

# Plant-Based on the Road How to Eat Well While Traveling

**You've done it!** You've made positive changes in your eating style, and you're feeling great! You've cut out meat and dairy, you're enjoying more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, and it was all easier than you'd thought possible. Now you're about to take it on the road...literally. That family vacation or business trip is looming on the horizon, and you're getting worried...will you be able to stick with your healthy plant-based diet while traveling?

**Hitting the highway:** Road trips can seem a bit daunting at first, especially if you're traveling with young children, or if you cherish fond memories of family meals at the roadside truck stop or fast-food joint when you were a kid. By far and away the easiest thing to do is make a new tradition -- pack a cooler and plan a picnic or two. Roadside rest areas make convenient picnicking spots, and a trunk filled with fresh veggies, fruit, bread (including pita or bagels), fat-free chips, individual servings of soy or rice milk, juice and packaged breakfast cereals makes assembling a healthy and satisfying breakfast or lunch *al fresco* a snap.

The time will come, however, when you'll need or want to stop at a restaurant. Perhaps you forgot the cooler on the front porch, or bad weather makes picnicking less than appealing. Don't give up and head for the golden arches! Many roadside restaurants, even fast food restaurants, offer vegetarian options these days. How about a nice sandwich? Pull into a sandwich restaurant or deli (e.g. Subway, Jersey Mike's, Miami Subs, Togo's) and order yours with all the veggies and seasonings they can pile on it...get the whole wheat bread, if it's on offer, and hold the cheese and mayo. Perhaps Mexican is more your thing? Pop into a Taco Bell or Taco Time and order a bean burrito or a tostada (hold the cheese) or a side of beans and rice. Anyone for pizza? Just about any pizza parlor will make you a pie (or a portion of a pie) without the cheese...load it up with the vegetable pie or a portion of a pie without

cheese. Load it up with the veggie toppings you find most appealing (tomatoes, onions, peppers, olives, mushrooms, artichoke hearts, etc.) and you'll never miss the greasy stuff.

Believe it or not, even "family restaurants" (e.g. Denny's, Shoney's, Perkins, IHOP), cafeterias (e.g., Morrison's) and steak houses (e.g. Sizzler, Golden Corral, Western Sizzlin') usually offer options for the hungry vegetarian. At the very least, you can get a baked potato and a salad, or choose from a variety of fresh and cooked vegetables. Steak houses often have huge buffet bars, featuring a tempting array of vegetables, fruits, baked potatoes and sweet potatoes, breads and desserts. Some "family restaurants" even offer veggie burgers on their menus! There's no need to go hungry.

So what if the only restaurant on the horizon is a burger place? What if the kids are whining, you're all hungry, and you just can't drive another minute without a break? If you're lucky, it will be one of the places that has added a veggie burger to the menu. If not, your best bet is to pick the sandwich with the most veggies on it and order it without the meat patty and cheese. You may get some strange looks, but do you really care? At least you'll get a halfway decent sandwich...and on the way out you can fill out one of those comment cards and drop it in the box or hand it to a counter person. Managers really do read those things...perhaps the restaurant will have a surprise for you the next time you pass that way!

**Taking to the air:** Most people don't realize that you can special order your meals on an airplane. All you need to do is call the airline (or have your travel agent call) at least 24 hours in advance. Some airlines even give you a choice...would you like vegetarian, vegan, Hindu, macrobiotic or raw meals? Just ask! And believe it or not, while most people (even vegetarians) like to complain about airline food, the plant-based meals you get on an airplane are considerably more appealing than the meat-based meals the other passengers are eating.

Imagine dining on fruit, rice pilaf or couscous while your seatmate is stuck with mystery meat and a stale white roll...you get the picture.

