

# Condé Nast Traveller

OCTOBER 2015 £4.10

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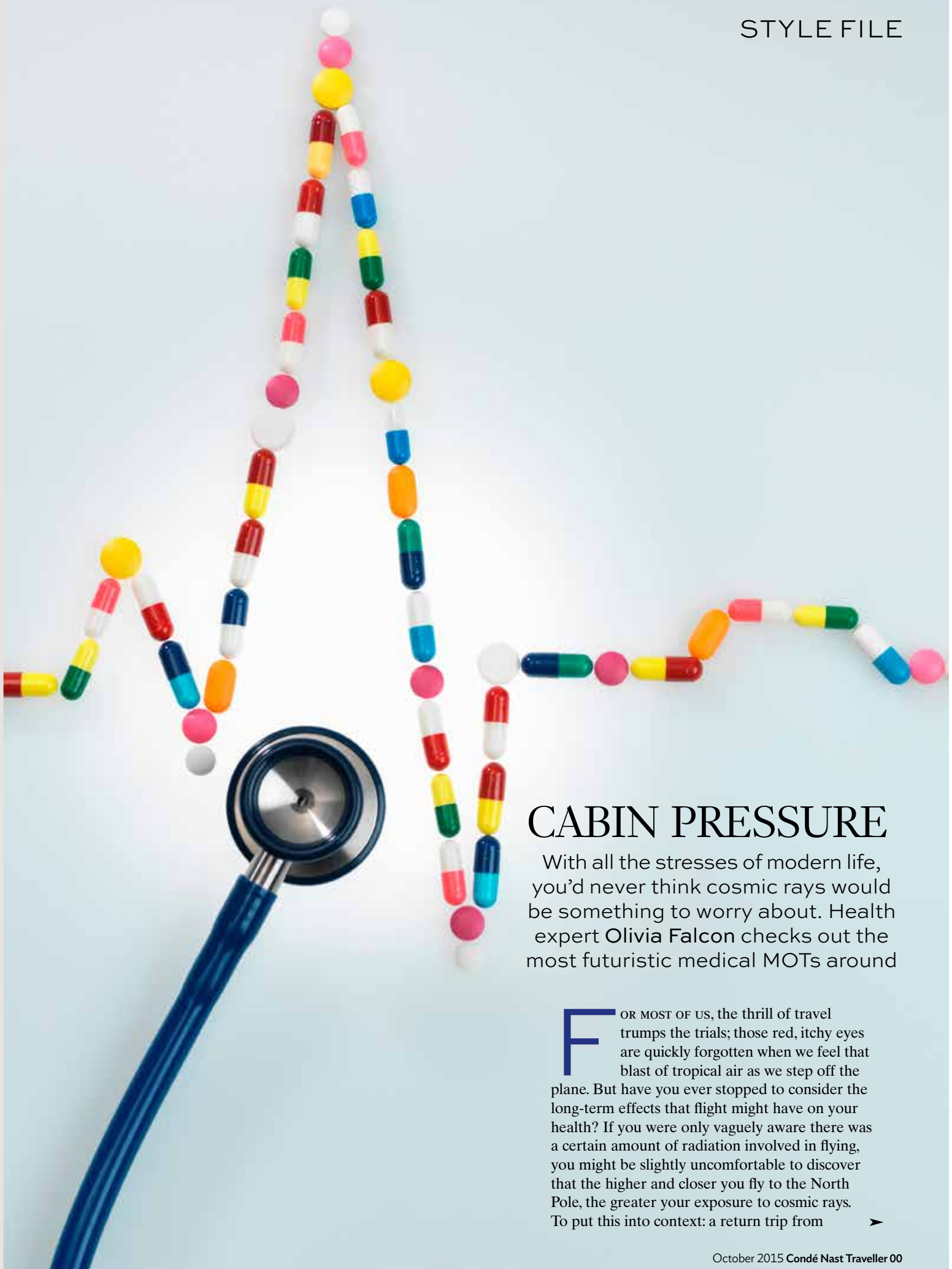
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## CABIN PRESSURE

With all the stresses of modern life, you'd never think cosmic rays would be something to worry about. Health expert Olivia Falcon checks out the most futuristic medical MOTs around

**F**OR MOST OF US, the thrill of travel trumps the trials; those red, itchy eyes are quickly forgotten when we feel that blast of tropical air as we step off the plane. But have you ever stopped to consider the long-term effects that flight might have on your health? If you were only vaguely aware there was a certain amount of radiation involved in flying, you might be slightly uncomfortable to discover that the higher and closer you fly to the North Pole, the greater your exposure to cosmic rays. To put this into context: a return trip from ➤

► London to Beijing easily exceeds the 100-microsievert dose from a chest X-ray. While not a problem for most travellers, it's definitely something frequent flyers should be aware of, as repeated exposure can increase the risk of cancer, genetic defects to a foetus during pregnancy, and to future offspring through DNA. You might also think twice about the window seat if you knew there was a greater risk from UVA rays, which age skin and cause premature wrinkling, than on the aisle.

