

Business Travel Policy

Why a visual
approach works



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1

Introduction

Visuals
are processed
60k
times faster
in the brain
than text

[source]

When did business travel become so boring?

If there's one type of company document that occupies the most space on a file server, it's the policy. Think back to the last time you asked someone to read one and sign a piece of paper to say that they'd done so.

Did they read it? Be honest, when did you last read your own policy? Imagine having to read it right now, how long would it take and how engaging would it be?

So, they may have scanned a few pages and read some of the bits highlighted in bold, but the chances of them having read every word within the sixty-eight page tome are somewhat slim. If they did get as far as reading the entire policy, can they even remember it? Did they find the main points that they needed to know about? Are they aware if they are operating outside of the policy? And do they care?

You only need to take one glance at the multitude of reports into travel expense claims and travellers' non-compliance, to realise that not everyone takes on board what the company travel policy says.

30%

of our brain processes visual information versus only 8% for touch and 3% for hearing

[source]

We're not trying to question the value of a travel policy, there are very good reasons for having a clear, easy to follow policy as they provide the company the ability to:

- Manage its duty of care
- Achieve expenditure and booking compliance visibility
- Handle expense claims efficiently
- Monitor traveller satisfaction

So how do you get people to read and engage with your travel policy? Could making some simple changes help you smash your user adoption rates and traveller satisfaction targets? Could it even impress the bosses enough to offer you that pay rise or promotion?

The answer lies in visualising the detail contained within the policy by swapping words for infographics and beautiful, engaging imagery.

Visual cues help us better retrieve and remember information because the human brain is *primarily an image processor* (much of our sensory cortex is devoted to vision). It isn't a word processor.

Put simply, we love visual stuff. It's why Instagram currently has *over half a billion users* and why digital marketers are forever told to use photos and imagery judiciously in their communications.

In this ebook, we're going to show you how to transform and modernise your travel policy so that it's more relevant to employees in the digital age and doesn't simply become yet another huge Word document that sits unread on your company sever.

Tweets with
images received
150%
more retweets

[source]

In this ebook, we're going to show you how to transform and modernise your travel policy so that it's more relevant to employees in the digital age and doesn't simply become yet another huge Word document that sits unread on your company sever.

Our guides are focused on delivering great, actionable advice that makes taboos comfortable, the out-of-the-box ideas acceptable and the unmentionable mentionable.

We want to empower you to try something different; business travel doesn't have to be boring.

“The answer lies in visualising the detail contained within the policy by swapping words for infographics and beautiful, engaging imagery.”

2

**The Psychology of Visual Comms
and Why it Works**

Colour
Increases
recall by
82%

[source]

There's a reason cavemen favoured drawing on walls over writing lengthy memoirs.

Human beings are easily stimulated by visual material. We devour posts that feature images on social media and are far more likely to engage with email marketing messages if they favour attractive photography over long-winded sales intros.

This guide isn't about turning travel managers into designers, it's about thinking differently when it comes to delivering key information every employee needs to take on-board. Your travel policy is incredibly important, but the message needs to be delivered in a way that befits a modern audience.

You can do this by swapping words for images.

“There's a reason cavemen
favoured drawing on
walls over writing lengthy
memoirs.”

6
Billion
Emojis are sent
everyday

[source]

Let's look at two examples of the power of imagery at work:

Roadsigns

So many of the instructions we're given on a daily basis are visual rather than written. While driving, we're given cues in the simplest of ways; traffic lights (green means 'go'), no entry signs (red: danger!) and arrows for junction exits simply can't be misconstrued and demand our attention.

We're pre-programmed to understand visual instructions which is why road signs are so satisfyingly simple. One glance is all we need.

Well, usually just one glance.

Emojis

Who'd have thought you'd swap your regular QWERTY smartphone keyboard for one that features a multitude of cartoon faces and tiny depictions of everything from water pistols to clinking glasses of beer?

