

# ESCAPE



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## 4 | ARRIVALS

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### Stressed out? Find the cure at, er, Heathrow

The baggage system didn't work and the new lifts trapped their occupants but, undeterred, tomorrow Heathrow airport introduces its latest hi-tech solution to make travellers' lives easier - machines to help you sleep.

The new MetroNap Energy Pods installed at Terminal 1 are designed to allow stressed-out passengers to quickly grab 40 winks. After a 15-minute power nap they are gently woken, relaxed and refreshed, ready to board their flight or head into the city.

The machines, designed in America and originally conceived by a Wall Street banker, are becoming common

New York offices, where employees use them to re-energise themselves during the day. Several US gyms have also bought Pods, and here the Lawn Tennis Association has installed one at its training centre to help players snooze between matches. Several UK airports are now in talks to introduce them.

A 15-minute nap in a Pod, in the Urban Retreat spa at Terminal 1, costs £9.50, but is it worth it, and do they work? Last week I got a sneak preview at MetroNap's head office in London.

Although on first appearance the sleek white Energy Pod looks like something from *Barbarella*, in fact it's



From tomorrow, stressed-out passengers at Terminal 1 will be able to climb into a MetroNap Energy Pod which is designed to lull them to sleep.

extremely simple. You kick off your shoes and get onto the seat, which then reclines, so your feet are level with your heart," says Marcus de Guinand, the firm's managing director. He explains that this will reduce pressure on my heart, while the chair's ergo-

nomie design will relax my back and leg muscles.

A timer allows you to set the length of your nap - from 15-20 minutes for an energy boost, 30 minutes to start repaying your sleep debt or up to 90 minutes, which allows the 'perfect combination

of deep and REM sleep'. The hood - designed to cut users off from the outside world without being claustrophobic - slides into place and specially commissioned new age-style music starts to play, from either headphones or the hood's built-in speakers.

At first my leg twitches, and I wonder what's going on outside the hood, but soon I am totally relaxed and the 20 minutes passes in a deeply pleasant blur. Did I go to sleep? I don't think so, although when the seat vibrates gently to wake me and moves back to the upright position, Marcus suggests I was in the very light stages of sleep so felt semi-conscious. Possibly, and it's true that I do feel strangely refreshed.

Ultimately the Energy Pod is just a reclining chair with half a giant ping-pong ball on top. But if you're stuck in the hell of Heathrow in the summer months, 15 minutes' respite might be a very tempting prospect indeed.

Tom Robbins

### THE BIG PICTURE

Luxury came to the shores of Lake Titicaca in Peru last week, with the opening of an 18-room boutique hotel and spa. All rooms at the Inkaterre-Titilaka have views of the lake, which sits at 3,812m and borders Peru and Bolivia. The hotel organises excursions by Land Rover, catamaran, on horseback or on foot. Double rooms cost from £480 a night, including transfers, all meals and drinks, and excursions (0800 458 7506; www.inkaterre.com).



### More than a cuppa at Earl Grey monument

When it opens on 15 August, it will be Britain's most exclusive and unusual hotel room. The Hotel Monument in Newcastle will have a reception and concierge, but just one room - 150ft up in the air, built around the top of the city's Grey's Monument, Earl Grey, who stands at the top of the monument, much like Nelson in Trafalgar Square, will be enclosed within the hotel room.

The hotel will be open for just one month, and is the work of Japanese artist Tatzu Nishi, who last year built a room around a fountain in the centre of Nantes in France. The project is part of East 08, a celebration of Asian culture in north-east England, but the room will be open to the public, at a cost of about £350 a night, including breakfast. Earl Grey, the former Prime Minister who gave his name to the tea, will dominate the room, staring down at the bed. See www.east08.com for more information.

### IN BRIEF

#### SUMMER IN THE SPA

The stunning Tschuggen Berggasse spa in the Swiss ski resort of Arona has until now only opened during the winter, but this year will open in the summer too, starting on 20 June. The semi-subterranean spa, designed by star architect Mario Botta, has double rooms from €209 including breakfast. The Tschuggen's private mountain railway will also be in operation, making it easy for even the laziest visitor to enjoy summer strolls in Arona's hills (00 41 81 378 9999; www.tschuggen.ch).



#### WHALE LISTENING

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (01249 449500; www.wdcs.org) is running a programme of holidays over the summer, letting participants live alongside whale and dolphin researchers. Using hydrophones - underwater microphones - technicians will be able to listen to whale and dolphin chatter. All proceeds will go to conservation efforts. The trips take place in Italy, the Azores, Canada and Spain, and cost from £750 a week, excluding flights.

#### SPAIN TRAVEL ALERT

Ryanair is warning travellers heading to Spain from 1 June that their tickets will be cancelled unless they comply with new procedures regarding passport information. Since last year the Spanish authorities have required passengers to provide their passport number and date of birth before departure, but travellers were permitted to provide this at the airport. Now Ryanair insists all passengers enter it into the Ryanair website at least four hours before departure or their booking will be cancelled.

#### FLYING START FOR BA?

British Airways' new airline OpenSkies could be flying into trouble. The airline, which will take advantage of the newly liberalised aviation rules to fly direct from Paris to New York, is due to start flying next month, but tickets have yet to go on sale. Under US rules tickets can't be sold until the airline has full authorisation from the US Department of Transportation, something the airline hopes to receive 'in the next few weeks'.

### Take up your invitation into the world, and studios, of Dorset's leading artists

More than 100 artists will open the beach huts, cottages, barns and warehouses that house their studios as part of Dorset Art Weeks, starting on Saturday and running until 8 June. Highlights include sculptor Sarah Gilpin letting visitors try stone carving in her studio on Portland Beach, and renowned illustrator Babetta Cole on the art of drawing for children's books. Oliver String, who makes life-size

exotic animals from bronze and steel, will turn his orchard near Bridport into a safari park, with kids encouraged to climb all over the animals. The Sculpture Garden at Lyme Regis is a contemporary sculpture trail through gardens and woods, featuring work by stone-balancing artist Adrian Grey (pictured).  
More information on 01305 853100; www.dorsetartweeks.co.uk



### Science and the cost of taking to the skies

A major new exhibition at the Science Museum in London examines aviation's impact on the environment and the new technologies being developed to reduce it. 'Does Flying Cost the Earth?' opened last week and will run for six months. It includes

models of the blended-wing aircraft designed by scientists at Cambridge University to reduce fuel consumption and Easyjet's proposed Ecojet aircraft, which the airline claims could reduce emissions by 25 per cent, as well as examples of the cutting-edge materials being used to shave weight from planes, such as a titanium aluminate turbine blade.  
Entrance free. 0870 870 4868; www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

See a model of Cambridge University's eco-friendly blended-wing aircraft.