

BE A WORLD CLASS TRAVELLER

STRATEGIES FOR MASTERING THE ART OF TRAVEL

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Over the course of your athletic career, there will be plenty of times when you will be required to travel for competition or training. If you plan ahead and have a good strategy, travelling to an event can be just a minor interruption to your daily routine and training schedule. The last thing you want before a major competition is to suffer from avoidable stress or poor quality sleep and nutrition. As a National Team Rower for the past nine years, I've flown huge distances from Zambia to Vancouver, made it through overnight bus trips across central Mexico and driven the length of entire continents for events. The most successful journeys are always the trips that I went into well rested and organized with a properly fuelled body. Over the years I've implemented helpful strategies that worked for me, which are included below in hopes of making your future travel a breeze!

2 - 3 DAYS BEFORE TRAVEL

Food and Hydration

Focus on eating high quality meals; building your immune system prior to travel is a MUST. Eat foods high in antioxidants (see Figure 1) at each meal for the days leading up to departure and consume healthy fats and yogurt. Also, be sure to pre-hydrate for your journey. You should be hydrated at all times but pay special attention to how much water you are drinking during those few days before you travel.

Sleep

Starting three days before the flight or bus trip, be sure to prioritize quality sleep. Plan to get an extra hour of sleep during the two or three nights before you travel to ensure your body is fully rested. If you are travelling overnight, attaining a solid night's sleep is likely impossible. When you arrive at the event destination you should be feeling as fresh and rested as possible and not worried about catching up on sleep. You should not be trying to catch up on sleep after you have travelled because your event will likely be soon to follow. Plan ahead and "bank" some extra sleep prior to leaving the comforts of your own bed.

Supplements

One of the biggest concerns with travel is getting sick. Before you leave you should give your immune system the best possible chance to fight off any germs you come in contact with. Be sure to take your multivitamins during the days leading up to departure.


Rank	Food item	Serving size	Total antioxidant capacity per serving size
1	Small Red Bean (dried)	Half cup	13,727
2	Wild blueberry	1 cup	13,427
3	Red kidney bean (dried)	Half cup	13,259
4	Pinto bean	Half cup	11,864
5	Blueberry (cultivated)	1 cup	9,019
6	Cranberry	1 cup (whole)	8,983
7	Artichoke (cooked)	1 cup (hearts)	7,904
8	Blackberry	1 cup	7,701
9	Prune	Half cup	7,291
10	Raspberry	1 cup	6,058
11	Strawberry	1 cup	5,938
12	Red Delicious apple	1 whole	5,900

Figure 1 - Foods high in antioxidants ¹



Activity

Set some time aside a few days prior to travelling to do laundry and most of the packing. You don't want to be running around your house the night before leaving, attempting to pack. This will create unnecessary stress that is easily avoided. It is possible to pack $\frac{3}{4}$ of your gear for the trip two days ahead of time. This allows you to prioritize hydration, nutrition, and sleep the day before departure while maintaining training and activity as you normally would.



Tip: Pack an extra shirt for when you arrive at your destination. Pulling on a fresh shirt can make a world of difference! Show off your team's travel gear and look sharp as you never know when you'll run into the media!



National Team Rower Steve van Knotsburg, photo credit Brandon Cali

TRAVEL DAY

Sleep

Try your best to follow your usual sleeping routine by going to bed at your regular time. If you are crossing time zones, switch your watch to the local time of your destination to help your body adjust. Avoid caffeine six to eight hours before you travel to give your body the best chance at sleeping. Pack items that will help maximize sleep, especially if you are travelling overnight:

- neck pillow
- warm sweatshirt
- eye mask
- socks
- earplugs
- blanket
- headphones
- gum

FliteKits™ (Figure 2) are loaded with items (including some of the items mentioned above) that you will find useful for travel. They are available through the Canadian Sport Institute, please contact your Athlete Services Representative.



Figure 2 - FliteKit™

Hydrate

The cabin air on a plane or bus can be extremely dry causing you to arrive in a dehydrated state if you don't drink lots of water. Whether travelling by land or air, pack a few water bottles, and one should include an electrolyte drink or herbal tea. If flying, pack empty water bottles that can be filled once through security. Electrolyte drink powder can be taken in a small re-sealable plastic bag to be added to your bottles. If you are driving or travelling by bus you don't have to worry about security, so just take as many water bottles as you need. Aim to consume about 500mL/hour while travelling. This will also get you out of your seat to use the bathroom, giving you the chance to move around and stretch!

Activity

While awake, you should stand up and stretch or walk to promote blood circulation every 60-90 minutes. This is very important on longer trips because it will help prevent you from feeling stiff and will keep blood from pooling in your lower legs. Compression socks or tights are also helpful on long flights and lengthy drives.

Food

Eat the snacks and meals that you brought at your usual times. If travelling overnight, eat a carbohydrate-rich meal and snack to help make you sleepy. Upon waking up or arriving in the morning, consume a healthy breakfast packed with protein to get your body fueled up for the day. Eating healthy, light meals including fruits, vegetables and lean proteins will prevent you from feeling bloated or lethargic during your trip and upon arrival.

Hygiene

Hand washing is a MUST when travelling. The seat, armrest, TV screen and door handles around you are covered in germs. Wash your hands every chance you get, especially before eating. Bring hand sanitizer to use when washing your hands with soap and water is not an option. Avoid touching your eyes, ears, nose and mouth unless you've just sanitized your hands. Also, moisturize the mucous membranes in your nose with a saline nasal spray (every two hours) to reduce the risk of germs passing through.

UPON ARRIVAL

Activity

After the trip to your event, be sure to get your body moving. After having sat in a seat for hours, you will feel much better after some light activity (walking or jogging or if possible something more specific to your sport). The idea here is to get your body activated and mobile again, ready for your first session.

Sleep

Be sure you have adjusted your watch to local time and stick to your usual times for meals and sleep. If you normally nap at a certain time, stick to that schedule, making sure not to oversleep. Following your daily routine is crucial, so eat your meals at the regular times of your new environment. Your body uses these cues (along with daylight) to regulate its sleep cycles.



Hygiene

You are now at your event where there are hundreds or thousands of other competitors, coaches and staff. This is an easy place to pick up germs and potential varieties your body has not been exposed to (especially at international competitions). Continue to be diligent with hand washing and sanitizing. The most critical times are before and after meals, upon returning to your room and of course when using the bathroom. It is very easy to stay on top of this preventative protocol as the last thing you want to do is compromise your performance with illness.

Food

If you don't have control over the food you eat at the competition site or hotel, select items you are familiar with. Now is not the time to experiment with new foods! Choose healthy options and hit the food groups you normally eat from. If you have crossed time zones, stick to eating meals when everyone else does to help your body acclimatize and transition into the new time zone. When access to food is restricted only to meal times, take a small snack with you from each meal in case you get hungry.



Figure 3 - Snacks

Hydration

There will be many distractions in your new environment. Carry a water bottle with you and continue to hydrate. Something as simple as drinking water can be forgotten when you are nervous before competition or busy with your new schedule.

REFERENCES

1. "20 Common Foods With the Most Antioxidants." WebMD. Ed. Charlotte Grayson Mathis. WebMD, 28 Sept. 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013.