

ADVENTURES

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Alastair Humphreys & Elise Metcalf



CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1: WHY TRAVEL?

- p7 Advice for young people dreaming of adventure
- p9 On escaping towards where you want to be

CHAPTER 2: HOW TO PAY FOR IT?

- p12 How much will it cost?
- p15 How to save £1000 without really noticing

CHAPTER 3: HOW TO PREPARE?

- p18 Travel light, live cheap
- p21 How to arrange your visas when travelling
- p22 Who to go with?
- p24 Is it safe to travel as a lone female?

CHAPTER 4: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET BACK?

- p2 Reasons to travel or not to travel
- p30 To study or to travel
- p31 Commit to Action
- p32 Still Interested?

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

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Many young people dream of adventure. I am guessing that you are one of them. Are you excited about visiting a certain part of the world? Or perhaps you are bored with where you grew up and thinking 'there must be more to life than this?' You might be seeking a challenge, looking to test yourself and stretch your boundaries. You may need a break before moving on to the next stage of your studies or career. Or maybe you'd like to try to make a career out of travel and adventure.

Adventure is a fun, thrilling experience that so many people dream of. It's a good thing to have in your life, no doubt. What then is stopping you from just going - right now?

There are countless reasons why you might want to travel. I can't begin to guess what drives you. But I can probably predict what might be stopping you. My guess is that it probably falls into one of these categories:

- Lack of time
- Lack of money
- Lack of knowledge
- Fear of danger
- Fear of what people will think
- Fear that you should be getting a proper job



Am I right?

If so, then I hope that you will find encouragement in these pages. These are the questions people always ask me, and I have tried to address them. Here's a 60-second summary to begin with:

Lack of time: start small with a microadventure

Lack of money: save £20 a week for a year and you've got £1000. That's enough. Save £2 for a week and you've got £100. That's also enough

Lack of knowledge: you need to see this as an opportunity and a starting point, not a barrier. You learn by doing

Fear of danger: men and women have been on adventures for generations. The world is not more dangerous today. Every generation has its own out-of-bounds danger zones, but don't hide behind the excuse that 'it was easier back then'

Fear of what people will think: discard the noise made by people you don't respect. Heed the thoughts of those you love. But remember most of all the person whose opinion you have to live with forever: your own. Do what feels right and important and worthwhile to you, and you won't go far wrong

Fear that you should be getting a proper job: you're going to be about 80 before you ever get to retire, so a year on the road now is not a big deal in the grand scheme of things. Doing a big adventure makes you more employable, not less

The most important part of my education? Spending a year teaching in a small school in a village in Africa for a year. I learned more about the world and myself than I ever did at school or university. It was much cheaper, too!

The best apprenticeship I did as preparation for a working life? Putting together a big expedition. Learning to take responsibility for my actions, to make stuff happen, to work to a budget, to overcome difficulties, to balance pragmatism and idealism, to graft towards something that made me proud: these things would make anyone better at any job.

Putting together a collection of advice and encouragement for young people dreaming of adventure has succeeded in making me feel extremely old! I began travelling the world long before Instagram came along. So it felt important to work on this project with someone who could help ensure that it was relevant and useful to people just setting out on a life of adventure. I worked with Elise – a young, smart, ambitious woman – to put together the advice here. Elise is a writer, a fitness enthusiast, and a traveller. Indeed, Elise is chasing me to hurry up with this foreword because she is heading off on another adventure to Africa soon and we need to get this guide completed before she goes.

I hope I can persuade you that the advice I offer is hard-won and relevant to you. I have travelled to 90 or so countries, I've been on trips by bike and boat and boot and backpack, I've written a bunch of travel books. But I only did all of these things by beginning. I once

knew nothing about travel and adventure and was just as daunted and confused as you might be now. I have been skint, nervous, clueless, and worried about the pressure to 'get a proper job'. I have tried hard, with Elise's help, to remember what I really needed to know back when I was starting out.


I appreciate that every individual has their own circumstances and that some lives are harder than others. If you are yearning for adventure but feel that it is not possible for you, I urge you to resist saying, 'it's easy for that guy to say - he doesn't have X problem that I have.' We all have a choice in life: to seek out the opportunities and the possibilities that we DO have (a small adventure is still an adventure), or to hide behind the barriers and excuses of our life and our mind.

Come then, with Elise and me. Allow us to throw down a bunch of ideas and suggestions and questions for you. I hope they will get you thinking and planning positively towards your first big adventure.

Send us a postcard!

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BIO – Alastair Humphreys is a British Adventurer and Author. He has been on expeditions all around the world, travelling through over 80 countries by bicycle, boat and on foot. He was named as one of National Geographic's Adventurers of the year for 2012.

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A WORD FROM ELISE

I proposed the idea of putting together some content on adventures for young people because of my own experience of desperately wanting to go on an adventure of some sort, but having absolutely no idea where to begin. Every time I thought of an idea, people were quick to pick holes in my suggestion– whether it was doubt as to how I would afford it, hesitation over whether I could do it, or concern about my safety (made worse by the fact that I am a young female travelling alone). I began to doubt myself, and wondered how on earth anyone ever got round to actually going on an adventure when there seemed to be so many barriers in the way.

Talking to Alastair and reading some of his blogs, I realised that the problems and barriers that one faces when planning an adventure as a young person can be overcome. When I sought to find solutions instead of looking for problems, it became clear that the only thing that was stopping me from going out on a grand adventure was myself. I realised that sometimes you just have to get a grip, pack up your bags, cast caution to the wind and go for it.

