

Air travel

Air travel does not present significant health risks for healthy passengers but it can have some adverse health consequences. However, with careful planning and adequate measures, these can be reduced.

Zelia describes some of these factors and how travellers can travel more comfortably by taking simple measures before, during and after the flight.

CABIN AIR PRESSURE

Cabin air pressure at cruising altitude (11000-12200 meters) is lower than air pressure at sea level and similar to the outside air pressure at an altitude of 1800-2400 meters, resulting in less oxygen being carried in the blood. This is usually well tolerated by healthy passengers, but for passengers with certain medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease or blood disorders, additional oxygen might be needed. Another consequence of the cabin air pressure is that the gases trapped in the travellers body will expand by 30% at take off and will contract on landing. Gas expansion during the climb causes air to escape from behind the eardrum and the sinuses, sometimes perceived as a "popping" sensation in the ears. On landing, air must flow back to equalize pressure differences. If this does not happen, the ears or sinuses may feel as if they are blocked and, if the pressure is not relieved, pain can result. Swallowing, chewing or yawning will help relieve discomfort. A forceful expiration against a pinched nose and closed mouth will usually help if symptoms persist. To decrease ear pain during descent, encourage your infant to breastfeed, suck on a bottle or on a pacifier. Older children can try chewing gum or blowing up balloons (8 years of age or older).

It is not recommend for individuals with ear, nose and sinus infections to fly. However, if travel cannot be avoided, the use of decongestant nasal drops shortly before the flight, and again before descent, might help.

In the abdomen, gas expansion when the plane climbs can cause a sense of fullness and bloating, but the discomfort is usually mild. Travellers who are particularly sensitive to these changes should avoid carbonated beverages and any foods that could increase gas production.

CABIN AIR QUALITY

Older model aircrafts provided 100% fresh air in the cabin, while newer models, in an effort to conserve fuel, provide approximately 50% recycled air. The recirculated air is passed through high efficiency filters (similar to those used in hospital respiratory isolation rooms), which remove more than 99% of particles, including bacteria and viruses. The total volume of air in the cabin is exchanged every 2 to 3 minutes, compared with an exchange rate of 5 to 10 minutes in an air-conditioned building. Ozone may enter the aircraft cabin together with the fresh air supply; most of it is removed by compressors in the aircraft engines that provide pressurized air for the cabin. In addition, most modern long-haul jet aircrafts are fitted with catalytic converters that break down any remaining ozone.

Cabin air is dry. While humidity in the home is normally over 30%, in aircraft cabins it is usually less than 20%. Low humidity may cause dry skin, eyes, mouth, and nose. Using a skin moisturising lotion, eye drops, saline nasal spray and spectacles rather than contact lenses can relieve or prevent discomfort.

IMMOBILITY AND DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Immobility coupled with long flights causes swelling and stiffness on the legs and increases the risk for the development of blood clots in the deep veins of the legs (deep vein thrombosis or DVT). Recent research has confirmed that anyone seated in a plane, car, bus or train for more than four hours is at an increased risk for DVT. In most cases, the clots are small and the body is able to gradually break down the clots with no symptoms or long-term effects. Larger clots may cause swelling of the leg, tenderness and pain. Occasionally a piece of the clot may break off and travel via the bloodstream to reach the lungs. This is known as pulmonary embolism and may cause chest pain, shortness of breath and, in severe cases, sudden death; it can occur many hours or even days after the formation of the clot.

Increased risk for DVT include:

- Previous DVT or pulmonary embolism
- History of DVT or pulmonary embolism in a close family member
- Age over 40
- Use of oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy
- Recent surgery or trauma to the abdomen, pelvic region or legs
- Cancer
- Obesity
- Some inherited blood-clotting abnormalities

Advice to reduce the risk of DVT:

- Walk around the cabin every 2-3 hours, turbulence allowing
- Carry out the exercises advised by the airlines on their in-flight magazines
- Clothing should be loose and comfortable
- Avoid crossing legs when seated
- Offset dehydration by drinking plenty of water
- Hand luggage should not be placed where it restricts movement of the legs and feet

Those travellers who are at most risk of developing DVT should seek medical advice, especially whether the use of compression stockings or anti-coagulant medication would be of benefit.

