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# Food, gas, lodging: For vegans, it's usually two out of three

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

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Last fall, my friend Jeanette walked the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage route across northwestern Spain. Her preparation was meticulous. She hiked hundreds of miles around Washington, getting ready for the 500-mile trek. She tested countless pairs of shoes for comfort and foraged for lightweight gear. Understanding that she'd have to carry everything, she obsessively calculated the weight of her backpack. Along with clothing, toiletries and snacks, she knew she'd have an additional four pounds of food and tools for meal preparation. After all, she was heading to a country that loves meat, and she intended to maintain a vegan diet.

"That was the hardest part of the trip," Jeanette told me. "I had to do a lot of mental preparation, knowing that I'd have to stop at the store every day and get chickpeas and fresh vegetables."

Jeanette packed a titanium bowl, Swiss Army knife and spork, which became her lifelines, along with packages of vegan energy bars and plant-based protein powder that she shipped ahead of time to various stops along her route. In the morning, she ate fresh fruit and instant oatmeal with the powder, chia seeds and ground flax. Given her daily distances, she needed to replenish calories every couple of hours. She created a homemade goo of peanut butter, powdered sweet potato and water, which she combined in a squeeze bottle from REI.

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# For vegan travelers, provisions are paramount

## VEGAN FROM F1

For lunch and dinner, she'd buy pre-cooked rice or quinoa in pop-top bowls and toss in fresh vegetables and lentils.

Still, she struggled. Not only did she find that "vegetarian" salads at restaurants were topped with tuna, but she also hadn't planned for Spain's traditional siesta — which meant all the grocery stores were closed just when she wanted to shop for dinner.

Toward the end of Jeanette's six-week journey, blisters sidelined her for a few days, and she felt defeated. The daily stress of finding vegan provisions caught up with her. She threw in the towel.

"I kind of gave up and ordered a Spanish tortilla," she said, referring to a popular dish with eggs, potatoes and onions. The experience left her fed up with what she calls vegan-unfriendly countries. In the future, she said, "I'm going to do only vacation destinations where they cater to vegans."

These days, animal-free eating isn't the obscure diet it once was. There are vocal vegan celebrities and athletes, vegan magazines, and vegan movements, such as Veganuary (which urges people each January to try going vegan) and VB6, author and columnist Mark Bittman's cleverly named plan for folks to eat vegan before 6 p.m. every day. A German vegan grocery store chain, Veganz, has expanded to Austria and the Czech Republic and is expected to open a location in Portland, Ore., this year.

Although veganism has moved into the mainstream in recent years, if you stray far from major cities — even in the United States — you may find your options limited to a bowl of iceberg lettuce with a side of fries. Jeanette's frustration is not uncommon.

Michelle McMacken, an internal medicine physician in New York whose practice focuses on plant-based nutrition, said that although it's helpful that veganism isn't met with the same confusion it once was, it's still important to consider your meals when preparing for a trip.

With a few exceptions, my kitchen has been vegan for a year.

The transition was a cinch once I discovered dairy-free ice cream and Miyoko's cultured nut cheeses, which satisfy my cravings at home. When I'm on the road reporting, I relax my rules a bit. But after going on countless long drives and packing food of my own, I've learned how to take a vegan road trip and what travels well.

This winter, I stocked up at Trader Joe's for a car trip, with single-serving bags of trail mix, popcorn and chocolate-covered almonds, and I packed jars of nuts, seeds and dried fruit. Spreading peanut butter over an apple, pita bread or a rice cake is a no-brainer for a vegan snack. (Justin's individual nut-butter packets are ideal if you want to skip the jar.) I also make a mixture of oatmeal, dried fruit, nuts, pumpkin seeds and cinnamon and can usually find hot-water dispensers at hotels. Some folks

travel with a small electric kettle or hot plate, or they bring a NutriBullet compact blender for smoothies.

"Sometimes people will plan for the destination but forget to plan for the travel time," McMacken said. "Airports and Amtrak are getting more friendly, but I always have nuts and dried fruit or seeds in my bag." McMacken packs a variety of seeds and nuts so she doesn't tire of any one, often sprinkling hemp hearts on restaurant salads for an extra nutritional punch. For additional sources of nutrients, she makes her own dry-roasted chickpeas, travel bars and trail mix.

In general, McMacken said, she has been delighted to find vegan options in all corners of the globe. "Most cities now have at least one vegan restaurant, but I'm amazed by other restaurants that have vegan options or will prepare something if you call ahead of time."

Bittman, who is also chief innovation officer at Purple Carrot, a vegan meal-delivery company, said that in Spain — where it seemed as if he was being offered ham every few minutes — he walked around with two shopping bags full of fruits and vegetables.

"If you're going to be strict, it's definitely challenging — not finding vegetables, but getting full," he said. "I'd go to restaurants and get a bowl of soup, salad and a roll. Vegans will say the problem with restaurants is that they end up having a chopped salad every day. Without cooking, being vegan in some places is very limiting."

Carolyn Scott-Hamilton, a vegan cookbook author whose website, the Healthy Voyager, offers recipes and travel advice, said she uses apps and advice from locals to find vegan meals overseas. Among her favorites: Rosebud in

Athens, Kopps in Berlin, Smith & Daughters in Melbourne and Gentle Gourmet in Paris.

"There's still so many people who don't want to leave home because they're worried about being able to find vegan food," she said. "I plan around some restaurants, but I also wing it. Get out there and explore. If you're afraid, pack food and don't worry about it."

McMacken stressed that it's not the end of the world if you skimp on nutrients for a short time. "The human body is remarkably resilient in the short term," she said. "Even a few days without produce won't kill us — a lot of people live months like that. Always have backup snacks, but focus on the enjoyment of the trip."

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## How to stay vegan while traveling abroad

**1. Plan ahead.** Do your research before hunger pangs hit. The website HappyCow is an excellent resource for vegan and vegetarian dining spots and health-food stores, as are vegan blogs if you're headed to a progressive city.

**2. Get your snack on.** Nuts, seeds, dried and fresh fruit, kale chips and some energy bars (watch out for added sugar) are excellent sources of nutrition, and they travel well.

**3. Go marketing.** Unless you're trekking across desolate plains or deserts, you're likely to find grocery stores. Even better: a co-op, farmers market or health-food shop. Stock up on staples such as fruit, veggies, hummus and guacamole.

**4. Cook.** Consider Airbnb or hotels with a kitchenette or microwave so you can reheat leftovers, whip up a simple dish or heat single-serving frozen meals such as burritos, vegetable potpie or veggie burgers.

**5. Keep cool.** If you're driving, pack a cooler to chill perishables and leftovers. If you're flying, book a room with a fridge or use the minibar.

**6. Just add water.** Among the easiest-traveling foods are those that simply need rehydrating: single-serving soup cups, oatmeal, plant-based protein powders and veggie drink mixes. Water itself shouldn't be an afterthought — drink plenty, no matter how you travel.

**7. Go ethnic.** Often, you'll find vegan options at Mexican, Indian, Asian and Middle Eastern restaurants. You'll also find a vegetarian or vegan national dish in most countries.



RACHEL MAVES FOR THE WASHINGTON POST