

Travel trends: How SA corporates can make the most of bleisure travel in 2020

A popular buzzword, bleisure is the conscious decision by business travellers to add days of leisure travel onto a business trip. The concept has proven to be more than just a fad, as the vast majority of all business trips include some leisure components, according to the latest research.



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The second annual [State of Business Travel Survey](#) by National Car Rental shows that 90% of millennials have engaged in bleisure travel in the past year compared with 81% of Generation Xers and 80% of baby boomers.

According to SAP Concur travel and expense data, bleisure trips increased by 20% from 2016 to 2017. During this time, more than 2.2 million bleisure trips were taken by business travellers around the globe, making up 10% of total business trips.

"For the modern corporate who has seen the boundaries of work and personal life increasingly erode over the years, bleisure travel offers the possibility to build a little personal time into their business travel," says Andrew Grunewald, Flight Centre Business Travel brand leader.

Grunewald adds that also for companies, bleisure travel has its advantages. If the traveller decides to arrive a few days early to explore the destination ahead of their meeting, they will be better rested and be able to make a better impression on

the client. Meanwhile, if the business traveller chooses to prolong their stay, they will be incentivised to work more productively and efficiently.

According to the latest research, bleisure travellers report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their quality of life compared to non-bleisure travellers (93% vs. 75%) as well as their work/life balance (87% vs. 64%).

Here are a few best practices for South African bleisure travellers, so that they can make the most of their business travels:

Safety first

Despite the vast majority of companies allowing a bleisure component to employee travel, almost a third (31%) do not extend the protection of their corporate travel risk policy to extra days or leisure time, according to the latest research.

A recent survey conducted by International SOS and CAPA (Centre for Aviation) revealed that nine out of ten people believe the responsibility for the leisure portion of business travel falls to the traveller. What's more, is that one in four organisations have not even considered bleisure in their travel policy.

"Speak to your Travel Management Company (TMC) for help on how to include bleisure travel into the travel policy and ensure your duty of care programme is a part of that," says Grunewald. "It is important to be clear about whether the traveller is covered under the company policy ahead of their travels."

Leverage public holidays and weekends

Try to schedule meetings on a Monday or Friday so that you don't need to take up too many leave days. Better still is if you can schedule your meeting ahead or after a public holiday. 2020 is the best year for this, as a great number of South African Public Holidays will fall on Monday or Friday.

If you can squeeze your business trip in ahead of a public holiday and weekend, you can easily get three days of travelling in a foreign country without losing a single paid holiday. Keep in mind that public holidays are usually associated with inflated flight and hotel costs, so be sure to book early and get a fair price that complies with your company's travel policy.

Look beyond the horizon

A quarter of bleisure travellers say they will add another city to their business trip for leisure purposes.

If you're on business in Brussels, for example, you can easily spend the weekend away in Amsterdam or Paris. Especially if your company is footing the bill for the long-distance flight, you can splurge on a train ride to visit another country.

Take along your family or friends

Although not always possible, taking your family or friends along is a great way to truly enjoy your bleisure trip. When dealing with a TMC, you will benefit from having a range of 'bleisure' options available that can be added seamlessly into your booking.

Keep tabs on your expenses

Can you charge that extra cocktail to your business expenses? Do you have a clear idea where the cut-off is between business and pleasure?

According to SAP Concur, it's common for companies to cover all costs for the days their travellers are there for business as well as the round-trip flight, while the employee foots the bill for anything associated with their personal time off.

"Expense reporting can get difficult if you don't define when business ends and leisure begins," says Grunewald. "Turn to your TMC for guidelines on how to clearly separate the two in your company travel policy."

Don't neglect your business obligations

Bleisure trips are great, but they can never come at the expense of your professional obligations. Remember that business is the reason you're on this trip in the first place. Make sure you're honest with your colleagues and boss if you're planning to tack on some personal days.

The bleisure trend is definitely here to stay. With the increasing globalisation of business, the line between business and leisure travel will continue to blur.

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