

Top 3 destinations for SA business travel in 2024

South African business travellers have a myriad of options, yet three standout destinations take the lead for 2024: the UK, Singapore, and the UAE. According to Bonnie Smith, general manager of FCM, these locations emerged as the most favoured international travel destinations among South African business travellers in the final quarter of 2023, with strong indications suggesting their continued dominance in 2024.



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"Economic ties, trade partnerships, and flight routes play a big role in the popularity of overseas destinations for South African business travellers," explains Smith, "And these three locations check all the boxes."

The United Kingdom – a classic choice

The United Kingdom has always been a top pick for South African business travellers, and it looks like 2024 won't be any different. According to a Statista survey, professionals are heading to the UK mainly for client meetings, training sessions, and conferences.

"Travelling to the UK for business is doable in 11 hours, and the time difference is convenient. Plus, with over 200,000 South Africans living in the UK, it also offers a chance to combine work with family time for many," says Smith.



Source: Supplied

But there's more to this love story. The UK and South Africa share strong economic ties, trading in various goods like minerals and agricultural products, and South African businesses have a presence in sectors such as finance, manufacturing, telecoms, and mining in the UK.

According to a Global Business Travel study, room prices in London are projected to rise by 9%. To stay ahead of these increases, it's essential to prioritise your supplier negotiations as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can reach out to your Travel Management Company (TMC) to explore how they can assist you in managing these rising costs.

Singapore – an evolving partnership

Singapore's appeal to South African business travellers has a lot to do with its evolving relationship with Africa. In 2018, only 60 Singaporean companies operated in Africa. More than 155 are actively involved, making Singapore one of Africa's top ten investors.



Source: Supplied

In a sign of this deepening connection, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made a significant trip to Africa in May 2023, where he met with President Cyril Ramaphosa. Their discussions resulted in substantial agreements covering sectors like technology, sustainability, and skills development.

Trade relations have also flourished, with the exchange amounting to a substantial \$14.38 billion in 2022. So, it's no wonder South African business travellers are increasingly drawn to Singapore, where opportunities are ripe and partnerships are flourishing.

UAE – a rising hub for change

In June 2023, the Dubai International Chamber (DIC) opened an office in Johannesburg. This move aimed to make it easier for businesses from both places to get together and do business.

The chamber has over 70 South African companies on its list, a 77% increase since 2016. South Africa happens to be the UAE's top trading partner in Africa, which is probably why it's become a hot destination for South African business travellers in 2023,



Source: Supplied

"Part of the reason for this increased interest is that Emirates has upped the number of flights to South Africa. From March 2023, the frequency of Emirates flights from South Africa was increased to 42 weekly flights," says Smith.

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