I hope that this short book, filled with words of wisdom from an experienced traveller like Alastair, will help give young people the initiative and incentive to stop faltering at hurdles and instead seek out solutions to make their adventure possible. There is a lot of uncertainty for young people. Leaving education can be a challenging and confusing time. Some people decide to put the world of employment on hold and follow the wanderlust that consumes them, whilst others are quite happy to stay put, and realise their adventure takes a form other than travel.



Although this book is more directed to those with leanings towards the former, the overall message behind Alastair's words is applicable to all. Whether your adventure is taking a year off to travel the world, using the summer holiday to cycle across Europe or using a long weekend off work to camp above the clouds, adventure is out there and it's up to you whether or not you want to grasp it.

I am excited to say that I have finally got my act together and by the time this is published, I will be in Kenya, on my own adventure: a 12-week volunteering placement with VSO helping tackle secure livelihood development issues within a local community. I am excited to see how this adventure shapes the direction of my future and hopefully the many adventures I will have to come.

Happy reading. And if you're in any doubt just remember- it's your life and it's up to you how you live it.

BIO – Elise Metcalf is a writer, traveller and fitness enthusiast who has lived in Belgium, Switzerland and the USA. Having recently completed her degree in International Relations from the University of Exeter, she is excited to see where her travels will take her in the future.

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1

WHY TRAVEL?



ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DREAMING OF ADVENTURE

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This may be your first extended period away from home, away from the comfortable familiarity of your own country. No offence, but you're probably pretty clueless about many things – **finance, logistics, expedition skills, interacting with different kinds of people.** I certainly was. But these are all good reasons why you should try to be brave enough to head out into the world. To learn, to grow up, to make your CV awesome, to have fun. The rite of passage journey is thousands of years old, and rightly so. If you're doubting how worthwhile it may be, **ask your Grandpa** about his first youthful adventures, mishaps and escapades. Watch his eyes light up as the torrent of tales pour forth about those glory days. You are inexperienced and broke. I understand. But please believe me when I tell you this is the very best time in your life to go and explore.

If you doubt me, speak to any tired-looking 40-year-old on any commuter train in any town. Ask them if they have six months spare to go cycle off into the sunset? Ask them about the ties that bind their lives. They may be good ties (family, career, a home), but they certainly are ties that make adventure more complicated.

You will never again have so much free time and so few commitments.

You have years and decades of "career" ahead of you so delaying this for a while whilst you go do something crazy is not a bad idea. Anyone who tells you that is an idiot. You can quote me on that. I cannot think of a single occupation that you will be worse at after spending time slowly exploring the world.




GO DO SOMETHING AWESOME JUST BECAUSE YOU WANT TO.
BECAUSE YOU NEED TO.

9 ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION I AM ALWAYS ASKED AT THE END OF MY TALKS: “WHY DO YOU TRAVEL?”

- 1 **Why not?**
- 2 **It's fun.** or at least it's fun looking back on it when it's over
- 3 **There's a hell of a big world out there** and I don't want to limit my experiences and education to the tiny corner I happened to be born in
- 4 I haven't yet found a more **fulfilling. exciting. worthwhile** thing to do with my allocation of days
- 5 **Because I can**
- 6 Because **I can't do anything else** very well
- 7 **To test myself** (*in my angry youth I may have added, red-faced and raging up a hill, “to prove myself to others”*) and to enjoy the self-confidence that develops
- 8 **To encourage young people to chase their own Everests** (*or perhaps a slightly lower yet less crowded, expensive peak*). This is a relatively new addition to my list but an increasingly strong one
- 9 **To feel alive**





WHAT'S THE WORST
THAT CAN HAPPEN?
YOU PROBABLY WON'T
DROWN OR GET EATEN
BY A SHARK.
SO GIVE IT A TRY!

ON ESCAPING TOWARDS → WHERE YOU WANT TO BE...

I had no right, really, to set off to try to cycle round the world. I wasn't an expert cyclist. I wasn't a seasoned explorer. I wasn't rich, or wise, or brave. For all those reasons I found pedalling away from my front door an extremely daunting and frightening experience. The doorstep mile is the hardest one of all. Thankfully my excitement about the adventure ahead propelled me into action and got me going.

But learning to begin before I was ready proved to be one of the most valuable lessons of my life. **"Ready. Fire. Aim!"** is a brilliant mantra to live by (unless you're a soldier or BASE jumper...) and has served me well so many times. Most things are not as difficult or daunting as you first imagine them to be. **Most things you attempt are very forgiving of early blunders.** Cycling around the world gave me the confidence to leap into new projects. If you're not yet on this journey you'll have to trust me that you too are capable of more than you imagine, that you should begin something big and

keep plugging away at it.

I had no right to cycle round the world. But I've now done it, so I guess that makes me an expert. In which case, allow me to put on my Expert's Hat and invite you to the party: "Come on in! Whatever it is you are hesitant to begin, let me invite you to begin. If you're already on the way, I give you permission to continue."

Imagine if what you are attempting came with a 100% guarantee that you couldn't fail. That's never the case in the real world, I know. But just imagine: if there was no way you could fail, what would you do? And when would you begin it? I suspect the idea would be pretty exciting, and you'd begin it right now. So, in the spirit of fearing regrets more than failure, why don't you begin today anyway? You might fail, of course. (If you succeed at everything you do it doesn't mean you are amazing: it means you're wallowing down in your comfort zone.) Living adventurously is about taking risks.

