

PACKING

How do you remember all you have to take and avoid taking too much?

How do I get it there? What do I leave?

All of us have stood at the last minute before the mountain of things we “just have to have with us,” culled through the pile and packed every suitcase to its fullest, then gotten there and realized we have forgotten something. It will happen to you again, but here are some general rules of packing:

- ▶ Take fewer clothes and more money than you expect to need.
- ▶ Don’t pack any suitcase you can’t carry. If your trip has severe weight restrictions (e.g., a private small plane is part of it) or if you must make multiple, rapid connections from one form of transportation to another, pack and repack until you have pared down your luggage to the required weight or to a size that allows you to carry ALL of it at least a few hundred yards.
- ▶ Remember that just because you are taking it with you, you don’t have to bring it back.
- ▶ If you are taking something for the missionaries or their work, remember that what they specifically asked for takes higher priority than what you thought they “might” like.
- ▶ Decide which camera (or at very most, two) you are most likely to use and then take extra batteries and twice as much film as you think you will use.
- ▶ Keep the most critical things (e.g., passports, visas, international certificates of vaccination, airplane tickets, money, and credit cards) on your body.
- ▶ Have a change of clothes and your necessary cosmetics, medications, one change of underclothes, and personal

hygiene items in your carry-on.

- ▶ Because of the occasional mishap with lost luggage, don’t pack anything you can’t afford (financially or emotionally) to lose.
- ▶ Start making your list early and jot down ideas about what you might like to take with you as they come to you.
- ▶ Ask somebody who has recently visited the field or the missionaries themselves for their ideas and help to decide whether something is appropriate for you to take.

In the Appendix entitled “Packing List,” we have included a list that may be helpful. **WARNING!** It is neither complete nor do you ever have to take all of these things. They are listed just to help you consider whether you want to take them. Obviously, the climate and conditions of your trip will most significantly affect the clothing you take, but they will also affect what you might want to have in the way of medications, emergency supplies, and the like. A trip to the polar conditions of Siberia would obviously be different than to the rain forest of the Amazon region. A trip to the high altitudes of Bolivia is different than to the low altitudes of Togo. Even the climate at the time of the year you are going can affect your list. And then there are rainy seasons: The rainy season consists of daily 4 p.m. rains in some areas of the world that last an hour and is certainly different than the monsoons of some areas of the Indian subcontinent that are true frog-stranglers.

SIZE AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

This is an area that changes frequently—and it is ultimately YOUR responsibility to make sure that your luggage complies with the rules. Just because Mrs. So-and-so was able to take her grand piano in her luggage last time doesn't guarantee that you can do so this time. And just because we write about it below, *doesn't mean it still is necessarily so*. Please check with your airline and your travel agent just before you go as to what regulations apply for your trip.

Usually, the North American airlines will allow two pieces of checked luggage and one piece of carry-on luggage. The dimensions of the checked luggage must add to a total no more than 62 inches. Measure the greatest length of your suitcase, the greatest width, and the greatest depth, then add them together. The weight limit is usually 30 kg (66 lbs.) on outgoing flights. Some airlines will stretch the limit to 70 pounds. These limits are often regulated by restrictions placed on the airlines by regulatory agencies, union contracts with their luggage workers, and the like. They are not in place just to foil your plans. Although *sometimes* they will take the average weight of your pieces (allowing you to scrape by with heavier pieces of luggage) or the ticket agent at check-in *may* allow a bigger piece, you run the risk of one of two penalties. The first hurts your wallet. The distance you are traveling and the amount of excess weight affect the extra fee you are charged for your baggage. Fees in the range of \$100–\$150 per extra bag are not unusual.

Should you pay it? That depends. Some airlines, *if you call ahead*, will allow you as a missionary to take extra pieces of luggage at no charge. You can call or ask your travel agent to check on this for you. Airlines are not obligated to do so, and, increasingly, in response to financial and other pressures many airlines do not. Also, not all airlines will honor an agreement you have with another airline to carry an extra bag, even if they are “partners” for frequent-flier miles and no matter what their advertising would seem to imply. Therefore, check with each airline and make sure all airlines that you are using will honor the agreements.

The second penalty that is sometimes imposed is that you are not allowed to take the bag. Depending on the conditions of your flight (how full it is, how much weight the plane is carrying), the airline agents have the option of not honoring any agreements for extra luggage. That happens rarely, but can be a problem if it does.

Anyway, back to that earlier question, “Should you pay the extra luggage fee?” Same answer: that depends. How badly do you want the stuff to go on the trip with you? And the answer to that question is often answered indirectly by how well you packed. Let's look at some factors that affect the answer and then look at the math. First, it is more likely (albeit not guaranteed) to arrive where you are going than if you ship it by some alternative method. Second, it is cheaper to take things by commercial airline than it is to send it by commer-

cial carrier and it's much, much faster.

Let's now do the math as a story-book problem. Dr. Smith, medical missionary, is at the airport ticket window and has planned to take an extra suitcase along with her. The agent states that the suitcase is 70 pounds but the extra luggage fee is \$140. Dr. Smith knows that the airline is giving a special reward to the agent who collects the most money that month for extra baggage fees. Quickly doing the "gozintos" (70 goz into \$140 twice), she comes up with a price of \$2 per pound. Since she knows the price for post office airmail and other express carriers can be from \$5 per pound to \$50 a pound and still may take weeks or even months for packages to arrive at her mission trip destination, should she: a) announce loudly that she is a missionary and argue, in general making a nuisance of herself and impressing all around with her Christ-like demeanor; or b) know that she has packed wisely, planned ahead to take only what she needs, and allowed for the possibility of having to pay the fee, knowing that she and the missionaries on the field need what she has?

