



As temperatures plummet here in Australia, tens of thousands of eager travellers head for the warmth of the northern hemisphere. To places like the UK, where warmth means you only need to wear a light jumper, USA, Europe, and Asia.

Many of these travellers will be young, bright-eyed, and bushy-tailed, and will forgo the expensive hotel route, and will don a backpack and make their way on a shoestring.

For the self-guided in particular, here are a few tips to get the most out of your backpacking trip:

1. Choose the Right Pack & Fit It Correctly

A properly fitted backpack will ensure you're comfortable throughout your trip and you don't injure yourself so that you can have an enjoyable time. In the video below, Lisa, our resident travel expert, shows how easy it is to get your pack fitted just right. Here are a few things to remember:

Buy a pack that suits the length of your torso

Most travel packs have an adjustable harness that allows you to lengthen or shorten the harness depending on the size of your torso. If your harness has a measuring guide, like with the **Black Wolf Cedar Breaks**, take note of your measurement so, if you lend your pack to somebody, it's easy to adjust back to your size.

Don't leave the day pack attached

If your travel pack has a detachable day pack when the pack is on your back make sure it's clipped off. It'll make you too top-heavy and is likely to whack somebody in the face if you turn around abruptly. Instead, carry the day pack by the top handle or clip it onto the front of your harness – by the shoulder straps.

Pack heavy stuff in the middle of the pack

A well-balanced pack will allow your harness to do what it's meant to, and that is to distribute 80% of the weight to the strongest part of the body – your hips. The last thing you want is for your pack to be hanging off your shoulders – this will be uncomfortable over time and may lead to an injury, or lots of cussing! By placing heavy gear in the middle of your pack you prevent it from being top or bottom-heavy.

*Here's Lisa, our travel, clothing, and footwear guru, demonstrating **how to correctly fit a travel pack**.*

2. Pack Light

Do you really need to take the kitchen sink with you? Travel should be about the places you go, the experiences you have, and the people you meet. Too much gear will impinge on this sense of freedom.



A bottle of **Wilderness Wash** should be in every traveller's pack. So many uses, super-concentrated, and biodegradable.

Try to pack gear that has multiple uses and is lightweight. Rather than a bottle of shampoo and bar of soap, consider something like Sea to Summit's Wilderness Wash – it's concentrated and will last you around a month.

Instead of nail clippers, scissors, a pocket knife, screwdriver, and so on, pack a Multi-Tool or **Swiss Army Knife**. Rather than carrying a pack full of clothes, choose quality, hard-wearing items that dry quickly so you can wash them on the go. With your Wilderness Wash of course!

Sure, you probably won't spend all that much time with your pack on your back, but when you do, you'll be thankful if it's light.

3. Don't Forget Your Travel Adapters

You're on your flight from Melbourne to London Heathrow. You've downloaded a heap of your favourite telly shows to your iPad. Most modern airlines now have power to your seat via USB. You land in London and need to recharge. But you forgot to grab an international travel adapter.

If you're travelling through many different countries, which is common when you're travelling Europe or Asia, make sure you have a suitable adapter for each country. If you're travelling to Europe via London, for example, you'll need an **AU/NZ > British adapter** as well as an **AU/NZ > Europe adapter**.

Alternatively, there are all-in-one adapters available, such as the **OSA Universal Plug which also has two USB ports**, meaning you can have, say, your laptop plugged in and



still be charging your iPhone.

4. Book In Advance

The Aussie winter is the high season for travelling to places like the UK and USA. It's just going into summer there, you're already jack about how cold it is here, it's time to don a t-shirt again. But don't get caught out booking at the last minute.

I know this full well as I am about to set off for the UK and Europe for three weeks. I checked the price for the Eurostar from London to Paris a month or two ago and put it in the budget. Just this week I went to book and the price has gone up by over \$100AUD. Serves me right. I'm the sort of traveller that generally likes to wing it. I like to wake up in the morning and see where the day takes me, rather than being subjected to some rigid itinerary. I learnt this after many seasons in New Zealand.

The weather can change rapidly so you need to be willing to change your plan. Which means making changes to transport and accommodation. This can be hard and expensive if you have booked it all in, at a good price, on some 'non-refundable' option.

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For accommodation at least, apps like Booking.com make it easy. Most hotels and rooms can be booked on a 'pay later' basis, which often gives you until up to 3 days before check-in to alter or cancel the booking without a fee.

This is handy if you want to secure a good price while remaining at least a little flexible to change your plans. Many other online booking apps and sites require a payment upfront to secure the best price.



5. Venture Off Track

It can be tempting to stay on the path well travelled. After all, we tend to head to places like Paris or New York to see the sights that we have heard so much about. But often, by straying from the path by just a little, we see the 'real side' of a place.

The Paris that the Parisians live in. The Las Vegas where the roulette dealers spend their weekends. The tavernas of rural Greece where elderly Greeks play backgammon with old mates.

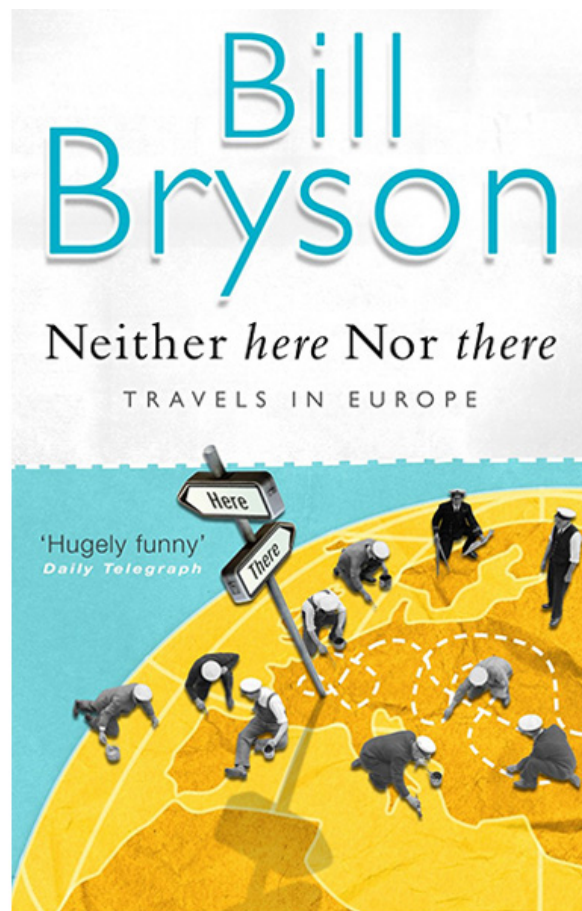
By all means, take in the tourist attractions. But explore a little further afield too. See what you discover.

BONUS: 6. Read a Bill Bryson Book On The Plane

Ok, I'm going to admit it. I'm a huge Bill Bryson fan. His writing is engaging and oh-so-funny. And it seems the guy has been to a place or two. Chances are he's written about the place you're heading.

There's *A Walk In The Woods* – his journal of his time on the mighty Appalachian Trail. *The Road To Little Dribbling* – his delightful rant about England, written many years after he last lived there.

Maybe you're heading to Europe, in which case *Neither Here Nor There* is mandatory reading. It's on my to-read list.



This is what I will be reading on my upcoming London flight.

Maybe I'm just a dork, but if you take a Bryson books on the plane, the flight is going to go by



in a flash and you're going to have sore jaws from laughter when you arrive.

What's your nifty tip for travelling overseas as a backpacker?