Things to Take on a Tropical Assignment

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Having recently returned from a tropical worksite let me inform you who might want to go about a few things to take:

1. Suntan lotion, SPF45 or so
2. Bug repellent, as strong as you can stand
3. Zip lock bags (large ones!)
4. Patience
5. Diarrhea medicine
6. Sinus medicine
7. Desiccant packs
8. Anti-itch cream

Ok, items 1 and 2 are probably self evident. Item 3 is used for dirty clothes, packing food away from various local bugs, storing things that might leak in a suitcase, etc. However, the most important thing for item 3, zip lock bag, or a resealable, airtight bag, is for transporting your laptop. Usually the offices and hotels will be air-conditioned and low humidity. However, as soon as you step outside the heat and humidity smack you like a piece of liver warmed in the microwave, it also smacks your laptop. My Vaio just died, well, actually its power switch did, due to I believe, to excess of humidity.

By placing the laptop into a large, sealable bag with a couple of desiccant packs (those things that look like packages of salt which usually say “Do Not Eat” on them) and then transporting the laptop between office and hotel an untimely demise can be prevented.

Item 4, patience, the heat and the humidity have resulted in the natives taking a rather laid back view where the word rush is unknown. They learn early in life that the person who rushes about tends to get heat stroke. This can take some getting used to. Plan on long lunches and long dinners. If you go expecting things to be like they are where you come from (or rather insisting) you are in for a hard time of it.

Item 5, diarrhea medicine. Even if you take care not to eat fresh (perhaps unwashed or washed in local water) vegetables, not drink the water, not use the water for brushing teeth, etc., you can still get this travelers nightmare, diarrhea. I usually have a bit of a cast iron stomach after traveling as much as I have, but even I get a case once in a while. It is strongly suggested to carry various medicines for gastro-intestinal difficulties just in case that tropical feast you were just dying to try, does you in.

Item 6, sinus medicine. There are pollens in tropical areas that you have never

heard of, neither has your doctor. There are molds, fungus and just about all other types of allergens you can imagine. Bring allergy and sinus medicine.

Item 7: desiccant packs. Collect them from the various electronics you buy. Reuse them to keep moisture from delicate circuits. See the section on ziplock bags.

Item 8: No matter how strong your bug repellent is, some will get through. Anti-itch cream (Benadril, Hydrocortisone, etc.) can be a real relief when bugs get through.

Don’t get me wrong, I love to travel to the tropics, like to work there and love the people. You just have to take a few precautions to make sure the dream assignment, doesn’t turn into a nightmare.

Mike