Admittedly, most people will get that question right, but going through the thought processes involved does help you decide what to take and how much of it to take. If you can take just enough for what you need, take powders instead of liquids, distribute your weight carefully between suitcases, and choose the things to take with you wisely, you will do okay.

Many airlines have a 10 kg (22 lbs.) weight limit on your carry-on piece of luggage and also may have unique size

limitations. As we have all heard, "it must be able to fit in the overhead bin or under the seat in front of you." It has been our experience that they don't usually enforce those weight restrictions on airlines in North America (although they can), but it is more of a problem on some of the overseas airlines.

Speaking of overseas airlines, some of the smaller carriers have a weight limit of 20 kg (44 lbs.) per checked bag instead of 30 kg (66 lbs.), unless you are flying first class or business class where the upper weight limits pertain. This can be a very expensive lesson to learn since very high rates are often charged for extra luggage, sometimes demanding it be paid only in American currency and sometimes refusing both traveler's checks and credit cards. Your first flight to a destination, no matter how many small airlines you fly, is covered by your first check-in. It is the subsequent check-ins for flights between countries or back to the U.S. where you might get burned. Check this carefully before you leave and decide how much weight you want to carry with you.

One other thing: The federal aviation authority has *strict* rules about what can be carried aboard a plane. Remember, this is like your childhood days: "my ball, my rules." Well, these are their planes, their airspace, and their rules. They take it seriously. You are not a special exception, no matter what your mother told you. The ultimate decision is theirs, and no logic will sway them. Check their Web site at www.cas.faa.gov for the latest information before you go.

You must declare hazardous materials to airlines. Violations carry a civil

penalty of up to \$27,500 for each occurrence and, in appropriate cases, a criminal penalty of up to \$500,000 and/or up to five years imprisonment.

► The following are banned from *all* luggage (check the list on the Internet at <http://cas.faa.gov/cas/these.html>):

- toy guns
- fireworks
- explosives
- butane lighter refills
- paints
- bleaches
- Your carry-on cannot contain:
 - knives (even pocket knives), scissors, or shears of any kind
 - straight-edged and certain other razors
 - box and carpet cutters
 - ice picks
 - cutting instruments of any kind
 - Mace, pepper spray, or any weapon of self-defense

► The following are also banned from your carry-on luggage by some foreign airlines and airports:

- darts
- baseball bats
- pool cues
- knitting needles

To sum up, here's a good rule of thumb: If you have the slightest doubt that an item you're carrying might be construed as a sharp, potentially dangerous item or a weapon of any kind, then pack it in your checked luggage. Even better: Minimize what you carry on board as much as possible, but never put essential medications, valuables such as jewelry, and expensive or fragile equipment such as cameras in checked luggage.

SUITCASES, TRUNKS, BOXES, OR DUFFLE BAGS?

One additional rule to the ten listed in the beginning of this chapter: "Your luggage will not return unscathed." Or unpummeled, or uncut, or unbroken, or unthrown, or undropped, or . . . so, put away your beautiful Corinthian leather luggage and drag out another kind. It should be:

- Sturdy. Soft-sided luggage (including duffel bags) may be easier to handle and has more give if you pack something of odd shape, but may not protect the contents as well and may not resist a thief's sharp knife. Your call.
- Wheeled (if you accept the fact that many places the wheels won't work). The little wheeled carts with straps may

be useful on smooth surfaces but they are just one more thing to keep track of; and, besides, there are no smooth surfaces where you are going.

- Disposable and/or foldable. If you are carrying a lot of things over that you don't plan to carry back with you, being able to roll or fold a bag up allows you to take it home. An alternative is to spend some time at yard sales, garage sales, and thrift stores where you can often pick up old luggage that is sturdy enough (perhaps with the addition of some duct tape or strapping) to make it one way to wherever you are going. You can leave it there. Even if you bring it back, you don't mind if it gets beaten up

a bit more in some airport somewhere.

Hint: We often use the 19.5 gal. Rough-Tote® by Rubbermaid. It (and the smaller sizes of Action-Packers®) fits within the 62" size limit. These have the advantage of being very rugged and cheap (even with the necessary long-shanked padlock, they can often be obtained for \$20–\$25 for the entire package). They also have good hinges and reasonably good clasps (although they should be strapped shut with strapping or duct tape). Tape your name and address securely to the outside. They also are welcomed as storage containers in most places. The only drawback in using them is that they sometimes will attract the attention of customs agents upon landing. Strategies for minimizing unwanted attention are discussed in Chapter 9.

WARNING! Larger sizes than the 19.5 gallon model may be okay if you are leaving from North America and IF the airlines permit the outsized luggage; but you are warned again that many foreign airlines will refuse to carry them or charge outrageous fees for overweight or oversized luggage.

One variation on that idea is packing part of your goods in a large cooler (greater than 50 quart capacity) that can then be left on the field. Please check with the missionaries as to whether this would be a desirable thing for them. Often missionaries can buy meat or other frozen foods in the main city, and this allows a way to transport them to the mission compound. These coolers do not have secure clasps, so it must be well reinforced with strapping and/or tape. It's usually best if it is packed with something relatively light.

► Don't take cardboard boxes. They get beat up in transit, don't necessarily protect the contents well, and tend to attract the attention of custom agents on the other end.

Label your luggage well. You never realize how many people have a suitcase of your model and color until you are looking for it on a busy baggage carousel. Make sure that you have put your name, address, and phone number, on the outside, using sturdy tags. Also place one address label inside the suitcase. This precaution may prevent your suitcase from being lost forever if the outer tags come off. Be certain to write *both* your home address and your destination address. The latter is to help them find you when they lose your luggage. Oh, we beg your pardon for that Freudian slip—"if" they lose your luggage. If we are using trunks as described above, print or use your computer to print up a large label with your U.S. address, the local address, and the name of your sponsoring organization prominently displayed. Tape it securely to the lid. Seeing the local address and name of a recognized mission seems to help with customs when the agents glance at it.

