

HACK THE SYSTEM

WITH MANEESH SETHI

The Digital Nomad Packing Guide

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The following guide is a list of everything I used to travel the world for over a year. I checked no luggage, I traveled to over a dozen countries, and I did it without any pain.

[Check out this video to see the packing in action.](#)



THE LIST

DEUTER FUTURA 28 LITER BACKPACK



DESCRIPTION: This is the main backpack I use to travel. It might be smaller than your high school Jansport, but you'll be surprised at how much you can fit. I traveled for over a year with just this bag.

It includes a pouch that is perfect for easy access to your computer, and a zipper at the bottom for easy access to your important stuff.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)
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WHY CARRY IT: You have to have a bag! This bag is a perfect carry on, and it's extremely comfortable thanks to its aircomfort suspension system. In a pinch, you can use it as a pillow.
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CAVEATS: It might be a bit too tiny for some. When doing serious long term travel, I will often carry this and the MEI Voyageur bag as well.

MEI VOYAGEUR BAG



DESCRIPTION: When I'm going to be traveling for a long time and need to carry a lot, I travel with the MEI Voyageur bag. Its size is the legal maximum for a carry on, so you won't have to check it. The coolest part is that it zips out and converts into a backpack, so you can carry it easily—but turn it into a handbag when you need to make it a carry on.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [MEI Voyageur](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: Slightly bigger than the Deuter Futura, these two bags work well together if you want to avoid checking luggage. Carry your large items in the MEI, and use the Deuter as your day pack, and you'll be set.

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CAVEATS: It is simply a large bag—so if you wanted compartments, you're out of luck. Use Eagle Creek Cubes to compartmentalize.

MACBOOK PRO 13"



DESCRIPTION: As a digital nomad, our computer is our livelihood. I chose the Macbook Pro.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Apple](#) or [Amazon](#) for \$1200

WHY CARRY IT: If you are working online, you're going to need something. I prefer Macs, since they just work great. The Pro has been awesome for me, for over 4 years now.

CAVEATS: It certainly is heavy. Consider the Macbook Air if you are going to be doing an extended vacation.

MACBOOK PRO SPECK CASE



DESCRIPTION: A simple case that attaches directly to your laptop. Beautiful and simple—and you never need to remove it!

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$32

WHY CARRY IT: Keep your Macbook protected, without having to deal with continually unpacking your laptop from a case.

CAVEATS: After 1.5 years of leaving this case on, I discovered it had left some scratches on my Macbook Pro. Next time, I might get an InCase case instead.

EXTERNAL HD: LACIE RUGGED 1 TB HARD DRIVE



DESCRIPTION: Carrying a lot of data or recording a lot of video? An external backup hard drive will be extremely useful to keep your data safe.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: The LaCie Rugged drive is very good at keeping your hard drive from breaking. It can handle a lot of shock.

CAVEATS: Although the data on my LaCie drives has never been damaged or corrupted, I have had some issues with the connectors on the back falling out. On the other hand, LaCie has always been great with their customer service and 3 year warranty.

IPAD 16 GB WITH CASE



DESCRIPTION: iPad, completely useful everywhere you can find wifi and its lighter than a computer (even though you'll see that I also brought my computer with me). There is a pocket in the Scottevest jacket above made just for the iPad, making it so you can carry it on your person instead of in your backpack. This makes it less likely it'll break as well as keeping it safely close to you.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Apple](#) or [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: It's a really easy way to connect when you find wifi, and its much more lightweight than a computer. Even if you bring your computer as well, you can carry it in your jacket, making it easier than pulling a computer out of your backpack every time you want to use it.

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CAVEATS: It's an electronic, which means there is always the chance it will get damaged. But if you're careful, there should be no problem with carrying it around, especially if you have a great case for it.

TRENT EMBASSY IPAD KEYBOARD CASE



DESCRIPTION: It's a hard shell case that protects your iPad and has a bluetooth keyboard attached. The stand for the keyboard and the screen are adjustable to three different angles making it super convenient for you.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: Mostly to protect your iPad, but the case I used also has a keyboard, making it much easier to type and use when you're on the go.

