

Guides

Packing the right gadgets and gear can make a world of difference in any traveler's journey. Just ask Great Big Story producer Austin Brown, who spends about half the year on the road. These are the tried-and-true products he can't travel without, that also happen to make excellent gifts.

Life is an adventure worth caring about. Great Big Guides give you the recommendations you need to live a more joyful, interesting and meaningful life. If you purchase any of the products we recommend in a Guide, Great Big Story may receive revenue. Please note that the prices in this guide were accurate at the time of publishing but are subject to change at any time.

22 Game-Changers for Globetrotters That Our Producers Swear By



KRISTINE SOLOMON, CONTRIBUTOR

A traveler's life may look glamorous on the 'gram, but reality is a different story. Setting yourself up for success takes some serious packing know-how, and Great Big Story producer [Austin Brown](#) has got

the goods. Austin spends half of his year on the road, documenting far-flung places (like [the most remote pub in Britain](#)) while navigating common challenges like delayed flights, power outages, jet lag, and even pickpocketing.

His go-to gadgets and gear help him stay charged up, connected, and surprisingly grounded wherever he roams—but the real key, he says, is keeping it all organized. Whether you're shopping for your favorite globetrotter or curating the perfect packing list for yourself, Austin's picks are the ticket to a smooth ride.

GREAT BIG STORY PRODUCER AUSTIN B

NORTH FACE BASE CAMP DUFFEL IN MEDIUM

Outdoor enthusiasts have a few non-negotiables when it comes to travel bags: comfort, roominess, and durability. This rugged [North Face Base Camp Duffel](#) has it all and then some. The bag's water and wind proof nylon and TPE laminate construction make it an all-weather warrior, but Austin loves it because "it has great space to store your things and is super comfortable." Case in point: the zippered compartments strategically located on either end provide spots to separately store wet clothes and keep electronics and sports gear within reach. Plus, the duffel's ergonomic design and twist-proof straps are made for unobstructed action.

\$155

Get It!

ANKER POWER BANK

Staying connected is paramount just about anywhere, but maintaining a full charge on the go can be tricky. Long concerts, overnight bus trips, and all-day walking tours are just a few of the reasons travelers might find themselves enduring the one-percent power panic. A dead phone means no Google Maps, no means of communication, and no chance to photograph once-in-a-lifetime sights. A power bank is the gift that says, “I don’t want you to waste a single minute hunched over a coffee-shop power outlet.” Austin calls the [Anker Power Bank](#) “essential,” and I agree. It can power three devices simultaneously or charge a single smartphone six times.

\$70

Get It!

PERSOL HAVANA FOLDING SUNGLASSES

“Everyone needs a pair of sunglasses when they travel,” Austin advises. “Bonus points if they fold, because it means more space in their bag.” Austin’s favorite pair of shades have polarized lenses that reduce even the brightest glare on the sunniest of beaches. Their classic style means they suit any face, look great in selfies, and can be rocked just as easily on a safari as they can at a fancy brunch. Each pair of [Persols](#) comes with a protective leather case—but is compact enough to slip into a shirt pocket in a pinch.

\$164

Get It!

travel gift guide wireless headphones

NURAPHONE WIRELESS BLUETOOTH HEADPHONES

Traveling can be hectic and noisy—and you never know if you’ll end up next to a screaming baby on the plane or in an Airbnb above a nightclub. Give the gift of serenity with a pair of [wireless Bluetooth headphones](#) that let jet-setters stream music or enjoy the silence. Austin sticks to this

Nuraphone model, which he loves to wear on flights. They even let the user personalize their sound—adjusting the bass, for example—or tune back into the outside world with the touch of a button. Charge them overnight and they'll last all day.

\$400

Get It!

travel gift guide dr. martens boots

DR. MARTENS LEATHER CHELSEA BOOT

“Trust me—invest in a proper pair of shoes for all the walking you’ll do,” says Austin. Enough said! These slip-on [Dr. Martens Chelsea boots](#) were made for walking with their cushioned footbeds, slip-resistant soles, and Goodyear® welted construction. Guys and girls can spend entire days exploring a real [Hobbit Hamlet](#), hiking the [Sardinian coast](#), or traipsing through the City of Light in true ‘90s style without developing leg cramps or blisters. Perhaps they’ll even make their way to Northamptonshire, England, where the Dr.

Martens' flagship factory has been operating for the past 150 years.

\$130

Get It!

travel gift guide spork

TITANIUM SPORK

Is a travel spork an odd choice for a packing list? Not really, says Austin. He assures us “this bad boy is essential, considering the amount of times I grab food on the go and forget to grab a fork or spoon. If this is in your bag, then you have no worries”—and no reason to feel guilty about reaching for single-use cutlery. Send hungry travelers packing with an eating utensil that doubles as a bottle opener and comes with its own washable cloth carrying case. This titanium multitool is small but mighty and can survive bumpy bus trips, tosses into the overhead compartment, and the occasional tumble down a flight of ancient stone steps.