One look at the real-time [Twitter Emoji Tracker](#) is all you need to see just how popular visual communication is in everyday digital conversation. People love expressing themselves with imagery because they know it delivers a far greater impact at the other end.

Visuals have been found to improve learning by up to **400%**

[source]

Visual communications: let's get statistical

Still unconvinced? Here's 6 visual content stats that will tempt you to re-energise your travel policy:

- People that follow directions with illustrations do 323% better than those that do so with just text. [\[source\]](#)
- Research has discovered that coloured visuals increase people's willingness to read a piece of content by 80%. [\[source\]](#)
- 34% of marketers say that visual assets are the most important pieces of content they use, behind blogging and videos. [\[source\]](#)
- Eye-tracking studies have found that people pay close attention to images that carry information. [\[source\]](#)
- Infographics are shared on social media three times more than any other form of content. [\[source\]](#)
- Searches for infographics have increased 25 times in the past 5 years. [\[source\]](#)

Visual stuff works.

Information traditionally delivered in text form can now be redesigned as imagery in order to provide more punch and aid retention of key details.

It's time to modernise your travel policy.

3

**Understanding why a visual policy
is a powerful way to communicate**

We can get the
sense of a visual
scene in less than

1/10th
of a second

[source]

Recent studies show that 62% of travel buyers update their company travel handbook every year. What's more, 82% believe they successfully communicate their company's travel policy.

Do you number among that crowd? When was the last time you updated your travel policy? More importantly, are you measuring whether employees reading and following the policy?

Whether you do or don't, it's clear that a combination of tactics can be employed in order to ensure that employees engage with travel policies. However the question of whether or not they read the parts that are relevant to them still remains.

It's time to trust

One of the main benefits of visualising your travel policy as an infographic or collection of engaging images with textual overlays is that you can focus on the situations and tasks that business travellers are most likely to encounter. For example:

- food and drink bills;
- booking hotels;
- booking flights;
- entertaining clients.

90%
of information
transmitted to
the brain is visual.

[source]

Every element of business travel above is open to interpretation. Rather than setting rules that run into several paragraphs of explanation, recognition that we're all adults and therefore capable of being responsible for our own thoughts is far more likely to draw in an engaged audience.

You simply can't account for everything in business travel, and if you demonstrate that you're willing to trust employees tasked with heading to foreign climes to promote the business or develop new partnerships, they'll repay with adherence to your travel policy.

Humans are changing

The road to digital is transforming how we behave. Verbal intelligence is dropping and visual intelligence is rising. We know this, because *research suggests* that humans are only capable of recalling 20% of a piece of text if it isn't accompanied by visuals.

This may account for the fastest growing social media platforms of the modern age being image-based, with services like Pinterest, Snapchat and Instagram achieving incredible growth over the last few years.

The rich, digitally-fuelled landscape we now inhabit has made us far more attuned to engaging imagery, so it makes sense that in order to get more employees engaged with your travel policy, you need to make it more visual.

65%
of the
population are
Visual Learners

[source]

How many words is a picture worth?

“Thousands” is the usual answer to the above question, but *research* suggests that pictures are correctly recalled around 1.5 times as often as printed words. While that may not sound particularly earth-shattering, Foos and Goolkasian, the psychologists behind the research, also point to the fact that words are usually processed too rapidly, and are therefore not particularly adept at catching the attention of the reader.

The same study concluded that if you’re presenting words you want others to remember (for example, your “travel policy?”), you’re far better off opting for pictures, despite the old adage of “a picture speaks a thousand words” being some way wide of the mark.

The connection between images and remembering

Clearly, people remember what they see far more readily than what they hear or read, but why? Experts believe that “*pictures have a direct route to long-term memory*” with each image consumed stored within its own ‘chunk’ of the brain.

If this is so, then it stands to reason that visual content that is designed to stimulate learning will be far more effective in the long run.

Our eyes can
register
36k
visual messages
per hour

[source]

The brain is a clever device. When we study images, they elicit a corresponding verbal label and, as a result, our brains store two representations of the image in memory. By contrast, words don't automatically elicit a picture, which accounts for their impoverished memory representation, *say experts*.

