

## Tips for Travellers – Last Minute Things

Well by now, you should be pretty well ready to go. There are always a multitude of last minute things to do. Here are some suggested things to think about that you may not have thought of.

It depends on whether or not everyone at home is going with you or whether there will still be someone at home to look after the domestic things. If everyone is going, then remember things like cancelling or redirecting the mail, getting someone to empty the letterbox of junk mail, taking care of the animals etc.

Try to work out which bills may come in whilst you are away and whether or not they will be due before you return. If so, then you need to either prepay them or set up a payment on a date before they are due. If you are not sure of the amount, then try and arrange for the supplier to email you with the account, so that you can access this whilst you are away. Internet banking makes it easy to manage your finances from anywhere in the world. If your bank sends you an SMS to confirm payments before they are made, then try to change these arrangements whilst you are away, as often SMS messages don't come through when you are overseas.

In the weeks leading up to your trip, formulate a packing list. Remember what season it will be where you are travelling to and what type of clothing you may need. Most of your clothing will probably be casual, but try to put in one lightweight set of good clothes in case you need to dine somewhere special.

Remember to put on the list those pesky little things that it is easy to forget, such as the charger for your mobile phone. Remember to ensure that you have sufficient medications so that you don't run out overseas. Simple analgesics such as aspirin and paracetamol and antacids can only be bought in pharmacies, so take an appropriate supply with you.

What would happen if you lost your main wallet with your passport and tickets in whilst you were away? One way to ensure rapid replacement is to make sure that you have copies of all of your important documents in another place than your originals. If you are travelling with someone else, then exchanging copies can be useful. I scan copies of my passport and all travel documents, email them to myself, and also store them on cloud storage. That way I can access scanned copies from anywhere in the world. Some spare passport photos can be handy.

I have found that having an A4 plastic binder with plastic sleeves an excellent way of keeping my travel documents together. Use one sleeve for each new event, and keep them in chronological order of what you will be doing. Make sure that you print off Google maps of how to get to your accommodation and place these in the same sleeve as your accommodation booking documents. You can start preparing this folder months before your trip and add to it as you finalise each sector. You may also wish to include in this folder any timetables of public transport that you will be taking.

Check the expiry date of each of your credit cards before you go. If one is to expire whilst you are away, you can approach your bank to have a new one issued earlier. Check the balance of any travel debit cards that you will be using and top them up with more funds if necessary. Make sure that you are clear about how to top them up whilst you are overseas. It is wise to advise your credit card

company and PayPal of your travel dates and countries that you will be visiting, else they may freeze funds whilst you are away as they may think that somebody is fraudulently using your card.

If you need global roaming for your mobile phone then this should be arranged before you leave Australia. You may or may not wish to put a voice-mail response on your phone advising that you are away. It is nice to be able to inform others that you are away, but from a security perspective, it may not be wise.

Depending on the class of travel and your frequent flyer terms and conditions, you may be able to pre-select your plane seats. If you are able to do this prior to your arrival at the airport then you will probably get a better seat than taking what is left over. Most international airlines allow you to check in on line 48 hours prior to travel. Such check in speeds up the process of when you arrive at the airport. Brisbane Airport Corporation now has an app on your mobile phone that allows you to print your green departure card when you arrive at the airport, rather than having to write out the card there prior to your departure.

Remember to register your travel details with Australian Government Smartraveller website <http://smartraveller.gov.au/> . This will ensure that if some disaster or event occurs whilst you are away, the Australian Government will be able to contact you.

One inexpensive indispensable accessory is a set of luggage scales. Excess luggage is expensive and there are multiple tales around of people paying hundreds (and even thousands) of dollars in excess baggage payments. Make sure that you are clear as to what your luggage allowance is. Be careful if you are using a no-frills airline on part of your journey. They have lower allowances than other carriers do – this is how they make their money.

The old adage of getting everything out to pack and then putting half of it away again is pretty close to the truth. Most of us take far too much. You need to think about what you may be bringing back with you. If you are close to limit on the way over and you plan to buy lots of presents whilst you are away, then you may be in trouble. If your scales tell you that you are over limit, then put your heaviest garment, your coat for example, in the outer pocket of your suitcase. If you get challenged at the airport about the weight of your baggage, you can then easily take out the coat and wear it, or carry it with you. It seems to be almost peculiar to Australia, but they are quite strict on how much you carry on baggage can weigh and they regularly weigh this. It is airline-dependent on what the carry-on allowance is, but for most it is 7kg. Normally they only weigh your actual bag, so if you have a coat with you, and you know that you are close to limit, then make sure you stuff every pocket with the heavy articles and wear it through the checkpoint. As soon as you are the other side of the checkpoint, you can transfer it back in to your bag.

If you really get stuck overseas with a lot of excess baggage then you can always use one of the freight companies to send things back. It is best to send used clothing or books or paperwork back this way. If you send new goods home in this way, there is a chance that you may have to pay import duties on them.

I didn't mention luggage. There is such a variety and the prices are unlimited. I would suggest one that is not too large, that is fairly substantial but not heavy and one that has wheels. If you can get a

carry-on bag with wheels, even better. International airports are large and you seem to walk for miles. Dragging a bag behind you is certainly faster and less tiring than having to carry one.

So that is all of my tips. I hope that you have found them helpful. I hope that your travel plans are realised and that you have a great time. Buon viaggio!