

How to Stay Fit on Vacation

A Simple Guide to Maintaining Fitness While You're Sipping Cocktails



A Free Guide by Jason Fitzgerald

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Do not take risks beyond your comfort level, fitness, and level of experience. The advice in this guide is designed for healthy persons over the age of 18.

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Whew, glad that's over. Now let's get on to the fun stuff.

About Me

Hi, I'm Jason Fitzgerald, owner of StrengthRunning.com and proud distance runner. I've been running for nearly 13 years and have tried almost everything: short road races, indoor track, the steeplechase, outdoor track, sprint triathlons, and the marathon.

Since this is a guide for runners going on vacation, I thought it would be only appropriate to show a hilarious picture of me with a cocktail.



A little bit about my history: after running 2:44 in the New York Marathon, I spent six months lying on the couch with a severe ITB injury. Finally, I learned how to beat it and get back into running. I read almost every running book that was out there, went to four physical therapists and countless massage therapists, and did a ton of online research.

Like Neo, I finally saw the Matrix. That's why I started Strength Running in early 2010 - to help other runners avoid the setbacks I experienced and achieve their best.

Since then, Strength Running has grown tremendously. I've appeared on countless blogs and running websites like Marathon Nation, Fitness Magazine, Naturally Engineered, Running and Rambling, Predawn Runner, and Runblogger, among others.

Strength Running is taking over the world! Well not really, but I'm glad to help as many runners as I can.

This guide is only available for those runners on the Strength Running Team, so I assume you know a bit about me. I won't bore you with another biography.

Just know that I am very grateful for you being here. Thanks for being a part of this community! If you have commented on a blog post, sent me an email, bought a training plan, or worked with me as a runner then you should know that you're the reason why I keep doing this.

Introduction to this Guide

I honeymooned for 12 days on the Big Island and Maui in Hawaii. My new wife and I did it all: snorkeling coral reefs, paddle boarding, hiking to 400 foot waterfalls through bamboo forests, hiking over a hardened lava lake, and drinking fruity cocktails at the pool (don't tell my guy friends).



It was a whirlwind of activity and awesomeness. With the six hour time difference and all of the sights and activities we wanted to experience during this once-in-a-lifetime vacation, it was exhausting.

Usually it was difficult to run or fit in a strength workout. After all, when are you supposed to train when you leave your hotel at 3:15am to watch the sunrise from the largest dormant volcano in the world?

Despite all of the sight-seeing, I managed to stay in good shape and ready to start training at a high level for the Philadelphia Marathon. I took a lot of days off and rarely ran more than 5 miles (I usually average about 10), but I still feel *fast*.

As I was running on the Big Island at the start of my honeymoon, I was thinking about how to best stay in shape, spend time with Meaghan, and enjoy my vacation without worrying about running too often. This was a *honeymoon*, after all.

I developed a rough plan for myself that focused on a few key principles that I want to share with you. You can use this guide to help you stay fit on your next vacation without being the annoying fitness freak that alienates your family.

After all, taking a vacation should be relaxing. It should be fun. You should spend time with *your family or friends*, not with the treadmill or your favorite core workout.

If I was running 10 miles every day, I know that Meaghan would be upset. And who wants an angry wife? (I'm learning how to be a great husband already!) Normally she calls me a "core whore" but not during the honeymoon.

Taking a break from hard training can give you the energy you need to come back and train hard, refocus on a new goal, or just give you a serious motivation boost. Now that my honeymoon is over, I'm ready to dominate. I want to crush this marathon. My motivation is at an all-time high and I credit my vacation for giving me time to relax and refocus. Your vacation can do the same for you.

This guide can show you how. I've heard from a lot of runners that vacations throw them off their schedules, they abandon all common sense when it comes to running, and they gain a lot of weight. It doesn't have to be that way! It's not that difficult to maintain your running fitness and limit the weight gain. I'll provide some simple workouts you can do to stay in shape and explain three important principles you need to know to succeed.

There are also a few diet guidelines throughout this guide. I'm not a nutrition expert, but it's a hobby of mine and I can give you some common sense strategies for limiting your weight gain on vacation. If you're really into nutrition and optimizing your diet, I highly recommend:

- [The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals](#) by Michael Pollan
- [In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto](#) by Michael Pollan
- [The Primal Blueprint](#) by Mark Sisson
- [The Paleo Diet for Athletes](#) by Loren Cordain and Joe Friel

What Do You Want to Accomplish?