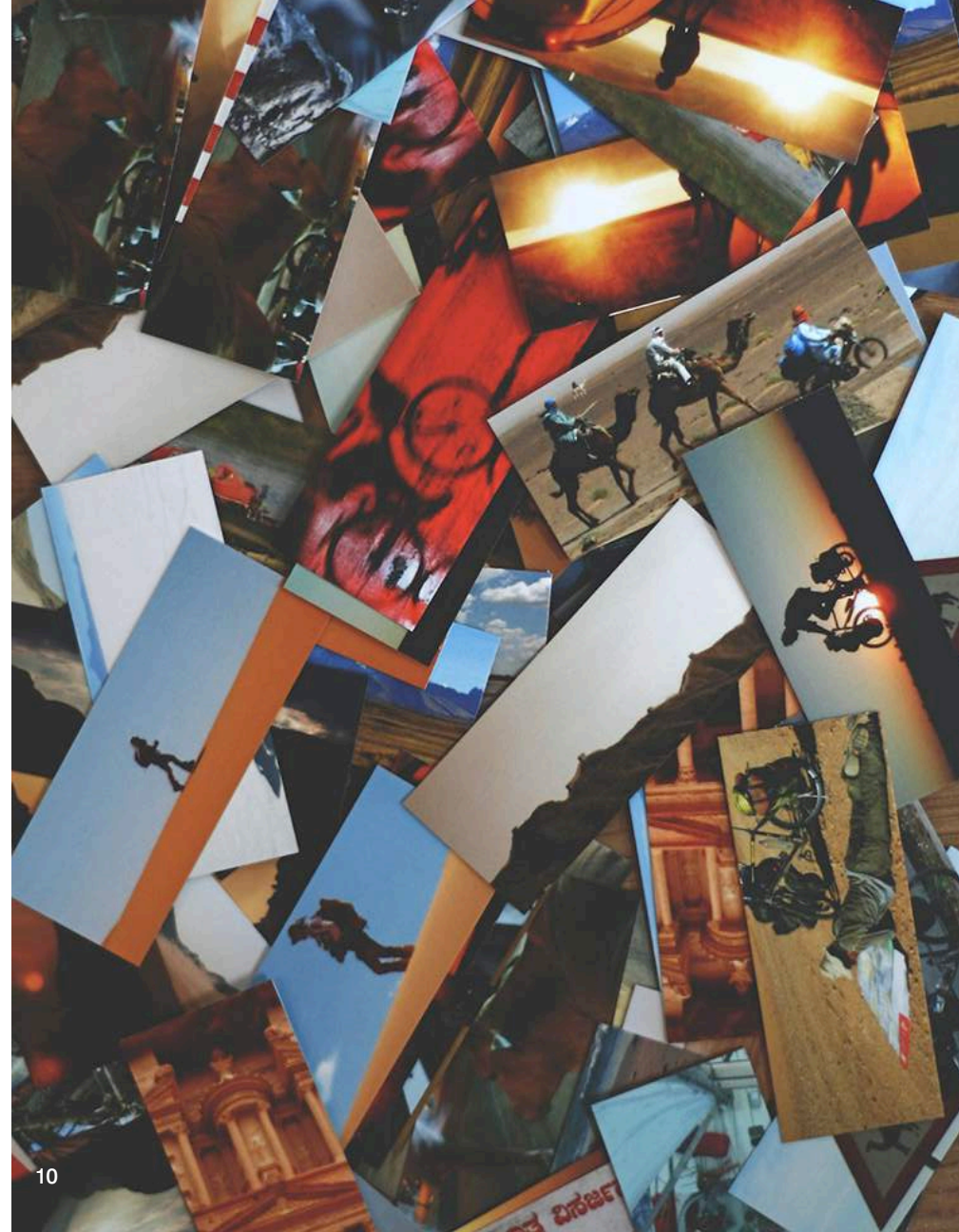
Waiting is the worst thing you can do. Waiting because you are 'planning'. Waiting because the time's not right. Waiting until you've got more time, more money, more expertise. There's never a perfect time to tackle something big and difficult. Do, don't think!

A really nice tip to help you be more honest with yourself, your excuses, your fears, is to swap the word "can't" with "choose not to"...

**I CAN'T AFFORD THIS.
I CHOOSE NOT TO AFFORD THIS.**

**I CAN'T SPARE THE TIME.
I CHOOSE NOT TO SPARE THE TIME.**

Be honest with the man or woman in the mirror. The time has come to decide what it is you are going to do. And to begin. No more thinking. No more procrastinating. Begin. Now. The doorstep mile is the critical one. What is the first tiny little step you need to do to get in motion? Something that you can complete before you go to bed tonight. Then wake up tomorrow, proud that you are in motion, and take the next little step. You're on your way!



2

HOW TO PAY FOR IT

The background is a textured blue gradient. In the lower half, there is a faint, stylized illustration of a landscape. On the left, a person is standing next to a bicycle. On the right, a person is hiking with a backpack. The landscape includes rolling hills and mountains in the distance.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

You can spend as much or as little as you like on an adventure. My good friends at the Scott Expedition spent a million quid on their chilly camping holiday. Rowing the Atlantic is a pretty pricey way of going boating. If you've got enough cash, you can pay someone to drag you up Everest (though you'll still have to queue).

But if you don't have access to that sort of cash, don't give up. You can still have an adventure that is fun, or challenging, or long distance depending on what appeals to you.



#1: GETTING OUT THERE AND MAKING ADVENTURE HAPPEN:

When I was a student, my friend and I bought plane tickets to southern Spain. They were on offer – £5 – irresistibly cheap.

