

## Travel BETA

Travel > Articles > Gear review: gadgets to help you workout on the go

ROAD TEST | FITNESS

# Gear review: gadgets to help you workout on the go

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Visiting the gym every day isn't easy; when you're on the road, it's almost impossible. For a fitness buff, that makes travel -- business or leisure -- more stressful than it needs to be. What to do? But there are healthy ways to counteract the hectic schedules of travel. Some people stay only at hotels that have fitness facilities; others map walking, hiking or running routes (hotel concierges can usually help); still others pack compact workout equipment to help them maintain their fitness routine within the confines of their hotel room. We tested a variety of these products -- crunching, flexing, practicing our downward-dog yoga routine -- and found they had one thing in common: They helped avoid the end-of-day couch-potato syndrome that travel sometimes inspires.

### STRETCH



*RipCORDS*

**First look:** RipCORDS Resistance Bands are a far less expensive version of Bowflex. Easily packed, the resistance bands come in several strengths, from lightweight to heavy-duty. Accompanying them is a DVD with exercise routines and a "message from the champ," kickboxing hero Michael McDonald.

**Likes and yikes:** The video leaves a lot to be desired; it looks as though it was made in someone's garage. But it does show routines, and if you ignore the poor quality, it will give you direction and a good idea of how to use the RipCORDS. The bands themselves are sturdy, inexpensive and easy to use.

**The 411:** \$24.95, [www.ripCORDS.com](http://www.ripCORDS.com).

## SWEAT



*Leah Garcia Custom In-Room Workouts*

**First look:** "Turn your room into a fitness center" says the advertisement for Leah Garcia Custom In-Room Workouts DVD. And it's true; the double DVD includes sessions featuring cardio stretching, core conditioning, pilates, yoga and a total body workout. All are tailored to be done in a small space, using only a hotel-room towel for a mat.

**Likes and yikes:** There's enough variety here to keep a fitness buff happy. The exercises are efficient and effective, given the space limitations. But what happens if there isn't a DVD player?

**The 411:** \$24.95; (303) 247-1711, [www.naturallycaffeinated.com](http://www.naturallycaffeinated.com).

## BEND



*Yoga-Paws*

**First look:** Yoga-Paws are lightweight, stretchy mitts that fit over the pads of your feet and your palms (think fingerless gloves). They have polyvinyl cushions, with holes for ventilation, that prevent you from slipping during a workout. They come in two sizes: regular and large/men's.

**Likes and yikes:** Yoga-Paws are better than trying to stuff a mat into your suitcase and much more portable. They kept me from slipping during a yoga workout that included downward dog, plank and warrior poses on a rugless wood floor. They even improved my balance in tree pose. Although the regular-size mitts comfortably fit my hands (I wear a size small glove), a female coworker found them tight.

**The 411:** \$29.95 to \$34.95; (888) 964-2790, [www.yogapaws.com](http://www.yogapaws.com).

## LIFT



**First look:** The travelTrainer Personal Fitness Studio has it all: a fitness ball and pump, resistance bands, a floor mat, a CD with 50 exercises and an attractive carrying case that the manufacturer says will fit into a standard 22-inch carry-on suitcase. For the most part, the components are first-rate.

**Likes and yikes:** This combination kit is my favorite exercise travel pack. Everything is a bit down-sized: The mat is shorter and narrower than standard, and the ball and resistance bands are smaller than usual. But the components are sturdy everyday favorites. There are a few downsides: The RapidAire Pump included in the kit is difficult to use and takes three minutes of strenuous pumping to inflate the ball. And the entire kit, in its carrying case, is heavy -- 5 pounds -- and large. It will fit into a carry-on bag, but you'd have little room left to pack many garments or anything else.

**The 411:** \$89.99; (562) 777-2544, [www.afproducts.com](http://www.afproducts.com).