CAVEATS: It adds a small amount of weight to the iPad and makes it a little bit more bulky to tote around.

IPHONE 16 GB UNLOCKED



DESCRIPTION: I got my iPhone unlocked so I could travel anywhere with it and have it be compatible in any country. iPhones are incredibly useful not only because you can use it for wifi if there is any around, but as long as it is unlocked if you decide to stay in any country for an extended period of time, you can use one of their networks. Also, it doubles as an iPod, so you only have to carry around one device instead of two.

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WHERE TO GET IT: Of course, you can buy from [Apple](#) or [Amazon](#). I would buy it factory unlocked, so you can use it in any country.

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WHY CARRY IT: It makes it incredibly easy to have a phone as you travel from country to country. Plus, as I mentioned earlier, you can put all of your music on it as well and listen on the go.

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CAVEATS: As with other electronic devices there is the chance of damage. Again, if you're careful and put a good case on it, you should be good.

AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-M50 HEADPHONES



DESCRIPTION: These are awesome headphones for either producing music or escaping loudness on a plane. Excellent sound quality and bass.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$130

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WHY CARRY IT: If you are a serious music lover, or do any work with video or music production, you're going to want accurate sound reproduction. These studio headphones are excellent for working with sound. Plus, they give off that 'don't fuck with me, I'm working' vibe.

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CAVEATS: Are certainly a bit bulky, so make sure you need them before you bring them.

PANASONIC RPHJE355A HIGH FIDELITY ERGO-FIT INNER EAR EARBUD



DESCRIPTION: My favorite earbuds—I've bought at least 8 pairs of these around the world because I continually lose them. Has great sound quality, bass, and loudness—all for less than \$20.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: To keep yourself entertained with music while you're traveling!

CAVEATS: As I mentioned, they're easy to lose. But they're not super expensive, so you can easily get another pair.

CANON VIXIA HF VIDEO CAMERA



DESCRIPTION: A great handheld camcorder, for filming interviews, taking good photos, and recording memories.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: You never know when you'll get to meet someone you've wanted to film a podcast with. So, always have a camera on hand.

CAVEATS: You might need some accessories, like extra batteries and SD cards.

LOWEPRO EDIT 110 CAMERA BAG



DESCRIPTION: A great bag for lugging your camera and accessories around.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: I lost this bag, and destroyed my Camcorder in the process. This thing will keep it safe, guaranteed.

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CAVEATS: It's a bit bulky, but it will fit into the Deuter Futura bag without any difficulties.

USB HUB



DESCRIPTION: A simple extender for your USB port—get 4 for the price of 1.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: The Macbook Pro only has two ports, which leaves a lot to be desired. I use this hub daily, to plug in all the devices I need.

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CAVEATS: Nothing, works great.

LIVESCRIBE PEN



DESCRIPTION: This pen records everything you write on your LiveScribe notepad and everything you hear. It allows you to replay what you wrote or what you heard by just tapping on the notes that you wrote on the notepad. You can also save all your notes and recordings to your computer and then you can share with others via email, google docs, etc.

I did a full, [in depth review](#) of this pen on Hack The System.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: It makes it very easy to transcribe your thoughts from your mind to paper and into your computer at the same time. You have the benefit of still being able to handwrite things, but the information goes into the computer without you having to type it in.

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CAVEATS: It's a little bit expensive, but if you're writing while traveling it makes the entire experience that much easier.

LIVESCRIBE NOTEPAD



DESCRIPTION: This is the notepad that goes along with the LiveScribe pen and has built in apps and shortcuts to the pen's settings. It has dot paper in it which is what allows the information you're writing on the page to be transferred as is to the computer.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

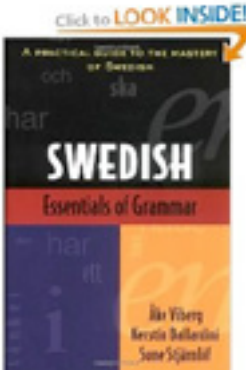
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WHY CARRY IT: If you have a LiveScribe pen, its necessary so that what you're writing can be transcribed into your computer.

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CAVEATS: If you're carrying more than one notebook it can add a little bit of weight to your bag.