\$18

Get It!

travel gift guide universal adapter

HYLETON WORLDWIDE TRAVEL ADAPTER

For travelers, one of the worst case scenarios is being stranded in a foreign land with no way to connect to the local power grid. There are only about 50 countries with power outlets that accept U. S.-style plugs; the rest use one of 13 other types. Travelers' itineraries are often in flux, so play it safe with a [universal travel power adapter](#) that lets them stay plugged in wherever they roam. This one has USB ports that can power four devices at once, and the unit has been rigorously tested for safety. Austin offers up a pro tip: "Bring an extension lead with you," he says. "That way you only need one adapter to charge everything."

\$21

Get It!

DJI MAVIC 2 PRO DRONE QUADCOPTER WITH HASSELBLAD CAMERA

Austin always travels with a [suitcase friendly drone](#) to capture stunning scenic shots from above. “The small size of this one (10"x10"x5") makes it super easy to pack,” he says. It also records for more than 30 minutes and can live-stream to personal devices. Austin cautions to fly responsibly, though, as drone laws vary depending on where you go. This gadget makes an extraordinary gift for a free-spirited traveler, but be sure to include information on drone regulations—drone flying is banned in 18 countries, including a few popular spots like Barbados and Morocco.

\$1,730

Get It!

AMAZONBASICS UNIVERSAL TRAVEL CASE

A modern traveler carries a lot of little electronics—smartphones, chargers, and power banks to name a few. All these bits and pieces are easy to lose track of, especially when they're being packed and unpacked all around the world. Plus, contending with tangled wires is not a cute look. Austin uses this [tidy travel case](#) to keep everything organized and accounted for. It has a molded plastic exterior and padded interior for ultimate protection, and mesh pockets inside to store tiny things like SD cards and ear buds.

\$13

Get It!

travel gift guide laacie hard drive

LACIE HARD DRIVE

So many photos, so little memory: welcome to the plight of the traveler. A slim external hard drive is the perfect place to dump all that data and free up space on smartphones and cameras to film a FIFA match or go wild photographing a Kenyan safari—then back it all up when the day is done. [Austin's](#)

favorite hard drive is built for the road, with a rugged, all-terrain shell that can survive splashes, falls, and even the pressure of a one-ton car. It's also compact enough to shove into a bag's side pocket. This diminutive powerhouse offers up to 5 TBs of storage and transfer speeds up to 130 MBs. **Starting at \$85**

Get It!

travel gift guide best ear buds

BOSE SOUNDSPORT WIRELESS HEADPHONES

Noise-canceling technology is one thing, but what about a lightweight set of headphones a traveler can wear to stream tunes as they run along the Adriatic Sea or a hike the Dolomites? Austin loves this pair for their streamlined design, but these bad boys have plenty more to offer during a workout. The unit is sweat-resistant, wireless, and powerful enough to let a wide-eyed wanderer tune out the world. If the headphones happen to get lost in the shuffle, Bose's "find my buds" app will locate them instantly.

\$200

Get It!

travel gift guide fitness tracker

FITBIT INSPIRE HR HEALTH & FITNESS TRACKER

Traveling forces people out of their routine—and that's probably exactly why they do it.

Unfortunately it can also mean skipping workouts and losing sleep, especially to jet lag. A [fitness tracker](#) is one way to avoid travel burn-out. Austin uses his FitBit to keep tabs on the quality of his shut-eye and the amount of steps he's taken.

Health professionals suggest aiming for 10,000 steps a day, which isn't such a drag if it means exploring ancient Roman ruins or the temples of Angkor Wat. Plus, a FitBit is wearable, so even the most minimalist backpacker would be pumped to receive it.

\$100

Get It!

HUNTKEY CUBIC SURGE PROTECTOR USB WALL ADAPTER

Anyone living out of a suitcase and trying to get some work done in the process (ahem, like Austin) understands the struggle of having to choose which gadget to charge when there's only one wall outlet available—or who gets to use it. That's why this brilliant, multitasking power cube is such a lifesaver. It packs four surge-protected outlets and three USB ports (that's right, three smartphones' worth!) into one unit that's less than three inches wide and weighs about half a pound. Smart IC technology gives it the ability to auto-detect each device and provide the maximum charge speed.

\$23

Get It!

RFID CARD BLOCKER

Nowadays, pickpockets don't always pick pockets to steal someone's financial information. All they need is a wireless scanner that discreetly captures credit and debit card information from an unsuspecting victim through radio frequency identification, or RFID. The crime usually goes under the radar until someone spots fraudulent charges on their statement. Austin recommends hooking up a traveler with an [RFID Card Blocker](#). It sits in their wallet to protect their credit and debit cards from invisible theft. "You can never be too careful," he says. "Make sure to stop criminals before they steal your hard-earned cash!"