Dr Zelia Araujo-Muggli graduated from medical school in her native Portugal. She is a member of the UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and has worked as a paediatrician in Portugal, the UK and Oman. She is a Shell spouse and mother of two children.



JET LAG

Warm temperatures can increase the concentration of ozone. Jet lag is the term used for the symptoms resulting from a difference between the internal body clock (controlling 24-hour rhythms, like body temperature, sleep-awake cycle, digestion, hormonal levels) and the external environment, when crossing multiple time zones, i.e. when flying east to west or west to east. It often results in:

- Indigestion and disturbance of bowel function
- General malaise
- Daytime sleepiness, difficulty in sleeping at night,
- Reduced physical and mental performance
- Increased susceptibility to disease

Jet lag symptoms gradually wear off as the body adapts to the new time zone. However, not all internal functions adjust at the same time and rate; the sleep/awake cycle may adjust more quickly than the body temperature, whereas digestion might still be in a completely different schedule. It has been shown that the body clock adjusts better traveling east to west, probably because our natural rhythm allows us to extend our day longer than 24 hours, but has difficulties reducing hours in a day.

Much research has been done, but no quick remedy has been found to fully treat jet Lag. Nevertheless, there are ways to help cope:

- Be as well rested as possible before departure, and rest during the flight. Short naps can be helpful.
- Eat light meals and limit consumption of alcohol. Caffeine should be limited to normal amounts and avoided within a few hours of an expected period of sleep.
- Light is one of the cues the body clock uses to connect with the outside environment; in general the more time spent outdoors in the first days, the faster the adjustment to new time zone. If travelling eastwards seek bright light in the morning, if traveling westwards in the afternoon.
- High-protein breakfasts seem to increase alertness, while high-carbohydrate dinners promote sleepiness.
- Regular exercise during the day may help to promote sleep, but avoid strenuous exercise immediately before sleep.
- At the destination, try to get as much sleep in every 24 hours as normal. A minimum block of four hours sleep during the local night - known as 'anchor sleep' - is thought to be necessary to allow the body's internal clock to adapt
- Short-acting sleeping pills may be helpful, but should only be used in accordance with medical advice and should not normally be taken during the flight, as they may increase immobility and therefore the risk of developing DVT.
- Melatonin is available in some countries. However, bear in mind that it is normally sold as a food supplement and is not subject to the same strict control as medications. It is therefore not recommended at present.

TRIPS OF SHORT DURATION

It is not always appropriate to adjust to local time for short trips of up to two-three days. In this case try to keep your body clock on home time. Make a note of the destination times that correspond with times when your body clock would be at maximum sleepiness at home (3-5am and on a lesser level 3-5pm).

Try to avoid important business meetings or events scheduled at these times of maximum sleepiness at home. Try not to be in the light at your destination if you would normally be in darkness at home. You can do this by staying indoors or wearing sunglasses when you go out. When planning meals try to keep your stomach on home time. So if it is dinnertime at your destination, but breakfast on your home time, try to have something light, rather than a full heavy dinner.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

Research has shown that there is very little risk of any communicable disease being transmitted on board the aircraft. However, transmission of infection may occur between passengers who are seated in the same area usually as a result of the infected person coughing or sneezing or by touch (direct contact or contact with the same parts of the aircraft cabin and furnishings that other passengers touch). This is no different from any situation in which people are close to each other, such as on a train or bus or at a theatre. Highly contagious conditions, such as influenza, are more likely to be spread to other passengers in situations where the aircraft ventilation system is not operating. An auxiliary power unit is normally used to provide ventilation when the aircraft is on the ground, before the main engines are started, but occasionally this is not operated for environmental (noise) or technical reasons.

Currently, with increasing air travel and the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB, the risk is still low but vigilance is required.

DISINSECTION

Many countries require disinsection of aircrafts (a process to kill insects) arriving from countries where diseases that are spread by insects, such as malaria and yellow fever occur. It involves treatment of the interior of the aircraft with insecticides - in some cases with the passengers on board - specified by the World Health Organisation.

While some passengers and crew members have reported reactions to the insecticides - including rashes, respiratory irritation, burning eyes, and tingling and numbness of the lips and fingertips - there is no data to support evidence that the authorised insecticides are harmful to human health.

Adventures in Kyrgyzstan

Glenda Lewin

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Glenda is an Australian expatriate living in The Hague. She is currently Chair of the Outpost Archive Centre Board, having recently completed a three-year term on the Outpost Advisory Council.

