

# Pack Your Bag

# Contents

<b>Un-Packing for a life on the road</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Inventory</b>	<b>5</b>
Clothes . . . . .	5
Shoes . . . . .	5
<b>Pack</b>	<b>7</b>
Stash a Pack . . . . .	7
Pack Lockup . . . . .	8
Wheels . . . . .	8
Electronics . . . . .	8
<b>Batteries</b> . . . . .	8
<b>Splashed Electronics</b> . . . . .	8
<b>PDA</b> . . . . .	9
<b>Computer</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>USB Key/Disc</b> . . . . .	10
<b>Mobile Phone</b> . . . . .	10
<b>E-book reader</b> . . . . .	11
<b>Wake Up</b> . . . . .	11
<b>Alarm</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Camera</b> . . . . .	12
<b>Music</b>	<b>13</b>
Wilderness Gear, and Urban Crash Gear . . . . .	13
Washing and Drying Clothes . . . . .	13
Washing Up . . . . .	13
<b>Towel</b> . . . . .	13
<b>Soap</b> . . . . .	14
<b>Nail Clipper</b> . . . . .	14
<b>Warm Water</b> . . . . .	14
<b>Haircut</b> . . . . .	14
Sleeping . . . . .	14
Sewing Kit . . . . .	15
Toilet Paper . . . . .	15
<b>Light</b> . . . . .	15
Hair Dryer . . . . .	15
Food . . . . .	16
<b>Diving Gear</b> . . . . .	16
<b>Immersion Boiler</b> . . . . .	16
<b>Travel Iron</b> . . . . .	17
Marking . . . . .	17

Umbrella . . . . .	17
Fun and Games . . . . .	17
<b>Quick Packing List</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Not Overpacking</b>	<b>20</b>
Money . . . . .	20
<b>Gifts</b>	<b>21</b>
Drugs . . . . .	21
<b>Phone Cards</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Pets</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Bicycle</b>	<b>24</b>
General Delivery . . . . .	24

# Un-Packing for a life on the road

If you make the commitment to forsake a regular roof and bed for the freedom of the world, you have to use your head when deciding what to pack. If you carry every mentioned item in this book, you will need a pack mule. A common rule of thumb is to separate your gear into three piles: things you absolutely need, things that would be useful, and things you don't need; don't bring the second two piles. Tailor your gear to what you plan to do and for how long you will be on the move. Keep your bag loaded with your basic gear and have it ready to go at all times; only take out what you need and return it when you are done. This advice will prove useful if the pigs come to clear out where you are staying or your host turns out to be a creep. If you carry expensive stuff, you will be afraid to lose it. Lastly try using your travel gadgets and supplies exactly as you plan to on the road at home, once you are on the highway your limited gear either helps you or you eliminate it. So sink wash your travel clothes, dry it on a line strung in your room, test your full pack and shoes on a few hikes and sidewalk strolls, charge up your phone or music player with that cheap greenie-weenie solar or crank charger, dry off from shower with that synthetic towel so you know its dry time, take your folding bike on a local train or bus, put the stuff you value enough to stick in your pack to the test. Eliminate the junk and even then only pack the bare minimum of the lightest well tested travel gear.

# Inventory

Unless you are traveling with only a tarp and a blanket one of the most important things to have in your pack is a complete inventory list and use it to keep track of what you have with you. Checking your inventory is especially important when breaking camp or packing up after a few days on someones couch. Important things like hammock tree straps end up getting left behind at campsites and wallets or passports in couch cushions, stuff that can really screw your trip should they become lost. It is also good to take inventory if traveling with checked baggage so you can replace stuff stolen by the airport security stooges. If you take the perilous kindness of loaning out your gear be sure to write it down or you will probably remember that you had to ask for its return too late a few hundred miles down the road, better to let your friend use your tool or gadget when you are present as this also prevents destructive misuse and accidental misplacement.

## Clothes

Don't pack too much clothing. One or two sets of lightweight, versatile walking clothes and possibly one set of upscale clothes kept in a big Ziploc to stay clean will get you by in almost all situations. Be aware of the culture of the area and try to fit in. Your upscale clothes will be like an access card to many locations and situations that standard punk or travel clothing might disallow.

Look for clothes that pack small, dry quickly, and don't take stains. Cotton, wool, and hemp are often bulky, and cotton dries slowly. Petrochem synthetics, do fit these requirements nicely if you can stand them on your body. On the other hand, natural fibers tend to retain odors less, and so will require washing less often.

Quality socks in quantity are just as important as good shoes. Only wear them for one day before putting them in the wash bag, and be sure to wash your feet every morning. A sarong works as a scarf, towel, skirt and shawl. Boonie style hats are available both in cotton and synthetic, they protect your eyes and neck better than a baseball cap and the chin string keeps it from blowing away. Hospital scrubs and a tee-shirt make good pajamas, and they can also be worn on the street or if you need to look at home in a hospital.

