

'Bleisure travel' and its benefits for employees

While work trips tend to leave most people exhausted, savvy business travellers are catching onto the idea of mixing business with leisure - aptly dubbed 'bleisure' - by adding an additional day or three to their itinerary, with the aim of enjoying some personal time wherever they happen to be going.



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Although some companies might not quite yet be on board with this idea, it makes perfect sense for them to consider the idea, in pursuit of ensuring employee wellness and productivity, a commerce and tourism expert says. Alternatively, if all else fails, taking a day or two of personal leave could have the same effect.

“Spending long days in meetings, waiting at airports, dealing with delays and transfers, dodging jetlag, and eating hotel food alone can take a toll on even the most seasoned business traveller,” says Dr Erika Zeelie, tourism expert and Deputy Head of Faculty: Commerce at The Independent Institute of Education.

“That is why frequent fliers are increasingly turning their business travel into a workation, with the blessing and support of their employers,” she says.

Bleisure, a combination of business and leisure, is the practice of combining a business trip with some leisure activities, and has become much more prevalent as workspaces became more flexible.

“Although the idea of blending work and leisure is not exactly new, the way people adapt to it, and their behaviour, is new. By adding a few extra days to your itinerary and exploring your destination beyond your work obligations, people are turning their business trips into opportunities for relaxation, adventure, and personal growth,” says Zeelie.

“It goes without saying that bleisure doesn’t equate to a holiday on the company’s time and dime, and that the work still needs to get done. However, adding leisure activities into the equation means employees are more positive about work trips, and that they can return to the office refreshed rather than exhausted, which positively impacts on company culture, the work environment, productivity and the bottom line.”



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The best of bleisure time

Zeelie says when considering how to make the most of their bleisure time, employees must be sure to do their research while also ensuring their company is fully on board with the idea, and everyone is on the same page with regards to expectations.

“Before you leave, look up popular tourist destinations, museums, restaurants or other attractions in the area that would interest you,” says Zeelie.

“If the destination is completely foreign to you, you may want to consider booking a tour or hiring a local guide to show you around, which in turn will not only save you time but also release you from additional stress in planning such activities. Figure out when you’ll have some downtime during your business trip and book your activities for these times.”

Another way to make the most of one’s bleisure time is to use it for personal growth and development, says Zeelie.

“Look out for talks or demonstrations on something that personally interests you, or consider signing up for a cooking workshop featuring local cuisine or exploring a local market. These activities not only offer a break from your work obligations but can also help you develop new skills, build relationships, and gain insights into the local culture – which of course can only be positive for business relationships.”

Mixing business with leisure can be a game-changer for business travellers, and their employers, Zeelie says.

“It’s a bit of a mindshift, yes, but by taking advantage of the unique opportunities afforded by your business trip, you can explore new destinations, develop new skills, and take care of yourself, so that you return to the office energised, not resentful and depleted.”