

Safe Travel: What You Need to Know

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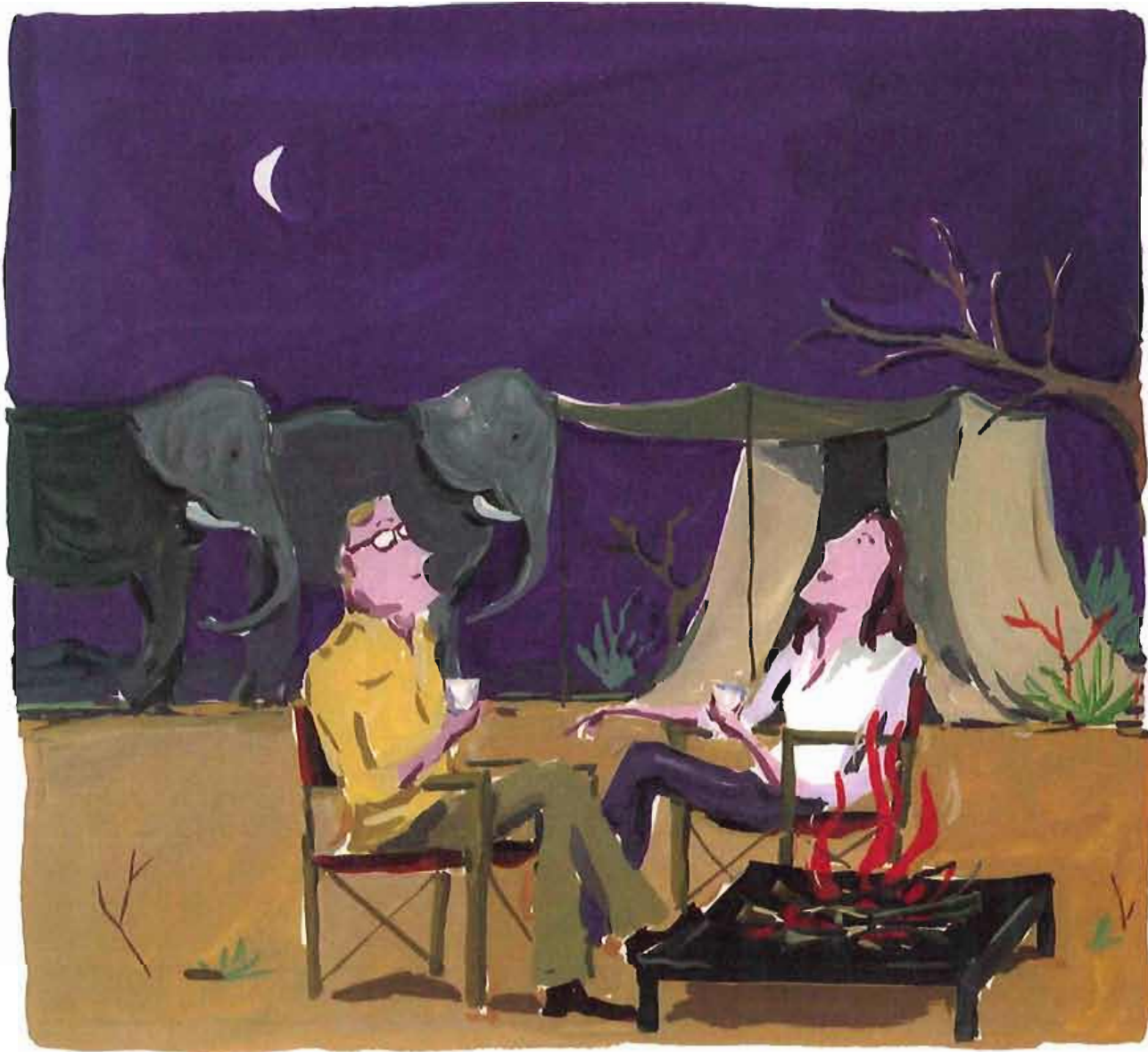
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Luxury, off the Grid

The comforts of civilization now await travelers in the most distant corners of the world, but for SHANE MITCHELL it's the simple things that matter most. *Illustrated by* JEAN-PHILIPPE DELHOMME