In hot climates synthetic underwear will dry far more quickly than cotton and help prevent sweat burns which are treated like diaper rash. Some people wear bicycle shorts as underwear in the heat, others cut off synthetic long underwear. Save the cut off arms and legs for cold weather as they are now far more flexible arm and leg warmers and can be easily be put on and taken off in public areas.

If you are headed someplace warm like Florida, Mexico, or Fiji, we suggest at least a light jacket since there are always some cool or rainy weather days, if you will be in desert area you should even have some heavier clothing to wear during the cold nights. A packable jacket and fleece vest is also a very good idea even in summer.

## Shoes

Your shoes, must be comfortable to walk in over long distances. Never take brand new shoes on the road, as broken-in shoes that you know fit well will put less stress on your feet and toes. Sandals are

great if you are not on the move. Doc Martens used to be an affordable comfortable shoe/boot, but fashion trends have caused prices to rise and quality has dropped. Mail carrier or military surplus black shoes are made to look dressy but survive daily hours of outdoor walking. Cheap army boots will last for a few months but are heavy and might slow you down. Discount stores sometimes have surprising quality light hiking boots, work boots, trail runners, or walking shoes. In addition to quality shoes or boots you should invest in quality laces, something synthetic and abrasion resistant, and always have a set or two of spares.

If you have a shoe blowout during a budget crisis find a contact cement which is recommended for shoe repairs, most require cleaning and then application of a layer on the two surfaces to be joined, after this dries to a tacky surface (10-15 min) the two surfaces are held together for about 15 minutes.

# Pack

You really don't have to go crazy on a hyper-expensive pack, but if you skimp too much on quality, you could end up uncomfortable or face it wearing out quickly. A frame pack will help distribute your load. An external frame is cheaper, but internal frame packs are now the more popular choice and move well with you keeping your center of gravity near to your body core. A roll of nylon fiber tape like is used to secure packages will make a break-in or break-open of your pack less likely if you have to check, stow, or throw the bag. Tape also helps to identify your bag in a luggage collection area. You might also want to carry a second comfortable day pack for short excursions when you can lock up your main pack. See more about packs and wilderness specific gear in [Backpacking and Camping](#)

When considering what kind and size of pack or bags to buy you should be thinking of your primary planned means of transport whether that is hitchhiking, jumping a train, booking a flight, or driving your own car. Just as important you should also be considering your fallback transportation mode which usually ends up being your feet. A great wilderness backpack will travel well on an airplane if you wrap it in that plastic cling wrap they use for freight, alternately even the best set of regular luggage is nearly worthless if you have to drag it farther than a mile or two on a gravel roadside. Even cycle travelers should consider getting or devising a system so panniers can be slung in a comfortable way should their bicycle become un-ridable or even un-pushable and you have to walk.

## Stash a Pack

You will have many times that you want to stash your pack but have no idea where to safely hide it. Wearing a backpack pegs you as a traveler or drifter, some people will assume you are using your pack to steal, and won't even let you enter stores.

If you carry a piece of webbing tied into a circle, a carabiner or pulley and some cord or rope you can use the tree stash. Carefully climb a tree and hang your loop and carabiner, don't forget to stick a bit of cord into the carabiner and climb down. Hoist your pack and tie off the end of the cord to a branch, a half inch eye bolt with a wood screw tip would also work. Discretion is of course the rule, do a walk-around and look for people watching first also be into the trees a bit. Don't talk about using this technique except with your true affinity group lest your new "friends" follow you and clean out your pack.

If your pack is small and not an obnoxiously bright color, you can also try hiding it under a tree like a pine that has lots of low, long branches that will shield your pack from sight, and lash it to the trunk with rope, paracord, shoelaces, carabiners, zip ties, or whatever else you happen to have. Webbing is always a plus, but not necessary if you secure all the zippers and pockets of your pack - the main thing is to make the main knot that keeps your bag tethered to the trunk super strong. The coils that come with bike locks are good for this because they can't be cut through unless somebody has bolt cutters.

If you are only going to be gone a short while, say making use of 24 hour hyperstores and their vast array of stealable products (not to mention the moderately clean bathrooms), discreetly stashing your pack in or behind a Dumpster might work for you. Just make sure to tether it if you are stashing behind one, and if you throw it in a Dumpster make sure it is at a time nobody is going to touch it, i.e. workers or garbage men.

## Pack Lockup

You could try to cable lock your pack with a cheap bike lock slowing down the grab and run thief. Wrap your pack in ratty blue tarp for homeless camouflage and lock it to your bike or near the entrance to the store you are in and it might slow down the less bold thief.

