

Three Things You Need When Filming on Location

BY PHIL COOKE



Over the years, I've produced and directed programming on location in more than 50 countries around the world. For everyone that spends lots of time on a film or video set – particularly in far away places – there are certain things you just don't leave behind. Novices could do well to learn what more experienced filmmakers consider "must have" items during a shoot. For me? The top 3 would probably be my laptop (I'm always writing), a raincoat, and a great bag. In fact, I'm a little obsessive about bags and have way more than I should. But on location, a bag is my office, so I'm not afraid to spend money for one that does what I need. So I asked some other experienced professionals what were the top 3 absolutely "must have" items they take to every location. Here's a few answers:

From Stu Hazeldine, Director of the upcoming feature film "The Shack:"

- ☒ Script in a leather binder.
- ☒ Director's Viewfinder.
- ☒ Blundstone boots.

From Lisa Swain, formerly Production Coordinator on films like "Big Fish," "Anger Management," and "Face/Off" and now Associate Professor of Cinema at Biola University:

- ☒ Sharpie.
- ☒ Swiss Army pocket knife.
- ☒ Chapstick.

From Korey Pollard, Assistant Director of "House," "Grey's Anatomy," "Nashville," "CSI," and "Monk:"

Charlie Peacock's West Coast Diaries.

- ☒ My Bible.
- ☒ AA meeting list.

And when I asked Ralph Winter, Producer of films like "X-Men," "Wolverine," "Planet of the Apes," and the upcoming "The Promise," and "Altered Carbon" from Netflix, he couldn't stick to 3 items, but since he produces \$100 million plus movies in all kind of challenging conditions, I let him explain:

From years of traveling, I build several "go" bags, that are always ready. Probably too much to explain here. But for instance:

☒ Snow bag: heavy gear, sweat shirts, sweaters, hats, gloves, boots, various levels of socks, scarves, etc. Hockey size bag, good to -20 degrees. Ready for Fedx with manifest to any country.

☒ Computer gear: backup laptop updated exact copy of working laptop; backup drives (3); various cables, power supply for apartment, office, trailer; Apple TV; older but spare Apple Extreme for use in apartment; Blu-ray NTSC drive with USB for laptop (otherwise a problem in countries like Spain, which are PAL); computer repair tools (several packets).

☒ Phone gear: separate iPhone 6+ for local sim card (everything else syncs with iCloud and iTunes); phone repair tools and various covers.

☒ Passport, Global Entry, Nexus cards; local currency which I have built up over the years; never know when you need cash for taxi, or a favour.

☒ Reduce wallet size: I take only specific credits cards that I will use on location, leaving others at home so they don't get lost. Cards in my wallet I make of and keep copy in office and home, in case of loss.

☒ Always carry a pocket knife (good site for this is www.everydaycarry.com) but this is in packed luggage of course, along with cigar lighter, cutter, etc.