

Business travel key risks

Business travellers face a variety of risks including corporate espionage, kidnappings, fraud, assaults, terrorist attacks, and health and safety. These risks underscore the importance of risk management and security measures for companies and business travellers alike.

2022 research published by the US-based Global Business Travel Association suggests that nearly 85% of companies already have travel risk management programs in place.



Their research additionally found that business travellers viewed terrorism as the greatest safety risk, with 45% ranking it as their greatest concern when travelling for business. This is much greater than street crime (15%), illness/disease (13%), theft (12%), kidnapping (8%), or natural disasters (6%).[1]

According to the US National Counterintelligence and Security Centre, corporate espionage is one of the biggest threats for business travellers, who are often targets of threat actors or nation states working to steal sensitive company data, trade secrets, and intellectual property. In many countries, hotel business centres and phone networks are regularly monitored, and information sent electronically can be intercepted.[2] A 2019 research report from Morning Consult on behalf of IBM Security indicates that business travellers don't frequently consider the risks of activities like connecting to public WiFi, charging their devices at public USB stations, and logging into publicly accessible computers. This report identified that more than 1 in 7 travellers in the survey had their personal information stolen at least once, and 84% of business travellers admitted to connecting to public WiFi networks.[3] Whilst not directly related to business travellers, in 2023 the ICIJ published a report on a company that had installed an updated WiFi system at Cyprus' Larnaca International Airport in 2019. It was later discovered that, during installation, this company also set up three access points that stole personal information from over 9 million mobile devices that passed through.[4] This almost certainly will have had some form of impact on business travellers.

Whilst no recent reports have been identified outlining specific fraud cases related to business travel, on 07 June 2023 Business Travel News Europe reported that business travellers face an increased credit card fraud risk, with one in six business travellers having fallen victim to credit card fraud while travelling.[5]

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Recent articles outlining business travel-related incidents

On 18 March 2024, the Daily Mail reported that a British businessman was four days into a 2 week work trip in Brussels when two masked men broke into his apartment and put a knife to his throat. They searched his belongings before blindfolding him and throwing him into the back of his own car. He believed they were driving him to a cash machine. Upon escaping the vehicle, he was intercepted and beaten unconscious. He was found hours later by a passerby and was transported to hospital where he was informed that he had a broken nose, broken arm, and fractured skull.[6]

On 28 June 2023, Crisis24 reported that an executive of an aquaculture company had been kidnapped in Ecuador when travelling in a pickup truck that was intercepted by a group of men travelling in two vehicles. The kidnappers exchanged gunfire with the executive's security team. The victim was released two days later and was believed to have been kidnapped due to his role in the business community.[7]

An article published in the Independent on 11 January 2024 outlined that a British Airways pilot had been kidnapped outside a supermarket during a stopover in South Africa. He was allegedly subject to torture and physical assaults in order to force him to hand over money.[8]

Health and safety

On 11 March 2024, the Mirror reported that a Crohn's disease patient who had to have his bowel removed after a work trip to India had won £800k in compensation, as his employers didn't consider the risk of sending him. He had to undergo two major surgeries and have a stoma bag after going to India with London-based company Primetals Technologies Ltd. He fell ill whilst away and received no treatment whilst on site and was therefore forced to return to the UK.[9]

References

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