

## David duChemin's Trip Prep List

October 29th, 2008



I'm in the middle of digging out from the pile that you come home to after an extended absence, so on one hand, thank God for jet-lag. It's 5am and I've been up for hours getting stuff done. On the other hand I'll be useless by 5pm. I'm now unpacking from India/Nepal and beginning to re-orient myself towards Kenya. I leave on November 14. So travel prep stuff is on my mind.

Here's a checklist of the basic routine I go through in prepping for the travel aspect of a trip. It really doesn't cover things like creative preparation/briefings, just the travel preparations. It's not meant to be authoritative or exhaustive (exhausting, yes), so be sure to adapt it to your own needs. I hope you find this helpful.

### **MONTH BEFORE TRAVEL**

- Passports current with six months validity? Most countries won't issue a visa or let you in unless the passport still has a minimum of 6 months on it.
- Visa requirements for all countries satisfied?
- If Visa(s) to be acquired on entry do you have passport/visa photos? I always carry a few of them, just in case.
- What is the electrical standard of the countries? Does all my gear comply (ie, is it dual-voltage 110-240?) or do I have a converter (not an adapter)
- What are the standard electrical plugs of the countries? Do I have the appropriate plug adapters (not a converter). *I usually bring a couple multi-standard adaptors and one dual-voltage power-strip - this way I can plug in 3 things and only need one plug adapter. Besides, plugs can be in very short supply out there.*
- Visit Travel Clinic for consult. Am I current on all required and recommended vaccinations (Yellow Fever for example)? What is the malaria situation? Is your yellow international vaccinations book up to date? Can you even find it? Keep it with your passport.
- Check medical and evacuation insurance policies. Are you up to date? Are you doing a 40 day trip on a policy that limits you to 30?
- Double check that all meds are current and that you have (1) twice as much as you think you need and (2) copies of all prescriptions.
- Check weather in-country. Make appropriate packing list for specific climate. Hot? Cold? Wet?
- Visit M.E.C. or R.E.I. to pick up new or replacement gear, clothing, meal bars, and any sun, bug, or sanitizer lotions.
- Review specific assignment and make specific gear list. This is a specific list, down to how many batteries, cables, chargers.
- Spend time researching country - history, economics, local customs and taboos. Buy Lonely Planet guide.

## WEEKS/DAYS BEFORE TRAVEL

- Clean and check cameras/gear, repack it.
- Clear and verify all hard drives before packing them. Create bootable backup of laptop on a partition of one of these drives.
- Charge all batteries.
- Check airline tickets and verify both checked and carry-on restrictions. This determines how I pack, and in what bags.
- Print flight itinerary, contact info, and hotel info (if available) and put this sheet on top in the inside of luggage - in case of loss, they know where to send it.
- Get foreign currency where possible and USD in new, small bills.
- Call credit card company and notify of travel plans.
- Check banking - do you have enough money in all the right accounts to cover bill payments, etc. while you are gone?
- Check Gmail account - make sure I still have my "Oh Sh!t" stuff on there - jpgs of passports, copies of itineraries and vital contacts, insurance information and serial numbers, etc. If things get stolen or lost, I can access this from anywhere I can get online.
- Check cellular/mobile standard in countries to be visited, pack appropriate mobile phone. I get there, buy a cheap SIM chip and some time and I can be cheaply in touch with travelling partners and home immediately.

## NIGHT BEFORE

- Back up laptop to home drive. Just in case. If my laptop gets stolen at least I come home to my most current data.
- Re-check packing list against against what I've actually packed.
- Re-check gear list against what I've packed.
- Re-check weather in case of dramatic changes. Add/remove from luggage accordingly.
- Check flight status on out-bound flights. Avoid unnecessary surprises where possible.
- Pull out zip-ties for luggage (I usually zip them when I get to the airport and am checking in.)
- Change extended absence messages on phones.
- Double check carry-on bag for forbidden items like Leatherman or knife.
- Double check carry-on for passports, money, documents, and essentials.
- Book taxi.