

Fasting and Travel

It is a common belief that people who travel are somehow exempt from fasting or that their fasting rules are relaxed. So, let us explore this issue a little further. In the past, people often travelled by foot, walking twenty or more miles each day and carrying their bags. They sometimes had to endure rain, sometimes snow, and sometimes heat. They even had to camp and sleep in the field or in the forest. Finally, they were unable to cook for themselves during their journey and had to be satisfied with whatever they could find along the way. Because of these hardships, fasting rules for travelers were relaxed—they needed more energy and could not be picky about their food. Nowadays, travel is quite a bit different. We no longer walk very much, but usually travel in a comfortable, air-conditioned car, or in an airplane with reclining seats, with an iPod, iPad, or some other device which keeps us entertained. We do not walk for hours, instead we sit for hours, and we complain a lot. When it is time to make a stop, we no longer camp under an open sky or sleep on the hard, cold ground. Instead, we sleep in a hotel room with a comfortable bed, a shower, and a television set. And then we complain some more. This is not to say that travelling cannot be exhausting or uncomfortable. But it simply is not as exhausting or uncomfortable as it used to be. One thing, however, remains pretty much the same—we cannot cook for ourselves very well while we travel and must be satisfied with the food that we can find along the way. In many cases, the solution is very simple: if we are taking a two-hour-long flight, we can eat a good meal before we leave home in order to avoid having to look for food at an airport. If we have a long flight or a long drive, we can try to pack Lenten food for the trip. If we end up needing to buy food, we should choose the healthiest, most Lenten option we can reasonably find. French-fries, while Lenten, are not necessarily the healthiest option. Often, we can find a salad, fruit, or a fish sandwich, or good bread with some vegetables. Whatever we choose may have dairy in the salad dressing or mayonnaise in the fish—and there is not much we can do about it, although, particularly here on the west coast of America, most reputable establishments offer vegan options. Let us thank God, enjoy our food, and continue with a stricter fast when the trip is over. But there is certainly no good reason to seek out opportunities to break the fast just because we find ourselves sitting at an airport waiting for an airplane. A relaxed fasting rule during travel is not a dispensation, it is an accommodation.