

We've all been there: you arrive at your dream destination, only to find your body clock out of sync, the unfamiliar bed less than welcoming, or jet lag playing havoc overnight. A rough night's sleep on holiday can feel catastrophic—especially when you've imagined every day to be a seamless adventure. But it doesn't have to be. **Handling sleep disruption without allowing it to sabotage your entire break is possible**, especially if you plan with flexibility, prioritise your energy, and manage your medications and documentation ahead of time.

Why Wellness Travel Doesn't Need Spa Clichés

Wellness travel often gets boxed in by images of luxurious spas, endless treatments, and detox diets. While spa days have their place, *wellness*—particularly when dealing with tiredness or sleep challenges—is far broader. It's about feeling your best in your environment, protecting your energy reserves, and planning realistically rather than optimistically.

For many travellers, especially those who rely on prescribed medication or have accessibility needs, wellness can mean peace of mind—knowing your essentials are covered and that your plans accommodate inevitable variations in how you'll feel each day. A holiday should be your recharge, not your stress.



The Three-Night Minimum: Why It Matters

Short breaks sound appealing but can be unforgiving if you have even one bad night's sleep. This is where I advocate for a **minimum three-night stay** wherever you go. Here's why:



- **Body clocks and adjustment:** It often takes at least two nights to adjust to new surroundings and time zones.
- **Recovery buffer:** If one night is lost to noise, discomfort, or jet lag, you still have two nights to recalibrate.
- **Energy replenishment:** Quality rest is rarely instant, but with multiple nights, you can bounce back without pressure.

Think of a three-night minimum as a *flexible cushion*—it's the luxury of time that lets you absorb whatever setbacks come up without feeling like you've wasted your trip.

Energy-First Itinerary Planning: Protect the Morning

One hallmark of travel itineraries I find particularly draining is the forced 7am starts and relentless agendas. Instead, I always prioritise my energy. This means my days revolve around a few key principles:

1. **Protect the morning:** Morning energy tends to be the best. Avoid scheduling strenuous activities first thing if you fear the previous night's sleep could be poor.
2. **One anchor booking per day:** Pick one non-negotiable plan each day—be it a museum visit, a restaurant reservation, or a guided walk. Then keep the rest of the day open for flexibility.
3. **Allow for rest and adaptability:** If one morning is rough, swap anchor activities around or choose a quiet, restorative option.

This **flexible schedule** approach makes travel inclusive for people with different energy rhythms, and helps avoid the dreaded feeling of 'ruined' days when sleep doesn't go to plan.

Managing Prescribed Medication and Travel Documentation

When sleep issues involve medication, planning and communication ahead of travel is vital. Here are my top tips:

Clinician Letter for Prescribed Medication

Always travel with a letter from your clinician that explains your prescribed medication:

- Ensure it specifies the medication's purpose and dosage.

- Include the generic name of medications to avoid confusion.
- Ask your clinician to note any special requirements, such as temperature control or the need for controlled storage.

This letter is especially important when passing through airport security or customs, and it streamlines conversations with private healthcare providers if you need services away from home.

Documentation Requests to Private Providers Made Well Before Travel

If your trip involves specialised treatments, private check-ups, or sleep consultations, **contact providers well in advance** [controlled drugs travel](#) to request any necessary documentation or assess availability. This lets you:

- Avoid last-minute stress and rushed appointments.
- Ensure providers understand your medical background.
- Arrange any medication prescriptions or adjustments ahead of time.

Remember that paperwork and medication regulations can differ widely from one country to another, so early preparation protects you against surprises.

Putting It All Together: A Sample Flexible Day

Time Plan Flexibility Notes Morning Breakfast at accommodation or nearby café Easy, no fixed time; option to skip if too tired Late morning Anchor booking: Visit city museum Booking at 11am, but reschedulable; rest beforehand if needed Afternoon Unplanned free time—rest or gentle walk No strict plans, adjust based on energy levels Evening Casual dinner reservation or room service Optional; room service for very tired days

With a schedule like this, even if you wake after just a few hours of sleep, you've only committed to one important plan. The rest of your day can flex to your energy and mood, helping you recover more gently.

Additional Tips to Ease Sleep Challenges on Holiday

- **Always ask where the lift is before accepting a room:** Avoid exhausting stairs after a poor night's sleep, especially if you have mobility challenges or heavy luggage.
- **Pack a tiny roll of blackout tape for rogue LEDs:** Small lights can disrupt sensitive sleepers. Some well-placed tape can make a world of difference.
- **Avoid overpacking your days:** Resist the pressure to cram in sightseeing. One meaningful experience really shines when you're not wiped out.
- **Communicate your needs to accommodation:** Whether it's requesting a quieter room or earplugs, don't hesitate to ask for what will help you sleep better.

Final Thoughts

A bad night's sleep on holiday isn't a trip-ender; it's an occasional hiccup in a carefully designed plan. By adopting an energy-first approach, respecting the need for a three-night adjustment period, securing your medication documentation early, and committing to just one anchor booking per day, you can keep your holiday resilient and enjoyable.

Above all, give yourself permission to adapt and prioritise your wellness authentically—it's not about forcing a perfect itinerary, but about protecting your mornings and preserving your energy so your trip can truly recharge

you.