As you head into your vacation, you first need to ask yourself what you want to accomplish. Everyone has different goals for a break from the daily grind: spending quality time with family or friends, sight-see national parks, lounge on the beach, or visit theme parks are all common reasons for taking a trip.

If you're planning a fitness vacation that focuses on sports and getting in good shape, **stop here**. Close this book, it's not for you. This guide is for people who want to maintain fitness but don't want to do much work.

Sounds too good to be true, but if your vacation is only 1-2 weeks you can definitely maintain your fitness level with a *fraction* of the workload you're currently used to. Now, let's be clear: you won't build any fitness. You're not going to gain endurance or get faster. But you'll be at about the same level when you return home.

Once you figure out why you're on vacation, then that should be your focus. Mercilessly cut out other distractions (like running!) so you can enjoy yourself to the fullest. Whether it's time with family or riding every roller coaster in a theme park, focus on that.

Some people are addicted to email, television, video games, or working out. If that's not your primary goal during your trip, then just stop or dramatically reduce your time spent on it. On your vacation, these are simply distractions.

One of my personal goals during my honeymoon was actually to *not* prioritize running. Even though running is typically one of my top priorities and never gets cut from my day, it was routinely skipped during this vacation.

Since I acknowledged that this was going to happen and planned for it, there was no guilt involved. Let me say that again: if you know something is going to happen, and you planned for it from the beginning, then you won't feel guilty or upset when it eventually happens.

That strategy is powerful for reducing your anxiety on your vacation. Who wants to be anxious on vacation?

Once you know your goals for your trip, then you're ready to start planning your training. Running is probably one of your priorities, although it's likely that it comes after "do nothing at the beach for most of the day" or "ride every roller coaster in the park until I puke."

Before you leave, you should sketch out a rough outline of how you'd like to train. It doesn't have to be anything fancy and should actually be very vague. Since your plans might change, or you may not actually have any set plans yet, you want to have a fluid training plan in place.

Before we get to several sample training plans, the next section discusses the key principles to follow to get the most out of the limited training you'll do while on vacation. **Read on!**

Stay Fit While Barely Exercising: Three Simple Principles

If you're like me, you like to work hard and play hard. But when I'm on vacation and playing hard (hiking lava lakes and/or dominating Pina Coladas) every day, I like to take a break from working hard. You can't go full steam ahead *all* the time.

I want to remind you that if you go on vacation with your significant other or family, your first priority should NOT be running. It should be spending time away from the bustle of everyday life with your loved ones.

With that said, for vacations of 1-2 weeks, you can absolutely maintain your current fitness level by doing next to nothing - just a few targeted workouts per week. And they'll only last a fraction of your typical training time.

Principle 1: Work out in the morning

Some of us are morning runners while others prefer the afternoon or early evening. But on vacation, I *highly* recommend that you run in the morning. It's best to get it out of the way while you're fresh and likely caffeinated.

Afternoons carry with them more obligations, happy hours, tired legs, less motivation, and small adventures that you didn't plan on in the morning (like spending two hours hiking to a 400 foot waterfall, in my case). When we got back to the hotel, it was dark and I was exhausted.

Finding the energy to fit in a short workout is half the battle to staying fit when you're traveling. Do yourself a favor and train in the morning, even if you're normally an afternoon runner. Leaving it to later is asking for a skipped workout.

This principle is even more important for those who might be doing a lot of hiking. Hiking takes a lot of effort and technical trails can leave your legs feeling like rubber. Running afterwards is not recommended - the fatigue can negatively affect your form, making you much more susceptible to an injury.

Principle 2: Never “just” run

It can be easy to roll out of bed in the morning, put on your running shorts, and stumble through an easy 3 miler. But like a workout at home, a vacation workout should include more than just running.

That means a warm-up, your run (including some faster running, if it calls for that), and some core or strength work. But unlike a typical session, you’re only going to **briefly** touch on each aspect of your workout. Many of the core routines I recommend include a [medicine ball](#) or [thera-band](#), but you can do without them for a week or two.

