



LIFE & ARTS

TRAVEL | OPINION | PUZZLES | WEATHER



Everyday items such as duct tape can fix a range of sticky travel situations, from a broken flip-flop to a leaky tent, according to one travel blogger. STEVEN SAPHORE/REUTERS

Easy does it: Travel experts share their simple must-have items

Forget the pricey specialized gear to ease your travels — you probably already have most of these everyday objects at home

JUDY MANDELL

Several years ago when I was visiting Cusubamba, a remote village in Ecuador, one of my fellow travellers carried plastic bottles of bubbles in her backpack. When we exited our tour bus, many Ecuadorian children ran toward our group, clamoring to see the American tourists. My friend pulled out one of her bottles and blew a myriad of bubbles toward the children. They were enthralled — laughing and jumping up and down. This broke the barrier between our crowd and the children and their parents. And it was such an easy, clever idea.

It got me wondering: What other simple items do travel experts and frequent travelers slip in their suitcases/backpacks to make their trips smooth and easy? So I asked. Here's what they told me.

DUCT TAPE

Mitch Glass, a travel blogger from Cali, Colombia, swears by duct tape. Whenever he travels, he wraps several layers of duct tape around his deodorant stick; this takes up less room in his backpack than toting a whole roll. "I cannot tell you how many times this has come in handy," Glass says. "I've used it to fix broken flip-flops and to patch up a leaky tent. I once used it to splint my dislocated finger when there were no hospitals nearby. When the stick runs out of deodorant, I use it as a hiding spot for emergency cash."

Jared Nusinoff, the "chief adventurer" with outhertotravel.ca,

also carries duct tape when he travels. "It can save you in a pinch," Nusinoff says. "You can use it to fix just about anything. Lost your wallet? Make one with duct tape. Lost a tent pole? Use a stick and duct tape. Strap broke? Use duct tape. It is the best."

CLOTHESPIN

Jonathan Rodriguez, a tech executive who travels often, uses a clothespin as a holder for his toothbrush in the bathroom (to clip the bottom of his toothbrush so it stands upright and doesn't touch anything) and as a bookmark. "I clip it on my used towel in my hotel bathroom so as not to confuse my towel and that of my travel companion," Rodriguez says.

Frequent traveller and public-relations agency principal Kristie Aylett also puts clothespins in her overnight bag. She uses them to clip snack bags closed, to pin clothes on a line to dry (of course) and to close gaps in drapes. "It never fails that hotel-room curtains don't quite close, leaving an annoying gap that lets in a beam of light into an otherwise dark room," Aylett says.

A WHISTLE

Aylett always packs a whistle as well. "It provides a sense of safety, knowing I could use it to attract attention on a dark street, in a natural disaster or other crisis," she says. "If asked about it, I jokingly respond that I've seen the movie *Titanic*."

PANTY LINERS

Janice Holly Booth, a team building expert and National Geographic author, sticks panty liners inside helmets (biking, riding, climbing) against her forehead to catch sweat before it runs down into her eyes. "They work great and are absolutely worth the dork factor," she says.

"No one has ever pointed out that I'm wearing an article of feminine protection inside my helmet, and I wouldn't care if they did."

A BEACH BALL

Keith Lang, founder of travel blog Nomad Flag, takes an inflatable beach ball with him on long flights. The fold-out table is uncomfortable when he needs to change position, so he inflates the beachball, puts it in his lap, wedges it against the seat in front of him, and rests his head on top. "It takes the load off my neck, and upper and middle back. The beauty of it is that the ball packs down to almost nothing," Lang says.

BUBBLE WRAP

Patricia Hajifiotou, owner of the Olive Odysseys, a travel agency catering to small groups, mostly in Europe, was trying to wrap a breakable gift she bought for a friend while travelling in Italy. Luckily, she found a small piece of bubble wrap in a recycling bin. Since that time, she always travels with a clean piece. "There are countless ways to use it," Hajifiotou says. "It takes up very little space in the bottom of your suitcase and weighs practically nothing."

DRYER SHEETS

Travelling from California to South Africa, Evan Rubens, a photographer based in Southern California, observed his wife packing dryer sheets in her suitcase to help reduce static and keep her clothes fresh. "I realized it would be the perfect fit for my backpack on long trips and I've used them ever since," he says. "A single sheet is usually enough for a trip and can be used for laundry when I get home."