Now that you know all of this you'll understand that a lack of engagement with your policy has been no fault of your own. While visual content may have taken other industries by storm, it was unlikely to have gained enough widespread acceptance from travel managers to become the industry standard for travel policies.

So maybe you'll be the one to boldly go where others haven't?

“Rather than setting rules that run into several paragraphs of explanation, recognition that we're all adults and therefore capable of being responsible for our own thoughts is far more likely to draw in an engaged audience.”

4

Modernising your travel policy

Colour increases
understanding
by as much as
73%

[source]

When was the last time you updated your travel policy? Even if you did so last week, chances are you simply amended the same document that has been used for years (section 15.5.7b on page 76 didn't include anything on the use of an employee's own car, after all).

Will anyone ever read section 15.5.7b, even if they sign something to say they have done so? It's highly unlikely, which means you've possibly just wasted your time. Sorry.

Getting everyone to follow the rules is hard at the best of times, but when the rules are hard to understand and buried within page after page of legal speak, you're going to have a particularly hard time ensuring everyone plays fair.

The documentation graveyard

Company file servers are littered with large documents that were created with the best intentions but which have never been fully digested, quoted or referred to by anyone within the business (even those behind the words are guilty of this).

Unfortunately travel policies can sometimes sit within this document graveyard and dead documentation simply represents wasted time that could have been better spent being productive.

People that follow directions with illustrations do

323%

better than those that do so with just text

[source]

Your travel policy includes important information. You've worked hard on it, you want people to read it, understand it, refer to it when required and, above all, use it.

By visualising the content within your travel policy, it'll become a living, breathing thing - not just another PDF cast aside in the depths of the digital domain.

Modern thinking: the visual approach

Companies need to adjust their thinking when it comes to creating travel policies. Such documents should be crafted, not written. Essays are written, as are terms and conditions. Policies require the reader to take on board specific, vital information that will help them comply with rules and work to the best of their ability.

The key is to instead take a visual approach with your travel policy. In the previous section, we learned how important visual stimulation is to humans and you can take advantage of that fact by creating a policy document that favours graphical content over words.

It's time to think about painting your travel policy, not writing it, and that means opening your eyes to alternative ways of delivering content such as infographics, videos and signage.

5

Mind your language!

Infographics are shared on social media

3x

more than any other form of content

[source]

Why does every official document or policy have to sound like it was written by a solicitor and proofread by a lawyer? Do you really want your travel policy to read like a set of terms and conditions that have been tuned for the role they're required to play during disputes and court cases?

The use of language in policy documentation needs to change. Why should it strut pompously around the room dictating long, 'clever' sentences and minutely-detailed bullet points?

Because that's how it's always been done?

Place yourself in the traveller's shoes and think about the content that you'd be likely to engage with. Dare to be different and be that travel manager that wasn't afraid to carve their own niche and put some personality into their policy.

Treating the business traveller as a human

This might sound strange, but traditional travel policies don't take into account that the travelling business person is still human. We live in a democracy, and those travelling are often put in charge of handling millions of dollars of business and tasked with making strategic decisions that affect the future of the business.

coloured visuals
increase people's
willingness to
read a piece of
content by

80%

[source]

Why shouldn't they have the same rights as every other member of the human race when it comes to travel? They're capable of independent thought, problem solving and, sometimes, straying from the leash in order to undertake a more sensible route.

How to humanise the language in your travel policy

Is your travel policy too prescriptive and bossy? Long paragraphs, copious use of business speak and too many acronyms will do nothing more than turn off business travellers.

To humanise your travel policy, you need to ensure that it fulfils the role of a trusted advisor who is mindful of the fact that its audience consists of grown-ups who are quite capable of making their own decisions and travel arrangements.

It needs to exude personality while describing the benefits of its imparted wisdom, but at the same time nod to the fact that this is a two-way street; there are no demands or suggestions that it's "my way or the highway" - readers of the policy document can get involved in the policy itself and make educated assumptions on travel rules.

