

Exploring the World and Meeting Its People

# A Couple's Survival Guide To Overlanding

Douglas & Stephanie Hackney

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1

## Bona Fides

- 43 Countries
- Travel by foot, auto, motorcycle, overland expedition vehicle, train, bus, plane
- Full-time, overland living from 6/2007 to present
- Lessons learned from our experiences and other overlanders



Learn more about us on our web site



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2

## Safety and Security

- Discuss your limits
- Respect the limits
- Safety and security are always trump
- You will worry about this the most and need it the least

**Your definition of relative safety and security will change over time**



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## The Gut Rule

- The ultimate trump card
- Can be challenging
- No quibble, no discussion, no debate
- No proxy vehicle for unresolved relationship issues
- Even the slightest little tingle

**Everybody Bails – NOW!**



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## Important Processes

- Talk through scenarios
  - Separation
  - Ditch bag / bug out
  - Medical stabilize to extraction
  - Daily life: markets, ATM, etc.
- Practice scenarios
  - Satellite phone, EPIRB, etc.
  - Know your gear



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5

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## Health

- Health issues for one affect both
  - Proximity to healthcare resources
  - Ability to participate in activities, eat “local” foods, etc.
- Be realistic about health impacts on proposed destinations / methods / timelines
- Be honest about and aware of the stress health issues place on each of you and your relationship



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6



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## Children

- Highly recommended!
- Travel is very conducive to children's self-confidence, self-esteem, independence, capability, leadership, language skills, etc.
- All the logistics are possible (education, health, etc.)

**Some of the best children we've ever met were full time travelers.**



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7



## Trial / Testing

- Travel
  - Start small, local, short term
  - Test methods: group, friends, solo
  - Test destinations: rural, remote, urban
  - Test lifestyle: everyday activities, space utilization
- Platform / method
  - Rent and learn
  - Fail fast



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## Fail Fast

- New pharmaceutical cost \$500m-\$1b
- Sailing costs ...lots

\$ Cost of Failure \$

Time

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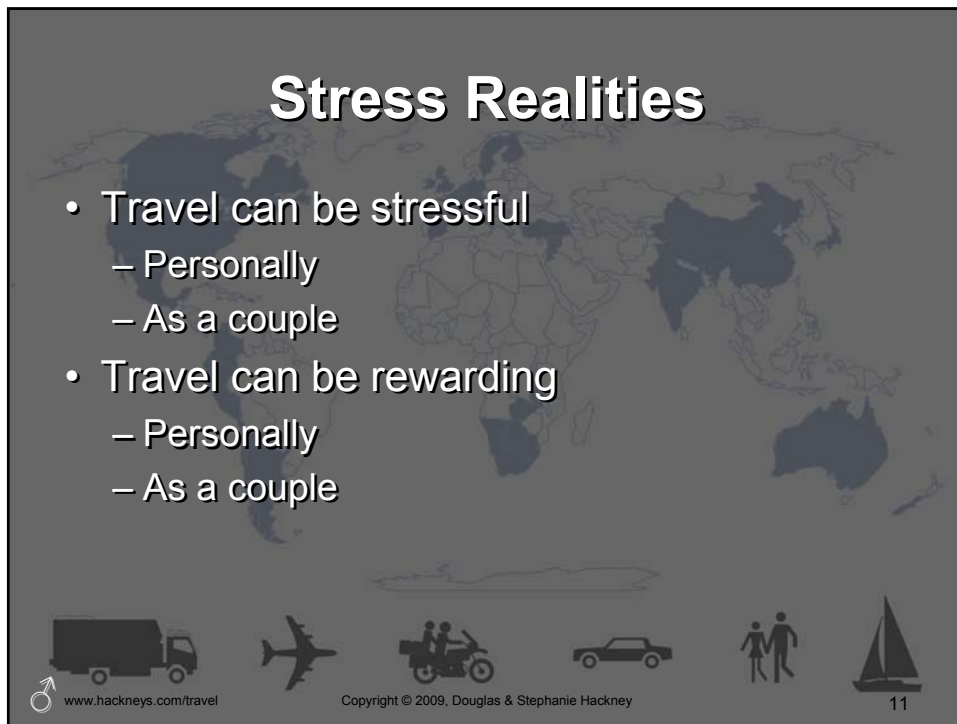
## Intermission and Exit

- Prior to departure
  - Establish and agree on concept
  - Define and agree on criteria
  - Define and agree on method(s)
- If the bell rings
  - No debate
  - No questions
  - No regrets

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## Stress Realities

- Travel can be stressful
  - Personally
  - As a couple
- Travel can be rewarding
  - Personally
  - As a couple



