15 Ways to Beat the Traveller’s Curse

Cheapflights spills the secrets on how to avoid jet lag

After whizzing through time zones, the human body is known to respond in all manner of ways – from extreme tiredness to fuzzy-headedness and absentmindedness – jet lag is the traveller’s curse that can eat into a holiday and zap that post-holiday glow.

There are 24 time zones in the world and the more that crossed during a long-haul flight, the more severe jet lag may be. The body doesn’t know if it should be delaying or advancing, and this confusion can result in days of exhaustion and sub-par performance.

With the majority (82 per cent) of Aussies opting for destinations more than seven hours, according to data from Cheapflights.com.au, to experts at Cheapflights have these top tips for fighting jet lag pre, during and post-flight.

Before:
1. West is best - According to experts, by travelling in this direction, you’re extending your day, rather than shortening it (and losing time). It’s easier to stay up later than get to sleep when your body is not ready to rest, so think about your route to maximise your experience.
2. Choose your flight times - Taking flights during quieter times such as midweek, early morning or late at night (and avoiding school holidays) could help. Depending on the route and class of airline, you’ll have more air and space to stretch out.
3. Are you a good sleeper? - Can you sleep on a plane or do you find it impossible to nod off – distracted by fellow passengers, in-flight entertainment and the constant drone of an aircraft cabin? It’s the disruption of your natural rhythm that leads to jet lag, so if you are a sleeper then take a night flight so you can maintain your normal routine. If not, fly during the day.
4. Get the best seat you can afford - Clearly, business or first class with lie-flat beds, capsules or pods will give you a better chance of rest than the smaller seats in economy. Could you upgrade one way, or perhaps buy a seat with extra legroom or get a bulkhead seat?
5. Have a stopover - On a long-haul flight, a stopover will be necessary. This is a good chance to stretch your legs, get some rest and acclimatise. Dubai, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong are popular and provide great jumping-off points for mini adventures too!
6. Reset your clocks - A few days before you fly, and try to reschedule your bedtime by an hour or two.
7. Hydrate - Drink lots of water before you fly to avoid dehydration and lay off the alcohol the night before. Experts also recommend about a litre per hour you spend in the air on top of drinks with meals.
8. Check out the meal options - Choose carbs for a night flight if you’re planning on sleeping, or proteins to keep you awake and alert.

During:
9. Reset yourself - As soon as you are on board, set your clock or smart phone to the time zone you are flying to. It’ll help get you into the local mindset.
10. Zzzzzzzzzzzzz - If you’re going to sleep, eyeshades, earplugs, a pillow and warm blanket will all help. Maintain as much of your bedtime routine as you can, even changing your clothes. Tell your seat mate and the cabin crew that you’re going to try to catch 40 winks so you’re not disturbed.

After:
11. Sleep - Have a power nap when you land. Try to keep it to 20 minutes so you don’t ruin your night time sleep.
12. Stay hydrated - Drink water and avoid alcohol – again!
13. Eat well - Refuel sensibly with lean proteins, a little fat and dark green leafy veg.
14. Try to stay on schedule - If you’ve flown long haul for just a few days, stick with your home routines. If you’re on a longer trip, live as the locals do.
15. Caffeine? Melatonin? Exercise? - A cup of coffee always helps to give a boost of energy! So does exercise, although don’t do it too close to bedtime. Many travellers swear by melatonin too, a sleep hormone that your body releases in the evening, letting you know that it’s time to rest.

For more information or to search for your next holiday, visit Cheapflights.com.au.

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Contacts
Kristine Arnott
02 8046 4845
mailto: kristine.arnott@historywillbekind.com.au