## Wheels

We have seen many packs equipped with wheels and a T-handle and zip panels to cover over the straps. Other people carry a folding luggage dolly for their standard packs or luggage. In well paved areas it might make sense to go the wheels route if your feet are the way you get around, letting the wheels do the heavy lifting. The downside is weight, comfort when worn on your back, and often higher price. We have never seen a true back country pack which also had attached wheels.

## Electronics

If you like to support the underground economy with stolen electronics, then join the millions of dumb western "flash-packers" who can't live without their MacBook and iPhone while on the road. Sparkly gadgets are the bait that can get your whole pack stolen by street thieves or corrupt cops who want more toys for themselves.

## Batteries

We like Nickel-Metal-Hydride rechargeables for power and environmental reasons, look for a charger with an option for low voltage flexibility including solar, hand, and bicycle generators.

If you stick a some ribbon or plastic in between the contacts and battery you will have an extra safety when keeping the batteries inside gadgets where they might get switched on.

Real alkaline batteries will store much better than rechargeable batteries for low power draw things like safety flashers, small FM radios, and LED flashlights, they are also great to keep i your pack should all of your rechargeable batteries die. Don't leave any battery in a gadget during long storage, old batteries often leak especially if the device is left switched on.

## Splashed Electronics

You are poor and on the move, expect your valuable electronics to go into the water at some point. All is not lost,

- snatch your gadget from the water
- get the batteries out now!!
- open every door and opening
- shake the water out
- if you can put the gadget in dry rice(uncooked) the dry rice will help soak up the moisture

If you dropped in salt water you are probably out of luck, but still as quickly as possibly



- rinse off with bottled water or fresh water to get the salt out
- take the gadget apart as far as you safely can
- get your gadget somewhere warm and breezy if possible. The top of a radiator with a fan blowing is great, behind a refrigerator where the warm air blows is good too. Car dashboards are especially good during spring and summer but keep watch, sometimes they get hot enough to melt some plastics, in winter the blower heater is ideal.

If you can find electronic cleaning 'air in a can' blast the inside of the gadget to blow the water out your gadget, it will help a lot, be careful using a regular air hose these sometimes have water or oil in them. Let dry for 24 to 48 hours inspecting for dampness blowing or dabbing what you can get at, if there is none evident after that time period try powering up the gadget. Good luck.

You can also clean electronics with distilled water or rubbing alcohol – just be aware that alcohol might ruin some LCD screens smf plastics. Keyboards with sticky keys from juice or soda can be taken apart and left to soak in distilled water. Make sure everything is 100% dry before reassembly and use.

We hesitate to mention the oven dry method because too many people freaked out over ruining their gadget get excited and mess it up, they end up with plastic slag dripping in the oven, we have inserted an oven temperature verification to help you boneheads out.

- Remove battery and open all other covers
- shake out as much liquid as possible
- Rinse gadget with bottled water if necessary to wash out liquids other than fresh water
- Preheat the oven or toaster oven and a plate to 120 F or 55C for 15 minutes - if the inside metal is too hot to touch then its too hot.
- Remove all knobs so nobody can adjust the heat
- Put a big sign on the oven explaining what you are doing, and what you will do to anyone who melts your gadget
- After 15 minutes carefully feel the plate, does it burn or just feel hot
- Let opened up gadget dry in the oven for an hour or more
- If you melt the gadget don't call us!

## **PDA**

A nice electronic convergence device is a used PDA that has WiFi for Internet, an ebook program, and can act as a MP3 or video player. Sticker and tape the PDA up so nobody will want to steal it. Many free programs are out for travelers with PDA's. Some PDA's and phones have a battery booster available which charge from AA or AAA cells.

# Computer

Depending on what you are doing you might just need a laptop, but most often not. If you really must load yourself down try to get something light like the tough inexpensive netbooks for under \$300 which have longer battery life and weigh under a kilogram, the trade off being small disk space and weak processors. An external hard disk can be plugged in to hold movies or music collections, most modern games are too rich for the low power processors, an offline copy of wikipedia makes a great hitch-hikers guide. We have run netbooks from portable solar power when camped in illegal squats grabbing neighborhood wifi.

## USB Key/Disc

A traveler often still wants his or her files or programs. We also describe in Computers#USB Key how to load and use a USB key for booting a MS Windows machine to Linux.

The basic USB key is a low cost and low theft way to have your data available when you have a chance to get on line, just be sure it is durable and the cap is not easily lost. There are several ways to maximize the potential of a USB stick. Many MP3 and multimedia players work as a storage device, as do some PDA's when the USB cable is attached.

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Since USB Keys are ripe for seizure by a pissed-off pig, make sure you use something such as TrueCrypt ( <http://www.truecrypt.org/>) to ensure that your data is not quickly compromised if the key is lost/stolen.