In September 2006, in celebration of her 50th birthday, Glenda and three of her friends went exploring the ancient trading routes leading west from Beijing. This piece was written from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, 25 days into her tour.

Kyrgyzstan, is a landlocked and mountainous country, and formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Kyrgyzstan is bordered by Kazakhstan to the North, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and the China to the Southeast.

We arrived over the border from Kashgar - via the Turugurut Pass (3,500 metres). Our driver and guide were there to greet us...as was the mountain weather. We left Kashgar in 30 degree heat and down the hill, 15 minutes on the other side of the pass, it was snowing!

We waited at the border for about an hour, where it is apparently not unusual for Customs to take this long before bothering to open the gates. Then we were on the road - 190 km of very bumpy four-wheel-drive-like driving - to reach our overnight stop of Naryn. This journey, despite some of it being on a well-worn track of bitumen, took us five hours - our heads often bumping against the ceiling of the van as we went. Our speed could not exceed 70kmh, so although it was a long journey our necks would've been even further out of alignment if our driver had been able to go any faster. In between bumps, the long, slow trip provided a good opportunity to take photos of the stark mountain scenery. The snow cleared as we came into the valley and we began to see some of the beautiful mountain scenery that this country is famous for. Snow-capped mountains - some over 5,000 metres high - lined either side of our road.

We arrived in Naryn just as the sun was setting. We unloaded immediately and ventured out to sample the local food. One thing we quickly learnt about our driver Valery, was that he was a master of inside information on where to eat the best

food, and cheaply! And so it was that for less than US\$9.00 for the four of us, on our first night in Kyrgyzstan, we ate extremely well. Including the delicious house specialty - Manty - dumplings filled with vegetables and mutton, on which we sprinkled spicy vinegar.

Here we also met a group of wonderful local ladies - staff from a local kindergarten who were out partying on their free day from work. They were up dancing so we joined them. For the next 30 minutes we practiced an exotic tummy role that came very naturally to them but less so to us! We were all of a similar age and we shared much fun together. It helped enormously, that Susie (one of our party), was fluent in Russian and that Cath (another of our party) was also very good.

On our second day, after lots of driving, we ended up in a yurt in a small village watching local craftswomen making felt carpets, with hopes of selling them to the handful of tourists who were increasingly passing through, as well as locally.

We lunched in the yurt*, legs folded under us, and sampled homemade apricot and cherry jams. We also had mutton, which is a staple food here as is as rice and potatoes.

At Isik Kol lake Susie and Cath braved 10 degree temperatures and waded in for a swim - we Southern hemisphere ladies were a little more sensible!

We arrived at our next destination, Jeti Ogurtz, after dark. Which is just as well as it stopped us from seeing just how precarious some of the bridges were that we crossed.

High up in the mountains we found our accommodation for the next two nights - our very own yurt, where we slept huddled together under two duvets each and in our silk sleeping bag liners, and still were cold. However, despite the freezing night temperatures the days were sunny.



We spent a full day horse trekking with a local guide up into the valley - the destination being a glacier (although the truth be known we didn't reach it). It was my second time only on a horse, but by the time we headed back down the mountain we were the best of friends - I think he must've enjoyed me singing to him along the way.

Being September, round-up time, we were also lucky to see the local farmers retrieving their livestock from the mountain pastures - to see these wonderful horsemen round up their animals (sheep, goats, cattle, horses) and then herd them down the road past our camp was the highlight of this part of the trip. The second being our host's yummy breakfast rice porridge which we adorned with her apricot jam and raisins.

Day four took us to the town of Karako, where after two days of wearing the same clothes (and hat) I found being back in civilization most agreeable. Our hotel for the night had only recently been opened by a Swiss who had married locally. It had European decor, a luxuriously hot shower and very friendly staff (who spoke perfect English). Something that constantly surprised us on this trip was how so many towns in Kyrgyzstan, such as Karakol, had developed very good linguistic programmes for teaching English.

Again we were bewitched by the local crafts - the dollars in our pockets decreasing with each new shop. The constant dilemma was simply how we would carry it all with us? I watched my friend Christine as she repacked her suitcase almost every night trying to squeeze in the next "must have" item. This dilemma had reached critical point by the time we arrived in Bishkek, where we had to take a flight on to Tashkent later that evening, and all and sundry had to be donated to our guide and driver to reduce our weight for the flight!

