

Travel Tips from Your Registrar

by Steve Henning

Contents:

Suitcases: Lightweight Expandable Suitcase; Small Carry-on Bag	1
Clothing: Quick-Dry; Caps; Rain Parka; Jacket; Shoes	2
Devices: Umbrella, Day Pack; Alarm Clock; Chargers; Camera	3
Food & Water:	5
Safety: Cards; Spare Cards; ATMs; Travel Documents	5
Important Details: Respect; Trip Insurance	5
Toiletries & Travel Medicine Kit: Don't leave home without these	6

Suitcases:

Darlene and I love to travel and don't like lugging heavy suitcases around, especially as we get older. Whether traveling for a weekend or 10 weeks consecutively, we usually pack fairly much the same things. We usually have **enough clothing for 6 days**. On long trips we plan on doing hand-laundry on a regular basis. We only pack things that are versatile. We always pack a rain parka and rain hat so we don't need to worry about walking in the rain. We take a change of shoes and make sure we have a pair of **waterproof shoes**. I always have an **umbrella** in my camera bag in case of rain or even for standing in the sun.

We take one small to medium size suitcase with wheels plus a small carry-on bag that we strap to the suitcase with a dog collar so we only have to wheel one thing around. Both have TSA combination locks to keep people from going through our suitcase when we are not in our hotel room.



My 26" suitcase and small carry-on bag strapped together with a dog

We distinguish our suitcases so they are easy to identify at the airport carousel and we can also tell quickly tell if someone else picks up our bag by mistake. We use two nylon straps: one in a contrasting color going around one way and one with a distinctive pattern going around in the other direction. The straps also act as backup if a latch on the suitcase comes open or the belt on my pants breaks, which has happened.

We like a **lightweight expandable suitcase**. Our light-weight 26" suitcases only weigh 6 pounds. There is no need to use up the airline weight allowance with a heavy bag. We don't use the expandable feature when packing. We reserve the expansion for things we buy while traveling that we want to bring home.

Hints:

- Use [suitcase organizers](#), ones for pants, underwear & socks, and a [special one to fold and compress shirts](#).
- Use a see-through pouch to keep small items together and easy to find
- In the **small carry-on bag**, pack meds, rain parka, umbrella, camera, electronic devices, spare wallet, photocopy of passport, small flashlight, travel alarms.
- Take extra meds in case you are delayed in returning.
- Put anything else into your carry-on bag that you would miss if your checked bag were lost.

Clothing:

Quick-Dry: For the most part, we only take cotton-free quick-dry clothes. Cotton is nice, but it is very slow drying and not suitable for overnight hand-laundry where it must be dry in the morning. Wool isn't much better for quick drying. Also, cotton clothing is usually heavier than the man-made fiber clothing

SPF items are good not only for the sun protection but also because they are quick drying, light weight, and good for travel. Be careful, some have a sloppy appearance, but some actually look quite good. Microfiber pants look much dressier.

- **SPF quick-dry no-iron long-sleeve shirts**
- **SPF quick-dry & microfiber no-iron pants**
- **Quick-dry Travel Underwear**
- **Quick-dry socks (REI Co-op Performance Crew)**



SPF quick-dry no-iron long-sleeve shirt

Caps:



Tilley Hat from Canada is guaranteed for life



Outdoor Research's Seattle Sombrero



Waxed Cotton Flat Cap folds small enough to carry in your pocket

- Our **Tilley Hat from Canada** and **Outdoor Research's Seattle Sombrero** are rainproof and pack flat. The Tilley Hat has a lifetime warranty
- My **waxed cotton flat cap** is an all-purpose cap. It has a low profile and won't blow off, and is rainproof. One really nice thing is that I can tuck the bill inside the hat and fold it up completely flat to carry in my jacket pocket without altering the hat's appearance.

Rain Parka: We always take uninsulated rain parkas, with both a zipper and snaps, that roll up to a compact size. The zipper is good in cooler weather. The snaps are for warmer weather or if the zipper fails and they help insulate over the zipper in cold weather.

Jacket: We take a long-sleeved quick-dry light jacket to wear under the parka or separately as needed. The key is layers

Shoes: We take one pair of light walking shoes that look good enough to wear to a concert and a good comfortable pair of waterproof walking shoes that need not be as good looking to wear while touring. We pack one pair and wear the other. We pack the shoes we put in our suitcase in a bag that will keep other items in our suitcase clean.



Uninsulated Rain Parka

Socks: If we plan on doing more walking than we are accustomed, we take good quick-dry walking socks, but also take the thin lightweight polypropylene or silk liner socks. They are excellent at preventing blisters. They are also easy to rinse out and dry quickly.

