



“OFF THE GRID”

KICK START YOUR BACKPACKING ADDICTION
THE SMART WAY

#BACKPACKING
ADDICTZ





GETTING STARTED

Research, research and more research is very important before you jet set off overseas on your next amazing backpacking adventure.

You need to do as much research as possible in order to plan your destinations, travel routes, budgets, equipment, safety and what you are going to see and do. You are in luck since there is a great deal of information both online and at your local travel agent to further assist you in all of these important issues.

This “Off The Grid” eBook will provide you with some basic tips and tricks, which are sometimes

overlooked when planning for a backpacking trip.

However, issues such as safety, health, money, packing and pointers will definitely provide you with a smoother sailing adventure.

At the end of the day its all about being aware of what can go wrong and being savvy about travelling to other countries.

HEALTH ISSUES



Travellers Health:

Your health when off backpacking in foreign lands should be the most paramount issue of concern along with your personal safety. There is no great secret to staying healthy when visiting foreign countries. What it comes down to is thinking smart, being aware of health concerns in particular regions and having access to appropriate medications if needed at some point.

Health Preparation Prior to Leaving:

It is highly recommended that you get a full medical checkup prior to setting off on your big backpacking adventure. There are specific Travel Doctors within the community who will sit you down assess what [countries](#) you intend to visit and let you know of the relevant dangers and concerns that are present in those regions, this includes both health and safety. Such doctors will give you a full check up and make sure that you have all your shots and immunizations necessary for the countries you are visiting. Travel Doctors are known for being more expensive than your usual doctors however when it comes to your health there is no point in being cheap.

In addition to a Travel Doctor it is prudent to have your eyes tested and your teeth checked, there is no point in waiting until you are thousands of miles away from home to have some backyard dentist who speaks a foreign language take to your mouth with their arsenal of dental tools.

Travel Medication:

If you need to take medication on a regular basis you need to make sure that you do not fault on this by forgetting to take it whilst your off having fun exploring the world. Since mobile phones these days are so prevalent, it is a good idea to set the mobile phone alarm for whenever you need to take your medication. After a while you will find it almost like a ritual taking medication, however having an alarm prompt you on your mobile phone is a sure way that you won't forget – just make sure that your mobile phone is always charged!

Beating Bacteria:

When your on the go all the time you often come into contact with a lot of germs from various different deposits and can often find it hard to wash your hands and clean up. Having a small bottle of anti-bacterial hand cleanser is a must for all travellers. Perfect to use before and after meals or when you have not had a chance to wash your hands or have a shower.



Water Hydration:

Water for the human body is the most important ingredient to stay healthy and keep the body hydrated. However, the problem is that in many countries access to clean and drinkable water is not as easy as simply turning on a tap.

In developing countries it is highly recommended to drink bottled water – no if, but or maybe – this should be a given when drinking water since contaminated water can bring your exciting and fun backpacking experience to a quick end.



If bottled water is not available then it is more than likely you are traveling through very remote lands and should this be the case then you would have no other option but to BOIL your water. Boiling water will ensure that any bacteria or germs will be killed off and allow for the water to be drinkable. If you are in a position where you need to boil your water it is recommended that you boil the water for 5 minutes.

Alternatively, water purifiers can be a good way of ensuring that your water is safe to drink. There are many different new types of purifiers on the market, which are compact, and easy to operate. It can be as easy as dropping a tablet into the water. You will be able to find the many different water purifiers from your local camping disposal store.

“If you are prone to travel sickness then you may want to consider travel calm tablets”

Flying Fresh:

Being hydrated is priority number one and this will be done through drinking plenty of purified or bottled [water](#), as previously mentioned. It is easy to become dehydrated when flying due to the altitude and this should be taken into consideration. It is worth noting that alcohol, coffee and tea in excessive amount can be detrimental to the way that you feel and be the cause of severe dehydration.

Deep Vein Thrombosis in recent times has been a major concern for travellers on long flights however this condition can be avoided by keeping the blood circulated within the body. On long flights it is important to stand up and have a walk around and stretch at least every one to two hours.

If you are prone to travel sickness then you may want to consider travel calm tablets which need to be ingested just prior to flying or travelling on boats or buses. These cannot be recommended enough to people who are prone to this type of sickness since becoming nauseous from travel sickness can completely ruin your trip. Whilst travel sickness is not a crucial concern to your overall health it can certainly make for an uncomfortable experience.