We decided to fly to Spain and try to only spend £5 in our week there. We had no idea what we were going to do once we got there, except to try to make some sort of adventure happen. Leaving the airport we grinned at each other in the sunshine, stuck out our thumbs and began hitchhiking. If you have no plan, let someone else make it for you. A car stopped. Picked us up. Drove us as far as Ronda. We got out. I had never heard of Ronda before, but it's a pretty great spot for a couple of hitchhikers to arrive in. 'What next?' we wondered.

Perhaps due to a chronic lack of imagination, we decided to walk back to the airport. But in a straight line. Cross-country. We set off on what turned into an epic week of scrambling up and down steep hillsides, buying bread in sleepy whitewashed villages and pinching occasional oranges from trees. We had no map. We followed our noses, slept under the stars, warmed ourselves by campfires and chatted to farmers who were surprised to see us so far from the tourist trail. It was a magical week. On the final night we slept in sewage pipes in a builders' yard on the outskirts of Malaga. But that's another story!

The next morning we flew home hungry and smelly, but it was one of the best adventures I've ever had. I still think of it often.

TOTAL COST: £10

HERE ARE THREE
ADVENTURE STORIES TO
GET YOU DREAMING...



#2: CROSSING A CONTINENT:

With three weeks to spare, a friend and I decided to cycle across Europe. We flew to Istanbul and began riding home.

The maths was quite simple. We had to ride 100 miles a day, every single day. We had £100 each to spend (plus money for flights and ferries), which meant a simple budget of £5 a day. I remember the stinking madness of the roads of Istanbul. I remember our excitement as we made it out of the city. I remember reaching the Sea of Marmara and how refreshing it felt to run into the water and cool down. Then it was back on the bike and ride, ride, ride.

100 miles a day was really tough for me back then and this was a gruelling physical challenge. But that is what we wanted. We were invited in to a family's home for strong coffee and fresh oranges. We saw a dead bear beside the road. I waited for my friend for ages at the top of a winding hairpin pass in Greece. I was annoyed at his slowness. But then he arrived with his helmet full of sweets, like a foraged basket of blackberries, that a passing driver had given him. Those bonus, free calories tasted so good! I remember the satisfaction of seeing the odometer tick over to "100" each day. I remember the simple fun of finding a quiet spot to wild camp, particularly the night in a flinty olive orchard as the sun set over the bay below us. Those were good days. (Or they were until we reached Rome when my ankle spontaneously swelled up and I had to fly home in agony with my leg in plaster! My friend valiantly continued the ride by himself and made it home on time and on budget).

TOTAL COST: £400 (ish)





#3: A SHORT WALK IN THE WESTERN GHATS:

I once walked 600 miles across Southern India because I wanted a challenge but didn't have much time or money.

I wanted to try to understand what drives me to all these adventures I feel addicted to. In order to understand that, I felt I had to push myself really hard. Head thumping, heat shimmering, sun beating. Loneliness in crowds of foreign tongues staring at one foreign face. Bruised feet dragging spirit bruised shoulders. Can't think. Can't speak. Just walk. The monotony of the open road. These are common complaints on a difficult journey. I often get them all in a single day, and know there will be more of the same tomorrow. Most days involve very little except for this carousel of discomfort. It doesn't sound like much of an escape. Yet escape is a key part of the appeal of the road.

All my adult life I have felt the need to get away. Its intensity and frequency ebbs and flows but it has never gone altogether. Perhaps it is immaturity, perhaps a low tolerance threshold. But there is something about rush hour on the London underground, tax returns and the spirit-sapping averageness of normal life that weighs on

my soul like a damp, drizzly November. Life's so much easier out on the road. But the rush of freedom I feel each time I escape keeps me coming back for more. Trading it all in for simplicity, adventure, endurance, curiosity and perspective. For my complicated love affair with the open road.

Escaping to the open road is not a solution to life's difficulties. It's not going to win the beautiful girl or stop the debt letters piling up on the doormat. It's just an escape. A pause button for real life. Life is so much simpler out there. But it is not only about running away. It's about challenging myself, to see what I am capable of. I don't see it as opting out of life. I'm opting in.

On this walk my feet and shoulders are the vital parts of my body. My face, my looks and my hairstyle are irrelevant. Out here nobody knows who I am. Nobody knows what I have failed at. Nobody knows what I have achieved. I'm just a guy on a walk. (Extract from my book *'There Are Other Rivers'*).

TOTAL COST: £500 (ish)





HOW TO SAVE £1000 WITHOUT REALLY NOTICING

One of the biggest problems with launching your dream adventure is saving enough money.

So here is an easy way to get saving. It requires zero willpower or organisational skills.

And it shouldn't cause too much daily hardship in your life, either.



* Start a new bank account.

This is the only hassle of the whole plan.
And it's not much of a hassle at all. I set up
a new account in under 15 minutes.

* Set up a Standing Order

from your main bank account to the new
account. Each week transfer £20 to the
new account. (If you can't afford £20 a
week even after cutting out your daily
cup of coffee and a couple of beers then
choose a figure you can afford. Just don't
use this as an excuse to do nothing at
all.) The important thing is to choose an
amount that you can spare without much
stress or worry.


* Persuade a friend to do the same

* The hardest part is over


This is such a painless way to raise
£1000 for your adventure in just one year.
Now it is time for the second phase of
the scheme...

* Tell everyone

that in one year's time you are going
to cycle to Sweden or run to Romania
or hitch-hike to Hanoi.



* You now have
one year to
sort out every
other aspect of
the adventure
(commitment,
equipment,
fitness, time
off work etc.)