Make sure your luggage is easy to identify. It helps you find it and it helps you make sure across a crowded room that your luggage is not leaving accompanied by someone else. A large "X" in colored tape on the side, colored yarn on the handle, or distinctly colored or shaped luggage tags are some ideas that can make your luggage identifiable from across the room. You are limited only by your imagination and your sense of embarrassment. If a whole group is traveling together, have everyone mark the luggage the

same way. That way when a few members of the group get assigned the job of picking up all the luggage, they know to look for the identifying mark or item.

Keep a detailed list of the contents of suitcases. You may need to report the

loss! Also, a list of contents sometimes will satisfy the customs agent's curiosity about what you brought, demonstrate that you are not trying to hide anything, and will prevent long searches of your baggage.

WHAT CLOTHES DO I TAKE?

There are some general principles that apply here; we will cover the details in subsequent paragraphs:

▶ If you look and dress like a tourist, you will be perceived as one. On the parts of your trip where you are just a tourist, this is fine, but the rest of the time you should dress in a fashion comparable to the local professionals. That is what you are.

▶ Take modest clothing. Modest is defined by the culture where you will be, not by what is considered modest in your culture. See Chapter 11 for a discussion on adapting to cultural mores.

▶ Dress appropriately. Do not over dress or under dress. Many cultures dress up for any event, so know the kind of clothes you have. Failure to dress appropriately may be considered as insulting by the nationals. North Americans, by and large, dress to reflect their own opinion of themselves. In many cultures, however, how one dresses reflects the person's opinion of others. Although casual clothing may be acceptable in your home congregation, many cultures take dressing up very seriously. If there are questions, check with the agency or missionaries before you go. You are on the King's business, and to dress in a way that detracts from that message is counter productive.

▶ Take wrinkle-free, non-iron clothes

that are easily cared for. Take color-coordinated clothes that can be mixed and matched for different looks. There are only so many times you can wear the same outfit without getting tired of it.

▶ Do *not* wear whites. Depending on what the water supply is, they may well return a nice shade of tan.

▶ Consider buying your clothing at a thrift store and plan on leaving them overseas. The clothes may make appreciated gifts to the nationals, and this may solve some of the problems with weight restrictions on your return trip—especially if you bought a lot of souvenirs!

▶ If you need special clothing or uniforms (white jackets, scrub suits, surgical hats, or masks), take them with you. Don't expect them to be there at your ultimate destination in sizes guaranteed to fit you, especially if you are a more generously sized individual. Plan to leave them for the staff. Extra scrub suits in the smaller "non-American" sizes are great gifts for the staff.

▶ Take sturdy and comfortable shoes that are well broken in. In temperate climates, take one pair of good walking or sports shoes and one pair of sturdy casual shoes that can double as your Sunday-go-to-meeting shoes. In hotter climates, a pair of sandals is often appreciated. Rubber flip-flops may be desirable to wear while relaxing and in the

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shower. Since in many cultures you are expected to remove your shoes, it may be desirable to take a pair of house slippers with you. Those that can fold or be rolled to fit into your pocket or purse may be appreciated once you are there.

► Despite your long-suppressed and burning desire to wear safari clothing and look dashing, they quickly look terrible. Crepes, jerseys, and cotton/polyester types of material that drip-dry quickly without much wrinkle are often best for many climates. Obviously, it

depends on the climate, altitude, and local weather. On one trip, we sweltered in nearly 100 degree heat in the high latitudes of Moscow and shivered in the 40 degree coolness in the high altitudes of equatorial Kenya.

► Leave your expensive watches and jewelry at home. It makes you a target for thieves, marks you as a “rich American” among the people you are working with, and makes you feel bad if you lose it.

WOMEN’S CLOTHING

► Six sets of underclothes packed (one of those six is packed in your carry-on) plus the ones you will be wearing.

► Six tops and the one you are wearing. In many cultures, bared shoulders are not acceptable, so a top with sleeves is preferred. Avoid tank, tube, or sleeveless tops.

► Three skirts or slacks. In some Third World countries, pants are inappropriate for women to wear because they are indicative that the wearer is a “loose woman.” If that is the case where you will serve, it is suggested that one or two of the skirts be loose culottes or dresses. Hemlines should be long, usually to mid-calf. One woman working in equatorial

Africa strongly recommends that the dresses be made with pockets. She had no desire to carry her purse on daily errands, but found that keeping track of the necessary keys, pens, and so on was very difficult to do without pockets.

► If culturally appropriate, or to wear on the trip to and from, take a pair of slacks or jeans. Shorts are much less commonly appropriate except for times you are spending in resort areas.

► One Sunday dress.

► If you will have any chance to use it, bring a (modest) swimming suit and a cover-up.

► A hat is optional, but it can protect from the sun, rain, or cold.

MEN’S CLOTHING

► Six sets of underclothes packed (one of those six is packed in your carry-on) plus the ones you will be wearing.

► Six shirts (one of those six is packed in your carry-on) and the one you wear (include one that will be used

with your sports coat). T-shirts may be appropriate, but no tank tops. Avoid wearing pseudo-military or camouflage clothing.

► A necktie (or two).

► Two pairs of pants plus the one pair

you are wearing. One should complement your sports coat. There are travel slacks made that have many hidden pockets and zippers that double as a body wallet and give you places to hide your money, papers, and important items. They are usually dressy enough to function as your “good” pair of slacks.

- ▶ One pair of jeans.
- ▶ One pair of shorts if culturally appropriate. Here it is not a question of modesty, but merely that men in those cultures do not wear them.
- ▶ A sports coat. Wear this on the plane since it gives you a place for tickets and documents (as well as warmth on the chilly plane). It will be needed for church overseas, especially if you are asked to

speak or represent your group. Again, some companies make special travel sport jackets that are wrinkle resistant and have a number of hidden pockets.