SWEDISH GRAMMAR BOOK



DESCRIPTION: What are you doing traveling, if not learning something? I always try to learn a language, at least one per year. Because I'm learning Swedish, this year I'm carrying my Swedish: Essentials of Grammar book.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$12.
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WHY CARRY IT: If you want to have a reason to talk to the hot Swedish girls at your hostel, this is it
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CAVEATS: Extra weight if you're too lazy to actually learn while traveling. Loser.

SLIMMY SLIM WALLET



DESCRIPTION: It's advertised as the slimmest wallet on the planet and it fits in your front pocket. Very comfortable to carry while wandering.

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WEIGHT: Irrelevant! Super thin and lightweight.

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WHERE TO GET IT: I found mine at [Amazon](#).

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WHY CARRY IT: It fits easily into your front pocket, you can't overload it with too many things, and if you do carry it in your back pocket it's still comfortable while walking and sitting. Incredibly convenient for traveling.

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CAVEATS: As I mentioned, you cant put a lot of stuff into it, so if you tend to carry a lot in your wallet, this may not be large enough for what you usually carry with you.

WRIST GUARD



DESCRIPTION: This is for the constant computer user, like me, who has some wrist trouble. It stabilizes the wrist for you so you don't injure it further as you continue your internet exploration.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: If you have wrist troubles and you plan on writing or typing a lot on your trip, it'll help lessen any further injury to your wrist.

CAVEATS: It's really only if you need it, it can take up a bit of extra room where you could stuff an extra pair of socks if you wanted to.

SONICARE TOOTHBRUSH



DESCRIPTION: You'll need a toothbrush to stay healthy. I've learned from experience that the Philips Sonicare one prevents cavities and is actually kind of fun. But, any toothbrush will do.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: Real health starts from tooth health.

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CAVEATS: It's quite large, and might not fit in your Eagle Creek Quarter Bag.

TOOTHPASTE



DESCRIPTION: You gotta have some with you. Tom's is the best and safest—although not the cheapest.

WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

WHY CARRY IT: Keep your mouth clean.

CAVEATS: You can usually get this on a plane, but I've heard disaster tales where they weren't allowed.

FLOSS



DESCRIPTION: I continually carry floss, although I don't use it enough.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) or any drugstore

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WHY CARRY IT: Apparently, daily flossing correlates with a [six year longer lifespan](#).

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CAVEATS: My first ever box of floss is still with me. Use it!

NAIL CLIPPERS



DESCRIPTION: You don't want your nails getting too long, do you? Bring along a pair to stay clean and pretty.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: You don't want to borrow that gross dude from the hostel's clippers, do you?

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CAVEATS: This pair is cheap, but it might not be the sharpest. But whatever, you can buy these anywhere in the world.

MULTIVITAMINS



DESCRIPTION: Something to keep you going, especially when fried street food isn't meeting your nutritional needs.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: A multivitamin is good for you! I think. And you might not be able to find good ones in third world countries. So, go prepared.

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CAVEATS: The container can definitely take up some space.

FISH OIL



DESCRIPTION: Fish Oil is one of those supplements that you should [definitely be taking](#).

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: It's healthy and good for you, and tough/expensive to find in other countries.

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CAVEATS: Can be large. Consider combining with your multivitamins.

HEADLAMP



DESCRIPTION: A little sexy headlamp to impress the ladies in your hostel room while you are packing your bag at 4am to catch the 5:30am bus.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: If you are the kind of person who is going to be moving around a lot, you might like these headlamps for difficult packing situations. But really, why wouldn't you want to look this good?

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CAVEATS: Honestly, I can count the number of times I've used this device (aside from camping) on one hand. Not really that valuable for hostel travel.

EARPLUGS



DESCRIPTION: Simple earplugs for getting some shuteye on planes and in hostel dorm rooms.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$12

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WHY CARRY IT: Do you have trouble sleeping? You'll love these. Simple, cheap, effective.

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CAVEATS: You might want to get a case —these mofos will get everywhere.