\$7

Get It!

travel gift guide travel resistance bands workout

BLACK MOUNTAIN RESISTANCE BAND SET

Being far from home is no excuse to skip the gym. Health-conscious travelers can easily pack a

portable workout system right into their suitcase. Movers and shakers swear—and sweat—by Black Mountain Products, a top-rated fitness brand on Amazon. This set comes with five synthetic rubber bands boasting two to 30 pounds of resistance and exercise instructions for a true full-body workout. With two handles and a door anchor, the set can be used right in a traveler's hotel room or at a local playground or outdoor gym. The whole system stacks up neatly and fits inside a compact waterproof carrying case.

\$33

Get It!

travel gift guide eye mask

MAVOGEL NEW SLEEP EYE MASK

Prolific travelers like Austin know that life on the road means squeezing in a snooze wherever they can—and anyone who's ever twisted themselves into a pretzel while trying to sleep in coach knows the struggle is real. One thing that makes naps on the fly a bit more bearable is a sleep mask that

blocks out every bit of light without digging, slipping, or smushing. It's a tall order, but Mavogel's state-of-the-art mask gets it right. It uses supersoft, renewable modal fabric for a perfectly gentle touch and a wrap-around design that eliminates pesky rubber band straps.

\$13

Get It!

travel gift guide eye mist

OPTREX ACTIMIST DOUBLE ACTION DRY AND TIRED EYES SPRAY

When packing for a trip, it's easy to plan for the destination and forget all about the journey itself. Flying notoriously leads to dehydration because in-flight air lacks the humidity we're used to in our normal environments—about 20 percent in an airplane compared to 40 to 70 percent on the ground. Drying out is just par for the course. “I always get dry eye on planes,” Austin admits, so he carries a small bottle of this [best-selling eye mist](#) at all times. At 1.6 ounces, it meets airport security

requirements, making it the perfect carry-on staple and stocking stuffer.

\$19


Get It!

travel gift guide hard shell suitcase

REYLEO HARD SHELL LUGGAGE

Austin recommends buying a [hard shell suitcase](#) for hardcore travel—but not just any hard shell will do. A true traveling pro wants a piece of luggage that does more than just sit there and store things. Reyleo's 20-inch carry-on suitcase comes with a “super handy” built-in rechargeable USB port for juicing up smartphones and laptops during long layovers. It also has a TSA-approved combination lock for safety—a gift in and of itself for any traveler. The luggage is made of unbreakable ABS material and undergoes what the company calls “insanely strict” quality control standards. This bag clearly means business.

\$49.97



Get It!

travel gift guide wifi travel security camera

TP-LINK KASA INDOOR SECURITY CAMERA

An indoor security camera isn't the kind of gift most people would think to give someone who travels—but considering how much time they spend away from home, it's kind of a no-brainer. Austin enjoys the peace of mind his TP-Link [wifi travel security camera](#) affords him when he's not around. It records crystal-clear 1080P HD video, and rotates a full 360 degrees, leaving crafty thieves with zero blind spots. It can even be configured to monitor key activity zones like the front door. The system live-streams footage straight to any smartphone or laptop and sends real-time alerts, so travelers can be “at home” from anywhere in the world.

\$45

Get It!

SONIC BOOM M2 HIGH SPEED JUMP ROPE

Friends don't let friends hike Machu Picchu or bike the Colorado Trail without some seriously strong legs and a solid core. Austin's favorite piece of portable fitness gear is one he can whip out and use just about anywhere he goes: a [jump rope](#).

This Amazon bestseller comes with silicone anti-slip grips and 360-degree ball bearings for lightning fast speed and ergonomic perfection, is designed to resist tangles and kinks, and is light enough to tote around anywhere. It's an all-in-one fat-burning, muscle-building wonder suited to extreme adventurers and everyday travelers alike.

\$24

Get It!

BOSE SOUNDLINK REVOLVE BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

Every great trip involves an equally great

soundtrack, and sometimes headphones just don't cut it. Austin says this compact, wireless Bose speaker is "great for the hotel room when you want to rock out or relax." For music-loving travelers, it's the next best thing to actually bringing their at-home sound system along for the ride. This sleek speaker broadcasts immersive 360-degree sound and receives a signal from up to 30 feet away. Travelers can even access Siri or pick up calls through the device—a godsend when they're trying to get out the door to catch a show or hop a ferry without slowing down.

\$199

Get It!

travel gift guide packable multi-outlet extension cord

CORDINATE MUTLI-OUTLET EXTENSION CORD

Austin learns some tricks from other travelers, and this one comes in clutch. It's an extension cord with enough outlets to charge your smartphone, power bank, and laptop all at once, so commuters can stay totally juiced up for the long trip ahead.

Its compact design means it takes up about as much space in a duffel bag as a typical charger but packs way more punch. Its ten-foot lead provides enough reach that travelers can comfortably take a seat instead of crouching on the floor while plugged into the nearest public power outlet.

\$10

Get It!

“I love to travel,” says Great Big Story producer Austin Brown, who’s been to 29 countries and counting. Now, he’s revealed his packing list go-tos, which happen to make perfect gifts for anyone with incurable wanderlust.

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