That said, it's wise to be prepared with your own food, especially if you're not flying non-stop. If you miss a connection or get bumped, you may discover your special meal is on its way to Tokyo while you're cooling your heels in Chicago. And let's face it...sometimes the airline goofs up, and your meal order simply doesn't make it on board. If you pack some fruit, whole grain crackers or rice cakes, and perhaps a sandwich or instant soup cup (ask the flight attendant for some hot water) in your carry-on, you won't go hungry -- and you can take comfort in the fact that you're still eating better than the majority of your fellow travelers! Just remember...don't pack apples and bananas in the same bag, or you will end up with a carry-on full of banana mush! (apples will force-ripen bananas in a hurry).

**At your destination:** When you arrive in your hotel or motel room, before you unpack your suitcase or count the baby soaps in the bathroom, pull out the phone book. Turn to the back of the "Restaurants" section in the Yellow Pages, where the local restaurants are often listed by categories. If you find a listing for "vegetarian," you're in luck. If not, don't despair...turn to the ethnic food section instead. Many cultures are very accommodating to a plant-based diet...much more so than the standard American restaurant. Some to try include Ethiopian (because of their religion, many Ethiopians avoid meat, dairy and eggs for much of the year; and creative lentil-based dishes are standards on Ethiopian menus), Mexican (ask about lard in the beans and flour tortillas and chicken in the rice, especially if the restaurant bills itself as "traditional Mexican"),

## Tips for Healthy Traveling

The Power To Make A  
Difference is On Your Plate

## TRAVELING LIGHT

Italian (pasta marinara or primavera is standard on most Italian menus...some also offer pasta peperonata, or will make you pasta puttanesca without the anchovies), Middle Eastern (falafel, tabbouli, hummus, baba ganouj and rice pilaf are menu standards) and Southeast Asian (Vietnamese or Thai...be sure to ask if they can leave out the fish sauce commonly used as a spice in those countries). If worst comes to worst, you can always fall back on the fast food or "family restaurant" options mentioned earlier, but do try to find something special...you're worth it, right?

It's also worth trying to locate a supermarket or natural foods store nearby...especially if you forgot that cooler! Sometimes after a day of sightseeing, you just don't feel like going out, and being able to assemble a simple dinner in your room is a nice option. If this sounds like you, it's also worth packing a hot plate so you can heat up soup or chili. If your hotel offers room service, that's an option too...most room service menus are a bit sparse in the vegetarian department, but it's worth a call. Often they'll make up something special just for you!

All this may seem awkward at first...if you're like most people, you're used to just stopping "wherever" when you feel hungry on the road, and eating "whatever" happens to be on the menu. Asking about ingredients or trying a different cultural cuisine may make you nervous. Just remember, as with other awkward aspects of changing your lifestyle, this too will pass. Before you know it, you'll be a seasoned and healthy veggie traveler!

© 2000 by *EarthSave International*.

### Join EarthSave to Stay Informed and to Educate Others

EarthSave's greatly needed programs are actively helping people reclaim their health and restore our planet. By joining EarthSave, you learn how your food choices protect and improve your quality of life, and you become an active player in healing the environment.

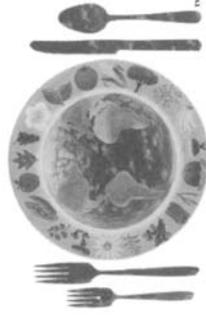
Local EarthSave chapters throughout the world help further these goals by teaching people in their communities about healthy, compassionate and sustainable food choices.

For information on membership, on the chapter nearest you or for information on starting a chapter, call us at 1-800-362-3648 or email [information@earthsave.org](mailto:information@earthsave.org).

## Taking Your Plant-Based Diet on the Road

Protect yourself from chronic diseases.

Plant foods supply the nutrients necessary to promote good health



## EarthSave®

Healthy People Healthy Planet™

EarthSave International's  
Educational Series

EarthSave promotes food choices that are healthy for people and for the planet. We educate, inspire and empower people to shift toward a plant-based diet, and to take compassionate action for all life on Earth.

## EarthSave®

Healthy People Healthy Planet™

EarthSave International

PO Box 96

New York, NY 10108

800-362-3648/718-459-7503

Email: [information@earthsave.org](mailto:information@earthsave.org)

[www.earthsave.org](http://www.earthsave.org)