



*Lay out the clothing and cash you plan to bring on your trip.*

*Now pack just half of the clothes and double the money.*

## TO ALL GATES

Text by Dan & Betty Orr

*"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." — Benjamin Franklin*

**We all dream of some day going to that special place somewhere around the globe for that 'dive of a lifetime'. In our imagination, we see the beautiful hotel, the splendid rooms, exotic foods and underwater scenery that truly takes your breath away. Whether your travel takes you to your dream destination or to your favorite local dive site, the key element to truly enjoying the trip is preparation.**

Preparation must begin long before you arrive at your chosen

dive site and involves a number of components. These components include the trip as well as the diving. We will focus first on preparing for the trip to your dive location. Whether your travel takes you across town or across the globe, preparation will reduce frustration and inconvenience so that you can truly reap the benefits and rewards of the dive location.

*"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to." — Bilbo Baggins*

Before you begin your journey with that very first step out of your front door, there are several things that you should first consider.

### **The first step: Make your lists**

Any successful plan begins with a comprehensive list or, more appropriately, lists. Since your travel involves many facets, it may require more than one list. Besides the essential pre-dive checklist, which will be addressed in a separate article, these lists can include your itinerary, which is, in reality, a list of what you are doing, where you are going and when you are doing it, a clothing list, camera equipment (surface and underwater) list and, of course, a diving equipment list.

These lists are to make sure that you have not forgotten anything essential that would impact the full enjoyment of your travels and to make sure that you are bringing everything back with you at the end of your trip.

**Know the laws.** When making these lists, it is important that you know about and comply with any laws or regulations regarding

what you can and cannot bring into a region or country.

**Medications.** Make sure that any medications are in their original bottles/containers and that all prescription medications have the prescription information intact on the bottles. Any medications, prescription or not, that are suspect may be confiscated by the authorities upon entry into the country.

**Camera equipment.** There are countries that restrict the amount of camera equipment you may bring in with you. There are popular dive locations in countries that limit the traveler to no more than two cameras.

**Clean your gear.** Many countries around the world are concerned about travelers bringing in invasive species and may require any hiking, camping, fishing and diving equipment to be fully

cleaned and debris free upon entry. Carrying dirty or suspect equipment may result in confiscation, a fine or both.

It is the traveler's responsibility to comply with any and all laws and regulations.

**Don't overpack.** When preparing your lists, you may want to sit down with a pad of paper and go through your itinerary, thinking about what you would need each day and for each activity.

Be very careful, as you may have a tendency to overpack.

