

ILLUSTRATIONS: DWIGHT ALLOTT

The demands of travel can prove perilous, undermining both good intentions and well-established routines. Here's how you can fight back and win — even when you're moving at supersonic speeds.

By LAUREL KALLENBACH

EIGHT TIMES A WEEK

in cities across the country, Victoria Matlock takes the stage as the green-skinned Elphaba in her Broadway touring company's performance of the hit musical *Wicked*. She belts out songs and dominates the stage as only the Wicked Witch of the West can. After the show, it's back to the hotel or out to a nearby eatery before collapsing, exhausted, into bed.

On the road for months at a time, the 29-year-old singer and actress does her best to eat right and maintain some semblance of a fitness routine, but it's a huge challenge. "The lead role is physically and vocally demanding, and I give it every ounce of my energy — onstage and off," she says. "When I'm tired, it's tough to motivate myself to exercise. It doesn't help sleeping in a strange bed, and if my hotel doesn't have a kitchen, I'm at the mercy of whatever restaurants are nearby."

Most business or leisure travelers don't battle evil wizards, but they *do* encounter many of the same daunting obstacles Matlock routinely faces: finding healthy food at odd hours in unfamiliar cities, and carving out some time for exercise and stress-relief — even in the face of a rigid and time-compressed schedule.

Longer and more-frequent trips typically pose the greatest challenge to healthy routines. But even short, occasional forays can disrupt our health-supporting habits — and make it tougher to pick them back up when we return.

The ironic part is, exercise and healthy eating can go a long way toward making our travels — particularly our business travels — more successful. A 2004 study commissioned by Hilton Hotels and Resorts reported that people who exercise during their trips performed 61 percent better than nonexercisers on reaction and alertness tests.

And good eating habits are just as important — for maintaining our energy, stamina and immunity, and also for warding off the flab that tends to creep on while we're away from home, away from the gym and eating out three times a day.

"The tendency is to gain weight on tour," says Matlock, who's also toured with *Evita* and *The Full Monty*. "After a show, the cast goes to a corner bar for a burger and drinks." Sounds like *a lot* of business trips we can think of.

But fear not — staying active and eating right on the road may require some resolve, but it's probably not

as tough as you might think. The following travel tips are doable, even for mere mortals. And they can make all the difference, both in how well you fare while on the road *and* in how well you look, feel and function when you return.

Fly Right

Whether you're aboard a puddle-jumper or an Airbus, air travel puts your body through the wringer. You're perpetually cramped, dehydrated by the bone-dry air and fed terrible food — or none at all. Worse yet, prolonged periods of immobility decrease blood flow to the legs and increase muscle stiffness, swelling and the likelihood of a life-threatening condition called deep vein thrombosis.

You can't change the airport or plane environments, but you *can* shift your response to them. Instead of succumbing to the siren scents of cinnamon buns or devolving into a seatbelt-bound lump, keep your system sitting pretty from the start of your trip. Here's how:

- **Never go to the airport hungry — and don't plan to eat what the airlines serve you on the plane. Pack your own healthy snacks and meals.**
- **Carry an empty water bottle to fill after you've cleared security.**
- **Speed walk the concourses while you're waiting for your flight.**
- **Request an aisle seat so you can get up to walk around. Spend some time standing, doing toe raises and stretching what you can.**
- **In your seat, point and flex your feet, roll your shoulders and neck, and clench and unclench your thighs, abs and glutes.**
- **Make a point of getting some exercise as soon as you arrive at your destination.**

That last point is particularly important if you travel internationally. When we fly across three or more time zones, we're far more prone to interrupted sleep, mood changes, irritability, digestive problems, decreased mental acuity and a dip in athletic performance, according to a 2007 study conducted by the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences in Liverpool, England. Walking or running, especially in bright sunlight, helps our bodies readjust more quickly to our new environments. →



Plan Ahead

The time to make fitness arrangements for your trip is *before* you leave, says triathlete Jim Kaese, coauthor of *The Athletic-Minded Traveler: Where to Work Out and Stay When Fitness Is a Priority* (SoCal Publishing, 2004).

He knows the disappointment of a hotel gym with broken machines and a lap pool that turns out to be a kidney-shaped puddle with a slide.

