



## Staying Active on Vacation

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Our Single and On Plan editor talks about getting off her lounge chair and finding ways to move more on vacation.

Since it's almost summertime, I'm dedicating this column to finding ways to stay active on vacation. I *love* vacation time! I'm a firm believer that taking a break from work (and New York City) makes me a better employee. And while I enjoy my job and think my coworkers are great, I appreciate them even more after we've had some time apart.

I've even discovered that taking some time away from the city life makes me grateful for all of the conveniences and luxuries available to me once I return.

My vacation destinations the past few years have involved warm beaches (from New Jersey to the Caribbean), a pool, good food and yummy, icy drinks.

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I have dutifully packed workout clothes (enough to cover three days of exercise), sneakers, my Weight Watchers Week 1 booklet (for referencing all of the food **POINTS**® values) and a few blank QuikTrak System booklets so that I could easily stay on plan and track what I eat.

I do all this knowing that I won't want to track my food on vacation. I blow it off as "too much work" during my "time off." And while I don't want to gain, I want to take a mini-break from counting **POINTS** values. So I tell myself I'll balance out the mudslide at lunch (19 **POINTS** values for 12 ounces!) with a jog on the treadmill the next morning. But I'd have to jog for 160 minutes to burn off those blissful 20 minutes of slushy sipping—and that has never happened.

I decided my next vacation needed to be different. I wanted to go someplace relaxing—but I also wanted plenty of fun options for activity. It turns out that there are resorts all over the world that cater to active travelers. So I flew to Club Med Rio das Pedras, in Mangaratiba, Rio de Janeiro, to experience the many sports and activities offered, while soaking up some South American sun and culture. Here are some of the ways I incorporated activity into my vacation, and you can, too.

### 1. Learn about your hotel's offerings before you go.

Fitness centers are the obvious amenity your hotel will probably offer, but call the concierge desk before you arrive and find out as many details as you can. Do they offer walking tours? Is there a personal trainer available to schedule a workout with? Will there be a lifeguard on duty at the pool if you're cranking out some morning laps? Many all-inclusive resorts have an abundance of activities and classes. (Check out my slideshow to see a few of them.) Get a schedule emailed or faxed to you before you arrive so you can plan other vacation excursions around the classes you'd like to attend.

### 2. Schedule a fitness wake-up call.

Even though it's beautiful, sunny and warm at the locations I visit, I love to sleep in on vacation. I tell myself that it's better for my fair Irish skin if I don't lie in the sun by the pool all day, and I take my time leaving the hotel room. But that's a missed opportunity to start my day off right with some exercise followed by a healthy breakfast. The resort I stayed at offered group fitness classes throughout the day, so that even if you slept through the morning power walk, stretching or weight-training classes, you could hop in the pool at noon for water aerobics, or take an evening class.

When I exercise in the morning, I make healthier choices throughout the day. And on vacation, if the chance for a new, unplanned adventure arises in the afternoon, I don't want to feel guilty for blowing off my workout to take advantage of the "only on vacation" opportunity. So from now on, I'll get exercise in the morning, but seek opportunities for activity throughout the day.

### 3. Rain isn't an excuse to hang out at the bar.

When an overcast vacation day turned into a rainy one, I sauntered up to the

According to the 2007 Expedia.com Vacation Deprivation survey, 51.2 million Americans are vacation deprived, earning (14 days) and taking (11 days) the least amount of vacation days among their international counterparts.

#### Time off is good for you.

A study conducted by researchers at Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield, Wis. Said that women who take vacations frequently are less likely to become tense, depressed or tired and are more satisfied with their marriages.

The study, published in a 2005 issue of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, found that the odds of depression and tension were higher among women who took vacations only once in two years compared with women who took vacations twice or more per year. In addition, the odds of marital satisfaction decreased as the frequency of vacations decreased.



covered poolside bar, ordered a coffee and asked the bartender, Mario, if it was going to get crowded under here now. His reply of “not really” turned out to be true at this Brazilian resort. Despite the rain, everyone jumped in the pool for water aerobics, played soccer, tennis and volleyball on both the indoor and outdoor courts, and danced under the covered poolside dance floor.

I couldn't get over it. Rain during vacation was always my excuse to nap, eat, drink or play games *while* eating and drinking. Even on my previous vacations, when it rained, the bars got crowded with American tourists and we all spent the next few hours socializing, munching and playing our favorite game of, “Oooh, that looks good, what are you drinking?” followed by, “Bartender, I'll take one of those.” So on this trip, I people-watched while finishing my coffee, checked my email and took a nap in my room, then got dressed and took a "body combat" class, followed by a walk around the resort. It was perfect.

#### 4. Refocus and Recharge

Even if a resort vacation isn't in your budget, make sure to make the most of the vacation days your company provides you with—they're paid days off! Taking a mental break from the everyday grind of work, chores, commuting and obligations can help you refocus on your goals, weight-loss related or other.

And if your vacation consists of spending a week in your hometown, put a vacationer's spin on the experience. Turn off your cell phone for some of the days and explore a museum you've never been to, buy a street map and walk around a safe neighborhood that you're not familiar with or schedule some pampering services. Try to use your vacation time for you and it will benefit you in the long run.

#### Share your activity suggestions.

Tell the Community how you [stay active on vacation](#) or send me an [e-mail](#) with your best tips. I'll update this article with my favorites and link to them from the next column. Read tips from some of my previous [Single and On Plan articles](#).

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