Our trip had been a wonderful journey. Our guide was full of jokes and was a wealth of knowledge about his country of which he is very proud. His ancestry is Russian, but he has a fine appreciation of the Kyrgyz peoples and their simple nomadic life. A life that Cath, Susie, Christine and I had the pleasure of glimpsing and savouring - creating memories that will remain with us for a very long time.

*A Yurt is a portable, felt-covered, wood lattice-framed dwelling structure used by nomads in Central Asia.

Meet the expert:

Robin Pascoe

Canadian author Robin Pascoe addressed the first Global Outpost Conference in The Hague ten years ago. That was before email and instant messaging, and before 9/11. She returned to Outpost The Hague this year to discuss her new book, *Raising Global Nomads*. The world has changed, but the essence of her message was the same: family first.

Lynne Allard

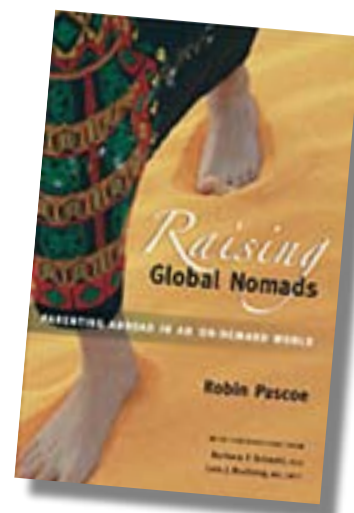
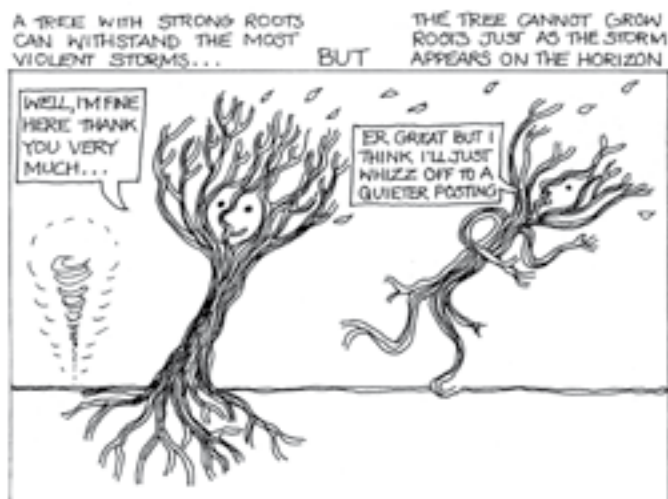
"Global Nomad: anyone who has ever lived abroad before adulthood because of a parent's occupational choice" Norma McCaig.

Robin has curly hair, and glasses. She looks pleasant, and smart. When she speaks, she is that and more: direct, funny, and down-to-earth. A veteran of some 20 years of expatriate life, she speaks with an authority and sincerity that comes from experience - her own, and that of the countless families and professionals she has interviewed. She helicopters effortlessly between the anecdotal and the academic, citing research findings and casual conversations in the same breath, with a smattering of her own parenting anecdotes thrown in.

Raising Global Nomads is her fifth book for expatriate families. In it, she distills an incredible amount of information from diverse sources into a very usable roadmap for mobile families.

Her suggestions include:

- Create a 'normal' environment for your children, where they have duties and responsibilities. In some locations, this may require some creative parenting strategies - finding voluntary work if paid work is in breach of local laws, or making sure a home-helper knows which duties to leave for family members.



- Help your children articulate their experiences. Formulate answers to tricky questions like "where are you from?", and help them to find words for their feelings.
- A posting can offer opportunities for you to pursue hobbies and a social life - but keep in mind that children may need more, not less, of your time after a move. Conversely, try not to be omnipresent in your children's lives. Hovering around sorting out every altercation deprives them of the opportunity to develop valuable life skills.
- Allow children to face the normal challenges of growing up - picking up after themselves, having a part-time job (even if it's voluntary), and budgeting. One day they will need these skills to navigate their own way in the world.
- Try to limit needless stresses, such as graphic or horrific news images, that can contribute to Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome: anxiety about what could happen.
- Aim for some semblance of work-life balance. Work and family life are intertwined when an employee is posted abroad. The employee may have more demands on their time, and the company may provide not only for the families livelihood, but for schooling, housing, medical, social and recreational facilities as well. And if the demands of the new job make the employee unavailable for family? Robin advises: "get over yourself - there are many jobs, but you only have one family". Did I say she was direct?
- Be open, and communicate - a lot. Discuss a move as soon as it is confirmed, and take time to reminisce about funny, awkward, or memorable family adventures.
- Use technology wisely - the internet is great for keeping in touch, but spending lots of time in the cyber bubble can delay immersion and adaptation to a new culture.
- Love, laugh, and listen - lots.

