

Travel and the life of the elite athlete

The high performance athlete spends a considerable amount of time on the road. With regular short trips to training, journey to compete at home and abroad, and flights away for warm-weather and altitude training trips, the miles quickly add up. For many people travel can be a stressful experience; something that is purely seen as a negative consequence of getting from one place to the next. Travel doesn't have to be stressful though, and when properly planned it can be productive, motivational and even enjoyable.

The risks of long-haul flights: jet-lag, fatigue, stress and infection

There are a number of risks to health and performance associated with travel. Trying to do a hard session straight after getting off a long-haul flight isn't the brightest idea in the world; breathing recirculated cabin air when flying can increase the risk of infection; and rushing around and getting stressed can wear you down. Here is some practical advice to help you get through long journeys:

- Be organised, and pack well in advance
- Get a good night's sleep before you travel
- Complete the Travel Preparation Worksheet to ensure that you have everything covered
- Don't do a heavy session immediately before or immediately after a long flight, as this will increase your injury and infection risks
- Pack plenty of food and snacks, and eat fresh healthy food where possible
- Check out the jet-lag factsheet for advice on coping with jetlag
- Add in additional time for things to go wrong when travelling to the airport
- Drink plenty of liquids, but avoid alcohol, on the plane
- Delays are a common part of travel. Don't let delays stress you out. Use the time to stretch, walk out tired legs, read, stock up on liquids and snacks.



Other essential travel advice

- Email a copy of all important travel documents (passport, visa, driving licence, travel vaccine records, itinerary, travel insurance, important telephone numbers) to yourself so that you can still access this information if all your belongings are stolen.
- Be aware of hand luggage allowances. Liquids greater than 100ml are not allowed in hand luggage and many budget airlines have a strict hand luggage allowance.
- Inform your bank of your planned trips to avoid your credit/debit card being blocked while you're abroad.
- Pack important training or competition kit in your hand luggage so that you can still compete/train if your checked baggage doesn't arrive.
- If you travel frequently duplicating toiletry items such as hairbrush, razor, toothbrush, shampoo can make packing and unpacking easier.
- Roll rather than fold cloths to prevent wrinkles and create more space.
- Label luggage clearly on both inside and outside to avoid confusion if outer label gets ripped off.
- When buying bus/train tickets in a country where you can't speak the language use a phrasebook to write down the destination, ticket type and travel date in the native language before approaching ticket counters.
- If travelling with a group, don't always depend on others. Know the address of your accommodation or where you're supposed to be in case you get detached from the group, or lost. Take responsibility.
- Give yourself some peace of mind. Travel insurance costs less than you think. If you travel a lot consider annual multi-trip insurance. It works out cheaper, and saves you having to worry about insurance every time you travel.
- Always pack toiletries in a plastic bag to prevent spillages in your luggage.
- If you find travel a useless waste of time, try to be productive. Drive with a language CD on; do some study on the plane; take up a needle craft, write your Christmas cards on the train, catch up on sleep.
- Keep any medicines in their original packaging; it will help airport security to identify what you have, and avoid delays.
- Enjoy!!!!!!!!!!



Essential preparation:

- Passport (6 months validity)
- Visa (apply in advance?)
- Money/currency
- Vaccine requirements
- Transport to/from airport
- Accommodation
- Check expected weather
- Inform bank of travels



Packing checklist

This list can be used as a starting point for organising your packing.

- Passport
- Visas
- Other travel documents
- Driving licence
- Travel itinerary
- Passport size photos
- Vaccination certificates
- Travel insurance
- Currency
- Alternative sources of money
- Travelguide/map/phrase book
- Sunglasses
- Phone plus charger
- Laptop plus charger
- Camera plus charger
- Entertainment
- Reading material
- Study material
- Sleep mask and ear plugs
- Travel pillow
- Foam roller/massage balls
- Travel socks
- Travel adaptors
- First aid kit, safety pins
- Hand sanitizer
- Adequate clothing for all weather conditions, including hat/gloves
- Training kit
- Training equipment
- Umbrella
- Suncream
- Toiletries
- Tissues/toilet roll
- Snacks
- Dietary supplements
- Medication and prescription
- Empty water bottle

Useful resources

- www.fco.gov.uk
- www.dh.gov.uk
- www.wunderground.com

Jet-lag and travel nutrition factsheets, and travel preparation worksheet from AltitudeTrainingCamps.com