

THE
QUEST FOR AWESOME

Gear List

Updated for 2016



Welcome to my new and updated for 2016 gear list.

I put together the original [gear list](#) you can find on The Quest For Awesome in preparation for my year long trip around the world in 2013.

As I have traveled over the years I've been making little tweaks here and there to better suit my lifestyle.

This updated version will show you what I carry now, as well as some tips and things I learned along the way after over three years of experience traveling long term, as minimally as possible.

One of the major things I learned from traveling and from numerous discussions on the road with other travelers about their gear choices is: everyone's different.

People have different interests and travel styles and this manifests itself in the types of gear they choose to bring on their trip.

However, **everyone agrees it's terrible to lug around unnecessary items while you travel.**

My advice has always been to pack less. A good metric to shoot for is to keep your luggage to carry-on only.

What follows is the gear and organization working for me and my travel style. It's a versatile set-up for how minimal it is and it allows me to experience many different activities comfortably, while also allowing for creativity and learning.

"Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own." –Bruce Lee

This updated list is organized as follows (updated gear noted with *NEW*):

- Essential Gear for ANY traveler
- Nice To Have Gear
- Eliminated/Replaced Gear

Hopefully this helps you in some fashion if you're getting ready for a trip or if you're just mulling the idea of long term travel over in your mind.

If you have any questions or are looking for advice on your travels, feel free to send me an e-mail at dave@thequestforawesome.com and I'll help you the best I can.

2016 Gear Update

I find my lifestyle morphing from backpacker who stays in hostels to a more digital nomad lifestyle.

This means my gear is shifting to be more suited for looking nicer in a city setting, where going out for dinners and grabbing beers is more common than mountain treks.

Nevertheless, I still travel out of carry-on luggage. I'm carrying more clothes I wear on a regular basis, instead of carrying gear to protect me from the elements.

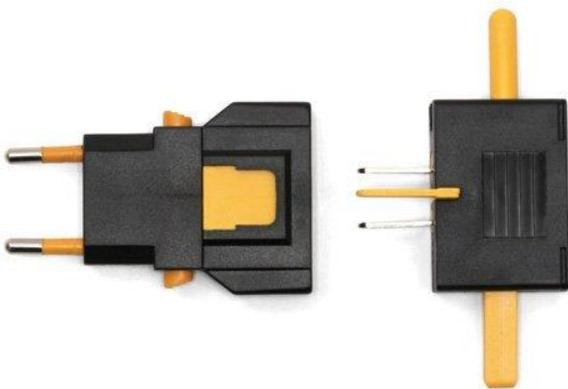
There's still a focus on high quality, long lasting gear, but the purpose has slightly shifted to fit a different lifestyle.

Currently, I carry enough clothing for a week, and when I'm staying somewhere for longer periods of time I'll pick up new (cheaper) shirts to give my wardrobe some variation, and then get rid of unnecessary clothing when I hit the road again.

One of the major updates you'll notice is that I got rid of most of my cold weather gear (except for gloves and a beanie). I wasn't using them enough to justify carrying them around at all times. If I need cold weather gear I plan on either buying what I need or renting from an outdoor gear shop.

Must Have Gear for Any Traveler

Kikkerland uL03-A Universal Travel Adapter



This bad boy adapts to ANY plug you'll find around the world. It's super compact, amazingly designed and inexpensive.

It also makes a great gift for any traveler you have in your life.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Exofficio Give-N-Go Boxer Briefs (7 pairs)



I've switched over to wearing Exofficio undies exclusively.

They are the best.

They are form fitting, they don't ride up and they have a pee-hole.

If you've been traveling for a while and haven't washed them, my go-to-advanced-move was to fill a sink with water and soap, hand wash them, roll them up in my towel like a burrito and then sit on it for a few minutes to dry and they were good to go.

Seriously the best undies I've ever owned.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Darn Tough Vermont Men's Merino Wool No-Show Ultra-Light Cushion Athletic Socks (5 Pairs)



I used Icebreaker and Smartwool socks for my trip around the world.

