

Fitness for Travelers

Whether you are going on a once-a-year vacation or travel frequently for business, there is no need to postpone your quest to be fit. There are probably as many ways to exercise on the road as there are modes of travel.

To begin with, there is the obvious, a hotel with an exercise room. Today, more and more hotels offer them at no extra charge. If this is true in your case, you have it made. Most exercise rooms are available from very early in the morning till late at night. Some even operate 24/7.

Or, you could arrange your schedule to spend some time at the pool. Swimming laps is considered to be one of the finest exercises there is, but it can be quite difficult unless you have the pool to yourself. Don't let that deter you. What you may not know is that simply walking in place in the water can provide a good workout. To make it even more challenging, do it in water that is waist level or higher.

But what if your hotel doesn't have these amenities? Or, what if it is too cold to go in the pool? What are your alternatives?

The most familiar ones are taking the stairs – repeatedly - or finding the nearest mall and making a few rounds, but these can be time-consuming. Not to mention that the stairs are boring and the mall walk only works if you don't stop at the Cinnabons kiosk.

If you travel with a computer, you could bring along a DVD of your favorite exercise program to do in your room.

If you don't need to be concerned about luggage weight, you could pack some wrist and ankle weights.

While all of these ideas can work, the easiest solution is probably resistance bands. They are cheap, lightweight and occupy very little space in your luggage. They come in several different strengths, so you can use whichever one matches your fitness level. Most exercises normally performed with weights can be easily modified to use resistance bands.

Want a quick, simple circuit workout using resistance bands that can be done in your hotel room? Try this:

1. **Bicep Curl** - Stand with feet hip-width apart, resistance band under your feet. Grab handles with arms straight, elbows close to your sides, palms facing ahead. Keeping upper arms still, curl your arms up to shoulder level, ending with palms facing shoulders. Return to starting position and repeat.
2. **Tricep Dip** – Sit on the front edge of a chair, knees bent at a 90 degree angle. Hands on sides of chair with fingertips facing out. Slide forward so that buttocks are not on the chair, bend elbows slowly lowering body toward floor. Return to starting position and repeat.

3. **Incline Chest Press** – Place a resistance band below midway point of door jam. Sit on chair facing away from door. Grasp handles with overhand grip, palms down, arms bent at elbows. Push arms out until fully extended. Return to starting position and repeat.
4. **Lat Pull Down** - Place a resistance band over the top of an open door. Grab handles with overhand grip. Sit or kneel on the floor with back straight. Lean slightly away from the door, arms straight up. Bend elbows, squeeze shoulder blades together as you pull your arms down and slightly out. Return to start position and repeat. *Tip: you may need to use your feet to keep the door securely in place.*

Alternative method: Anchor resistance band at top of closed door. Grab handles and sit or kneel on the floor, facing door with back straight. Lean slightly away from the door, arms straight up. Bend elbows, squeeze shoulder blades together as you pull your arms down and slightly out. Return to start position and repeat.

5. **Seated Abdominal Crunch** - Anchor resistance band at top of closed door. Sit on chair facing away from door. Grasp handles with underhand grip, holding firmly at front of shoulders with bent arms. Exhale while crunching torso forward and down, tightening stomach and squeezing ab muscles. Inhale as you return to starting position. Repeat.
6. **Front Raise** - Stand with resistance band under your feet. Grab one handle in right hand in front of thigh. Extend arm straight out to the front until you reach shoulder-level. Return to start position, repeat and switch arms.
7. **Squat** - Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and toes pointed forward. Bend knees into a squat position attempting to get upper thighs parallel to the floor. Emphasize pushing hips back as if you are sitting in a chair this will help you keep your knees above your ankles. Do **NOT** extend knees forward past toes. Return to start position and repeat.
8. **Abductor lifts** - Stand with resistance band under feet, grasping handles at waist level. Extend right leg at to the side as far as you comfortably can. Return to start position, repeat. Switch legs.
9. **Full Range Hamstring Curl** – Put anchor around handles of resistance band and secure near bottom of door. Lie on stomach facing away from door. Secure both ankles in loop of resistance band. Contract legs, pulling ankles toward buttocks. Return to start position, repeat.
10. **Push Ups** - Start on hands and toes, hands placed just slightly wider than your chest. Arms straight, but don't lock the elbows. Back straight, legs extended. Bend elbows and slowly lower entire body to the floor. Chest should touch the floor. Do **NOT** arch back. Return to start position and repeat.

Complete at least one set of 8-12 reps of each exercise.

Naturally, you could substitute your own favorite exercises.

So the next time your regular exercise regimen is interrupted by the prospect of time on the road, don't worry, just smile, and pack those resistance bands.

Additional tips:

1. Try out your planned travel exercise routine at least once before you leave home.

2. Don't forget to pack your workout attire.
3. Remember to drink plenty of fluids.