


**Exploring the World and Meeting Its People**

# 43 Countries: Lessons Learned

Douglas & Stephanie Hackney

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## 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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## Who, What, When, Why, Etc.

- **Who?** – Couple only, kids are grown.
- **What?** – Global travel, developing countries.
- **When?** – Now, while we're healthy.
- **Why?** – To learn, to grow, to experience, to know the reality first hand.
- **How?** – Worked hard and saved our money, made this the priority.
- **Model?** – Sold primary assets, donated the rest.
- **Funding?** – Self-funded, no sponsorships.
- **Modes?** – All the graphics below.



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## The 3 Ms

- Money
- Murder
- Me



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## Money

- It costs less to overland full time in developing countries than to live in the U.S. or western Europe
- Costs vary widely
- Most overlanders live on \$500 to \$2,000 per month

**Background costs are killers  
(insurance, storage, etc.)**



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## Murder

- The world is a very warm and welcoming place
- The world is, generally, safer and less violent than the U.S.

**You will worry about safety and security the most prior to departure and the least while you are out there**



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## Me

- Yes, you can do this
- Overseas overlanding is generally pretty easy, in some places, very easy

Your biggest challenge is looking back at you from the mirror



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## Basics

- **Water** – Bottled water available everywhere on the planet; filter or sterilize the rest
- **Food** – Available everywhere
- **Communications** – Cell available in populated areas, bring sat phone for remote regions
- **Internet** – Available in cities and market towns
- **Fuel** – Diesel available everywhere, gasoline can be challenging, propane – see website
- **Insurance** – Get travelers, medical and liability. Comprehensive is limited and cost prohibitive.



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## More Basics

- **Campgrounds** –As you know them, don't exist outside NA & Europe
- **Trash** – Available everywhere
- **Sewage** – Cassette or macerator pump
- **Repairs** – Non-electronic anywhere
- **Electricity** – 220VAC/50Hz is world standard, 110VAC/60Hz in NA, CA, Columbia, Ecuador, Japan



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## Even More Basics

- **Laundry** – Available everywhere
- **Money** – ATMs in cities & market towns
- **Finances** – Online
- **Bill Payment** - Online
- **Mail** – Box and forwarding service
- **Spare Parts** – Electronic and model specific
- **Pack Lists** – See our web site



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## And Even More Basics

- **Roads** – Inter-city mostly paved, market town roads dirt to paved, chicken bus roads typically dirt
- **Local Language** – Learn basics (thank you, please, etc.), otherwise smile a lot and draw in the dirt
- **Danger / Safety** – The world is a very welcoming and safe place, generally much more so than the U.S. & Europe



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## Safety & Security Basics

- **Trust Your Gut** – No exceptions
- **Dress and Behavior** – Don't stand out
- **Firearms** – No viable overseas scenarios, don't even consider it
- **Civil Unrest & Natural Disasters** – Register with U.S. State Dept.
- **Keep things locked** – Vehicle, storage compartments, etc.

**The world is generally much safer than the U.S.**



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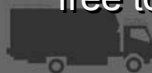
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## Health Care Basics

- **Health Insurance** – Care will typically be covered as out of network
- **Medical Evacuation** – Travel policy including air evacuation is highly recommended
- **Vaccinations** – Required, see a travel doctor
- **Prescriptions** – Bring a supply for the term of your trip or period between trips back to U.S.
- **Meds** – See our web site
- **Allergies** – Bring EpiPens for severe cases
- **Health Care** – Available, quality varies, usually free to very nominal cost



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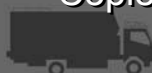
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## Required Paperwork Basics

- Passports
- Vaccination record
- International Driver's License(s)
- Vehicle title
- Vehicle registration
- Vehicle insurance
- Health insurance / medivac
- Birth certificate
- Key emergency contact information
- Copies of credit cards



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## Paperwork Basics

- If you can make the room, bring an all-in-one scanner/printer
- Never present original docs unless you are returning to the U.S. / Europe
- Carry a color copy of the photo page of your passport in cities
- Keep color copies of all vehicle docs ready for presentation
- Create multiple color copies of all important documents; leave one set in the U.S.



