

# Travel and accommodation trends to watch in 2019

The South African travel industry is entering an era of innovation driven by increased demand for cost efficiency, simplicity and ease of use. Prioritising the critical aspects to your travel and thinking practically are key to ensuring a successful travelling experience - whether for business or leisure - in the current evolving social, political and economic conditions.



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Garnet Basson, Chief Operating Officer of The Capital Hotels and Apartments, notes that, while cost controls are a vital business imperative, 'traveller friction', where rules around travel spending in tough economic times, may lead to unhappy and unproductive travellers.

"Cutting out the frills that business travellers don't need – such as porters and chocolates on pillows – and investing in the services that they really want means that guests and their businesses are happy."

Basson identifies several trends in hotels and accommodation that are likely to impact the industry during in 2019:

## Less is more

Its election year and South Africa is slowly recovering from the technical recession in 2018 - It's tough for everyone now, and the hospitality industry is no different. Everyone is feeling the pinch, and business and leisure travellers alike want more bang for their buck.

## Budgeting for business travel

Corporate travel budgets are ever-tightening, and even though corporate travel accounted for 56% of turnover for ASATA travel agents in 2017 with government travel accounting for 21% of turnover, procurement teams in private and public sectors are keeping tight controls on the purse strings.

This means that fewer business travellers can travel without due consideration for budgets, with hotel groups expecting to

retain this market needing to focus on cutting the frills and offering the 'must-haves' of corporate travel – starting with high-speed Wi-Fi.

## **It's still location, location, location**

Accommodation in central locations close to amenities are likely to be the most popular, regardless of country, with meeting spaces, food options, and entertainment choices being top of the 'must have' list for business and leisure travellers. Hotels that are close enough to main attractions will be able to offer more affordable rates than their competitors in the heart of tourist or business districts, while still offering easy access to food and entertainment destinations of choice.

## **Bleisure blends business and leisure**

With budgets under tighter control, guests are increasingly choosing to 'work, play and stay' to avoid extra travel costs. Venues that offer easy ways to welcome families who are joining their spouse after a business trip will score the incremental extra revenue while earning loyalty as family-friendly destinations.

## **Apartments beat hotels rooms**

Apartment-style hotel accommodation has many benefits to the individual traveller and even to families, especially if you are in a foreign country where simple tasks such as getting your laundry done can be challenging. Apartment hotels offer more space for long stays, and the option to cater for themselves allows travellers to save money by eating in.

Traditionally, travel is shaped by the desire to learn, teach, interact and understand other cultures and people, but changes in consumer behaviour, cost controls and technology are compelling the hotel industry to adapt to the needs of 21st-century travellers, who seek the freedom of choice and the ability to control costs without compromising on their expectations.

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