



THE VIRTUAL PEN

# The Virtual Pen — A Travel Blog

## **Disclaimer:**

This list of things to do and bring on a well-planned automobile day trip has been assembled for my personal use and shared as a general guide.

## **Please note:**

This is **not** intended to be a comprehensive or universally applicable checklist for all types of day trips. Travelers are responsible for thoroughly planning and preparing for their own trips. Use this list at your own discretion and risk. I do not accept responsibility for errors, omissions, or any issues arising from the use of this information.

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## **THINGS TO DO (Before and During the Trip)**

### **Pre-Trip Planning**

#### **1. Research the Site**

- Location, history, GPS coordinates (especially if obscure)
- Access info (public vs. private land, hours, restrictions)
- TripAdvisor, Atlas Obscura, or local tourism sites

#### **2. Plan a Route**

- Use offline-friendly GPS apps (Google Maps with offline area saved, or Maps.me)
- Look for scenic detours or quirky roadside stops

#### **3. Check Weather & Road Conditions**

- Especially important for rural roads or seasonal attractions

#### **4. Contact Locals or Forums (optional)**

- Local Facebook groups, Reddit threads, or historical societies may give better info than official sources

## 5. Notify Someone of Your Plans

- In case the area has poor cell service or if you're going somewhere very remote

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## WHAT TO BRING (General Essentials)

### Navigation & Info

- Phone with charger and power bank
- Offline maps or printed directions
- Notebook or travel journal
- Pen/pencil
- Paper map or atlas (especially for remote areas)

### Clothing & Comfort

- Hat & sunglasses
- Jacket or raincoat (weather-dependent)
- Hiking boots or walking shoes
- Change of clothes (if you get wet/muddy)

### Food & Drink

- Plenty of water
- Snacks (granola, nuts, jerky, fruit)
- Picnic lunch or cooler
- Thermos with coffee or tea
- Trash bags / ziplock bags for cleanup

### Safety & First Aid

- First aid kit

- Flashlight or headlamp
- Sunscreen & insect repellent
- Emergency whistle
- Pocket knife or multitool
- Matches or lighter

### **Exploration Gear**

- Binoculars (for wildlife or distant views)
- Magnifying glass (for nature or artifact viewing)
- Camera or smartphone for photos
- Small tripod or selfie stick
- Notebook for sketching or note-taking

### **Technology Add-ons**

- Portable solar charger (if remote)
- Bluetooth speaker (for music or audio tours)
- Walkie-talkies (if in a group without cell signal)

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## **OPTIONAL ITEMS (for Themed or Deep-Dive Trips)**

### **Historical/Abandoned Sites**

- Gloves for safety
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Small digital voice recorder (for interviews or reflections)
- Guidebook or laminated local history printouts

### **Nature or Scenic Destinations**

- Field guide (birds, plants, geology)
- Blanket or folding chair
- Bug net or tent canopy

- Sketch pad or watercolors
- Reusable utensils and dishware for eco-picnicking

### **Creative/Content-Making Visits**

- GoPro or action cam
- Drone (check flight rules first)
- Tripod and microphone for filming
- Notebook for blog or video script ideas

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### **THINGS TO DO ON-SITE**

1. **Observe Quietly** – Take 10–15 minutes just to take in the site
2. **Document It** – Journal, photograph, sketch, or record your thoughts
3. **Talk to Locals** – If in a small town, ask about local stories or other hidden gems
4. **Leave No Trace** – Respect nature and local culture
5. **Look for Secondary Points of Interest** – Sometimes the “unlisted” nearby things are more rewarding

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### **BONUS: Ideas for Less-Known Sites**

- Abandoned railroads, trestles, or train depots
- Hidden springs or forgotten state parks
- Obscure Civil War or Native American historical markers
- Cemeteries with famous or unusual graves
- Vintage diners or tiny-town museums
- Giant roadside sculptures or murals
- WPA-era bridges, dams, or buildings
- Former mining towns or logging camps