- ▶ Light jacket, sweater, or sweatshirt. A windbreaker can often double as rain gear. If rain will be a frequent event, a poncho that folds flat may be appreciated.
- ▶ Light, foldable rubber boots or galoshes to put over shoes, especially helpful in rainy areas.
- ▶ Swimming trunks.
- ▶ A sturdy belt, suitable for all of your clothing.
- ▶ A hat is optional, but it can protect you from the sun, rain, or cold.

TIPS ON PACKING

▶ Rolled clothes pack tighter, taking up less room. Breakable items can be placed in a plastic bag, sealed, and rolled within the item of clothing. Rolling works better for socks, T-shirts, blue jeans, and clothes made of rayon, polyester, or any other thin, durable fabric. Do *not* roll blouses, neckties, suits, or articles of silk or linen. Fold dress shirts, blouses, or anything that is 100% cotton (have your cleaner fold them for you). Fold bulky items such as sweaters.

- ▶ Clothes with a shiny, smooth lining (e.g., suits, dresses, blazers, and pants) will wrinkle less if they are turned inside out before packing and turned right side out after unpacking.
- ▶ Be sure to pack any potential unused spaces (e.g., the insides of shoes, the center of a roll of duct tape) with socks, underwear, or similar things.
- ▶ If you are color blind or taking chil-

dren, put each day’s outfit in a plastic re-closable bag and seal it. It keeps it clean and makes it easy both to find your things and repack if necessary. It also eliminates arguments about what to wear.

- ▶ Use plastic containers with lids (e.g., Rubbermaid®, TupperWare®, small pocket tackle boxes, etc.) to organize your items. Pack each one to the fullest by itself. This makes it easier to pack and repack (especially if the customs agent has emptied your suitcase!). These containers are also a wonderful gift to leave with someone on the field.
- ▶ Slide into an outside pocket of your luggage enough extra-large trash bags, like those used for yard pickup, that are big enough to put your suitcase in. On occasion, you may not be able to get your luggage out of the rain. These will keep it dry.
- ▶ Pack your clothes in the order they

will be worn so that you won't have to dig through layers.

- ▶ If room in your suitcase is at a premium, wear your heavier or bulkier clothes while traveling instead of packing them.
- ▶ To keep neckties from wrinkling, place them over the center page of a

magazine you are taking for a missionary. Close the magazine and pack it flat.

- ▶ Do not pack food items and soap or scented toiletries in the same suitcase. The food inevitably picks up the flavor of the scent.

TOILETRIES, BED, AND BATH

Carrying a towel and washcloth is a good idea. Many hotels in developing countries do not furnish washcloths. Alternatively, the special swim towels available at sporting stores or dive shops are very handy. They are only about a foot square, but dry by wringing, and can be used as a washcloth or a towel if needed. They take up very little space. Carry the washcloth or swim towel in a small resealable plastic bag in your carry-on. Baby wipes and/or anti-bacterial hand cleanser may be desirable.

Depending on your sleeping arrangements, having your own sheets and pillowcase may be desirable. An alternative is a "sleep bag" made of silk that you can use to line your bed when you are sleeping in questionable surroundings. This may give you some peace of mind and, being of silk, can be folded very small and easily hand-washed. Check whether it is wise to bring your own mosquito net, and whether it is available on the field (if so, find out if you have to make arrangements to have one purchased ahead of time for your use that first night). There are small, one-person folding mosquito nets available from camping, sports, and military surplus stores as well as from mail-order companies. They fold down into a small package. Try it out at home

before you go to see if you need any additional string or other supplies. Some people find them rather claustrophobic.

Besides the usual things listed in the Appendix with the packing list, there are some general principles to consider. Men should bring a shaving kit (razor and soap) that does not require electricity. Women should never count on being able to buy their favorite toiletries in another country and should never require a blow-dryer or curling iron to be presentable. Tampons, menstrual pads, and other items for feminine hygiene are often not available, and sufficient amounts should be taken with you. Both sexes need:

- ▶ Toilet paper: Take out the cardboard roll and squash it flat or buy the specially rolled paper from a camping store. Alternatively, use the small travel packs of Kleenex®. Toilet paper can be a rare commodity in the Third World, especially when you need it *right now!*
- ▶ A small mirror, unbreakable if possible. Lightweight plastic mirrors are available in camping sections of discount stores and in camping stores.
- ▶ Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, and deodorant are necessary. Shaving gel or foam is optional. Some camping stores have a liquid soap that is multipurpose for cleaning, dishes, and clothes.

- ▶ No perfume or cologne. It attracts mosquitoes.
- ▶ Any supplies you need for contact lenses, including a spare set of lenses.
- ▶ A minimum of cosmetics. Women may need base, a little blush, and neutral lipstick; this is enough for most mis-

sions situations. Take only the ones you will use. Body lotion may be desired.

- ▶ Take enough of what you need but no more than enough. Most toiletries are liquid and are heavy. Tape the lids of bottles that hold liquids securely and put powders in double zip-lock bags.

PERSONAL MEDICATIONS

The list of appropriate medications obviously may vary on location and according to personal health considerations. Many of these are discussed in more detail in the chapter on health. However, for the sake of completeness, they are mentioned again here:

- ▶ Prescriptions for routine use: Carry in your carry-on at least enough to make sure you are okay if your main suitcases are lost. Some people recommend carrying enough medication for the entire time in both your carry-on and your suitcase. Make sure you carry them in an original prescription bottle to avoid problems with customs and their concerns about drug smuggling. Don't forget your contraceptives or you may have an unexpected souvenir.
- ▶ Carry extra syringes and needles for your personal use should you be asked to take an immunization at a foreign airport for entry into the country or if you find it necessary to take personal medication while you are away from home. If you are diabetic and have cleared this trip with your doctor, do not forget your insulin, syringes, glucose testing devices, and so on.
- ▶ After discussion with your doctor, you may wish to carry prescriptions for the following items (see Chapter 7).

