

Bleisure is booming - The time for blending business and leisure is now

 By [Odette Faling](#)

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Like most industries, travel has its fair share of insider expressions and "bleisure" is right up there with "staycation", "babymoon" and "voluntourism" in the trade's glossary of peculiar portmanteaus. Even if the term prompts a few eye rolls from buzzword-loathing individuals, bleisure makes a convincing case for the growing number of business travellers with a tendency to live it up in the places they travel to for work.

Coined by industry pundits ten years ago, today bleisure is abuzz as the possibilities of merging two separate reasons to travel catch on in the business of travel.



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Research by the Global Business Travel Association found that bleisure travel accounts for 7% of all business trips. While the study focused on American business travellers, the behaviour has not gone unnoticed in our neck of the woods and some travel shops are responding with purpose-built add-ons. Newer research by Expedia found global bleisure travel is up 40% since 2016 proving that the number of travellers who indulge in destinations they visit professionally, is not slowing down.

In South Africa, bleisure travel presents opportunities on three sides of the same triangle so travel companies can cater for the trend across a trio of segments: international business travellers who visit our shores to attend conferences, meetings and commercial activities, outbound business travellers and professionals travelling within South Africa.

South Africa – an ideal reason to promote bleisure

While the long-haul location of South Africa may be a deterrent for some globetrotters, the distance offers inbound tourism players plenty of possibilities to sway those visitors who might consider extending their stay when business is concluded. Our landmarks, sights and destinations sell themselves and their abundance and accessibility make bleisure a no brainer

for business travellers from abroad – indeed, inbound tourism operators have their work cut out for them.



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South Africa's domestic air travel brands and world-class airports make it easy to connect to most corners of the country with frequent flights and quick, direct routes. Airfares are competitive and travelling professionals have myriad reputable airlines to choose from including low-cost carriers; most of which have an excellent on-time record. In addition, our tourism facilities and attractions are well-resourced to accommodate foreign business visitors who want to spend their down time effectively, and in most cases, a foreigner-friendly exchange rate lends itself to discovering Cape Town and the Garden Route, Kruger National Park and the Drakensberg to name a few.

Make outbound corporate travel more "bleisurable"

Without a doubt, the strain of international corporate travel is easier to bear when one is permitted to absorb the fun side of a far-off place. Overseas corporate travellers who combine business and leisure are likely to return fulfilled when they have out of office stories to share. Remote connectivity has advanced to a point where exploring a destination on a work trip is realistic, especially for those limited by few leave days and lack of funds for personal holidays out of the country.

Domestic business travellers will bleisure...

Domestic jetsetters demonstrate a craving to stay on in the towns and cities they visit for work. Whether they want to reconnect with family and friends residing in a destination or soak up entertainment and events that coincide with their trip, businesspeople, the younger group especially, is likely to shell out a bit extra to lengthen their stay... especially when main travel costs (flights, accommodation and transport) are covered by their employer.

An ongoing survey by [Travelcheck.co.za](https://www.travelcheck.co.za) reveals that business is the primary purpose of travel for 14% of eight hundred South African travellers. More than 30% say they travel for both business and leisure. Local hospitality brands such as Tsogo Sun have gotten onboard and package business and leisure with add-ons and experiences designed to get workers out and about after hours. At the 2019 World Travel Market, acting CEO of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Phindile Makwakwa said "bleisure is booming" and she encourages the industry to tap into the expanding market of conference-goers and business travellers with a desire to explore an area beyond the boardroom.



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As more people prioritise a better work-life balance, employers are warming to bleisure with the aim of showing appreciation for their employees and retaining talent by enriching their idle hours on work trips. Furthermore, including leisure and life experiences outside the office can boost performance as employees are motivated by meaningful life experiences with support from their manager. While the travel industry should focus on packaging bleisure so that it is frictionless, HR practitioners must come up with work travel policies that manage expectations and set appropriate boundaries.

Business trips are no longer confined to conference venues, airplanes, airports, taxis and offices and people want to take in the culture and lifestyle of the places they end up. For those who don't get to travel in their personal capacity, blending business trips with leisure time can bring a lot of value.

It's up to industry participants to move on opportunities that can make bleisure a viable and rewarding choice for business travellers. In this instance, hotels, airlines, attractions, MICE, tour operators, DMCs and travel agents should put their heads together and package bleisure so that it's an obvious choice to tack on a few extra days or return to a destination in holiday mode. The travellers are willing; is the trade?

ABOUT ODETTE FALING

Odette Faling is the CEO of South Africa's newest online travel agency, Travelcheck.co.za. After 12 years in ecommerce she has gained deep knowledge in developing partnerships and marketing strategies to help companies grow.

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