

Top tips on making business travel worth your while

It may seem like the days of face-to-face meetings are numbered with the rise of conference calls and video conferencing systems. However, a number of business leaders and industrial psychologists reckon that there's no substitute for meeting someone in person, especially at critical junctures in a business relationship - like introducing yourself or closing a deal. The question is, how do you make business travel less stressful and worth your while? Dawn Weir, head of Kulula Work, the direct distribution channel of Kulula specialising in corporate travel, suggests the following:



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Maximise the business benefits:

Weir says that business travel can benefit the individual traveller and their business, whether it's a small enterprise or a multinational conglomerate. British Airways On Business, for example, enables your enterprise to earn points when you travel on BA, Iberia and American Airlines, and you're entitled to members-only offers and discounts. BA Executive Club enables you to graduate to higher tiers where you can, for example, get cabin upgrades and access to business lounges, and use the points to take your family on holiday with you.

Be travel ready:

In this busy, always-connected corporate life so many of us lead, you can never be too prepared to travel at a moment's notice. Weir admits to being a super organised individual and has a travel drawer with her travel necessities, ready to pack at a moment's notice. This drawer includes luggage labels, extra ID and passport photos, toothbrush cover, toiletry bag with miniatures (shampoo, hand sanitiser and moisturiser), a travel brush, neck cushion and eye masks.

Go paperless:

Chances are that you already use apps to check in online and stash your boarding pass. Saving all travel documents and passport copies to your smartphone or tablet can also be useful if you mislay the hard copies. Most seasoned travellers have harnessed the power of technology to some extent, and Weir suggests the following apps for those who don't already have them.

- Scannable enables the camera on your smartphone to record documents at a quality similar to those that have been scanned or photocopied. Take a picture of that all-important, game-changing, freshly-signed contract and the app straightens and neatens it so you can email it. It's quick and discreet, and it's also a way to keep track of your expenses: take a shot of your receipts and email them to your accounts department.

- There's no shortage of online project-management tools, but Trello has earned the loyalty of its 10m users through the canny use of colour-codes and to-do lists and timelines.

- AroundMe uses your mobile device's GPS to find facilities like banks, ATMs, parking-garages, eateries and medical facilities, while Wi-fi Finder does the same but for Wi-Fi hotspots.

Take a breather:

Airport lounges provide a haven from the hubbub of departure-lounges, but not all are equal by any means. The best ones have space for some work, high-speed Wi-Fi, a good selection of food, a decent wine list, and facilities to shower and freshen up.

The SLOW Lounges at a number of South African airports have these facilities, and there's even one at the Radisson Blu Hotel opposite the Sandton Gautrain station (SLOW in the City), which provides boardrooms, lounges, and can arrange for private areas to do business lunches and interviews, with the benefit of waiters on call for food and drink orders. A new lounge recently opened at Lanseria International Airport called SLOW XS and has, among its many attractions, wine tastings offered by local drinks specialists Winesense and is exclusive to FNB/RMB cardholders and Kulula passengers.



Slow Lounge to open at Lanseria International Airport

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Add some colour:

Many business travellers will go to great lengths to ensure they only travel with cabin-luggage, but if you do have to check luggage into the hold, take a moment to familiarise yourself with bag-drop arrangements and any restrictions on the size of cabin-luggage. Also, many travellers find it helpful to mark their luggage with a brightly-coloured tag of some sort that makes it readily recognisable on the conveyor.

Stash it all:

So, you have your boarding pass on your smartphone and you've stashed keys, wallet and change in your carry-on baggage, to save you time passing through the metal detectors at the security checkpoint. If you're travelling internationally, you may have opted to wear slip-on shoes and to pack your belt in your carry-on luggage to avoid having to take them off and put them back on again at security. We've all stood behind fellow travellers who arrive at the checkpoint with coins and keys in every pocket, and electronic devices in the bottom of a suitcase. There's not much you can do about that, but you

can make your own passage through the metal detectors easier.

Hydrate and rest when flying:

Weir says many business travellers tend to put in more working hours when away from the office and home. Rather than attending to every outstanding email in your inbox on-board, deal with the top five and then shut your laptop down and rest. As much as the free on-board booze may seem attractive at the time, if you tittle in moderation and drink plenty of water you'll feel a whole lot better when you arrive at your destination.

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