

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THEY'VE GOT YOUR BACK



BackJoy's SitSmart Posture Plus Seat

Straighten up and fly right with these devices that support better posture on cramped airplane seats

BY KAREN CAMPBELL | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As airlines continue to make economy seats smaller and smaller, with less leg room in between rows, flying has become a real pain – literally. After hours of sitting squished into a tiny space, backs slumped and shoulders curled inward to avoid offensive-elbow syndrome, many travelers emerge from their flights in need of chiropractic adjustment, or at least a long hot bath and some ibuprofen. Sometimes, we just need a little support, and a number of easily portable products can help counteract the dastardly curved bucket seat of most airplanes, which force the back into an unhealthy C-curve with the head pitched forward. (All products transition easily to regular chairs – i.e., waiting areas – as

well!) Basic lumbar cushions behind the back help nudge the pelvis into the slight forward tilt that stacks the vertebrae in the healthy S-curve alignment. But one clever new product called BetterBack (getbetterback.com, \$59) is even more portable. It's a nifty back pad connected to straps that go around the knees to not only provide lumbar support but also stabilize the pelvis. It's surprisingly comfortable and the edges zip into a handy pouch for traveling. Cambridge physical therapist Melissa Buffer-Trenouth said one of the patients in her practice brought it in to show the clinicians. "We all kind of liked it for different reasons," she says. "I found that it does force you to have good sitting posture but you're able to feel the muscles release. It's really kind of cool."

Another approach works from the bottom up, from the tried-and-true sloped coccyx cushion (like Clever Yellow's Driving Comfort Cushion, which comes with its own backpack, www.cleveryellow.com, \$59) to more innovative designs like BackJoy's lightweight molded SitSmart (www.backjoy.com, \$39.99), which cups the gluteus muscles to support the back in a natural posture.

Cathryn Jakobson Ramin, author of "Crooked: Outwitting the Back Pain Industry and Getting on the Road to Recovery," takes one with her any time she expects to sit for long in a bad chair. "It works great for me," she attests. "It basically it raises your butt slightly above your thighs and means your pelvis doesn't slump backwards, and it puts less strain on your lower back." She says her bright orange SitSmart attracts lots of attention in airports.

Taking it a step further, the inflatable wobble seat cushion, like Bintiva's Air Balance Disc (bintiva.com, \$14.99) not only enables better posture, it actually encourages subtle movements as you sit, keeping you loose and limber, rather than locked into an uncomfortable position. You can actually burn calories working on muscle tone and core stability while you wait for the snack cart to come around.

Lots of choices. There's really no reason not to be sitting pretty – and comfortable – on your next flight.

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HERE

HOW TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL PIE DAY

Sample more than 50 different pies at restaurants and inns throughout Rockland and Camden, Maine, during the 14th annual Pies on Parade Pie Tour, Jan. 28, 1-4 p.m. Participants can savor everything from seafood pie, gourmet pizza pies, and savory galettes to whoopie pies. You will also find traditional fruit pies, shepherd's pie, egg pies and, for the health-conscious, sugar-free pies. New this year, Camden will host a scavenger hunt/trivia contest. Stay at one of four participating Rockland or Camden inns and get a spe-



cial two-night package that includes guaranteed tickets, wine and pie pairings, access to a silent auction, and two pies. Event-only tickets are \$30 for adults, \$15 for ages 10 and under; two-night packages start at \$380. Proceeds go to a local food bank (in previous years, the event has generated enough money to feed



100 Midcoast Maine families for a full year). 207-596-6611, www.piesonparade.com.

THERE

EXPLORE SPAIN'S QUIET COAST

Take a new 10-day self-guided walking tour along the coast of northwest Spain with On Foot Holidays. The UK-based company offers a new Camino dos Faros (Lighthouse Way) tour that lets travelers walk at their own pace while immersing themselves in the culture and cuisine of Galicia, one of the quieter, less-trodden areas of Spain. This stunning 124-mile route takes walkers by grand cliffs, sandy beaches, and expansive capes punctuated by lighthouses. Enjoy fresh seafood in little fishing villages

and meet locals along the way. Walk approximately 9 to 16 miles per day. The company can arrange short-cuts using local taxi drivers, and drop-off and pickup points for walkers who prefer shorter days or more beach time. Or do a shorter 5- or 7-day trip starting at Camarinas or Laxe, respectively, and finishing at Cape Finisterre

lighthouse, the ending point for the famous Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. Tours start April 2018. Rates start at [£830] per person based on double occupancy, including 10 nights bed and breakfast, all luggage transfers, route notes, and an information pack; flights and airport transfers not included. www.onfoot-holidays.co.uk.

STAY IN THIS NEW BARCELONA HOTEL

While you're in Spain, visit the city of counts and stay at the new OD Barcelona, which recently opened in the city's L'Eixample District. The 98-room hotel has a light, spacious, and airy feel with floor-to-ceiling windows and high ceilings. All rooms and the hotel's five suites come stocked with a selection of Spanish wines and regional snacks. The Grand Suite has its own private terrace with a swimming pool and panoramic city views. From the hotel, it's an easy walk to top sights, such as Passeig de Gràcia (one of the city's top shopping streets), Sagrada Família (the iconic unfinished Roman Catholic church), and the Plaça de Catalunya (a large central plaza in the heart of the city). Or you can use one of the OD Barcelona's Smart

cars. Rooms start at \$155 per night, including tax and breakfast. www.odbarcelona.com.

EVERYWHERE

THIS COOLER CAN OUTLIVE YOUR ADVENTURES

Keep your travel snacks and drinks cold for up to 72 hours with Mountainsmith's new Cooloir soft-sided coolers. The super-durable coolers come in three sizes, holding up to the equivalent of 12, 24, or 36 cans. They feature a waterproof 400-denier coated nylon exterior, fully-taped interior seams that prevent spills from infiltrating the bag, medical-grade water-resistant zippers, and a removable inner cooler box that you can throw in the freezer. Although they're soft-sided, the coolers retain their shape and protect contents from being crushed. \$119.95-\$179.95. Check them out at REI and other outfitters, or online www.mountainsmith.com. 800-551-5889.

SAFELY NAVIGATE USING THIS DEVICE

You know you shouldn't take your eyes off the road. Get Hudly and you can access important info from your smartphone – safely. This heads-up display (HUD) mirrors your smartphone's screen and projects it directly onto your windshield so you can access Waze, Google Maps, and other navigation apps without having to look away. Download maps in advance, so you can use them offline while in route, without needing a cell connection – great for overseas travel. Hudly also displays your speed, fuel level, and temperature on the windshield by syncing with your vehicle. A handy light sensor automatically adjusts the brightness for best visibility, day or night. The device plugs into your car or rental car's DC socket, but also has a USB port so you can still charge your smartphone or other compatible device. Compatible with Android and Apple devices. \$299. www.gethudly.com.

KARI BODNARCHUK

