



# Cloud Nine

Expert tips for your healthiest, happiest long-haul yet.

BY BROOKE PORTER KATZ

**W**HILE THE TOP FIRST-CLASS aircraft cabins can make long-hauls an exciting part of travel – we’re looking at you, Etihad First Apartments and Singapore Airlines Suites – on most flights, even the cushiest business-class seat can be a challenge after a few hours. To make your next extended flight more enjoyable, we reached out to a pilot, a nutritionist, a health-retreat honcho, and Virtuoso travel advisors for their tricks to stay healthy and happy in the air.

## Eat Smart

Everyone knows that eating homemade food is healthier than grabbing take-out – and that’s just as true when you’re traveling. That’s why Virtuoso agency owner Barbara Nichuals of Bronxville, New York, packs her own raw almonds, apples, and bananas. “The nuts have protein, and the apples have

a lot of fiber to help keep you full,” she says. “And bananas have two key nutrients – potassium and magnesium – which help prevent cramping, as well as natural muscle relaxants that can promote sleep.”

Nicole Avena, PhD, a visiting professor of health psychology at Princeton University, swears by Munk Pack Protein Cookies, which have no sugar alcohols, gluten, soy, or dairy. “It’s a nutritious alternative to a granola bar,” she says. “I was stuck on a delayed plane with no food recently, and the cookie saved my life!” Whatever you do, try to avoid sugar as much as possible. “The sugar crash will make you crave something later,” Avena says.

Canyon Ranch CEO Susan E. Docherty prefers Lärabars for her weekly flights, favoring the Apple Pie, Cashew Cookie, and Cherry Pie flavors. “They’re a blend of unsweetened fruits, nuts, and spices that don’t cause sugar spikes,” she says. In a





promising trend, many airlines are now including healthier alternatives on their menus, such as snack packs with nuts, fruits, cheese, and whole-grain crackers. And some are going further: Singapore Airlines partnered with Canyon Ranch nutritionists to create its menu of healthy (and delicious) dishes, such as wild-caught-prawn ceviche, roasted beets with burrata, and seared organic chicken with zucchini ribbons and braised tomatoes, on long-haul routes to the U.S.

Since it's harder to digest food when you're sedentary for hours on end, Captain David Morgan, an Air New Zealand chief pilot, eats a small meal before takeoff and avoids anything rich or too heavy. "Once on board, I eat in moderation so I'm not having everything at once," he says.

#### Water, Water, Everywhere

While cabin humidity has improved on new planes, flying is still dehydrating. According to the experts, the only acceptable in-flight drink is H<sub>2</sub>O. "I set a goal of having eight ounces of water for every hour I'm in the air," says San Antonio-based Virtuoso travel advisor Jeff Audley. The real buzzkill: Avoid caffeine and alcohol. "Not only are those drinks stimulants, but they're also diuretics, so you're effectively enhancing dehydration in a very dry environment," says Morgan.

#### Move It

Morgan suggests walking up and down the aisle a few times every two to three hours. In between, practice a few unobtrusive, seat-based exercises to help increase circulation and prevent stiffness and deep-vein thrombosis. (Canyon Ranch even created a video for Singapore Airlines that leads passengers through a variety of exercises.) Examples include raising your shoulders up and down, stretching your torso, raising your knees to your chest, and doing ankle circles. Avena also does seated calf raises to prevent pins and needles.

#### Pick Your Plane

Consider aircraft and ask your travel advisor to search for specific types – especially when it comes to long-hauls. "Newer planes have better cabin environments, including pressurization and humidity control, so you're more likely to feel fresh on arrival," says Audley, who flies on Airbus A380s or Boeing 787 Dreamliners when possible. "They also have better lighting that simulates natural sunlight."

#### Tune Out

Wear comfortable clothing (including warm socks), stow your phone, put on noise-canceling headphones or earplugs and an eye mask, and don't get sucked into the in-flight entertainment. "All of us lead such overstimulated lives, but if you take the stimuli away, close your eyes, and focus your body, you'll get to sleep more quickly," Docherty says. You can also try to re-create your at-home routine. For example, if you drink chamomile tea before bed, pack your own and ask for hot water. Nichuals is a fan of ginger tea: "It's very calming, helps with motion sickness, and is great for digestion," she says.

#### Give Jet Lag a Rest

Take it from Captain Morgan – jet lag is a reality, and while there's no true cure other than acclimating to the new time zone, there are ways to minimize its effects. Upon boarding, both Audley and Docherty set their watches to their arrival time zone. "When you land, even if your body is lagging behind a bit, at least your head is in the right place," Audley says. If it's nighttime in your final destination, close your eyes and try to sleep or relax – even if it means missing a meal. Sleeping on the flight has additional benefits as well: "If you're lethargic when you land, it can cause you to make poor food choices," says Avena. "And that can make you even more tired."

## FIVE PRODUCTS OUR EXPERTS WON'T FLY WITHOUT.

**1.** "I wear **compression socks** on flights longer than five hours. They keep swelling down and help prevent deep-vein thrombosis." – Jeff Audley, Virtuoso travel advisor

**2.** "I bring **Purell wipes** to wipe down the tray, the inside and outside of my computer, and the armrest, so I have a clean place to work and eat." – Susan E. Docherty, Canyon Ranch CEO

**3.** "**Vitafusion's Power C gummies** have more than the recommended daily amount of vitamin C and will help keep up your immunity defense." – Nicole Avena, PhD, nutrition expert



**4.** "Flying is the one time when no one can reach me and I can't do anything but be in the moment. My **journal** is perfect for jotting down thoughts." – Barbara Nichuals, Virtuoso travel agency owner



**5.** "Air New Zealand partnered with Allbirds to create a light and comfortable **eye mask** for business-class passengers, which you can also buy online. It's hollowed out inside, so it doesn't press against your eyes, but still blocks out light." – David Morgan, Air New Zealand chief pilot