IT WAS NEVER MY INTENTION to become Action-Adventure Girl. Despite being one of those rare individuals actually born in Manhattan, I have spent most of my adult life at a remove from sprawling cities, where every indulgence is a cell phone call away. But the wide-open spaces of my home are not

just far from civilization because they have more than their share of cellular dead zones. My base is on the western edge of the Adirondacks, south of a barren plateau famous for its extreme snowfall and its populations of bald eagles, moose, and black bears. From here, I am often compelled to go to destinations »

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SO HOW EXACTLY DO YOU get completely off the grid when it keeps expanding?

even more remote—rain forests in Fiji, uncharted islands in the Palawan archipelago, Aboriginal camps in the Australian outback, villages in the Himalayan foothills. I like being the first one there. (Well, the first Western woman, anyway.) And my drive definitely stems from an abiding fascination with uncompromised cultures and landscapes, which often lack such rudimentary services as indoor plumbing or electrical outlets. Increasingly, it seems, others share the same interest—although unlike me, they aren't always willing to sacrifice the comforts of home.

This has given rise to a subset of high-end hoteliers and outfitters eager to operate on the fringes of civilization, while still providing for every First World whim. It's been 20 years since the first Amanresort opened on an isolated beach in southern Thailand. (These days, Phuket isn't considered so remote.) Since then, the company has become a standard-bearer for what founder Adrian Zecha calls "sincere luxury," introducing the concept to tourism frontiers such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines (there are also resorts in more popular destinations, from the French Alps to the Caribbean). His fifth Bhutanese outpost, Amankora Bumthang, opened late last fall in the Choekhor Valley next to the Wangdicholing Palace. Essentially, Aman's concept of comfort in a remote setting

equals a generous amount of private square footage, curated artwork, sunken marble tubs, and spa treatments. Meals always have an indigenous flavor. "After a day of exploring," says executive director Trina Ebert, "we want our guests to have happy stomachs." Of course, now Amanresorts has plenty of competition—many others are also jockeying for the attention of adventurers who favor a soft landing at the end of their day.

West of the prime meridian, Explora's Modernist hotels in Patagonia's Torres del Paine National Park and in the Atacama Desert have attracted upscale travelers to two of the starkest regions on the South American continent. The company recently expanded its portfolio offshore to the new 30-room Posada de Mike Rapu, which faces the blank Pacific on Rapa Nui (Easter Island), slightly south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Explora also has a Travesía (Spanish for "journey") tour to the Salar de Uyuni—one of the world's highest salt flats—between Bolivia and Chile, although the tent accommodation is more Orvis than opulent. Uncharted Outposts handpicks individually owned wilderness camps and outback stations from Namibia to Australia's Northern Territory. All have an open-plan, rustic sensibility that inspires a desire for pith helmets and khaki garb with a thousand zippered »

Read the Patient Information that comes with VESicare before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet does not take the place of talking with your doctor or other healthcare professional about your condition or treatment. Only your doctor or healthcare professional can determine if treatment with VESicare is right for you.

What is VESicare?

VESicare is a prescription medicine used in adults to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called overactive bladder:

- Having to go to the bathroom too often, also called "urinary frequency."
- Having a strong need to go to the bathroom right away, also called "urgency."
- Leaking or wetting accidents, also called "urinary incontinence."

VESicare has not been studied in children.

What is overactive bladder?

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

Who should NOT take VESicare?

Do not take VESicare if you:

- are not able to empty your bladder (also called "urinary retention").
- have delayed or slow emptying of your stomach (also called "gastric retention").
- have an eye problem called "uncontrolled narrow-angle glaucoma".
- are allergic to VESicare or any of its ingredients. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.

What should I tell my doctor before starting VESicare?

Before starting VESicare tell your doctor or healthcare professional about all of your medical conditions including if you:

- have any stomach or intestinal problems or problems with constipation,
- have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream,
- have an eye problem called narrow-angle glaucoma,
- have liver problems,
- have kidney problems,
- are pregnant or trying to become pregnant (it is not known if VESicare can harm your unborn baby).
- are breastfeeding (it is not known if VESicare passes into breast milk and if it can harm your baby. You should decide whether to breastfeed or take VESicare, but not both).

Before starting on VESicare, tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. While taking VESicare, tell your doctor or healthcare professional about all changes in the medicines you are taking including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements. VESicare and other medicines may affect each other.

How should I take VESicare?

Take VESicare exactly as prescribed. Your doctor will prescribe the dose that is right for you. Your doctor may prescribe the lowest dose if you have certain medical conditions such as liver or kidney problems.