PLANNING ISSUES

Travel Insurance:

This is a must when planning a backpacking adventure and it is also a must to have this all organized prior to leaving home. When abroad make sure to carry all your travel insurance details with you, generally keeping these details with your travel and passport documents are recommended. Having your insurance details handy will speed up the process should you require some sort of medical treatment, it will also inform your insurer of what is happening. It is also worth emailing a copy of your insurance policy and any other important documents to yourself so that in the even you lose the physical documents then you can always retrieve a copy through the Internet.



Packing:

Rule of thumb for packing your backpack is to pack and then half your belongings and then half your belongings once again. The worst thing a backpacker can do is to take anything that is unnecessary or over the top on a backpacking adventure. You really only need to take the bare essentials.

Packing List

Prior to packing your backpack it is advisable to sit down and write a packing list. This list should be compiled on only necessities that you will require to live and get by whilst backpacking on your journey.

In order to travel light you should consider packing 3 pairs of underwear and socks, 2 or 3 pairs of pants or shorts and tops to wear depending on the climate of the destinations in which you intend to visit. In order to pack a lesser amount of clothes it is advisable to also pack some washing powder, a clothes line and a sink plug so that you can do you own washing of clothes every few days. This will ensure that you can carry fewer amounts of clothes and it will also save you costs on paying for others to clean your dirty laundry whilst traveling.

Stick to your list and do not vary from it by packing anything that you do not need to take. In relation to your toiletries you should only pack small travel sized products as you can be sure that you will not have any trouble in purchasing toiletries along the way and probably cheaper than purchasing such products in your home country depending on your travel destinations.

Pack for accessibility

It is important to pack your backpack for ease of accessibility. It should be obvious to the backpacker that certain items will need to be accessed more often than other items, therefore these items should be packed towards the top of the backpack so that if you need to quickly access these items whilst you are on the move then you can easily pop the top on your backpack and obtain them with relative ease.

Laundry

It is advisable that backpackers take the initiative to do their own laundry. All that is required is some washing powder, a piece of string for a clothesline and a universal sink plug. This does not need to be a difficult or time-consuming task but rather considered a routine that is partaken every 2-3 days. Consider it a normal travel routine just like brushing your teeth instead of a major chore.

You will find that doing your own laundry will offer 2 great benefits whilst backpacking:

1. You will be able to carry a lesser amount of clothes; and
2. You will save money on paying for your laundry to be done by someone else.

Toiletries

When you are packing your toiletries remember that liquids and gels can be often problematic for the following reasons:

- They are quite heavy products;

- They can cause a great deal of mess should they leak or become unsealed; and
- Liquids and gels can cause some problems amongst customs due to recent unsavory terrorist practices involving the use of liquids and gels.

All standard and necessary toiletries will be available for purchase along your [backpacking journey](#) so this means that you will be able to renew your products without having to pack bulk amounts of shampoo, tooth paste, soap and other common toiletry products.

Useful thing to consider packing:

- Baby wipes
- Masking or gaffer tape
- Swimming or snorkeling goggles
- Torch
- Drivers license



Choosing Your Backpack:

You really need to love the **backpack** that you have since it will travel with you everywhere that you go, in fact you could go as far to say that after a long time backpacking overseas you will more than likely develop a somewhat bond with your backpack.

Personalizing your backpack in some sort of way is advised in order to be able to clearly identify your baggage on airport carousels or amongst other similar looking backpacks crammed in together on a bus or a train. You may decide to tie a piece of colourful ribbon or place a sticker on your backpack in order to distinguish it from the others similar looking baggage.

A fun and interesting way in which to personalize your backpack is to sew or attach small patches of **countries** flags clearly showing all the countries that you have visited along your travels. This is also a fun way to keep count and show off your extensive travels throughout the world.

It is worth investing in a decent and good quality backpack as this is the baggage that will house all your personal belongings and it will also bear the brunt of a majority of the wear and tear along the way on your backpacking adventures.

Comfort

Firstly, you need to find a backpack that is above all else comfortable and pleasant to carry around on your back with your personal belongings inside. When you go to purchase a backpack it is very important to try the backpack on and practice carrying it around whilst it is filled with contents which will be similar to the weight of your personal belonging in which you will be lugging around with

you on your backpacking journey. There is not point in going to a backpack store and trying on the backpack without anything inside of it. You really need to simulate the feel and effect of carrying a backpack around just as if you are carrying it on your trip.

Accessibility

Second, backpackers need to take into consideration the accessibility of the backpack that they intend on taking with them on their trip. Accessibility is important and there are a many different kinds of backpacks with varying types of accessibility.

Some backpacks only allow access as a top loader backpack whilst other backpacks allow both top loader and bottom loader access. This means that you can access items from your backpack from either a opening at the top of the backpack or for bottom loaders, an opening at the bottom of the backpack.