By doing research in advance, you have a better chance of locating a hotel with state-of-the-art equipment. "Nothing's more enticing than a stellar hotel fitness center that's just an elevator ride away," he says.

Kaese launched www.athleticmindedtraveler.com to help travelers find fitness-friendly hotels and healthy restaurants in their destination city. Among the more noteworthy options:

- **Westin Hotels** let you customize your private room into a mini-gym with a treadmill or indoor cycle, adjustable dumbbells, and Pilates or cycle DVDs; www.starwoodhotels.com/westin/workout.
- **Participating Fairmont Hotels** give members the option to have Adidas running clothes and shoes waiting in their room; www.fairmont.com.
- **Kimpton Hotels's "Om Away From Home" program** provides a 24-hour yoga channel, and a yoga mat, block and strap; www.kimptonhotels.com.

Many hotels form partnerships with local health clubs and offer reduced rates or passes. Check to see if your company will let you expense health-club costs.

Have a Plan B

What if you're visiting a place with no decent fitness center, or what if the center is packed? No problem, says Suzanne Schlosberg, author of *Fitness for Travelers: The Ultimate Workout Guide for the Road* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002). She recommends packing a workout kit in your suitcase and bringing exercise DVDs to play on your laptop or the hotel TV (check for DVD player availability).

Jump ropes and rubber tubing make excellent portable

equipment (see "Fitness in a Suitcase," page 64). You can even tone up your muscles using hotel-room furniture as gym equipment. One chapter in *Fitness for Travelers* illustrates bed and chair exercises. And, of course, you can go with the old standbys — pushups, sit-ups, squats — that require no equipment whatsoever.

Hotel-room cardio can be as simple as downloading your favorite tunes onto your iPod and dancing. Or think of the outdoors as your personal cardio gym. Search for local running clubs or scenic routes in the area. Consider walking to appointments instead of taking a cab. If you have enough time, why not rent a bike and pedal the area? (For more suggestions about getting exercise in the urban outdoors, see "Business? Adventure!" in the March 2006 archives at experiencelifemag.com.)

Nordic walking with poles is a great way to get fresh air while maximizing cardio time. These lightweight, telescoping poles take up almost no room in your duffle bag and can help you burn 20 to 46 percent more calories than you would walking the same speed and distance without poles, says Claire Walter, author of *Nordic Walking: The New Way to Health, Fitness, and Fun* (Hatherleigh Press, 2008). (To learn more about Nordic walking, see "Making Strides" in the April 2007 archives at experiencelifemag.com.)

Maximize Your Motivation

Of course, a fitness-ready suitcase doesn't mean much unless you use what you pack. Work pressures, unfamiliar surroundings and lack of control can all sap your exercise resolve. If your will is flagging, heed this advice from Schlosberg:

- **Exercise first thing in the morning.** The activity will bolster you all day.
- **Accept a compromise.** "People figure that if they can't put in their 45 minutes on the elliptical trainer, they shouldn't bother," says Schlosberg. "Be willing to pare down your workout, but keep its essence." (For a time-efficient interval workout, see "The Tabata Tune-Up," page 24.)
- **Make an exercise appointment** with a travel companion so you won't blow off your workout.
- **Substitute yoga or stretching for watching late-night TV.**

Resist Temptation

Good nutrition is key to maintaining your health and fitness wherever you are, but traveling can sabotage even the best of eating intentions.

That's because you're physiologically more inclined to crave high-calorie foods when you're away from home. University of Chicago researchers found that partial sleep deprivation alters the hormone levels that regulate hunger, increasing your appetite and triggering an interest in foods you may generally avoid at home. The fact that travel often produces sleep deficits might just explain

The Healthy Travel Checklist

Planning ahead ensures you'll remain resolved to exercise and eat right.

