

The golf addiction - A course in business travel

By  Avukile Mabombo

8 Apr 2019

Business is stressful, and stress is not something you want to flirt with. In a health-conscious world, more and more people are looking for a work-play balance that helps to ease the strain and provide food for the soul at the same time. As much as golf is viewed by many as time-consuming and isolating, it's still the go-to stress reliever for South Africa's hard-working executives. So much so that the opportunity to catch a round as part of business travel isn't just an escape on the company's dime, but an active approach to work wellness.



Mick De Paola via [Unsplash](#)

Making the most of lost leave days

Technically, we're all entitled to leave, a couple of weeks each year where we can sort out the mess in the garage or braai with family every day while the sun sets. Let's face it, though, for executives and business owners, the chance to take those leave days in one chunk is a luxury – your phone keeps beeping with messages from the office, there are always crises to be sorted out – the consistent noise associated with a career can get in the way of a break.

You may end up with a few odd days leave pending as a result, leave days that may be cancelled if unused within the business work year. If you travel for business or spend days at a time at conferences, you could easily tag on a day's leave to do the things you love – and that's where golf comes in.

Why not make a strong weekend of it and use the public holidays wisely, too?

Most courses offer equipment hire, so you don't have to travel with your whole kit. Day passes at courses are available, too. There are even businesses aimed at the travelling executive golfer, such as Ozzy's Golf Guides. Ozzy will pick you up at your hotel, take you to one of many courses in Cape Town where he is able to make bookings and set you up with the finest equipment. He's also a great golfer, so if you need someone to pit your skills against, he's your guy.

Imagine, one minute you're fussing over getting your PowerPoint presentation to work, the next, you're stepping out onto one of South Africa's renowned tees to watch as the ball slides a graceful arc into the blue skies.

It's possible to arrange conferences, launches and events with that prized game of golf in mind: take a hotel such as the African Pride Arabella Hotel and Spa, Autograph Collection; besides its relaxing proximity to nature reserves and rolling hills of fynbos (not to mention access to whale watching),

The property boasts one of the top ranked golf courses in South Africa, with pristine grass, tricky sand traps and challenging water hazards. Designed by Peter Matkovich, the golf course has been enjoyed by celebrities such as Samuel L. Jackson and professional golfers like Ernie Els and Gary Player. The 18-hole course has consistently been voted as one of the top 10 in the country, and is regularly enjoyed by Sunshine Tour pro golfer, Jake Roos.

Almost makes you want to organise your next conference there, right?

Golf widows and widowers

The term "golf widow" – a wife abandoned while her husband is off playing – is passé – golf is growing in popularity with women. It's still a good workout that takes place in nature instead of the clinical confines of a gym.

Let's face it, it's a lifestyle.

What was once considered the sport of retirees and the wealthy is increasingly accessible to younger people, too. Take the River Club in Cape Town, for example. The facilities there are specifically geared towards families and young people, eschewing some of the formality of the traditional gold club, you can play in whatever you happen to be wearing, a boost for the business traveller whose wardrobe choices are, by necessity, limited. The venue also has conferencing facilities and is central to many of the city's business hubs.

Golfers will tell you that it's a lifestyle, and it is: friends and enthusiasts gathering to strike the ball from the very spot where famous players and celebrities have stood – the chance to improve one's handicap and achieve something – not for your KPI report in the office, but just for yourself.

You may have your favourite local course, but the bigger cities in South Africa offer a wide range of options. Even some smaller towns have remarkable greens laid out in rugged mountain surroundings.

The point is, you're serious about getting down to business, but that should never get in the way of your wellbeing, and the two can work in harmony when you enjoy a round of golf once the paperwork has all been filed.

What courses will you put on your business travel bucket list?

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Avukile Mabombo is the group marketing manager of Protea Hotels by Marriott.

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