Laundry: Doing hand-laundry is the key to traveling light. Things usually dry very quickly if the room is air conditioned. In humid climates with no air conditioning, only quick dry fabrics will dry overnight. If we are in a city for a couple days and there are local laundries near our hotel, they may be very reasonably priced. Hotel laundry service is notoriously expensive, often more expensive than the clothes they are cleaning.

If we are only in a hotel one-night, we need our clothes to be dry in the morning. First, we only take cotton-free, quick-dry clothes. After washing, rinsing, and wringing out by hand, we lay out the wet clothes on a large bath towel, roll the clothes in the towel along the long edge and wring out as much as we can. The towel gets soaked, but our clothes will be almost dry. We make sure we have dry towels to use the next morning.

Then we hang our clothes either on clothes hangers or on a clothes line where there is plenty of ventilation. Some hotels have a retractable clothes line in the bathroom. It is always good to have our own travel clothes line and travel clothes pins.

We use one of the plastic laundry bags hotels puts in each room to use in our bag if we have any dirty clothes. My suitcase has an outside pocket that I like to use for dirty clothes to keep them separate from the clean clothes.

Devices:

Basics: An umbrella, day pack, and travel alarm are the most important devices. I didn't mention cell phone because we don't use one. We may have one tucked away to call someone to pick us up when we get home, but that is it.

- **Umbrella:** We each take a small pocket-size folding umbrella.
- **Day Pack:** We also have a small light-weight day pack in which we can carry bottled water, umbrellas, and a jacket when we are out during the day touring
- **Alarm Clock:** We take 2 small battery travel alarms. We take 2 in case we set one wrong or the batteries fail. Nothing is worse than oversleeping and missing a plane or prearranged tour. Many people use their cell phone as an alarm clock, but I recommend a backup to the cell phone.

Internet: We take a device for Wi-Fi email and browsing. This is our preferred way of communicating with people back home, and it works well no matter what time zone we are in. We must always remember that Wi-Fi is not as prevalent abroad as it is back home. We can almost always count on the lobbies of better hotels for free Wi-Fi. Other than that, we have to be flexible and wait until we find Wi-Fi access. I prefer an iPad. People who phone or text while traveling in different time zones must be aware that the person that they are calling or texting may be sleeping.



Ultra-lite Day Pack that folds into a pocket.

Chargers: Make sure all chargers are for 100-220v, 50/60 Hz. This avoids the hassle of having voltage converters, which are heavy transformers. I always take an extension cord. It means that I only need one plug adapter and permits me to plug-in multiple chargers in at one time. It also is more convenient when the outlet is not where you want to place your chargers.

Camera: We take cameras with a rechargeable batteries and spare batteries. Many people just use the camera on their cell phone. My camera is a digital “super-zoom” meaning it has a zoom lens that goes from wide angle to long telephoto. It also is very sensitive and can take pictures in most lighting conditions without flash. It has a flash to use for filling in harsh shadows when photographing in direct sunlight. It has over four-times as many pixels as I really need, but they are useful for extra resolution when photographing large groups and I want to see everyone’s face, or when using digital zoom to shoot something further away than what the optical zoom of the lens will reach. When doing telephoto zoom photography, it is necessary to have image stabilization built into the camera to avoid any blur, especially under lower light conditions or with a moving object. My lens is not removable, allowing the camera to be moisture and dust proof. I take a camera bag that will hold my camera, spare batteries and memory cards, my sunglasses, and a small umbrella.



Sony RX10 Superzoom Camera

Photography is a primary goal when I travel. I want to get lots of good pictures to use for programs. I take a lot of flower close-ups. For these, the zoom and fill flash are super important. Two things will ruin a flower picture. The first is not being able to zoom in on a single bloom. The second is having to take a picture in full sun without fill flash to remove the harsh shadows. I often take two photos, one with fill flash and one without fill flash. Then, when I am editing my photos, I select the best one.

I always try to take some photos that will be good in our Christmas letter. In very popular places where there are lots of people, I don’t worry about the people in the picture since that is part of being there.

Food & Water

Food: Some people have trouble adapting to food or water in different areas. Always **drink bottled water** unless you are sure of the local tap water. Even some tap water in the US is not potable. Some potable tap water may cause unpleasant symptoms if your system can’t adapt to differences. One advantage of group tours is that they usually only go to places that have food and water that is safe. Never buy food from sidewalk vendors that don’t have places to wash their hands. Their food may look great, but it may not have been refrigerated for a long time and the attendant may not be able to wash his hands.

