

Business travel etiquette - have the rules changed?

 By Oz Desai

9 Nov 2021

Life looks a whole lot different since the dawn of Covid - face masks, elbow greetings, temperature checks at practically every entrance, and an overwhelming amount of sanitiser dominating our days. And business travel definitely isn't an exception. Not only has the way in which we travel transformed (think pre-travel Covid tests, proof of vaccination and mask mandates, etc.), but the etiquette surrounding the intricacies of our business trips has changed too.



Source: JoshuaWoronecki via [Pixabay](#)

Are handshakes back in or is the slightly awkward elbow 'bump' here to stay? How do you approach management to request a business class seat as opposed to sitting in economy when you're worried about social distancing and possible exposure onboard your flight? Are tangible business cards still acceptable, or are they seen as a Covid risk? If so, what's the alternative?

Here are the answers to these questions, and many more, below.

What if I'm not feeling confident enough to return to business travel just yet?

According to Business Wire, corporate travel levels are expected to rise up to an estimated 70% of pre-Covid levels by the end of 2021, but that doesn't mean that everyone is feeling confident to get back to 'normal' just yet.

Organise a sit-down with HR, management, and your company's TMC to discuss measures that could help you feel more comfortable about the prospect of a business trip, such as a carefully-tailored itinerary, vetted accommodation, direct flights and whether premium cabin travel is an option. Of course, you'll need to be fully vaccinated at least two weeks before you're due to depart for optimal protection and peace of mind.

Is it ok to approach management to request to travel business class?

As mentioned, many corporate travellers will feel uneasy about travelling economy class due to concerns about social

distancing. While airlines have gone out of their way to maximise safety for all passengers, you're still well within your rights to request an upgrade from management if it will make you feel calmer about your impending trip. So feel free to broach this topic with conviction!

Is it ok to request to stay at a specific hotel for safety reasons?

Keep in mind that a higher star rating doesn't necessarily mean that a hotel is 'safer'. Instead, it's important to conduct lots of research into the various Covid protocols put in place at a prospective accommodation establishment.

This is where a reputable TMC really comes in handy. The team will have handled the required investigations to ensure that all business travellers are booked into a hotel or guesthouse where their safety is viewed as absolutely paramount.

Travellers who still feel uneasy regarding the accommodation chosen for them should request a detailed list and explanation of these various protocols.

What if I'm uncomfortable using public transport during my stay?

If you're feeling uncomfortable about using public transport, you can always request to hire a personal vehicle for the duration of your stay. However, note that rental cars are currently in short supply across the globe, in large part due to the fact that many vehicle rental companies sold off a decent portion of their fleet due to the economic impact of Covid-19.

As such, it's vital to discuss your preference to hire a car with management and your company's TMC well ahead of time to avoid any issues or disappointment.

What if a fellow traveller is not complying with Covid regulations during a flight?

For your own safety and that of others, it's crucial to bring any lack of passenger compliance to the attention of your flight attendants. They will be well-trained on how to deal with the situation swiftly and appropriately.

Is there any new face-to-face meeting etiquette I should be aware of?

Yes. Always enquire regarding a company's unique Covid procedures, protocols, and requirements before attending any in-person meetings.

For example, you might be expected to fill in health questionnaires or to bring your proof of vaccination along. Not only will enquiring about these particulars help to ensure that you're fully compliant, but it will also provide you with peace of mind that your health and safety has been made a priority while doing business at that particular establishment.

Are handshakes back in or still best avoided?

The handshake has been a go-to greeting for centuries but considering how the Covid-19 virus is spread, it's still currently very much in limbo. Ultimately, handshakes are safer if you've been vaccinated, but that doesn't mean you're 100% safe from infection! If you do decide to shake hands with someone, it's recommended to wash or sanitise immediately afterwards.

If you choose not to shake hands, rest assured that most people won't take offence. At the end of the day, it's a personal decision, and everyone's decision regarding the matter should be respected.

ABOUT OZ DESAI

With a proven track record in business management and finance, Oz Desai heads up Flight Centre Travel Group's dynamic Corporate Traveller brand in South Africa. Having worked in a retail travel, management and finance environment within the Flight Centre group, Desai's first-hand experience brings great depth to the role of positioning Corporate Traveller as the preferred provider of travel solutions to corporate South Africa.

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