There are also backpacks available that offer top and bottom load access as well as suitcase style access. Suit case style access is advisable since it allows you to lay your backpack on its back and unzip a large U shaped flap or suite case style flap to access your entire contents of your backpack. Top and bottom loaders are handy and useful when you want to grab something from your backpack quickly and whilst your on the go however the suit case style accessibility is greatly appreciated by the backpacker when they are station in a tent, hostel or guesthouse and require accessibility to all of their belongs with relative ease.

Waterproofing

Third, it is important to obtain a backpack that is at the very least **water** resistant. Most of your newer backpacks these days will be made of water resistant material which will become very handy when you are caught out by a sudden downpour of rain. Your dry clothes, electronics and other belongings will be kept relatively dry from the outside elements.

Depending on your type of backpacking journey and the types of terrain and regions in which you intend to visit you may wish to obtain a backpack with appropriate waterproofing instead of just being water resistant. Waterproof backpacks will have either a completely waterproof lining on the inside of the backpack or some of the newer and more technically advanced backpacks will be made from special waterproofing material which will ensure that all internal belongings will be protected from water and rain.

Style

Finally, backpackers may wish to opt for a stylish backpack or a particular colour. A dark colour is preferable since it will hide the dirt that your backpack is guaranteed to obtain along the way. However, this should be the last thing to be concerned about when deciding on a suitable backpack to purchase prior to your backpacking journey



Visas:

A visa is another travel document which is required to be obtained by the backpacker, this document is different from the backpackers passport in that it basically identifies a right of access into a foreign country for a particular period of time. Usually a visa is stamped or attached to a backpacker's passport at the point of entry into a foreign country or even prior to entering into the foreign country.

Different countries have different requirements in obtaining a visa into their country and some countries also have varying specifications attached to their visas, such as length of time permitted to stay within the country and the costs associated with obtaining a visa.

It is worthy of noting that some countries will require you to apply for a visa prior to arriving into the country subsequently it is well worth doing your homework on the visa requirements of the countries that you intend to travel to and take all necessary actions required.

Some countries however may not even require you to obtain a visa into their country, however just to be sure it is advised that you visit www.iatatravelcentre.com to gauge an insight into various visa specifications of different countries throughout the world.

Passports:

To travel internationally you will be required to carry a valid and authentic passport from the country in which you are a legitimate citizen. Your passport is your personal mandatory travel identity document that must be presented to customs officials in order

to be processed through a checkpoint of a particular country.

Prior to leaving on your backpacking journey it is important to make sure that your passport is valid and not expired. Depending on the countries in which you intend on backpacking, you may wish to ensure that your passport has at least 6 months validity until its expiration. Many countries throughout the world do require that your passport have at least 6 months validity.

Should you decide that it would be necessary to renew your passport or even apply for your first passport then it is a good idea to allow plenty of time to obtain a new valid passport from your countries relevant government authority. This is especially the case in times of peak travel periods.



MONEY ISSUES

Carrying Money:

Backpackers need to consider safe ways of carrying money with them whilst venturing off around the globe. A very important way in which to carry money when backpacking is to consider breaking your money up into a number of different monetary methods. You may wish to consider carrying your money in cash, traveler's cheques, on a credit card, pre-paid cash cards, pre-paid telephone cards, and even cash in a different, but well recognized currency for back up, such as the US dollar, the Pound or the Euro.

The most obvious reason for breaking your money up into different capacities is so that if you lose a portion of your money or you are robbed or some other unfortunate event occurs whereby part of your traveling money goes missing then you can always fall back and rely upon another one of your monetary carrying capacities to get you by.

It is also advisable to break your cash up into smaller amounts and place them in various areas, some areas to consider include:

- Wallet;
- Money belt;
- Passport or passport carry case
- Toiletries;
- Day pack;
- Big backpack.

You may also wish to keep your other capacities of money such as travelers cheque and credit cards in



It is worth noting that when you break your money up into smaller amount the backpacker tends to be better able to stick to a budget. It is a psychological thing whereby if you carry all your money around with you in one lot then you feel as though you have a large amount of money and will tend to frivolously spend money with out being careful – backpackers can often fall into this money trap and find themselves scrapping for money towards the end of their trip.

By breaking your money up and only carrying small amounts around in your wallet or in your day pack you will constantly be cautious of spending too much money and further you will not be able to spend frivolously on unnecessary things.

Daily Budgets:

Daily budgets are very important for the backpacker who needs to keep an eye on their spending and avoid frivolous spending on unnecessary things. A good strategy is to allocate a certain amount of money to be spent each day. If you are keen on this strategy and wish to follow it to a tee then you may wish to use a small money bag which you fill up at the beginning of each day with that days allocated budget amount. Or alternatively just pop your allocated amount into your wallet each day and make sure you stick to only spending you allocated amount for the day.