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## Money Basics

- Businesses do not accept credit cards outside cities and major market towns
- ATMs are in cities and market towns almost everywhere in the world
- For remote areas with no ATMs, stockpile cash in cities / market towns
- Always have more than one card that you can draw cash on
- Cover multiple ATM networks, e.g., Plus, Cirrus



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## Data Basics

- Backup your data often
- You will generate terabytes of data – high resolution photography, digital video, etc.
- Get a copy of the data off your vehicle – ship a copy home
- Never have only one copy of the data
- Overseas retail drive capacity lags the U.S. by several to many years; stock up on capacity before you leave and when you visit



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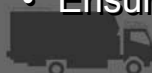


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## Crossing Borders Basics

- First time can be intimidating
- Have all documentation in order
- Have plenty of color copies of all documents
- Bring a language dictionary - know the key words in the local language (license plate, VIN #, driver's license, passport)
- Understand the basic flow of border crossings (see our web site)
- Ensure you get entry and exit stamps



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## Vehicle Dimensions Basics

- Turning radius is the most important day-to-day dimension
- Track width is very important; world standard is HiLux (Tacoma)
- Large & heavy vehicles are self-limited to market town roads - use local vehicles or animals to get to the out of the way places
- U.S. camper width vehicles are OK for Africa, NA, SA, and Australia, problematic elsewhere – Sprinter cab width is OK everywhere



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## Charity Basics

- You must come to terms with poverty
- Big logo charity doesn't work
- "We know what these people need" doesn't work
- Handouts of cash don't work
- Locally initiated and sustained programs work

**Time and personal involvement is infinitely more valuable than cash.**



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## The Important Stuff

- You will learn the basics in the first few weeks
- The important stuff takes longer to learn and is much more valuable
- You learn the important stuff from
  - Your experiences
  - The experiences of others – ask other overlanders!
  - Read the Overlander Interview threads on ExPo



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## Begin With The End

- The ship will come ashore
- You will have changed
- Everyone else will have changed
- The world did not stop turning while you were gone – everyone and everything moved on
- Others are not all that interested in you, your experiences, your perspectives, your insights, etc.; they are more interested in TV.
- Others may resent your experiences



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## Getting From A to O

- It doesn't happen in one big step
- Start small – local, short duration
- Test methods / styles / platforms – solo vs. group, rigidly scheduled vs. no schedule, small vs. large, etc.
- Consider rental or group trip for initial overseas experience



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## Misplaced Prep Priorities

- It's not about the truck / bike
- It's not about the stuff
- It's about the experiences

**Every \$ spent on things is almost certainly, without exception, better spent on the travel.**



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## Planning

- "No plan survives first contact with the enemy." - Helmuth von Moltke the Elder (1800-1891)
- Much of what you bring you won't need or use
- Most of what you think will happen won't

**Remain Flexible**



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## The Big Mistakes

- Seeing a lot and experiencing very little
- Checklist travel
- Wearing cultural goggles
- No permission to change (mission, self, destinations, interests, etc.)
- Never disconnecting / unplugging from home



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## The Big Challenges

- Understanding the differences between tourism, travel and overland living
- **Removing** your cultural goggles
- The reality of poverty
- The corruption and failure of big logo charities
- Understanding that your culture's and country's way is not the way, it is only one way among many possible ways



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## Cultural Goggles

- Other societies have different norms, customs, practices and standards
- Some are diametrically opposed to yours
- You cannot fully learn about others unless you can set aside those differences and look at them without the filter of your cultural goggles

**Your preconceptions, biases and deeply rooted expectations can and will color and shape your experiences – it's up to you.**



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# U.S. View of the World

The screenshot shows the CNN International website interface. At the top, the logo reads "INTERNATIONAL CNN.com/world". Below the logo is a navigation menu with tabs for HOME, ASIA, EUROPE, U.S., WORLD (highlighted in red), WORLD BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY, ENTERTAINMENT, WORLD SPORT, and TRAVEL. Underneath the menu, there are "Hot Topics" links for IASA, North Korea, Pirates, India, Living Golf, and Economy. A date and time stamp indicates "April 14, 2009 -- Updated 1701 GMT (0101 HKT)". The main headline reads "At least 20 killed in Peru crash". At the bottom of the screenshot, there are icons for a truck, an airplane, a motorcycle, a car, a couple, and a sailboat. The footer includes the URL "www.hackneys.com/travel", the copyright notice "Copyright © 2009, Douglas & Stephanie Hackney", and the page number "29".