Using an external drive is just like an orgy of unsafe sex, the computer can easily infect your drive or someones drive can infect your computer making you a virus and malware vector. This is mostly a MS Windows problem, Linux, Unix, and Mac computers are pretty safe in this area. A drive with a read-only or write protect switch can keep your drive safe but you cant save anything then. One option if you have lots of time get the free open source Portable ClamWin Anti Virus designed to run from your USB keychain drive. Plug into an infested Windows machine with your drive in read-only and run a virus scan, once it shows clean you should be pretty safe. [http://portableapps.com/apps/utilities/clamwin\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/utilities/clamwin_portable) The PortableApps.com site has many other useful free open source applications for travelers and students with USB drives.

## Mobile Phone

A mobile phone may be a "flashpacker's" voice, text, and Internet connection, but it is also the leash that constantly updates CorpGov to your exact location within a few meters and takes money from you at the same time. Even a phone without GPS can be tracked by most wireless carriers, and some phones will continue "pinging" the network *even when you think they're turned off*. A fresh prepaid phone and SIM card together gives minimal anonymity for a few days but this is really a false sense of security.

<http://wiki.stealthiswiki.org/wiki/Pack-your-bag> 6/16

If you still need to carry a leash around your neck look for a phone that you can connect to your computer with a cable or something wireless like infrared or Bluetooth. Some newer smartphones will even go into Wi-Fi access point mode with the right programs or hacks.

You still may have a desire to communicate after you ditch the phone, see Communication for some alternatives.

## **E-book reader**

If e-paper is the miracle it is promised we will soon have a cheap way to schlep many e-books on a single sheet of flexible plastic with a little controller/battery pack somewhere that lasts months on a charge. This might save a few trees and let us carry a whole bookshelf in our pack rolled up in a small protective tube. For now nearly all PDAs, mobile phones, and some MP3/video players already have software available to view book files.

The most well known ebook reader on the market at this time is the \$139(WIFI)/\$189(3G) Amazon Kindle. The Kindle uses a glass backed e-paper display which gives it several weeks life on a charge but it can break if dropped. The Whispernet wireless connection allows you to buy and download books and also access wikipedia.com for free, allegedly forever anywhere inside the US, it almost sounds like the perfect hobo device. The downside to the current models of the Kindle is that the wireless connectivity is an ordinary cellular EVDO data connection, this means you are traceable just like a mobile phone when the unit is in use. Our other concern is that our current economic troubles could lead to bankruptcy of either Amazon or the cellular carriers leading to a surprise disconnection of your expensive Kindle.

There are open source crack programs for many locked book file types, the most famous is the Microsoft lit file, the program clit (crack .lit) which has versions for unix, linux, windows, and apple will convert your .lit files into something you can put on nearly any device.

## **Wake Up**

A digital countdown timer from a kitchen store will let you grab both quick naps or a full night of sleep without worry of oversleeping; set it according to your watch. Your cell phone alarm clock can now be turned off for privacy, to save batteries, or allow you to leave it at home.

# Alarm

One of our fellow travelers was given a gift bag after volunteering at a women's shelter it included a loud whistle great for cycling, some pepper mace, a mini kubaton for striking bad guys, and a personal alarm with a rip cord activator and plug in door jamb sensor. We have since seen this cheap but painfully loud alarm by the checkout at several mart type stores for a few dollars.

The personal alarm works several ways:

- Clipped on your person the rip cord is pulled if you are attacked, 130Db of heinous noise
- Clipped to your bag and the rip cord to your belt you can easily chase a bag thief by following the noise maker still in the bag
- Stick the sensor into the door jam or window of your room or squat and it alarms when the door or window is opened
- Attached to your bicycle and the rip cord to a spoke or the bike rack, alarms if someone tries to take your bike
- Place the sensor under your laptop and it alarms if your computer is picked up
- Mount to bicycle handlebars and use as a panic horn/siren when drivers are getting out of control

Cheap enough to use as a noise grenade, distraction, or at protests, more noisy or booby trap ideas will come to mind.

## Camera

Give consideration to protection of the camera from both notice and physical damage. If you are less of a pro think about a more "toy" type camera or something a few years old from an auction. Be sure you have spare batteries, charger, and card reader, and extra storage media. It is useful to burn and mail CD's with your pics every few weeks or when you capture a major story. Hacking is not just for your computer anymore, the Canon Hackers Development Kit or CHDK lets you do all kinds of crazy things with the right models of Canon cameras from enabling the features only found on the \$1200 and up cameras to converting it into a motion sensing security system to silly games and it all runs from the SD card in the camera, check it out free and open source. <http://chdk.wikia.com/wiki/CHDK>

Disposable film cameras are still available in 2009 if you don't need to take too many photos. If you don't mind the price of the film, the old Polaroid instant cameras are great for leaving behind some memories with new friends, but many people have printers now so digital is pretty quick to print except in serious back country.