- 1** Locate a hotel with a good fitness center or a health club nearby. Check the Internet or books, such as *The Athletic-Minded Traveler* (see Web Extra!).
- 2** Research healthy restaurants in the area you'll be staying in, check menus online and preselect a light entrée so you won't be tempted by rich food later.
- 3** Book a hotel room with a refrigerator so you can stock healthy perishables (turkey, yogurt) or store dinner leftovers. If you'll have time to cook, find a hotel with kitchen suites.
- 4** Keep a bag packed with your workout clothes if you travel frequently. Then you'll never be unprepared.
- 5** Schedule flights around your fitness regimen. If possible, fly later in the morning so you can work out before departure. Avoid arriving hungry when it's late at night and restaurants are closed.
- 6** Check whether your employer will allow you to expense day passes to a health club.
- 7** If you're flying to a different time zone, shift your home bedtime and waking time closer to what they'll be at your destination a few days prior to departure.
- 8** Get a good night's sleep before your trip; don't start out exhausted.
- 9** Pack hearty, healthy, portable food, including your lunch and powdered vitamin-C packets to mix with your water. A cooler is handy for road trips. (If you're traveling internationally, you must consume all fresh fruits and vegetables before entering another country.)
- 10** Schedule time for exercise. Let your travel companions or business associates know that your workout is important to you — they might even join you for a run or bike ride.

your weakness for deep-dish pizza or doughnuts while on the road.

"When people are on the run, they gravitate toward foods that pump them up, especially stimulants such as caffeine and sugar," says certified dietitian-nutritionist Nikki Goldbeck, coauthor of *Healthy Highways: The Traveler's Guide to Healthy Eating* (Ceres Press, 2004).

Indeed, the Hilton study about people who exercised while traveling found that travelers drank 14 percent more caffeinated beverages, such as coffee and soda, than they did at home — presumably to ward off fatigue. Alcohol consumption increased, too — by 30 percent.

To prevent sleep and digestive troubles, Goldbeck encourages travelers to concentrate on fruit, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and lean protein, while going easy on added fats and sugars. Avoid fast food if you can, but if you can't, choose your meal wisely, and don't be shy about asking to "have it your way." A burger with no bun, extra veggies, hold the sauce, whatever it takes.

Pack some healthy snacks to get you through back-to-back meetings and travel delays, she suggests. "I tuck a box of whole-grain crackers and a jar of natural peanut butter — a good, portable protein — in my suitcase in case I'm stuck with no time for a real meal."

Rules for Restaurants

Whether you're sightseeing in Bangkok or making presentations in Houston, restaurant calories add up. When television and cable consultant Denise Link, 50, realized she was gaining weight during her weekly business junkets, she got smarter about dining out.

"I realized that when I ate a Big Mac or fries, I hardly had energy to move," she says. Eating at

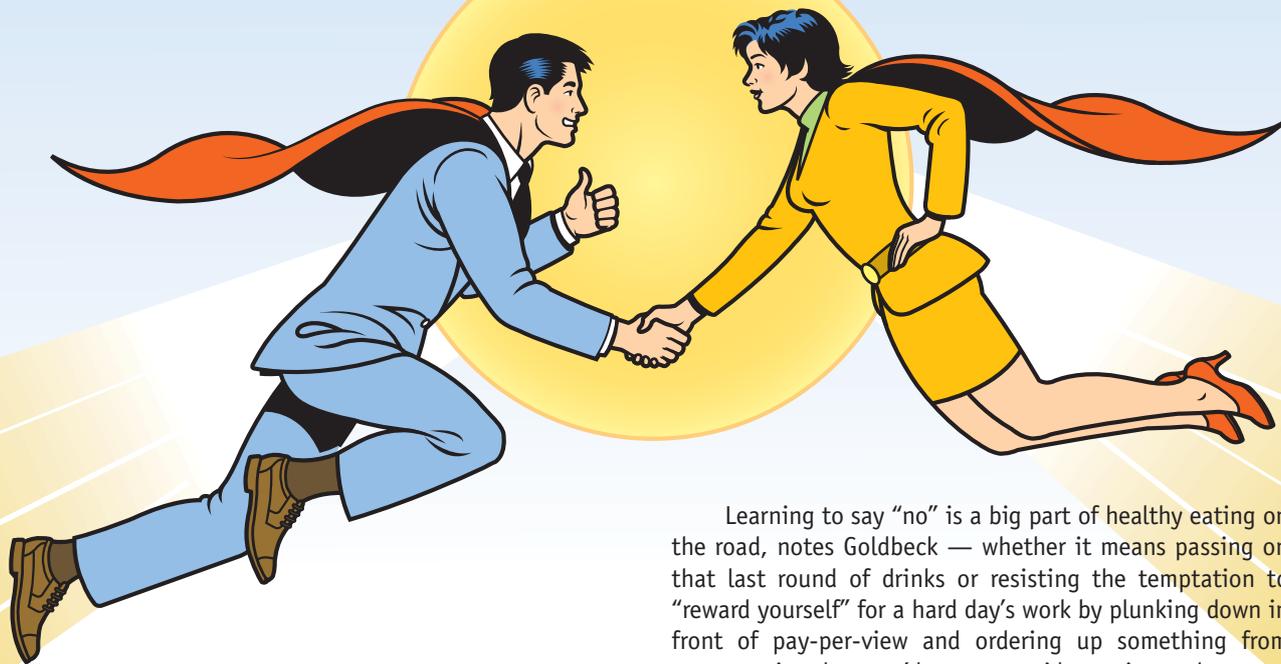
better restaurants costs a little more, Link notes, but she economizes by keeping alcohol and desserts to a minimum.

