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Many fitness enthusiasts find it difficult to follow their normal exercise plan while traveling to see family or friends for the winter holidays. Unfamiliar environments, tightly-packed family living conditions, or lack of exercise equipment may hamper even a fitness fanatic's best intentions for staying fit while traveling this holiday season. Alex Vitale is a V Shred Lead Trainer, Certified Personal Trainer through the National Council of Strength and Fitness and a graduate of the Equinox Fitness Training Institute. When planning your December holiday trip, he offers the following tips for putting together an exercise program that travels with you.



"If you've worked hard to establish a good fitness routine, traveling for the holidays doesn't have to mean your healthy habits will be derailed," says Alex. He adds, "You can keep your momentum and endorphins flowing and maintain your fitness level when traveling."

How can this be done?

Stay Hydrated. "Drink a minimum of eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day. Airport food, sitting on a plane, jet lag - all contribute to bloat. The best way to fight it is to stay hydrated," says Alex Vital of V Shred.

Lift from your knees, not your back. Be aware of your posture as you carry your bags. Use good body mechanics when you lift your suitcases up to the check-in counter.

Eat three meals a day. Even though you've left behind your daily routine, try to eat three meals a day, maintain a balanced diet and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. If you're going to eat a high-fat meal, eat a smaller portion, or order an appetizer instead of the main course. Split desserts with a friend.

Rest. If your schedule is shot and you're not sleeping enough at night, take cat naps whenever you get the chance. Stretch in the morning and evening, especially if you've been sitting all day. If you will be drinking alcohol, drink a lot of water between events.

Pack snacks: bananas and apples, yogurt, protein bars. You can make meal replacement shakes in your hotel room. You don't need a blender, just a container with a tight-fitting lid, large enough to shake the contents.

Find out if your gym reciprocates its membership with a gym where you'll be traveling, log onto the International Physical Fitness Association's Web site, or ask at your home health club before you leave town. Alex Vital says that *"Three to five days off from a strength routine can give your muscles a rest. But you wouldn't want to go a week or more without serious exercise and a short respite for your biceps doesn't mean you should ever let your cardio workout go."*



Become a member of an online fitness platform

Vshred.com guides users to the very best program for their body type and fitness goals while giving them some amazing tips they can use that day in a video and then offers them a program that's perfect for them if they don't want to do it themselves.

Take the V Shred Quiz Here.

Pack a jump rope for a go-anywhere aerobic session. Invest in "travel weights" -inflatable weights that can be filled with water or sand when training, folded and stored while on the road.

Plan active recreation during vacations -check out the local golf course, riding stable, and so on.

When sightseeing, forget the tour bus and walk. You'll not only see more, but you'll be sneaking in some extra activity.

Bring portable fitness.

For more fitness options, place in your luggage a Resist-A-Tube or any of the home exercise tubing, a stability ball, jump rope or exercise video. "If you like classes, make your own class in your room," offers Alex Vital

If you work with a personal trainer, ask him or her to design an exercise plan before you leave town. When you're sitting on a plane or in a hotel room, take deep breaths occasionally, tighten your stomach muscles, then relax. Travelers need to periodically flex and stretch the hamstrings and hip flexors, the muscle at the upper part of the leg that connects into the pelvis.

For women who spend the day in high heels, a walk around the room toe-up, heel-down will stretch the calf muscles. Or, do toe raises by putting the heels on the floor and stepping up onto a telephone book. "Men often complain of being cramped when traveling," states Vital. "They need to stretch their lower back and legs." He recommends the cat stretch. Get up on your hands and knees, arch your back for 15 seconds, then release. Repeat.

Alex Vital points out that the more comfortable you are with operating fitness machinery at your home gym, the easier it will be to set up unfamiliar equipment when you're on the road.

Fit flying

Air travel may be fast and convenient, but for many of us, it can be uncomfortable and restrictive due to cramped cabins and sardine-like seating. The following tips can help you make the most of your next airplane trip by helping you stay flexible and fit while you fly.

- **DEEP BREATHING** is an instant-relaxer and can be done anywhere at any time. Try taking 4-5 deep, cleansing breaths several times during your flight.
- **RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS** by bending forward slightly, hands on knees and "rolling" your shoulders in a circular motion 5 or 6 times. Repeat the "roll" in the opposite direction, then finish up by "shrugging" your shoulders up and down 5 times.
- **RELAX YOUR BACK** by reaching overhead, holding elbows, and bending side to side. Repeat 5 times in each direction.
- **STRETCH YOUR LEGS** by alternately lifting your knees toward your chest and bringing your body toward your knee to the count of eight.
- **RELEASE YOUR FEET** by "drawing" the alphabet with one foot then the other.

About Alex Vital:

He is a V Shred Lead Trainer, Certified Personal Trainer through the National Council of Strength and Fitness and a graduate of the Equinox Fitness Training Institute, a global leader in applied exercise science education. Alex's mission as a personal trainer is to, not only help people to get in shape, but also to take more control over their lives and up-level to the best version of themselves possible.