




FCM

# The Ultimate SME Travel Guide

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Travel can feel a little overwhelming these days. Juggling anything from PCR tests to vaccine proofs and confusing destination restrictions, it's only natural that business travellers feel a bit apprehensive. But travel today doesn't have to be complicated or daunting – especially with the right planning in place. We guarantee you that with FCM by your side, that first business trip will feel like a walk in the park.



That's good news for small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs). After all, for them business travel is non-negotiable. A business's competitive edge is often reliant on building relationships with suppliers or partners through more face-to-face meetings, negotiating deals, and exploring opportunities – all of which is very difficult over Zoom.

Asia needs its small and medium businesses back on the road as soon as possible. After all, all eyes are on them to drive post-pandemic economic recovery.

According to an Asian Development Bank report in 2019, SMEs accounted for more than 96% of all Asian businesses – and two out of three private sector jobs. In Southeast Asia, the number is even higher. There are more than 70 million micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in Southeast Asia today that employ over 140 million people and account for 99% of all businesses in the region.

Speaking at a CAPA-Centre for Aviation event in June 2021, Danny Lau, Managing Director Kam Pin Industrial (Hong Kong) Limited, said that despite SMEs being more vulnerable to the economic fallout of COVID-19, they'll be the first to hit the road when travel opens up.

**“Mid-market businesses are more flexible – and they're ahead of the curve to go and visit overseas clients if the location opens up for travel.”**

But even though SMEs are far more flexible and far less risk-averse than their multinational counterparts, there are a few things they can do to ensure a safe – and successful – return to travel.



## 01

## Planning a smooth return

### All eyes on your travel policy

First things first. All SMEs, no matter how small, should have a solid travel policy. A document that clearly outlines how to book travel, what is allowed and what it isn't, and what check and balances are in place to keep travellers safe while also keeping the costs down.

Even if you already have a travel policy in place, chances are that you'll need to review and update it for post-pandemic travel.

Not only will it help you keep a handle on costs, but clear guidelines can help your travellers feel comfortable and confident to travel again.

#### It's a good idea to:

- Make sure all travel is booked through one provider so that you have a clear overview of your travel spend.
- Review any policies around only booking the cheapest fares. In the current climate, flexi fares can save you money in the long run.
- Update policies such as minimum hours for business/first class fares.

- Define essential travel for your organisation – in other words, what warrants a business trip today? And how many employees are allowed to travel together at any one time?
- Include COVID-19 travel protocols (for example, will you ask your travellers to be vaccinated?).
- Add in guidelines around acceptable (and safe) hotel accommodation and travel suppliers.
- Include banned or high-risk destinations.
- Add tech to support your duty of care. There are tools available to keep an eye on risks and developments in the world of travel. They can send alerts, track where travellers are and send relevant live information – straight to your mobile device.

A travel management company (TMC) can help you structure, design and share an easy-to-follow travel policy with your team. They'll also set you up with the latest tech to support duty of care – and advise on the best 3rd party risk management systems.

### Information at your fingertips

Trust us. The most valuable commodity in travel today is information. Engaging a reputable TMC with a cutting-edge booking platform will give you instant access to the latest information, advisories and travel alerts.

For example, with FCM's technology, travel managers, bookers and travellers can tap into a number of different resources, including the latest travel rules from across the globe, current restrictions, airline routes and traveller information, as well as quarantine and testing requirements for domestic and international travel routes.

Even better, customised safety dashboards allow you to track travellers on the move.

Today's systems give you an immediate snapshot of where your travellers are, including flight times, estimated time of arrivals, accommodation booked, itineraries and more. Mobile alerts inform travellers of any changes or incidents, while apps like FCM Mobile have a 24/7 chat or call-back function so travellers can ask for advice and support – any time, any place.

With the latest information at your fingertips, a return to travel is a breeze.

### Top-notch supplier management

Identifying areas for cost-savings is crucial right now. Perhaps the best way SMEs can reduce their spend – and up their safety – is through expert supplier management.

Of course, it helps if your TMC has global buying power. This ensures that the best possible rates are negotiated on your behalf (be it air fares, accommodation or ground transport), and they can also arrange flexible payment terms, secure additional perks and benefits, and ensure expense reconciliation and reporting is as smooth and seamless as possible.

For many though, safety trumps all. Ask your TMC to recommend safe, vetted suppliers from their pool of approved, budget-friendly and policy compliant airlines, hotels and car rental companies.



## 02

## Embracing Technology

The vast majority (77%) of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) SMEs indicated that they would increase their technology-related spend as compared to the previous year, according to Accenture blog. However, with COVID-19 impacting revenue expectations, ASEAN SMEs are recalibrating their investments, with a 33% drop in those who still plan to increase their investment in technology.

If we're honest: there's never been a better time to update your travel tech. Whichever way you look at it, COVID-19 has fuelled innovation in the travel industry, making it easier to share information, access and book the widest range of travel product, improve traveller safety, increase visibility over spend, and streamline reporting.

**Looking for the right tech? Here are a few non-negotiables to keep in mind.**

### A slick end-to-end use experience

New generation, AI-enhanced online booking tools are quick and intuitive, meaning travel bookers can search and book a massive range of inventory in a matter of minutes – saving SMEs valuable time and money.

Chat to a TMC about customising a booking platform to meet your business's needs, including features like:

- Traveller profiles
- Itinerary management
- A live, real-time dashboard with the latest COVID-19 travel information
- Travel alerts
- A wide range of budget-friendly, policy-friendly product to search and book
- Customised dashboards and the ability to pull up-to-the minute reports for cost analysis, budgeting and planning.