EAGLE CREEK CUBE



DESCRIPTION: The Eagle Creek Cubes are excellent for organizing your items within a bag. I use it for my toiletries, but in the past I've used them for electronics, books, etc. Just don't use them for your clothing—the Eagle Creek Stuff Sack will do the job much better.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: You'll keep your stuff organized much more easily. After a while, the color red will remind you of the bathroom :)

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CAVEATS: There are a few sizes, and you might not get one that fits your stuff. But, try out a few and see which is right for you.

EAGLE CREEK COMPRESSION SACK



DESCRIPTION: This is a lifesaver -- this compression sack allows you to stuff all of your clothing into one bag and remove the air, saving you 40-50% of the space that it would normally take. Without this, I would never have been able to travel the world. All for less than \$20.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for \$20

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WHY CARRY IT: Without this, your clothing will take twice the size. Buy this and I promise, you'll love it. No vacuum pump needed!

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CAVEATS: The little yellow slider can fall off easily, but you don't really need it to close and compress your bag.

BASEBALL CAP



DESCRIPTION: A simple baseball cap to wear as you travel. Easy to pack away in your bag or jacket pocket, doesn't take up much space at all.

WHERE TO GET IT: Again, you can get this pretty much anywhere, but you can always get one on [Amazon](#).

WHY CARRY IT: For sun protection.

CAVEATS: You will sweat. It will get dirty. I recommend a dark color so you notice it less.

SUNGLASSES



DESCRIPTION: Cheap sunglasses you can carry while you travel.

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WHERE TO GET IT: Pretty much anywhere, but [Amazon](#) of course has it for cheap.

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WHY CARRY IT: Tropical countries mean sunlight. Sunglasses protect your eyes!

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CAVEATS: Since you're traveling with only a backpack, they might break, but that's why you buy the cheap ones.

HAIR / BEARD TRIMMER



DESCRIPTION: Depending on how you deal with your hair, you might want a trimmer or a razor. I tend to keep a goatee and a shaved head, so I actually carry a head shaver and a beard trimmer. However, you might want to bring a simple razor if you go clean shaven.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$30

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WHY CARRY IT: Carrying your own trimmer/ razor will save you a lot of money and time, rather than finding a barber in each city. Nothing like the feeling of a barber clean shave, though.

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CAVEATS: Can be a bit bulky, and nothing is more embarrassing than when one of these bad boys runs out of batteries right in the middle of shaving your head—and you have to walk around with a half shaved face/head for a day.

SCOTTEVEST TROPICAL JACKET/VEST



DESCRIPTION: This jacket has 18 pockets, is incredibly lightweight and mesh-lined. Because it is made for tropical climates, it is very breathable, has zip off sleeves and packs into itself for easy carrying when you're not wearing it. One of the 18 pockets will fit a Macbook Air or an iPad (or both)

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WHERE TO GET IT: from [Scottevest](#).

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WHY CARRY IT: This jacket is perfect for traveling. Not only can it hold your iPad, passport, phone, wallet, camera, water bottle, etc, you can zip off the sleeves if the day is too warm for the full sleeves.

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CAVEATS: It has lots of tiny pockets that I found to be sorta useless. I ended up just using the big pocket for most things.

2 - 3 PAIRS OF TRAVEL BOXERS

DESCRIPTION: You're going to need some underwear. Unless you want to carry a full wardrobe with you, I recommend you get quick-drying nylon boxers made by ExOfficio or Scottevest. Why?



These guys are super quick to clean and dry. Just take them in the shower with you, wash them with hand soap, and leave them out for a few hours—or wear them right away for a super speedy dry. You won't need to do laundry every few days if you use these bad boys.

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WHERE TO GET IT: Amazon for about \$20: [ExOfficio](#) and [Scottevest](#)

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WHY CARRY IT: These guys will save your life. Perfect for traveling—they are compact and quick drying, and don't retain too much of a smell. I wear only this brand. The Scottevest one is even better because it comes with an iPhone and a Passport pocket. Use it to store some extra cash and valuables when you are in a precarious situation.

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CAVEATS: None. You definitely want these.

