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PRINT

# Health - Travel Fitness

By Alexandra Paul

Vacations are supposed to be rejuvenating but all too often, we come back feeling tired, out of sorts, and 5 pounds heavier. Most of us use our holidays as 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 take a rest from the routine of your daily life, too, but does that mean overeating, over-drinking and ditching workouts so you feel worse when you get home? Maybe there is a better way ...

I believe there is a balance between maintaining a healthy routine and still having a great time on vacation. In fact, you can even come back fitter. Studies show that habit change is easiest when people are in contexts different from their everyday life. 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 on vacation 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 Workout 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 vacationing with others, make sure you notify everyone when you will be working out, so there are no conflicting events—or hurt feelings when you don’t show up for that family breakfast. Added bonus: someone else will probably want to exercise with you.

## Find a Hotel So Working Out is Easy

Before I book, I always make sure the hotel has a gym with the equipment I need for a decent workout, or I will call a few nearby gyms to make sure I can buy a guest pass for a few days. If you are a runner, stay in an area conducive to running. Added bonus: running or walking briskly is a great way to see a new place.

## Bring Your Fitness Tracker

Wearing a device that clocks your calorie burn or miles covered keeps you motivated. If this is a sightseeing vacation, you could get enough exercise just from walking place to place. Added bonus: you can have culture 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—you are on vacation so no need to rush! 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 when you are just 80 percent 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 that participants doubled their alcohol intake while on vacation.

Alcohol contains quite a few calories on its own. Because it limits inhibitions, studies also show that when we drink, we tend to eat more, too. Added Bonus: you won’t waste precious holiday time feeling hungover.

## 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 healthy travel apps sites like [The Trim Traveler](#), and apps like [Happy Cow](#) to find great but healthy food wherever I go. Added Bonus: you’ll find places off the beaten tourist track.

## Pick an Active Vacation

My husband and I enter triathlons, ocean swims, or running races in exotic places and then build our vacation around that. I now have my eye on a swim vacation in the [Galapagos](#) or off [Turkey](#).

My foodie neighbor Nancy went on a walking tour of Umbria and Tuscany, eating at amazing restaurants as she walked through the hillsides from village to village [www.backroads.com](#).

There are cycling holidays for singles over 50 <https://www.booksinglesholidays.com/club-la-santa/8-days-senior-cycling-holidays-for-singles-in-spain>, for example! Do an internet search combining your dream activity with your dream location and see what you come up with! Added Bonus: you’ll meet diverse people with healthy, active lifestyles.

Vacation weight gain 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 holiday with the stress of getting back into shape? 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 vacation will be the best ever!

*Alexandra is a health coach with clients all over the world. Go to [AlexandraCoaching.com](#) to get a free 20-minute consultation.*