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THE GETAWAY

How the Tough Get Going: Silicon Valley Travel Tips

Drew Kelly for The New York Times

Tim Ferriss, dressed and packed for the road. He can go from his house to his departure gate in 20 minutes and almost never checks a bag. More Photos »

By STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM
Published: July 12, 2012 | 134 Comments

IT'S 11:26 a.m. in California and Tim Ferriss, who has turned his personal tactics for streamlining life's chores and savoring its pleasures into best-selling books like "The 4-Hour Workweek" and "The 4-Hour Chef," is timing himself to see how fast he can get from his house to his departure gate at San Francisco International Airport.

Multimedia

Using Uber, a cashless car service, and Clearcard, a fast-pass for airport security, he zipped from home to gate in 20 minutes. A friend making the same flight spent 33 minutes on the security line alone.

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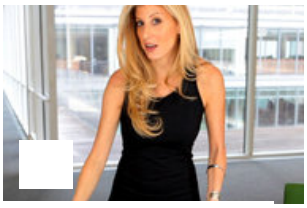
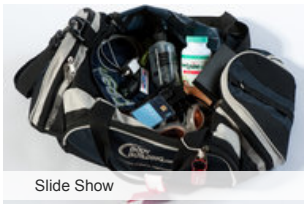


The Getaway: Efficiency on the Run



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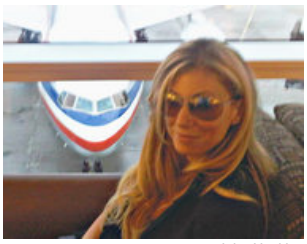
Packing Like a Pro



John Haskins

Stephanie Rosenbloom is the writer of a new Travel column, The Getaway. Learn more about Stephanie, including how many times she's been to Disney World, on her bio page. More Photos »

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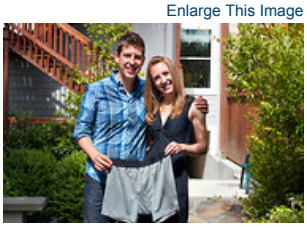

Drew Kelly for The New York Times

Chris Hutchins, a product manager at Google, favors quick-dry underwear when traveling. His wife, Amy Fox, a business developer for a technology start-up, wears her Patagonia Bandha dress. More Photos »

Enlarge This Image

Annie Tritt for The New York Times

Krista Canfield, a senior manager for LinkedIn's corporate communications, models the Circle scarf from American Apparel. More Photos »

"I had lunch and polished off two conference calls before my friend even got his shoes back on," Mr. Ferriss said.

If there are upsides to obsessive-compulsive behavior, traveling efficiently is one. I consider myself a nimble traveler, able to fold a dress into the size of a croissant and get out of the airport before most passengers can even find the baggage claim. But as I grilled Mr. Ferriss and a handful of his Silicon Valley peers, who have made a sport of stripping time and pain out of routine nuisances, it was clear that even I could learn a thing or two. (Like when to pack a starter pistol, but more on that later).

For a certain type of frequent-flying entrepreneur in and around Silicon Valley, travel is an art form — one that doesn't require private jets and fat wallets. Rather, they have perfected the art of traveling comfortably, without anxiety or wasted time. I caught up with half a dozen of these travel aces from companies like Google, Klout, Yelp and LinkedIn and pumped them for pointers on how to make planning and taking vacations as effortless as shuffling an iPod.

Designing Your Trip

Oh, the monotony of cutting and pasting details from confirmation e-mails — plane tickets, hotel reservations, car rentals — into your online calendar. So what do the experts do? They turn to **TripIt**, a Web site and free app that allows users simply to forward those e-mails to plans@tripit.com and — bang! — everything is instantly organized into a digital itinerary that can be synced with calendars and shared with friends and family. (There is also an option to automatically import the e-mails from an in-box.) The itinerary, organized chronologically from flight to hotel and everything in between, includes all the essentials: addresses, reservation numbers, weather forecasts (notes can be added, too). When your flight lands, pull up your itinerary on your smartphone and tap "directions," and maps, along with step-by-step instructions on how to get from A to B, will appear. No need to test your phone battery and your patience with GPS.

