

TAKE THE Stress Out of Holiday Travel

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If you believe the lyrics to "Jingle Bells," people used to laugh all the way during their holiday travels. Today, getting to grandma's house may be a little more complicated, but there are still ways you can make it less stressful.

Try these holiday travel tips and sample meditation to make your trip more enjoyable.

Stress-Free Holiday Traveling

1. **Give yourself plenty of extra time.** Staying calm is easier when you give yourself plenty of lead time. Leave the house a little earlier than usual.
2. **Expect to run into snags.** That extra time will come in handy if you miss a connecting flight. Keep an extra change of clothes with you in case some luggage gets lost.
3. **Pack light. *If possible, ship your gifts directly to the recipients so you have fewer suitcases to wrangle.*** Get in the habit of using a single carry-on bag.
4. **Travel during off-peak hours.** Early mornings, late nights, and the middle of the week may be less crowded. Shorter lines are a great way to reduce stress and weariness.
5. **Start out well rested.** You can manage everything better after a full night's rest. *Try to get at least eight hours of sleep before your trip.* Take an afternoon nap if you've got a late flight ahead.
6. **Bring healthy snacks.** Skip the fast food at the airport. A protein bar or a bag of homemade trail mix with nuts and dry cereal will give you more nutrition and energy.

7. **Limit alcohol and caffeine.** Take it easy with the free cocktails. Flying is dehydrating, so alcohol and caffeine aggravate the effects. They can also make it more difficult to meditate. Drink more water instead.
8. **Use portable meditation props.** Airlines generally disapprove of lighting up incense but will welcome less intrusive props. Bring a string of wooden beads you can use for counting or load a favorite image onto your smart phone or tablet.

Sample Meditation for Holiday Travel

1. **Get into position.** Sit up straight and relax your shoulders. Take deep breaths from your abdomen. *Let distracting thoughts dissolve away as you focus on your breath.*
2. **Think about your destination.** Picture your destination and the loved ones you'll be visiting. Mentally greet them and describe to yourself the good times you'll share. Think about what's for dinner and the gifts you'll exchange.
3. **Expand your thoughts to those around you. Remember that you're surrounded by people making similar plans.** Think about all you have in common. Make believe that you're all sharing a loving and joyous celebration.
4. **Focus on your new holiday mood.** Once you're feeling relaxed and happy, let go of the details and rest your mind in that warm feeling. If other thoughts begin to interfere, retrace your steps to bring that positive sensation back.
5. **Dedicate your good feelings.** Pretend you can wrap up those good feelings in a box and present them to everyone around you. *Pay special attention to those who may be experiencing less fortunate circumstances.*
6. **Gradually return your attention to the present moment.** Bring yourself out of meditation slowly. Take notice of your body and the objects around you while trying to keep a relaxed mind.
7. **Remind yourself of the fellowship you felt while meditating.** There may still be lost luggage or missed connections ahead. When you encounter a hitch in your

plans, think about how good you felt while meditating and use those thoughts to maintain your composure.

Holiday travel can be challenging, but you can make it easier on yourself. Plan ahead and use simple meditations to lift your spirits and enjoy more peace of mind.