

Avoiding the Road to Ruin

The business traveler's guide to keeping fit. By Lawrence Savell.

Having a job forces you to make certain sacrifices: You have to shave (and iron) every day; you have to miss (or tape) daytime television; and worst of all, you have to appear serious for extended periods of time—even when your boss walks by trailing three feet of toilet paper from his shoe. To me, however, the greatest sacrifice used to be having to interrupt my diet and exercise routine when traveling on business. The inevitable combination of heavy meals and physical inactivity always guaranteed that significantly more of me would return from these trips than had left. Therefore, by necessity, I learned the secrets of maintaining some semblance of a diet and exercise regimen on the road.

***Avoid airborne temptation.** Savvy svelte flyers eschew normal airline fare, opting instead for the special diet plate, or even bringing their own fresh fruit and bottled water. After catching on to this nifty trick, I began special ordering my meals too. And it was working, in theory. Unfortunately, after dinner, the flight attendant lured me into the wasteland with her offer of cocktails and peanuts. Sure, the bags of peanuts are small, but somehow I ended up with five packages. Add to that the two after dinner drinks I ordered and my battle was basically lost. Since then, I've studiously avoided the beverage cart. As strong-willed as I am, there's just something about airline peanuts that I can't resist.

***The battle of the buffet.** When faced with a meeting room buffet line, try to hold out as long as you can. Chances are, when you finally make your way up to the table, all the brownies, cookies, cakes and pies will be gone, leaving you with a lovely selection of lean meats, vegetables and green salad. I personally have seen people (who I know to be dieting) get right up, march up to the table and right past the dessert. Watching them walk past me with their plates filled with healthful goodies makes my heart swell with pride. Unfortunately, I've also seen people seemingly pulled through the line by the magnetic force field of a huge piece of cake and forced to eat it, whether they wanted to or not. (That's

why I wait until everyone's had their chance at the table before I go up.)

*** Order prudently in restaurants.** More and more restaurants are offering low-fat alternatives to traditional calorie-laden dining fare. But what do you do if you're having dinner with a key client who happens to savor the kind of food that keeps cardiologists in business? To avoid embarrassing or alienating my "bread and butter," I sometimes engage in mild subterfuge. When it's time to order, I usually go for something that makes my pants feel tight just reading it off the menu. Then my guest doesn't feel self-conscious about his appetizer order of Fettuccine Alfredo, followed by the "Cattleman's Cut" two-pound steak. After the waiter departs, I excuse myself and dart unnoticed into the kitchen, where, after a quick currency transaction, I persuade the waiter to change my order to a tossed salad with skinless sliced chicken. As agreed, he will deliver this with some mumbled words about a mix-up in the kitchen. At which point I, being the kind and noble gentleman that I am, offer to avoid a waste of food by eating whatever he has brought.

*** Don't make your hotel room a dining room.** Every dieter knows that you eat more when you eat alone. As a result, some diet-conscious travelers refuse to accept the key to the mini-bar upon check-in. It also goes without saying that room service is risky at best. However, if it is too late to go out to eat, room service may be your only option. Then it's time

for Plan B: Beg the delivery person to stay with you while you eat!

*** Exercise your options.** Of course, restrained dining is only half the battle. A weight-conscious traveler also makes sure to get regular doses of aerobic physical activity. Although this can most easily be accomplished by picking hotels that offer on-site exercise facilities, sometimes such options are not available. No sweat. You can easily convert any place of lodging into an edifice of fitness. For example, check into the tallest hotel in town, demand a room on the top floor and carry your bags up the stairs. Before checking out, I used to fill my bags with all the mini shampoos and shower gels I could get my hands on (well, you can't get these things anywhere else, you know). Now that I'm looking for a workout, though, I forego the toiletries in favor of phone books and heavy glass ashtrays. Lugging a suitcase filled with these "souvenirs" down five flights of steps is sure to have you working up a sweat! Then, on your way to the airport, arrange with the cab driver to drop you off at the entrance no earlier than five minutes before your flight (the last of the day) leaves. (Hey, I've seen O.J. Simpson do it a hundred times on TV, and it seems to be working for him.)

Although these techniques do involve some effort and inconvenience, they will work to keep you on track. And they may even serve to convey a lean and efficient image to your clients and supervisors, ultimately fattening your wallet instead of your thighs.