Minimalist travelers don't schlep destination guides, especially now that there are Web sites like Wikitravel, a worldwide guide the travelers I spoke to say is particularly useful for figuring out how to get around a city. They also rely on apps from familiar brands like Lonely Planet, and start-ups like **Trippy.com**. A new social site and free app for the iPhone, Trippy (to which Mr. Ferriss is an adviser) enables users to "friendsource" their vacations by telling connections on social sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn where they are planning to visit. Those in the know can then offer recommendations about where to stay and what to do. Suggestions can be added with a click to a master list, which can then be consulted throughout a trip. A photo album in the app enables users to show friends in real time that their advice is being heeded.

Another handy, free app endorsed by some of the travel aces I spoke to is **Room**. "When you travel as much as I do," said Miriam Warren, vice president of new markets for the consumer review site Yelp.com, "you start to forget your room number." Room stores it on the home screen of your smartphone, along with hints like "east tower."

Is your French rusty (Est-ce votre français rouillé)? When traveling internationally, Krista Canfield, a senior manager for LinkedIn's

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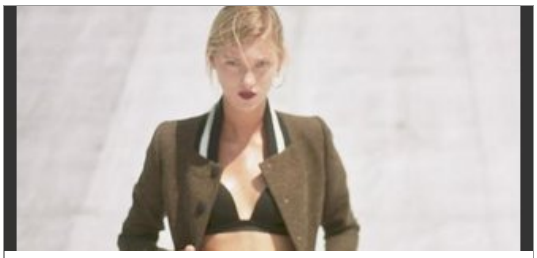

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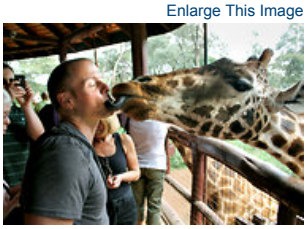

Charlie Hoehn

Tim Ferriss makes a friend in Kenya. More Photos »

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Chris Hutchins and Amy Fox in Egypt. More Photos »

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Dave Canfield

Krista Canfield in Quito, Ecuador. More Photos »

Readers' Comments

Readers shared their thoughts on this article.

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corporate communications, relies on Google Translate, a Web site and free app that translates words and phrases between more than 60 languages.

Of course, part of planning a getaway is preparing for bumps in the road — like having your flight canceled. And the only thing worse than being stuck in an airport without a flight is being simultaneously stuck in a phone maze unable to reach a customer service representative. That's why Mr. Ferriss and his peers use **GetHuman.com**, a Web site and free app that tells you the swiftest way to reach a live operator (for example: dial the 800 number, then press 1 and then 4). "Calling on the phone is always faster than getting in line at the customer service desk if there's a problem," he said.

Joe Fernandez, the chief executive and co-founder of Klout, a company that uses data from social networks like Twitter to rank from 1 to 100 how influential you are on the Web, suggests also installing the apps of the major airlines on your smartphone, keeping your accounts at your fingertips. "In the ride over to the airport I can make sure I'm all checked in," he said. It can also pay to check the "perks" section of Klout.com, where users can learn if they rank high enough to reap certain benefits. For instance, recently San Francisco International Airport visitors who had Klout scores of 40 or higher and were using the site's iPhone app were given free access to the Cathay Pacific Airways first- and business-class lounge, even if they weren't passengers of the airline.

For overseas adventures, Chris Hutchins, a product manager at Google, recommends safeguarding yourself and your possessions with insurance from **WorldNomads**, which he said is more comprehensive than many other policies. It covers an array of sports and adventure activities, lost bags, health care, even necessities like food if your flight is delayed. You can get a quote on the Web site — for instance, a weeklong policy covering two people (under age 67) traveling anywhere in the world for a week beginning July 10 was $98. When his camera was stolen, Mr. Hutchins said "all I had to do was get a police report and send them the receipt, and they paid us back."

