

# Tech gadgets that make travel easier

July 29 2009, By Etan Horowitz

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When my wife and I went on our honeymoon last year, some friends couldn't believe that we were posting pictures and updates to our Facebook and Twitter profiles while we were supposed to be relaxing. But for us, and many other people, being able to access social-networking sites and the Internet is as important when we travel as remembering to pack our toothbrushes. With that in mind, here are some gadgets, services and other tips that will help you make the most of technology when you travel.

## NOVATEL WIRELESS MIFI

Lots of business travelers carry an "aircard" or cell-phone modem when they travel, which plugs into their computer's USB port to give them high-speed Internet access. But those devices typically only let you connect one device to the Internet at the time. Both Sprint and Verizon offer a better solution, the MiFi from Novatel Wireless, a credit-card-sized device that gives you a personal Wi-Fi hot spot wherever you go. Both versions let you connect up to five devices at once on a password protected Wi-Fi network. Both versions cost \$100 (after rebates, discounts and contract agreements), and the rate plan for the Sprint version costs \$60 a month, while rate plans for the Verizon version range from \$40 to \$60.

## POWER AND ENTERTAINMENT ACCESSORIES

If you have an iPod or other MP3 player, carrying an audio cable with 3.55mm plugs on each end (often called a "stereo audio" or "auxiliary

audio" cable) will let you play your music through speakers in a hotel room or through many rental car stereos. Cost: about \$10 to \$15.

Devices such as iPods, smartphones and Bluetooth headsets come with a charger that consists of two parts: a cable with a USB plug at one end that connects to the device, and a power adapter that connects to the USB plug. Save some room in your bag by bringing all of the cords, but only packing one of the power adapters, or buying a power strip that has USB power slots, such as the Belkin Mini Surge Protector with USB Charger (\$25/Belkin.com). If you'll be in a car, the Griffin PowerJolt Dual Universal (\$15/Griffintechnology.com) lets you use the car's power outlet to charge two [USB](#) devices at once.

## NETBOOKS

Netbooks are the ultimate travel computer because they are lightweight and have a webcam, long-lasting batteries and a built-in digital memory card slot so you can load photos from a digital camera without using a cable. Popular models include the Acer Aspire One series, the ASUS Eee PC series and the Dell Inspiron Mini 10 series. A nice option is the ASUS Eee PC 1005HA (\$378/ Amazon.com), a [netbook](#) with a sleek design, 10-inch screen and a battery the company says can last up to 10 hours.

## TRIPIT

Keeping track of flight times, confirmation numbers, hotel addresses and phone numbers can be a hassle while you are traveling. So instead of rifling through a stack of printed-out e-mails to find out when your flight leaves, sign up for a free account at Tripit.com. Then, when you get a confirmation e-mail from an airline, hotel or rental car company, just forward the message to [plans@tripit.com](mailto:plans@tripit.com) and the service will automatically create an itinerary based on your travel details. At TripIt

.com, you can edit the details of your trip or share it with a friend. You can access a mobile version of the site from your phone by visiting [m.tripit.com](http://m.tripit.com), or, if you have an iPhone or iPod Touch, you can download the free TripIt app from the App Store.

## OFFLINE ACCESS TO GMAIL, GOOGLE DOCS

Just like you can access documents and e-mails stored on your computer when you have no Internet connection, you can also access documents and e-mail messages stored online by Google when you are offline. This will let you catch up on e-mail and get work done while you are on plane.

When you have an Internet connection, log in to your Gmail account and click on "Settings," then "Labs," and then click to enable offline access and follow the instructions. In Google Docs, click on "Offline" at the top of your account and follow the instructions. You'll have to install "Google Gears" on your computer.

You can compose e-mails, delete e-mails, edit documents and spreadsheets and perform other tasks. The next time your computer is connected to the Internet, the changes you made while offline will be synced with your online account.

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Citation: Tech gadgets that make travel easier (2009, July 29) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-07-tech-gadgets-easier.html>

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