Make sure you fully understand when and how to take them and what conflicts there may be with other drugs.

- Traveler's diarrhea
- Altitude sickness
- Antimalarials
- Broad-spectrum antibiotic
- Medications for gastric upset, especially if you are going to a country where the food is spicy
- ▶ Take a small first-aid kit (adhesive bandages, tape, etc.) and the following over-the-counter drugs with you:
 - Motion sickness pills
 - Antidiarrheal (e.g., loperamide)
 - Anti-inflammatory drugs/analgesics
 - Antihistamines/decongestant
 - Cough drops, throat lozenges, and/or cough syrup
 - Tube of antibiotic ointment
 - Tube of hydrocortisone cream
 - Antifungal powder or cream
 - For women, a course of anti-fungal treatment for vaginitis
 - Lip balm (with sunscreen capabilities)
 - Thermometer (the contact strip type)¹
 - Tweezers for splinters or stingers
 - ▶ Sun block (SPF greater than 20)
 - ▶ Insect repellent (DEET in the 20–30% range is the best). Use a liquid preparation rather than a repellent in a can (for weight considerations and FAA con-

¹Mercury-containing thermometers are banned by some airlines.

cerns). Avon's Skin-So-Soft® is a great hand cream but has been proven not to be an effective mosquito repellent. Remember, these mosquitoes can kill you.

- ▶ Nail-clippers or a manicure set.

The list of things you might also need can be endless. Items are listed below (sometimes with comments) in order to stimulate your thought process. Use the list in the Appendix and fill in the blank lines to make up your list:

- ▶ Your professional equipment (stethoscope, instruments, medications, etc.).

- ▶ A credit-card-sized calculator, preferably solar powered. These help with many things, including local currency transactions and bartering in the market when you don't speak the language. Just key-in your offer. They will take it and key-in their counter offer.

- ▶ Your reading glasses, sunglasses, extra contact lenses, and a spare pair of prescription glasses. Make sure that you have your ophthalmologist fill in the prescription information on your yellow International Certificate of Vaccination in case you have to have some made overseas. Take a small eyeglass repair kit, along with the right size screws for your hinges.

- ▶ If you wear dentures, don't forget your denture adhesive and a tube of contact cement that can repair the dentures in case of a crack or lost tooth.

- ▶ Laundry supplies, including a net bag for use in washing delicates, for use as a dirty clothes bag, and also to function as a shopping bag. Carry a clothesline, some clothespins, and a double-sealed bag of laundry soap. Bring a sewing kit for repairs, including some

safety pins. Some people like to throw in a few lightweight plastic clothes hangers. Buy a flat, flexible sink stopper in case you have to do hand washing and there is no sink stopper.

- ▶ Take an inflatable travel pillow, eye-shades, and earplugs. Many airlines now furnish them on transoceanic flights. They are useful once you land and are having trouble sleeping due to jet lag and strange noises.

- ▶ Your camera is essential. A point-and-shoot camera is okay for the average photographer. A disposable waterproof camera gives you added flexibility in some situations. Most serious photographers will want a 35 mm or digital, single-lens reflex with interchangeable lens that will allow for much more versatility. A telephoto lens will help if you are taking wild animal shots at a distance, but also allows you to get close-ups of people without getting into their personal space. The pictures will be much more candid and vibrant. A wide-angle lens is sometimes helpful, especially if you are in an urban setting. A suitable macro lens is also good. Some of the little creatures and flowers you will see are amazing. Digital cameras give you the benefit of being able to see right away if you got the picture. They are also great ice-breakers when you show the pictures to your subject and his or her family and friends.

Don't forget: Take plenty of film (10 to 20 rolls of 36 exposure). It is usually expensive overseas. Airport X-rays usually aren't a problem unless you use very high-speed film. A lead foil bag can protect film. They are sold at camera stores.

- Extra batteries for camera and flash. Batteries in special sizes are difficult to find overseas. If using digital, make sure the memory device is adequate. You cannot count on finding more overseas. Make sure your recharger is compatible with the voltage standards where you will be.
- Take equipment in a well-padded bag.
- Lens brush for dusty conditions.

Video cameras may be optional if you are taking something else, but they are a great way to get the sound and movement of your experience. Too bad there is nothing that can quite capture the aroma of the developing country! The new, smaller digital cameras with good zoom can be ideal. Don't forget:

- Take extra batteries and charger that can use 220 volts and 50 Hz.
- Take appropriate adapter plugs so you can plug in your charger.
- Take enough tape cassettes. They are very expensive and hard to find overseas.
- Take a well-padded case.
 - ▶ Disposable toilet seat covers.
 - ▶ Spare shoelaces for all pairs of shoes.
 - ▶ Swiss army knife or pocket tool kit.
 - ▶ Travel dictionary and/or electronic translator.
 - ▶ Water purifier or filter. See Chapter 12 for a more complete discussion. There are companies that make a sports-bottle type of water purifier that uses ultrafiltration, iodine resin cores, and activate charcoal to remove infectious organisms and bad tastes from the water. This will allow you to use water from almost any source safely. Alternatively, a filter plus chemical decontamination of the water to prevent viruses is an option. If you don't want to use those, take at least one bottle of bottled water

for the airplane trip.