A reduction in word count is crucial if you're to develop the right persona for your travel policy, and that's why imagery should play a central role in its construction.

6

**Gaining
acceptance of the travel policy**

60%

of business travellers use alternative methods when booking work trips to those listed in the travel policy

[source]

If your travel policy says “I’m with you”, those reading it will understand implicitly and engage with the content.

If your travel policy says “I don’t trust you, so here’s a massive list of rules and regulations that I assume you’re going to break given the slightest chance”, you’ll alienate and disrespect the readers and make their time travelling for the business nothing but miserable.

The members of staff who are put off by travel policies are likely to find every way they can to work around the rules. They’ll seek loopholes and, when one proves successful, ensure everyone in their department knows how to game the system.

Such juicy information spreads like wildfire and, before you know it, the entire company will be ducking and diving beyond the rules of your travel policy.

Let’s avoid that, shall we?

The benefit of leaving the odd ‘T’ un-crossed

Documents that deal with stringent terms and conditions may need every ‘i’ dotted and all ‘t’s crossed, but you can be a little more relaxed with your travel policy.

86%

of online
marketers now
use video content

[source]

If you cover just the salient points with vibrant infographics, you'll gain the respect of the reader. They'll view the policy as a trusted advisor - not someone who is doing everything they can to make the travelling feel uncomfortable.

According to *research*, 60% of business travellers use alternative methods when booking work trips to those listed in the travel policy. Provide your workforce with a policy that doesn't patronise them, and they're far more likely to sit within the 40% of compliant travellers.

“If your travel policy says
“I'm with you”, those
reading it will understand
implicitly and engage with
the content.”

7

Separating the policy and the numbers

62%

of travel buyers
update their
company travel
handbook
every year

[source]

Provide separate example infographics, imagery or signage for the following:

What should you cover?

- Costs
- Booking processes
- Payment procedures
- Service delivery
- Carbon reduction targets
- Risk

Key sections to include

- General traveller guidelines
- Flights
- Hotels
- Car rental
- Rail and ground transportation
- Duty of care

Content with relevant images gets
94%
more views than content without relevant images

[source]

Communications with travellers

- Inform travellers of how they can access travel information whilst on the move (this could be through a travel app provided by your TMC, or through your intranet)
- Share how you (as the employer) will communicate with the employee in the event of an emergency – case studies often help here to illustrate how situations will be managed
- Remind travellers to keep their profile information up-to-date, so any communications are received efficiently

“Inform travellers of how they can access travel information whilst on the move (this could be through a travel app provided by your TMC, or through your intranet)”

8

**Choosing
what visual content to use**

Facebook posts
with images see
2.3x
more engagement
than those without
images

[source]

We've established that the modern travel policy needs to favour imagery over text. But what type of content should you employ to get the message across and ensure that it is stored deep within people's minds?

There are 3 content types you can call on for your travel policy. In this section, we'll describe each one and consider how they can work to your advantage.

1. Infographics

Infographics are a brilliant way to make complex data, statistical information and numbers more interesting.

They're often lavishly-designed and mix multiple visual styles and are used to give information in a memorable story format. They are also typically very long pieces of content - literally; the reader can scroll and scroll to find increasingly vibrant, interesting stuff with which to engage.

So popular are infographics, in fact, that they regularly accompany traditional blog posts and dominate the page space.

An estimated
79%
of internet traffic
will be video
content by 2018

[source]

2. Video

It's believed that **86% of online marketers** now use video content. It remains one of the stickiest forms of media on the web, which is why you so often see video featuring prominently on the homepages of business websites.

Why shouldn't video play a central role within your travel policy? Who says the imagery you use should only be static?

The great thing about video in the modern age is that virtually anyone can produce it. If you've got a modern smartphone to hand, you've got your camera, and services like YouTube and Vimeo provide a brilliant hosting platform.

People are far more likely to click 'play' in order to watch an engaging video explainer on your travel policy than they are to read a 60 page document on the subject.