However, I switched to Darn Tough because they have a lifetime warranty. If they ever get a hole, just fill out [this form](#) and they will replace them for you. I've already had them replace two pairs and it was no problem.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Icebreaker Men's Tech Short Sleeve V-Neck Tee (3 shirts)



This is my everyday shirt and I carry three of them in various colors.

They are made of Merino Wool so they are odor resistant and quick drying, which is why I recommend them so highly.

In my original gear list I only had 2 everyday shirts. While this lasted me the year, I wouldn't recommend it.

I also carry 5 "throw away" shirts. I update these every 6 months (in total, I carry eleven shirts).

This allows me to give my wardrobe some variety and it's easier to keep things fresh.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

New Balance ML 1980 AD *NEW*



A good pair of shoes is essential. These are a nice cross between athletic and fashionable. Another good option are Converse Chuck Taylors.

I also travel with a pair of dress shoes (not essential), which are nice for more formal outings.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

20oz Klean Kanteen Insulated Water Bottle



One item people always point out as being unnecessary is my water bottle. Most suggest buying bottles of water wherever you are, and saving the plastic bottle for refills until it gets gross enough to get a new one.

Meh...to each their own.

This is **insulated** and there's nothing better than taking a drink of ice-cold water when you've been riding in the hot sun on a scooter all day or taking a sip of steamy hot tea while you're looking for street art during winter.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Icebreaker Men's Rover Long Sleeve Hoodie (Black) *NEW*



This hoodie is all I carry for cold weather gear. It's perfect for those early morning or late night outings when it gets chilly.

It's made from Merino Wool, so I'll even wear it when it's hot outside instead of putting on sunscreen, which is nice when you're in a country where sunscreen is hard to find (and ultra-expensive).

I changed to this instead of the LS outback because this has a hood and pockets.

It's also great for sleeping in public. I'll put it on backwards and pull the hood up over my face. Since it's ultra-breathable I never feel like I'm suffocating.

[● View On Amazon ●](#)

Moleskine Classic Large Plain Notebook



I use this as a daily journal to track where I am, what I'm eating, how much I'm spending and highlights from the day.

I also use it to keep track of travel recommendations, flight information, directions, etc.

Many say you can use your phone for this. I like the feeling of the physical pages, but more importantly, I don't like to take out my phone in sketchy places to look for directions, which could signal to a potential thief I have something to steal.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Apple iPhone 6 64GB Unlocked - Space Gray (w/ charger) *NEW*



It's very important for me to have a way to connect to the internet. It allows me to do research on a new area before showing up, stay in contact with friends/family back home (and new friends I meet on the road) and book places to stay.

I also use it for my alarm, flashlight and as a going-out/quick camera when I don't want to bring out my nice camera.

Whether you have a smartphone, tablet or laptop, I doesn't matter, but I think you should have at least one while you're traveling for extended periods.

The unlocked version allows me to get a new SIM card in any country so I can use the phone without WI-FI. I HIGHLY recommend this option if you're a frequent traveler.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Eagle Creek Undercover Neck Wallet



I had my stuff stolen from a hostel while I was out to dinner. The thief would have taken my passport and credit cards had they been in my bag. Losing my electronics was a bummer but losing my passport and all of my money would have been devastating.

This is why I ALWAYS keep my passport, money and credit cards hidden at all times using this money belt.

I wear this around my waist and under my pants, not around my neck.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Pilot G2 Retractable, Ultra-Fine Point, Black



As you travel you're going to need to write something down, usually directions, customs forms or other travel information.

It's a pain to always be looking for a writing instrument.

Plus, I keep a daily journal so I write every day. I like precision and writing small at times, which is why the ultra-fine (0.38mm) has been my go to.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Arc'Teryx Spiro Cap



A hat is right on the brink between must have and nice to have.

But, if you do a lot of hiking and outdoor activities it's a must have.

The back unrolls for full ear and neck protection, which is huge if you are fair-skinned like I am and don't want to deal with sunscreen all the time. It dries quickly and can fold up very easily without damaging the brim.

[● View On Amazon ●](#)

“Pirate Pants”



These bad boys are custom made, custom fitted.