- ▶ Duct tape or fiber-enforced strapping tape. This has a million uses. Leave it for the missionaries if you don't need it on the way home. Some security checkpoints will object to your carrying it onto the cabin of the plane itself.
 - ▶ A fanny pack or folding backpack. Some people have advised lining these with a fine wire mesh to prevent pick-pockets from slitting the pack with a razor and removing the contents without removing the backpack. There are commercially made versions that have slit-proof straps and pockets.
 - ▶ Emergency snacks (peanut butter, crackers, nuts, granola, trail mix, candy, etc.). Remember, gum (and spitting) is not socially acceptable to some Asians. It is illegal in Singapore and can get you arrested!
 - ▶ Take your Bible.
 - ▶ A notebook or journal and stationery, envelopes, ballpoint pens, and stamps may be desirable. Carry one pen in your pocket when you travel for filling out entry and custom forms, writing postcards, and the like.
 - ▶ Other reading material.
 - ▶ Photos of your home and family. Consider laminating them to preserve them from the dirt of many hands. Avoid photos that show your possessions or the obvious wealth of the American lifestyle.
 - ▶ Postcards, magazines, or booklets about your city and state.
 - ▶ Brochures and pictures of your church.
 - ▶ A watch, waterproof (a dive watch), and an alarm are nice features to have. Make sure you have put in a fresh battery before you leave.
 - ▶ An umbrella.
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- ▶ Outdoor thermometer. A small one will fit into many cracks.
- ▶ A permanent marker.
- ▶ A whistle. It's great for signaling, and in case of personal attack (God forbid).
- ▶ Binoculars.
- ▶ Disposable cigarette lighters. Great for starting fires and lighting candles.
- ▶ Cable ties of various sizes. They can be used as an ersatz padlock, can hold things together, etc.
- ▶ Envelopes (often hard to find overseas) and U.S. postage stamps so that anyone on the field returning to the U.S. can mail your letters here for faster delivery. Also, take enough stamps to give or sell to the missionaries for their personal use to do the same thing. Put waxed paper between the envelope flap and the envelope if you are going to a tropical climate. Otherwise, your envelope may seal before you use it.
- ▶ If you have room, small two-way radios can come in handy to communicate between the hospital and home, in bazaars, etc.
- ▶ There are available specially modified "can safes" that look like common products (shaving cream, drinks, etc.) but are hollow with a screw-in bottom. These allow you to "hide" valuables in plain sight but probably should not be used to hide things of great value. Use more secure safes for those items.

Pack these things in either zip-lock bags or in see-through small plastic compartmentalized trays such as those used for pocket fishing tackle boxes. These boxes are available in the sporting areas of discount stores. They have the advantage of being waterproof as well. It is a great way to store all the extra little things.

ELECTRONICS

Americans have become dependent on many electronic devices, but traveling overseas with them is not always straightforward. We have dedicated an entire appendix to traveling with your laptop (Appendix 7). Most of the countries of North, Central, and South America as well as the Caribbean use 110 volts, 60-Hertz currency and you only have to use an adapter. However, much of the rest of the world uses 220 volts, 50-Hertz electricity, and the difference can be problematic.

For those whose eyes are already beginning to glaze, let's make it very practical. If you plug something designed for 110 volts into a 220-volt outlet, it will fry the circuitry rapidly and

become worthless.

Ideally, you will have appliances (irons, curling irons, blow-dryers, and most computers) that can handle either 110 volts or 220 volts. Most of them require that you flip a switch. Failure to do so will burn out the 110 portion if you plug it into 220 volts or it will be non-functional if set on 220 volts and you have it plugged into a 110 volt outlet.

If your device doesn't have that two-way switch, you will need to get a transformer and a set of plug adapters. As with their money, every country seems to want to set the shape and size of their electricity outlets, and, of course, nothing seems to match. At your local travel, electrical supply, or discount

store, you can buy a set of plug adapters. Make sure you have both the adapters and a transformer. The strength (rated in watts) of the transformer is variable but, in general, the more money you pay, the bigger, heavier, and more robust it is and the more likely it can handle high-wattage items. The little transformers available in discount stores often cannot handle the wattage of a large hair-dryer, so make sure it is rated for as many watts as your devices require. If not, they will burn out rapidly and you cannot use the device.

The potential problem with transformers is that they are designed to cut the voltage by a certain percentage. For example, a 230 volt incoming current would be cut to 115 volts; this would be ideal. There is still a problem for certain motorized devices and those devices with internal “clocks.” The voltage may be changed to the appropriate level but the frequency has not changed from 50 Hz to 60 Hz. There is no easy fix to this dilemma and, as a result, many motorized items will run slower and hotter on the lower frequency. Some may not function.

Even without that problem of frequency, most of the world’s electrical companies do not deliver highly uniform voltage, and a purported 220 volts may be anything from 110 to 330 volts. It may vary from minute to minute. Most of us are familiar with surge protectors, and it may be wise to include one in your luggage if you are going to be using 110 volts. If not, a surge protector for 220 volts is harder to find in North America—you may want to make that one of your first purchases in-country. Surges are familiar, but serious problems with lower voltage are not as

familiar to us. Many electrical devices dislike this “brown-out” as much as they dislike electrical surges, and many pieces of equipment may eventually die because of it. The fix is not as easy. An uninterrupted power supply (essentially a battery and inverter hooked to a voltage monitor) is the only option, but it is too big to carry and too expensive to buy overseas unless you have a major project going on or will be there long enough to take one with you or buy one in-country.

Battery-operated equipment avoids this problem, but it may take a large number of batteries if the device has high power consumption. Batteries may or may not be available in the developing countries and are usually either of poor quality or very expensive (for quality, brand-name batteries).

So What Should You Take?

