

Before I retired, my company conference & travel department always booked my flights business or first class. Nice, comfy and relaxing. But now that I'm on my own, I'm not too willing to pay double or triple the tourist airfare, and just do it by cheapest.

However, that doesn't mean I must be miserable back there with all the other flying peasants. There are ways to make the flight more bearable, and be almost as comfy as those rich yoyos up there in the plush seats sipping free champagne, while paying three times as much for the flight as you are. Here are just a few hints.

1. Whenever possible, fly red-eye on trips of more than two hours. Roads to airports are less crowded, parking is easier, and airline waiting areas are not jammed people-to-people. Before you go, get several hours of total rest home or in your hotel room. Then, when you settle in to your tourist seat, you can relax with a book or watch a Netflix movie on your skinny computer or little carry-on DVD player and noise-cancelling earphones. Also, many red-eye flights are not totally booked, and your chances of stretching out over two or three seats are better.

2. Get an aisle seat when booking, or if you're flying Southwest use your home computer to get an A boarding pass exactly 24 hours before your flight, dash aboard and get an aisle seat. As a senior, where going to the bathroom is an important event, your aisle seat allows you to get up and go as many times as necessary. You also have easier access to the overhead compartment, so that if you need your computer or something from your carry-on bag, you can get it without disturbing people you'd have to stumble over.

3. Get as comfy as you can. Use a small, soft bag as pillow, or take along a blow-up neck cushion. If you need a blanket and the airline charges for it, drape a coat over you instead. Take along flexible slippers or scuffies that can fit in a bag. As you settle down in your seat, replace your shoes with them. If the inconsiderate guy in the next seat wants to read or thump his laptop all night, use an eye mask or a soft brimmed cap you can pull down over your eyes and block outside sound with your earphones.

4. Keep healthy while in flight. We all know the air conditioning on planes can be annoying, if not actually damaging. Therefore, on those long flights when you need to be comfy, be sure to take some face cream and other stuff to soothe the way. Before you settle in to nap, give your face and hands some moisturizer rubbing. Also, as you do when going to bed at home, use the plane's bathroom to brush your teeth and do some basic washing. If you have a sleeping pill prescription, digestion, aspirin or other medication to help you make it through the night, take modest doses.

5. When your flight is about to arrive at the destination airport, and before being required to

buckle up in your seat, get yourself ready for the day. Go to an open space aft and do some basic exercises for at least five minutes. Repeat the bathroom routine of washing and teeth brushing. As you step off the aircraft, taking long, healthy strides, you'll look as if you've just spent the night in the executive penthouse suite of the Waldorf-Astoria. Well, almost.