# Music

One way to go is to carry a small instrument and make your own music to share (see Making Music) as opposed to being antisocial and listen to MP3's or the radio all of the time.

If you like to stay informed, a small hand-crank or solar powered radio can be useful for not only weather reports and news breaks, but also for listening to NPR, pirate stations, and college channels. See Radio.

An external speaker can either share your tunes or pollute the room with constant noise, so be nice and think of your mates before playing your music out loud.

## Wilderness Gear, and Urban Crash Gear

Unless you are planning a deep wilderness stay or third world travel then you probably only need a sleeping bag and either a hammock or ground pad which are highly useful when staying indoors, an a porch, or outdoors urban camping especially if all of the beds and couches are taken. Some hammocks have tarp covers or you can buy lightweight gore-tex covers which protect you from weather both are also available with bug netting which will protect you from bites while allowing air movement. Stoves and cookware are useful if you will be without electricity or a kitchen.

see also Low-Impact-Crashing and Backpacking and Camping.

## Washing and Drying Clothes

No bucket? Throw soap, clothes, and water into a plastic sack and swish around, remember to rinse completely. In case you have access to a sink or bathtub, carry a universal flat drain plug. Find a good concentrated soap good for clothing and human use or carry detergent in a reused plastic container or castile soap like Dr. Bronner's.

An excellent dry line is a long narrow bungee-type cord; the hooks work on door and window frames, curtain rods, and hooks you place into the wall.

## Washing Up

### Towel

In the cleaning section of grocery and hardware stores you will likely see synthetic or microfiber cleanup towels. The larger ones make great cheap towels which pack light and dry quickly, this is the same thing as expensive backpaker pack towels.

## Soap

One packing trick we have found useful comes from a fancy soap liberated from a German hotel. The soap bar was first inserted into a soft cotton bag with a small hanging loop, it dried out quickly when we put our wet soap into it and hung it from the toothbrush holder or shower curtain bar. When we had to travel quickly there was a second tough vinyl bag sized for the soap in the cotton sack, it had a fold over seal. This system kept our pack contents from getting contaminated up even if the soap bar had not yet dried out.

## Nail Clipper

Clipping your toe nails regularly prevents infection from ingrown nails as well as lengthening the life of your socks and shoes. Always clip straight across with scissors or clippers and leave the corners of the toe nail sticking out, trimming off these corners lets the skin around the nails grow in and when the nail grows it will cut or rub this flesh leaving you open to infection.

## Warm Water

Warm up your bath water with your stinger in a bucket or tough plastic bag inside a nylon stuff sack, for small volumes be careful not to overheat the water. Alternatively you can also use your camp stove to boil water to add into a bucket of cold water warming it up.

Wash up with your damp washcloth or sponge to save water. If rinsing is not an option because of limited water or drainage rub on a few drops of baby shampoo or baking soda in your armpits and groin then wash away as you wash the rest of your body with your washcloth.

If you are really cold, soaking your feet in warm water is a delight, pull out and dry off before the water gets cold or spills.

## Haircut

There are those among us with enough skill to give great haircuts for both men and women with nothing more than a barbers scissors and a comb, very easy to pack. For the rest of us even women the practicality of a cool bug free buzzed short cut is hard to beat, if you are worried about your appearance or the sun wear a hat, beret, or scarf. Our best luck has been with a quality adjustable cordless beard trimmer kit that comes with a 110-240volt charger and gives several adjustable options for hair length and has a comb and scissors in the box. If you plan to share the trimmer you should clean the adjustable spacer, comb, and scissors with bleach or other disinfectant between uses to prevent the spread of lice and other skin afflictions.

## Sleeping

A twin sheet folded and sewn on the bottom makes a cheap hostel sheet, this is good if you must crash on a funky old couch or mattress in summer or if you are staying at a hostel that charges extra for sheets, if you are cold use your sleeping bag as your blanket. Your hostel sheet is much easier to wash and dry than your sleeping bag so use it as a liner to keep your bag clean.

Regularly check for bedbugs in your sleeping bag and sheet especially if you stay at hostels or cheap hotels. Bedbugs are flat, oval and reddish brown in color and are about .2 inches long. Bedbugs resemble cockroaches but are wingless and flat and live in your mattress. If there is suspicion of bedbugs clean out your bag, gear, and clothing giving it a good shaking out. An hour on hot dryer cycle once the clothing is already dry will kill the eggs.

