



## TravelPod Community Article

### Updating your Travelogue on the Move

April 2005

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#### **Abstract:**

Scott Woz, a devoted TravelPod member, shares his experience and tips on how to update your TravelPod travelogue while you are traveling.

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#### **Article:**

Those of us that keep a travelogue are in the same boat really. We either need or 'want' to keep them updated. Obviously there are a number of ways to do this. Depending on your location and circumstances you're either going to make notes as you travel - which you'll enter into TravelPod at a later stage when you've found an appropriate Internet cafe. Or, you'll be lucky enough to be surrounded by an abundance of high speed, dirt cheap Internet facilities with plenty of time on your hands to update your travelogue there and then, as and when you see fit. I'm sure the majority of travelers who are out and about pursuing their adventures are probably not that fortunate and chances are, make notes when and where they can. Either that or they have one hell of a memory.

If you're anything like me you prefer typing to writing - if nothing else it's a hell of a lot quicker and if you are one of those people who make travelogue notes while you're on the move before finding a suitable computer, then this article will be of interest to you.

#### **Background**

I've never been one to sit and write with paper and pen. It's just not me. I also promised myself at the beginning of my travels that I'd try to keep on top of my travelogue as much as possible and not get too far behind with it, otherwise and also due to my character, it would get left in the dark ages and I'd never catch up with it. So from the outset I made a point of visiting Internet cafes regularly and making as many notes and 'drafts' ( TravelPod entries can be saved in draft mode while you perfect it ) as possible until I had the time to check for mistakes and make any necessary changes before 'releasing' the entry.

This worked great at the beginning of my trip - I was in the city where the Internet charges were cheap and the level of my adventure was quite low. As soon as I moved around and things started happening, there was suddenly lots to write about



and it naturally meant more time on the net. More time - more money. This was almost acceptable until I reached those far out places that charge a small fortune for ten minutes. The problem was, I wasn't needing five or ten minutes to simply check for any emails, I wanted to sit for much longer and write lots of exciting stories and details of my adventures. I certainly didn't want to have to hand over a roll of notes for the privilege.

This is where laptops and Personal Digital Assistants ( or PDAs ) work wonders. For the purpose of this article I'll be referring to the 'PDA' as that's what I've been using. Obviously, a laptop, though less practical, will by all means achieve the same result, in spite of the extra cost, weight, size, etc. I must stress that this isn't a PDA manual and I'm certainly no expert. I've simply come to benefit a great deal from using a PDA and wish to share this information in the hope that it might also help and benefit others.

In light of the high Internet costs and my need to keep a constant update on my travelogue, I decided to invest in a PDA. Of course, there are loads on the market that are really impressive (with a not-so-impressive price tag) that have lists of functions as long as your arm, but as I only wanted a means to enter and store text quickly, easily, and securely for a later date - I opted for one of the basic 'Palm' models.

### ***Using a PDA***

The beauty of using one of these is that you don't pay hefty Internet charges where it matters. Nobody wants to be charged \$10 an hour to sit and scratch their head, thinking how they can describe a particular experience or find the right word to match the right moment. That's what the PDA is for. You can spend 24 hours a day entering text if you really want to. If need be, you can then spend the next 24 hours correcting spelling, changing words, deleting or adding things as much as you like. It's up to you. After all, it's your travelogue. Your 'free time' often presents itself at obscure moments. When it does, there may not always be an Internet cafe there when you need one - certainly not a free one. And that's the important thing; your PDA 'can' be there when you need it, and above all, it *is* free. The most it will cost you is your time and the battery power of the device, which will need electricity at some point to recharge it. And chances are, a lot of the time you're already paying for electricity as part of your accommodation so you may as well use it. Sound good so far?