Yes, I’m recommending that you slack off! A shorter warm-up, less total running, a lot less faster running, and only a few strength exercises compared with what you typically do. You have better things to do than work out, so vacation workouts should be just enough to make sure your body remembers what it’s like to get fit.

Principle 3: Focus on the basics

For almost every runner, the basics include running at opposite ends of the spectrum: easy pace and a 95-100% effort. Both types of running will keep your aerobic and neuromuscular systems sharp during your brief down time.

Most runners know how to go for an easy run, but struggle to fit very fast mini-workouts into their training. First things first: fast does not mean hard. A very good fast session might include 4 x 100m strides (barefoot, if it’s appropriate) or 4 x 10 second hill sprints.

Both workouts include less than two minutes of hard running, so you’re not running fast for long. And you’re barely running over 30 seconds for the hill sprints!

Aside from easy running and a few short sprint workouts, it may be appropriate for you to sprinkle in some fast running at race pace. The key here is to do a fraction of what you’d normally do in a typical workout - make it *very* easy. If your normal workout is 6 x 800m at 10k pace for example, just do 2 x 800m. Feel free to take a little more rest, too.

This is what I did during my vacation and I can tell you that it really works. Just miniaturize everything you’d normally do during a workout (you rarely should skip anything outright) and you’ll still stay in shape. You can also skip race-specific paces and stick to easy pace with strides or hill sprints. For a mere 1-2 weeks, it won’t matter much.

My Vacation Training

Let's look at my training from my wedding to the last week of my honeymoon as an example of how you can stay in good shape by doing just a few short workouts a week. My wedding was on Saturday, 7/9 (yes, I ran on my wedding day) and I returned from my Hawaiian honeymoon two weeks later on Saturday, 7/23.

9-Jul	Lunge matrix, leg swings, easy 5 miles. Total workout time: 45 minutes.
10-Jul	OFF
11-Jul	OFF
12-Jul	Lunge matrix, leg swings, 6 miles + squats, planks, pushups, lateral leg raises. Total workout time: 60 minutes
13-Jul	Standard warm-up, 5 miles: two miles at 6:07 and 5:39. Dead lifts + leg swings. Total workout time: 45 minutes
14-Jul	OFF - 3 hour hike into a volcano.
15-Jul	Standard warm-up, 4 miles + 4 BF strides. 2 sets of shortened standard core routine. Total workout time: 50 minutes
16-Jul	Standard warm-up, easy 9 miles + Myrtl routine and 20 body weight squats. Total workout time: 80 minutes
17-Jul	Shortened standard warm-up, 5 miles with mile 3 in 6:03 and 4 x 30 seconds hard. Total workout time: 38 minutes.
18-Jul	OFF - 2.5 hour hike to a waterfall.
19-Jul	Lunge matrix, 4 miles on the treadmill, squats and hamstring curls. Total workout time: 40 minutes.
20-Jul	OFF
21-Jul	OFF
22-Jul	Standard warm-up, 5 miles with 4x1' at 5k pace. Total workout time: 45 minutes.
23-Jul	OFF

The average time I spent working out per day (not including hikes, snorkeling, swimming, or paddle boarding, which were definitely for fun and not fitness) during these 15 days was about 27 minutes per day. Not bad for someone who usually workouts out for at least 90 minutes every day!

You'll see that I focused on a variety of speeds, with an emphasis on easier running and very short fast workouts. Most of the warm-ups and core/strength sessions I did were shortened too.

I hit almost all of the major paces I might do during normal training: all-out sprints, 5k pace, half-marathon and marathon pace, and easy running. Doing a little bit of fast running keeps your metabolism high, helps your body remember what these paces feel like, and maintains fitness better just easy running. And **you only need a little**.

My long run was clearly sacrificed while I was away - and for only two weeks, that's totally fine. Long runs will likely be the hardest workout to fit in during your vacation. It's okay to skip it if you're only vacationing for 1-2 weeks! **Your aerobic fitness (endurance) is the last thing to erode during a period of reduced running**, so just enjoy yourself.

Instead of a real long run, I ran just 9 miles (usually about half the length of my long run). I was actually planning to go longer, but the Hawaiian sun is *strong*. Don't fret about a tiny setback like this - you're not losing much fitness.

I also did a handful of core and strength exercises after most runs, with flexibility being a pre-run ritual for at least 5 minutes.

