

# On the road

*Occupational hazard, perk of the job or somewhere in between? Katharina Wawrzon-Stewart focuses on coping with the practicalities of working trips*



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## Start off with preparation

Planning ahead is the biggest factor in making my trips go smoothly. I like to establish a routine, yet still leave space for those elements of whimsy and exploration that help keep international travel interesting.

## Keep it all on your back

When they aren't actually working in the interpreting booth, conference interpreters are often busy packing or unpacking their travel suitcases yet again. My preferred alternative is my trusty backpack.

Why do I choose a backpack? Because keeping your possessions in check means that you have more time to work or focus on what is important, and less clutter that you have to worry about. Frequent air travel for work tends to be more exhausting than glamorous, and being well prepared can take the edge off a busy schedule. It also means you can explore your new temporary surroundings more easily. Personally, I relish the freedom of checking out of the hotel and venturing out on foot to explore a new city without a cumbersome wheelee bag in tow.

## Embrace a routine

A routine really can make packing less tedious. My recipe for hassle-free travel is packing by category and keeping similar objects together. Rather than filling my luggage loosely with all necessary items, I rely on packing cubes – rectangular zip-up fabric containers in various sizes that keep clothes compressed, allowing me to squeeze in more items and optimise space.

With time, packing has become an automated task I hardly notice.

As a result, the whole process is quick and efficient and it doesn't get in the way either of making the most of my billable time or of my opportunities to relax after the day's work.

## Pare down to a uniform

Admittedly, I am not much of a fashionista myself, but in my experience it cuts down a huge amount of worry (and space) if you work out a straightforward, reasonably practical wardrobe and stick to that. (I tend to pack one pair of work trousers or a skirt, one work shirt per day, a pair of jeans, a more casual top to change into after each



workday, underwear, socks, nightwear – and a swimming costume, on the chance that the hotel I'm staying at has a pool.)

## Pre-pack your electrics

I keep my small cube of electrical items pre-packed, so that I can simply take it out of my drawer and put it into my backpack. It contains my laptop and phone chargers, a power brick, a memory stick, noise-cancelling headphones and mains adapters. That way I avoid the dreadful moment of realising I've forgotten something essential and can focus on the job in hand instead.

## Plan for peace and quiet

My noise-cancelling headphones are a recent addition to my travel essentials and are already making a significant contribution to my comfort and well-being. They work like normal headphones but have the in-built ability to isolate the listener from noise pollution. They are an ideal companion during flights, cutting down the noise of the engines and in-flight announcements. You can listen to audio content without having to turn up the volume – the active noise control takes care of the background sounds.

Sleeping in a new place may be difficult at times, so I was glad to discover Calm, a collection of guided meditations, sleep stories and relaxation music tracks. My favourite feature is the Sleep Story. It is like a journey back into childhood as you drift off to sleep while listening to a bedtime story. The calm voice of Stephen Fry talking about lavender fields and sleepy villages in Provence instantly calms my worries about articulated vehicle terminology and delegates quoting EU directives at the speed of light...

## Keep to the rule of three

In addition to my laptop computer, a book, my passport, a notebook, small travel cubes for electrical items, and my medium-sized travel cube for clothes, I have another clear toiletry bag. This is waterproof and approved for hand luggage, meaning no more disposable plastic bags before going through airport security. (Travel-size toiletries are expensive and contribute to more waste, so I prefer small reusable acrylic bottles and pots too.)

Travelling with only three small storage bags keeps everything in the same category together. Gone are the days when I had to rummage through my bag looking for some small, yet indispensable, object.

## Use in-transit breaks

When you're planning ahead, don't forget the journey itself. The LoungeBuddy app lets you view – and sometimes book – the paid-for airport lounges you may encounter en route. These are very useful if I have a few hours to spare and need a quiet place to work, with the added bonus of unlimited access to drinks and snacks too.