Packing

Mr. Ferriss is not alone in feeling like he "would rather jump face first through a window than check luggage." So it's no surprise that young entrepreneurs flying without children prefer duffel bags or backpacks that can be squished into an overhead bin. Mr. Ferriss likes **Victorinox** backpacks because they are durable and can be used for hiking yet also have wheels.

To save time and sanity, he recommends keeping an extra set of phone and computer chargers packed and ready to go so they are never forgotten. Still, even if they are, Ms. Warren of Yelp has a trick she said rarely fails: tell the hotel you want to rummage through the lost-and-found bin. "Every single time I've done this they'll have this huge box full of chargers and all kinds of miscellaneous plugged-in things," she said. "They're just like, 'Please take some of this off my hands.' "

Having spent seven months traveling around the world with only a carry-on bag, Amy Fox, a business developer for a technology start-up in San Francisco and married to Mr. Hutchins, knows how to pack light. Her "lifesaver" is **Patagonia's short, A-line Bandha dress** ($79), made of a moisture-wicking, wrinkle-resistant fabric originally designed for climbing tights. "It's pretty much smellproof and wrinkleproof," Ms. Fox said. "You can dress it up or down." For a bare-minimum makeup routine, she recommends **the Balm Stainiac** cheek and lip stain ($17), which delivers a rosy pop to lips and cheeks. "If you throw it on with no other makeup you still look semi-put together," she said.

For a glamorous jersey dress that can be styled in more than 25 ways, Ms. Canfield of LinkedIn (who lived out of a single bag for two weeks in Egypt) recommends **Von Vonni's Transformer dresses**

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(most are $120), available in long and short styles. She also likes **Lululemon's Covers It All dress** ($98), which is reversible and is a skirt, top and shrug, too; and **American Apparel**'s cotton spandex jersey **Bandeau Pencil dress** ($41), which can be worn strapless or as a halter. When combined with American Apparel's **Unisex Circle scarf** ($28) — which can be worn as a dress, skirt, top, capelet or head wrap — the dresses are not only fashionable but are also able to take you from blistering city streets into churches and other places where shoulders and legs must be covered. Another pick is **Lululemon's moisture-wicking Studio Pant II** ($98). With drawstrings at the ankles, the pants morph into capris, eliminating the need to pack both.

In Ms. Canfield's toiletry bag you won't find hard plastic refillable bottles "where you know you have enough conditioner but you can't get it out," she said. Rather, you'll find HumanGear's squeezable, silicone **GoToob travel bottles** (about $19 for three, three-ounce bottles) with identification rings like "soap" and "lotion" so you don't accidentally wash your hair with sunscreen. The bottles are BPA-free, and some have suction cups so they can be stuck to walls in tight spaces.

For men, Mr. Hutchins of Google is a fan of **quick-dry underwear and socks from Eastern Mountain Sports and REI** because they make it possible to travel for weeks with just a few pairs. During the around-the-world adventure with Ms. Fox, "every time I bathed I would just wash a T-shirt or pair of underwear," he said.

Mr. Ferriss saves space by leaving his gym clothes and sneakers at home and swimming for exercise instead. "I can bunch up my goggles and my swimsuit in one hand," he said. His **Nau riding jacket** ($225) is another travel staple because it's water-repellent and has deep hidden pockets. So are his slip-ons by **Native Shoes** ($44.99), made of the polymer ethylene vinyl acetate because they're lightweight and perforated, providing ventilation. "They never smell, and you can hose them down if they get dirty," he said.

Should you need to bring a computer, Mr. Hutchins suggests buying a lower-end **netbook** (about $250) specifically for travel so you don't fret about it being damaged or stolen. "The last thing you want to do is check your suitcase on a bus in the middle of Africa with your $2,000 MacBook Air," he said.

