

Airplane Yoga by Ann Pizer

It's no secret that travel is stressful and airplane seats are tiny. Though you can't do much when you're squashed into the middle seat, there are a few little stretches that can help relieve your cramped muscles and reduce your stress without getting into your neighbour's personal space.

1. Neck Rolls



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After you get settled into your seat, take a few deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. Then start with a simple neck roll. These are great because so much tension is stored in the neck and you don't need much room to do them. First let your chin drop towards your chest. Try to relax and let the head hang heavy. Begin to circle your head to the right side, then back, then to the left side. Continue slowly circling for five rotations and then switch directions and circle the other way five times.

2. Eagle Arms



© Barry Stone

Next, you can do the arm twist from eagle pose. This gives you a nice stretch across your upper back and shoulders. Bring your arms out in front of you and wrap the right upper arm underneath the left one. Bring your palms to touch and raise the upper arms while lowering your shoulders. Take five breaths before releasing and wrapping the left arm under the right.

3. Shoulder Stretch



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Next, scoot up to the edge of your seat. Clasp your hands behind your back and straighten your arms as much as you can behind you. You can also let your head drop forward. This stretches the front of the shoulders.

4. Cow Pose



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From here, take yourself into to a little cat-cow stretch. First, the cow. On an inhale, arch the back and look up toward the ceiling.

5. Cat Pose



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On the exhale, round the spine and let your head drop forward. Repeat the cat-cow movements on each inhale and exhale for five breaths. Now relax and enjoy the rest of your flight. If you are feeling tense, try practicing some breathing exercises to calm the central nervous system. Order some water or juice from the drinks cart to keep yourself hydrated and repeat your stretches as necessary.

6. Standing Forward Bend



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Now for some stretches you can do while waiting in the terminal for your connecting flight. Obviously you can do just about any yoga position you chose now that you have room to stand up, but here are a few recommendations for poses that can be done discretely but give you great bang for your buck. Start with a standing forward bend with hands interlaced behind your back to maximize your shoulder stretch.

7. Standing Pelvic Tilts



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Find yourself a wall for this standing version of a pelvic tilts. These will give your low back some relief from carrying all that luggage.

8. Seated Spinal Twist



© Barry Stone

Come to sit on the floor for ardha matsyendrasana, a twist that will help unwind the spine.

9. Downward Facing Dog



© Barry Stone

If you're feeling bold, you can never go wrong with the full body stretch of a downward facing dog.

10. Legs Up the Wall - Viparita Karani



© Barry Stone

If your flight is delayed or you are feeling extra tired and stressed, throw caution to the wind and indulge in legs up the wall. This pose is so relaxing and is great for reducing swelling in the legs, which can be a problem during air travel. Slip a lavender-scented eye pillow into your carry-on and you can almost forget you're in a crowded airport. Bon voyage