# Reality

The collage consists of six photographs arranged in two rows. The top row includes: a condor in flight against a blue sky; a man in a wide-brimmed hat and poncho carrying a blue bundle; a woman in a red and white patterned poncho and a red hat; and a close-up of a white hat with a decorative silver band. The bottom row includes: a snow-capped mountain peak (likely Mount Everest); a dirt road stretching into the distance with a llama in the foreground; and a close-up of a young child's face next to a llama's head. At the bottom of the collage, there are the same icons as in the first slide: a truck, an airplane, a motorcycle, a car, a couple, and a sailboat. The footer includes the URL "www.hackneys.com/travel", the copyright notice "Copyright © 2009, Douglas & Stephanie Hackney", and the page number "30".

## The Reality Rule

- The world is very different, almost exactly opposite, of what you have been led to believe.
- The differences between what you expect and what you actually experience will be initially disconcerting.

**You will only know the reality of the world by experiencing it yourself.**



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## Being an American

- “Everyone hates us.” is the biggest lie ever perpetrated on the American public.
- The people of the world have a tremendous reservoir of affection for the American people.
- The people of the world understand the difference between a country’s people and their government, much more than we do here.

**You are an ambassador for your country - represent us well.**



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## The Director of Dotting

- Borders, ports, airports, etc.
- Their only domain - their only power
- That “ i ” must be, and will be, dotted
- Be patient, be friendly, keep smiling

**Tomorrow you will be somewhere else and they will be in the same place – probably forever.**



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## Beware the Mission

- Western travelers, especially Americans, tend to overland within the context of a mission
  - Commercial / Sponsorship / Marketing
  - Personal Growth / Fulfillment / Adventure
  - First / Fastest / Most / Least
  - Service / Charity / Philanthropic
  - Media / Video / Photography / Writing
  - Research / Science



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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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## Ride Your Own Ride

- Do not become a guidebook zombie
- Others will seek to shape your experience
- Please yourself first
- Do what you want as you want to do it

It's not about their journey  
**It's about your journey**



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## Overlanding Realities

- Tourism is not Travel is not Overland Living
- Full time overlanding is full time living
- Overlanding is a market town road experience – not a Rubicon Trail experience
- Overlanding is about experiences with people and places, not about experiences with your vehicle



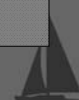
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## Vehicle Realities

- International overlanding is about using market town roads to get from one interesting place to another.
- You can see at least 90% of the interesting places in the world with a VW Westfalia.
- You will adapt your lifestyle to your vehicle.

**It's not about the truck**  
**It's about the experiences**



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## More Vehicle Realities

Most Americans think  
they need this



But most global overlanders  
travel like this



**Your vehicle can be good enough today  
or perfect someday – your call.**



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## Experience Realities

- If you unplug, there are consequences
  - Identity
  - Disassociation
  - Tribelessness
- If you don't unplug, there are consequences
  - Missed opportunities
  - Cocooned experience








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## Time Realities

- By far the most precious commodity
- The most important variable
- Will shape your experience more than any other factor
- Time is dangerous – drives compromises to safety, limits, goals, etc.

**Time gated overlanding alters the experience**



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## The Three Golden Rules of Travel

### Doug's

- Don't #&%@ with the locals.
- Always remember you are a guest - act accordingly.
- Don't be stupid.

### Steph's

- Trust your gut.
- Be respectful at all times.
- Focus on where you are - not where you are going.



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## How To Do This

- Must be the #1 Priority – top life goal
- Test modes / methods / platforms
- Clear the decks
- Prioritize destinations
- Remain flexible

**Go sooner with less  
vs. later with more**



## Prerequisites

- Understand and accept the realities of international overlanding
- Establish exit gating factors, e.g., health of parents, grandchildren, financial limits, etc.
- All parties must be on board and comfortable with all known risk factors, e.g., financial, health, career



## The Good News

- After you make this the #1 Priority, everything else is easy
- The rewards far outweigh the sacrifices
- What you learn and witness is only available for those who are out there

**The world is a very warm and welcoming place.**



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## Learn More

Details on the lessons in this presentation  
and more are available at:

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