

# Business Travel Made Easy - *Adapting East*

Considerations for business travelers when traveling eastward and adapting to local time

It is not only airline crew that can benefit from scientific guidance when moving across the globe. Business travelers can also make good use of the same science when managing their performance while impacted by an inconvenient work/rest schedule and jet lag from time zone crossings. Unless you have a lot of experience from business travel, and have already developed your own strategies, this paper provides some input on doing so.

## Background

There are several tips and tricks for managing travel across many time zones. However, it quickly becomes quite complex if you are to take into account all different alternatives regarding direction of travel, departure times, duration and timings of the stay on out-station and your activities planned.

In order to simplify the matter somewhat, we are assuming that you are transitioning **east** with **six to nine time zones**, and that you have a **wish for acclimatising** to the arrival station time zone. The strategy outlined for this below will fit most people but, due to individual differences, **not everyone!**

## Preparations (far in advance)

Try to book an evening departure for your flight, ideally around 7-10pm. Try to make sure there is room for 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep on the flight. A flight connection will often ruin that. Plan if possible your meetings at the destination so that you avoid any work in the early mornings local time the first couple of days, as you will not be at your best and may need to sleep in a bit, depending on how your strategy works out.

## 2-3 Days Prior Departure

Try to gradually adapt to an early routine. Get out of bed successively early and seek bright light exposure and exercise in the first half of the day. In the afternoons, avoid caffeine and exercise and if possible also exposure from bright light. Go to bed early - which may require informing and consulting with your family so that they accommodate for your strategy as best as possible and don't happen to wake you up in the evenings. If they do, the strategy may back-fire and you'll find it hard to go back to sleep again, not allowing for rising early. Plan also for some three to four hours of work (ideally work for your laptop) that you bring with you for the flight. If you have a prescription, and find it suitable, melatonin intake in the late afternoon will assist greatly in advancing your circadian clock (which is what you want here).

Try to reserve an aisle-seat in the middle of the cabin, so that you avoid people climbing over you

and risk waking you up, but also eliminate the need for you climbing over someone when going to the lavatory (assuming travel in business class).



## Departure day

Start your day early with bright light exposure (artificial light or even better, natural outdoor lighting if possible). Exercise in the hours before lunch is also recommended. In the afternoon; avoid caffeine and exercise as well as afternoon naps. Arrive early to the airport and have your dinner there prior to the flight. Set an alarm to wake you up 6 hours into the flight. Then set your watch and phone to the time of your arrival station. Here it is good to have a wearable device waking you up silently (or the phone in your pocket) as many of the other passengers will be asleep when you wake up. Hydrate well with water and tuck in as soon as you can after take-off, using a comfortable face mask and earplugs.

When you wake up, hydrate again and seek light exposure\*. You can either use dedicated

\*) If you start your exposure too early, there is a risk of the opposite effect; *delaying* your body clock (adapting west). If you did manage to adapt to an early routine prior the trip, with some two hours or more, you should be 'safe' to apply light exposure immediately after the alarm clock goes off. If you haven't adapted at all, you should wait an hour or two after the alarm.



2:00



13:00



10:00

light emitting glasses and/or turn your laptop to full screen brightness while doing the work you had in store. Opening window shades, although highly effective, is of course not popular with the other passengers who are still asleep. A movie will not be as efficient as a bright white background of, for example, MS Word on your computer. Try also to move around a bit to get your body started, and do your morning routine.

The cabin attendants are few and far between at this time while most passengers are asleep, but you can normally still be served a light snack and coffee. The breakfast served on the flight before arrival will later become your lunch.

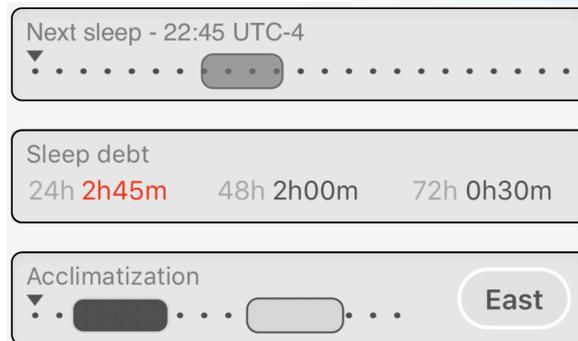
## Arrival day

At your arrival, which is typically in the afternoon local time, you will have capacity for a few more hours of work. Avoid a nap when you reach the hotel, unless you *really* need one. Avoid caffeine and exercise as you will to go to bed quite early per your body clock time. Eat a late and light dinner meal. The mild sleep debt from the night of the flight will assist you falling asleep but make sure to stay up quite late (local time) before going to bed because you will otherwise wake up easily. If you have a prescription and find it suitable, taking melatonin and having some handy on the bedside table may be a good idea for improved sleep maintenance. Plan ahead so that you do not need to switch on any, or only use minimal, bedroom lighting in case you wake up prematurely.

## First full day on location

If you have travelled more than six or seven time zones east, you will need to be careful to avoid light exposure early in the morning hours (local time) at your location. Until you have started to adapt there is a risk that the early exposure will coincide with the timing where you are sensitive to delaying (rather than advancing) your internal clock. Checking this on an app like CrewAlert Pro (see picture) can be a good idea, but also make sure to start late the first couple of days. If you do wake up too early; keep lights off, curtains shut, and listen to an audio book or music with your eyes closed. Once you are past 8 or 9 am, given that you succeeded in priming yourself towards morningness before the trip, the opposite will be true: try to get as much light exposure as possible to advance your internal clock. Outdoor lighting is the best. Exercise is also a good idea at this time, so why not an outdoor walk or run?

During the afternoon, skip over any nap or coffee on this day also. You might find it harder the second night to fall asleep and maintain sleep, so don't get into bed too early and (possibly) also now keep melatonin at hand and an audio book or music on the bedside table. This second-day effect is often related to now



A partial screen shot from the app CrewAlert Pro showing, from the top:

- a) the timing of the next predicted sleep
- b) predicted sleep debt in preceding periods, and
- c) guidance for light exposure timing for quickly acclimatising eastward, with each dot being one hour into the future and the rectangles the times to avoid and seek light exposure

having paid back your sleep debt from the night of the flight, while still being out of sync with local time. On this your second day at location, try to resist taking an afternoon nap; doing so will make it even harder to fall, and stay, asleep.

## Is it worth the trouble?

The outlined strategy above comes with a few sacrifices and some things to keep in mind as you will have noticed - even when simplifying it here for the case of travelling east and a wish to acclimatising quickly to the arrival station. It will of course depend on the importance of your daytime performance at your location if it is worth the trouble adhering to the guidance.

Sometimes, for a short stay, you might rather prioritise keeping your body clock fixed to the time zone of your home location, which will of course lead to a quite different strategy. But that's for another paper to elaborate on.

## Further reading

CrewAlert Pro has built-in functionality for prevention and mitigation of fatigue risk described here: [CrewAlert Fatigue Mitigation PDF](#)