What's more, video can be digested anywhere and on any device the traveller has to hand - particularly handy if they need to refer to the policy while travelling.

3. Signage

Digital signage is just like its analogue ancestor in that it's designed to present key information in an eye-catching manner.

By using signage in policy making, you can break down the constituent elements that make up the whole and display them on digital sign boards that feature the most important points, boosted by attractive imagery.

81%
of people only
skim the content
they read online

[source]

Design and colour will also have a significant effect on the reader's engagement levels across all of these content formats. For example *bright and warm colours can help to energise and alert a reader, while cool dark shades can be tranquil and relaxing*. So it would make sense to bear this in mind when creating the most important sections of your policy. Do you want to grab their attention? Or do you want to come across as calm as possible so it doesn't seem like you're nagging them?

Whichever way you look at it, not everyone is going to have the same reaction and level of engagement with a design, colour or content format. It's about finding out what can work best for your employees by gathering regular feedback.

When you're implementing a new way of thinking you can't be expected to hit the nail on the head immediately, but hey, who knows, maybe you will.

“Infographics are a brilliant way to make complex data, statistical information and numbers more interesting.”

9

**Training reinforcement and
compliance**

Information can
be located
70%
faster if it is
in color

[source]

So, you've created a gorgeous travel policy and have distributed it company-wide.

Now what?

Job done? Not quite.

Has everyone digested the policy? How do you know if it has been read and adhered to?

Remember - employees test company laws every day. We know this, because we've all done it at some stage. Such rule breaking is rarely malicious, and it's often completely unintentional, but for a policy to succeed, the policy maker has to be proactive once the document has been distributed - it's not all on the reader.

How to ensure visual travel policies are followed

Remember: we're aiming to create a travel policy that people will actually read and follow. We don't want to beat them into submission with heavy word counts and language that paints a picture of mistrust.

We want to keep the laws of the travel policy in play, but ensure they're visceral and elicit an air of trust.

23
Million
GIFs are posted to
Tumblr every day

[source]

Here's 5 ways to ensure you gain buy-in from all travelling staff, while continuing to reinforce the travel policy without coming across like a nagging parent:

1. Share it judiciously

The world we live in offers a multitude of sharing platforms. A travel policy is just a piece of content, and content can be shared via business apps, instant messaging clients and project management software. Share your policy regularly in order to highlight its importance, and encourage others to do the same. Thankfully, because yours is attractive and genuinely interesting, people will do just that.

2. Let them fix it

Your travel policy may be broken in places. That's entirely normal; few policies are perfect. That's why you should create an open forum where you actively encourage staff to offer fixes for any rule or action they find that needs work.

67%

of consumers say detailed images carry more weight than product information or customer ratings

[source]

3. Ensure the “why?” is always present

Every action within a policy should have a corresponding reason for its existence. Employees will quickly be put off any policy - no matter how visceral - if it's light on explanation and fails to list the benefits they'll enjoy as a result of following the rules; for example, remind them of the time saved from not reworking expense claims and faster repayment, fewer post trip emails trying to resolve discrepancies and while they might not fully appreciate it today, you're telling them you value the importance of their safety.

4. Measure

Too many policies are released, signed off and then forgotten about - not only on behalf of the employees but by the policy makers, too. It's vital that you measure the effect of the travel policy once it has been launched. Are rules being followed? Do expense claims add up? A policy whose impact isn't measured may as well not exist.

Try tracking email opens, and better still how many people click on your document and how long they spend reading/on the page. Try testing training and knowledge retention with a follow up survey. Or maybe you measure the number of non-compliant claims or the volume of open bookings (out of policy) you have. However you do it, measuring whether the policy was actually followed is going to come down to your post trip reporting.

The brain can
see images
that last for just

13 ms

[source]

5. Hold reviews with employees

'Review' might sound rather formal, but an off-the-cuff, informal catch up with travelling employees can reveal an awful lot about their adherence to your travel policy. Ask questions that relate directly to actions within the policy and you'll soon get a feel for whether or not it has been digested correctly.

