



Gluten and Allergy Free Travel Tips

USA Today Travel Section



Frequent flier Henry DeLozier learns how to say he cannot eat shellfish in the local language before he heads abroad. DeLozier, a consultant in Phoenix who is allergic to shellfish, also follows a handful of self-imposed rules. “Eat only what you recognize as safe, and, if you have doubt, don’t eat it,” he says. “Carry carrots and celery from home as a backup.”

Studies show that about 78 million Americans have food allergies or food intolerance, or are following gluten-free diets, according to Kim Koeller, the founder of health education company Gluten Free Passport. Many of them do as DeLozier does: They use strategies to prevent an allergic reaction from

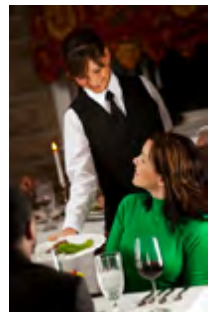
spoilng a business trip.

Frequent business traveler Ryan Endress of Chicago, for instance, asks an employee at his hotel in a foreign country to write on paper in the local language that he cannot eat shellfish. He can then present it at a restaurant. Endress, a marketing director in the biotech industry, says he also questions food servers. “I’ve learned that just because it’s not listed on the menu doesn’t mean it’s not in the food,” he says.

Koeller, co-author of *Let’s Eat Out Around the World Gluten Free and Allergy Free*, says that according to the federal government, eight foods — milk, soybeans, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish — account for more than 90% of allergic reactions. About 30 million Americans are sensitive to, or intolerant of, gluten, a protein in wheat, rye and barley.

Education, preparation and communication are the keys to avoiding these allergens and traveling safely, Koeller says.

- 1. Education.** Before traveling, she says, learn how dishes at your destination are often prepared, what ingredients are used and where hidden allergens may be found. Research common cooking techniques — whether flour dusting and dedicated fryers are used — and the type of oil usually used. Determine what food-preparation modifications “can be made to easily accommodate your requirements,” Koeller says. Learn where allergens may be hidden. For example, soy sauce usually contains wheat and gluten, and artificial mashed potatoes may contain peanuts.
- 2. Preparation.** Order special airline meals in advance, and bring snacks suitable for your diet and medications for a food-related emergency. Reconfirm special meals before the day of departure. Airlines use the codes GFML for gluten-free meals, NLML for non-lactose meals and PFML for peanut-free meals. Many airports worldwide now offer healthy, gluten- and allergy-friendly snacks. Make sure your medications are always with you — not stored in an aircraft’s overhead bin.
- 3. Communication.** Tell airlines, restaurants and hotels of your special dietary requirements. Inform the restaurant wait staff and, if possible, the chef of concerns and allergies. “Then, instead of simply asking, ‘Is this dish free of gluten, dairy, peanut or whatever allergen?’ you need to ask questions based on ingredients and food preparation in restaurant language terms,” Koeller says.



If you are gluten-free, sample questions could be: Are hamburgers and the flourless chocolate cake made with bread crumbs? Is the chicken flour-dusted? Is the sauce made from a roux that includes wheat flour? Are french fries fried in the same oil as breaded items such as chicken fingers?

If you have a milk or dairy allergy, sample questions may include: Does the marinara sauce have Parmesan cheese? Is the steak finished off with butter? Do you add milk to your omelets? Can oil be used instead of butter to sauté green beans?

Gluten-free and allergy-free translation cards are available in various languages at websites, including www.GlutenFreePassport.com. Other translation tools include mobile apps for Apple and Android and eBooks.

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