



# Toolie's Business Travel Newsletter

## April 2005

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### Travel Guide Plans

It's hard to believe that I've only been working on the travel guides for a year, but it was this time last year when I finished up publishing my father's book (<http://www.beyondchurch.com>) and began the research for my travel guides.

After last month's visit to Hong Kong, I decided to rearrange the schedule for some of my product releases. I'm pleased to report that I'm working with a vendor on the technical details of managing the digital rights on my travel guides. This vendor can also handle print-on-demand (POD) from the same source, which is terrific. Having the POD angle worked out prior to releasing any guides saves me time in the long run because I can design a layout suitable for both e-books and printed books.

If things work out with this vendor, my customers will in one "shopping cart" be able to order both softcopy and physical books. I can also begin selling Custom Event Guides right away, knowing that I can properly license bulk sales of e-books and/or sell physical versions of the custom guides -- whatever the customer needs.

I'll keep you posted!

I got an email from a friend early this month saying that she was on her way to Europe for a couple of weeks. She had a lot of questions about what electronics to take along, how she could recharge them, and whether to take a phone along. I thought I should share my answers with you as well.

### Taking the Heat

Most electronics produced in the last 3-4 years are built to accommodate both foreign and domestic power supplies. You might have noticed more and more items arriving with big resistor blocks on somewhere on their power cords. Pull out the power cords for each of your electronic items, and look on or near the block. For a sticker or metal plate that lists the manufacturer and various pieces of information about the electrical requirements.

Once you find the sticker, look for the "Input" statement. If it says something like "Input: 100-240v, 50-60 Hz", then you can safely plug your electronics into a foreign power source. The big block is a resistor that slows down the rate of power being delivered to your electronic item. When you plug it into power rated at 220v, the block will heat up, but don't be alarmed. It's designed to take that kind of power onslaught.

### Plugging In

You can get a set of (usually 5) different plug adapters at a travel store for about US\$15. That set will take care of most of the countries you'd visit, but it only gives you one adapter of each type. What I do is take a good quality extension cord and plug that into a plug adapter. Then I have 3 outlets available instead of one.

If you have a device that requires a 3-prong extension cord, you can get an adapter from the hardware store that takes 3 prongs in but puts 2 prongs out. Put that adapter between your 3-prong extension cord and your foreign plug adapter because most of the foreign plug adapters only accept 2-prong inputs.

### Phoning Home

I truly envy the rest of the cell phone world that operates on the GSM protocol. My US cell provider doesn't offer domestic phones that can work on a GSM network, so if I want a cell phone I have to rent one. When I first left Microsoft, I contacted a friend who travels regularly from the US to Europe. I asked him whether he had a GSM phone or rented one when he traveled. He said that he tried renting a cell phone but gave up on them because the phone calls were too costly.

Personally, when I've rented a cell phone overseas I've regretted it every time. Last fall I ended up spending hundreds of dollars on just phone calls -- calling home to the US from a rented foreign cell phone is incredibly expensive. I foresee that changing in the next year or two: the GSM protocol has already made inroads into the US market. I'm lucky; so far my business doesn't require me to have a phone while traveling; that may change! If my provider doesn't accommodate GSM soon, I may end up switching providers.

What I do instead is to make phone calls through my laptop using Dialpad <http://www.dialpad.com>. Dialpad works best if you're staying at hotels with broadband Internet access, but it does work over dialup. You need to take along a computer headset to make the calls, but the extra gear is worth the effort — it will save you hundreds of dollars in calls if all you plan do to call home to stay in touch.

The last piece of the telephone puzzle is a dialup Internet account, in case your hotel doesn't have broadband. I don't know who your Internet provider is at home, but most US ISPs don't have corresponding providers overseas. I use a company out of Spain called "IberPass" <http://www.iberpass.com> that provides local dialup numbers in hundreds of countries. It's a prepaid account: they charge your credit card in advance, and each call decrements the amount in your account with IberPass. IberPass charges by the second...no rounding up to the next minute, and I like that. The rates are very reasonable. Do be aware though: some hotels charge for local phone calls, and some hotels add a surcharge for calls over 60 minutes.

### Protecting Your Gear

It's hard to know what to carry onboard and what to pack in a checked bag, especially since the airlines have clamped down on the number of carry-on bags you can bring aboard. I ALWAYS keep my laptop and my PDA with me (and my good camera if I take that along). I also put my CDs and DVD movies in my carry-on bag, along with any other high-value and/or delicate electronics. I pack the rest of the cables and rechargers in my checked bag.

When I get to my hotel room, I put whatever will fit into the safe in the room. If I have to leave my laptop out because I'm working, I have a cable lock attaching my laptop to the desk and chair. The rest of the gear I lock in the bag and tuck it into the back of the closet, out of sight. These are simple precautions, but important ones to safeguard your gear.

One last note: don't forget to back up your laptop data on the road. Even if you have the discipline of regular backups in place at home, you need to consider doing them while you're gone. External USB hard drives have come down in both price and size, so it's easy to tuck one into your carry-on bag. I use the same external backup drive at home on and on the road. I use the Backup program built into Windows XP and back up my documents to that external drive no matter where I go.

### Toolie's Travel Plans

I am writing to you from Phoenix, Arizona where I'm attending the Humor Lab sponsored by the National Speakers Association, of which I am a member. I'm looking forward to trying out some humorous material on travel. I have so many funny travel stories that I won't run out of material anytime soon.

I'll be in Chicago briefly in early May, and in the Orlando area in late May for a meeting of the Society of American Travel Writers. I'm not yet a member of that elite group, but I'm working with two mentors to meet their requirements.

It looks like I'll be home for most of June and part of July, but after that I'll be racking up the miles again in the latter part of the year.

Here is the link to my site: <http://www.tooliethetravelguide.com>. I love to hear from my subscribers anytime!

Very "Toolie" yours,

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