

# WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

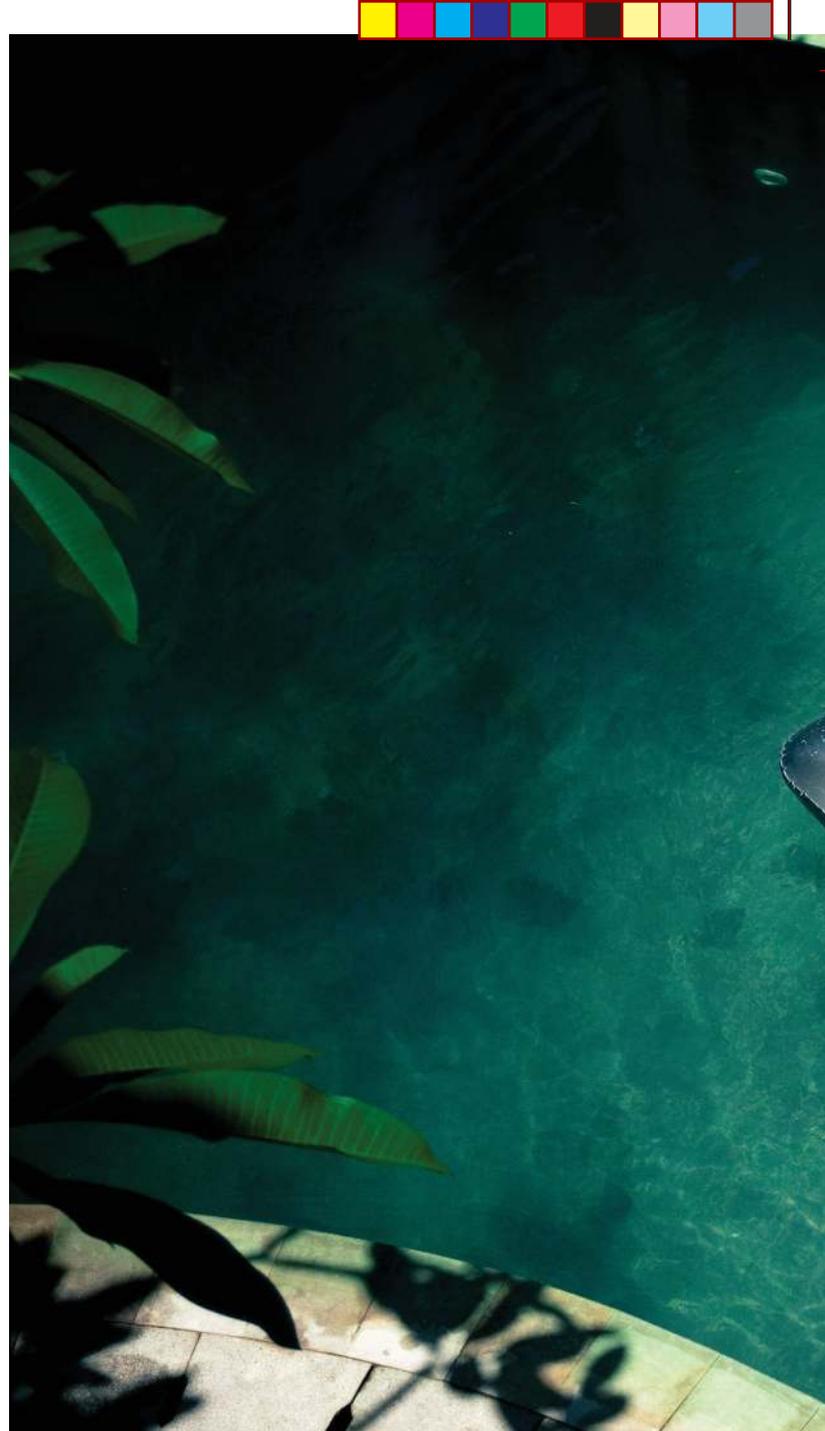
**BUSINESS TRIPS MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE THE MOST EXCITING, BUT TAKING A FEW EXTRA DAYS TO EXPLORE THE CITY OR COUNTRY YOU'VE LANDED IN CAN BE A MAJOR PERK. WHAT'S MORE, EXPERTS HAVE FOUND THAT IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR CAREER, TOO.**