For my year long trip I had some Icebreaker shorts, but they had no pockets and were too short.

These pirate pants are perfect for me. They may not be everyone’s style, but you should definitely have something shorts-like.

If you DO want pirate pants I recommend cutting [these](#) about 3 inches below your knee.

Throw Away Wallet

You can use any wallet for this. Basically, the idea is to carry something that looks real, but if you get robbed or pick-pocketed, you don’t lose much.

I fill the wallet with old hotel keycards, business cards, etc. and then fill it with 10 one dollar bills and no more than \$50 dollars worth of the local currency.

It gives me easy access to cash, so I don’t have to pull out money from my money-belt and is a great decoy.

I prefer a wallet like [this](#), because you can show there’s stuff in it very easily and if you threw it while being asked for your valuables, everything would fly out, which could give you time to run away.

Mizzen + Main Owens Grey Chino Pant *NEW*



Level of necessity: **Must Have**

I still only travel with one pair of pants and I switched to these from the Icebreaker pants because the Icebreaker pants wore down too quickly and were too baggy.

These are much more form fitting as well as being quick drying and breathable. They also have a four way stretch and don't need to be ironed or dry cleaned—a travelers dream!

These pants require professional hemming, so keep that in mind. It means you get a pair of pants that fit perfectly, but require extra time to get them that way.

[● View On Mizzen+Main ●](#)

Lulu Lemon Sojourn Backpack *NEW*



My Tom Bihn backpack got too stinky so I decided to get a new pack. This Lulu Lemon bag is the same size (26L), but has some slightly different features than my Tom Bihn Smart Alec

Likes:

- Rain Cover
- Top and back access to main compartment
- Separate bottom pocket for better organization

Dislikes:

- No hidden water bottle holder
- Straps made to hold a yoga mat and are poorly designed to hold anything else.

[● View On Lulu Lemon ●](#)

Reusable Grocery Bag



This is one of the best things I've added. I was constantly having to take off my backpack to get at items I needed regularly, like my camera, journal (where I wrote directions) or maps of the area.

I also use it for carrying things I'll get rid of in the future: food/groceries, hard copy books, maps, etc.

It's also a nice day bag or a place to store things if I go on a day adventure and don't need everything in my backpack. I put the unneeded stuff in the reusable grocery bag and leave it in the hostel.

You can find them in most grocery stores for cheap and [Tom Bihn](#) even sells a high quality version.

Toiletries - Tom Bihn 3D Clear Organizer (liquids) & Tom Bihn Kit

Liquids:

- Shampoo, Conditioner and Body Wash
- Sunscreen
- Toothpaste
- Cologne
- Eye Drops

[●View On TomBihn.com ●](#)



Non-Liquids

- Toothbrush & Floss
- Razor & Nail Clippers
- First Aid/Sewing Kit
- Nyquil, Imodium AD, Motrin, Claritin, Excedrin
- Deodorant
- Comb and Hair Pomade

[●View On TomBihn.com ●](#)



Nice to Have Gear

This is gear I don't really need while I'm traveling but it makes my life much more enjoyable so I don't mind carrying it.

Joby GorillaPod



This tripod is nice to have if you're traveling solo.

You can set it up by wrapping it around trees, poles or just setting it on the ground and it's much smaller than a traditional tripod.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Packtowl UltraLite XL



Full sized, ultra-light (just a bit over 3 ounces), compact (folds to the size of a large index card), and quick-drying towel.

This thing is great and while most hotels will have towels, most hostels make you pay to use their towels, so while this isn't a must have while you're traveling, I highly recommend it.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

[Nikon D5200 \(With Charger\)](#)



It's very nice to have some sort of a camera to document your travels, but you by no means need a professional camera like the D5200.

I have really grown to enjoy taking photos as an activity while I travel, so it's why I choose to carry such a large camera with me.

If you're looking for something a bit more compact, that still takes great photos, I recommend the [Sony NEX-5TL](#).

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Fitbit Charge HR (With Charger)



I use the Fitbit to track my steps throughout the day to help me better track my diet.