Special to The Globe and Mail

TIFF's Top 10 Canadian films of 2019 skew young, bold and Indigenous

BARRY HERTZ

SCREEN TIME



Attempting to find a common thread in an annual wrap-up of Canadian cinema is a fool's errand. Aside from the unifying factors of low budgets and lower exposure, there isn't much in the way of theme or execution to tie together, say, the latest domestic drama from Quebec's Xavier Dolan to the latest convention-demolishing feature from whichever young talent is making waves in Toronto. But with this year's TIFF's Canada's Top Ten list (17 years strong, still as awkwardly named as ever), a common thread has emerged: age. Or the lack thereof.

This year's ranking of both feature films and shorts, compiled by the Toronto International Film Festival's programming team in collaboration with industry experts and released Wednesday morning, is composed predominantly of new-guard artists. In the features category, three titles are directorial debuts (Nicole Dorsey's *Black Conflux*, Heather Young's *Murmur*, and Matthew Rankin's *The Twentieth Century*). Another, *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, is co-directed by a first-timer, Elle-Majja Tailfeathers, alongside Kathleen Hepburn, who's only on her second feature. *Aimee* at 13,000 ft. marks only the third film from Kazik Radwanski. And all but one filmmaker on the list, 62-year-old Zacharias Kunuk (*One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk*), is under the age of 50.

More familiar names whom some audiences might imagine as the country's legacy filmmakers — Atom Egoyan, François Girard, Denis Arcand, Bruce McDonald — are absent from the 2019 collection, even though each aforementioned director released a new film this calendar year. Indeed, the most prolific name on the new list — Dolan, recognized for his eighth feature, *Matthias & Maxime* — is also its youngest, at 30 years old.

"This is a very exciting time — there are affecting, inspiring films being made in Canada by new and bold artists, and they're beginning to get some of the exposure that they deserve," says Halifax's Young, whose character study *Murmur* made its world premiere at TIFF this past September, a feat that the filmmaker credits to Telefilm's revamped micro-budget program. "A low-budget funding stream for first-time feature filmmakers is having a big impact, because it's giving realistic access to funding for new voices."

Also of note is the fact that the 2019 list features four Indigenous filmmakers (Tailfeathers, Kunuk, as well as *Throat Singing in Kangirsuk* directors Eva Kaukai and Manon Chamberland), a significant jump compared with the single Indigenous production featured on 2018's list (Cwani Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown's *Edge of the Knife*).

"There's a huge build of momentum amongst Indigenous filmmakers that is really a global wave that has been a long time in the making, and it's a beautiful thing to witness," says Hepburn, whose film with Tailfeathers is already garnering praise in the United States since it's become available to stream on Netflix. "We don't know exactly how it's performing, but we've been told its numbers are good," she adds. "We were so amazed to see it listed in the 'Trending Now' category on our first weekend."

Yet, despite the momentum Indigenous filmmakers have made this year — in addition to making TIFF's list, *The Body Remembers* was shortlisted this past Sunday for the Toronto Film Critics Association's \$100,000 Rogers Best Canadian Film Award — Hepburn and Tailfeathers don't see it as evidence that the system is necessarily working, but more so proof that there's a growing desire from audiences for new stories.

"As an Indigenous filmmaker, I am proud to belong to such a thriving community. But to be quite frank, I have mixed feelings about the current state of the Canadian film landscape," Tailfeathers says, citing last week's restructuring at the National Film Board, which saw the elimination of two executive director positions, including Michelle van Beusekom, a widely recognized champion of Indigenous cinema.

"We are witnessing the ways in which institutions are failing to honour their commitments, which is deeply disappointing. Indigenous people have fought hard for a seat at the table and have offered numerous gestures of respect in hopes that institutions are willing to listen, adapt and grow," Tailfeathers says. "However, institutions can often get it wrong, particularly when deeply ingrained paternalistic attitudes toward Indigenous peoples prevail. Institutional change also requires responsible leadership. That being said, there are allies within institutions who are listening and actively working toward something better."

As with all selections in TIFF's Canada's Top 10, *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* was offered a theatrical run at the TIFF Lightbox, and will screen there starting this Friday. (Sophie Deraspe's *Antigone*, another Top 10 2019 selection, started its Lightbox run Dec. 6.) Other titles — including Louise Archambault's *And the Birds Rained Down* and Calvin Thomas and Tom Lewis's *White Lies* — will have the opportunity to play the Lightbox in the new year, while the short films will be screened in a program format on Jan. 26.

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