Final thought

If you find that engagement with your travel policy is still lacking, despite creating a visual masterpiece, don't assume the employee is at fault. While that may be true in certain circumstances, there's a chance the policy still needs work.

Monitor, ask questions and make changes where needed. Never assume a policy is finished; remember: **62% of travel buyers** update their company travel handbook every year.

Enjoy crafting your travel policy - it should be fun.

TRAVEL POLICY

The Visual Guide

Booking Process



Must book 2 weeks in advance.



Book travel using [booking.com/business](https://www.booking.com/business)



Budget



Food and Beverage:
€65 per day

Lunch and/or Dinner

Refreshments and soft drinks

Only alcohol with your evening meal can be claimed, and is included within your daily allowance.



Accommodation:
€125 per night

Budget for top 5 cities:

*Amsterdam €100
London €150*

Zurich €175
Tokyo €175
Boston €200

If city is not listed, please check relevant city cap in the system.



Flying



Flight Budget

Fly economy class

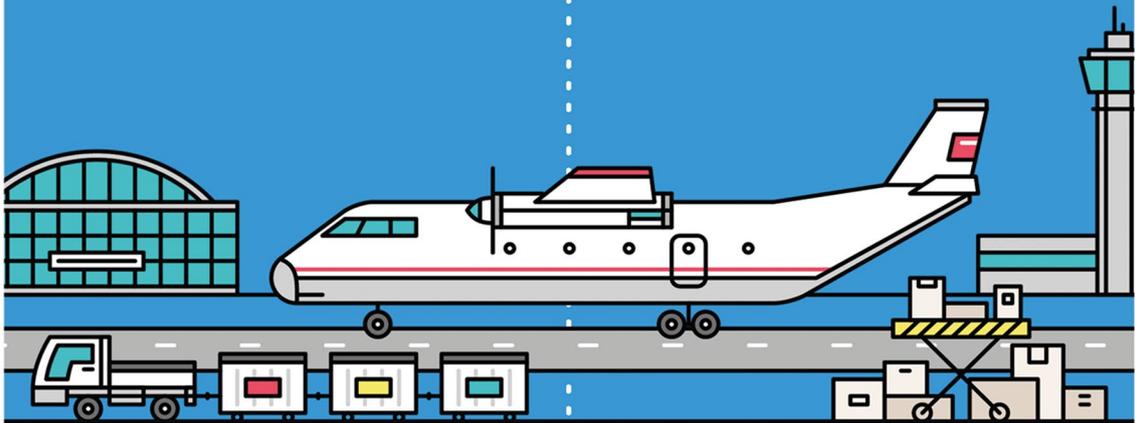
Short haul budget: €250

Long haul budget: €700



Missed flight policy

*Please speak to the travel manager
(travelmanager@example.com)*



Ground Transport



Public Transport

Train, bus and tram are the preferred way of transport unless considered unreasonable, such as unreasonable length of time or

unreasonably expensive.



Rental cars must be booked from rentalcars.co.uk

Accept all insurances (e.g. Collision Damage Waiver, Liability and Personal Injury)



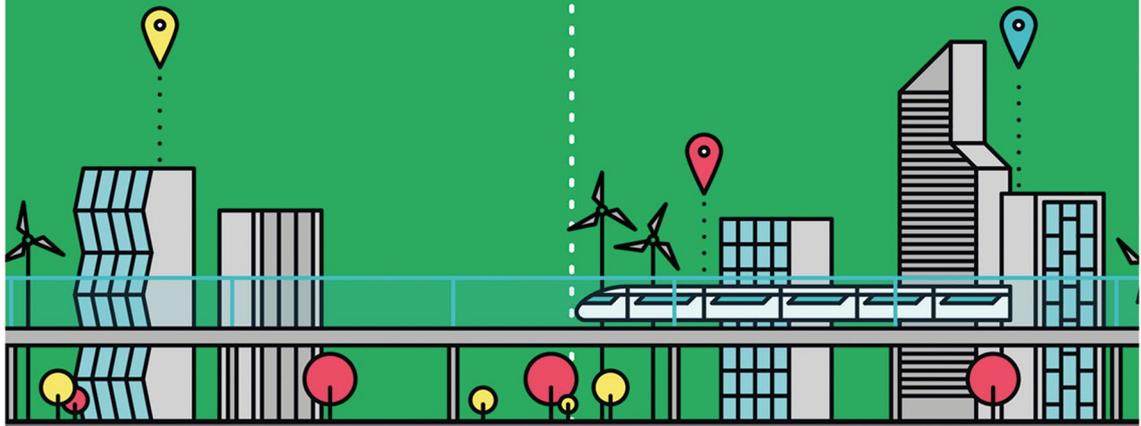
Personal car mileage will be expensed at 45p per mile