It's also great for tracking sleep and it's fun to see how far you walk while exploring during a trip.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

13-Inch Sony Vaio Pro (With Charging Cable)



I do all of my work from the computer now and while I was traveling, I had all of my electronics stolen about 6 months in. While I was ok for the rest of the trip without a computer, I lost a major outlet for my creativity—writing, editing photos, working on my blog, etc.

So for me, a full computer is a must have, however, it's possible to travel without one.

[● View On Amazon ●](#)

Seagate 1.5TB Slim External HDD



If you're taking lots of high resolution photos you'll probably need an external HDD.

It's ultra slim so I can fit it in my money belt if I'm in a sketchy area and worried about keeping all of my photo memories safe.

I also have a backup in the cloud using [Backblaze](#), which is unlimited cloud backup for \$5/month.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

E-Reader (With Charging Cable)



When I was traveling for a year I thought I'd be reading much more than I actually did.

However, when I did read, it was nice to not have to lug around full books, which is why I recommend an e-reader of some sort, especially if you are traveling where books in English might be hard to find.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Dream Essentials Sweet Dreams Contoured Sleep Mask with Earplugs



I didn't use these as often as I thought I would, but, when I did need to use them I was glad I had them.

I like them better than other sleep masks I've used because they are contoured so you can blink your eyes without interference.

They are compact and very light so I don't mind keeping them in my pack even if I don't use them often.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Mizzen + Main Hampton Dress Shirt *NEW*



Having at least one nice shirt with a collar comes in handy.

I chose this one because it's made for travel.

It is crafted from a lighter weight fabric and has:

- Superior quick dry properties
- Moisture wicking fabric
- Four way stretch
- Never needs any dry cleaning or ironing

[● View On Mizzen+Main ●](#)

Mizzen + Main Anadarko Navy Heather Henley *NEW*



Great stylish everyday wear shirt for any weather. Made from athletic material so it's:

- Moisture Wicking – unique fabric blend that breathes better than cotton.
- Four way stretch
- No ironing and quick drying
- Trim fit

[● View On Mizzen+Main ●](#)

Fossil Men's Charlie Reversible Belt (Cognac)



Brown and black belt in one.

Not the highest quality of belt but it does the trick for what's needed.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Tom Bihn Padded Organizer Pouch (Small)



Hooks into side pocket with other small pouch and holds 1.5TB external HDD.

● [View On TomBihn.com](#) ●

Tom Bihn Clear Organizer Pouch (Small & Medium)



These hook into the side pockets, the small holds:

- Kikkerland Travel Adapter
- Nikon Battery Charger
- iPhone and Kindle charging cables
- USB Drive
- USB to wall outlet converter
- Fitbit Charger

The medium hooks into water bottle pocket:

- Copy of passport, driver's license and other travel documents

● [View On TomBihn.com](#) ●

Eliminated/Replaced Gear

Icebreaker Men's Seeker Pants - Replaced



These replaced the Prana pants from my world trip.

Stylish travel pants are hard to find and you usually end up with cargo pockets, synthetic fabrics or zip-off-to-shorts. The other option is jeans, which are heavy and take FOREVER to dry.

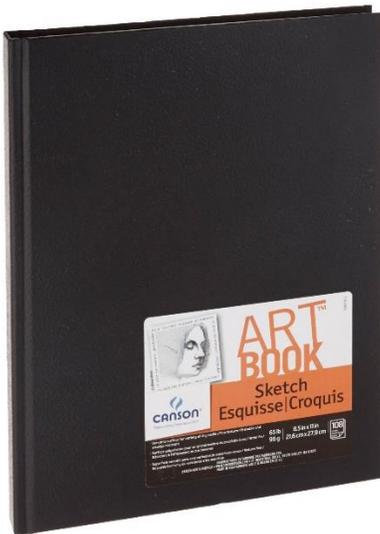
These are 70% merino wool and look like dress pants. You could wear these to work and drinks afterward and go hiking in them the next day.

I replaced them because they were too baggy and wore out quickly. Icebreaker replaced my worn out pair at no charge, but I couldn't be bothered to keep doing that.

