

Hitting the road

If the dream of a summer trip is distracting you from your studies, then read on, because it isn't far away.

Your thoughts might lie with partying on one of Australia's great beaches, or you might be thinking about heading to a tropical destination in Asia. Or perhaps further afield, to Europe or someplace else on this exciting planet.

There are a few musts to travel, even if you are the sort of person who likes to just up-and-go. You – or your organizing friend that's coming with you – has to work out as a minimum, how you get there, where you stay when you arrive, have you got enough money to feed yourself and if you are going overseas, you must have a passport.

If you have secured all this, then it is okay to just let the adventure unfold once you arrive, though rest assured under this strategy things might not always end up the way you expect. A bit of extra planning is not a bad idea.

First up, decide where you want to go, by browsing websites and travel guides looking for the place that captures your imagination, or by talking with other people who have been there.

Once you've decided on where you are going, hunt around for the best fares on how to get there – remember though that fare specials advertised are often only available off-peak or have only a few tickets on sale at the cheap price. Your best chance is to get in early.

Next is to book some accommodation, though if you are planning to be on the move, you might not book all this in advance.



The first couple of nights though are worth booking because wandering the streets in a place you don't know – looking for somewhere to sleep after a long bus or plane ride – will test your patience.

And if you are going overseas and don't yet have a passport, get online now (www.passports.gov.au) and start the process as it will take some time. And while you are online search out the visa requirements for the country you are visiting.

Then there is insurance. Travel insurance is highly recommended – it not only saves you from being lumbered with a hefty potential bill, but being able to flash a travel insurance card might just expedite service a bit quicker in an out of the way place.

Once you've locked in the big stuff, keep doing as much research

as you can – the more you know about a country and its people before you arrive, the quicker you get under the skin of a place. Consider learning a few words of the local language and make sure you know what's considered polite and what's not in terms of eating, greeting and dressing.

Before you leave, make sure your family and friends know where you are going and how they can keep in contact.

Then comes the packing and deciding what to take on your trip. The golden rule is to take as little as you can. You're the one who has to carry it all around the place, but also don't forget that there are limits on what planes and buses will let you take, so check that out when you book.

Clothes take up a lot of space in

your bag, so try and cut them right back to the minimum. A word of warning though before you turf the jacket – check what the weather will be at the place you are going. Keep your toiletry bag light by taking small portions of what you need, and don't forget to include a few basic first aid items and any medicines you might need. Don't take too many books – if you want to read novels, you can often swap them with other travelers when you get there.

Think about how you are going to do your laundry and maybe take an elastic clothes line you can tie on the porch. A pocket knife that opens cans and bottles is also worth considering, as are padlocks to secure your bag. Check out the travel shops for more ideas on lightweight, compact items that may become indispensable for you on the road.

Websites you might want to check out

www.smarttraveller.gov.au (visa information and travel warnings)

www.lonelyplanet.com (guide books for everywhere in the world)

www.statravel.com.au (travel agency specialising in student travel)


www.flightcentre.com.au (travel agency with large network of offices)

www.bootsnall.com (travel ideas including online message board and blogs)

Tackling climate change

Climate change is a serious environmental threat, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. We all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Give thought to how often you fly. Take fewer trips – stay for longer! Or consider making any flights you do take 'climate neutral'. A number of travel companies support the carbon offset scheme run by ClimateCare.

Log on to www.climatecare.org and use the 'carbon calculator' to work out your greenhouse gas responsibility and the amount of payment you can make to a scheme that offsets this. These schemes include renewable energy, energy efficiency and forest restoration projects across the world, including India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda. 



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