Just a few minutes of extra exercises makes a world of difference. A little bit goes a long way, so focus on those exercises that either help you the most or are the most effective (only you will know these, it is different for each person). Think: what dynamic stretches feel the best or target an area you know is tight or sore?

Even this snapshot of my training may look a little intense for some, but keep in mind this is just a fraction of what I normally do. Your training will look a lot different, but the principle of doing everything you did before, *but in smaller proportions*, remains the same.

As long as you run a little bit, focus on some race pace work and strides, and do a little bit of core and strength exercises, you won't lose any fitness and will be able to jump back into your training when you get home from vacation.

Example Training Plans

Below are two example plans that I created for two very different runners. You'll see that they include daily activities, so the workouts are put in perspective. Since what you're doing all day will dramatically impact what you're able to do in a workout, it's important to include.

Keep in mind that these are generic and may be very different from what you are doing now or what you'd want to do on your vacation. They're just examples.

The plan below is for a marathoner who is hoping to run a Boston Qualifying time. She wants to run a lot, but can't because she's taking her family to Disney World for a week.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Morning workout:	Morning workout:				Ran after flight:
OFF	Lunge Matrix	Shortened Cannonball	OFF - Stayed late to	Standard W/up with	OFF	Lunge Matrix
[Travel/settling in to	5 miles easy	4 miles with 1 @ HM Pace	watch Disney fireworks	no lunges. Easy 7 for	Up early to travel	6 miles: 2 @ MP
hotel]	DISNEY!	5' of flexibility exercises	TIRED	long run. Pool day!		5' of flexibility work

Our second hypothetical runner is going on a two week road trip across the country to hike and camp. Running isn't a big priority, but he still wants to maintain his fitness because he has a 5k coming up in a month that he wants to run well in.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6 hours of driving!		Up early to run:				
Lunge Matrix	Long hike - no	Cannonball, 5 miles	Squeezed in 3 miles	OFF	Lunge Matrix	OFF
3 miles + 4 strides	running	Only had time for 1 set	with mile 2 @ 10k pace	Not motivated	4 miles + 6 strides	Too much to do!
		of Standard Core	Shortened Myrtl		Did the last 2 BF	
	Cannonball					
Off	4 miles with 4x1'	Easy 3 miles	OFF	OFF	Shorted Standard	OFF
Hung-over & tired	fartlek	3 planks + 3x25 pushups	Visiting family	Long drive, no time	w/up, 6 miles	2 hour hike
	Shorted ITB RR				1 set Standard Core	

These example plans are kind of funny because they're arbitrary and I just made them up. But they do show many of the principles that can help you stay in great shape: a small amount of fast running, a little bit of strength work, and shortened workouts.

I can promise you that this training is *not* ideal and *won't* put you in the best shape of your life. If you're used to more, then after a few weeks your fitness will decrease and you'll race a lot slower. But for a mere 1-2 weeks, you may even come back feeling **better than when you left!**

If your training is similar to one of the two fictional runners above, feel free to use the above plans as a template as you plan your own training. Have an important race coming up and don't want to leave things to yourself? Consider a [coaching option](#).

Where to Run?

One of the biggest difficulties of working out when you're traveling is finding a suitable place to run. Gone are your familiar routes and well-known trails. There's no perfect answer to this dilemma, but my recommendation is to do what I do: explore!

Now is the time to have fun, stop worrying so much about your pace, and explore your surroundings. Run around your resort, taking in all the sights and sounds. Find a great restaurant a few miles down the road that you can bring your friends to for lunch. Scout out the nearby park and find solace on the softer surfaces. Maybe there's a local high school nearby where you can run a few quick 400's.

Below is near where I ran on the Big Island. A black sand beach isn't a bad place to explore, is it?



A lot of times, you may not have an ideal place to run. I've done loops of a very large Holiday Inn parking lot on previous vacations. It was awful, but I wasn't running for a long time and it got the job done. Luckily, a lot of runners have a GPS watch (like a [Garmin Forerunner](#)), so you'll know how far and fast you're running.

Plus, you won't get lost and turn an easy 3 miler into a long run. You probably know that I'm not a big proponent of overusing technology, but in this case it's probably a good idea to have a smart watch.

