



C.5. RAINFOREST

Mic Connell (2009)

Advice for novice travellers entering jungle areas for the first time
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DRESS

1. Wake up in the morning, nice and toasty, climb out of hammock and dress in your 'jungle' gear - nice and wet from yesterday.
2. Long sleeves and no shorts (to combat excessive sun and sharp thorns).
3. Tie bottoms of trousers over boots to stop leeches climbing in!
4. Use 'leech socks' if you are in an area where you can buy them - or you can make them out of very tightly woven cotton. They look like loose knee length socks with a tie cord at the knee.
5. Empty boots out before putting them on to stop the spiders and wrigglies camped out inside from biting tootsies!

WASHING

6. Keep your wash kit small but effective. Take only the amount required of soap and toothpaste.
7. When brushing your teeth, use only purified water NOT local tap or river water as this may be contaminated by effluent (see points on purifying water)
8. You could use a small or cut down towel, but there are small travellers towels on the market which are suitable and very light and which dry very quickly, such as 'pertex'.

[A larger comfortable towel for the journeys end R&R period could be kept with travelling clothes and stored at the start, or sent on to the end of your journey]

INSECTS

9. Take any 'daily' tablets - such as your anti-malarial tablets. If not after breakfast then pick a regular time of day to take them - and keep to it!!
10. Spray yourself with a spray that contains a good level of "DEET" (Diethyltoluamide) at dawn (and again at dusk) against the mossies - don't forget your ankles and waistband if your shirt is out.
11. Better still - tuck in your shirt, roll down those sleeves. Don't invite the mossies and leeches in.

RUCSAC

12. Pack your rucksac ensuring that your vulnerable photographic gear and 'overnight' or 'dry' clothing is in waterproof or plastic bags AND sealed against the wet.
13. Keep your waterproof (if you use one) on top ready for use.

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WATER

14. Ensure that ONE LITRE of purified water, ready to drink, is handy for taking frequent small sips from along the route.
15. Ensure that your other ONE LITRE bottle of water is being purified for drinking, either by filtering, or adding a treatment such as iodine.
16. If, by some luxurious chance, you are offered iced water, drinks with ice in, or ice cream, think very carefully where and what that ice has been made from, and where the refrigeration plant is. The water they use may be "local" and contaminated. **If at all in doubt - DON'T !**
17. You will lose a good deal of water and salts through sweating and it is advisable to take a rehydration agent: frequently while in the heat of the jungle, and especially after a bout of "Dehli Belli" (or "Thai Trots" etc.)

ON THE MOVE

18. Before moving off - NUMBER OFF - don't leave anyone behind because they were having a on the loo or taking photographs - do this again on arrival at stops AS WELL AS when moving off.
19. Walk as a group at a comfy speed that will ensure that you are still walking at the end of the day, so ignore local guides telling you to speed up, but listen to your own leader who will give you guidance on your speed.
20. Try not to split the group into a 'fast' and 'slow' group; if someone stumbles help them up and help them keep up. If there is constant stumbling then the lead person may need to slow down a 'tad'.
21. Walk with the 'slow' person at the front and ensure that your guide walks at your pace; those used to the jungle tracks walk very fast, even barefooted !
22. Stop for breaks when necessary, and bare in mind the last ones to arrive to give them a break as well.
23. When you stop, look where you are going to sit or lie down for creepy crawlies and things like ants that nip; spread your poncho down to sit or lie on if you are uncertain.
24. Keep lunch to a light minimum - biscuits, fruit and water or fruit juices. Easy to carry and prepare when it is hot and sticky on the move.
25. Move on again with little delay unless you are at a point of natural interest or there is a need to wait for another reason.



RIVERS

26. When crossing rivers your local guide will usually find the easiest way over; however be prepared to get very wet wading across. You will dry off very quickly in the heat.
27. Don't hesitate to use a stick for balance or a rope as a safety line if you feel you require it. A group should always carry a rope. A canoe rescue "throw bag" is ideal.
28. Always use BOUYANCY AIDS if it is deep and treacherous, or if you board rafts or boats, especially in fast flowing waters.
29. DO hesitate before building a raft or a rope bridge to get your gear across a river - there may be another easier way that the locals use.

CAMP

30. On arrival at you destination, secure your camp site from any creepy crawlies, look in the trees above you too.
31. Hang your hammocks at waist height between two trees not too far apart. DO NOT use a compression knot - tie a bow like your shoes after circling the cord around the tree a few times.
[As you sleep any other knot will tighten up and become damp and you may have to cut the cord to remove your hammock, so there may not be enough to re-hang your hammock a following night.]
32. Hang your mossie net over your hammock so that when you lie in it you DO NOT TOUCH the sides of the net.
[Mosies can bite you through a net where it is touching you!]
33. Hang your shelter over the top of both the hammock and the net so that the 'apex' runs right down the centre of your hammock and covers both your head and feet. Again use 'bow' knots, (or a 'half- hitch' may be OK as there is little pressure on the knot to over tighten it). Learn and practice these simple knots well.
34. 'Peg out' the corners and ensure that all is secure and taut. You may also be able to use a stick at either end to hold the corners apart but use another tie from the centre of the stick to the tree to hold it taut. Ideally you should just be able to see under the edge of your shelter when in your hammock.
35. If you are going to build a 'natural' shelter, take into consideration what is available in the locality, build it small, but big enough for your needs. Destroy it when you leave, don't 'civilise' the jungle.
36. Hang your pack up away from the ground overnight to stop animals nibbling at or pinching your food from it.
37. Keep a torch (a head-torch is ideal) handy for food preparation and ablutions after dark. Keep a spare battery handy for it too. [When it goes dark in the jungle it goes dark very fast and very noisily!]
38. Ensure that your overnight sleeping area - be it a camp site or village hut - is as clean if not cleaner when you depart as when you arrived. Remember - take only photographs, leave only footsteps.



