

Senior Travel Tips: 5 Ways to Feel Comfortable on a Long-Haul Flight

By Slobodanka Graham • Travel

If you're planning an overseas holiday, you might not be looking forward to the long-haul flight. I recently flew 14 hours non-stop from Sydney to Johannesburg (and back again). These are my tips to travel comfortably in economy:

Stay Slim

You might remember air travel in the 1970s: it was elegant, novel – and you were much younger! I never worried about swollen ankles, but now that I'm in my 60s, I have noticed a puffiness after long-haul flights.

With not much legroom to stretch out and few opportunities to get up, there is a chance your legs might swell up. For the past few years, I've worn Scholl's support hose to prevent any swelling.

These natural-colored stockings don't look any different from other pantyhose, though in the early days they were ribbed and funny colored.

I wear a half-hose with ordinary socks over them so I can peel off either layer as I need to. They work great: after both recent long-haul trips, I didn't have any swelling to my ankles or feet.

Keep Cool

As well as being an extreme light traveller, I never drink alcohol on a plane: it's too dehydrating. Instead, I drink plenty of water. On this recent flight, the stewards refilled our water bottles all the time, which was most welcome.

Don't you hate it when customs makes you throw away the water bottle you've just bought? To combat that, I travel with a roll up water bottle. I empty it before customs and fill it up again on the other side so that I have plenty of water going on board the plane.

Enjoy the Quiet

I used to measure flights by the number of movies I watched: "This is a five-movie flight," I'd tell my friends.

These days I prefer *not* to watch movies, giving my eyes a rest from the dry airline atmosphere. Instead, I wear my wireless headphones – did you know you can hook up your own headphones to the airline headphones’ jack? – and drift off listening to audiobooks.

Cocoon Yourself

The minute I get on board the plane, I put on a face mask. When I wear a mask, I feel cocooned from the privations of long-haul flying. I noticed on this recent trip that the skin under my mask was well hydrated. The skin on my face that was exposed to the cabin air dried out far quicker.

Wearing a mask, plugging in good headphones, and using a neck cushion, which I hadn’t used since the airlines introduced headrest cushions, creates a barrier between me and what’s happening around me in the cabin. I withdraw into my own little world.

Go Incognito

In addition to the face mask, I wore the airline eyepatch on this trip. This tool was terrific as it cut out the light and made me feel even more cocooned and private. I topped all of this off – literally – with my hoodie.

Imagine me: face mask, eyepatch, headphones and hoodie – tucked into the headrest. No one was going to disturb me – let alone recognize me!

So, what was the outcome? On the way to South Africa, I managed a good few hours of sleep, which meant I started my holiday feeling fresh. On the way back, I dozed and relaxed – somehow sleep evaded me, but I was as comfortable as a bug in a rug!