

From the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, budding adventurers on an extended study break, to the seasoned travellers still with a bucketlist of places to see and people to meet – these days, travelling is alluringly easy.

No matter how spontaneous a traveller you are though, there are must-know tips, tricks, and tools to make our dollar (and itinerary) go a little further.



*Wherever you travel in the world, these tips will come in handy. Image: Caribee*

## **Before You Go**

### **Book in Advance**

The Aussie winter is the high season for travelling to places like the UK and USA, as it's leading into summer there. Checking the price of the Eurostar from London to Paris and putting it in the travel budget is great organisation – but booking it two months later could see you paying over \$100 AUD more than you budgeted for!


If you're the sort of traveller that generally likes to wing it and wake up in the morning and see where the day takes you – be aware that the weather can change rapidly, so you need to be willing to change plans. This means making changes to transport and accommodation, which can be hard and expensive if you have booked it all in at a good price and on some 'non-refundable' option!

For accommodation at least, apps like [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) make it easy. Most hotels and rooms can be booked on a 'pay later' basis, which often allows until up to three days before check-in to alter or cancel the booking without a fee. This is handy if you want to secure a good price but remain 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.

### **The No-Fee Bank Card**

A good option is the Qantas Travel Money Card. For every Australian dollar loaded, you receive a Qantas point. That said, it can be a hassle figure out how much to put on the card – plus, the bank charges a fee and locks the user into one currency.

However, the no-fee [Citibank](https://www.citibank.com) debit card doesn't charge the standard 3% on international purchases, and charges \$0 on ATM withdrawals. It's free to apply, and you just need to link it to a savings account. You can use this card for most purchases – plus, if you need cash, you know you won't be charged a hefty \$5 withdrawal fee!

 *The Aussie winter is the high season for travelling to places like the UK and USA. Image: Caribee*

## **Travel Insurance**

### **Yes, this is an essential!**

We've all been there: trying to save money by flirting with the idea of just risking it without insurance.

'Oh, but I'm just going on a short trip to Bali. I won't need it.'



Well, as it tends to unfold, *that* can be the trip when you actually need it! For example, a few years ago, a volcano erupted on Bali's neighbour island, Lombok. All flights were cancelled for a week – but thankfully, that's the sort of thing that can be covered under insurance policies.

We suggest finding a company that offers a hybrid coverage of both health and travel. Ensure you have got full protection in an emergency, and pay a little extra to secure your valuables. A recommended insurer is the 'Qantas' of travel insurance: World Nomads. They're Australian, totally helpful, and donate part of their profits to third world countries.

## Google Flights

Google Flights not only delivers on price or partner airlines, but functionality. A calendar view allows you to quickly work out which day is best to fly (as opposed to having to reload the page, isolating a specific day). If you can be flexible with the day you fly, check out Google Flights.



*No matter where your travels take you, travel insurance is important. Image: Knog*

## During Your Travels

### Travel Adapters

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. For example, if you're travelling to Europe via London, you'll need an AU/NZ > British adapter as well as an AU/NZ > Europe adapter. There are also adaptors available for those travelling to Japan and the USA.

Most of these also have USB ports. This means you can have your laptop plugged in and still be charging your smart phone. Usually, the universal adapters are slightly bulkier than the single country products – but if you're continent hopscotching, you'll love it.

## The Right Luggage



In determining the right luggage, take into account the variety of activities you'll partake in. For those who won't be doing any extreme adventuring, there is the option of a straight wheeled bag or a wheeled pack with a daypack for sightseeing. If you like to travel light, a duffle bag with multiway straps might be a good choice. This also bodes well for grabbing your gear, slinging it over your shoulder, or carrying it on your back.

For the backpackers, a travel backpack is a must to ensure that you can trek and explore without wheels holding you down (literally!). Just make sure you find the right size and volume for your frame, and that it has a comfortable and supportive harness.

Then there's your carry-on. You don't want to rock up to your flight only to find that your carry on bag is too big to take on the plane. This is why it's important to ensure that your carry on is the correct size. This and other requirements vary from airline to airline, and country to country – so be sure to call ahead and check before you invest.



## **Ben and Lauren also ~unpack~ hiking packs with Deuter on the Snowys Camping Show:**

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## **Fit Your Pack Correctly**

More on this further down, but for now – here are a few things to remember:

- **Consider 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, take note of your measurement. That way, if you lend your pack to somebody, it's easy to adjust back to your size.

- **Detach the Daypack**

If your travel pack has a detachable daypack, 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 daypack by the top handle, or clip it onto the front of your harness by the shoulder straps.

- **Heavy Items Go in the Middle**

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.

## **TSA Padlocks and Luggage Tags**

There's nothing worse than being frantic in an airport. No matter how organised you are, items like padlock keys just seem to vanish. If you're travelling to countries that need to inspect your luggage, switch to TSA locks to make life a little easier – just don't forget your four-digit code! If you find it hard to remember your passwords at the best of times, that code might just fly out the window when you're under stress in transit. If this sounds like you, choose a lock with a key instead of a pin code.

It's amazing how similar luggage can look when they're all rolling out in a row on the conveyor belt. When you're tired and bleary-eyed from a long haul flight, use luggage tags to make locating your bags easier at baggage claim.



*Luggage tags make identifying your bag a little easier during your travels. Image: Knog*



## 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.

Try to pack gear that offers 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](#) (more on this further down). Rather than carrying a pack full of clothes, choose quality, hard-wearing items that dry quickly so you can wash on the go (with your Wilderness Wash!).