**WORDS: IGA MOTYLSKA (@eagerjourneys)**

**N**o one needs to be any the wiser that you're responding to emails from a sun-drenched lounge looking at the view of Cape Town's coastline before switching your laptop off for some weekend downtime.

While many business travellers might not be familiar with the portmanteau 'bleisure' – where professionals extend their business trips to include a few days of leisure travelling – it's a growing trend in the business travel sector. According to *Travel Weekly's* 2016 Consumer Trends Report, bleisure trips have increased by 6% across the globe since 2012, with women and millennials being the most likely demographics to take a bit of R&R to balance out their professional obligations.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that this trend is on the rise. Gone are the days of employees having to clock in and out for their nine-to-five. In fact, gone are the days of nine-to-fives. An increase in connectivity due to the advent of mobile technology means that employees can work anywhere at any time, provided they have a reliable internet connection.



With business travel having become part and parcel of corporate life, and jam-packed schedules during trips, it makes sense that more than a quarter of bleisurites take time off from work and extend their stay either before or after business is taken care of.

Besides giving you a bit of a thrill, taking a few days off to explore a new country or city is also legitimately good for your career. Bleisure encourages a healthier work-life balance and helps you to destress, leaving you feeling rested and hence more productive on your return to work.

According to *The Bleisure Report 2014*, 78% of bleisurites believed that adding a few personal days to a business trip made their professional assignment more rewarding and benefitted them as an employee. In addition, the report stated that more than half of bleisurites bring their significant others or family members along on business when extending for a few days.

"Bleisure may improve an employee's willingness to travel for work, which can place quite a lot of stress on the body and mind. If the employee is not considered holistically – that they are not just



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Instead of staying couped up in your hotel room on your next business trip, why not explore the streets outside?

## TRAVEL SOUTH AFRICA

at the company to work, but that they also have family – it will place more stress on the relationships at home, which becomes cyclical and may impact on the employee’s output,” says clinical psychologist Sarah Newstead.

Besides the psychological benefits, bleisure saves both the employer and employee valuable man-hours. Staff are able to minimise the amount of leave they take because they don’t have to include travel time in their application, while employers have their workforce out of the office for fewer days in total. It makes sense, then, for companies to incentivise this type of travel – and that’s without considering the fact that these perks also tend to increase employee’s loyalty, thereby lowering staff turnover in the long run.

According to the Tourism Performance Highlights 2017 report published by South African Tourism, South Africans took more than 1.9 million local business trips. And they’re not the only ones who are who are taking advantage of their business travel time.

“Bleisure is a growing trend in East Africa. We always make it a point to have pre- and post-conference leisure offers available,”

says Rosemary Mugambi, Regional Sales and Marketing Director for Serena Hotels East Africa, which owns 24 properties across the continent.

“With the current emphasis on changing one’s lifestyle to embrace wellness, the keenness of business executives to adapt their lives to be more balanced is pushing the hospitality industry to encourage wellness, which creates a platform to build up bleisure,” she continues.

“The future of bleisure is bright as a new business opportunity. The wellbeing of our guests is top of mind and, at Serena Hotels, we are continually improving our products and facilities to keep up. We’ve introduced menus with more healthy options as well as activities such as hikes, mountain climbing, yoga and even painting,” says Rosemary.

