



Don't let fitness go south this winter

By Alexandra Paul

Going south for the winter months is supposed to be rejuvenating, but all too often we come back several pounds heavier because the time away from our regular routine is an excuse to give up all our healthy habits - we stop exercising and watching what we

eat because we think heck, I deserve a break.

I want you to get a respite from the routine of your daily life too, but does that mean overeating, overdrinking and ditching workouts so you feel worse when you get home? There is a better way...

I believe there is a balance between maintaining a healthy rou-

tine and still having a great time traveling. In fact, you can come back fitter, because studies show that habit change is easiest when people are in contexts different from their everyday life. This is because all habits have triggers, and if you remove yourself from your environment, you lose some of those cues - like snacking as

soon as you come home from work or watching the news instead of working out. If you want to quit smoking or start a walking routine, being away from home for a while might be just the place to do it.

But remember, when you are in new surroundings, you also lose some triggers for good habits too! With a little planning, you can make it easier to implement some healthy routines while you are away. Here are some tips on how to have a great vacation and come home feeling better than ever:

Plan to work out every day.

When I say "plan", I mean before you even leave home, schedule time to exercise each day while you are away. If you are traveling with your family, make sure you are clear with everyone that you need time to work out daily. Added bonus: someone else will probably want to exercise with you.

Choose a place to stay so working out is easy. Choose your vacation location with exercise in mind. There should be a gym nearby with the equipment or classes you like. If you work out outdoors, stay in an area that has beautiful and accessible running or walking routes. Added bonus: running or brisk walking is a great way to get to know a new place.

Bring your fitness tracker. Wearing a device that clocks your calorie burn or miles covered keeps you motivated. You could get enough exercise just exploring your new home. Added bonus: you can have new experiences and fitness at the same time.

Enjoy the food without overeating.

It is wonderful to eat at new restaurants and try new foods, but we can do that without overindulging. In fact, the first bite is usually the best and our enjoyment of the food dissipates the more we eat of it (which is why "good to the last drop" is such a compliment). To really enjoy new tastes, eat mindfully - chew well and put your fork down between bites! Split menu items with your dinner companions so you can sample more while eating less. Practice

the Okinawan habit of hara hachi bu- leaving the table just 80 per cent full. Added bonus: feeling too full is an anti-aphrodisiac, so eat less and have more sex.

Limit your alcohol intake. I sound like a party pooper, but a study by University of Georgia's College of Family and Consumer Sciences found participants doubled their alcohol intake while on vacation. Alcohol contains quite a few calories on its own, but because it limits inhibitions, studies also show that when we drink we tend to eat more too. Added Bonus: you won't waste precious time feeling hung over.



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Enjoy a healthy kitchen. Being in a new place is a great way to start from scratch when it comes to the foods in your larder. Stock only healthy food and make a point to make most of your meals. Food cooked in your kitchen has less fat, salt and calories than what you get in a restaurant. If you do have some treats, put them high up on shelves and way to the back, which will minimize mindless snacking. Remember being in a new place is the perfect time to start some healthy habits! But if you do eat out...

Find healthy restaurants. I make better choices when I go online and choose what I am going to eat before I arrive at the restaurant. Studies show that we all make smarter food decisions in advance, rather than when we are already at the table with a hungry tummy and a menu full of fatty, salty, sweet foods in front of us. To find the healthy places to eat, I use travel health eating apps like Happy Cow, My Fitness Pal, CDC's Travwell, Eat Out Well, and Can I Eat this? With these apps, I

can always find great but healthy food wherever I go. Added Bonus: you'll find places off the beaten tourist track.

Look for active activities. You are away from your normal routine, why do normal things? Look around for cycling groups and hiking groups to join, or better yet spelunking and scuba les-

sons. Do an Internet search combining your dream activity with your dream location and see what you come up with - it might change where you winter this year! Added bonus: you'll meet diverse people with healthy, active lifestyles.

Weight gain when we travel adds to "creeping obesity", that common pattern of adults adding small amounts of weight over long periods of time. Even if you just gain a pound or two, why mar a lovely trip with the stress of getting back into shape when you get back home? You can have fun, relax, enjoy delicious food and still come home feeling healthy and fit. Just follow these few simple guidelines, and I am willing to bet your time away this winter will be the best ever.

Alexandra Paul is a certified health coach with clients all over the world and is internationally recognized for her role on the TV series "Baywatch." Visit Alexandra-Coaching.com for a free 20-minute consultation with Alexandra.



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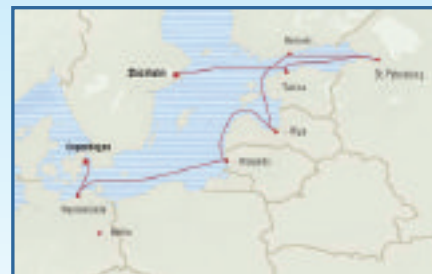
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