

The Hindustan Times

Add-ons for travel

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If you are one of those who rarely hits the road without packing in your gadgets, chances are you have your share of sob stories to share.

Right from batteries going on the blink to your shoulders and back caving in under the burden you could well have avoided carrying.

Here is a lowdown on ways to make travel not only exasperation-free, but also pleasurable in many ways.

Why carry a laptop?

Unless you need it during the journey, why not leave your laptop home the next time you are travelling? And carry everything you need from your laptop - software applications, personal settings, files, preferences – in your pocket.

Ringcube's MojoPac software allows you to do that – by virtually transporting your desktop environment into any USB (universal serial bus) device such as an iPod digital player, a cell phone, a portable drive or even a USB stick. You can plug this into any Windows PC – in another office, in a cybercafé or in your hotel's business centre -- after that and work on it as if it were your own PC. You don't even need to load any personal software onto this host PC. And when you plug out, there will be no trace of your ever having been on this computer. Go back and sync to your laptop again –everything gets updated as if your computer was always with you. MojoPac's Freedom version is free, and gives you most of what you may need. Download at www.mojopac.com.

Staying connected

If you have decided to lug your laptop around, you would want to connect to a Wi-Fi network. Instead of powering up your computer to check availability of signals, which can be quite awkward if you are popping into cafes to do so, get hold of a Wi-Fi finder to locate the signals for you before you need to open your laptop. Popular brands include IOGEAR and StarTech.

Prices start at around \$17 (Rs 680) and can exceed \$100 (Rs 4,000) depending on features.

Packing a power punch

On the move for extended stretches of time means your gadgets would need to take a break to soak in some power. Here is some stuff from APC India to pack in some power into your devices:

Plug-and-Play external battery UPB60I: Compatible with most laptop brands and models, can provide up to six hours of additional power depending on the machine. Costs about Rs 13,000.
Mobile Power Pack UPB10: This provides a charge to your mobile devices including phones, PDAs and iPods. Fits into the pocket – you can even leave the unwieldy chargers home if it's a short trip and use this pack for recharging. Costs around Rs 3,900.

Travel Power Adapter with International Plug Kit TPA90DCI: To simultaneously charge your mobile phone, PDA and laptop from a single airplane, car or mains power outlet, this device is useful. Has USB charging ports too and comes with four international plug adapters to give you worldwide adaptability. Priced at Rs 6,779.

Entertainment on the go

Not available in India yet, at least officially, but more and more people seem to be buying the Archos pocket entertainment devices for use while travelling. "The AV 504 portable media player with 160 GB hard disk carries all my music, pictures and several movies for the long haul flights. I can also review work documents on this device in PDF format," says Ravi Kiran, CEO, South-Asia, Starcom MediaVest Group.

Don't forget your expense report

If you have been out on a business trip, managing all your expense receipts and reports for submitting to accounts departments later can be a job in itself. Gopal Ramasamy, the vice-president for outsourcing at Intelligroup, based in Hyderabad, has found a solution.

"I use a portable scanner called neat receipts (neatreceipts.com). The device scans my bills and, using proprietary OCR technology, automatically identifies the date of the receipt, the amount and the vendor name and stores the image," he says.