Depending on where you are and your intended plans for the day it is necessary to at least budget for the priority expenses for the day such as breakfast, lunch and dinner, and also transport.

It is also a good idea for the backpacker on a long journey to keep tabs of their bank accounts by regularly checking your account summary online, this will constantly keep you updated as to what monies you are spending on your credit card or withdrawing from an Automatic Teller Machine.

Banking Issues:

If you're a cautious backpacker you may wish to notify your banking institution of your upcoming and intended backpacking adventures so that there is a less likely chance of them blocking your card. Whilst banks are unpredictable at the best of times, this simple cautionary procedure is just an extra measure to take in minimizing some of the potential problems that can often occur when backpacking throughout the world.



Money Saving Tips:

Ignore "commission free":

When exchanging currency try to ignore the selling slant of a "commission free" [currency exchange](#), it is just words spoken by the seller to entice you into exchanging money with that trader. Commission free simply means that you do not have to pay a separate charge yet in saying this you do tend to still pay for the extra charges since they are generally loaded into the average to poor exchange rate that they are giving you. Make sure you ask currency traders of all charges that will be incurred in dealing with them.

Bartering and haggling for best prices

It really depends on what country you are backpacking through and what the accepted approach is to bartering or haggling for a lower price for certain products or services.

Generally bartering and haggling occurs in developing countries where foreigners are offered one price and locals are offered a significantly lower price. If you are in these circumstances you will generally find it safe to barter down 10% of the asking price, however you will often find that you will be able to barter and haggle for a lot more than 10% of the asking price. Just be careful not to be too aggressive and avoid offending the local trader with an unreasonable offer. Remember many of these types of traders are in business of making money to live and provide for their families therefore being too aggressive is not worth the risk of offending the locals when on your backpacking journey.

Use local currency

You will often find when making a transaction for something when using you are using your credit card that the trader will ask whether or not you wish for the transaction to be paid for in your own currency or the local currency. It is advisable to take the option of paying for the transaction in the local currency otherwise you may be subject to the traders unspecified exchange rate rather than your own banks exchange rate which you will find is generally a better rate.

Tipping

In some countries tipping is somewhat expected more so than other countries. In countries such as the United States you will find that a lot of waiters, bar staff and other hospitality workers rely heavily on tipping. Often their hourly wages is quite low however due to the fact that tipping is so widely expected in these industries the workers rely on this type of income.

The amount that you should tip for a service being provided to you varies from country-to-country and even region-to-region The best advice is to speak to some locals or other travelers and backpackers to gauge an idea of what is generally accepted.

Where a tipping charge is automatically added onto your invoice don't be shy to question the amount if you are either unsure or suspicious on the amount that has been charged to you. If you legitimately feel that you are being ripped off from your tipping charge then you need to raise this and consider not paying. But be cautious not to offend locals by refusing to pay a tipping charge that is reasonable and widely accepted.

Check out the table below to get a very general idea of what are acceptable tipping procedures around the world.

TRAVELLERS TIPPING TABLE

COUNTRIES	RESTAURANTS	BARS	TAXI DRIVERS
Australia	5% – 10%	Change	Change
Canada	15%	10% – 15%	10% – 15%
France	15% service charge by law	5% optional	Rare 10%
Germany	5% – 10%	5%	5% – 10%
Ireland	10%	Uncommon	10%
Italy	10% optional	Small change	Uncommon
Japan	Not customary	Not customary	Not customary
Thailand	Rounding up	Change	50BHT – 100BHT
United Kingdom	10% – 15%	Not expected	10% or roundup to nearest Pound
United States	15% – 20%	\$1 per drink	10% – 15%

US Dollar

The US Dollar is arguably the most recognizable currency in the world and for this fact it can be useful for a backpacker to carry a small amount of US currency with them on their backpacking journey. US notes in small denomination can be very useful in situations where small amounts of unexpected monies are required such as tipping of airport departure taxes.

Currency Exchange:

There are a number of things you need to consider when exchanging currencies on arrival and departure from a particular destination. Usually there are official currency exchange outlets stationed at airports and these outlets will generally do the right thing by not trying to rip you off.

However, you will often find yourself at a cross border checkpoint desperately needing to exchange currency without an official currency exchange outlet in sight. In these situations you will be found by local unofficial currency traders willing to help you out of your currency dilemma.

The main things that you need to be aware of are that these unofficial currency traders will be happy to help you out with an inflated exchange rate. Their rate will be higher than the official currency exchange outlets and this is how they make their money.