## Sewing Kit

You can start out with the little travel sewing kit found at hotels or the grocery store which has several color threads buttons and a needle in a little box. If there is room on the thread card add several meters of heavy carpet thread in your favorite color or carry unwaxed dental floss for thread. A few extra buttons and perhaps some sew down snaps can replace a destroyed zipper. A tiny scissors is handy but you probably have on on your multitool or pocket knife. Consider some extra needles including one large one and a curved one. Most kits include a threading tool which really helps you get the needle threaded in low light conditions. Several safety pins in assorted sizes are the quickest way to make a temporary fix until you can sew up the damage.

## Toilet Paper

Don't forget to pack toilet paper or plan for alternative ways of cleaning yourself after using the bathroom. In need, rolls of toilet paper can be liberated from the toilets in fast food joints or public bathrooms.

## Light

A small LED headlight covers almost everything a person needs light for out to about 4 meters. A good idea is to wear the headband around your neck until needed and leave your light easy to get to in the top of your pack.

If the room you are in has no electrical or natural light many camping and mart stores sell a cheap four cell AA powered fluorescent and incandescent combo pocket flashlight. The light bulb can be replaced with a LED making a long lasting night light with the fluorescent tube for when you need general coverage.

When the power goes out you can never have too many light sources, glow tape or tritium markers will help you find your lights or gear in the dark.

## Hair Dryer

A hair dryer can be your best friend in cold, rainy, and/or unheated locations. Choose something high quality, portable, and quiet, a built in circuit breaker is a good safety precaution. Just be sure it is small, or else you would be better carrying a small heater, which is usually much quieter. Remember that if you are renting a room the manager or your neighbors might object to the noise, this will also tip off the existence of a squat. Use your dryer to:

- Dry clothes, socks, and shoes (be careful not to melt the glue holding shoes together)
- Warm up your sleeping bag, or dry it out
- Heat up a small room (find a dryer that can stay on for around half hour)
- Removing adhesive stickers and signs
- Thaw a car window or preheat the interior without wasting fuel
- Make cars slow down (pretend it's a radar gun)

- Thaw frozen pipes

If no small room is available and you are in a warehouse or outside but with access to electricity, pop your tent, tarp tepee, or cardboard box up right there and you have a much smaller space to heat, be careful that you don't damage tent fabric from the heat.

Clean the lint and dust out of the screen on the back so your dryer won't overheat. Never run the hair dryer if you are very sleepy or going out; these things can lock up and overheat even though there is supposed to be a thermostat safety shutoff circuit, you must be on guard for fire. Like with all electrical stuff, water or wet concrete is big danger.

## Food

For packable food, see Roadside Chow for some easy on the road improvised recipes. It is really important to have enough filling ready to eat food and a liter or two of drinking water with you since you never know how long you might be stuck out somewhere when hitching, riding, or waiting. It might be smart to keep a separate soft lunch bag so the smell of food doesn't attract pests and rodents.

On a different note, carry a corkscrew of some kind especially when in Europe. Nothing is so frustrating as ending up with a bottle of nice wine and having to jam the cork down with a spoon handle to open it. If you travel by air it has to go in checked luggage.

## Diving Gear

A few trash sacks and a cheap headlamp can be useful for scoring a few days food in a dumpster, a few plastic shopping sacks from inside will probably be enough for a person who is on the move. If you can, get a headlamp with a red filter so as to preserve your night vision (nighttime diving is often necessary at some locations) although white light helps you see food with an off color. You just need stuff to isolate your potentially smelly dumpster products from the rest of your pack... Accidentally getting rotten food all over the inside of your pack for a week long trip is no fun.

## Immersion Boiler

A stinger or immersion boiler is useful for boiling water for cooking, are cheap, and are super light to carry. see Cheap Chow and Roadside Chow for stinger specific recipes. Once you have lived in a place without electricity for a few months you will understand the pure magic of finding a working power plug and using such a small cooker where you don't have to buy or gather fuel to heat your food. A commercial 200-500 watt coil stinger is usually so cheap and light that getting and carrying a spare or two only makes sense, especially considering that they burn out after a while, travel stores sell 110/220 volt models with a Euro adapter tip. You can also heat larger containers of water to warm for bathing, washing, or thawing frozen stuff.

The immersion heater you buy in stores will burn out if the water boils away or it falls out, this is a safety feature so it won't start a fire, as water gets low your heater might start to melt instead of burning out so be careful. We generally don't lend out our stingers since we have rarely had one returned in working condition. If someone needs it give a new one as an inexpensive gift with instructions.

If you need to make a prison stinger try this, take a discarded power cord with the cut off ends stripped of insulation now submerge both wires in salted or hard water, don't let the stripped ends touch or you will blow the breakers, oh and **if you knock the prison stinger over or use it with a metal can it can electrocute you!!**. European power systems will usually blow if there is more than a touch of salt in the water.