Throw in a cabin humidity level of about 10 per cent compared to the 50 our bodies need, airplane food loaded with sugar and salt to compensate for the fact altitude dulls our sense of taste, and a few glasses of wine to steady your nerves, and you're heading towards Gobi Desert levels of dehydration – which raises blood pressure, increases the risk of DVT and clots, and causes problems for those with respiratory conditions such as asthma.

**T**hanks to low-cost airlines and globalisation, we're all jetsetters now, and a new type of wellness service is on the rise to counteract the corrosive effects of our adrenalin-charged lifestyles. Challenging old thinking that you only need to see a doctor when you're ill, these health concierge services want to meet you on an average day (you're probably feeling tired, bloated and irritable, but that's normal, right?) and then work their magic to supercharge your body into a shinier, healthier, more energetic version of itself.

Your medical history is, of course, very relevant, but it's your future health that gets these doctors stirred up. Employing cutting-edge tests to microanalyse your lifestyle and genetic predispositions, they'll give you a health strategy tailored to balance the fact that you Ping-Pong across the Atlantic on business trips every month or juggle a gaggle of children with a 24/7 career. Or both.

So who to see? If you're prepared to risk the cosmic rays and take a flight to South Korea, you can join a consortium of wealthy Russians, Chinese and a handful of clued-up Americans at the Chaum Centre in Seoul. Part hospital, part spa, Chaum offers one of the world's most powerful health MOTs. The top-to-toe medicals, which include DNA blood screenings to check for genetic mutations and a host of investigations with the latest equipment, including MRIs and the newest CT scans (with the lowest dose of radiation,



naturally), take just two-and-a-half hours to complete. Compared to most American clinics, where such tests might take five days in five different locations, this in itself is extraordinary. Treatments range from sleep therapy in a Dreamer's Capsule that triggers brain waves for the deepest, most refreshing slumber (a 30-minute nap in the pod is said to be as restorative as five hours' ordinary sleep), to intravenous drips that contain vitamins, antioxidants and a top-secret ingredient to help you retain more intravascular volume (a techie term for fluid) to counteract dehydration.

Chaum also has a stem-cell centre in Tokyo (South Korea prohibits such practices) that will harvest, culture and grow your white blood cells for reinjection into your body, which is claimed to boost the immune system. Starting at about £6,000 a pop, it's not cheap but, as Dr Richard Dawood, author of *Travellers' Health*, warns, 'You are up

tests to heavy-metal detox programmes. It is also pioneering cognitive stimulation with a 3D-machine that monitors brain activity, and can prescribe exercises to strengthen neural pathways and protect against early signs of dementia. Sha is on a mission to lighten travellers' bloat too, with two new Esenza mini-spas at Madrid airport that offer posture-correcting shiatsu massage, energy-boosting reiki treatments and a selection of fresh, organic food boxes as an alternative to airplane food.

**L**eading the charge in London is Viavi in Devonshire Place, servicing high-flying clients who often arrive feeling lethargic, with weak immune systems and poor digestion. Viavi's chief executive is Dr Sabine Donnai, a GP and former regional clinical director of Bupa. She says, 'These factors can fast-track the ageing process and increase the propensity to get diseases. People shouldn't have to accept feeling tired or unwell as a result of a busy lifestyle. At Viavi, we show them how they can have it all without paying the price.'

Well, of course, there is a price to pay, and at £7,500 for a health evaluation, it's a pretty hefty one, but many clients, such as top chef Marcus Wareing, rhapsodise about the benefits and believe it's essential to improving the quality of a load-bearing life. Viavi also offers more streamlined anti-ageing and detox programmes from £3,000 to address specific concerns.

So what do you get for your money? If you're up for the full whack, a physician will take a comprehensive medical history and run cutting-edge tests to get a 360-degree view of your current health and where you're heading. The process starts at home, where clients may be asked to gather saliva and urine samples, which are used to measure stress and sex hormone

## YOU ARE SEVEN TIMES MORE LIKELY TO CATCH A COLD WITHIN A WEEK OF A TRIP THAN IF YOU HAD STAYED AT HOME

to seven times more likely to catch a cold within a week of a trip than if you had stayed at home.' So the treatment will be music to the ears of a business person who spends much of their time on virus-riddled flights.