2-3 PAIRS OF MERINO WOOL SOCKS



DESCRIPTION: Merino wool is the magic fabric for travelers. It never smells and dries extremely quickly. Believe me—you won't want to lug around 5 pairs of socks while traveling, so stock up on a couple pairs of the good stuff. You won't need to wash them every day.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$12

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WHY CARRY IT: Keep your feet from getting smelly. Wear Merino Wool.

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CAVEATS: If you really want that sleek black or white look, you won't get it with Merino wool—all the ones I've ever seen have a very technical gray/black color scheme to it. Often, I'll bring a single pair of dress socks along for fancy situations.

1 PAIR SHORTS



DESCRIPTION: Is it hot where you're going? Bring some shorts. I usually bring a pair of running shorts so I can exercise in them (and show off my Stanford Cardinal colors as well). These guys are super quick to clean and dry. Just take them in the shower with you, wash them with hand soap, and leave them out for a few hours—or wear them right away for a super speedy dry. You won't need to do laundry every few days if you use these bad boys.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for varied prices

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WHY CARRY IT: It gets hot, and you have to wear something.

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CAVEATS: Most other countries don't have the shorts culture that America has. Be prepared to be laughed at, for example, if you wear shorts and shoes in Italy.

3 ICEBREAKER MERINO WOOL SHIRTS



DESCRIPTION: Believe me—you want to buy these shirts. Merino wool will change your life, and make travel 10x easier.

Icebreaker makes my favorite Merino wool shirts, and I use them almost exclusively. Check out SmartWool for some other options as well.

I carry three types—a black 150 workout shirt, a Icebreaker Tech T Lite shirt, and a 200 Bodyfit shirt.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Icebreaker](#) or [Amazon](#). Expensive—\$70 or so for a T shirt.

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WHY CARRY IT: Merino wool is the magic fabric that keeps you warm in the winter and wicks away sweat in the summer (meaning your shirt stays dry, even after a crossfit workout). It has no smell, so you don't have to wash your clothes every day. Or every month.

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CAVEATS: Moths LOVE pure wool, and will sometimes rip tiny holes into your expensive shirts. But if this happens, Icebreaker will replace them for free.

TRAVEL TOWEL



DESCRIPTION: These travel towels are awesome. They are quick drying and super compact, so you can stuff them in the bottom of your Compression Sack or in your toiletries bag.

I recommend the MSR brand over Eagle Creek, because it comes with a nifty carrying case. Also, spring for the extra large—it doesn't take up much more space, and I guarantee you'll be happy when you don't have to reveal your naked body to everyone in your hostel room.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$28.

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WHY CARRY IT: You won't have space for a full size towel, but you probably will need one while traveling. So get this one instead.

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CAVEATS: If you don't let this dry completely, it will start to smell a bit rancid. So, make sure it dries or wash it thoroughly!

JEANS



DESCRIPTION: can't wear those funky zip-off pants anymore. Jeans are my staple—they look great and are comfortable. Of course, they are heavy and take up a lot of room, but that's the price for looking so good.

WHERE TO GET IT: Any department store or [Amazon](#) for about ~\$35.

WHY CARRY IT: You've gotta wear pants at some point. And jeans work everywhere in the world. Versatile, comfortable, and good looking.

CAVEATS: They are heavy and take up room, so I suggest you wear them while traveling, rather than packing them up.

GARMONT 9.81 ESCAPE RUNNING SHOES



DESCRIPTION: Stylish running shoes? Who would have thought?

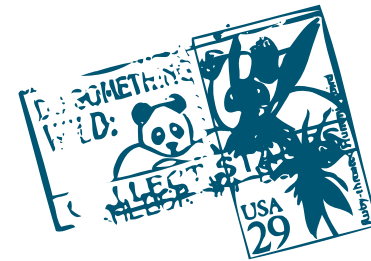
I love these shoes because I can use them for the gym or for going out at night. Comfy, and I got them for a steal. A little more expensive now, though.

I recommend you find a pair of running shoes that suits you. Shoes will take up a lot of space in your pack, so try to find ones that you can use for walking and for looking fly.

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WHERE TO GET IT: [Amazon](#) for about \$60
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WHY CARRY IT: What, are you going to travel the whole world barefoot?
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CAVEATS: None. You're going to need a pair of shoes, so get ones you know are comfortable.



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