## Travel Iron

Those cute lightweight travel irons with the folding handle and long cord can often be employed as a hotplate or with a layer or two of new smooth foil a way to hot wax your skis or snowboard. To work for cooking they need to rest reasonably stable when flipped upside down. We have found that most of these irons are low powered even when run at full heat and best suited to warming food but will bring a 3 liter pot to a boil in about 30 minutes. If you need to jump start cooking use your stinger to assist the warm up and remove, the iron can maintain the low simmer. As we mention in Roadside Chow wrapped in foil you can warm or toast sandwiches and pizza in a few minutes. The iron is also a great way to iron-on repair and decorative patches. We suppose you might someday even be able to find a way to somehow use the iron to do this thing the straights call ironing clothes, be sure there is no food or wax residue though. While they weigh around 500 grams they free you from needing cooking fuel and do not appear out of place in almost any motel, hostel, or airport even where a hotplate might not.

## Marking

It is a good idea to carry big sturdy permanent marker or paint pen with a good cap for hitchhiking or panhandling signs, marking food in group pantries or refrigerators, hobo marks Wall Painting, and tagging with intelligent quotes or philosophical quandaries *in appropriate places*. Store pens and markers in a plastic bag near the top of your pack in case of leakage, especially in hot weather or during air or mountain travel.

Street chalk can also be useful for the above purposes and less permanent especially if you are concerned about ink leaks, a small chalkboard is great for hitchhiking or temporary signs.

## Umbrella

If you spend lots of time walking down lonely roads you might find use in a decent umbrella both for rain and sun protection. If you are buying find something really tough like the new wind proof umbrellas with two layers that open up to dissipate hard wind gusts and don't easily turn inside out. For sun protection in the desert you are looking for a larger canopy so two can take a break under it as well as using it while walking in the middle of the day.

## Fun and Games

Fun things that pack well and spend downtime without wasting your brain or batteries include:

- Playing cards or card based games (games like "Magic" that can collect huge decks might end up too heavy).
- Magnetic wallet board games (chess, checkers, backgammon, etc.)
- Question cards from "Trivial Pursuit".
- Dice for D&D type role-playing games or other dice games (like "Yahtzee").
- CDs or small discs (vinyl singles, etc.) to use for Frisbee (those free AOL CD's work well).

- Hacky Sack/Footbag.
- Small musical Instruments (See Making Music).
- Journal, colored pencils, etc for composition or sketches.
- Kite.
- Paperback of short stories, better than novel for when you are waiting, just finish the short story you are on and go
- A knife for whittling.
- Paper-back, digital scanned, or photo-copied text books or printed-off school resource pages and/or texts on a portable disk drive to keep up on your education.
- Foreign language dictionary to study up on learning a new language.
- Book of Sudoku or crosswords, or word search.
- Seeds to plant in public places.

<http://wiki.stealthiswiki.org/wiki/Pack-your-bag> 13/16

- Those Chinese Juggling sticks are pretty fun. You can also get really good at them and perform for tips.

# Quick Packing List

We trust you to choose what you don't need from this list, some gear is inappropriate at times, overloading is always inappropriate. It is merely a quick idea list:

- Food prep- camp stove or pocket immersion boiler and large cup, bowl, or small pot, eating utensils, chopsticks, coffee or tea stuff, strainer, corkscrew.
- Wash- flat drain stopper, outdoor faucet key/knob, bungee cord dry line, small scrub brush, stain treatment, wash soap/detergent
- Shower- pack towel, wash cloth or sponge, liquid soap with neck strap, flip-flop sandals with add-on heel straps, universal shower kit, bucket and cup/dipper
- Clothes- packable jacket, lightweight clothes, walking/outdoor shoes, swimsuit
- Repair kit- quality multi-tool, heavy nylon carpet thread, needles, buttons, hot glue stick, lighter, sport or duct tape on a pencil, zip-ties, shoe laces, hose clamps
- Sleep- sleeping mask, earplugs, neck pillow, countdown timer or alarm clock, hostel sheet, shorts or scrub bottoms and t-shirt, ground pad, sleeping bag, bug net
- Contact- phone cards, change for pay phones in rolls, a pad of paper including numbers to call collect, USB memory stick with portable software, list or map of Library/Coffee shop Internet, WiFi PDA, small shortwave or ham radio set, walkie-talkie, prepaid mobile phone or SIM card, laptop, modem card, key chain WiFi detector, laptop or netbook computer
- Personal Hygiene- fingernail clippers, first aid kit, baking soda, vinegar, Hair removal/trimming tools, baby wipes, toothbrush, toilet paper, love lube, safe sex stuff, period stuff (tampons, pads, moon cup, or re- washable pad), makeup, acne treatment
- Wilderness Gear- Hammock, tarp or tent, sleeping bag, bivy sack, ground pad, water treatment and storage, stove or grille, pack, walking sticks, toilet hole spade, pocket "chainsaw", navigation gear, survival kit, food, fuel, hatchet, fishing or hunting gear. see also Backpacking and Skiing and Boarding
- First Aid- moleskin foot dressings, plasters(bandages), temp tooth filling kit, gauze pads, roller gauze, triple antibiotic ointment, tape, scissors, tweezers, medications for pain, motion sickness, allergy, indigestion, and diarrhea, sam splint, antibiotics, local parasite prevention/treatment
- Protection- handgun, knife, walking staff, pepper spray, baton.
- Other- Lightweight flashlight/torch or headlamp, emergency hidden cash, batteries and charger, journal, foreign dictionary, small gifts, seat pad, folding stool, LED book light, hair dryer, large or small solar cell, battery charger, personal/door alarm, combination lock, light gardening tools
- Entertainment- Cards, paperback book, hacky-sack, games, notebook/journal, small radio, MP3, harmonica, busking act stuff
- Special- bicycle spares, pump, combination bike tool, tube patches and tire levers and tubes, repair and craft tools, ski or board wax and scraper, edge file, sewing, embroidering, or knitting stuff

