

OFFICE SIESTA

A jet-set bird's eye view of the international office existence.

BY BRYONY TAYLOR

You step outside and it isn't raining. There're no cattle buses packed with anti-social commuters. No sardine can without air conditioning. Instead of wondering whether you'll get through the heat exhaustion of the underground you calmly waltz over to your taxi which takes you to the airport for a two hour, budget flight back to the British Isles. Your heart may sink at the prospect of this being merely a holiday instead of the key to an idealistic new life, but the British shores only beckon for four days of the week for some lucky office executives. The rest – if there is indeed a 'rest' – can be completed sat beside your villa's swimming pool in the Mediterranean sun, Friday to Monday.

Last issue of *USP* published survey results which showed an alarming number of office workers now commute from outside the UK. Spain, with its siesta lifestyle and cheap, relaxing lifestyle, is only a stone's throw away. Consequently, cities like Barcelona, Granada and Madrid have become popular

destinations for the semi-expatriates. It is a fact that the fourth largest group of foreign residents in Spain are made up of British expatriates – including the part-timers, so those that choose to move are often not alone, and many report that Spanish locals are very welcoming to the new arrivals.

Unlike perhaps more of the eastern block of Europe where houses are extremely cheap, Spain has a high standard of living with good infrastructure and economic growth coupled with a very family orientated culture. However, those choosing to live and work there often find that working hours are longer than expected, but work is less intensive and interspersed with more frequent breaks. The siesta adds a new dimension to the long office lunch break, but it is no longer the case that all Spanish businesses close completely for the afternoon.

There's an attractive buzz to office environments in other countries, especially in the big bustling cities of America's East side. Manhattan not only offers

excellent shopping with a great exchange rate, but caffeine lifestyle popularized by TV shows such as *Sex and The City*. Google recently moved 500 of its employees to its new building in downtown Port Authority, now dubbed the 'Googleplex' setting a new standard for the inner city New York office. Inside its lavish building are two canteens (designed by Frank Gehry) filled with free food including the customary sushi and espresso. There are private phone booths and showers for those brave to cycle to work down 6th Avenue. It is a vision of the workplace conceived by Silicon Valley, including faux English scones and tea, but even that doesn't deter one from thinking such an office would be nice! ■





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