Alastair Humphreys

How to Cycle more safely in traffic

illustrated by:
www.laurengentry.com



My suggestions on equipment to help you be safer on the roads:

Use a mirror

(UNLESS YOU ARE GOOD AT LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDER EVERY 5 SECONDS)



wear a helmet



BRIGHT FRONT & BACK LIGHTS FOR YOU AND YOUR BICYCLE



ASSUME EVERY VEHICLE IS ABOUT TO SUDDENLY TURN LEFT



OBEY THE LAW

My suggestions on riding techniques in traffic:

- Make eye contact
- Communicate with hand signals



DON'T Listen to music while cycling

GIVE DRIVERS A THUMB'S UP IF THEY ARE NICE TO YOU

3

HOW TO PREPARE



TRAVEL LIGHT, LIVE CHEAP.

I was reading a website this morning that had a suggested kit list for a round the world backpacking journey. It was ridiculous! Captain Scott and Edmund Hillary did not have as much fancy gear as this list was suggesting. And the cost of it all would mean that, if I bought all their suggestions, then I would only have enough money left over for a weekend break on the Isle of Wight rather than a once-in-a-lifetime round the world odyssey.

So I am going to play devil's advocate and suggest an alternative way to the backpackers I have seen in many countries, hot-faced and stressed, hiking from bus station to hostel with a massive pack on their backs and another one on their front.

**"I'M GOING
TO SUGGEST
TRAVELLING LIGHT,
REALLY LIGHT."**

MY SUGGESTIONS ARE BASED ON TWO KEY POINTS:

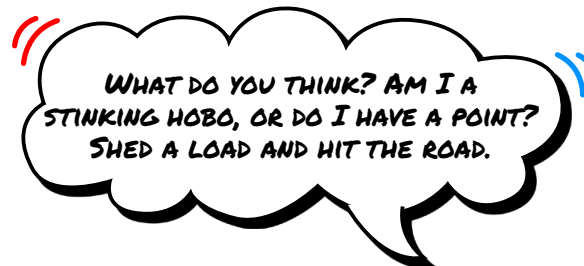
1. There are already people living in the country you are going to. There are shops there where you can buy stuff if you need it. You do not need to carry with you everything you may need for every imaginable scenario.

I once spent three months travelling round the Philippines. I travelled only with hand luggage. I had one pair of trousers, one pair of shorts, one shirt, one raincoat, one pair of socks, two pairs of underwear, a pair of shoes, and my flip-flops. I had to wash my clothes in the sink at night. I look identical in every single photograph from the trip. But the experience was so liberating. Towards the end of the trip I began giving away all the items I needed no longer. So I landed at Heathrow with only the clothes I was wearing: shorts, t-shirt, flip-flops and a conical straw hat that I had swapped for my shirt. By the time my train home arrived in Yorkshire I was very cold and looked massively out of place. But those days of travelling light are still some of my fondest travel memories.

2. An important aspect of backpacking is to leave your normal life behind for a while. A little simplicity and basic living is no bad thing.

Recover from recoiling in horror at my omission of laptops, special outfits for partying and vast first aid kits. Internet cafes can be found worldwide and party frocks don't belong on an adventure blog. Think about what citizens of the country you are in do should they suddenly get haemorrhoids, a bee sting, or a sore throat: they go to a chemist and buy a medicine. Don't feel the need to carry with you a treatment for everything you might never catch.

Although I anticipate you will probably carry more than this on your next trip (and so would I), I hope it provokes you to question what you really do need, and what you can live without for a few weeks or months.





MY ALTERNATIVE KIT LIST FOR A BACKPACKING ADVENTURE

It matters not whether you are going for a week or year: you still need just the same amount of stuff. Let's assume you are going to a warm part of the world and are not planning to do any hardcore trekking etc.

Here is all you need to take. It's cheap and it's simple. Sexy, it ain't! Remember: you're going on an adventure, not planning a military invasion and siege!

1 long-sleeved shirt.

Roll the sleeves up and unbutton the front when you are hot. Do the reverse when cold

1 raincoat.

Also acts as an extra layer if you are cold

1 set of underwear, 1 pair of socks.

1 swimsuit

(can also double as underwear).

All-purpose shoes

and flip flops or sandals

1 pair trousers

that convert into shorts, or 1 dress

30 litre backpack

Silk sleeping bag. Packs down tiny, keeps bed bugs away, very warm for its size

Mosquito net

Basic toiletries. Suncream and mosquito repellent

Camera

Diary and pen

One reading book. Swap it when you're done

Guidebook. If you must

Map of the country

Sunhat, sunglasses

Pen Knife (leave this behind if you plan to fly with only hand luggage)

Mug (great for eating breakfast cereal from too)

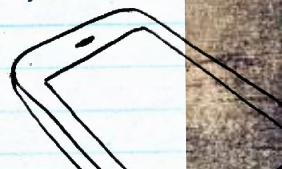
Spoon

Water bottle and water purifying tablets

Passport, credit card, cash etc.

Back up your files online before you fly.

Phone & Charger



HOW TO ARRANGE YOUR VISAS

"DON'T TICK THE
LITTLE BOX THAT ASKS
IF YOU'RE A TERRORIST
OR A SPY."

I am often asked about the complexities of securing visas on my travels. What I have found is that, if you play the game properly, fill in all the right forms in all the right places, don't tick the little box that asks if you are a terrorist or spy, and swallow a big patience pill, then the whole process is not as daunting as it seems.

Research the countries you are excited by and ask questions from people who have been there. not from the Doom And Gloom Merchants who've never even been there. The *Lonely Planet Thorn Tree* is a great place to hang out. If you're going by bicycle then buy the *Adventure Cycle Touring Handbook*. Now put a Start Date in your diary. Tell everyone you are going on that date. Commit to it and begin on that date, even though I guarantee you won't be ready by then. Nobody is. It doesn't matter.

