

Words: Olivia Prutz Pictures: Mark Howe

# TRAVELLING WITH KIT



PAG's technical director David Hardy started the day off on the subject of travelling with batteries

to get when travelling as an air passenger. With global representatives and 24-hour airport presence, there are many reasons to choose to freight equipment with someone like Logfret, who are used to dealing with high value and fragile cargo, so it seemed like something worth considering, especially for longer trips and/or those involving large amounts of kit. One attendee in particular was interested in freight options for a trip to Albania and it was a good opportunity for her to discuss the options and practicalities with Simon and Tom.

After a lunch kindly provided by the organisers, it was time

So what actually *is* the answer to the 'li-ion batteries on a plane' conundrum? This is a frequently debated topic on the GTC forum and after attending the 'Travelling with Equipment' workshop I feel much better informed.

Armed with an IATA Dangerous Goods manual as thick as two phone books, David Hardy, technical director from PAG kicked the day off with a discussion on travelling with batteries. I was particularly interested in this session as the previous week I'd been stopped at security and told that I was officially only allowed to take two spare li-ion batteries with me into the cabin, instead of the four I had with me, but that he would make an exception this time and allow me through and that next time the extras should be checked into the hold. Feeling disconcertingly ignorant and pressed for time, I didn't question him and as various anecdotes from the workshop attested to, its not always smart to antagonise security or customs!

As expected, the answer is far from straightforward, with the official guidelines being somewhat outdated, non-specific and ill informed. Interestingly I did learn that there is a two battery per traveller limit on li-ion batteries between 100Whours and 160Whours, but no set limit on those under 100Whours (as

mine had been). Essentially the key facts I took away from David were that spare batteries should be taken into the cabin and made safe using tape over the contact points and kept individually in separate plastic bags. Batteries are only permitted into the hold if they are attached to equipment, such as a camera, although someone pointed out that attaching a battery to something like a light could result in disaster if the light were to get accidentally switched on whilst in the hold. This is one example of how the regulations don't really make sense, as storing them safely, for example in a Peli case with a custom cut foam insert, tape over the contact points etc, (as one attendee usually does when travelling), would surely be better than arbitrarily attaching them to a piece of equipment? However, whilst David provided the official guidelines and some expert advice, the general message I took away from the discussion was that essentially you're at the mercy of the airport staff and their interpretation of the rules, so it's best to try and comply with their wishes – the penalties can be severe for breaking the rules!

Following on from the topic of batteries was a discussion with Tom and Simon from Logfret, a specialist freight company offering a bespoke service for freighting equipment and offering the kind of piece of mind that's no longer possible

to move on to carnets, with Suki from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce providing the expertise. Carnets are something I have little knowledge and zero first-hand experience of, although I did learn that I should've had a carnet for a trip earlier this year to Ukraine and feel rather glad that my lack of one luckily didn't give me any problems! There are 44 countries listed for which a carnet is required if you're travelling with professional equipment. Feedback from the workshop and also from the GTC forum suggests that Suki is a star when it comes to quick turn-arounds, 24-hour customer service and hand-holding for those unsure of the process. She definitely seemed to



Sukie Dehaney from Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

know her stuff. Of particular interest to many was the possibility to use the same carnet for multiple trips, assuming that the kit was the same – thus saving time and money. With heavy discounts for GTC members and such positive feedback, I know that I will be going to Suki if I need a carnet in the future.

After hot drinks and biscuits to rejuvenate we moved on to our final discussion of the day, with Robin Smith, a wildlife cameraman used to travelling to extreme and remote locations. Spending months at a time in a hide waiting for a fleeting glimpse of what you're after obviously takes considerable commitment and skill, but even just reaching the location with all the equipment is a challenge! Once there, maintaining kit further adds to the challenges of working in diverse locations. Robin had some great tips and advice born from his own extensive experience, starting from the more obvious, such as 'don't film a sand storm', to handy little tips like taking bungee chords to attach luggage to airport trolleys and placing an



Master of Ceremonies for the day was the GTC's welfare officer, Brian Rose

A4 sheet with your contact details inside each bag in case it goes missing.

Overall it was a day filled with great advice and it was good to hear from people with different experiences and knowledge. As with filming, travelling can have a lot problems to overcome and the

more experience you have, the easier it is to solve or avoid them, which is why this workshop and the GTC in general is so beneficial as a place to share knowledge. I learned a lot and heard some amusing anecdotes into the bargain too! Thank you to everyone involved in organising it and taking part.

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