

Gayle's Guide

(to Being Comfortable on the Road)

This guide is based on my own road experience and advice that was given to me in preparation for it by friends who have also spent time traveling, notably the late Greg McConnell of Stratochief, whose former band, The Lost Dakotas, was arguably the most comfortable band on the road.

The guide lists some useful items to take on the road with you, you may not wish to have all of this stuff, I can only say, if you are going to be on the road for a while, think about it. I've used everything in this list while on the road, or wished I had it. This is an explanation of the stuff I feel to be useful.

I highly recommend doing some camping if you are on a long road trip and the weather is suitable. There are a lot of government campgrounds that are very nicely sited, with fire pits and outhouses, it is more like outdoor cottaging than truly like camping, but the sunsets are amazing just the same. For the price of an often scummy room the whole band can be accommodated.

If you are going to have to sleep in the vehicle from time to time, you can always get a shower by going to a public pool.

I also recommend taking some stuff to help you make food on the road. You may not want to do it all of the time, but it can often be both cheaper and more pleasant. Of course, hot dogs are no big deal and they can be the hot food at the end of the day that takes away the strain of the road.

Travelling for an extended period of time can be a lot more pleasant if you have what you need with you. Below is a list of useful items to consider taking on the road with you.

If you are driving across Canada in the summer, Don't Forget A Good Bug Repellent even if you aren't camping.

If you are coming to Canada from outside of North America, or if you are a Canadian band travelling outside of North America, you should get an **International Drivers Permit**.

You Should Think About Taking:

Checklist of the Band's Musical Equipment and Stage Gear and ONE person to be in charge of it.. Include the serial numbers of each item, in case of dispute or theft.

Insurance now that you have the serial numbers, you might as well invest in this. It is a lot easier to collect on insurance than organize a benefit to purchase new stuff.

Large Rubbermaid Container with a tight sealing lid. This will hold all of the camping/personal comfort supplies that are recommended below. Arrange your

packing so this is among the first things to come out.

Road Atlas of Canada Get the large one that includes the major cities.

Contracts DON'T, DO NOT leave without copies of your contracts, it can save a lot of unpleasantness, and oh yes, you are going 3000 miles, and you will be working for strangers, not all of whom are nice people, so you should have [CONTRACTS!](#)

Press Kits You should take at least 5 good copies of your press kit with you. Check out this link on press kits.

List of Everyone's Emergency Numbers Each band member should have a copy of this.

Press Addresses and Names If you have the time before you go, it is good to have a set or two of sticky labels with your press contact names and addresses on them. This may sound like a tedious job to do before leaving, but it is way less tiresome than spending your highly limited spare time on the road addressing envelopes.

[Canadian Automobile Association](#) **Membership** There are other auto clubs, this is the only one I am familiar with,. Unless one of your band is a master mechanic, make sure you have this coverage. Get the plus package, it costs extra, but you get three free tows, and your first tow will more than pay for the cost. An added bonus is that membership entitles you to discount at a number of hotel chains. Don't forget the card.

You should have a **Second Set of Keys** to the road vehicle. This should be your first stop. Ideally, each licensed driver should have a set. It is 4:00 AM, you are at a truck stop halfway between Sault St. Marie, and Drummondville and the keys get dropped in the parking lot, and the second driver left the keys in his jeans, which are in a bag that is under all of the drums, which are in the van.

Vehicle Cigarette Lighter Even if you don't smoke, many useful things can be powered off of them.

An Automatic Tire Pump These are available from automotive supply shops and hardware stores, and operate off of the car lighter. Get one with an adapter for pumping an air mattress, and then make certain you know where this is.

Flares For road trouble. We once lost both mufflers from our car, midway between Windsor and London. The banjo player had to lie beneath the car, practically on the road, to tape up what remained of the muffler with Duct Tape. Our flare ran out, (we had only one) and our flashlight batteries were toast, so I was forced to McGyver a safety reflector out of a candle, a clear plastic water bottle, and a washtub bass. Since most bands are unlikely to have all of these supplies, remember the flares.