If you're heading off on your first big trip that requires getting several visas here are a few tips. Bear in mind that each individual country is different, that the passport you hold will also affect things, and that things are always liable to change. Keep an eye on travel forums (as well as the wimpishly pessimistic Foreign Office website) for up-to-date news.

* I've written a simplistic list to show how easy the procedure really is. There are occasional variations and extra hassles involved, but so long as you are organised, **work out where the embassies are**, have long enough remaining on your current visa to wait for the next visa to be granted, and **have an alternative route planned** in case your visa application is refused, then bureaucracy need not be a major hassle in your first grand adventure.

- 1. If you're going away for less than three months get all your visas before you leave.** Some countries demand you stipulate an exact entry date, but most do not. If you're not entering a country in the next three months you probably won't be allowed to obtain it that early. In that case you need to get it on the road...
- 2. If you want a visa to country "A" here's what you do.** Find a country ("B") along your route that has an embassy of country "A" in it.
- 3. Go to the embassy.** If you're worried you may be refused a visa it's worth being very friendly and polite and wearing the smartest clothes you can muster.
- 4. Fill in lots of forms. Pay lots of money. Get a receipt.** Make sure you have a photocopy of your passport as in many countries you have to carry one if you have submitted your passport for a visa application.
- 5. Wait.** This can vary from an hour or so (take a good book) up to a few weeks. You might get to know country "B" very well while you wait to be allowed into country "A"!
- 6. Collect your visa and hit the road!**
- 7. Repeat in country "A" in order to get into country "C"**

WHO TO GO WITH?

On most of my travels I have been by myself. But I have also had many great experiences when travelling with a friend. So which is better? Here are a few thoughts to help you weigh up the pros and cons.

WITH A FRIEND:

- It's safer
- It's cheaper (sharing rooms, taxis etc.)
- It's less stressful (you share the haggling with touts and answering the same questions a million times from curious locals. You can keep an eye on each other's bag while one of you nips into a shop or toilet)
- Shared memories to reminisce over when you are old
- Someone to laugh with
- Less daunting and scary heading to strange and unknown places
- Less gear to carry (share a tent, guidebook, medicines)
- Easier to ignore the weirdo on the 24-hour bus ride who is determined to sit next to you and tell you their life story
- Less boring or lonely

SOLO:

- More of a challenge
- You meet more people
- Less bickering
- You can do what you want when you want
- Less time talking about Eastenders: you're more immersed in the experience
- Great for self-confidence – you realise you are capable of more than you imagine
- Solitude
- Strangers are kinder to you
- Real freedom. Arriving in a place where nobody knows a thing about you is liberating
- Greater sense of achievement.
- More peace and quiet, time to think, read, write, take photos
- Easier to tell outrageous lies about your adventures in order to impress girls or boys...

OR



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



JAMIE McDONALD:
RAN 5000 MILES ACROSS CANADA

 www.jamiemcdonald.org

I think the benefits of travelling alone include...

- Embracing the adventure, and everything around you more
- Meeting and connecting with local people
- You only have to focus on one person: you. Selfishly, that can be nice

Whilst the advantages of going with someone else include...

- Two people can work as fast as four people, logistics become easier/faster
- Having company, you never become lonely so whenever you hit low points, you can perk each other up
- Sharing experiences together, and years later you can drink a beer with that person and reminisce

If I had to choose...

"I WOULD GO ALONE: IT'S MORE CHALLENGING AND YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO EMBRACE THE ADVENTURE, PEOPLE AND EXPERIENCES AROUND YOU."



SHIRINE TAYLOR:
CYCLED AROUND THE WORLD

 www.awanderingphoto.com

I think the benefits of travelling alone include...

- Freedom! There is no feeling on earth like being able to choose exactly where you want to go or what you want to do every step of the way
- Being more social and more open to meeting new people
- Learning more about yourself and gaining a sense of independence

Whilst the advantages of going with someone else include...

- You have someone to share your adventure with
- You may get to try more things if you have slightly different interests because you end up doing them both
- You have someone to cuddle up with at night!

If I had to choose...

"I ABSOLUTELY LOVE TRAVELING ALONE AND WILL DEFINITELY BE DOING MORE OF IT THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, BUT NOW THAT I HAVE FOUND "MY PERSON" I WOULDN'T GIVE HIM UP FOR THE WORLD."

IS IT SAFE TO TRAVEL ALONE AS A FEMALE?

Thoughts from Female Adventurers...

TEGAN PHILLIPS:

In areas that are especially conservative in terms of how women are perceived, adventuring as a female alone might induce hostile reactions from a very small portion of local people, and there may be a risk of physical danger. That said, just because something is risky doesn't mean you can't do it. Furthermore, the risk is much lower than media/hype/worried family make it out to be, and (for cycle-tourists) infinitely lower than the risk of being hit by a car. There's a difference between not letting your sex stop you from doing something amazing, and deliberately putting yourself in danger just to prove a point.

What's more, the flipside of the safety issue is that being a solo female adventurer can sometimes have big practical advantages, because people are less likely to be wary of you (guys occasionally have this problem) and more likely to welcome you into their homes etc., even when you're all dirty and sweaty. It seems that people are always willing to help a female on her own.