So, the verdict’s out: work hard and play even harder in 2018 by booking yourself off for a few days and exploring a new destination on the back of your business trip. Just be sure to send your boss a postcard.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCKPHOTO, DANNY KEKSPRO, COURTESY IMAGES



# The best international bleisure destinations

Condé Nast Traveller recently released its Reader's Choice of the best cities for mixing business and leisure. If you have one of these cities on your conference itinerary, be sure to extend your stay.

## 1 CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**Industries:** Finance, real estate, agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, tourism and hospitality

**Why stay?** With world-class hotels, stunning views, a cutting-edge art scene and some of the best restaurants in the world, the Mother City really does have it all.

## 2 BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

**Industries:** Automotive, electronics, information technology, pharmaceuticals and medical

**Why stay?** The birthplace to countless inventions over the centuries, this dynamic capital city, split in half by the Danube River, blends the old with the new in the most novel way.

## 3 ROME, ITALY

**Industries:** Tourism, hospitality, government, fashion, film, telecommunications, publishing

**Why stay?** One of the most exhilarating and romantic destinations in the world, the aptly name Eternal City has been attracting visitors for millennia – and for good reason.

## 4 BARCELONA, SPAIN

**Industries:** Manufacturing, textiles and fashion, expos and conventions, tourism and hospitality

**Why stay?** From stunning architecture to famous works of art, Barcelona is a treat for the culturally inclined. Eat, drink and be merry at the lively bars and tapas restaurants in this cosmopolitan city.

## 5 BANGKOK, THAILAND

**Industries:** Manufacturing, commerce, textiles, tourism and hospitality

**Why stay?** Although it's a bustling metropolis with soaring skyscrapers, Bangkok is still steeped in tradition. Visit colourful temples and royal palaces before dining al fresco on the 60th floor. ●

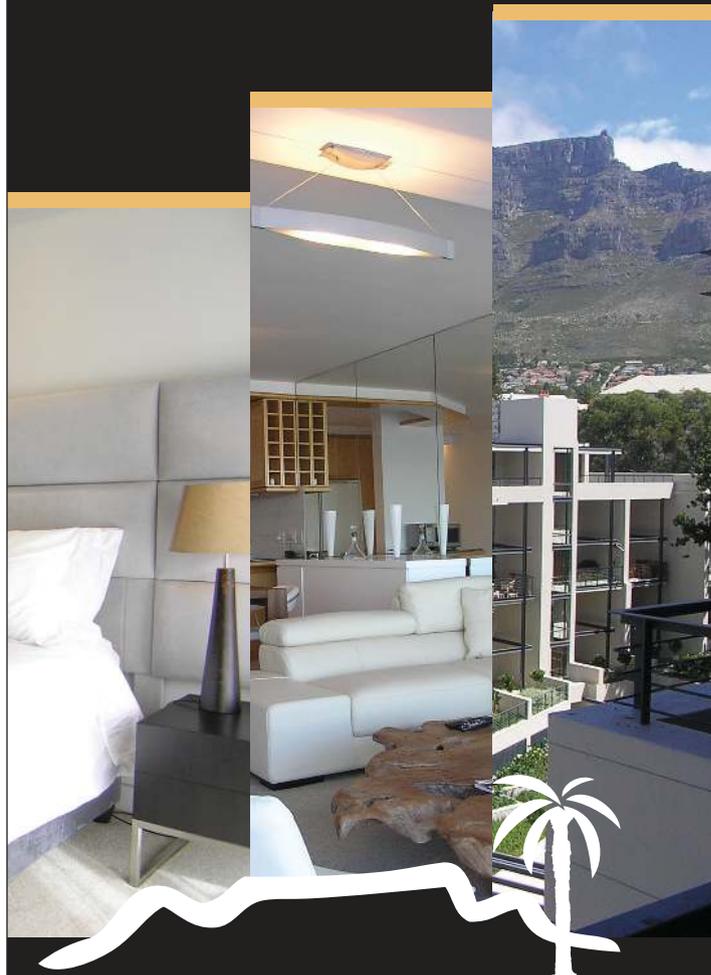


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