- ▶ A flashlight with extra batteries. A small magnesium light running on 2 AA batteries may be sufficient, depending on your use. Be sure to take an extra bulb as well.
- ▶ A battery-operated travel alarm or a watch with an alarm. Make sure your batteries are fresh before you go.
- ▶ Hair-dryer with a 220/110 switch. Small and light are the operative terms. Consider sharing one with another person on the trip so you both don’t have to pack one. Check the wattage and compare it to the transformer you plan to use.
- ▶ Curling iron with a 220/110 switch. Again small and light. Share. Check the wattage and the transformer capabilities.
- ▶ A travel iron or steamer with a 220/110 switch. Again, share with a fellow traveler.
- ▶ Tape recorder or microcassette to

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record sounds, people, or your own thoughts. Don't forget extra tapes and batteries.

► A small, short-wave radio if you want to keep up with the news. Sony and Radio Shack make small ones half the size of a paperback book. The price range for such radios is in the \$50 to \$300 range. Digital circuitry is more expensive, but a search/scan function saves hours of slow scanning through all of the channels.

► If you insist on using an electric razor, make sure it has a 220/110 volt

switch or batteries with sufficient half-life to work throughout the trip.

► A coffee pot or heating coil. These are high wattage, so again make sure the transformer can handle it

A final bit of advice on this topic: Surges and brownouts are a problem only if the devices are plugged in. Get in the habit of unplugging your appliances as soon as you are finished with them or they are finished recharging. You may be glad you did.

GIFTS FOR MISSIONARIES AND NATIONALS

Carrying items to the mission field is a very important part of your ministry. In most developing countries, the mail is very unreliable, and items are often stolen before they arrive. Additionally, the cost of sending items from the United States is very expensive. One short-term missionary spouse put it this way: "It is a crime if you arrive on a station with any unused weight allowances and only your personal stuff." You will have only limited room in your baggage, so you must prioritize the items you take to ensure that the most critical items reach the hospital. There are three different categories of items that you may be asked to take:

► Items that the hospital or missionary directly requests that you bring. These items should have the highest priority, and you should make every effort to take them. Getting the missionaries to tell you something they really want or need is sometimes very difficult and requires patience and repeated contact. Of course, they usually don't think of it

until the day before you are scheduled to leave, and then they want something esoteric like a left-handed monkey wrench with an attached modem made by a now-defunct company. But the treasure hunt is part of the fun.

► Items that you know will be usually needed. You know because the agency has told you, the work or missionary has published a general list, or because of your past experience. Critical medications and supplies that are not easily available in-country would fall in this category.

► Items that friends and family have asked you to carry with you. These items are usually of a personal nature and can be everything from Christmas gifts to videotapes to family photos. Although these things are very meaningful, they are often not essential and should, therefore, have a low priority (but ahead of the non-requested gifts you had thought to take). You have to be willing to say "no." Those who request that you carry items for them may have

no idea how much you already must pack. Certainly use every ounce of your allowed weight, but you are not obligated to take extra baggage unless you wish to do so. If you must take excess baggage, please contact your travel agent or airline with the dimensions and weight. As mentioned earlier, sometimes it will be allowed free of charge. If you have to pay for the excess baggage, please feel free to bring that to the attention of the hospital or missionaries. You should contact the doctor in charge or the visiting staff coordinator to let them know about the expected cost. Try to supply a percentage of the cost to be assessed toward each person who had things included in the baggage. Another option is to charge the cost to the project you are funding through your parent organization. Check with them before doing so, to see if this is allowable. The third option would be to pay these expenses out of your pocket as a gift to those you are visiting on the field.

WARNING! Pack items you are taking for others in your luggage among your own stuff. Take any new items out of the packaging and separate the instruction booklets from the item. Do not carry them in boxes. Always carry the receipts with you for the item in case they are needed in a discussion with the customs agent. You may need receipts even for your own things that look new, just to prove that they are yours. Electronics are perhaps the thing that will set off the most red flags. If you are hit for customs and want to pay the duties for the missionaries that is fine, but if you are bringing something at their request and if the duty fee seems too high, it is appropriate to ask for a receipt for the item (making sure the serial number,

model number, and a good description are noted) and leave it with the customs agent. The missionary can come back and pay the duties for the item and have the advantage of arguing in the native tongue.

If you have extra room and your luggage is still light after all of the above, here are some ideas for things for the missionaries. It is not by any means an exhaustive list:

- ▶ Clothing for the missionary children
- ▶ Entertainment items:
 - Up-to-date magazines and/or newspapers
 - Recorded videos of recent sporting events or television specials
 - Videotape (or DVDs if they have the players) movies (being sensitive to the language and violence issue)
 - New novels or non-fictional works that may be of interest to them
- ▶ New items to help the missionaries worship
- ▶ Christian videotapes for the children
- ▶ Christian music (keeping in mind their interests in music). This can be a recording or new sheet music and songbooks of worship music.
- ▶ New Christian books, Christian novels, Bible study handbooks, personal devotional books, etc.
- ▶ Cassettes or videotapes of your pastor or other famous pastors or singing groups
- ▶ Special food items. These make a great hostess gift. If you brought a lot, ask your host missionary to divvy it up among their compatriots.
 - Marshmallows, powdered drinks, gelatin deserts, popcorn, and pepperoni are perennial favorites
 - M&M's™, Hershey Kisses™, chocolate and butterscotch chips, coconut, nuts