Note: They run big, so get a pair smaller than your actual size.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Canson Basic Sketch Book, 8-1/2" x 11" - Eliminated



I used this sketch book for note-taking, brainstorming and fleshing out ideas.

The Moleskine is rigid in structure—one page per day. So if I needed to flesh out an idea, I'll do it in this.

Currently, I use Evernote for this now.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Icebreaker LS Outback - Replaced



This shirt was a great shirt perfect for those early morning or late night outings when it starts to get cold.

I replaced it with the Icebreaker hoodie seen above because of the pockets and hood it has, which this does not.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Patagonia Super Shell Jacket - Eliminated



Eliminated because I didn't use it enough.

I probably only used the rain shell a handful of times because if it was raining out, I just stayed inside.

The one time it truly came in handy was when I was exploring Indonesia on a scooter and it started raining really hard when I was still an hour away from home. I had my backpack with me, which had my computer and camera in it, so I used the jacket to protect my backpack.

● [View On Amazon](#) ●

Mont-Bell Ex-Light Down Jacket - Eliminated



Eliminated because I didn't use it enough.

This jacket is almost too good. It keeps you so warm I only needed to wear it when it was extremely cold outside, otherwise I'd get too hot.

When I did need to wear it (which rarely happened), I was glad I had it. Otherwise, I'd be warm enough wearing my long sleeve Ice Breaker shirt.

The only problem is neither of them have hoods. One solution is an Ice Breaker hoodie, [like this](#). This is the direction I'll probably go when it's time to retire my long-sleeve shirt.

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Eagle Creek Pack-it 2-Sided Half Cube - Eliminated



Eliminated because I also eliminated most of the cold weather gear.

I used this to hold all of my cold weather gear, it makes it easy to keep it all together and easy to pack:

- Patagonia Super Shell Jacket
- Mont-Bell Ex-Light Down Jacket
- Mittens
- Beanie
- Neck Tube Scarf

[●View On Amazon ●](#)

Tom Bihn 26 L Smart Alec Backpack - Replaced



There are lots of things to think about when choosing a backpack to travel with. Ultimately, I chose this one because it looks unassuming (small, black, not a lot of zippers) so it doesn't scream backpacker/tourist, which could be a signal to a thief you have something valuable.

It was also designed with great customizable, organizational capabilities; it is made from super durable material and has aquaguard zippers, which helps to keep the contents dry if it starts raining.

[●View On TomBihn.com ●](#)

Kodak Play Sport

This was going to be my "rugged" camera.

It is waterproof and takes 1080p video. However, I found my phone worked just fine when needing to take quick pictures or videos.

Fenix LD15 Flashlight

I only really used it at night in the hostels when I came home late and didn't want to wake anyone and the flashlight on the iPhone works just fine for this.

I/O Bio Merino ¾ tights

I never wore these once, even when it was below freezing cold outside.

Invisible Shoes Connect 4mm Barefoot Sandal

These sandals were great, and ultra-compact. However, the knot on the bottom would occasionally break and fixing it while on the road was annoying.

Anytime sandals would be useful, I just go barefoot and if I really NEED sandals for some reason, I just buy a cheap pair at the store wherever I am.

Griffen USB Mini-Cable Kit

While these are nice and compact, it's annoying to use your devices (like my iPhone) while they are charging.

[Rick Steve's Travel Gear Clothesline](#)

Awesome product design, but I really only think it would be useful if you're doing a lot of camping.

I don't travel with many clothes and I found there were always plenty of places to hang stuff to dry without having to use the clothesline.

[Sea To Summit 100% Premium Silk Travel Liner \(Traveler Size\)](#)

I took this with me in case I ever stayed in any sketchy hostels. I stayed in a hostel for 207 nights all over the world and never had an issue.

I think I used it once while I was couchsurfing in Indonesia because my host didn't have any extra blankets.

[RayBan 54mm Foldable Wayfarers](#)

These are actually pretty awesome sunglasses and I'd still be carrying them with me had they not been stolen and broken by monkeys in Indonesia. [Click here](#) to check them out.

Currently, I just carry a cheap pair I bought from a street vendor in Thailand.