If you decide not to get a GPS watch, a strategy I've used that works well (even for those with zero sense of direction, like me) is to rely on simple out-and-back runs. Just run down the street for half the time you want to run, and then turn around and come back the same way. It's boring, but you'll never get lost! Plus, you can time how fast you run home and have a nice negative split.

For the well-prepared and more calculating runner, a good idea is to look up where you're staying on Google Maps or Bing. From the satellite map, you can easily find the nearest track, local park, or river (they usually have some type of trail next to it) to run on. A little planning goes a long way.

I was in Denver for a few days and found a great park this way. With well marked cinder paths and lighting along my route (I was running very early in the morning), it was worth the 25 minutes I took to learn about the area.

How to Come Back to Normal Training After Your Vacation

When you come back from your trip and want to resume training, you can usually begin training at the same volume and intensity as before you left. This is only true if you were gone for 1-2 weeks. Your fitness, both aerobically and structurally, doesn't decrease much until after the two week mark.

My recommendation is to pick up right where you left off and repeat the same week that you had before you left. I wouldn't build on that last week, but repeating it ensures that you're not doing too much, too soon. During that first week back from your trip, pay careful attention to your body during your runs – especially your faster workouts and long runs. If anything is too sore, too tight, and much more difficult than usual, then be cautious and back off. It's better to take it easy for a day or two than have to take a week or two off with an injury.

If your vacation was longer than two weeks, you need to ease into your previous training volume. My recommendation is about 10-20% less volume and one less workout than you did the week before you left. Be cautious! Being a successful distance runner is more about patience than aggressively trying to run more and more.

When you do your long run, reduce the mileage by 1-3 miles for that first week back, and then go back up to your previous long run distance during the next week. I'm much more careful with hard workouts: if you didn't do any during your vacation, drop one from your first week back.

And if you only did one hard workout during a typical week, reduce the volume of fast running and slow the pace down slightly. Here's one example: instead of 6x800 at 5k pace, run 5x800 at 8k pace. Don't over think this, but be smart and over-conservative. Patience will pay off in droves when you're healthy and consistently training.

Different Vacations, Different Training Plans

As you think about the type of training you're going to be doing while on vacation, remember that the *type of vacation* will affect how you're able to run and train. Road trips are very different than visits to Disney theme parks.

My vacation to Hawaii included active sports like swimming, hiking, and paddle boarding. But it also included relaxing days where I sat on the beach or the pool (there's a bar near the pool!).

It was easier on these down days to have a more structured workout. When I was doing a lot of driving and sightseeing, I wasn't able to run. Those days usually included a lot of walking and hiking so I typically skipped my run.

Some of the most popular types of vacations include your traditional "beach vacations" where you go to a resort, Cape Cod, the Jersey Shore, or lake house to relax and swim. Theme park vacations (think Disney World) and road trips are also included. These three trips are all very different and present different challenges and opportunities.

Let's dive into specific types of vacations and the specific situations they'll put you in. You can use your activities to complement your workouts and determine when you won't do any training.

Beach Vacations

You're going to be doing a lot of barefoot work on this type of vacation. Whether walking on soft sand, chasing your kids by the water, or trekking your gear to and from the beach in sandals, your lower legs and feet are going to get a great workout.



All this barefoot work is going to fatigue your feet and lower legs, so adjusting your total mileage and intensity is vital or else you're probably going to tweak an achilles tendon or plantar fascia. Nobody wants that.

Like I mentioned before, you should cut your total volume by 50 - 75%. This includes the number of miles you run on particular days, but also the number of days that you run.

You might be tempted to run barefoot on the beach - I don't recommend this. Just walking on soft sand, spending a lot more time in sandals, and going from your beach chair to the water barefoot is enough of a workout for your feet.

If you can't resist, then never run in soft sand - you'll likely strain a muscle. Instead, run on the hard-packed sand by the water. And as with road running, avoid the camber of the sand. Limit your total barefoot running time to just a few minutes at the end of your run.

[Note: camber is the slope of the surface. At the beach, the sand usually slopes down toward the water. If it's too steep, don't run on it.]

Remember that old running rule to introduce new stresses **gradually**? Since you're spending most of your time barefoot or in very minimalist footwear, you're likely throwing this rule out the window! So I'd rather you train accordingly: no barefoot running.

