



August 2006

No Vacation

Business travel can be grueling, but there are ways to ease the pain.

By Laura DeMars

If you suspect that business travel is getting worse, you're right. Recent data from the Department of Transportation indicates that on-time arrivals are declining, mishandled baggage is more common, frequent-flyer miles are more difficult to redeem, and consumer complaints are on the rise. Add to that the usual stress brought on by time-zone changes, lost sleep, uncomfortable hotel rooms, and sundry logistical details gone awry, and it's no wonder that you arrive at the big meeting only to realize that you left your PowerPoint presentation in the cab. Business travelers were supposed to get a break this summer when a new "registered traveler program" was scheduled to take effect. Surprise: it's been delayed. The original June start date was scrapped, and as of press time, no new date had been firmly established.

When the program does debut, many expect it to be modeled on one currently in place at Orlando International Airport and run by a private company called Clear. Under this system, frequent travelers provide personal information that is used for a background check and submit two forms of government-issued ID along with fingerprints and an eye scan. Upon arriving at the airport they present an ID, undergo a check of fingerprints and/or eye, and enjoy an expedited trip through the security line. Travelers pay a fee for that privilege, currently \$79.95 a year (somewhat less for a multiyear plan).

No news on whether the broader rollout will be priced similarly, but expect to pay something, and be advised that not every airport may participate. And don't expect a faster trip through security to compensate for fuller planes, higher ticket prices, or weather delays (although, in a bit of good news, a new software system dubbed the Airspace Flow Program has helped the Federal Aviation Administration reduce flight delays during stormy weather by targeting specific flights versus issuing a blanket delay).

Frequent business travelers are easily distinguished from occasional tourists by more than a fancy ID card. Most have well-evolved strategies for seat selection, meals, sleep, and tech support — in other words, every element they can control. Katharine Johnston, CFO of AlphaTrade, a Vancouver-based company that provides real-time stock quotes and other financial data, says that advance preparation and attention to detail are essential.

Johnston is an inveterate keeper of checklists, which she relies on to plan her days out of the office and to make sure she leaves nothing behind. She also recommends a quick talk with the hotel concierge, who can not only steer you to good restaurants but steer you away from the kinds of situations that can derail meetings. For instance, she says, "I just got back from Dubai, and I learned that there are times of day when simply getting from the hotel to the meeting site can take three hours."

Lagging Indicator

Every frequent flyer complains about jet lag. Most are eager to share their strategies for coping, even as they admit they don't work all that well. Alcoa CFO Joseph Muscari used to travel almost monthly from Asia to the United States when he served as president of the company's Asia unit. "I've tried every remedy under the sun," he says, "but I haven't found one that works, besides going with the flow."

Researchers are experimenting with melatonin and with Vitamin D, both believed to play a role in helping the body regulate its circadian rhythms. Melatonin, which triggers the body's sleep mechanism, is available over the counter; it is unregulated and opinions differ on its effectiveness and on how best to use it. Meanwhile a vast range of jet-lag "cures" are hawked to frequent travelers, everything from homeopathic remedies to acupuncture to regimens that involve a complex combination of altered sleep patterns, diet, and exposure to sunlight.

If you suffer from particularly nasty jet lag, your doctor may prescribe a sleep aid or other medication. Most people, however, manage to adopt a system that provides at least some relief. Johnston adjusts by starting to live as if she were already in the time zone to which she is traveling. "A few days before, I get up early, eat differently, and get to bed early," she says.

In a previous job, Neil Lyons, now CFO of Regenerx Biopharmaceuticals, in Bethesda, Maryland, traveled from the States to Europe so often that he says he "ended up living on Iceland time for four years." He got through it by training himself to sleep whenever an opportunity presented itself. Travel experts say that exposure to sunlight upon a daytime arrival can help (it slows the production of melatonin) as can eating meals at the usual hour in the destination city (that is, if it's breakfast time in Paris, have a croissant and a café au lait, even if it's midnight to you).

Greg Raiff, CEO of Private Jet Services Group, points out that it's generally easier to cope with jet lag when flying east than west (the body adapts better to a day that's shorter than 24 hours than to one that's longer) and that intake of liquids makes a difference (alcohol dehydrates and should be avoided, but drink plenty of water, because, as he says, "pressurization results in a plane's interior being as dry as that of a desert at 10,000 feet"). While flights to Europe typically leave the United States at night, he says travelers should experiment with early-

morning flights that allow them to be productive in flight and arrive in the afternoon or early evening. Staying up later than usual that first night may also help you adjust more quickly.

Private Jet Services Group (PJSG) acts as agent for our clients in negotiating and facilitating transportation with licensed air carriers. We have no affiliation with any carrier except that our sister company, Private Jet Management Group (PJMG), may act as agent for one or more carriers. Transportation to be furnished by any PJMG-represented carrier will be arranged through the interaction of PJSG on behalf of its client and PJMG on behalf of the carrier.