- You should take one VESicare tablet once a day.
- You should take VESicare with liquid and swallow the tablet whole.
- You can take VESicare with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of VESicare, begin taking VESicare again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of VESicare in the same day.
- If you take too much VESicare or overdose, call your local Poison Control Center or emergency room right away.

What are the possible side effects with VESicare?

The most common side effects with VESicare are:

- blurred vision. Use caution while driving or doing dangerous activities until you know how VESicare affects you.
- dry mouth.
- constipation. Call your doctor if you get severe stomach area (abdominal) pain or become constipated for 3 or more days.
- heat prostration. Heat prostration (due to decreased sweating) can occur when drugs such as VESicare are used in a hot environment.

Tell your doctor if you have any side effects that bother you or that do not go away.

These are not all the side effects with VESicare. For more information, ask your doctor, healthcare professional or pharmacist.

How should I store VESicare?

- Keep VESicare and all other medications out of the reach of children.
- Store VESicare at room temperature, 59° to 86°F (15° to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely dispose of VESicare that is out of date or that you no longer need.

General Information about VESicare

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use VESicare for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give VESicare to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about VESicare. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about VESicare that is written for health professionals. You can also call (866) 972-4636 toll free, or visit www.VESICARE.com.

What are the ingredients in VESicare?

Active ingredient: sulfonacin succinate

Inactive ingredients: lactose monohydrate, corn starch, hypromellose 2910, magnesium stearate, talc, polyethylene glycol 8000 and titanium dioxide with yellow ferric oxide (5 mg VESicare tablet) or red ferric oxide (10 mg VESicare tablet)

Manufactured by:
Astellas Pharma Technologies Inc.
Norman, Oklahoma 73072

Marketed by:
Astellas Pharma US, Inc.
Deerfield, IL 60015-2548

Marketed and Distributed by:
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North Carolina 27709



GUIDE TO GOING OFF THE GRID IN STYLE

HOTELS

Amanresorts' fifth **Amankora Bumthang** lodge, in Bhutan, opened in October 2007 (800/477-9180; amanresorts.com; doubles from \$700).

The **Ananda in the Himalayas** spa and hotel is located near Rishikesh, India, in the foothills of the Himalayas (91-1378/227-500; ananda.spa.com; doubles from \$2,794 for three nights, including meals).

The newest Explora hotel, **Posada de Mike Rapu**, on Rapa Nui (Easter Island), opened in December 2007 (866/750-6699; explora.com; doubles from \$3,588 for three nights, including all meals and activities). The 10-day Travesía tour to the Salar de Uyuni salt flats starts at \$5,240 per person, double, and includes all transportation, meals, and activities.

OUTFITTERS

Abercrombie & Kent, the world's largest luxury outfitter, has itineraries on all seven continents that include cruises, train journeys, and tailor-made trips by private jet—as well as safaris, their original specialty, in both southern and eastern Africa (800/554-7016; abercrombiekent.com).

Geographic

Expeditions began as an adventure outfitter, but has incorporated cushier stops into its

excursions. The Australian outback trips stop at Barossa Valley wineries and include transfers by private plane (800/777-8183; geoex.com).

Latin Excursions has helped raise the travel profile of South America with high-end cruises on the Amazon and in the Galápagos, as well as bespoke itineraries in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Among its newest offerings is a 14-day trip to Brazil's northeast, where the beaches have long been more dazzling than the accommodations. Land Rovers and private houses that have been outfitted to the standards of their clients help ease the way (866/626-3750; latinexcursions.com; from \$5,000 per person, double).

For travelers not wishing to schedule their trip to Namibia's Skeleton Coast around the dates set by an outfitter, **Mountain Travel Sobek** relaunched its Private Adventures this past October. Travelers can choose from 54 itineraries in 33 countries. There is a premium for privacy, however. A 14-day group trip to Annapurna, in the Himalayas, booked as a Private Adventure starts at \$3,495, versus \$2,295 per person, double (888/687-6235; mtsobek.com).

Off the Beaten Path, based in Bozeman, Montana, specializes in itineraries to destinations throughout North and South America (as well as New Zealand, where it offers a two-week backcountry hiking trip on a half-dozen dates each year). Like the other outfitters listed here, customized trips—arranging for a yacht to explore the more remote stretches of the Alaska coastline, a tailored itinerary exploring the biospheres and ruins of the Yucatán by day, with nights spent in restored haciendas—complement their catalogue of set itineraries (800/445-2995; offthebeatenpath.com).