If you want to push it a little - or if you're used to a lot of barefoot work - you can run 1-2 sessions of barefoot strides on the hard packed sand. I would keep the number of strides to only 3-5 and decrease the intensity slightly.

You're also going to be spending a lot of time in the sun. Don't underestimate how fatigued this makes you! If you don't have access to a treadmill inside or if you're not at a hotel with a fitness center, run in the early morning to avoid the heat and stronger afternoon sun.

Vacations closer to the equator, like in Latin or South America, the Caribbean, or Hawaii are going to expose you to a much stronger sun. You'll burn faster and more intensely than you probably think, so wear sunscreen and reapply often. I was amazed that I got a slight sunburn with a short run at 8am in Hawaii. Choose a sunscreen with a SFP of at least 30 and one that's sweat-proof and water-proof.

If you go on a beach vacation and don't do any swimming, you probably should have gone somewhere else. But most likely, you're hitting the waves. Even completely unstructured swimming, like playing in the waves or snorkeling, can help you stay in shape.

While it's not running-specific, just 10-15 minutes of moderate swimming in the ocean is going to help preserve your aerobic capacity when you're not running much.

Besides, the lower temperature of the water makes your body work harder to stay warm. This means you're burning more calories just standing in the ocean. Water is a much better heat conductor than air, so it draws heat away from your body much more effectively. Why do you think Michael Phelps can eat 9,000 calories a day? He spends 5 hours in a pool every day!

Below is your quick cheat sheet for training during a beach vacation:

- Run in the morning! It's probably too hot and sunny in the afternoon. Also, your motivation will be much lower in the afternoon or evening hours.
- If you missed your run in the early morning and spent all day at the beach, skip the run.
- Bring a golf ball or tennis ball to roll your feet if they get sore from the increased barefoot exercise.
- Don't run outside in the sun without sunscreen, especially if you're near the Equator.
- Skip the barefoot running on the beach, but you can do strides on hard sand if you have some barefoot work under your belt.

- Beach vacations almost come with ice cream. Get a small - your scale will thank you later.
- If you have the opportunity to nap, take advantage of it! More rest = more recovery.
- You may not have access to a gym, so replace any strength work with body weight exercises that you can do anywhere.

Theme Park Vacations

If there ever was a vacation that puts you on your feet for hours and hours, it's visiting a theme park. Whether you go to Disney World, Animal Kingdom, Sea World, Universal Studios, or a smaller park, you're sure to get little time off your feet.

Since you're going to be doing a lot of walking and standing in lines, you shouldn't even attempt to run at the end of the day. You're likely going to be sore and have low motivation to run or do any type of core or strength routine.

Instead, get out earlier in the morning while you're fresh. You'll have higher motivation (especially after that cup or two of coffee) and your legs won't be thrashed from 8 hours of standing. Keep your workouts shorter and less intense. With a long day ahead of you, the last thing you want is to be standing on fatigued legs.

Minimizing the Damage

When you are out in the park, alternate your shoes to keep your feet from getting too sore. You can alleviate that bloated, tight, cramped feeling with a simple change of shoes halfway through the day. Running shoes, sandals, and casual shoes like [Sperry's](#) give your feet and lower legs variety and stress different muscles.

At any point in the day, take the opportunity to sit and rest when you can. If you're not going on a ride or watching a show, then take a load off and relax! You've been walking for hours, so take every opportunity to sit down and rest your feet.

If you don't mind looking weird (this is usually not a problem for runners), it's helpful to do 1-2 minutes of simple dynamic stretches a few times throughout the day. They can help you get out the kinks in your legs, loosen up your muscles, and prevent tightness that typically accompanies long bouts of standing.

My two favorites: normal leg swings and lateral leg swings. They are the last two exercises in the [Standard Warm-up](#).

When you're done for the day, use a tennis ball, foam roller, or enlist the help of a loved one to massage any sore spots that you might have. You're on vacation, so treat yourself right. If you're running the next day, your legs will thank you when you wake up with fresh legs.

Diet

When it comes to keeping a healthy diet, theme park food is notoriously bad unless you go to a sit down restaurant and order a simple meal. Avoid the processed, fast food if you can, pack a lunch if that's possible (it's a lot cheaper too, but you may not be able to bring outside food or drink inside the park), or stick with the most simple food items on the menu. Think grilled chicken over fried foods, cream sauces, or pasta dishes which are typically loaded with too many carbs and a lot of fat.