Robin is very positive about the potential benefits of a global upbringing. Children can develop a world-view and an appreciation that there are two sides to every situation - a valuable skill in today's world. Many global nomads are drawn to altruistic and globally focussed work. Ideally, your children may share the view of one of the grown-up nomads she cites: "the world is our classroom - we are lifelong learners". But children raised on the move can also face challenges - of restlessness, feeling different, and of unresolved grief following a childhood of goodbyes. So it is important to parent mindfully: say proper goodbyes, maintain important friendships, and allow for grief or homesickness.



London Outpost celebrates tenth birthday

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London Outpost and Global Outpost Services

In March 1997 London Outpost was born. At the time there were 450 expats in London, and the need for practical information and an established network was clear!

In the very early days Outpost London consisted of a volunteer expatriate spouse welcoming new arrivals to London with a phone call, following the example of similar practices in The Hague. But the office grew fast, and a network of volunteers for London and surrounding areas was quickly established, a feasibility study for establishing an independent office in Shell Centre was undertaken, and a supportive steering group was appointed.

Ten years and 2000 families later, that need still exists and the support is going strong. We now operate out of a warm and welcoming office space including a children's playroom. The number of expats/repats has grown from 450 to 750 and we receive an average of 300 questions a year. We not only share basic non-contractual information and offer networking opportunities but we also provide expatriate related workshops and seminars such as Culture Shock and Living and Working with the British.

In 2006, we launched a Career and Development service that we are particularly proud of, because unlike in some countries where career prospects for spouses can be relatively few, the vibrant and cosmopolitan city of London provides a host of choices.

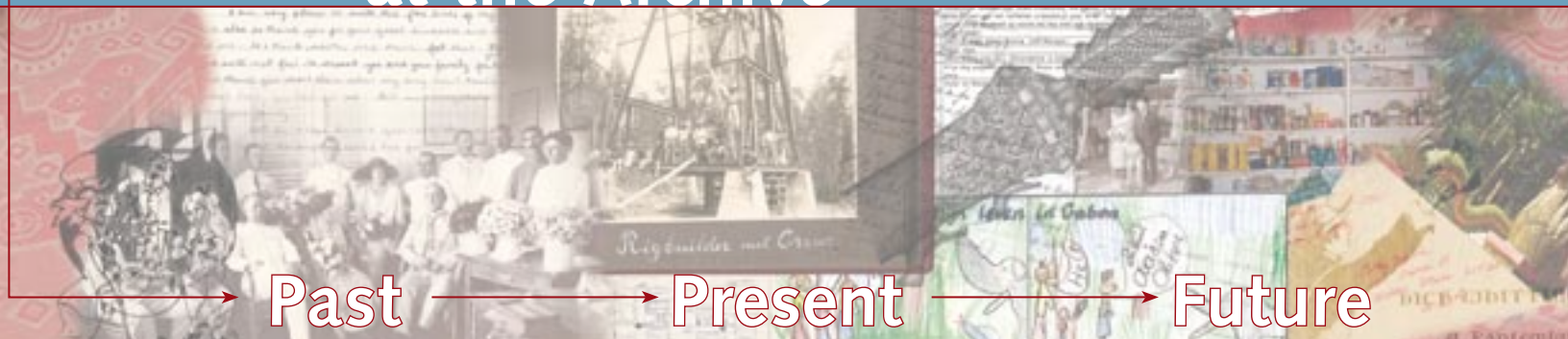
Turning ten years old has provided an opportunity for us to reflect on our past, and look ahead to the future, but just as importantly to simply celebrate getting this far. This we managed to do in fine style a few months ago. In the beautiful grounds of The American School in England, Surrey, almost 100 Shell employees and families turned out to enjoy the day. The sun shone over the lake nearby, and the marquee was used to provide some shade, and not, as we had feared, protection against possible rain. Highlights of the day included a beautifully presented English tea with freshly baked scones with jam and cream, spouse business promotion tables to do some shopping, and the kids' car boot sale.