Your insurance must cover you to use the vehicle for business purposes.



Parking

Parking expenses are only reimbursed in combination with either personal or rental vehicle used for business purposes.



Duty of Care



Point of contact

Travel Manager
(travelmanager@example.com)



Travel Insurance

Reimbursed? Yes
Personal trips are not covered.



Travelling with a Spouse

Please note that the company will not cover expenses.



Bleisure

If you want to add extra time to your business trip for personal or pleasure please feel free to do so.

Please make sure any additional costs as a result of this choice (flights, car hire, hotels, transport etc) are fully covered by you and must not be claimed as an expense.



Claiming Expenses



Expense Report Employees requesting reimbursement must prepare an expense report

No later than 30 days after the expense was incurred or paid



What you can't claim

Only expenses related to doing business can be reimbursed. Certain other expenses are not.



Expenses related to personal days taken before, during, or after a business trip



Upgrades in airline class of service, hotel rooms or car rentals



Personal or travel insurance (these are covered by a Booking.com policy)



Lost airline ticket application fee



Babysitters/childcare fees



Pet care fees



Drugstore items (i.e. toiletry items, headache remedies, medicines, etc.)



Clothing purchases



Barber shop/beauty salon/shoe shines



Expenses for personal entertainment



Newspapers, magazines, books and other personal reading materials



Internet Service for personal use



Spa services (gym charges, massages, facials, etc.)



Hotel room or in-flight movies, TV or other entertainment charges



Parties, flowers and gifts for birthdays, baby showers or other personal occasions



Rewards for performance or recognition



BOOKING PROCESS

Advance Booking

How long in advance to book

2 weeks

Booking Software

Software for booking accommodation

business.booking.com



TRAVEL POLICY

The Visual Guide

Booking Process

Must book 2 weeks in advance.

Book travel using booking.com/business

Budget

Food and Beverage: €65 per day
Lunch and/or Dinner
Refreshments and soft drinks
Only alcohol with your evening meal can be claimed, and is included within your daily allowance.

Accommodation: €125 per night
Budget for top 5 cities:
Amsterdam €100
London €150
Zurich €175
Tokyo €175
Boston €200
If city is not listed, please check relevant city cap in the system.

Flying

Flight Budget
Fly economy class
Short haul budget: €250
Long haul budget: €700

Missed flight policy
Please speak to the travel manager
(travelmanager@example.com)

Ground Transport

Public Transport
Train, bus and tram are the preferred way of transport unless considered unreasonable, such as unreasonable length of time or unreasonably expensive.

Rental cars must be booked from rentalcars.co.uk
Accept all insurances (e.g.

1

Add your travel policy details to the form.

2

Download your new visual travel policy infographic.

3

Send your colleagues a travel policy they'll actually read.

Get started now >

A publication of

Booking.com **business**

Booking.com are experts in the leisure travel market with over 1 million properties worldwide, and we're bringing this travel know-how to the corporate world with Booking.com for Business. With features designed to make your life that much easier, committed customer support available 24/7 in 43 languages, no implementation costs, flexible cancellation policies and exclusive Company Discounts, Booking.com for Business is the simplest way to manage company stays.