Don't forget to drink a lot of water when you're out there - too many runners skip hydration when they're out with their family on a trip. Your increased activity level throughout the day means you need more water. You don't need to obsess over it, just use the color of your urine to judge your hydration level (it should be pale yellow).

Road trips

The opposite type of vacation from a theme park is a road trip. Sitting, sitting, and more sitting. Keep your road trips to a minimum as a general rule - [all that sitting is killing you](#). It's as unhealthy as smoking and no amount of physical activity counteracts the health detriments of spending long periods of time in a chair.



But hey, what's more fun than going on a thousand-mile sightseeing adventure? I understand the attraction, so let's dig into how to do it safely and still maintain your running fitness.

One of the biggest benefits of a road trip is that you have a lot more flexibility with your schedule. There aren't as many events and things to see – it's just you and the open road. So with that in mind, you may not have to cut your mileage and workouts back as much.

However, I'm going to assume you are a normal person who likes to take a break from running every now and then. Who doesn't? This section will discuss the unique training obstacles and benefits of taking a road trip.

You're going to be sitting for a big part of the day, likely with some stops to sight see. If you plan on running during a stop or after a long period of sitting, it's crucial to do a thorough warm-up to loosen your muscles and warm-up. I recommend cannonball plus the lunge matrix or a very thorough Standard Warm-up. When you're in the car, stretch often!

Like many of the other vacations, it's a good idea to try and run in the morning before you get stiff from sitting all day. Motivation will be higher and you're more likely to get it done.

If you're in the car for a majority of the day, spend a few minutes doing some flexibility exercises at each rest stop to keep your leg muscles feeling loose. My favorites: hurdle drills, leg swings, and different types of lunges. These can all be done standing up which is ideal in a parking lot. You're going to look funny, but your legs will thank you.

One of the clear benefits of running while on a road trip is that you can explore many different areas since you're driving a long distance. You can use a map to locate areas of interest and plan your runs for when you stop there. Prehistoric forests, canyons, and national parks are all great places to run.

Road trips are notorious for making otherwise healthy people eat the worst food. It's difficult to eat right at a highway rest stop or many of the diners on the side of the road.

It's a good idea to stock up on some healthy snacks to keep your hunger at bay in the car: bagged nuts, portable fruit like bananas or apples, and even a jar of peanut butter will work.

When you do go to a fast food restaurant (it's inevitable), stick to the grilled chicken or salad options. The burgers aren't actually that bad for you, besides being very artificial, but the fries and extra sugar in the soft drinks are the worst. I sometimes opt for unsweetened iced tea, just a small fry order, and a grilled chicken sandwich. Disaster averted.

For more training theory, practical running workouts, motivation, and example training plans I highly recommend:

- [Run Faster from the 5k to the Marathon: How to Be Your Own Best Coach](#) by Brad Hudson and Matt Fitzgerald
- [The Daniels Running Formula](#) by Jack Daniels
- www.coachjayjohnson.com – the blog of elite coach Jay Johnson
- [Brain Training for Runners](#) by Matt Fitzgerald

Time to Have Fun...

There's not much of a conclusion I can write for this guide. You're about to take a vacation so I want you to have fun! Your trip isn't about running, your fitness level, or trying to exercise a lot. The important part of any vacation is to spend quality time with your family and friends.

Preserve your sanity, relax, and have fun! Let loose and have that extra drink at the bar when you might normally cut yourself off. Sleep in. Stay up too late. Let your kids have more ice cream than is reasonable. Cherish it.

Any conclusion to a Strength Running guide isn't complete without a sincere **thank you** for being a reader here. YOU are the reason I do this! YOU give me the motivation to continue writing and helping runners achieve their goals.

Strength Running started as a small website helping runners design better training programs. Now it hosts over **twelve times as many readers** as it did during its first month, with over 26,000 readers in the last month! Thank you for helping it become such a great resource for so many runners.

If you enjoyed this guide and found it helpful, then it would be awesome for you to spread the word. Tell your friends about Strength Running if it would help them. Share articles you like on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). With your help, more runners can run easier and faster.

To your running success,

- Jason.