

the **Business**travel

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UNDER THE COVERS

*An extended guide to
business accommodation*



Traveller safety
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TALKING TRAVEL: RAY MEARS

Risky BUSINESS

Traveller safety remains top of the agenda, writes **Benjamin Coren**, who finds out how the latest developments are helping corporates inform and assist their business travellers

A nasty stomach bug, a road traffic accident or even a major terrorist incident – what’s the biggest concern for business travellers today?

Human nature probably suggests it’s the latter. Widespread media coverage of recent attacks, such as the outrages in Manchester, central London and Nice, obviously put the spotlight on the most extreme threats.

But the truth for corporates is that the question is the wrong one. Anything that could impact the safety and wellbeing of employees is a cause for concern – underlining the need for robust safety protocols and risk mitigation processes.

“Duty of care, risk management, traveller tracking – these are all topics that are high on corporates’ agendas,” says Wings Travel Management’s Chief Operating Officer UK/Europe and Americas, Paul East.

“Many companies tend only to focus on the obvious risks and threats – natural disasters, terror attacks and kidnapping – but it’s also important to consider incidents such as medical emergencies, or accidents while travelling. First and foremost, any corporate should have a process in place for traveller tracking, so that they know where their people are at any given time should there be an emergency.”

In fact, the responsibilities of businesses today and the policies in place must meet strict duty of care laws – something the vast majority of medium- and large-sized companies are now familiar with.

But it’s not a matter of just ‘ticking the box’ and having the most basic traveller tracking practices in place; companies need to demonstrate that traveller wellbeing and safety is accounted for, and there are some aspects of particular importance.

Julie Oliver, Managing Director at Business Travel Direct, says: “As a minimum all companies should have a travel policy that provides guidance for both travellers and

suppliers. It is essential to think about suppliers, as they can be key to helping ensure travellers are kept safe.

"Pre-planning is much better than trying to address issues during a trip. That includes simple things like having a detailed itinerary, which helps to narrow down where travellers should be. Having this information also opens up other channels of communication such as hotel suppliers or airlines."

Corporate concerns

American Express Global Business Travel (GBT) recently partnered with the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) to evaluate the impact of geopolitical change and travel disruption on business travellers.

The study found that 56% of corporate travel managers reported heightened personal security concerns among travellers in early 2017, while 54% say travellers have expressed new concern about travel to the US in light of Trump-inspired changes to immigration and visa policies.

"The pace of change – and the amount of anxiety – in the corporate travel industry has accelerated tremendously over the past three to six months, and it will be critical for companies to stay ahead of the curve if their employees are to remain productive and happy on the road," says Greeley Koch, Executive Director of ACTE.

"Luckily, travel technologies are evolving just as fast and offering executives and planners new tools to address happiness, safety and security."

The study also found that 87% of buyers plan to improve safety training, with one third having introduced changes already.

The future of security

New developments in the security arena are announced regularly. Simply knowing where employees should be, with itinerary tracking, is rapidly being complemented with GPS tracking apps and devices allowing real-time visibility. These operate outside of mobile phone networks – usually the first thing to fail if a major incident occurs.

In the past, traveller privacy may have been a concern, but such apps are increasingly an 'easy sell' for companies if they take time to explain duty of care to their travellers.

George Taylor, iJet's Vice President of Global Operations, says: "I see the need to account for employees' whereabouts evolving beyond only high-risk travel. Attacks in Europe and other traditionally low-risk locations have demonstrated that crisis situations can happen anywhere.

"While full-time tracking may not be necessary, the ability to turn on a tracking feature in times of crisis will become increasingly relevant," adds Taylor.

“Live location data will allow companies to make instant decisions about threats and redirect travellers to safety”

Going forward, he suggests real-time location data will allow companies to make instant decisions about threats and redirect travellers away from danger. Additionally, data generated by tracking will be used to make informed decisions on future travel.

International SOS is currently operating the seventh iteration of its TravelTracker software, enabling employers to locate travellers and educate them on their locations, says James Wood, Regional Security Operations Manager.

"Travel tracking technology has become a lot more integrated. There is an increased and more immediate awareness and the ability to communicate in real-time is greater. Our technology can send advice and receive a message back in. In the future it will also be tying in with greater geographic accuracy. This will plot safe locations the travellers are in and look at

sites they are moving to," says Wood.

Traveller safety is also closely linked to traveller wellbeing, says Randall Gordon-Duff, Head of Product, Corporate Travel, at Collinson Group, who believes neither should be subjected to cost-cutting measures.

"Companies should evaluate what they are offering to employees in the context of their wellbeing," he says. "Not every company will need to invest in business class tickets or high-end hotels, but better trip quality means better business impact and when travellers are well looked after, risks to their health and safety are mitigated."