### ***So which PDA?***

This article is about updating your travelogue efficiently and cheaply. Therefore in that respect, all you really need from a PDA is the means to enter and store text as effortlessly as possible. Most PDA's will offer you this, as it is one of their basic functions. If you want more from it, then there are plenty on the market offering all sorts of gadgetry. You get what you pay for. What I would suggest though is to buy one that will accept and support an external memory card (like a digital camera does). This is probably *the* most important feature. I'll explain why very shortly.



### ***Entering Text***

As strange as it may seem initially, you will soon get used to entering text on the graphical keyboard that is displayed on the screen or via one of the other methods that the PDA accepts. We're all different, but for me, the best option by far is the use of a 'universal foldable keyboard'. This is a full-size, fully functioning keyboard very similar to that of a laptop (in fact, it's based on the laptop design) - your PDA simply sits on top. The words appear on the screen via an infrared transmission so you don't even have to worry about any wires, cables, knots or hassle. Some plug into the PDA directly which can be just as good. The whole thing folds in half and in half again to a size just slightly bigger than the PDA itself. And it still fits in your pocket (with the PDA). I've just tried it and the whole thing folds out from nothing and is completely set up and switched on, ready to go in less than four seconds. It's just like having a miniature laptop in front of you at the click of a finger and once again, you can type until your heart's content - for free.

### ***From PDA to TravelPod***

This is why choosing and using a PDA with an external memory card takes all the hassle out of uploading. When your entry/ies are ready to go on the Internet, all you need is access to a computer with a USB connection and card reader or just a USB connection (cos' you'll provide the card reader.) As cheap as card readers are, it's worth investing in one. Most people carry one anyway for the purpose of uploading photos - this is exactly the same only now you're uploading your 'entries' as well as your photos straight into TravelPod. The card reader I use is a basic '7-in-1' reader and reads my PDA card and digicam card at the same time so I can upload pics and entries together. It may even be that you're already using the same card for your camera and don't actually need to buy one.

The text upload is even easier as it's not really an 'upload' at all. All that happens is that you simply open your pre-written PDA document in the computer's word-processing software (or even a text editor/viewer) and simply 'copy' and 'paste' the text straight into the new 'entry' you've just created on TravelPod. Magic! A minute or so using TravelPod's spell-checker (if necessary) and you're done. In seconds. Doesn't really matter if the Internet charge is \$15 or \$20 an hour as the 'upload' takes less than a second. The point being that you did the important, time-consuming, costly bit for free - the thinking, the writing and the editing. The costly part happens in a flash, therefore causing it to be miraculously 'non-costly'.

### ***What if your PDA hasn't got an external memory card?***

Then the result is exactly the same. It just takes a lot longer and so defeats the objective. What you would do is go through the lengthy process of installing the PDA software on to the computer you're sitting at, in order for it to recognize your PDA. Then you can access your pre-written entries. You would then call up your document in the same way, copying and pasting into TravelPod as before. The problem is, copying your entries using the PDA's software assumes that installing software on one of the computers you are using is allowed, which we know is not always the case. Buying a PDA with an external card simply takes the 'what if?' out of the



equation. In most cases, the computer will simply read your card as a regular USB storage device and display the card and its contents as a separate drive.

### ***The Pro's and Con's***

*'I'm a technophobe, I wouldn't know how to operate one of those things.'*

We're also in the year 2005, and things are simpler and more 'user-friendly' than they ever have been. Entering text on a PDA is one of its basic functions and also one of its simplest. They are designed for quick response and you'll be turning it on and writing a sentence in less than a few seconds. Of course there are more complex functions available, but as your main concern is with updating your travelogue cheaply and efficiently, i.e 'entering text', you won't have a problem.

*'Why spend money, when a simple notebook and pen does exactly the same thing'*

I completely agree, though at some point that beautifully hand-written text will need to be entered through a keyboard and onto a screen so as you can create and write your entry on TravelPod. Why wait and pay for every hour you spend sitting and entering that text? Why not 'type as you go' - for free!

