

Traveling Guide to Better Health

Tips on Staying focused when traveling for business or fun

It took me a long time to realize that I didn't have to sacrifice my lifestyle goals while vacationing or while traveling for a business trip. All it took was a made up mind, a little planning ahead, some creative thinking, and a whispered prayer to make things work out in my favor.

Let's face it. When traveling for fun, food is high on the agenda! I love going to new places and checking out the food. I even make it a point now to talk to the Chef or at least, I send him a message especially if the food is good! But I've discovered that one of the biggest mistakes that we make when traveling, especially if we are traveling for fun, is that we give ourselves permission to get off track with our lifestyle goals. It's so easy to say "I know that I will overdo or get out of focus but that's ok, I'll get back on track when I get back home." Sounds familiar? Been there, done that. But you know what, you can stay on track with your nutritional goals and exercise regimen when traveling. It is definitely a challenge but not impossible to stay focused. Here are a few tips to help you to maintain your lifestyle changes that you have worked so hard to achieve:

Tip #1 don't give yourself permission to slip back into your old ways and sabotage all of your hard work. Moderation is the key but don't give yourself a blank check that reads SABOTAGE.

Tip #2 have a made up mind. Decide ahead of time that you will enjoy yourself and that enjoyment is no longer equated with over eating or wrong food choices when you are traveling. Once you make that choice then you begin to look for healthier options.

Tip #3 during your vacation or while you are making your travel plans, look for restaurants that are off the "beaten" tourist path. If you stay in the tourist's area, depending on where you are at, you will most likely end up eating fast food or worst! So look to dine at restaurants and shops that are off the main tourist's area. You will most likely get a better quality of food and healthier choices.

Tip #4 lots of restaurants have a healthier choice section on their menu so opt to choose from this section. Ordering a salad is always a good choice, with the dressing on the side, or even better, choose a healthier option like vinaigrette dressing. If you are dining at a buffet you can make your own vinaigrette by using olive oil and balsamic vinegar and/or a squeeze of fresh lemon. You don't have to treat yourself to the high caloric options.

Tip #5 if you are ordering a burger, order a vegetable or fresh fruit as a side instead of fries. No 100% whole wheat bun or bread for your burger, eat it open faced. Remove one of the buns which are white carbohydrates and eat only one. This way you are consuming less white carbs and salt.

Tip #6 soup du jour. Ask about the salt content or ask to pretest to check it out for yourself, especially if you are dealing with high blood pressure. Avoid creamy soups because usually the cream means high fat content.

Tip #7 drink water with a twist of lemon or lime juice to add flavor. Choose hot or cold tea, or coffee without sugar. Avoid the sugary beverages that sound wonderful and looks good but in reality, they are deceitful. All that glitter is not gold. Don't be fooled by the look and the name.

Tip #8 I kid you not, and no this has not been researched and written about in popular health magazines, but if you are sincere about your weight loss goals and changing your lifestyle and are sincere about giving God the glory out of your life, He will give you the "Holy Spirit hookup," even in small matters like a vacation. God really does care about the little things that concern us and there are countless times when He has landed me and my family in the right hotel and the right places to eat. "Stand still and know that I am God!"

Tip #9 don't despise mom and pop type restaurants; sometimes these are the ones that usually, sometimes, take the most pride in what they are cooking and serving. So go ahead and ask the locals for the best....in town, and sometimes you will discover that these are the places that you will have the most heartwarming dining experiences.

Tip #10 you are new in this vacation area and you don't quite know where to eat, just drive around a little before you make your dining choice if you have the time. Check out the parking lot of the local restaurants: Which ones are empty and which ones are crowded during the peak meal times. That's usually a clue to the quality of their food and service. Be brave! Go in and check them out. Write me and tell me about it.

Tips #11 don't be shy about packing away your favorite healthy goodies when traveling. Bring along your favorite trail mix or fruit, crackers, etc.

Tip #12 make sure the hotel where you are staying have an exercise room and/or swimming pool. You want to stay fit during your travel. Try to stay as active as you can. Also, look beyond the hotel for fun activities like horseback riding or renting a bike for cycling. Take long walks after a meal. No exercise room at your hotel, turn on the music in your room and dance to the beat for 30 minutes; do some form of stretching or floor exercises.

Tip #13 choose healthier choices at the hotel's continental breakfast. Avoid the donuts, bagels, and sugary cereals. Choose the oatmeal instead. Opt for the yogurt and fresh fruit. Have a boiled egg at least this way you are getting some protein which will help you to stay satisfied longer. If the juices are not from concentrate and have no pulp in them, then you want to avoid these. Without the fiber in the juice to slow down digestion, you are pouring a load of sugar into your body at once. If you just have to have some juice, drink about ¼ cup. There! You had a taste and your taste buds are satisfied! And your pancreas is not working overtime to secrete insulin to accommodate the onslaught of sugar intake and the excess sugar is not being converted

and stored as fat in your body, weakening your cell walls and arteries which set you up for heart disease. If you haven't noticed, the nurse in me just slipped in a bit of education. I couldn't resist! Knowledge is power!

Tip # 14 How to survive the airport food environment?

- Pray and pray hard that you find something that might work for you, if not, plan ahead. In all honesty, airports are responding to consumers' demand for healthier food choices so you will likely find some low fat, low cholesterol, low sugar options.
- Bring your favorite fruit or trail mix to munch on until you reach your destination. Try to buy Greek style yogurt while in the airport but make sure you read the label for sugar content and fat. There maybe a few scattered restaurants that you are able to apply the above tips to.
- If you are traveling early am, try to eat breakfast before you leave home. No time to eat breakfast? Make yourself a couple of peanut butter sandwiches on sprouted grain bread of course or 100% whole wheat and drizzle with agave or honey. Cut into fourths, put in a Ziploc bag and store securely in your carryon bag. It does the trick every time!
- Lay over at lunch time or dinner? Choose the low fat, low cholesterol, low sugar options. Choose lean protein to promote satiety. A choice between a chicken salad and a gyros with a side of fries, opt for the salad. Always go for the healthier options.
- Make smart decisions when buying snacks from the gift shops. Buy snacks like low or no salt nuts or trail mixes; buy a granola bar instead of a big candy bar. Too much sugar in the granola bar? Eat half and a piece of fresh fruit and drink water.
- When you are finally up in the air, soaring above the birds, you are at the mercy of the flight attendants. You might want to pass on the sodas and opt for the coffee that might or might not be good. But hey, it's liquid without the sugar! And again, have that bottle of water on hand that you purchased in the airport. Nuts anyone? Opt for the plain over the honey roasted. Ok, go ahead and eat a few of the honey roasted. Who can say no to honey roasted peanuts.
- I have found that I am most successful when I plan ahead and have a made up mind. If it's a short trip 3-4 hrs, I bring my PB sandwiches tucked away in my purse, some fresh fruit and trail mix, buy a bottle of water and ride it out until I reach my destination!
- Be realistic. Don't expect too much in an airport in terms of supporting your healthy lifestyle. I mean, you won't find a whole foods market there so you have to use good judgment.