Our tenth anniversary has come in the same year that Shell is commemorating its 100th year, and as we read the wonderful stories of how the company has developed from a small shell and bric-a-brac business to what it is today, we can't help but wonder what London Outpost will look like in another 90 years!

At home or abroad, Robin's parenting philosophy is summed up in her favourite quote: "A tree with strong roots can withstand the most violent storm, but the tree can't grow roots just as the storm appears on the horizon" (The Art of Happiness, Dalai Lama).

Raising Global Nomads: Parenting Abroad in an On-Demand World (2006), by Robin Pascoe, is published by Expatriate Press, Vancouver. You can order this and Robin's other books at www.expatexpert.com, or on www.Amazon.co.uk

Moscow at the Archive



Jo Parfitt

Knowing that this issue of Destinations was to focus on Moscow, we rose to the challenge and here, below, are a few of our favourite "local" contributions:

PRIMARY SOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS

The following are part of a large collection of Russian humour and superstitions that was deposited by an anonymous donor. Source code 0504/514.

Whistling inside a house or building is considered to be an evil omen. It is believed that people who didn't want to be annoyed by whistling made up this omen. To frighten whistlers they were told: 'Stop whistling, or we won't have money in this house and you won't either!'

Foreigner asks Russian:

"Why do more car accidents happen in summer than in winter? You would expect it to be the other way around considering the road conditions!"

Russian answers:

"In winter, women hide their bodies in fur coats. In summer, car drivers are distracted by the sight of women's flesh."

The following extract comes from a deposit from Georgette Reissen. Source code 0800/512.

Somewhere in August 1998, I found myself some 100 miles north east of Moscow. It had taken about three hours by car to get to the dacha of our Russian friends. Their country house is a lot larger than their five by five square meter apartment, where they live with four adults(!) in the capital. The holiday retreat consists of a plot of land, surrounded by a primitive wooden fence, a large log built house, a banja and a wooden outhouse. This little facility is much like I used to know from far away farms in the fifties when sewage was not common everywhere in the Netherlands.

PUBLICATIONS

In addition to a vast collection of DESTINATIONS magazines and Outpost newsletters, we also have a number of other publications including schools brochures and local magazines. Among them we found a 1997 issue of Russian Far East News, with this extract. Source code oac2/7/1/1:

THE WILD EAST

The media, both foreign and Russian, frequently paint the RFE in the darkest of colors, with bandits roaming the streets, no sense of law and order, and bureaucrats growing rich and powerful from 'fiefdoms' carved out of the government hierarchy. Interestingly enough, many locals hold those same opinions about life in Moscow. In that the Far East does not differ greatly from the rest of Russia.

Criminal activity and its effect on foreign businesses in the Far East have been blown out of proportion. Does organized crime exist? Certainly, but no more so than in Moscow and Western Russia. In general, the 'low level' Russian crime groups stick to the 'gray' sections of the economy where there is a high cash turnover, and where income is not reported to the authorities in order to avoid the infamously onerous Russian tax burden. In such cases, these companies cannot turn to the police for help when approached for 'protection' as they themselves are working semi-legally. Non-cooperation can result in an 'anonymous tip' to the Tax Police to carry out a full investigation of the company followed by large fines and/or confiscation of assets. The 'high level' crime groups are already undergoing 'legitimization' of their activities by obtaining controlling shares in banks and other companies.

SIGN UP TO @RCHIVE NEWS

If you want to be kept informed of what's happening at the Outpost Archive sign up to our quarterly newsletter Archive Enews by sending an email to Ros at everyarchive@outpostarchive.com

Coming up in the next issue in December 2007:

Focus on "frontier locations"

These could be stories from places that some people still refer to as 'hardship postings', but they may also be stories from established and modern locations at difficult times (such as New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina). It would also include challenging destinations where for example Shell has a presence but the expat population is very small and the location comparatively isolated. We will be interpreting the theme quite liberally, so if you have ever been at the frontier we look forward to hearing from you.

Contributions by 18 October 2007 welcome (janet.carson@shell.com)