- Salad dressing mixes, Dream Whip™, chili or taco seasoning, mixes of all kinds for baking and cooking
- American peanut butter
- ▶ Paper products and stamps. High-quality paper is difficult to get in many places and is expensive. Stationery, greeting cards, and thank-you notes are appreciated. Stamps for their home country are often appreciated since they can send letters back with you or some other visitor to be mailed in America.
- ▶ Soaps, lotions, and cosmetics. One missionary waxed rhapsodically about a bottle of American dishwashing soap!
- ▶ Hair accessories
- ▶ Zip-lock™ bags and Tupperware® or Rubbermaid® containers. Pack your suitcase with everything in them and then leave them after washing them out when you leave. Stuff cracks in your suitcase with the plastic bags. Make sure some are large enough to put in your wet and dirty clothes.
- ▶ Medications for the hospital or clinic work you are going to perform are sometimes a problem. There is a worldwide awareness program pointing out the dangers of outdated drugs. Most countries will not allow outdated drugs into their borders and some require that the expiration date must be at least six months later than the date of entry into the country. Sometimes the official policy and roadblocks to importation of those drugs does not seem consistent with the fact that you can buy any medication over the counter at the pharmacy or from a little lady at the market who has piles of drugs of various shapes and colors, unmarked, unidentifiable, and who prescribes by color. It is very tempting to collect all the sample drugs that you are given and “repackage” them

to save room. If you do, do so with the knowledge that they might be confiscated if you get the wrong person in customs on the wrong day. At the very least, make sure you put in the drug inserts and at least one package with a clearly identifiable expiration date. If you get the drugs in bulk from one of the wholesalers or ministries mentioned in the Appendix, it is safest not to repackage them until you have gone through customs. Make sure you take the proper paperwork with you. Many people doing short-term outpatient clinic work will create a dose pack for the commonly used medications. This saves time, but you do run the risk of having your drugs confiscated because they are not properly labeled. If you create a label for these dose packs, make sure the name, manufacturer, and expiration date are clearly spelled out. Get advice from someone who has done it before in this country and from your in-country professionals. Taking narcotics and controlled drugs is another issue beyond the scope of this discussion, but make sure you have properly gone through all the channels and have all of the needed paperwork.

▶ Taking surgical, medical, laboratory, or imaging supplies can sometimes be a problem. It seems to help if you carry a signed and sealed letter from your organization stating that these are gifts for the work and for the people of the country. Also a letter of invitation from a person at a recognized institution, governmental office (local or federal), or known ministry within the country can often smooth the way. If the goods are confiscated, get a detailed receipt and leave it to your in-country contacts to solve the problem later. Do not pay a bribe.

Gifts for the nationals are sometimes a little trickier if you want to prevent the “Santa Claus” syndrome. Many missionaries are very leery of visitors with gifts. They understandably want to avoid creating the perception within the nationals’ minds that every visitor bears gifts and that the nationals with whom you are most likely to interact have somehow received favored status with the missionaries because they have received gifts from many visitors. Always clear it with the missionary before you give any gift worth more than a few dollars. Remember, in many of the countries where you will work, a full day’s wage for a working man is only a dollar or a dollar and a half. What you perceive as a minor gift may not be perceived in that culture as a minor gift, and you do not wish to precipitate a major cultural and employee rift.

► Gifts of yourself are always the best, both at home and on missions:

- Take a musical instrument if it is not too big, or accompaniment tapes if you want to sing special music. Guitars are not uncommon in most Third World countries, so you may be able to borrow one.
- If you are an artist, take your sketchbook, pencils, and pastels. If you start drawing nationals, you will have an instant audience. Your artistic skills may be appreciated elsewhere, as you design and execute wall murals, give art lessons, and add beauty to the locale.
- If you have skills in puppetry, take your puppets or the materials with which to make them. Teach the nationals how to make them and how to use them. Help them build sets and screens.
- Balloons—kids love them. They are cheap and a guaranteed hit. Buy a book on how to make animals out of them. It is not hard, and with a little practice you will be a superstar.
- Magic tricks. Anyone can learn some simple tricks with some practice. If you can combine them with a gospel message, you will have an especially great ministry.
- Take a folding pocket parafoil kite and fly it with the children.
- Work with the children:
 - Sunday school materials, especially visual ones, for telling Bible stories.
 - Craft supplies
 - Coloring books (especially with biblical themes) and crayons
 - Bible stories, and small gifts of the type usually given for Sunday schools and Vacation Bible Schools. Your local Christian bookstore is a good source and there are many companies over the Internet that sell appropriate little novelties and gifts.
 - Toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, and brushes
 - A roll of shiny American pennies makes 50 great gifts and souvenirs of their visiting American.
 - Candy and chewing gum (if gum is allowed) are never a bad choice for children the world around.
 - Create wordless gospel books or bracelets and teach them its message.
 - Puppets, coloring books, etc.
- Other gifts that are for adult nationals could include:
 - Bibles (especially reference types) or Bible study helps for pastors and laymen if they speak English or some other language that you can get Bibles written in.
 - Writing paper and pens (in bulk, paper

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is heavy!). Ballpoint pens are very popular gifts, especially the retractable type.

- Wall calendars
- Hand towels
- Tee-shirts
- Bookmarks
- Small U.S. flags
- Pins
- Used clothing and shoes as gifts for house helpers and other nationals you meet
- Cassette tapes of music from your church or by favorite musicians—be sensitive to cross-cultural tastes in music.
- Cheap watches (often obtainable for as low as \$5 each at discount stores), solar-powered (dual) calculators
- Pictures of yourself and your family. Bargain photo deals like those available through discount stores may be ideal. One option is a mini prayer card the size of a business card with your

picture and description of your ministry on one side and your contact information on the other.

- ▶ For the hospital or medical personnel:
 - Surgical scrubs, surgical dresses, caps, white coats
 - Penlights, reflex hammers, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs
 - Surgical instruments and equipment
 - Oximeters and other hand-held instruments
- ▶ Here are some things also to take with you that weigh nothing and are very useful. You will be glad you brought them:
 - A sense of humor when you get uptight over situations and people
 - A teachable attitude toward those you are working with
 - A desire to learn from God, missionaries, and nationals
 - A flexible spirit when things don't go as planned
 - A willing heart to do whatever you are asked to do

