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**TECHNOLOGY**

# Working Road Trip? Pack for Success!

Guided by the Boy Scout motto of always being prepared, I'm writing this column on my "gotta have items" for working anywhere on the road.

**Roman Kepczyk** • Jul. 20, 2023



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Summertime is vacation season as well as consulting season (my 27<sup>th</sup> year on the road) and many of us are heading out on the road with the caveat that we might, yeah maybe, ah yeah.. have to work some during a portion of your trip. Guided by the Boy Scout motto of always being prepared, I'm writing this column on my "gotta have items" for working anywhere on the road, along with some personal road warrior tips to minimize summertime travel and work blues.

**Road Backpack:** Frequent Road trippers know that being able to "grab and go" is key which means having a computer backpack pre-packed with all your essentials minimizes the risk of forgetting something. The bag must have adequate space to carry both work and personal items but small enough to slip under the seat in a regional jet. I'm carrying my second Samsonite Xenon 3.0 (Large) after wearing out my first one after about a decade of heavy road use. It has a suitcase "smart sleeve" so I can easily slip it over the extended handle of my roller bag which allows me to charge through airports pulling one handle, freeing my other hand to pull up my boarding passes on my phone.

**Chord/Charger Bag:** Road warriors know that forgetting a power cord or adapter is an immediate disaster, so I always carry a mesh pouch pre-packed with power cords, chargers and device cables for everything (even my Fitbit and spare headset connector for my phone). Buy *duplicates* now and keep them in that zippered bag. When in a hotel or client site, plug everything in ONE wall plug area (the plugs that get left behind are the ones you connect *outside* of your line of sight). Having a portable surge bar such as the Belkin Surge Plus 3 will allow you to keep everything together plugged in one outlet).

**Spare Power:** Finding a power plug can be challenging and "Free" airport phone chargers can actually introduce malware to your smartphone, so carrying a spare battery is recommended. I carry an Amper 10,000mAh which can recharge my phone a couple of times. If you also need to charge your laptop or tablet, you'll have to go up to the 30,000 mAh models to provide a couple recharges, but remember you have to keep Lithium batteries with you if you are traveling by plane and cannot check them in luggage.

**Noise Cancelling Headset:** I suggest you carry the larger "over the ear" headsets to block out noise (Bose QuietComfort 45), as well as subtly tell the person next to you that you might need to work (and prefer not to be interrupted, even while watching a movie). This may sound anti-social, but I get as much work done as I can at the start of the flight when I'm fresh and reserve reading and entertainment for later. Most of

these have built in microphones so they can be used to make conference calls in noisy areas. I also carry a smaller in-ear headphones with in-line microphone (and a USB-C phone adapter) to work with my smartphone for handsfree.

**Gear Protection:** While most computer bags have some padding, a drop-damaged screen can ruin a work trip. I always carry neoprene sleeves for my laptop and tablet to protect from accidental drops and spills. Also, carrying a 3M laptop privacy filter keeps prying eyes from seeing what is on my screen. If you have to leave your laptop unattended, Kensington and Targus have locking cables for laptops to keep someone else from grabbing it. I recommend using the hotspot in your smartphone to connect to the Internet but if you are going to use hotel or client Wi-Fi, be sure to utilize a VPN and multi-factor authentication to connect when traveling.

**Travel Apps on Phone:** Set up a page with all of your Airline, Hotel, Uber/Lyft, Rental Car, Clear, Weather Radar and Maps on both your smartphone *and your tablet* so you don't have to scramble to find them and so you have backup on another device. Speaking of backups, while most of use the alarms in our smartphone, I also carry a small travel clock that I use not only as a backup alarm clock, but also to keep in front of me for meetings and webinars so I don't get caught looking at my watch.

**Road Warrior Success Habits:** While carrying the right equipment can make for more successful road trips, there are also a number of personal “habits” that I have adopted that are time saving and stress reducing for both business and personal travel.

- 1. Pack the Night Before.** Last minute packing leads to forgetting dongles, important documents, and maybe even an umbrella, dress socks, or a tie (all of which I had forgotten at least once!). Laying out everything in your office and in your suitcase *the night before* eliminates having to scramble for basics when on the road.
- 2. Fold and Roll Clothes to Minimize Wrinkling:** There are tons of tutorials on the web teaching optimum packing skills which are life lessons few of us were taught in school. Learning to fold multiple dress shirts with sleeves buttoned and tucked in dry clean hangers allows you to pull the whole stack out and quickly hang them in the closet (or in the shower to “steam” out any unavoidable wrinkles). Stuffing socks in shoes and placing them in light plastic bags keeps everything clean and makes it easy to set out for the next morning.
- 3. Carry Liquids on Top:** Buying a zippered “quart” travel case allows you to keep all liquids in one place which should be the last thing you put into your carry-on so it

is easy to pull out if flagged when going through airport security.

4. **“Personal” Spares in Laptop Bag:** In addition to the hardware items listed above, everyone should keep a list of personal essential items such as contacts, spare eyeglasses, medicines, tissues, mints, toothbrush/paste, travel snacks, pens, etc.
5. **Double Rooms:** When traveling alone, I always get a room with two beds to layout my suitcase and clothes where I can see everything and pack items after they are worn. Unless I’m somewhere for more than a day, I don’t place clothing in drawers where they can easily be left behind. Items get repacked as used, to minimize the process of re-packing the next morning.
6. **Unpack/Repack ROUTINE:** Having a standard routine to setup as soon as you get into a hotel or conference meeting room eliminates a lot of travel snaffus. Laying the next day’s clothing out and setting up toiletries, any medicines, preparing morning coffee and exercise clothes are part of my standard morning routine, which I reverse the next day when leaving (including doing a “last looks” walk around the room before checking out!
7. **Sleep Well:** Optimizing your hotel room to sleep well should be part of an automatic routine as well. Setting the thermostat to 70 degrees and bring document clips to pinch drapes to block out outside lights. Packing a few pairs of earplugs and a white noise machine or phone app also helps drown out noisy neighbors.

Traveling and working on the road can be stressful but adopting a standard set of travel routines and working habits minimizes problems so you can better enjoy your time on the road.

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