

Travel Smoothly To-Go: A Recipe for Smooth Touring

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There may be those of you who have not done very much touring and then some who may have toured for years. For brass players who haven't had much experience with touring, you may benefit greatly from this recipe. Those who do tour may discover new items to add to their list. Touring is not for all of us but for many, playing live music is a great way of life as long as one learns the wisdoms of the trade in respect to traveling and discipline. The following ingredients are all useful for domestic as well as international travel. Whether you tour with a brass quintet, big band, orchestra, brass band, or solo, let this recipe be your tour checklist! Many of these items may seem obvious to have along, but then there are some that may raise an eyebrow. I have toured worldwide extensively for twenty-five years with diverse ensembles of different musical genres.

INGREDIENTS:

For Your Instrument

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 or 2 spare mouthpieces | 2 bottles valve oil | 1 lip balsam |
| 1 long and short warm-up plan | 1 slide grease | 1 proper flight case |
| 1 practice mute | 1 cleaning snake for the slides | 1 shower hose adapter |

For the Musicians

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Patience and tolerance | Copy of the contract | Suitcase practical for light traveling |
| Passport or valid ID proving your identity | Organizer and business cards | Money belt or neck wallet |
| Credit card | Instrument insurance and travel insurance | ID tags on bags |
| Clear and accurate tour | | |

SERVES:

All brass players.

Most professional brass players will experience at least one or two tours in their lives. Common tour types range from one- or two-nighters lasting over a period of time, weekend stints,

or longer stints with theatre productions, which involves staying in different countries/cities for more extended periods. As for newcomers, your first tour will most likely be an unforgettable experience. Try to learn from all types of experiences. One important thing to remember is to stay calm in stressful situations! You can learn a lot from this.

There are sometimes different considerations when using the different modes of transport. When traveling with trains make sure that your instrument is put in a place where tourist or other passengers cannot damage your horn with their heavy bags. When going by bus, don't forget the DVDs and the earplugs.

Extra care is needed when traveling by car or minivan—when loading and unloading, do so as quickly as possible. Always have someone watch the bus or car when unattended. When stopping at rest stations, keep your auto parked within eyeshot. At night always park with the back door or trunk against a wall or hard-to-get-at location. Never leave *anything* in the van when you are not around. Take all valuables indoors at night. Do not underestimate the location for a potential burglary.

When flying, I recommend earplugs for long-distance flights. For the dryness that may occur, drink lots of water and go easy on the alcohol. Some say taking vitamin C helps relieve the dryness and stuffy feeling. Try to be one of the first onboard, because you will have more time to store your instrument and more space options. Below are the ingredients, together with explanations of how they can be applied!

FOR YOUR INSTRUMENT

1 or 2 spare mouthpieces: A spare is strongly recommended. When one is lost and you know the next brass shop is a day's drive away, you won't regret having the spare mouthpiece.

A long and short warm-up: One never knows when a train is delayed or suddenly there is traffic and you have to rush straight to the stage. Having a quick warm-up plan will help the gig go much easier.

Practice mute: Hotel staff as well as their guests would appreciate this spice.

Extra bottle of valve oil and slide grease: Horn maintenance.

A cleaning snake for the slides: Horn maintenance.

Lip balsam: This can be helpful when traveling in cold or dry climates.

A proper flight case: A strong professional case should do the trick. When choosing to buy a flight case, make sure that the case has latches that close below the surface. Latches that sit above the surface damage easily in transport. Also, make sure the outer surface is made of fiberglass, aluminum, or strong wood.

Shower hose adapter: These are a big help for those long tours. This is a tool that fits into the leadpipe and is adapted to connect with a shower hose. It should then be attached to the leadpipe for cleaning out the horn interior.

For the Musicians

Patience and tolerance: Touring can be stressful and sometimes filled with surprises. Staying calm is usually a healthy tactic.

A passport or valid ID proving your citizenship: This is needed when crossing borders or the occasional security checks that happen in some lands.

Credit card: A must for the serious traveler. Many hotels need a credit card for checking in, opening phone lines, mini-bar, and pay-television use.

A clear and accurate tour rider: This is the tour blueprint. Without it, you may miss a train or even a gig.

A copy of the contract: This may come in handy should a dispute arise.

Organizer and business cards: You may run into a contact that may be useful for you. Provide your contact information with a business card, and document the information with your organizer or keep in a card file.

Instrument insurance and travel insurance: Having a damaged horn on the road is bad enough, but having to pay the repair costs alone is not necessary. A good uncomplicated instrument insurance policy is advised. Accidents do occur, so health insurance with international coverage is advised.

Items to use for passing time: This includes books, CDs, portable CD player, MP3 player, and music notes for your next project. Having these goodies may come in handy for long journeys and for free days or for free time.

A suitcase practical for light traveling: It would be wise to travel light. It helps keep away overweight costs and makes movement throughout the tour *much* easier.

A money belt or neck wallet: This makes a pickpocket's job much harder and keeps your earnings safer.

ID tags on bags: Often bags that look similar end up in the wrong places. You won't regret taking time to place this on your bag.

USEFUL TIPS

Drink lots of water: It's healthy and does help in avoiding dry mouth on airplanes and in air-conditioned rooms.

Get plenty of rest before the tour: It would be wise!

Make a mental list of your belongings: Don't leave the hotel or club until you run through your list.

Invest in international/domestic telephone cards: Your family and friends will delight in having a call from far away. These cards are usually found in airports, convenience stores, and tobacco and magazine shops, and are often a very good bargain.

Know airline policies in advance: This is essential for checking in big instruments or for permission to carry instruments onboard. Check weight limitations and other useful information.

Arrive earlier for check-in: It will be easier to deal with unexpected complications when time allows. When using a large flight case, notify the airline a day or so before to help avoid unwanted situations.

Do not carry sharp objects (e.g., scissors or pocket knives) and remove flammable, sharp, and suspicious items from your gig bag: When you fly, carry-on bags are always X-rayed. Such items will surely be taken and you may not ever see the items again.

Use “fragile” or “heavy” stickers for your checked flight case: When checking in, ask for a few of these stickers. If you’re lucky, the baggage handler will notice it and, hopefully, will treat your horn with care.

Keep your horn and valuables with you or within eyesight always: When leaving the hotel, this extra effort will always pay off.

Eat healthy: Your body will love this!

Have a great tour and safe journey! ➡