

Getting Used To It

anon.

1966

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Following is part one in a series of articles subtitled "a guide to bumming in the U.S.A." The author is unknown, and we wouldn't have found out about it if it weren't for the keen eye of one of our readers in Berkeley, California.

"Nobody's ever taught you how to live out on the streets and now you're gonna have to get used to it."
—Bob Dylan

Last week a girl told me she wanted to move cross-country, but it was too expensive. And lately I've talked to many people who wanted to travel, but "don't know how. And a good part of my last four years have been spent "on the road." So here I am—riding a piggy-back from Boston to New York on my way to Chicago, because it's a four day weekend and I don't have to work, so I'm going visiting. And I have been provided by the world with a notebook and pen and so I start writing this book for all of you other people who also like kazoos, and crisp winter mornings, and warmly baked bread, and small furry mammals.

When I hear people say they'd like to travel around, but it takes too much time, or money or is too dangerous, I think maybe they're missing the point in life. For living is very expensive and dangerous -and IS time. Expense can be reckoned in experience and decisions if you lack money—in fact money is only a way of exchanging these things, and is far too often used as an attempted substitute or buffer for them. Certainly free-lance traveling can be dangerous—but not much more than crossing a busy street. Life is dangerous—A win or lose game with happiness and personal fulfillment as the stakes, ways of living as the rules, and physical death as only one of the cleaner ways of losing. Traveling is one of the ways I've chosen to directly experience things.

A man who exists for his time on earth worrying about his "security" (material, social or intellectual) and so doesn't enjoy the good things that happen to him; and won't accept the "bad" ones at face value loses more, and less cleanly, than one who takes as much of the joy, love, and pain of living as he can—and grooves it—even if he is hurt more in the process. For living happily, and lovingly, the charitably, is the only way we can hope to win—is the only way to a full, and therefore a long life. This is true for the businessman as well as the bohemian, the settler as well as the traveler. For ultimately the only security must come from within ourselves—for that's where it's needed and felt, and only there can it be trusted to last.

Ultimately that's "where it's at."

2. CLOTHES AND EQUIPMENT *

"Put all my clothes in a little black bag,
put all my money in a paper sack,
I'm goin' ramblin' an' tumblin', pretty momma,
down the road;
Well if I get lucky,

I ain't gonna worry no more."

—Spider John Koerner

The suggestions in this chapter are intended mainly for Hitching and Freight Riding, although they are basically what I carry however I'm traveling. Also, since they're based on my own experience, they apply mostly to men (especially clothing) but would be a good basis for either sex. I always like to travel as light as possible—never exceeding what can be carried easily on my back or over one shoulder.

I. EQUIPMENT

1. Luggage—I use a green canvas book-bag, with the seams double-stitched and padding added to the strap for shoulder carrying. It holds as much as a medium sized suitcase, takes up little space, can be used for a pillow, and can be thrown around. A medium sized backpack is also good, especially if you're carrying a bedroll. Suitcases are bulky, have to be carried by hand, break easily (and are hard to repair), and have to be opened wide to get anything out.

2. Toilet Kit—The Usual (soap, toothbrush, etc.). Also an old, LARGE bath towel, safety pins, needle and strong thread, toilet paper, aspirin, mercurochrome, chap-stick, "no-doz", mouthwash, and perhaps Keopectate. Yes, and Band-Aids.

3. Accessories Bag—I usually take a small screwdriver and a pair of pliers, a small flashlight, small salt shaker, (to keep up salt — in — blood level in hot weather), extra pen and notebook, spoon, can-opener (c).

4. A Very handy thing for many situations is the Boy Scouts HANDBOOK FOR BOYS.

5. A knife that doesn't look too much like a weapon, but with a good edge.

6. A paperback book for when you get hung-up in small cafes, train yards, jails.

7. In pockets—Pen, notebook, kleenex, pocket comb, etc.

II. CLOTHES

1. I usually wear blue Levis (but Wranglers jeans fit women's hips better)—They outlast slacks, show dirt less, are acceptable in most social groups, and are comfortable in almost any weather (Levis and Levi jackets can be waterproofed by soaking in Thompson's Water Seal, but it makes them a little stiff.) I take two pairs—one for traveling and one for town. This also gives you a pair to wear while doing laundry, or in case of rain, rips, spillings, or Acts of God!

2. Shirts—2 or 3 light cotton washable, and one wool shirt or sweater.

3. Coat—Anything that is sturdy, good insulation, lightweight, and doesn't show dirt. I like leather or Levi jackets.

4. At least 5–6 pairs Clean, dry socks keep your feet and legs from getting tired nearly so fast. (By the way, when you feel tired and dirty, just washing your face and feet and changing socks can raise your spirits 74-1/2%. Wool "athletic" socks absorb and evaporate perspiration well, and are soft. Always make sure your shoes AND socks fit well

5. Shoes—Something with good soles—Tennis shoes give me sore ankles and stone bruised feet. I sometimes wear lace-up mountain boots, otherwise a \$4–5 pair of oxfords (traveling wears out shoes fast). Always carry an extra pair of laces.

6. Girls should take at least one change of feminine clothes.

In any city you can find used clothing or Goodwill, etc. stores to prepare cheaply for traveling—or to supplement your traveling clothes when in a city. Learn to shop around, there are usually lots of stores.

III. EXTRAS FOR FREIGHT TRAIN RIDING

1. Also a cap with ear flaps or a hat and a scarf to tie it over your head, gloves that come above your jacket sleeves. You want to be able to cover as much of your body as possible against cold wind and dirt.

2. Don't wear good clothes on freights, you can get fantastically dirty.

3. It's nice to have some water along on a train -A canteen or a washed out plastic Purex bottle with a shoulder strap.

4. And food. (see FOOD)

5. Extra matches and cigarettes if you smoke -learn to roll your own, the railroad hobos will bum from you constantly. Also it's a nice feeling to sit in a car and smoke your own cigarettes—I like Velvet pipe tobacco and Bugler to roll.

* Web archive note: Section 1 is not labeled in the original print version.

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