## Travel Comfortably

On those long 10+ hour flights, a good trick is to break up the time. Watch a couple of movies for the first three hours, sleep the next chunk, then either write or read for the last leg. This way, you can focus only on the three or four hours ahead. Turn off the flight path (this is as painful as watching paint dry!). When you're ready to be (slightly) productive, or shift the boredom – pull out your headphones and open [Audible](#). Pre-download a book before your leave, so you don't need WiFi.

There's nothing worse than trying to catch some shut eye when the lights are on in the plane, your pillow keeps slipping down the side of the seat, and there's an adorable baby screaming bloody murder at your end of the plane. You can't control what other people do on your flight – but you can pick up an eye mask for blocking out light, some ear plugs for cancelling noise, and a neck pillow to support your head while you try to catch some shut-eye!

If you're one to feel motion-sick, there's no need for you to spend the whole flight with a churning stomach. Do yourself a favour and pick up a pair of motion sickness straps, and some air sickness tablets for good measure. That way you can kick back and enjoy the in-flight entertainment, or catch up on a good read.

While the fun is in the journey – find items, tools, and little tricks that'll offer helpful shortcuts or a welcomed 'travel companion'!

 *Travel should be about the places you go, the experiences you have, and the people you meet. Image: Salomon*

## Top 5 Essentials for Outdoor Adventuring

### 1. Comfortable and Lightweight Daypack

Even if you'll spend most of your time relaxing, there are likely to be times when you head out-and-about.

While many [travel packs come with zip-on bags](#), these tend to be small and lack useful features. [Daypacks](#) range from 15-40 litres, making them light but roomy enough to fit the necessities (e.g., phone, money, and camera).

Look for:

- Comfort

Comfortable and adjustable harness with padded straps and good ventilation

- Rainproof cover

This will protect valuable electronic gear that you have in your pack

- Hydration compatibility

So you don't have to buy or pack bulky water bottles

- Laptop compartment


If you simply *must* to catch up on those emails while on holiday...

- External or side pouches

Where you can store wet or muddy gear and snacks



*Look for a daypack that's as comfortable as it is useful. Image: Caribee*

 *Even if you'll spend most of your time relaxing, there are likely to be times when you head out-and-about. Image: BlackWolf*

## 2. Hydration System

A hydration system can very valuable, as it negates the need to stop to retrieve your bottle from your pack. They come into their own when riding a bike, motorbike, or horse. Salomon's XA 25 and 35 Hiking Bags are also a small, slimline, and lightweight option for hydration on the go.

Look for:

- Sufficient size

Typically options are between 1-3 litres, but this will depend on how much you drink, how far you are going, and how long you're travelling for

- A *good* mouthpiece

Many cheaper ones are poorly made, leak, and don't withstand knocks

- Pull-apart and easy-to-clean components

Look for hydration packs that have service kits available, like those from Camelbak



*A hydration pack negates the need to stop to retrieve your bottle from your pack. Image: Salomon*

## 3. Lightweight Cooking Stove

While some may say it's a little over-the-top, many pack their lightweight cooking gear when heading overseas.

It's a particularly good idea for longer expeditions, or when on a tight budget. Lightweight cookers typically operate on gas, pressurised liquid fuel, or simple liquid fuels i.e. methylated spirits.

Look for:

- Gas stoves

Gas types are the simplest (and cheapest), but you can't take cylinders on a plane. Plus, finding them when you arrive can be difficult (especially in less-developed countries).

- Pressurised multi-fuel styles

The MSR Whisperlite is a good example, though they can be a little daunting to learn to use.

- Liquid fuel stoves

Liquid fuel types, like Trangia, are indestructible and simple to use – but bulkier, and don't heat as efficiently.



*The Trangia is simple and indestructible, but bulkier. Image: Chris Newman*

#### 4. Head Torch

From finding the light switch in a dark hostel room to searching for that bottle opener behind the back seat of the car, a head torch is one of the items you'll find you reach for the most. LED technology has come a long way, and the head torch range available today is extensive. However, beware of cheaper models that drain batteries – they will let you down when you need them most.

Look for:

- Comfort and ease of use

Comfortable head strap and up-down pivot adjustability

- Sufficient power


A 100-lumen output is the benchmark for an average, good-quality head torch

- Adjustable LED beam

This feature is handy, as it will conserve battery life

- Water resistance

This ensures that the head torch will perform in all kinds of weather

 *LED technology has come a long way, and the headtorch range available today is extensive. Image: Knog*

#### 5. Multi-Tool of Swiss Style Pocket Knife

Arguably one of the most useful items you can take with you. Whether you prefer a multi tool (like a Leatherman or Zippo) or a traditional Swiss style pocket knife (like Victorinox) there's sure to be a model that has the tools and size you are after. The differences between multi-tools and Swiss styles? Multitools are preferred by tradies as they include pliers and wire strippers, while the Swiss designs tend to be more for travellers as they have a corkscrew, scissors and other novelty features like a toothpick.

Look for:

- Precision and a high-quality steel construction

This is where the extra money you pay off when it comes to a multitool

- Lockable blades

These can be an advantage, as it is an extra safety measure to ensure the blade stays put when in your pocket. Just remember not to put it in your carry-on bag!



*Instead of carrying a fire lighter and tinder shreds, save space with the Zippo Surefire Multi Tool – featuring flint wheel ignition and a tinder grater. Image: Zippo*



## 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 we have heard so much about. Often though, 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.



*Be sure to explore a little afield!*

*This blog was updated for 2024, comprising of content from bloggers Amanda Smith, Paul Goodsell, Daniel Gorman, and Bob West.*

**What are the essential items you always take when you travel?**