- It's useful to do at least a tiny bit of research before you go on an adventure, and if you feel a bit uncertain about a place you're thinking of going, do a lot of research.
- A great way to get in touch with other female adventurers is to participate in online forums. But don't get paranoid and let one freakish story scare you off from a place. Bad stuff can and does happen to all types of people all over the world. Resist unwarranted paranoia as best you can!
- If you are nervous, there are alarms you can carry to feel a bit more secure.
- Be respectful – Learning local customs/values/norms and interacting with people in the most respectful, friendly way possible is a great way of not only making cool new friends, but also making yourself less of an outsider, and so less vulnerable.
- Start small – If you feel a bit nervous to adventure as a woman alone, start off with a very small adventure just to get a little taste of what solo adventuring entails.



NAME: FLEUR VAN CRIMPEN

INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG TRAVELLER: (On travelling alone as a female...)



Briefly describe the adventure you went on as a "young person" (whatever you feel "young" to mean!)

After high school I sailed for a year as an ordinary sailor on a three-mast square-rigged sailing vessel across the Atlantic. When I was 20, I cycled to Budapest on my own. It took approximately three weeks. All the people I met were surprised and supportive. Two years later, I cycled to Lago do Como by crossing the Alps at 2100 meters. Last summer, I had fieldwork for my studies in the Peruvian Andes. I traveled alone in Bolivia and Chile.

What worries did you have before the adventure?

Mostly about safety - I'm a young woman traveling alone and a lot of people are surprised and tell you that you are very vulnerable. I worked hard to make sure I didn't get in a situation where I was clearly uncomfortable or felt unsafe.

What obstacles made it hard to begin the adventure?

Timing, parents. The first three days I hated every inch of what I was doing. 'Stupid stupid stupid plan' was going through my head all day.

How did the reality of the adventure compare to your pre-trip worries?

Of course you remember mostly the good things. Most things went smoothly and people are willing to help you out at any moment. They will try to support you.

What did you learn on the adventure?

I was very happy to discover that I dealt very well with stressful or difficult moments. I learned to follow my gut feeling. The most difficult thing to do for me was to be gentle to myself and accept that I had to adjust my goals sometimes.

What impact did the adventure have afterwards on your life (Did it help or hinder your career? Financial trouble? Relationships? Emotions?)

Traveling alone is a roller-coaster of emotions for the first days, and after that there is quiet and peace. It taught me to listen to my body and to trust myself. Career-wise I think it always gives people a good idea of who you are and that you don't just give up when it's hard.

What advice would you give your younger self? What would have been helpful to know before you began your adventure?

Trust yourself! And if you don't feel safe, find people who can help you.

Do you regret going on an adventure when you were young?

No.

4

WHAT TO DO
WHEN YOU
GET BACK?

REASONS TO TRAVEL OR NOT TO TRAVEL

I remember sitting on top of the Simplon Pass in the Alps. The view was fabulous, the world lay all before me. I loved my life on the road. I was good at it, it was comfortable and – at long last – I was earning a few hundred quid here and there through an occasional published article. I was living the dream, and I was earning enough to keep on living it. From that pass I could, had I wanted to, turned around and cycled to Australia. It would have been a great adventure. I thought of Heinz Stucke, the Godfather of long-distance cyclists (40 years on the road, and still going), and of all that he had seen and experienced. And yet I did not turn around and ride off towards Tasmania. I decided not to “do a Heinz”. I decided instead to drop down the northern side of the pass, towards France, England, home, and the end of my four year ride around the world.

If life on the road is so precious, why did I decide to end it? It is still something I often ask myself (often during morning rush hour).



PROS:

Good things about coming Home

- The instant pleasure I felt from stopping travelling was that of returning to a sweet, lazy life. I was so grateful for fluffy pillows, a fridge full of food, a roof, lights and tap water. It felt good to be home! (This ease, of course, is what eventually becomes the greatest 'Con' of stopping and what drives me to get out there again...)
- Stability. I love putting down some roots. I enjoy knowing where I live, knowing the area, knowing people, knowing the history, and seeing the place as more than just the instant, present tense snapshot that you get when you are only ever passing through places.
- Relationships. Friends, family, relationships: being a lone wolf for over four years made me realise that I am not, in fact, a lone wolf! Ultimately I treasure a few deep bonds more than the wonderful variety of brief encounters the open road exposes you to. Thinking of Heinz, it was this aspect in particular that made me feel I should go home rather than riding on into my twilight years.
- Diversity. To my surprise, one of the things I appreciate most about having stopped riding is the diversity of my life now. I thought that it was through travelling that I would find variety. But my life is no longer just about the ride. Books, running, music, friends, libraries, sport, holidays, cooking, camping, cities... In some ways there is more variety to my life than when I was away striving for spontaneity and diversity.



CONS:

Reasons I still pine under a full moon for the Open Road

- Freedom. The freedom to ride where I wanted, when I wanted. Sleep where I wanted, eat when I wanted. Free to BE whoever I wanted to be, for in each new town I arrived in I was a blank canvas, a fresh start.
- Unpredictability. To never know what is round the next corner. Literally or metaphorically.
- Simplicity. To have all my worldly goods in four panniers, and to carry all that I owned on a bicycle. That is something I miss. I also miss the mental simplicity of those days. The lack of mental baggage.
- New Friends. To form fast, fierce friendships with extraordinary people. To treasure those brief days and conversations in the knowledge that once they are gone, they are gone forever. Out of each other's lives and on down the road.
- Other things that flow into my mind so fast now that it makes me realise how conscious and aware I am of the things I chose to give up: fitness (proper, eight hours a day on the bike, iron-hard fitness), frugality, changing landscapes, camping, sunsets, rivers, dreaming of "what's next", always learning...
- The strange satisfaction that comes through having a hard time, sleeping on stones, eating dull food, being hot/cold, feeling tired or anxious and yet knowing that these are, without a doubt, the times of your life.