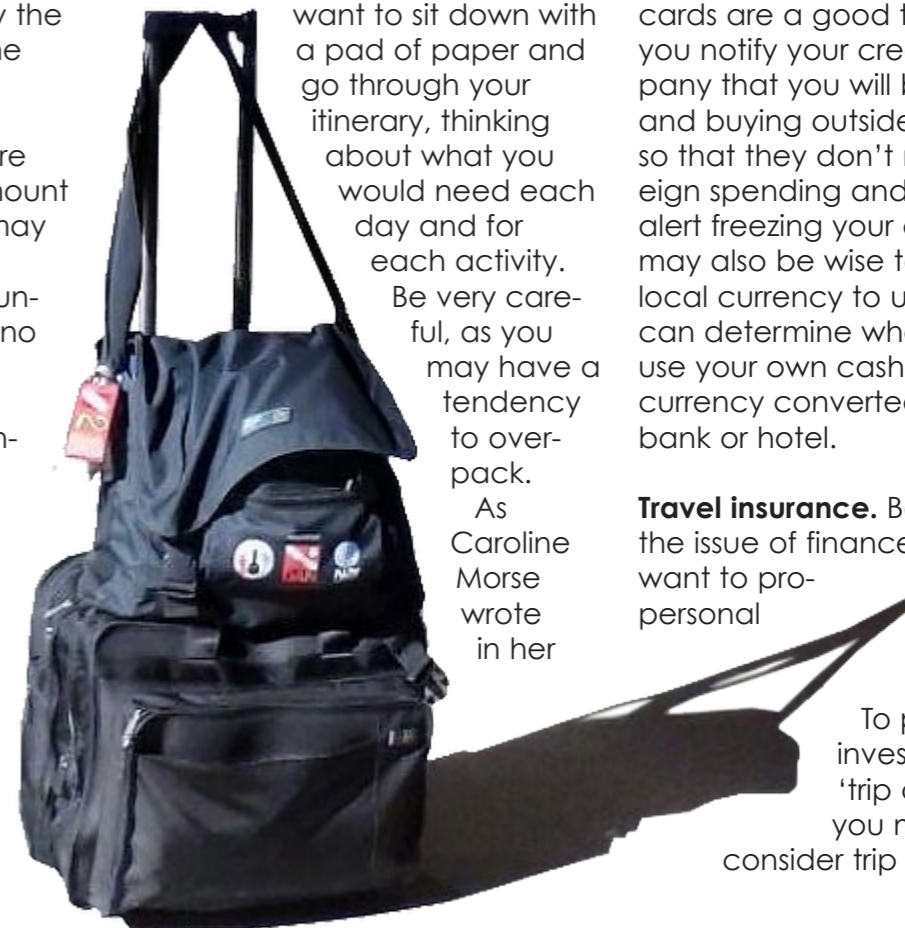
As Caroline Morse wrote in her

*10 Cures for the Chronic Overpacker*: "Lay out the clothing and cash you plan to bring on your trip. Now pack just half of the clothes and double the money."

**Bring extra cash.** And, speaking of money, it is always wise to bring extra money for contingencies including emergencies. Credit cards are a good thing as long as you notify your credit card company that you will be traveling and buying outside the country so that they don't misinterpret foreign spending and issue a fraud alert freezing your credit card. It may also be wise to carry some local currency to use until you can determine whether you can use your own cash or have your currency converted at the local bank or hotel.

**Travel insurance.** Before leaving the issue of finances, you may want to protect your personal finances by considering insurance.

To protect your investment in your 'trip of a lifetime', you may want to consider trip insurance to



# Preparing Yourself for Dive Travel

## Going to Europe or just passing through?

The **Schengen Area** is the area comprising 26 European countries that have abolished passport and any other types of border control at their common borders, also referred to as internal borders. It mostly functions as a single country for international travel purposes, with a common visa policy. That means that travelers arriving i.e. from the United States only have to go through immigration once when traveling to Europe.

The area is named after the Schengen Agreement. Not all EU member states have ratified the agreement. Most notably the United Kingdom has opted not to become a member. Meanwhile Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland who are not members of the European Union participate in the Schengen Area. □

cover trip cancellation or interruption.

Many credit cards have some level of insurance coverage if the trip is purchased using their card. However, this coverage may be limited, so it is incumbent upon the traveler to understand what coverage they have and how to access it.

Remember, when it comes to trip insurance, purchase it early (probably when you book your trip). To have coverage for trip cancellation due to storms such as hurricanes or typhoons, coverage must be purchased before a storm is named by the weather service. Once a storm is officially named, it is an event in progress and you can no longer purchase coverage for it.

*Many credit cards have some level of insurance coverage if the trip is purchased using their card.*

**Health insurance.** Having insurance coverage for health-related issues when you travel is also essential. You just never know when you are going to experience a medical issue when you travel.

The Center for Disease Control states that between 20 to 50 percent of all international travelers, an estimated ten million persons, develop traveler's diarrhea each year.

Although you may have complete coverage in your home country, your healthcare coverage may not extend to a foreign destination. Some trip insurance plans do provide some medical coverage it may be limited.

Be sure to check with your healthcare provider to understand the

limits of

your coverage and be prepared to purchase insurance to make sure you are covered for medical issues while traveling.

**Dive accident insurance.** One other area of insurance to consider is diving accident insurance. Although recreational scuba diving is an inherently safe sport, accidents do occur and those that do may require specialized treatment in a hyperbaric chamber.

Although treatment facilities are spread around the globe, treatment for pressure-related diving emergencies (arterial gas embolism and decompression sickness) may require specialized medical evacuation.

The cost of medical evacuation and treatment can be staggering and financially devastating to the uninsured. Make sure that whatever specialized insurance coverage you choose, it covers the costs associated with medical evacuation to the nearest appropriate treatment facility as well as coverage for all necessary treatments.

Insurance is as necessary and essential for dive travel as your mask, fins and snorkel.

## Dynamic lists

And, by the way, these lists are dynamic. As you continue your preparation, you may think of things to add to your lists or things to modify if your itinerary changes.