"Travelers invariably arrive in a city tired and hungry, so they eat what's at the hotel," Goldbeck points out. Instead, check the Yellow Pages or search the Internet to locate natural-foods restaurants within range.

Or consult Goldbeck's book, *Healthy Highways*, which lists restaurants that serve vegetarian entrées, natural meats and unprocessed food. Once you find a suitable restaurant, she says, try these tips:

- **Order a smaller portion, if available, or cut the entrée in half before you start eating. Ask the waiter to put the rest in a doggie bag.** →





- **Share an entrée with your dining companion; you can each order your own salad, soup or appetizer.**
- **Ask the waitstaff how food is prepared. Don't be afraid to request substitutions, special orders or to have a food broiled instead of fried.**
- **When you've eaten enough, have the waiter remove your plate so you won't keep nibbling.**

Finally, take care to avoid the vagaries of too much indulging: The all-you-can-eat breakfasts and the bottomless-glass cocktail parties, the supersized steaks and the bountiful bread baskets can all leave you feeling loaded down, lethargic and in no mood to move, much less stick to your workout plan. (For more tips on eating healthy and staying active while traveling for business, see "Road Warrior" in the March 2005 archives at experiencelifemag.com.)

Learning to say "no" is a big part of healthy eating on the road, notes Goldbeck — whether it means passing on that last round of drinks or resisting the temptation to "reward yourself" for a hard day's work by plunking down in front of pay-per-view and ordering up something from room service that you'd never consider eating at home.

But what about the incredible chocolate mousse or steak-frites you just can't bear to pass up while visiting France? "If it's something you really enjoy, go ahead and eat it," suggests Goldbeck, "just as long as it's a special treat and not a regular habit."

By keeping your eyes on your fitness and nutrition goals when you're on the road, you're likely to find that your business objectives benefit every bit as much as your body.

"I strongly believe that squeezing in exercise during business travel can even help you close business deals," asserts triathlete Jim Kaese. And, after all, isn't that why you're on the road in the first place? ●

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WEB EXTRA!

For more resources on traveling and fitness, check out the online version of this story at experiencelifemag.com.

Fitness in a Suitcase

Carry along a few light essentials for strength training. When you open your bag, you'll have an instant reminder to get moving.

- **RUBBER BANDS OR TUBE:** Multiuse resistance training tools that weigh almost nothing. \$10 each; www.spriproducts.com
- **JUMP ROPE:** Good cardio, anywhere. \$15; www.performbetter.com
- **PEDOMETER:** Count your daily steps, from jogging to museum walking (optimal goal: 10,000 steps). \$10; www.bodytrends.com
- **TRAVEL YOGA MAT:** The Tapas Travel sticky mat is only 1/16-inch thick, making it lightweight and portable. \$14; www.huggermugger.com
- **NORDIC WALKING POLES:** Telescoping poles that fit into luggage and bump up your caloric burn. \$50 to \$90; www.fittrek.com
- **VERSASTICK:** A portable, lightweight bar with attached rubber tubes, clips and a door anchor for strength training. \$80; www.versastick.com
- **WALKING SHOES:** If you can't tote athletic shoes, pack some walkable business-casual shoes that can do double duty. Try Rockports, about \$110; www.rockport.com
- **WEBBED AQUA GLOVES:** Add underwater resistance. \$15; www.hydrofit.com