

20 Things Ms. Dynamite Learned from Toast 2007:

(in no particular order)

-- 1) Yes, you really can get badly sunburn on a rainy grey day.

The elevation of high desert means you get burnt *much* more quickly. I know this, and yet... We didn't apply sunscreen on pack-out day because it was cold, raining and occasionally snowing. We were walking around for about 2 hours and despite the weather we both got sunburned. I think we were even wearing hats for some of the time. My face and ears were red and sore for days. Ouch.

-- 2) High wind + dust = windburn. Ouch. But also makes a nice exfoliator.

Combined with sunburn is even more ouchy (the skin is already sensitive from one, making it easier to get the other). I experienced a similar thing on the playa in 05: all those dust storms pelted my skin red and sore like a sunburn. On the upside, as K8 pointed out, it does make for a natural exfoliator. My skin was sore when I got home, but really smooth. ;)

-- 3) Shea Nut Butter is da bomb.

It's awesome for sunburn. Regular lotion stings. Even aloe gel stings and doesn't seem to do much. Shea nut butter goes on without pain and heals the skin faster. It's also fantastic for dry desert skin. Only problem I found was that it would turn solid in the cold nights so I placed the container in the leftover pan water when I cooked at night to soften it.

-- 4) Never lend clothing you don't want ruined or lost.

I learned the hard way to never lend clothing (or anything else) that isn't expendable. I lent a nice coat to a virgin who unfortunately got messed up to an historic level that evening and burnt the hell out of it. I think I can repair it to some degree, but the coat is now downgraded from dress-worthy status to dirty-partywear. Live and learn.

-- 5) If you lend anything you value, get it back before the borrower leaves the event.

It took over 2 weeks and the intervention of 2 separate people to get back the aforementioned coat because the borrower had left early on Sunday before returning it. That's just an unnecessary hassle so if it's something you'll need or worry about, make a point to get it back first thing Sunday morning. Even if one of you has to be woken up.

-- 6) Plan for unexpected visitors.

We had a bigger camp set up this year which had the wonderful side effect of drawing visitors who wandered by. We had only packed dishes and chairs for the two of us, trying to keep the load compact. So I wasn't readily prepared to lend guests a cup when sharing our hot chocolate on their morning stroll, or some comfy chairs when they paid an in-tent visit. I really enjoyed being able to share some hospitality so I'll be bringing stuff for visitors next time.

-- 7) Keep old/unwanted gear to help out.

I was surprised at the number of people at Toast that didn't have a tent or a sleeping bag. We realized on the way home that we had some things that would've helped those without. Our crappy little pup tent that we use to store gear when on the playa isn't the most habitable, but it would be welcome shelter to someone at Toast who was sleeping outside during the rain. That travel mug is awkward to drink out of once the sippy lid was lost, but a passerby who wants a hot drink will be happy to use it. I'll be planning to bring some compact things that can be safely lent without worry next year in case they're needed.

-- 8) A camp stove rocks and is worth the effort.

It's amazing how tolerable the cold can be when you have something warm to drink. Being able to just boil water for coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cup noodles, oatmeal really makes a difference. We had a little 2 burner that folds up small and I managed to use it several times without blowing us up. In addition to the self-reliance aspect, it's really nice to be able to offer some morning stumbler a wake-up cup, or a evening shiverer something hot. It's also hugely awesome when your amazing bf wakes you up with hot cocoa after a cold rainy night.

-- 9) An Air mattresses rocks and is well worth the effort.

This was the first year I actually slept, and slept well. We brought an air mattress with a built-in battery operated inflator. Didn't take much time to inflate or deflate, and the whole thing was smaller than a pillow when packed. Oh, the joy of not waking up with pains and stiff joints and things poking me in the back. A rested Dyno is a less cranky Dyno. Which is a public service, really.

-- 10) Get there early. Arriving Friday night is too short and hectic.

This was the first year that I was able to arrive earlier (Thur. night) and it really made a difference in my experience. Usually just the effort of getting there knocks me out and I spend half of Saturday trying to recover. This year I had Friday to recoup, get set up, get acclimated. Which left a comfortable schedule for the event so I could rest as often as needed without missing too much. Just as importantly, it gave me time to really roam around and interact with people. We had planned to arrive even earlier so we could help set things up, but couldn't because I was sick. Next year I think that will be a good approach.

-- 11) Plan well, well ahead. Like many months. Even for simple things.

I had planned to make some LNT signs to help out. It seemed silly to rush to it, I figured I'd have plenty of time before the event. Then as my schedule got busier I figured worst case I could certainly crank out some signs the week before if I had to. Then I got really, really, really sick and could not do anything at all. So no signs. Suckage. Additionally, I was also frantically, hectically sewing before the event -- as usual -- even just to repair or alter things I needed to wear. And of course I couldn't get it all finished. And of course I was really tired from the effort. Plus, I wish I had been able to sew more for Mr. Sudden and others. So if there's anything I plan to do next year, I'll be sure to start them many months before the event.