**Save lists.** It is also wise not to discard your lists after a trip. Using past lists, as a starting point for subsequent trips will

## "Pill passport"

Schengen rules require travellers to apply to their doctor for a certificate, valid for 30 days, proving their right to carry certain drugs to other Schengen countries. In particular this applies to medications with narcotic effects. This certificate must be approved by the National Board of health.

## Uncertainty reigns

There has always been a rule that the traveller should be able to prove that medicine in his/her luggage is for his/her own use. The problem is that the lists used by different countries do not comprise the same drugs.

However, research on practise in various Schengen countries, resulted in the information that i.e. France with her 60 million inhabitants issues fewer than 500 certificates per annum. This seems to indicate that the French authorities do not take the rules very seriously calling into question how much the rules are actually enforced among the European member states. □

save you some time and effort so you don't have to start from 'ground zero'. There may be some benefit of having a permanent list of 'basic essentials' that must be part of each trip regardless of the destination or duration.

With your lists in hand, you are now well on your way to having a successful and truly enjoyable trip.

In the next article, read about Step Two: Fitness to Dive.

*Dan and Betty Orr are consultants with over 80 years of combined diving industry experience. They provide diving safety and emergency management consultation, product review and evaluation, product and services marketing and educational expertise.*

For more information, visit: [www.danorrconsulting.com](http://www.danorrconsulting.com) □



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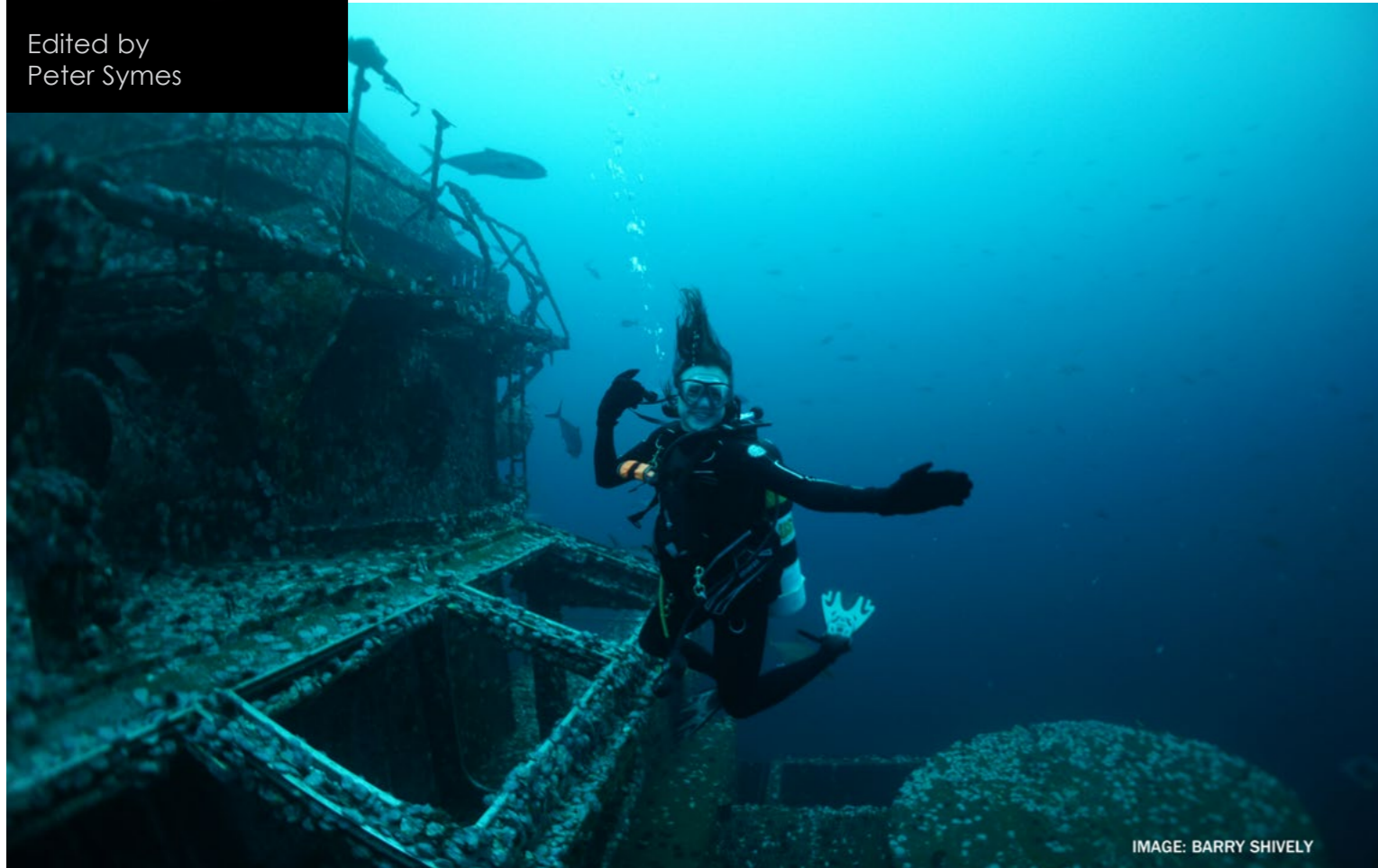