# Not Overpacking

It is completely reasonable to walk out the door with wearing sturdy clothes and shoes while packing some socks, a toothbrush, and extra underwear. Let the world and your skills provide for you and you are a pioneer, if you must supply everything either out of your pack or bank account you are a finite expedition that will eventually run out. Some of our best adventures started with almost no gear or money and required us to use our hands and brains.

Look at the ultralight section of Backpacking. For improvising gear from available junk start with Low Impact Crashing.

## Money

Credit cards provide a perfect police trace of where you have been at every point of use. However, they do provide the best exchange rates during international travel.

One guy we know sews a gold coin hidden into his trousers. Once, in Africa, he got dumped in the wrong town without his bags across an international border. His pocket money was no good there, but he ordered a taxi out, some meals, and several nights stay by selling the emergency coin. Another hippie friend would stash cash in Tylenol bottles, making sure to stuff the cotton back in. A cursory glance from a would-be thief wouldn't reveal her hidden money. Sewing hidden pockets in your clothes might also be a good idea.

Don't be afraid to offer your services in exchange for cash or trade, just like the old hobos. Demand a decent wage for your mental or physical labor. Use the underground economy as much as possible; barter, bum, and buddy your way along. You will build your resourcefulness and wit by freeing your mind.

## Gifts

Depending on the nature of your walkabout, it might be a good idea to bring along cheap lightweight gifts, like pictures of (yourself near) an interesting place near your home with your e-mail address on back, stuff from a tourist stop near your home, local sport team cards, stamps, state quarters, etc. Don't go overboard on price, this is supposed to be a token memory.

## Drugs

Nothing makes a cop's job easier than a possession rap against a protester or squatter with used resin coated drug paraphernalia. These can easily be found in a legal pat-down weapon search. If you must use drugs while traveling or living on the road, make something disposable or borrow instead. If you have a legal prescription for any type of ADD, anti-depressant, or pain medications, keep a photocopy in your bag with the meds. If you plan on being involved in protests or other risky adventures, it's usually a good idea to keep your mind and body free from any possible chemical hindrances.

Never, EVER try to cross international borders with drugs, especially if you go through a standard border gate. A loner traveling with no contact to family or friends is an easy candidate for retention and confinement for indefinite periods of time. Be sure to hot detergent wash your clothes and hang dry them for a day or two outside before a border crossing or airplane trip to reduce any drug smell which might alert drug dogs.

# Phone Cards

Here is the story of a guy that gives his hippy and punk daughters phone cards to make long distance and international calls from regular and pay phones. He may not hear from them for weeks but he is able to see everywhere they travel and who they are calling by checking his account on the Internet. Can Big Bro' do the same? Of course. Disposable cards sold in many convenience stores are less traceable but cost more per minute. See Free Telephones.

# Pets

Pets can make getting a ride and finding a place to stay more difficult. On the other hand they are a source of friendship, comfort, and healing, especially to those who have been traumatized. Tailor your travels to match your pet, or tailor your pet choices to meet your travel needs.

# Bicycle

Some of us won't leave home without a bicycle and can be seen all over the world with a big pack everything from a little folding bike to a recumbent touring cycle. It is more difficult to hitch while making a bike trip since your ride needs either a pickup truck or have an empty bike rack. Many forms of commercial transportation will either forbid a standard bicycle or charge up to a double fare.

If you are not too personal about your bike, try to call ahead and arrange a bike from friends, a local listserve, or craigslist.com. We mention lots of options in Cycling.

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## General Delivery

So you won't over pack, you can have seasonal clothes, food, or gear sent to a post office as general delivery, see Postage





Pack Your Bag

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