To charge your devices in foreign countries, Mr. Hutchins packs an extension cord with room for three plugs, which means he has to bring only one converter for all of his gadgets. To charge devices on the go, Mr. Ferriss opts for the **PowerGen** (about $35 on Amazon) because it's small and can feed both his iPhone and his camera; Mr. Hutchins likes **New Trent's external battery** (about $35 to $77 for smartphone batteries) because it provides more charges than other brands he's tried.

Also worth tossing in your luggage: plastic zip or cable ties. They'll enable you to attach your bag to a bike rental, or to fix a backpack strap if it breaks. Ms. Canfield keeps a few around to secure her luggage if she's forced to check it at the gate. That way, if T.S.A. workers cut open her bag, at least they don't break her locks, which she uses when she leaves luggage with a bellhop. (She brings along nail clippers in case she later has to cut the ties herself.) If you plan to shop, she said, toss a couple of plastic **Travelon compression bags** (about $13 for two) into your luggage; valves push out excess air so you can store more in less space. Ms. Fox uses nylon "**stuff sacks**" to organize and streamline.

Hacking the Airport

Face it: It's hard to arrive at the airport at some perfect, magical hour when you can just waltz onto the plane without waiting at the gate; cut it too close and you might end up racing through the terminal like Seabiscuit. So if you have work to do or a stack of magazines to pore over, try it Mr. Ferriss's way: Go early. Absurdly early.

"Let's say my flight leaves at 7, which means I need to be at the airport at 5," he said. "Total nightmare. It's rush hour. I'll just go to the airport five hours early." Before you roll your eyes, consider this: Being at the gate even 40 minutes before a flight is still not enough time to plunge into any work you might want to do. But if you're there five hours early, you can get plenty done in an airport lounge replete with unlimited coffee, snacks and Wi-Fi.

To get to the airport without cracking open a wallet, technology wonks like Mr. Fernandez of Klout opt for **Uber**, a text-for-a-ride, cashless (and no-tips!) car service that has flat rates (to and from airports and between cities) as well as rates by the mile and by the minute (when traveling at or below 11 m.p.h.). To use it, sign up on Uber.com and when you want a lift, text your address and city (in the United States or Canada) to UBR-CAB and you'll receive a reply with an approximate arrival time. You'll get another text when the car is there. After the ride, the credit card you have on file will be charged and a receipt

will be sent to you via e-mail. No more idling curbside at the airport waiting for change or a credit card receipt. In San Francisco, the base fare for the cheapest car is $5, plus $3.25 for each mile within the city. (The minimum fare is $10.) Mr. Fernandez said that when his plane lands he messages Uber with his terminal number. "They'll be waiting for you by the time you get off the plane," he said. (Mr. Ferriss is also a fan, and has equity in the company.)

At the security line, programs like Global Entry expedite the screening process. Another option is to register for a **Clearcard** ($179 a year), which uses biometrics (fingerprint and eye scanning) to whisk you through designated fast lanes at a handful of international airports.

If that's too "Minority Report" for you, get in the security line and follow Ms. Canfield's choreography: As you approach the X-ray belt, put your shoes in the first bin, your laptop and liquids in the second bin, and your carry-on bag in the last bin. This way, when you're waiting for them on the other side of the metal detector, you'll be able to put your shoes back on first, then grab your laptop and liquids and, finally, return them to your bag. "If you do the bag first, you end up being the person who holds up the line," she said. (Ditto to those who still insist on wearing belts to the airport.)

Staying Healthy

Given that Mr. Ferriss also wrote a book called "The 4-Hour Body: An Uncommon Guide to Rapid Fat-Loss, Incredible Sex, and Becoming Superhuman," I asked him how he stays superhuman while locked in a cabin with more than 100 other humans, some of whom have colds and an aversion to covering their mouths.

