



TRAVEL Q&A

Shedding Light on Jet Lag

By Scott Vogel
Washington Post Staff Writer
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Q. Any suggestions on how to minimize jet lag when traveling either east or west?

Thomas Pereira, McLean

A. I must admit, when I called one of the nation's leading authorities on sleep and its many enemies, Cornell professor James B. Maas, I didn't expect to hear some breaking news from the world of jet lag. And it's not as if the best-selling author of the 1998 book "Power Sleep" retracted any of his previous tips on avoiding travel's greatest malady. It's still important to "limit the alcohol, make sure you don't get dehydrated, wear loose clothing, walk up and down the aisle several times during the flight and avoid red-eye flights," Maas reiterated. When flying west, you should still try to absorb some afternoon sun upon arrival even if your biological clock is telling you it's nighttime. Similarly, when traveling to London, say, and landing in the morning, fight the urge to "go to a hotel room and sleep for several hours," which will only keep you on Washington time. Instead, the minute you land, go outside and walk around in the sun.

"The problem is, uh, sometimes it's raining in London." Yeah, sometimes it is, which is why Maas is so excited about a new little gadget on the market called Litebook Elite (\$199 at <http://www.litebook.com>, 877-723-5483). It's a contraption that uses daylight spectrum LED bulbs, not unlike the light therapy boxes used by sufferers of seasonal affective disorder. The difference is that at five inches square, the Litebook is portable and therefore can be used to help shift your biological clock quickly no matter where in the world you are.

Purchasers of the Litebook also gain access to a calculator on the company's Web site. After entering data on their normal wake-up times, as well as what time zones they're traveling from and to, the site spits out a customized schedule of when they should avoid light and when they should engage in light therapy (which usually involves 30- to 60-minute exposure the first day, and 15- to 30-minute exposure the second).

"A lot of people are still relying on drugs like Ambien, which when taken as prescribed is an okay drug," said Maas, who confirmed he has no financial interest in the product, although he did admit to having consulted with the manufacturer during its creation. "But the real key is exposure to daylight spectrum light, and for that [the Litebook] is a godsend."

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RV this summer. Any suggestions on where to rent one and campgrounds to visit?

Marianne Teague, Huntington

"It's definitely kind of a niche market but it *is* growing," said Doug Bredesen of Ideamerge, a Portland, Ore.-based company (888-297-0001, <http://www.ideamerge.com>) that specializes in connecting travelers with RV and camper rental companies around the world (including two in Germany, McRent and DRM). Such vehicles don't come cheap (expect to pay more than \$150 a day for a vehicle that sleeps four), although presumably you'll save money on lodging and food, but not gas, along the way. Whatever company you use, Bredesen said to make sure you get a "fully detailed, broken-down quote," as complete charges can be much higher than base rental costs. As for campgrounds, "we always recommend that people make reservations in advance, but that can take some of the fun out of it. Surprisingly, even in the peak months in Europe, typically you can just roll in and find a spot." More information on German campgrounds can be found at the "Planning Your Trip" page on the country's official tourism site, <http://www.cometogermany.com>.

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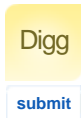
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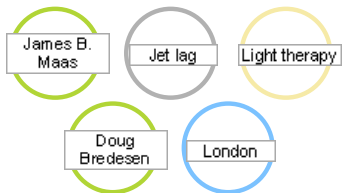


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