IMAGE: BARRY SHIVELY

## Florida Panhandle launches shipwreck trail

**Underwater trail showcases Florida shipwrecks and promotes Panhandle tourism. Many of the shipwrecks along the trail were sunk to become artificial reefs, and have become popular fishing and diving destinations in varying depths of water with countless varieties of sea life.**

The Florida Panhandle Shipwreck Trail is highlighted by an interactive website that features underwater videos of each shipwreck, the locations of local dive shops and the current marine weather forecast.

To guide visitors along the trail, an official passport can be obtained from participating dive operators. The passport contains information about each of the shipwrecks, a dive log to record each stop and a place to validate the visit with an official sticker.

### Twelve selected wrecks

The 12 shipwrecks were chosen by a consensus of local dive operators, based on popular demand, historical context and ecological diversity.

Off Pensacola, the veteran aircraft carrier *USS Oriskany* is the largest artificial reef in the world, and has become one of the most sought-after diving destinations. Nearby are the U.S. Navy dive tender *YDT-14*, and the oilfield supply vessel *Pete Tide II*. *San Pablo*, a freighter that hauled fruit

from Central America, was sunk in a secret military operation during World War II. In shallower water, a series of three coal barges offer a great location for divers to practice their skills and learn about marine life.

Off Destin, the tugboat *Miss Louise* is a perfect destination for novice and intermediate divers. Off Panama City, the oilfield supply vessel *Black Bart* is intact from the top down between 40 and 85 feet of water. Two navy tugboats, *USS Accokeek* and *USS Chippewa*, offer exciting dives to 100 feet. At another site, the FAMI Tugs, one tugboat is situated on top of the other.

*This new underwater trail represents our latest effort to showcase a portion of Florida's vast collection of shipwrecks. Each location along the Florida Panhandle Shipwreck Trail offers an adventurous opportunity for heritage, recreational, and ecological tourism.*

— Secretary of State  
Ken Detzner

## North Korea announces plans to open underwater resort

**According to the *Pyongyang Times*, the city of Wonsan on the east coast of North Korea is to be developed into a tourist city.**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is moving ahead with the idea of building an underwater hotel that would change North Korea into a top-notch tourist destination. The development is to comprise an underwater hotel, flower park, international meeting hall, exhibition and exposition hall and stadium.

The beach resort to be built at Wonsan, which is 200km from the North Korean capital Pyongyang, would cater to up to 100,000 visitors, according to a report quoted by News.com.au. Wonsan which according to Wikipedia is a popular tourist destination for foreigners and locals alike, is also the terminus of the Mangyongbong-92 ferry, the only direct connection between Japan and North Korea. The nearby Songdownon is a famous sea bathing destination in North Korea, said to have exceptionally clear water. □

A visit to the *USS Strength*, a World War II minesweeper that survived both a midget submarine attack and a kamikaze raid, includes making friends with the resident goliath grouper. Off Port St. Joe, the steamer *Vamar* was made famous as a support ship for Admiral Richard Byrd's 1928 Antarctic expedition before sinking under mysterious circumstances in 1942.

### The trail

The Florida Panhandle Shipwreck Trail was funded in part through a grant agreement from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, by a grant provided by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. □

To learn more about the Florida Panhandle Shipwreck Trail, visit [www.floridapanhandledivetrail.com](http://www.floridapanhandledivetrail.com).



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## Car rental firms caught overcharging customers from wealthier countries

The European Commission has written to at least six car rental firms operating across Europe, urging them to stop the discriminatory practices of using online booking systems that 'automatically re-route' customers to other web pages resulting in customers not being able to access the lowest fares on offer.