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## The Goals

Maximize Rewards



Minimize Stress



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## Typical Stress Factors

- Her
  - Children
  - **Emotional Isolation**  
(Friends/ Family)
  - Loss Of The Nest
  - Personal Safety & Security
  - Female Health
- Him
  - Logistics
  - Finances
  - **Vehicle**
  - Technology
  - Spouse Safety & Security



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## Stress Relievers

- Communication
- Empathy
- Understanding
- Support
- Validation
- Loyalty
- Respect
- Physical Activity
- Conjugal Relations



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## Communications

- Know your styles
- Know the basics
- Workshops / seminars / retreats / books / videos
- You will need this skill – while under stress
- Be specific when speaking
- Try to improve every day



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## The Three Most Important Words

**I Am Sorry**



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## The Next Three Most Important Words

**You Are Forgiven**



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## Lexicon / Taxonomy / Definitions

Mutual understandings

+

Mutual definitions

=

Mutual Expectations



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18

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## He Thinks / She Thinks

- Shelter – “We’ll find a place.”
  - Him: Wild/dry camp – 70% of the time
  - Her: Hotel to hotel – 70% of the time
- Route – “We’ll find a way.”
  - Him: Go Where No Overland Expedition Vehicle Has Gone Before
  - Her: No roll angle greater than 3 degrees



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19

## Put The Moose On The Table

- Get the issues out and on the table before you depart
- Keep the issues on the table while underway
  - Old
  - New
- Be honest with yourself and your partner

**Fears are the most important thing to put on the table**



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## Manage Expectations

- Be Honest
- Be Fair
- Be Open
- Communicate

**Revisit Expectations Often**



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21



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## Define Roles

- Determine individual strengths / weaknesses
- Discuss prior to departure
- Test roles during lifestyle trial
- Revisit regularly
- Be adaptable and flexible
- Respect each other's roles

**Cross-Train Roles**



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22



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## Define and Express Needs

- Unique needs for each individual
- Shared needs
- Compromise needs

**Unmet Needs Will Sabotage Your Journey**



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23



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## Common Priorities for Segments/Countries

- Establish couple priorities
- Establish individual priorities
- Rack 'n stack within available resources (time, money, health, etc.)
- Maintain flexibility

**Prime Territory For Simmering Resentments**



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24

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## Different Gears

- Individual styles of travel
  - Slow down - you move too fast
  - Go, See, Do
  - Checklist / Goal
- Shared styles of travel
- Compromise styles of travel
- New / evolved styles of travel

Style Can And Will Be Driven By Circumstances



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## Compromise / Flexibility

- Expectations
- Goals
- Time
- Destinations
- Mode of Travel
- Priorities
- Commitments
- And that's just the beginning...



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## Permission to Change

- Yourself
- As a Couple
- Your Journey
- Your Methods
- Your Platform
- Your Goals
- Your Rewards
- Your Preconceptions
- Your Destination
- Your Fears
- Your Timeline
- Your Location
- Your Friends
- Your Tribe
- Your Interests
- Your Expectations



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## Being The Everything

- Special challenge for both parties
- All Roles are often assumed and/or required
  - Friend
  - Spouse
  - Doctor
  - Confidant
  - Family
  - Therapist
  - Peer
  - Hero/Heroine
  - Fixer
  - Lover
  - Admirer
  - Devil's Advocate
  - Booster
  - Champion
  - Playmate



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## Personal Keys To Success

- Personal Space
- Personal Quiet
- Personal Time
- Personal Interests
- Personal Communications
- Personal Rewards

**Must Be Happy Yourself To Be A Happy Partner**



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## Tourism vs. Travel vs. Life

- Very important to discuss and understand your perceptions of these concepts
- Tourism is not travel
- Travel is not Overland Living
  - Traveling through an area is not the same as living in an area for a time
- Full time overlanding is full time living

**Each Mode Has Different Goals, Experiences And Outcomes**

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## Cultural Gender Identity

- Gender-dominated and / or defined societies
- Acceptance of other societies' ideals / standards / requirements
- Gender-specific behavior
- Gender-specific requirements

**Both genders must be on board – this is not only a female issue / challenge**



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## Female Gender Identity



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## The Mission / Purpose

- Why are we doing this?
  - Revisit this question regularly
  - Start at 40,000 feet and work down from there
- Don't be afraid of changing the answer

The Mission Does Not Define You  
**You Define The Mission**



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33

## Re-entry

- The ship will come ashore
- When it does, you will both be different people
  - Individually
  - As A couple
- When it does, everyone else will be different too
  - The world keeps on turning



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## The Simple Things

- Learn from others
- Take time off
- Celebrate
- Rituals
- Be Here Now
- Be nice to each other



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## The Most Important Things

Doug's	Steph's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish and pursue common goals</li><li>• Take responsibility</li><li>• Maintain honesty and integrity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect</li><li>• Communication</li><li>• Happiness...it's a choice and it's your responsibility</li></ul>



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