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Review: High tech device stops nausea

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Business 2.0

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(Business 2.0) -- For someone who gets dizzy from standing up too suddenly, whale-watching probably wasn't the sharpest idea. But emboldened by the release of the ReliefBand, a new electronic device that combats motion sickness, I took a friend on a four-hour tour off the California coast and hoped for the best.

There've been countless attempts to come up with a nausea-beater sanctioned by the Food and Drug Administration. Before the ReliefBand, the best hope was a wristband with a small crest that rested against the underside of the wrist and worked like acupressure -- sending a soothing message to the brain. But those straps aren't comfortable, and though my traveling companion brings one along for us to try, he pops a Dramamine just to be safe.



Now for my dose: I apply a thin layer of conductivity gel to my wrist, on the space between the two tendons, and strap on the lightweight ReliefBand (which looks something like a sports watch). As we motor out from the dock, I turn the dial to the first setting. The result is shocking -- literally. Two small electrodes start emitting a sporadic electrical current through my wrist and into my middle finger. I turn up the flashing dial setting one increment at a time to level five. Flinch! Squeal! When I make a fist, I can feel the now-frequent jolts tingling through my entire palm. Whither the "gentle signals" the sales pitch promised? It's more like a tide of tough love.

After the intensity of the highest setting, level two feels manageable. Though no spouts have yet been spotted, we're navigating some hurl-inducing Ahab action out here on the open seas. My friend is already complaining that the Dramamine is making him feel sicker than the waves, but I feel steady as the North Star. Though I'm certainly aware of the ReliefBand's little shocks, it's more like white noise now. Even when I go belowdecks, where nausea usually sets in immediately, I feel only slightly piqued. Plus, the ReliefBand is water- and shock-resistant, so there's no fear of splash-induced electrocution.

Though the trip ends up being about as exciting as watching a fishbowl (we saw just one tail and endured four hours of chilly sea spray), I'm pleased to know I can go thrill-seeking without losing my lunch.

Next stop: the Matterhorn.

ReliefBand (includes two 3-volt lithium batteries, a leather strap and an extender strap, a carrying case, and a tube of conductivity gel): \$130.

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