The Commission says it is aware of one case where a customer from Germany was asked to pay

double the original price on offer when attempting to rent a car in the United Kingdom after entering his country of residence.

The Commission said it has received hundreds of complaints against the six companies—identified as Europcar, Hertz, Sixt, Enterprise, Goldcar and Avis—and wrote to the CEOs of the companies warning them that such practices run contrary to the notion of a single EU market. □



## Airbus unveils prototype "smart" bag

Airbus has unveiled a prototype 'smart' bag featuring an RFID chip, allowing passengers to track luggage during their journey. The chip allows 'Bag2Go' to be recognized by automated airport and airline baggage systems that connect the bag with a passenger's specific flight itinerary.

Mobile technology and other location-based technologies such as GPS, can track the luggage along its journey. The bag's accompanying iPhone app's 'Find My Bag' feature allows passengers to check whether their bag has made it onto their flight and trace its location. □



Some airlines are phasing out touch screens on the back of airline seats as more travelers bring their own personal electronic devices for entertainment. Instead, some carriers are offering in-flight entertainment that travelers can stream directly onto their personal devices

## Airlines poised to phase out seat-back screens

The screens are said to be heavy and costly, and instead of seat-back screens, some airlines will be offering in flight entertainment through a special server that's loaded with "hundreds of movies and TV shows that passengers can stream directly through their gadgets."

A new study by Osurv, titled "Airline Passengers Receptive to BYOD Future," reported that travelers prefer to bring their own devices on travel than to watch

in-flight entertainment on seat-back screens. While passengers prefer to bring their own devices anyway, they also want to be compensated for helping the airline cut back on costs such as more free entertainment or lower ticket prices.

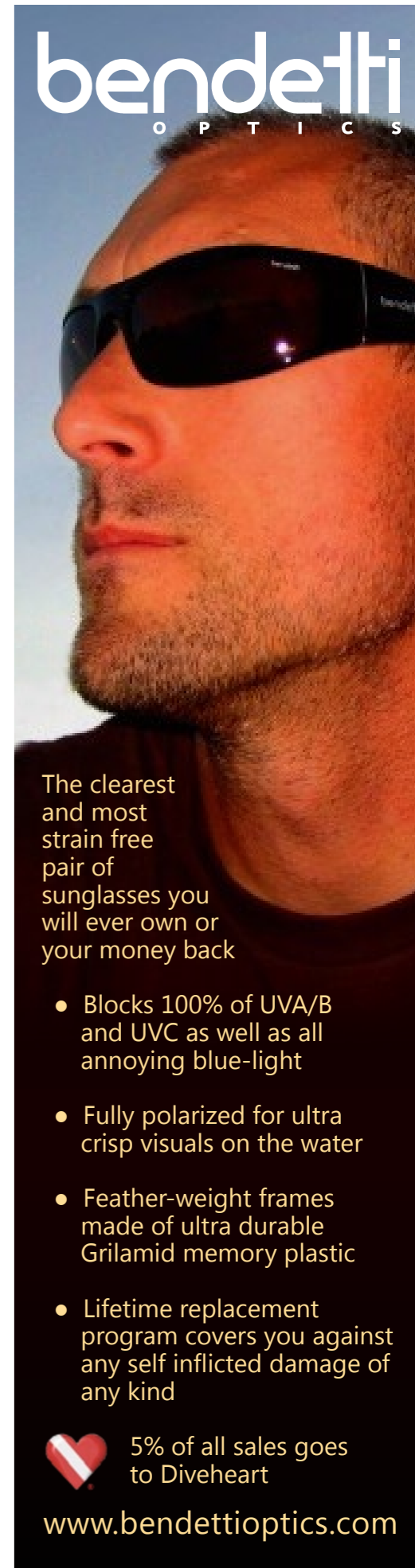
### Charging

The down-side to phasing out the seat-back screens, as expressed by one passenger featured in a CNN report, is that personal devices need to be charged,

especially if they're using wifi. Assuming your seat-back screen actually works, you're not responsible for keeping it powered up, which isn't the case for your iPad, cell phone, Kindle or whatever else you've brought with you.

### Onboard outlets

This isn't a problem for passengers on planes that include outlets to plug in their stuff, but on planes that don't include charging stations, you're out of luck if your battery runs out of juice. □



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