There are some impressive options closer to home too. On the Costa Blanca in Spain, Sha Wellness Clinic has a full range of genetic screenings and preventative treatments, from DAO enzyme migraine

levels, a good indication of how close you are to running out of steam. The hormone test involves spitting into a test tube at five-hour intervals, which is particularly challenging by torchlight at 3am, as turning on the lights wakes up the body and tampers with your melatonin reading. But all the picky precision reassures you this is a no-holds-barred medical that gets answers.

Most people are also asked to submit to a heart rate variability test. This means ►

## STYLE FILE

➤ wearing a small monitor under your clothes for three days, which takes real-time readings of your heartbeat and nervous system to gauge the balance between stress and rest fluctuations. The results, presented in an easy-to-understand graph, illustrate how simple lifestyle tweaks can have a huge effect. Every

team put clients through their paces. Everyone has their body composition analysed on bioelectrical scales that use a painless current to check the ratio of muscle to fat. This often flags up what Donnai calls 'skinny fat syndrome': a situation where a person might be size zero or consider themselves a 'normal'

### IF YOU NEVER FALL INTO THE DEEPER PARTS OF A 90-MINUTE SLEEP CYCLE, YOU'RE HEADED FOR TOTAL BURN-OUT

patient is asked to drink alcohol with dinner on one night and abstain for the next two. The results are shocking. Angry red spikes of a disrupted alcohol-induced sleep all through the night are compared to calm blue waves of deep rest cycles when you lay off the wine.

'People get very hung up about how many hours' sleep they get,' says Donnai, 'but they are missing the point. The purpose of sleep is energy recovery, memory consolidation and the release of hormones. This monitor measures the nervous system to show how well your body is recovering. It dispels the myth that a glass or two of red wine will help you drift off, as we can see clearly it's doing the opposite. If your body is never allowed to fall into the deeper parts of a 90-minute sleep cycle, you're setting yourself up for total burn-out.'

At-home tests completed, it's into Viavi's plush HQ where the medical

weight, but dieting or a sedentary lifestyle has led to muscle loss, leaving an unhealthy percentage of fat even though they appear thin. This test often spurs people into changing their exercise regime, and Viavi works with top personal trainer Harry Jameson to review the data and create incredibly precise workouts.

Jameson's regimes are fine-tuned by a cardio-pulmonary exercise test to measure cardio-vascular fitness. This involves donning a rubber facemask and pedalling hell for leather on an exercise bike. The mask allows the team to record intake of oxygen versus output of carbon dioxide, which not only shows how well the heart and lungs are functioning but gives precise readings on how hard the person needs to work to use up fat (to keep them fit) rather than burning sugar (which makes you feel

stiff). This test is often repeated a few months later to prove how effective the training regime has been.

'Typically, my clients are successful forty-somethings who want their bodies to perform as well as their businesses,' says Jameson. 'When it comes to leisure, rather than the fly-and-flop holidays of old, the alpha gang wants an adventure, be it hiking the Inca Trail or heli-skiing in Alaska. The kind of thorough testing that Viavi carries out lets them burn the candle at both ends in the safest possible way.' To prepare people for extreme physical challenges at altitude, they offer hypoxi-training and assessments at the Altitude Centre in London. 'We can simulate low-oxygen environments with a mask or give them an oxygen tent they can sleep in at home for the most targeted training,' he adds.

'This type of precision medicine is the future,' says Donnai. 'It's about giving people a strategy.' Test results are fed back in a PowerPoint presentation with colour-coded scores: green (nothing to worry about), amber (let's keep an eye on it) and red (immediate action). 'We flag up a priority list so you can see the most pressing change you need to make to your busy schedule; the one that's going to make a major difference to you. At the end of the day, we want our clients to enjoy their lives, but we give them a more in-depth understanding of their bodies and their trigger points so they can avoid the crash and burn.'

## THE POWER OF PICK-ME-UPS

Six hard-working products to bring balance and wellbeing to the depleted traveller



Magnesium works to relax the body and get rid of tension. Ideal for soothing cricked joints and helping you slumber like a bear.  
*Better You Magnesium Oil Soak, £35*



These rebalancing salts contain ionic minerals that correct fluid imbalances and take away that 'greige' skin tone.  
*Rejuvenated H30 Hydration, £25*



Packed with vitamins and electrolytes, and great for tiredness or jet lag – a far healthier energy boost than a Coke and a fry-up.  
*Faust's Recovery Pack, £5.50*



A super shot of vitamin B5, 'the happy pill', which supports the adrenal system and regulate energy levels.  
*Strong Chill Pill, £22.50*



Activates telomase enzymes to turn back the biological clock and make cells act younger – the best 50th birthday present you could give.  
*TA65, £400*



This blend of roots, herbs and cordyceps mushrooms helps oxygenate the blood, boost immunity and balance hormones.  
*Living Nutrition Warrior, £29.99*

