

Exploring the World and Meeting Its People

A Couple's Survival Guide To Overlanding


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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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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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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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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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

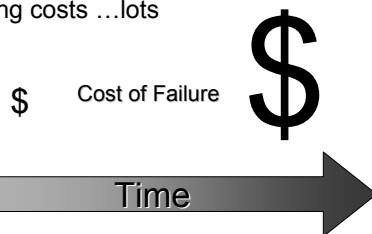
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Fail Fast

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




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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

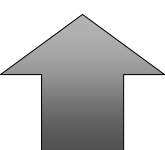
- Travel can be stressful
 - Personally
 - As a couple
- Travel can be rewarding
 - Personally
 - As a couple


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The Goals



Minimize Stress



Maximize Rewards


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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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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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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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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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Define and Express Needs

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

Unmet Needs Will Sabotage Your Journey

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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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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 | • Your Destination |
| • As a Couple | • Your Fears |
| • Your Journey | • Your Timeline |
| • Your Methods | • Your Location |
| • Your Platform | • Your Friends |
| • Your Goals | • Your Tribe |
| • Your Rewards | • Your Interests |
| • Your Preconceptions | • 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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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

- Establish and pursue common goals
- Take responsibility
- Maintain honesty and integrity

Steph's

- Respect
- Communication
- Happiness...it's a choice and it's your responsibility



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Learn More

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