

A TRIP TO THE LAND OF POD

We're overworked, have non-stop lifestyles and we never seem to get enough sleep. **Sara McCorquodale** tries to catch forty winks in a power-nap pod



As the clock strikes 3pm, people all over London wonder how they'll stay awake until it's time to log off. Eyes droop and concentration wanes as most of us stare blankly at a screen of unfinished work.

Living in a city populated by overworked, bar-loving residents, it is no surprise that Londoners are plagued by sleepiness. And the demand for shut-eye was highlighted commercially when the Urban Retreat spa installed power-nap pods in its Heathrow branch last year.

They allow people to go for forty winks in the way you would go for a massage – a sign that sleep is no longer a solid nocturnal activity but a few snatched hours supplemented by power-napping.

The pod is the creation of American company MetroNaps and was initially aimed at stressed-out workers in the corporate grind of Manhattan. With the company launching in the UK last year, the pods may also become a fixture in offices across London.

Sceptics may scoff and continue to sip on triple-shot Americanos, but power-nap-

ping can provide a much needed second wind.

Prof Jim Horne, sleeping expert at Loughborough Sleep Research Centre says: "A power-nap can be very effective as long as it is no more than 15 minutes long.

"It can improve concentration and leave you feeling refreshed. To feel especially energised, people should have a coffee and then take a nap. Caffeine takes about 20-

to reach the level of a coma style sleep. A dark visor covers most of your upper body and face to reduce light while headphones play soothing music to block out city sounds.

Positioning the back at a 45-degree angle and raising the legs, it takes the weight off without letting the napper get into a dream-filled sleep. Cleverly, a refreshing nap is the only thing that's possible in the pod.

So far, the creation seems to be getting the thumbs up from travellers at Heathrow Airport. George Hammer, the Chairman of Urban Retreat, says: "Since we installed the pods a few weeks ago, they have grown tremendously in popularity. One chap on a stopover was asleep for five hours. In today's time-poor modern world, sleep is a luxury and business executives in particular need to capitalise on quality sleep while they can."

However, benefits aside, Dr Irishaad Ebrahim at the London Sleep Centre warned that power-napping is a habit that must be kept under control. "The problem with this is that the brain will want



QUICK NAP | A visor covers your torso and face while headphones play soothing music

to sleep during the day rather than at night," he explains. "Over a long time the messages the brain gets become inconsistent.

"You must keep the nap to between 15-20 minutes. This is long enough to get into stage one or two of sleep. Any longer and you would reach

stages three and four – which leads to a full sleep cycle. This cycle takes an hour-and-a-half, and you wouldn't achieve the intended result."

For further information, go to uk.metronaps.com, londonsleepcentre.com, www.urbanretreat.co.uk

“A power-nap can improve concentration and make you feel refreshed”

PROF JIM HORNE

25 minutes to kick in, so by the time you're finished napping you will feel much more awake."

It is no surprise that extra sleep is good for you. But is a power-nap pod necessary? Wouldn't a bed be just as effective? Perhaps not.

Softer than an office chair but not quite as comfy as a bed, the pod is a restful retreat that doesn't allow you

sara's verdict...

"The most damning thing I can say about the power-nap pod is that I didn't actually fall asleep, which is bizarre having just come off a night shift. However, it did recharge my batteries. The music is peaceful without being too invasive and the chair is comfortable, though you can't sink into it. But having worked on many a hangover, I think I would have done a much better job if one of these had been an option."