**" WHAT WAS THE POINT OF THE JOURNEY
IF NOT TO PREPARE ME FOR LIFE? BEFORE I BEGAN
MY LONG RIDE I FELT THAT IT WOULD BE MY LIFE.
NOW I SEE THE RIDE AS A PHASE TO HELP ME LIVE THE
REST OF MY LIFE TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY. I AM
ENJOYING TRYING TO TRANSFER THE LESSONS FROM
THE ROAD TO ALL THAT I DO NOW. "**



TO STUDY OR TO TRAVEL?

People often ask me for advice on earning a living from adventures. Sometimes young people contemplate adventure instead of higher education. Some consider dropping out of uni to focus on expeditions.

Many successful adventurers did not go to college, university or earn any qualifications. Many successful people in life did not, either. So it's clearly not essential. From my own point of view though, I had the opportunity to go to university. I didn't particularly enjoy it: I was just itching to get out and explore the world. But, looking back, I am very glad that I persevered and got my qualifications first. I know that a year feels like an eternity when you are young [*that sentence makes me feel old!*], but for me it was worth the wait. Make the most of the time: earn money, learn relevant skills, squeeze in microadventures. You need to bear in mind that not everyone who sets out to make their living from adventure will succeed. If you do not succeed at it (or you decide that you'd prefer to keep it as a hobby), what will you do then?





NAME: KEVIN O'SHEA

INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG TRAVELLER: (On affecting a career...)

Briefly describe the adventure you went on as a "young person" (whatever you feel "young" to mean!)

I now live in Beijing and have called Korea and Japan home as well. As a kid though, nothing beats my back-country adventures. Growing up in rural Canada we were all about camping and hiking. Building shelters from spruce boughs, tree houses and catching fish. One of my greatest adventures was as a high school student winter camping near Kelly's Mountain in Nova Scotia. It was cold, tough and fun!

What worries did you have before the adventure?

Would we have the proper gear needed to stay warm? Would we be able to collect enough firewood? (Our gear sucked).

What obstacles made it hard to begin the adventure?

Collecting camping gear from family and friends. Not having money to buy proper winter camping gear.

How did the reality of the adventure compare to your pre-trip worries?

We basically jumped into it. Didn't worry too much beforehand.

What did you learn on the adventure?

We weren't prepared. Our tents were cheap and it got to -10C at night with snow. There were four of us and our teamwork got us through the adventure. Lots of huddling to keep warm.

What impact did the adventure have afterwards on your life (Did it help or hinder your career? Financial trouble? Relationships? Emotions?)

I'm now an international school teacher and traveler. I've been living the expat lifestyle for 16 years. Now craving rural life.

What advice would you give your younger self? What would have been helpful to know before you began your adventure?

Don't think so much, Kevin! Pull the trigger. Backpack around Ireland. If you have to borrow money you are smart and hardworking, you'll be able to pay it back later!

Do you regret going on an adventure when you were young?

No.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Many more adventures to come.



STILL INTERESTED?

"THE SINGLE BIGGEST REASON THAT PEOPLE DO NOT SUCCEED AT THEIR AMBITIONS IS NOT BECAUSE THEY FAIL. IT IS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BEGIN."



Here are a few pointers to try to help commit you to action:

1 Come up with a plan that gets you very excited.

So excited that you want to just start right this minute. You need to care, really care.

2 Now go for a long run with your pessimist hat on.

What's wrong with your plan? What are the risks, pitfalls and hurdles? Do you really want to go through with it? Really? Really? Can you afford it? Do you have the time? Will your mum let you go? You need to be realistic.

3 If you still believe you have an exciting plan and that it is realistic then it is time to commit.

Set a start date that you are determined to keep to. Tell everybody what you are doing and when you will start. Tell the mates who will ridicule you the most if you do not begin. There's no turning back now.

4 Work out what obstacles lie in your way.

Do this honestly and realistically. But do not be daunted by them: accept they need to be dealt with, and believe that you can deal with them.

5 Start having cold showers. If you can make yourself begin the day with something daunting then the rest is easy. Feels great too. And it's good for the planet!

6 Tame your ego. Think small. Don't be an "all the gear and no idea" numpty. Concentrate on getting to the start line rather than superfluous rubbish.

And don't worry too much about 'World Firsts' and so on (unless you need that for sponsor-hunting). So long as it is new and fresh and difficult for you then that is perfectly enough.

7 Think realistically about sponsorship.

Do you need it? Or can you save up for a bit longer? Or can you just be tight, eat banana sandwiches, sleep in ditches and therefore get going right now?

8 Accept that everything may not be absolutely perfectly ready come departure date.

Think pragmatically. Get yourself to the start line. Remember the 80% rule. Get things 80% right then crack on to the next thing. Fill in the pretty detail later, if you have time. (Obviously this attitude does not apply to a few things where it makes sense to strive for perfection: expedition safety, parachute packing, bungee jumping etc.).

9 Continue to remind yourself of why you began all this in the first place. Was it to faff with website redesign, schmooze with potential sponsors, be skint? Or was it to get out there, feel alive, do something great? Exactly. So get on with it!

10 Don't be a "would've, could've, should've" person.

No excuses, no regrets, just do it. You'll get there if you want it enough.

**"IF YOU REALLY, TRULY WANT TO
EXPERIENCE A BIG ADVENTURE,
THEN YOU CAN DO IT.
YOU CAN DO IT. YOU CAN."**

These articles and more in-depth content and travel advice can be found at
alastairhumphreys.com and [@al_humphreys](https://twitter.com/al_humphreys)