Operating in 16 countries in Asia, **Remote Lands** also creates custom trips with a private jet option. Prices vary depending on the itinerary, but usually range from \$1,000 per person per day, including some meals but not airfare to and from the United States (646/415-8092; remotelands.com).

Operating since 1972, **Uncharted Outposts** selects properties in Africa, South America, Australia, and New Zealand—it currently works with more than 200, from safari lodges to island resorts—and also organizes individual itineraries (888/995-0909; unchartedoutposts.com).

—JOHN NEWTON



I WOUND UP IN A CHAIR CAR, air-conditioned and with tolerable meal service— probably the best carriage from which to see middle-class India on the move

compartments. Even so, the bars are stocked with chilled beverages (potable ice is itself quite a rare commodity in some parts of the world), and you'll never share the infinity pools with submerged hippos or toothy crocs. One of its newest properties is the Nomad Tarangire Safari Camp, deep in a 1,000-square-mile national park among Tanzania's central highlands. The look would appeal to anyone harboring fantasies of Arabian nights: arched bedouin tents, kilim rugs, Turkish brass lamps, Oriental throw pillows.

So how exactly do you get completely off the grid when it keeps expanding? Frankly, remoteness doesn't always appeal on its own. One of my all-time favorite narratives is *Roughing It*, Mark Twain's hilarious tale of a hapless tenderfoot who spends several years of "variegated vagabondizing" in the Nevada Territory, all the while encountering gold prospectors, polygamists, outlaws, coyotes, and other mythic phenomena of the Wild West. His account of crossing an alkali desert near Salt Lake under the midday sun says it all: "The poetry was all in the anticipation—there is none in the reality." These days, the focus has shifted to the Wild East. Catherine Heald, of Remote Lands, a custom tour company based in Manhattan that specializes in "tailor-made once-in-a-lifetime" trips to such emerging destinations as Borneo and Bangladesh, asserts: "Our goal is to get people into the places far beyond their comfort level. If you want a profound, life-changing experience, you need some difficulty in order to be moved emotionally."

WITH GENUINELY LAVISH appointments cropping up in the wild, the meaning of *basic necessities* has also changed. By its very nature, certain gear—anything dependent on electrical outlets or other forms of connectivity—is expendable when journeying to a new frontier. Who really needs an iPod when a Fijian choir is willing to serenade? And although I've figured out how to download episodes of *Lost* onto my laptop and have largely mastered Wi-Fi, I try to leave it at home, too. Whenever I have been surprised by small comforts (a bucket shower, a clean blanket, a cold drink) in outermost circumstances, or have found myself smugly planning ahead (my own tea bags, toilet tissue, painkillers, and chocolate-covered nuts) to counter mild deprivation in these locales, it has served to remind me that each degree of ease has a corollary, but entirely individual, tolerance for discomfort. Like pool butlers. I can definitely do without them. Porters, on the other hand, are, well, handy. Even with my whatever-fits-in-one-bag packing rule, I only stand five foot two in my Jimmy Choos—I'm always grateful to have someone sling my leather tote into an overhead rack on a crack-of-dawn train to Mombasa or Siberia or the Himalayas.

THE DEHRADUN SHATABDI EXPRESS takes 4½ hours to travel 162 miles between New Delhi and Rishikesh, the holy gateway for yogic converts and impassioned Beatles-trivia buffs. (It is also home to Ananda in the Himalayas, a mellow spa retreat with three handsome new villas high above the rushing brown Ganges River.) Since executive class was sold out on my recent trip there, I wound up in a chair car, still air-conditioned and with tolerable meal service, and probably the best carriage from which to see middle-class India on the move. (Do not be fooled by sleeper class, a misnomer for the cattle cars where travelers are crammed onto bench seats, clog the aisles, and hang out of open doorways, gasping for fresh air.) Quite soon, however, impatient pilgrims will be able to shorten their trip to the ashrams by hours when Dehradun Airport, currently closed for expansion, reopens. To my mind, that will be a shame, especially after observing life in Uttarakhand unfurl outside the train window. And then there's the priceless farewell as the train finally pulls into Haridwar station. The loudspeaker crackles to life with a polite, disembodied message from an anonymous lady representing Indian Railways. She trills, "We wish you a comfortable and effortless journey." ✦

Shane Mitchell is a special correspondent for Travel + Leisure.