Of course, you need a mobile app that syncs beautifully with your travel management platform. After all, travel managers and bookers are always on the go – and making changes on the fly.

### 24/7 Support in your pocket

If you're on the road, you're going to want everything you need in the palm of your hand. There are now countless mobile travel apps to assist, but make sure they include:

- A self-service booking tool
- Profile management
- Itinerary management
- Travel alerts
- A dashboard for Covid-19 updates and information
- Access to 24/7 omni-channel support, including a handy call-back function so you're able to chat to a travel expert if you need to.



## 03

## Hitting the road with confidence

Once your travel policy is modernised, and you've made sure the tech you're using fulfils your needs, you're ready for your business travellers to hit the road – or the skies.

For travel managers, this is where the heavy lifting starts. After all, travellers today need to have all the possible information at their fingertips – at any time of the day or night – wherever they are in the world.

That means, it's time to take 24/7 service to the next level. Think live chats and Artificial Intelligence supported apps. In short: a true omni-channel experience.

SMEs today want and need to be able to track their travellers while they're on the road. They want to know exactly where their travellers are if they need to bring them back.

After all, COVID-19 put even the most robust travel risk management plan to the test.

We've all been faced with travellers falling ill while abroad, road warriors getting caught out by changing government restrictions as well as new airline, hotel, or immigration procedures. A modern travel risk management plan needs to protect your travellers no matter what happens.

Solid procedures are the bedrock of your risk management plan. But you'll have to take it one step further. A crisis management team with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities needs to be appointed in order to ensure quick and effective response to any crisis.

### A step-by-step guide to creating a future-proof risk management plan

Still not entirely sure how to put together a future-proof risk management plan? We've put together five easy steps to help you get started:

#### 1. Determine your risk tolerance level

What do you consider essential travel? Which destinations do you feel are 'safe'? How many employees are allowed to travel at any given time? It's important to consider these questions carefully and determine how much risk you, your company and your travellers should take.

#### 2. Let your team in on the plan

It's great to have a risk management plan in place. But if nobody knows about it, it's hardly going to be effective. Communicate the strategy to your team to empower them and reduce travel anxiety.

#### 3. Put your crisis response to the test

Put your plan to the test. Engage everyone in the value chain in the test phase from your TMC to suppliers. Answer questions like who will contact travellers in the event of an incident.

#### 4. Be tech savvy

The right technology will streamline your duty of care. Chat to your TMC and discuss travel risk management platforms, traveller tracking and travel apps.

#### 5. Make sure you balance tech with a human touch

Technology is great, efficient, and available 24/7 but when things go wrong, we all want to be able to chat to a human being. So, make sure your TMC has 24/7 emergency assistance



# 04

## Keeping track

SMEs are savvy and have a keen business sense. They know that it's essential to constantly monitor their operations, report and not be afraid to improve.

Travel management is no different. Now more than ever, it's important to question the processes in place. The world has changed and so should your travel programme.

Reliable, up-to-date and useful data is the best way to tackle any changes you'd like to make. To make the best decisions, you'll need holistic data that covers your company's travel needs, preferences, expenses, spend and return on investment.

The following five reports should be put in place to help you manage your travel better:

- **The Monthly Report**

A must-have. Your monthly report will give you consistent visibility of your travel spend. It will allow you to think more strategically about how travel expenses, payments, and reconciliation processes align with company-wide strategy and profitability goals.

- **The Booking Behaviour Review**

Big Brother is watching. Are your travellers waiting to the very last minute to book their travel? Do they like to splurge on little luxuries? Do they tend to make a lot of changes to their bookings?

It's important to understand why your travellers book travel the way they do. A TMC like FCM can help identify the reasons behind certain behaviours and then craft a travel policy that fosters a culture of support, encouraging greater compliance.

- **Supplier Management**

Who are your top suppliers? It might seem irrelevant but if you'd like to achieve far-reaching savings, it's time to identify your top suppliers and negotiate preferred agreements. For instance, if FCM's data reveals that your company is using different hotels each time your travellers hit the road, we will suggest you streamline the process. That way we can negotiate a discount with the chosen hotels. It is about creating efficiencies.

- **The Annual Review**


Once a year, it's time to take stock and review the overall performance of your travel programme. After all, you cannot possibly look to the future if you have little idea of what has occurred in the past. What worked? What didn't? Don't be afraid to cast a critical look on the year and set ambitious new goals and milestones for your next travel programme.

- **The Digital Review**

Digitalisation is not only the future; it is also the 'now'. Automation, blended technology, and advanced data analytics will make it easier for companies to make informed travel decisions. After all, the right technology will streamline your travel programme from expense claims to approval processes and duty of care.

Technology has also become intuitive and hyper personal. New booking tools are user friendly and global reporting has become a breeze. Travellers benefit from real-time and accurate travel-safety information on the ground, while managers receive comprehensive traveller tracking capabilities – allowing them to immediately see who is travelling, when and where. New functionalities also allow companies to analyse their travel behaviour, spend, bookings and programme compliance quickly and easily. Clear, concise data is no longer a pipe dream but a reality.





### Conclusion

Getting back to travel is a non-negotiable for start-ups and SMEs. Their competitive edge depends on building relationships through face-to-face meetings, negotiating deals, and exploring opportunities – all of which is very difficult over Zoom.

With the right partner by your side to help you make sense of the new rules, regulations and travel information, a return to travel doesn't have to be daunting. Quite the contrary: it can be smooth, seamless and rewarding.

**Contact us today to  
find out how FCM can  
elevate the performance  
of your corporate travel  
programme.**