Hydraulic Jack These are safer than the other kind and can help prevent the kind of injuries that could prevent someone from playing. Nothing beats a properly designed tool.

At least one powerful Flashlight per vehicle. For emergencies.

Swiss Army Knife An old friend who moved to Toronto from Vancouver by car once told me that when he left Vancouver to drive to Toronto, his sister gave him a very fancy Swiss Army Knife with many attachments which he laughed at when he received and tossed somewhere at the bottom of the trunk. By the time he arrived in Toronto he knew where the knife was at all times, and had needed every tool on it during the trip. When I told friends that I was working on this guide, the Swiss Army Knife was a top recommendation, and the corkscrew in particular was for some reason very popular.

Gaffer Tape, aka Duct Tape See above, also Red Green.

Tarp - We were about to leave for a month on the road. I stood there with my tarp in my hand, deciding whether or not to bring it. I left it behind. A surprise rain storm caught us at our camp site. If we had had the tarp and had set it up, there would have been a dry place under which to store/load our gear. We didn't, there wasn't, and weeks later we were still hauling soggy stuff out of the trunk.

Even if you aren't camping on the road, a tarp can help create a rough shelter if you have to change a tire in the driving rain.

On our next trip, we had the tarp, but didn't put it up, something about a party at the camp site, big mistake, huge rainstorm. When we woke up, we had to clean up a soggy site with a hangover, very bad news. It is not enough to bring the proper equipment, you really should use it. They also make good ground sheets under the tent.

Inflatable Mattress The standard camp mattress is a good bet, if you have a tire pump. Otherwise, look for the Aero Extra Bed. It automatically inflates and unrolls in 45 seconds and deflates in 15 seconds. It rolls up like a sleeping bag and tucks away. They aren't cheap, but if you are spending a month or more on the road, you may find that it is more than worth it. A missed gig on the road will not only cut into revenues, it will affect your reputation and future bookings.

Sleeping Bag Do not leave without this, you will be sleeping on the floor a lot.

Pillow If space is limited, take at least a small pillow, this is more important for driving than for sleeping, you may be too tightly packed in your vehicle to adjust your seat, this will at least help to change your sitting position a bit. Neck pillows (the ones that wrap around your neck) are great! At least take a pillowcase, you can put t-shirts in it to use as a pillow.

Alarm Clock Sometimes you will have only 4 hours to sleep before you must get up. A loud alarm clock is a good idea even if you don't normally use one.

1 Liter Stainless Steel Thermos It's a long way between stops, especially late at night in Northern Ontario.

Cooler See above.

Travel Mug for each band member. Getting insulated mugs keeps your coffee warmer longer, and if you have these, there will be less styrofoam litter in your travelling environment.

Gas card "Hey Eugene! You got a credit card?" This is a really good thing to have.

Cash Float There is nothing more tedious than trying to sort out who paid for what and it is a total waste of time. Start with a float of traveling money in its own wallet, keep all of the receipts in there, and replenish it with band cash after your first gig. You should try to have \$100.00 of ready cash at all times if at all possible.

Division of Labour for Travel Tasks There is a lot to be taken care of on the road. Someone with a proven ability to handle money should have the band cash, someone should be in charge of the loading and off loading of the van (and the band equipment checklist), One person in charge of contracts and press materials, one navigator, etc.

Cell Phone Face it, this is Canada. If you are touring across the country there are points where you can travel for hours without coming into contact with civilization. You may believe that this is nothing more than a convenience, but if you do need it, you will really need it. If you are travelling in a convoy, it will definitely save you time (which may mean the difference between sleeping and not), plus making it possible to inform the other vehicle of road trouble. It also means that in the event that there is some kind of emergency at home, you can be contacted without too much strain on your loved ones.