Be aware that even places that use English may use British English for foods such as *aubergine* for eggplant; *biscuit* for cookie; *coriander* for cilantro; *courgette* for zucchini; *crisps* for potato chips; *digestive biscuit* for graham cracker; *doner kebob* for gyro; *gammon* for ham; *mange tout* for snow peas; *paw paw* for papaya; *prawn* for shrimp; *profiterole* for cream puff; *scone* for biscuit; *sultanas* for raisins, and *tart* for pie. Also remember, table napkins are called *serviettes* in British English.

Safety:

Cards: If traveling anywhere outside the US, we only take **cards with chips**. Most other countries only accept cards with chips. When choosing which credit cards and debit cards, we choose ones with the **lowest foreign transaction fee**. Always read the fine print and see what the fees are.



The chip in a Chip Card

Spare Wallets and Cards: We always have **spare wallets** kept in our locked carry-on bag. When we are in a foreign country, we keep our US currency in our spare wallets. We have **two different credit cards** and **two different ATM cards**. We keep the spare cards in our spare wallets so that if we lose a wallet, we have a backup.

We also keep photo copies of both sides of our critical documents such as our passport, credit and debit cards, and anything else we might have to replace. Of course, we immediately contact the card company of any card that is lost or stolen to limit our liability.

ATMs: When getting cash in foreign countries, the best exchange rates are at bank ATM machines. I say bank ATMs because they are the most reputable and less likely to have high fees or skimming devices. But it is best to purchase items with credit cards if possible. They get an even better exchange rate. They also provide additional consumer protection. Cash is good for small items and vendors that can't take cards.

Travel Documents: We always carry two forms of identification: typically our passport and driver's license. We always take a list of all of the email addresses for our family, friends and financial advisors. We always have spare copies of our reservations and the booking numbers stored in two different bags.

Important Details:

Respect: Be respectful of the countries you visit, your fellow travelers and your guides

You may have heard of the "ugly American." We have seen them and try not to be one.

- Always remember you are a guest where others call home.
- Respect all places you visit no matter how humble or elaborate.
- Expect things to be different from what you are used to. Adapt.
- If you don't understand something like how to flush a toilet, ask for help.
- Learn words in the local language, especially hello, excuse me, and thank you.
- Be aware, the locals can usually spot a visitor and are willing to help you.
- Don't expect everyone to speak English. Usually some do, but not everyone.
- When in a group, remember to respect others around you. Don't shout to friends.
- Ask before taking a photograph of a person unless you are far away.
- Help your fellow travelers take photos of themselves, especially at iconic places.
- Always be early for departures or meetings. Don't keep others waiting.
- Learn the local words for toilet and bill or check at a restaurant.
- Don't assume that there will be ATM's or banks readily available.
- Please don't use perfume or cologne or other smelly toiletries.
- Get to know your fellow travelers. Then you are traveling with friends, not strangers.

Trip Insurance: Trip insurance has two important coverages. First, medical coverage is important, especially if your own insurance will not cover you.

Second, trip coverage often covers losses of baggage and trip cancellation by either you or the tour company. It usually covers trip interruption by illness or injury, terrorist threats, or emergency travel home. Trip insurance is best booked with a travel agent since it is usually least expensive if booked at the time reservations are made.

Toiletries and a Travel Medicine Kit

Most luxury hotels have common toiletries and tissues in case you forget something. However, many countries don't have the products you are accustomed to, so be sure to take ample amounts. For a safer shower I always have lightweight cloth-free shower shoes that are easy to dry. We take small travel sizes of any bulky items. We keep our toiletries together in a pouch.



Lightweight Shower Shoes

Besides our own personal medications, we have some travel medicines such as:

- Antidiarrheal medication such as **Imodium**
- **Laxative:** constipation is a common problem, so be prepared. We stay hydrated and bring along a mild laxative we find useful at home.
- **Pepto-Bismol** can head off many problems such as upset stomach, heartburn, nausea, and mild diarrhea, before they become serious. It is also valuable in preventing travelers' diarrhea, often called "Montezuma's Revenge."
- A **triple-antibiotic** ointment such as Neosporin to treat minor cuts and scratches.
- **Band-Aids** in various sizes and shapes.
- A non-drowsy **antihistamine** since we may discover a new allergy.
- Our normal pain medication such as **aspirin** or **acetaminophen**.
- A **cough suppressant**. I like to take sugarless breath mints for this.
- **Lip Balm & Sunscreen**, at least SPF 15 that has both UVA and UVB protection.
- **Hand sanitizer**, either liquid or hand wipes.
- **Lubricating eye drops** in case we have dry eye problems.
- And it never hurts to have **bug repellent**.

Bon Voyage