His answer: He pops **Quantum Super Lysine+** supplements (about $8 for 90 tablets) a day before his vacation and at the end to boost his immune system (if the trip is less than three days he takes the tablets the entire time). He also uses a **Neti bottle** (about $15) to clean his sinuses, and sleeps with an **eye mask** and **earplugs**.

"I know for a fact if I don't sleep well for three days straight when I'm traveling," he said, "I will get sick."

HAVE STARTER GUN, WILL TRAVEL

Some of Tim Ferriss's travel tips are not for amateurs.

Pack Heat: Never write "fragile" on your bags unless you want an airport worker "to just wing them against the wall out of spite," Mr. Ferriss said. For those rare (and hateful) occasions when he must check a bag, he places a cheap starter pistol inside (they don't use bullets and are available on Amazon or in sporting goods stores), and then declares at the check-in counter that he's carrying an unloaded and locked firearm. (See T.S.A. firearms guidelines.) No chance the airline will lose track of that bag (for which you need a T.S.A.-approved lock), Mr. Ferriss said. (Don't even think of trying this on international flights.)

Park It: Sometimes it's cheaper to pay for a parking ticket (or two) than airport parking — at least on Mr. Ferriss's street. "I'm one of the local government's favorite customers," said Mr. Ferriss, who has yet to be towed. "Parking tickets are for revenue, first and foremost, and I always pay on time." A monthlong trip cost him $115 in parking tickets compared with $540 for airport parking.

Stake Out Your House: When he's on the road Mr. Ferriss uses iControl software, which allows him to receive e-mails with video clips from infrared cameras in his house and to receive text alerts on his phone about who's going in and out of his home.

Lighten Up: Mr. Ferriss, who sometimes travels to places where safety might be a concern, brings along a Fenix or SureFire flashlight, which he says are so bright they can double as weapons. "They can be used for self-defense, to temporarily blind an assailant," he said. "Like an optical pepper spray."

STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM is the new writer for the Practical Traveler column, which is being renamed The Getaway. For a video of her favorite packing tips, go to nytimes.com/packingtips.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: July 15, 2012

The cover article this weekend about travel advice from frequent travelers in Silicon Valley refers incompletely to the legal issues surrounding one such tip, by the author Tim Ferriss, who discussed packing a starter pistol and declaring it at check-in as a way to insure that a checked bag is not lost. While Transportation Security Administration rules allow such items if properly declared and locked, some local jurisdictions, including New York City, have stricter rules. (A spokesman for the New York Police Department said starter pistols are illegal without a permit.)

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: July 15, 2012

An earlier version of this article misspelled Seabiscuit as Seabiscut.

A version of this article appeared in print on July 15, 2012, on page TR1 of the New York edition with the headline: How the Tough Get Going.

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BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

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Craig Michigan
San Francisco is NOT Silicon Valley. And there are only about 12 non-LEO's licensed for concealed carry of any type in SF. One of them is Diane Feinstein.
July 16, 2012 at 1:08 p.m. RECOMMENDED 2

John in Brooklyn Brooklyn
I can't wait to show up at a client's office in my perforated shoes, disposable underwear, and safari-style jacket. After they laugh me out of their office, at least I know I can travel home lightly.
July 16, 2012 at 1:07 p.m. RECOMMENDED 2

A. NY, NY
I just read reviews of WorldNomads.com - uniformly awful! And the reviews of those airbags in the video also aren't great. Anyone check this stuff before it is printed?
July 16, 2012 at 1:06 p.m. RECOMMENDED 1

A. NY, NY
I am 64 and travel for weeks with a light weight carry on plus a sling bag for toiletries and electronics. I travel primarily with black "engineered" clothing in black, tissue weight wool shawls with interesting designs and great inexpensive jewelry.

There is almost no place I can't go with black skinny leg jeans or good jeggings, a fitted black

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