You must also be wary of counterfeit currency in different [countries](#). An advisable way in which to avoid being caught out by money counterfeiters is to insist on receiving currency in low denominations.

Counterfeiters will generally try to aim high by only forging high denomination notes. Insisting on low denomination notes will also be beneficial for the backpacker to avoid the “sorry no change” debate which is generally given by local taxi drivers or other traders looking to make a quick and easy earn.

Currency Familiarity:

Knowing your currency is crucial when entering into a new county in order to avoid being ripped off, looking like a naive tourist and general confusion. In fact it is recommended to familiarize yourself with the currency of the destination in which you intend on visiting just prior to arriving. Just make sure that you know what each note is worth and approximately what it is worth in comparison to the currency of your home.

If you are completely in the dark about what sort of currency you will be handling on arrival to your next destination you can go online and become familiar with all official currencies from all nations throughout the world. The following website is very useful for the backpacker slightly uneducated on currency familiarity:

www.colnect.com/en/banknotes/countries

A good way to gauge an understanding of the currency comparison rates is to download an application on your mobile phone that allows you to quickly and efficiently work out the [currency exchange](#) rate of the local currency. I have often found such a mobile phone application extremely useful when either bartering for an item or where I am rushed to buy a product.

As soon as some savvy locals catch on that you are unfamiliar with the local currency there is a high chance that they will either inflate the cost of an item or even try to short change you. This is to be avoided at all costs for the budget backpacker.

If you’re a backpacker without an iPhone or a new age mobile phone allowing you to download a fancy currency exchange application then you may wish to check out the following website which allows backpackers to create and print a currency converter:

www.oanda.com/convert/cheatsheet

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Useful Travel Money Websites:

Money Saving Expert –

www.moneysavingexpert.com

This website provides a good source of money saving information in particular booking for accommodation and flights.

Tramex Travel Tips –

www.tramex.com/tips/tipping.htm

This tipping page which is part of the Tramex website provides a useful and alternative look at a tipping guide for various [countries](#) throughout the world.

XE – www.xe.com

This is the best website on the internet for assessing the exchange rate for all currency around the world.

XE also has a very helpful iPhone application that is free to download and use – perfect for quickly and easily working out the exchange rate of a particular currency.

TIPS & TRICKS

Bars & Cafes:

Just a quick tip in relation to saving a little money when you would like to get a drink or a bite to eat. It is important to note that if you simply want to visit a bar or café for a quick drink or coffee pastry you should be aware that many of these places will charge you a fee to sit down at the venue and consume your drink.

Why not take your coffee and pastry out of the café and take a seat on the closest park bench and enjoy the local scenery. If your in a bar serving alcohol this may not be an option so just be aware that these types of sit down charges do apply at many cafés, bars and various kinds of eateries.

Another way in which you may wish to avoid the inflated café and eatery costs is to visit the local market selling fresh local delicacies and then grab a blanket and head to the local park. You bound to get your food cheaper, possibly fresher and you are definitely going to avoid extra hidden charges for sitting down at a café, eatery or bar.



Airport Traps:

Backpackers will undoubtedly often find themselves in transit waiting around at an airport with very little to do but to sleep, read, listen to music or spend grand amounts of money on over inflated unnecessary items.

Don't be fooled by all the glamorous duty free advertising. Backpackers can often fall into the traps of spending money at airports simply out of boredom. It is advisable to wait until you arrive at your next destination to purchase books, magazines, alcohol and even searching the internet, unless of course the airport in which you are stationed at has free Wi-Fi internet.

If the airport does have free Wi-Fi Internet, which many do these days, then this is ideal for catching up on your emails and travel information, avoid shopping for unnecessary items and a perfect cure for in-transit boredom.



FINAL WORDS

It is important that you use a lot of common sense and travel smarts when jetting off to countries that you have not been to before and are not overly familiar with. You should read up on various cultures and traditions of the places you intend to visit and even more importantly you should research health and social safety issues that raise concerns in the regions that you intend to travel.

Sure you can get ripped off by being caught up in money scams or paying too much for items but these concerns are secondary to ensuring that you are safe and healthy on your travels.

Finally, some very crucial advice to any backpacker is to keep in contact with your family and friends back home whenever you can. Inform them of the places you are visiting and your means of transport in getting there. Regularly check-in with friends and family whether it be by email, text message or a quick phone call. If problems do arise then at least your loved ones will somewhat informed of your whereabouts and be able to take steps to help you out.

By all means enjoy yourself, experience all that life and its many cultures have to offer but please be safe.

As always - Safe Travels
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