

Smartphones and Time Travel

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I saw and reviewed the 2011 movie *The Man from the Future* (Brazilian with English subtitles) yesterday, and noted that I liked the time traveler's use of his smartphone (he traveled back from 2011) to demonstrate to the people in 1991 that he was a time traveler. He points out that his phone, which is a smaller version of the cellphones and mobile phones they already knew and were using, was also a computer, could take photographs, etc. This familiarity with a mobile device made it easier for the people in 1991 to accept that the time traveler came from twenty years in the future - had he shown them something totally alien to their culture, it would have been a much steeper climb for them to make any sense of it and him.

But it occurred to me that a smartphone could be a useful passport to the past much further back than twenty years. People as far back as the late 1870s knew about telephones, and in the 1840s about cameras. Certainly most people in 1845 could have related to a small device that took pictures, and would have been intrigued by the time traveler's claim that it and he came from the future.

Of course, one problem with smartphones going through time is there would be no service, neither data nor wifi, in the past. But that's ok. The camera function would still work. And for jaunts even further back in the past, before there were photographs, phone apps like the flashlight and mirror would be impressive. And the smallness of the smartphone, a great advantage to us here in the present, would be a boon to the time traveler, being effortless to carry in a pocket.

Batteries would be a more serious limitation, and it's interesting, isn't it, that just as battery life is the Achilles heel of smartphones in our present, they would also bedevil the use of the smartphone by the time traveler - indeed, far more bothersome than for us, since the time traveler would have no way of replacing them, other than carrying along a supply of batteries for the trip, which would ultimately be exhausted.

Unless ... how about a solar-powered smartphone? They're not yet here, but are beginning to be available. That's the ticket. Ok, add potential use for time travel as another reason I'm going to get one of these.