SLEEPING

39. You will NOT need a sleeping bag for any jungle journey, however an inner sleeping bag will be of comfort. These can be made of silk [very expensive], a form of nylon called Pertex which is wind proof, cotton (similar to a Youth Hostel inner bag) or a slightly thicker one made from a man made material called Polyester/Viscose, which is similar to a thermal vest.
40. There may be rare moments, especially after rain, when the temperature FEELS as if it has dropped, when a lightweight 'tropical blanket' will be of comfort. This is similar to an aircraft blanket. Better to get closer to the fire!
41. At your first opportunity change into dry clothes from your pack, hang your damp clothes up.
[They may not dry fully and still be damp again the following morning, but it airs them, stops them smelling, and may prevent creepy crawlies breeding in them overnight.]
42. Don't sleep in tight clothing in hot damp conditions as you may develop rashes or fungal infections such as thrush.

HUTS

43. If you are in a 'hut' for the night, then a short stub of a candle may well be very useful, or if you want to be high tech, a chemically powered light stick (expensive for continuous use).
44. Make sure (if in 'hotel' or 'guest hut') that if there is no mossie netting over the windows, then you use your own or ensure that you sleep with the windows shut despite the heat - or the nearest to the window, and probably all of you, will be bitten while you sleep.

TOILET

45. There may be a 'long-drop' toilet in the camp for you to use, but be prepared for the smell and flies. You may be requested to shovel in a small amount of soil after you have finished - ask the guides.
46. Patience - there may only be one loo, and a queue! Men may just 'pop' behind a tree but be aware of the sensitivities of other people.
47. In deep jungle find a quiet spot away from the track and dig a hole for your excrement. Ideally burn your toilet paper, or wash yourself like the locals do, so take a bottle of water with you for this purpose (not your valuable purified water). Don't forget to fill in the hole afterwards.
48. If you are thinking of using a tree trunk or log as a toilet 'seat' make sure that there are no creepy crawlies sleeping on or around it as you will be very vulnerable if they object to having their home squashed.
49. There may be good argument for leaving your excrement on the surface should you believe that you are remote enough, as local wild life will make a meal of it - literally - but don't forget to burn your paper, if you use it.



FIRES

50. Light your fire immediately you arrive at your camp and put on a brew that can be heating while the other chores are attended to. Collect enough firewood for the evening and morning.
51. Do not build a fire bigger than is necessary for cooking (though wet wood may need a bigger 'firebase' than dry wood).
52. Prepare your fireplace with either logs to balance pots on, or sticks arranged over the fire to hang them from.
53. Keep your fire site neat and tidy as any trip over firewood or pots could end up with someone being burnt or skewered.

FOOD HYGIENE

54. When preparing and eating food - ENSURE YOU WASH YOUR HANDS FIRST.
55. Try to eat FRESH food as often as possible, so see what the locals eat and have on sale.
56. If you do not use cutlery when eating your food, as may be the custom in places, make sure that the hand you use is not the one you clean yourself with after going to the toilet; normally the right one is used for eating, the left one for cleaning yourself. Check with your guide for the local customs.
57. ENSURE that your plates and cook gear are cleaned THOROUGHLY after each meal; if there is slight illness in the group you should LIGHTLY DISINFECT your utensils. "PRESEPT" tablets are idea for this purpose - one tablet will produce about 5 litres (one gallon) of disinfected water for washing items in.

FIRST AID

58. Keep your first aid kits handy at all times, ensure you know who has them, and that you know who is first aid trained.
59. At a convenient moment, hold a 'clinic' to treat any blisters, cuts or any other ongoing minor ailments all at the same time.



SECURITY

60. Be aware of local sensitivities if you are camped close to or inside a town or village, so do not wear very short or very tight and revealing clothing, for this may attract some unwelcome attention and be the cause of indecent assaults on individuals.
61. Keep your valuables out of sight. Do not make a show of your money or other 'riches' such as radios, tape-recorders, cameras, as this may draw attention to your group and create opportunities for theft.
62. Keep your wallet and passport safe in a body belt or neck bag.
63. When walking through a village or town to a station or bus stop, carry your day sack on your front (i.e. back to front) and put it on FIRST; then when you put on your large rucksack on your back it will hold the other sack in place.
64. Keep within groups of no less than three when wandering around a strange town or village; ensure there are always males with the females.
65. When exploring an area always be aware of where you are in relation to where you are staying, and your eventual destination; watch any maps you may be using, or use a guide. Watch the time too if you have arranged meeting others of the group.

LOCAL LINKS

66. Interact with the locals where you can. Learn a few simple songs to sing to them. You will be very surprised at what you can achieve as jungle people may not have TV or radios to listen to very much.

FINALLY:

More than anything else - enjoy the experience!