



# WALKABOUT TRAVEL GEAR IS A RUNAWAY SUCCESS

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Walkabout - A period of wandering undertaken as a sporadic interruption of routine life while in search of spiritual cleansing. (Australian aborigine in origin.)

Brad and Gia Boyle got the idea for their home-based business, Walkabout Travel Gear, during a six-week sojourn spent, appropriately, walking about the tiny island nation of Malta. They had logged thousands of travel miles in China, Taiwan, Honduras, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey and other locations far from the madding (tourist) crowd, but they had never seen the inside of a four-star hotel nor a restaurant recommended by the Michelin guide.

Everything the peripatetic Utahns needed for their travels they carried on their backs.

Long ago, says Brad, he and his wife had become dissatisfied with the "norm of modern society, the 9 to 5 indentured servant." Instead, he said, they have spent much of their time exploring the world, albeit on a budget, since "we are incapable of holding regular jobs."

Brad's characterization of how most of us spend our working days would be offensive but for one thing: revenge is ours. Since starting their Salt Lake-based mail order catalog business, the Boyles have had little time to walk about anywhere that's more than a few feet from their phone and computer.

"I'm stuck here all the time," groans Brad, much to the delight of indentured servants everywhere.

Still, don't feel too sorry for him. Deskbound as they claim to be, the Boyles still found time last summer to get away for a walkabout in the Greek islands and the south coast of Turkey where, says Brad, they discovered the bones of (don't tell the kids) Santa Claus. (Actually, St. Nicholas, born in Patara around 4 B.C. He had a beard and gave presents to kids but likely never saw snow, let alone the North Pole.)

But it's a good thing the Boyles can still get out and stretch their legs a bit, because that's when they come up with their best ideas for useful, inexpensive and, above all, lightweight gear that makes the backpack of the adventure traveler easier to bear.

Over the years, the Boyles had acquired a wide array of such items but never in any one place. During the Malta excursion last spring, fellow travelers would note one of their items and exclaim something like, "Wow, where'd you get that? I've gotta have one."

Brad and Gia would then explain that they picked it up in a Borneo bazaar or a tiny shop on a back street in Hong Kong. The fellow trekker would sigh and go away disappointed.

After a few dozen of those encounters, they decided they would go home and go into business supplying independent travelers with gear not easily found elsewhere. If nothing else, noted Brad, "it would be better than getting regular jobs."

The result is a catalog that provides travelers such items as:

- The PUR Scout water purifier, a filter pump that they say will eliminate everything from the ubiquitous giardia bacteria (the usual suspect in cases of traveler's diarrhea) to heavy metals, insecticides and even viruses.
- The Seal Pak, a waterproof fannypack that enables you to take your passport, money and other valuable with you while, for example, snorkeling off a Honduran beach.
- Inexpensive binoculars that weigh only 4 ounces.
- The Epco Design SleepScreen, a single or double net for getting a good night's sleep outdoors or in "budget" lodgings (the Boyles prefer the word "exotic" to describe the places they stay). Brad vows it keeps out everything from tarantulas to "no-see-ums."

- DEET, described by Brad as "the mother of all insect repellants" used by the U.S. Army in tropical climes.
- Eagle Creek Endless Journey, or slightly smaller World Journey, backpacks.
- Computer compact discs for language study at home on your PC before you head out. The Boyles claim the Transparent Language system is a language learning breakthrough. Available in Spanish, French, Russian, German and Italian.
- The world's toughest eyeglass case, and it floats.
- One of the ways to save a lot of money when you are traveling on a budget is to cook your own meals. "But have you ever scraped fried fish bought from a fisherman on a Thai island from a regular mess kit?" asks Brad. If you have, you will be glad to know that the Walkabout catalog features only the "Non-Stick Mess Kit."
- If you are going to take the mess kit advice, the Boyles also suggest you get the 6.9 ounce Walkabout stove, which uses CV470 fuel cannisters widely available overseas. Also, take some spices, salt, pepper and maybe a small bottle of Tabasco sauce to liven up (or disguise) your culinary adventures.

That's a small sampling of the catalog. Walkabout's best sellers include the Portabolt, a door lock that they assure keeps out everything from unwanted maids in hostels to "mysterious attempted entries" in Third-World hotels.

Also in high demand are PackTowls. Towels are not standard items in budget lodgings or on deserted beaches, and the terry cloth variety are heavy and take forever to dry. But PackTowls, they say, release 90 percent of their water when rung out and dry very quickly.

The most challenging part of starting their own business, says Brad, was becoming computer literate, and the largest capital expense was acquiring the necessary computer gear - PC, fax, scanner and graphics software.

That's all behind them now, and Brad notes that the computer revolution has allowed people such as he and Gia to enter and succeed in home businesses that only a few

years ago would have been impossible without huge capital outlays.

Although he quotes Mark Twain in the catalog - "I have never let schooling interfere with my education" - Brad holds an MBA degree from Westminster College and sounds like a Japanese auto manufacturer when he discusses "just-in-time" ordering from his suppliers that helps keep costs down.

The Walkabout Travel Gear catalog is available by calling 1-800-852-7085 Monday through Sat-ur-day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by writing to Walkabout, P.O. Box 58502, Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0502. The Boyles recently launched a new Walkabout division called A Safe Mission. That catalog features items especially for departing LDS missionaries. It is available at the same number and post office box.

Walkabout also has a large Web site (30-40 pages) on the Internet. In addition to products, it outlines various adventure-trip itineraries, including such information as weather, currency exchanges and travel tips. Its Internet site may be visited at <http://www.xmission.com/~walkgear/walk.htm>