

Domestic travel takes dip, but appetite for international travel remains healthy

Members of the Association of Southern African Travel Agents (ASATA) confirmed that, despite reports this week that South African travellers are taking fewer local trips and spending less when they travel domestically, there is still a healthy appetite for international travel. South Africans, however, are shopping around for the best international travel deals and are opting for destinations that are visa free as visas can be a significant expense and a time-consuming task.



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Travel trends: More bang for buck

“Clients are certainly looking for more bang for their buck, but still have a great appetite for travel,” says Vtravel’s Vanessa Frankal. “We find that although South African travellers are tightening their belt in some respects, they are prepared to pay more when presented with an option that gives them better value.”

“There’s definitely an appetite for travel among South Africans, but we’ve seen a change in the type of holiday that clients are choosing. Three- and four-star hotel requests are on the rise, all-inclusive is trending and added value is expected,” says Flora Fubbs, senior manager marketing at The Holiday Factory.

Increasingly South Africans are comparing the cost of local travel to regional and international travel destinations that offer competitive pricing and value for money, explains Luana Visagie, marketing manager, Club Travel. “Value for money and

destinations offering all-inclusive packages continue to grow in appeal.

Thompsons Holidays agrees local travel has declined because when it is compared to seven-night packages to Zanzibar and Thailand, it is often more expensive. “The Indian Ocean Islands are booming, as is the Far East where the most popular destinations remain Thailand and Bali. The current trend seems to be shorter trips, but more frequently,” explains media and PR manager John Ridler.

Popular destinations

Popular destinations for South Africans, in addition to Thailand and Bali, include Greece, India, the USA and Disney World, adds Annemarie Lexow, Travel Vision Sales and Marketing Manager. “The average length of these tailor-made packages is about seven days at the moment.”

Portugal and Spain have also been on the radar for South Africans, explains Theresa Szejwallo, Managing Director Trafalgar South Africa. “These destinations offer South Africans great value and the depth of experiences on offer make them extremely popular among our guided holiday destinations. We’ve also seen that Christmas Markets in Europe are a popular choice for December holidays.

“There are some very good specials out in the market to encourage South Africans to travel globally, from early bird to book now, pay later deals, and even rand guarantees so that South Africans are not penalised when the rand exchange rate dips. Important for South Africans is to check all the inclusions on their package so that they know upfront what is included and the value that they’ll get from their experience.”

Cruise and guided holidays popular

Also important for South Africans, is knowing as much as possible in advance what they’re going to be paying for their holiday, which is why resort, cruise and guided holidays remain popular this season.

“Many cruise lines offer all-inclusive sailings, the option to buy drinks and Wi-Fi packages or special discount packages with drinks included so you know upfront what your holiday is going to cost you. It’s important to understand what these inclusions are up front so that you don’t end up paying extra when you’re on the ship,” explains Jane Davidson, director, Development Promotions.

Sounds too good to be true?

As travellers gear up to plan and book their December holidays, ASATA CEO Otto de Vries warns against booking something that sounds too good to be true. “We find this time of year that fraudsters tend to target unsuspecting travellers with incredible holiday deals that are simply not viable. Once you’ve booked your holiday, you’ll have no recourse, and in most cases no holiday.

“If you’re looking to book your holiday, first and foremost ensure that you are dealing with a bona fide company and secondly, check on the ASATA website if they are an ASATA member so that you can travel with peace of mind this December.”