

The rise of the domestic traveller

 By [Alan Campbell](#)

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International travel continues to be a pipe dream for South Africans as we grapple with the latest news of yet another Covid-19 wave and the possibility of harsher restrictions, come the festive season.

After nearly two years of extremely limited travel options, South Africans, particularly the vaccinated, were excited about the opportunity to travel this year. While the unceremonious red listing on multiple countries has thrown a spanner in our travel plans, unforeseen challenges are nothing new to South Africans.



Alan Campbell

The sudden discovery of the Omicron variant and the arrival of the fourth wave has squashed many travel plans during the festive season. While many South Africans were planning on international travel this year, we've seen a significant rise in domestic travel since the start of the pandemic. This includes business and leisure travel, as these are two separate markets that must be considered and catered for.

The biggest point of contention for many South Africans is the uncertainty. Just when things seem to be returning to a semblance of normalcy, we're hit with a new variant or spike in positive cases throughout the country, and we're brought back into the harsh reality of the times we're in.

As such, safety continues to be paramount to everyone in the hospitality industry, especially during the festive season. Hotels have remained cautious throughout the pandemic, specifically in terms of social distancing and hygiene, and this season will be no different.

For corporates, business travel is the nature of the game, and while we expect to see an upswing in business travellers, we've noticed smaller groups than before. As such, ANEW ensures that we provide comfortable, functional workspaces and amenities for travellers during this time. We've also been tapping into technology as a way forward for our business. This includes self-check-in, an initiative we launched a few months ago to reduce contact at hotel entry points, which is critical with so many feet through doors.

As a business, it's about looking after the individual needs of the guests while ensuring a safe environment for all, which was a tricky concept that all hotels have needed to navigate. People still want to feel welcome, and service with a smile remains a top priority.

Too large a cost

The increase in domestic travellers can be attributed to various factors. For one, overseas travel restrictions certainly played a major role in South Africans choosing to travel locally. What's more, the quarantine requirements when arriving abroad means we're spending exorbitant amounts of money on hotel accommodation before the trip even begins. So, the expense of international travel is exacerbated by the time South Africans need to spend in quarantine. As such, domestic travel is becoming more appealing and cost-effective.

South Africans are embracing our fantastic climate mixed with incredible adventure and travel opportunities in every province. Our country is really an attractive option from an affordability perspective and as an alternative to international travel. It's simply a no brainer.

Growth in self-catering options

There are typically two types of leisure travellers - those wanting to splurge on a luxury holiday experience and budget-conscious travellers looking for family-friendly options close to various amenities and activities. Due to the latter, we expect to see a dramatic increase in demand for self-catering accommodation. On the business traveller front, guests staying for weeks at a time will likely want the flexibility of catering for themselves when the need arises.

Our leisure properties have seen a massive influx on the weekends. Short stays, family trips and long weekends are booked-out ages in advance as domestic travellers make the most of this time with friends and families. So, I think this will be a big focus in 2022.

The uncertainties around international travel will not disappear overnight – they'll probably be with us for a lot longer than we'd like. While there's been a vast increase in vaccination numbers, we're still nowhere near where we need to be.

I don't think people are willing to take the gamble travelling overseas, so they're looking inward at domestic travel opportunities. Locals want to explore South Africa in a way that they never had, and this is something that I really want to encourage. Covid-19 highlighted how fast and drastically things can change, so people should take this opportunity to discover the variety of spectacles our country has to offer.

South Africans have had our fair share of challenges, and to others, these hurdles seem so insurmountable. Yet, we persevere and continue to find different ways to do things. When one door closes, another opens for South Africans. I think that's what makes us special. We don't let the world define what we're capable of or allowed to do. We find a way -

that's what being South African is all about.

ABOUT ALAN CAMPBELL

Alan Campbell is Sales and Marketing Director at ANEW Hotels & Resorts.

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