-- 12) Hardly anyone else finishes their costumes/clothing in time either.

In the past I'd feel lame for not finishing a lining or adding the intended detailing before a burner event. This year at Toast I kept running into people who were wearing things still "in-progress" and realized this is just a common burner thing. Just about everyone runs out of time for something. Embrace the unfinished. For my 2005 burn I made 3 full evening costumes including jackets, boot covers and accessories for each; plus 4 full daytime costumes, also including bootcovers and accessories for each, some of which coordinated with the nighttime costumes so I could mix and match... all in about 6 weeks. And yet I was bothered that I didn't get to finish the details on all of them. Reality check: if it's ok for someone to not have time to add the pockets to their one coat, I think I can chill the fawk out.

-- 13) You don't always have to be "on". You're still good company.

While talking with 2 wonderful women I was surprised to hear that they didn't feel interesting, fabulous, or whatever enough to talk to (at times). Not "burner enough" perhaps. I was like, huh?? I mean, these are just seriously fabulous babes. Which led to a lovely conversation. There are times when I also "feel neither Dyno nor Mitey", when I'm feeling tired or awkward or spastic or just "off". It was a great to recognize that many of us go through that, sometimes for long periods of time. That just because we don't feel we're the dazzling wit and life of the party, doesn't mean we don't have something worthwhile to offer. That it's ok to sort of sit in our "off" space because sometimes that is just the kind of company someone else is looking for. Ok, group hug.

-- 14) Mental note: Rig something for the porto-potties to hold ziplock baggies.

People forget to bring baggies with them to the potties. Then they find they need to dispose of something... like say, I don't know, a plethora of tampons... so they just leave them in bundles in the potties or on the ground outside. Having handy little bag holders inside the potties might help prevent moop, prevent people from putting non-waste items in the hole, and prevent embarrassing situations for attendees. I haven't yet figured out how to rig it so that it's totally removable at the end of the event with no damage to the potties, but I have a year.

-- 15) Mental note: Label your sh*t.

Put your name on your things so they don't get lost, so people know who is responsible for them, and people know to whom they should be returned. There were belongings such as chairs at center camp on late Sunday afternoon and no one seemed to know who owned them. Since the majority of people had already vacated, it left the remaining folks guessing whether the owners were coming back for them, or they had been forgotten/abandoned and someone else should take it home so as not to leave crap behind for the property owners. Which leads to the next item...

-- 16) Mental note: Before you break down your own camp, first go around to common areas like center camp and collect your things.

This prevents the quandary mentioned above, where people are left guessing about others' things. It also ensures that you don't leave something behind. Everyone I spoke with already had their own vehicles packed to the hilt with their own belongings. They had no room left for someone else's stray chair or box or poles. That creates a potentially bad situation in terms of LNT.

-- 17) On windy days, do moop patrol each day well past the main event areas, in the direction of the wind.

It hadn't occurred to me that on those windy days anything caught by the wind blew well past the campsites, about a mile out into the open field areas. The moop can't be seen from the campsites so it appears at a glance that everything is tidy. Seems obvious, but I didn't realize this until my bf, Sudden went on moop patrol well past the perimeter and came back with a handful of garbage. Next time I'll be more attentive to this.

-- 18) Drive up via Flag, drive back via Globe.

We had always taken the Globe route (from Tucson) when going to and from Toast. Partly because it's the only route we knew, partly because it's a beautiful ride, and partly because it's fun to drive zigzag through the mountain turns. We took Flag back this year and I realized how much that can help for the drive (ignoring our unusual 2hour delay in traffic on 10). My little VW put-puts up those mountain passes, so taking Flag UP when the car is heavier (water weight) would alleviate the stress on the engine by sticking to flat-ish highway. It also gives us a LOT more food and gas options. Then we can take the pretty Globe route back, DOWNHILL, when the car is lighter, and we can see the scenery. Seems obvious, but I just caught on.

-- 19) Headlamps make great ceiling lights.

We tied a headlamp to the loop at the center of our tent ceiling. It's amazing how much more effective overhead light is when you're trying to dress, etc. It also meant we didn't have to have 2 lanterns going to find something at night. Just that one light, and less batteries.

-- 20) Bless that Bag of Useful Things and the mysteries it contains.

The high winds kept blowing the fly off the end of the tent, letting the rain in through the screen roof. Joy. After numerous attempts to straighten this, I fished around in my Bag of Useful Things hoping for some kind of help. Sudden keeps a Box of Useful Things, full of random small items he collects throughout the year. I keep a Bag of Useful Things, full of random utility type items that often I'm too lazy to find another place for. The mystery box and bag come with us whenever we camp. The magical Bag of Useful Things yielded 2 metal clamps, the kind you'd use in a photo studio. I have no idea why I own these. But they were perfect to hold the fly to the top frame pole, keeping us dry for the rest of the trip.

- the end -

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