He continues, "The optimal results between cost containment and ensuring staff performance in a safe and productive environment can only be achieved when travel management is not viewed solely through the lens of a financial matrix." ▶

[CASE STUDY: ATP / PETROFAC]

In January 2013, ATP assisted oil company Petrofac in the evacuation of approximately 300 of their staff in Algeria because of a security risk posed by a terrorist attack on the Amenas Gas Plant. Petrofac partner BP had chartered three planes to airlift Petrofac workers and their own staff to safety. The flights were due to arrive at Gatwick on the same evening and ATP's role would be to provide support on-site and arrange onward transportation for employees to their home nations. During the first hour after receiving the call ATP established a disaster recovery team and dedicated phone numbers to handle the emergency, plus a unique client account that would streamline cost and administration of the situation. The projected arrival time at Gatwick changed constantly, resulting in onward reservations frequently being altered which included individual flights and travel for a group of 43 to Dubai and onward connections. Two of the aircraft were diverted to Dubai and the third charter arrived on the second night. ATP's online booking tools were used to provide instant schedule information for the changing requirements.

► **The highest levels of protection**

When business requires sending travellers to volatile destinations a new level of protection is required, *writes Neal Baldwin.*

In June 2012 Canadian aid worker Steve Dennis was kidnapped at the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya along with three colleagues. During the attack, Dennis was shot in the thigh and his driver killed.

Held captive in neighbouring Somalia for four days, the group were eventually freed by Somali militia and Kenyan troops. The injuries he suffered, plus subsequent post-traumatic stress disorder, meant Dennis was forced to give up work.

Three years later the incident gave rise to a landmark legal case, which saw Dennis sue his employers, the Norwegian Refugee Council, for its failure to protect him. An Oslo court found NRC guilty of gross negligence and awarded 4.4million kroner (£401,000) in damages.

“Don’t stay in a hotel near a US Embassy, simply because you’re more likely to get caught up in demonstrations or even terrorism”

Operating as they do in some of the world’s most hostile environments, aid workers are perhaps the most exposed overseas workers of all. In 2016, 287 were victim of major attacks – a staggering 110 of those killed.

The figures highlight the dangers faced by executives when travelling to unstable nations. In these cases, meeting the duty of care threshold often means employers calling on the expertise of specialist risk and security consultants.

Typically staffed by former police and military personnel, these companies offer a menu of services covering everything from itinerary planning and reces of foreign destinations through to providing drivers trained in high-speed evasion and even armed ‘close protection’ (ie, bodyguards).

International Intelligence is one of numerous global businesses providing risk



management and protection. “Around 80% of our work is overseas,” explains Group Chief Executive, Alex Bomberg. “Duty of care is an area that is overlooked by many businesses. We get an awful lot of companies coming to us who have suddenly realised they need to raise their game because they’ve been winging it in dangerous countries,” he says.

For Bomberg, a former soldier and aide to the royal family, security always begins with preparation. Having as much information about a destination as possible is the best way to avoid trouble.

His company has developed a comprehensive set of ‘travel risk reports’ covering all countries around the globe – like “a supercharged version of the FCO country guides”, he says – which are constantly updated with intelligence and even feature interactive mapping.

“In an ideal world we like a week to look at travel plans but it often doesn’t work that way. Being able to work alongside a TMC or a company’s risk experts means we can advise on the logistics of a trip and get the best solution. For example, don’t stay in a hotel near a US Embassy, simply because you’re more likely to get caught up in demonstrations or even terrorist incidents.

“At the extreme end of the scale is having armed protection, but in the majority of cases we can mitigate risk by working in a covert way – moving people fast and having a well-planned route between A and B.

“If you are going somewhere dangerous the most important thing is knowing where the hospital and British Embassy are located, and having emergency telephone numbers on you at all times. The simple techniques are always the best.”

**[PRIVATE SECURITY
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW]**



1. Pick a provider registered under the voluntary Approved Contractor scheme run by the Security Industry Association. These companies

meet quality standards that are agreed by the Home Office.



2. Many contractors offer e-training courses for executives travelling to danger zones covering topics such as identifying threats early and avoiding danger.



3. Road safety should be a major concern in high-risk countries. Poor driving standards are an obvious danger, but travellers are often targeted by robbers

when driving. Hijacking and hostage taking is also easier. Security specialists will arrange expert drivers for you.



4. Use a firm with a global reach if possible. These have operatives around the world so they can cater for last-minute arrangements.



5. Don’t be cheap. Expect to pay around £1,000 per operative per day for close protection.