

## Business travel in Africa risk report

Africa's emergence as an economic growth zone is attracting business investment - both from other countries on the continent and abroad. As interest and foreign direct investment into the region grows, so will the amount of travel for South African and global business executives.



Image by 123RF

However, according to Annelie Smith, corporate executive at Risk Benefit Solutions (RBS), many of the businesses expanding into the region do not have the appropriate risk management procedures in place for staff traveling into these regions.

“Similar to doing business, each country has unique challenges in terms of infrastructure and regulations, and the same is true for travel risks.”

She says that representatives travelling for business need to have precautions in place for each region of travel as the associated risks could potentially expose both the staff and businesses to danger as well as significant additional expenses.

It was reported that 50% of the members of the American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa are Fortune 500 companies and that over 90% of these companies operate beyond South Africa's borders. Smith says that as companies are steadily expanding their presence across the continent, business owners and executives need to be conscious of not only the challenges of doing business from a risk management aspect, but also those associated with travel.

“Africa is not one single market and shouldn't be treated as such when making travel arrangements. Similar to doing business, each country has unique challenges in terms of infrastructure and regulations, and the same is true for travel risks.”

Smith adds that aside from the legal visa requirement for many destinations, correct travel insurance could just be the difference between a safe passage home, and not coming back at all.

The recently released [International SOS Travel Risk Map 2016](#) – a comprehensive overview of risks by

destination to aid organisations and staff in their travel risk mitigation efforts – highlights the disconnect between travellers' preparation for travel and the reality of what travel actually entails. It revealed that 71% of senior executive travellers have experienced medical problems abroad, yet only 15% had adequately researched local healthcare prior to travelling.

She adds that rising political and social unrest have further increased the risk of business travel. According to the [Global Kidnap Review 2016](#), the threat of kidnapping in Africa has also increased due to militant activity. Kidnapping in Africa accounted for 34% of reported cases worldwide in 2015 - making it the second highest number of incidents per region.

Smith says that these statistics highlight the many risks associated with traveling into Africa, aside from stolen or lost luggage protection. "Medical and travel security issues may require extensive medical treatment, emergency medical evacuation, flight cancellations or even kidnap and ransom cover – all of which necessitate comprehensive cover.

"There unfortunately isn't a one size-fits-all approach for travel insurance, and businesses should provide sufficient protection for their staff depending on the potential risks that may be encountered in the specific region they will be visiting.

"Those that have taken the necessary precautionary measures in advance will be better positioned to contain and contain incidents, thereby ensuring the safety of the employee," concludes Smith.

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