Coffee Pot I purchased a Phillips Travel Duo, which is a very compact and useful item. It has a cup shaped kettle which comes with a permanent coffee filter cup, two coffee mugs, and containers which can hold coffee, sugar and powdered milk substance. If coffee is important to you, get one. It also can be used to heat up foods which is a bonus, although it might affect the taste of the coffee.

Laundry Bag At a certain point in your trip, this is the only thing that will help you know what is clean. If you decided not to take a pillow, this may have a secondary use as well.

Liquid Laundry Soap Way easier to transport than powder, and cheaper in the long run than purchasing small boxes in laundry mats (not all of which have dispensers).

Bring Favourite Music Highly recommended by many friends.

Yards of Latex This will help you prevent both venereal disease and future paternity suits. Think of it as an investment in the future.

[Pheylonian Long Burning Candles](#) For the winter, take a long burning candle for emergency warmth during a vehicle breakdown. The Pheylonian commune makes great beeswax candles for this purpose which come in a tin can with a lid. People die of exposure when their car batteries die, literally, this could save your life.

Camp Lantern whether you plan to camp or not, take at least the kind that is a candle inside of a glass sleeve.

Thermal Blanket Also known as 'Moon Blankets' because the material used was developed for insulation in space, these highly reflective blankets are available at outdoor supplies stores, and cost between \$10.00 and \$30.00 depending on quality.

Eye Mask Really good for sleeping at odd hours, these are available at some drugstores and at cosmetics stores

Ear Plugs Also for sleeping, at hardware, drug, and safety supply stores. Don't bother with the cotton ones, get either the yellow foam or gel type.

Walkman With Speakers and Headphones For the same reason as the tapes. If you are on the road for a long time, music may be the only taste of home that you have. You may be the only member of your band with a fondness for late '70's industrial noise compositions.

Snack Factory Or similar kind of sandwich maker. If you take nothing else, this alone will let you feel like you've had a hot meal for next to nothing.

Electric Frying pan Okay, you may not wish to cook on the road, but this is a pretty useful item even if you only use it to heat up hot dogs in the hotel room at 2am when restaurants in small towns are all closed. I have two that I take on the road; one is full size and goes on long trips, the other I picked up at a junk store in Sudbury for \$15.00 and is about 7 inches square, excluding the handle, it goes on all trips.

Electric Rice Cooker provides regulated heat, rice is a staple.

Juicer The Dakota's took one of these on all trips.

Cast Iron Frying pan If you end up camping this is a good thing to have. When you are cooking over a campfire, remember to put dish soap on the outside of the pots before you start to cook. Otherwise they will be hard to clean.

Cutlery I don't know about you, but I hate plastic.

Sharp Knife At least one, ideally you should have both a paring knife and a longer one, if you have no protective sleeves for them, make sleeves from cardboard and packing tape.

Can opener A good one, you don't want to screw up your hands with a bad tool.

Metal Spatula Aka. Egg flipper.

Some Condiments I always take a small jar of chopped garlic, a big piece of ginger, some soy sauce, ketchup, mustard, salsa, olive oil, margarine, and a loaded pepper grinder. Take what you use every day. Familiar things like favourite foods and music can make long road trips just a bit more palatable.

Unbreakable Plates and Bowls Useful to have if you are going to do any cooking on the road at all. Much of what I use as bowls on the road are plastic food containers.

Thermal Lunch Bags These aren't essential, but if you own some, they take little room and are great for safely storing food for the road. No point arriving with a bad stomach.

Hibatchi or Camp Stove Very very useful.

Frozen Water in Bottles As I keep mentioning, you are in Canada, and there are long gaps between stops. Frozen water bottles will give you a steady supply of fresh tasting water for several hours, and it won't be in the way, because you will be using it to chill the food in your cooler.

Tents Take 'em if you got 'em

Blow dryer Even if you don't normally use one, it is a good idea to take one with you, especially if you are travelling in the winter.

All of the Underwear you own. There is no telling how long it will be between laundry stops.