



Clothing and Equipment

Looking round old buildings can be dirty, damp and painful work!

This page highlights a few of the essential things you should take with you when looking around old buildings. For this, I will highlight some of the items I have in my personal Urbex Toolkit.

1. Gardening Gloves: This may sound daft, but it pays dividends to invest in a good pair of gardening gloves! Leather or suede ones are the best as you can still feel what you are doing whilst maintaining a good degree of protection. There will invariably be occasions when you have to fight your way through a hedge or two in order to find a way in somewhere, there may also be places you find which are absolutely smothered in pigeon poo, which can make you very ill indeed.

2. Decent Boots: In most places you will be trudging through corridors strewn with broken glass and wall tiles, so flip-flops are right out! Thick soles mean good grip and lessen the chance of spikey things sticking in your feet. There will usually be a bit of climbing getting into places and again, thick soles are better for negotiating barbed wire and spikey fences.

3. Beany hat or Baseball Cap: Keeps twigs and pigeon poo out of your hair, but will also lessen the impact of smacking your head in tunnels.

4. Martindales: Martindale dust masks are a must in this game. They are very handy for filtering out Asbestos and pigeon poo and stopping you breathing it all in. These are more important in service tunnels, where you are most likely to find asbestos around pipes. It isn't usually a problem unless you trip over something and disturb the dust.

5. At least 2 torches: It's always good to have a second torch handy in case one fails somewhere very dark (I learnt this the hard way!) My torches of choice are a main 1 million candella rechargeable searchlight, a wind-up LED flashlight and a small LED torch. I use the searchlight for low light photography and the LED torches in between so that I can conserve battery life on the searchlight.

Headlights are well worth looking into, as they leave your hands free for negotiating obstacles, but it is worth bearing in mind that you get what you pay for. Expect to pay between £40 and £70 for a serviceable LED headlight.

There are many different powers of searchlight out there, ranging from 1million candella, up to 15 million candle power! expect to pay around £30 for a decent rechargeable 1million, and around £50 to 70 for a big beastly. Most are rechargeable sealed lead acid and waterproof, so ideally suited to Urbex.

For examples of what you can find for your money, go to www.tooledup.com



6. A Decent Rucksack: All this stuff gets a bit bulky, so a decent, lightweight rucksack is pretty essential. Many's the time when I've got halfway through the day and not had any munchies on me, so the rucksack comes in handy there too! The only problem is that a gaggle of blokes with rucksacks hanging around outside an abandoned building is going to look a bit suspect, so usually in our group only 2 of us will have rucksacks...

7. Laser Pointer: Not only immense fun, but incredibly useful. There have been times where I have crawled into a dark space and wondered how far it goes. The great thing with Lasers is that the beam can be seen a great distance away, very clearly indeed - giving a well focused and incredibly high contrast patch of light. The red (helium neon) Lasers are the most common and are easily affordable: expect to pay between £5 and £10 for a red one. The green ones give a far brighter and more powerful focused beam, but are occasionally difficult to find. Expect to find one for between £10 and £25. The most likely place to find such gadgets is [Maplin Electronics](#).



8: Antibacterial handwipes / Babywipes: After crawling around in Service Tunnels and through several inches of pigeon poo, it's nice to be able to clean yourself up a bit. Also, after 6 hours, someone will invariably need the loo! Abandoned buildings and Lunatic Asylums are not well known for having soap and running water, so again, baby wipes come in very handy here!

9: Clothing that you don't mind getting dirty, ripped or damaged: It's a dead cert that you are likely to end up covered in dust, mud, pigeon poo, anticlimb paint and all manner of other things. As a result, it's not going to be a good idea taking your best Adidas top, Nikes and Armani jeans....

10: Mobile phone: I cannot stress enough the importance of this. If anything goes wrong, emergency services can track your location to within a few feet if you have a mobile phone with you. However, it is imperative to keep the phone on SILENT! I've had a few heart-stopping moments when my phone has gone off with extremely loud happy hardcore as a ringtone! Keep it switched on, but set it up for VIBRATING ALERT.

A lot of people have very expensive cameras for this sort of thing, but out of personal preference, I find it easier and far less cumbersome to use mobile phones for photography. They are small, unobtrusive and very robust, as well as having the ability to take photos in very low light and record video footage. I use 3 on site: I have a Nokia N70 (LEFT), a Nokia N73 (MIDDLE) and a Nokia X6 (RIGHT) and every photograph on this project has been taken with either one of these three fantastic machines. Hard to believe.



11. Hi-Viz Vest or Jacket: A lot of people might wonder why this would be? Why would anyone want to draw attention to themselves by wearing one of these? In some situations, a Hi-Viz vest is as good as an invisibility cloak! Honestly, you would be amazed at what you can achieve in one.

I used to work for a large hotel in Brighton and 2 guys in Hi-Viz jackets came into the hotel, claimed they were there to collect an item of damaged furniture and walked out with quite a nice sofa, totally unquestioned. It would seem that if you have a Hi-Viz vest, you must be there for a reason.

These can be quite easily obtained from most tool hire shops and quite often, they can be found in bike shops, too.



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