*'I haven't got room for all this extra equipment'*

I thought that too until I saw that the whole thing (including the keyboard) folded up and fit right into my pocket. They're actually no larger than a small notebook. It will always be handy when you need it, plus of course, it will give you so much more than just a notebook.

*'I don't always have access to electricity; it's no good to me if the batteries are dead'*

This is probably, the only sticky point with using a PDA, laptop or any electronic device for that matter on the road. You will need regular access to a power supply in order to recharge it. That being said, some PDAs use AAA batteries, so just keep a few extras handy and you should be fine for 10+ hours. As I said, the one I've got is a very basic model and I get a few hours out of it with one charge. Maybe the better models have a better battery life? Without fully researching I don't know. What I do know is that nowadays there are many new and clever ways of 'battery charging' available whilst on the move. There are 'regular' battery packs that can charge devices on demand at specific voltages, not to mention 'solar-powered' alternatives, which are ideal for when you're on the move. Everybody's circumstances are different so it's a case of finding what's right for you.

*'So what else can it do for me?'*

Similar to a laptop, the possibilities are endless and the uses are many. As well as the usual standard functions such as storing and organizing contact information, logging appointments and tasks, you can even manage your finances, sort and view your photos or set up fully functioning spreadsheets. Some models allow dial-up, SMS, some have built in mp3 players and some allow you to view movies. The list



goes on and on the more you're prepared to empty your pocket. It's probably also worth pointing out that the more money you spend on one, the less you'll want to have the thing stolen the minute your back's turned.

I'd guess that for most travelers, the basic PDA will do the job more than adequately. It may not always be your travelogue you wish to write. You may want to compose a particularly long e-mail to one or a group of people. You may wish to construct a letter which takes a lot of time and effort. All this again, will be able to be done 'free' and what's more, you'll be able to store documents either to the memory card or to the PDA internally. You may even choose to note the highlights of each day so you can call it up anytime you wish to look back on it. It also means that all of your previously completed entries are always at hand and can either be updated or edited as you go or filed away for a later date. If you wanted to you might decide to go back and have a quick look at 'what you did last summer' in an instant, just because you can.

Because it's only 'text', it takes up hardly any space at all. I've written over sixty travelogue entries since I've had my PDA and they've barely taken up 3MB's worth of space (I'm using a cheap 64MB card).

I also find it useful to copy and paste articles or text from the Internet and on to a blank document on the memory card for later, when I can read it in depth at my leisure, straight from the PDA - again for free. And whether it's reading, writing, adding or editing you need to do, you can pretty much be anywhere; on a bus, a train, a plane, in bed for that matter. I've lost count of the ideas and notes I've written in the toilet!

It's also possible to assign 'categories' to each document so that at a glance you know where you are with things. For example, any new entries I'm working on will be assigned to the general 'travelogue' category. When they've been edited and are ready for upload on to TravelPod, I assign them to the 'Ready' category. Uploaded entries are filed away as complete. So at any given time, at a glance, I can see which entries are ready for upload and which ones are currently being worked on. The list goes on and on.

### ***A Final Word***

For me, the basic little PDA has equipped me with everything I need to keep my travelogue updated. That was, of course, the priority and the whole point. At the same time it has helped me to keep costs to a bare minimum and has also helped me to make the most of limited time (it's amazing how much you can type in twenty minutes when your mind is buzzing and fresh from adventure). Without even mentioning the vast array of other functions which are exceptionally useful, the fact that it's helped me to keep my travelogue going like it has, has proven to be of great benefit and in reality, has probably paid for itself twice over since I bought it in November 2004. Without it, I probably wouldn't have made the effort to have kept up with my own travelogue the way that I have. And that would have been a great shame. I wouldn't have logged the details of my adventures and travels, or the precious 'little things' that can so easily get forgotten. My friends and family



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wouldn't have been able to keep up with my antics and mis-adventures and let's face it; there's nothing better than for someone to log on after a days work to see what a fantastic time your having!