

# What are travellers looking to get out of their December holidays?

As the festive season edges ever closer in a year that has been one of the most challenging in recent memory, many South Africans are tired, burnt out and looking forward to a well-deserved break. But what will summer holidays look like in December 2020, and how can you make it one to remember?



Image Supplied.

Here are just a few things travellers are looking for:

## Safety

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the fact that prospective travellers are looking for optimal safety goes without saying – and yet it cannot be emphasised enough. Dubbed 'Generation C' at WTM London at the beginning of November, establishments need to go out of their way to communicate to this new generation of cautious travellers that they are, in fact, Covid-ready and actively making guest/patron safety a top priority.

They should communicate this message on their website, social media pages, brochures, and more. Most importantly, they should encourage recent guests to speak openly about their experiences in an effort to encourage cautious travellers to spread their wings once again.

"Word of mouth is still so powerful, and hearing how safe one person felt when staying at a hotel or when taking part in an excursion or activity could mean the difference between someone booking the holiday they so desperately need and want, or opting to stay home," says Peter Dros, sales and marketing director at Fancourt in George.

"Travellers are definitely looking for spacious accommodation, wide-open spaces and the chance to avoid crowds this festive season," says Dros. "But they also need to know that their establishment is taking Covid-19 seriously and that all protocols are in place. We're sharing our safety video, guest reviews and photographs on social media – it makes a huge difference in terms of what to expect!"

## **Flexibility**

Last-minute bookings are on the rise as travellers adopt a 'wait-and-see' approach amidst the uncertainty of Covid-19.

Loathe to lose out on money due to lockdowns, border closures or travel restrictions beyond their control, travellers want to make 100% sure that their trip will go ahead before they confirm their booking – and they're looking for flexible payment and cancellation terms.

Sue Garrett, Flight Centre Travel Group's general manager for product and marketing says that flexible booking has become as much, if not more, of a factor, than price: "Customers need assurance and flexibility to make any travel decision confidently. For example, our new Moneyback Guarantee allows customers the flexibility to cancel their booking, in writing, 24 hours before the intended check-in date, and we will refund immediately – no questions asked."

## **Familiarity**

Amidst masks, sanitiser and social distancing, travellers want to feel normal. This might be a yearning for family beach holidays of past, road trips or visiting destinations they discovered when they were young.

Garrett says homegrown holidays are in demand: "Not only are domestic holidays particularly popular this year as South Africans tighten their purse strings (or avoid the stress and uncertainty of international travel), but also because travellers are looking for normalcy, familiarity and a good dose of nostalgia!"

"It's the year of the self-drive road trip and truly experiential travel," says Garrett. "Homegrown holidays should be designed to meet this desire, giving travellers the product to quickly and safely enjoy holidays that hark back to their childhood or younger days. Think local and regional microcations (holidays shorter than five nights), off the beaten path experiences, hiking weekends, glamping and camping."

## **Experiences**

Since everyone was kept apart from their friends and family for months on end during lockdown, travellers are looking to embrace the opportunity to reconnect with loved ones while away on holiday. There will be a strong focus on taking full advantage of bonding experiences and activities – and there's no doubt people, places, experiences, memories and moments are more important than ever!

The team at South Africa is Travel Ready agree and launched their new #ExperiencesNotThings campaign last week – encouraging people to buy travel, not trinkets this festive season.

Natalia Rosa, MD Big Ambitions, and a member of the South Africa is Travel Ready Collective, said after a tough year, consumers are looking for ways to escape and reconnect meaningfully with others: "A 20-year study by Cornell University

shows how investing in experiences over things delivers 'enduring happiness' as you are able to break out from your everyday routine and try something new when you travel. We hope that people will want to try something new, put a higher value on experiences than on material goods – and will discover new ways to 'escape and reconnect meaningfully with others'.

Happily, South Africa is brimming with excursions, activities and adventures.

"South Africans are spoilt for choice," adds Dros. "And we're particularly lucky on the Garden Route. Our leisure team can help you book anything from hot air balloon trips, boat cruises, wine tasting and picnics to horse riding and Big 5 game drives."

## **Deals on domestic travel**

Due to the stringent requirements placed on individuals looking to travel internationally (i.e. a need to take a Covid test, quarantine, only being able to visit certain 'low risk' destinations, etc.), the vast majority of South Africans will be keen to book a holiday a bit closer to home this year – and they'll be looking for local deals!

"We're definitely looking to add value to our packages at the moment," says Dros, "It could be combo packages, for example, including spa vouchers or a golf of game – or creating local itineraries with other establishments. It is a wonderful opportunity to get South Africans excited about travel again, as well as for travel suppliers to collaborate and support one another throughout the travel industry's revival period," he adds.

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