

# What business travellers can expect

Business travellers can once again take to the skies as South Africa enters level 3 of the lockdown. Oz Desai, general manager for Corporate Traveller, has welcomed the resumption, but warns that the travel experience will be very different for now.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

"Business travellers can and should expect that the travel rules and regulations will change constantly as risk levels are continuously re-assessed. Working with a professional travel consultant will become a non-negotiable as these experts will be able to advise travellers on the documentation that is required, the airline regulations and requirements as well as the safety guidelines put in place by hotels and other accommodation establishments," says Desai.

"Booking your own travels is all good until something goes wrong. The past few weeks have shown us exactly just how much can go wrong."

Desai outlines what business travellers can expect and how they can prepare for their next business travels:

## 1. International travel is still off the cards

As South Africa's borders remain closed, international passenger flights are still off the cards for now. Only local business travel can resume.

## 2. All work and no play

Minister of Transport Fikile Mbalula has clearly outlined that travel for recreational, leisure or tourism purposes is not allowed for now. Air travel will, therefore, be for business travel only.

## 3. Limited flights will be available

The Ministry has revealed that Cape Town International Airport, King Shaka International and OR Tambo International Airport will open for domestic flights from Monday, 01 June. Lanseria International Airport will open as soon as the availability of Port Health Officers has been confirmed.

At a later stage during Level 3, Kruger Mpumalanga, Polokwane and Bram Fischer International Airports could open followed by Kimberley, Upington, East London, Umtata and Port Elizabeth.

"We are in talks with suppliers to establish which airlines will resume operations under Level 3," explains Desai.

"Airlines have told us they are meeting, discussing and evaluating both their readiness to fly and the commercial viability of doing so. We will continue to update our platforms including our website with the latest updates on which airlines are starting as well as the documentation that will be required."

#### **4. What to expect at the airport?**

Drop off and pick up is only permitted outside the terminal building.

Any traveller who enters the airport will need to wear a face mask and carry documentation from their company outlining the reason for their travels. Without this documentation, travellers will be denied boarding.

All travellers will be screened before entering the terminal building, and will be denied access should they have elevated temperature or present with signs of being infected with Covid-19. Any suspected cases will be reported to health officials. After the flight, upon landing, all passengers will once again be screened and suspected cases referred to health officials.

In a briefing to parliament, the Airports Company of South Africa (ACSA) outlined further measures at the airport. This included the possibility of luggage sanitation for both carry-on and checked luggage, strict social distancing and self-scanning of boarding passes. Boarding will also be staggered to ensure social distancing.

#### **5. What to expect onboard flights**

Airlines will be allowed to operate at full capacity. Minister Mbalula ensured the public that the risk of contracting Covid-19 on aircraft is much lower than in other confined spaces and public transport. He explained that all aircraft are fitted with high-level HEPA filters that eliminate all viruses, including the coronavirus.

To further mitigate the risk of contracting the virus, travellers will be asked to wear masks onboard flights. No catering will be provided onboard, and there will be no onboard magazines available. The last row of the aircraft will be reserved for isolation purposes in the event that a passenger needs to be isolated.

All aircraft will be thoroughly disinfected after each flight.

#### **6. What to expect from accommodation establishments?**

Hotels and accommodation establishments will be open for business travellers only. The establishment will therefore likely ask travellers to confirm that they are travelling on business prior to accepting your booking.

Hotels will have stringent health measures in place. Buffets will likely be scrapped, while room and linen cleaning frequency may be reduced to lower contamination risks and turndown service might be eliminated. To reduce surfaces in rooms, all excess softs cushions, throws, extra blankets etc., and décor items could be removed. Mini-bar stock will have been reduced to a minimum.

The new travel landscape could lead to uncertainty and anxiety for travellers and companies.

Desai suggests that companies get in touch with their travel consultant to discuss the possibility of compiling a clear and transparent travel policy. With unprecedented times comes the need for flexibility, especially with something as important as travel policy. An interim travel policy created for this specific situation is the best way forward and will highlight responsibilities, duty of care and destination restrictions.

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