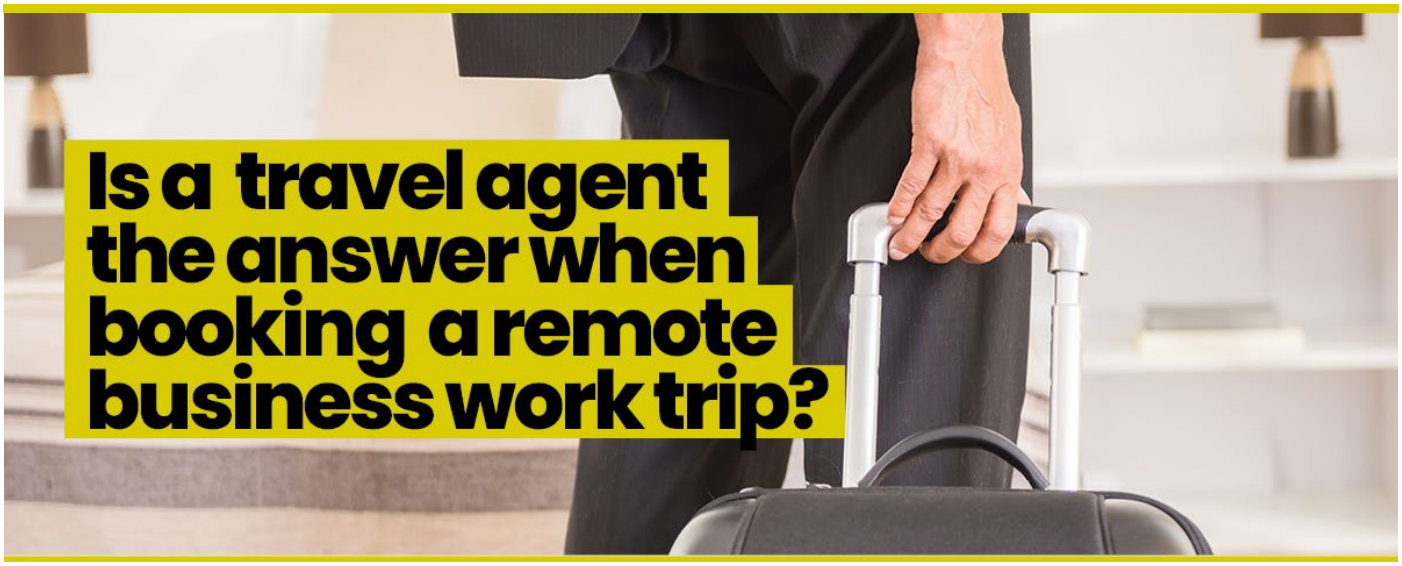
Case Study

ilodge



Would you get these business benefits if you used a travel agent?

When you research the key responsibilities of a travel agent, leading job sites like Indeed and Glassdoor list things like assisting clients with general travel plans, recommending and booking travel and hotel options, and travel itinerary assembly. And when it comes to booking a family getaway to the Seychelles, a travel agent may be just the ticket. You can sip on cocktails poolside knowing everything is taken care of – from accommodation to meals and activities.

But in the world of business, travelling becomes more complex. In the first instance, you're trying to navigate corporate travel policies, booking regulations, multiple personal documents and legalese that could give the most ardent student a headache. Very different from a family with one person calling the shots.

In the second instance, you're not dealing with cookie-cutter requirements – the size of the team travelling, how to transport them, and meal preferences can all vary greatly. And, inevitably, hiccups will arise. The hotel room that promised to have a shower now only has a bath. The breakfast buffet that was meant to have vegan-friendly options is a meat-lovers delight. The DStv bouquet leaves much to be desired in terms of channel selection. And so on and so on.

And although most travel agents are okay with business travel requirements, an important question is this: Would a travel agent handle the hiccups on the ground? In most instances, this is where the responsibilities of the travel agent end, and it's up to you (as a business traveller) to handle these upsets with your hotel directly. The same is true if you run into issues with your transport provider. If a shuttle is MIA to pick you and your team up at 8am, you'll likely be the one picking up the phone, not the agent. Now we're not saying a travel agent wouldn't find you different accommodation options or even contact a different transport service provider, but what can they do to ensure smooth sailing from there? How much time can they really spend on you and your team's needs and concerns?

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Some of the biggest stresses for business travellers according to Travel Perk, are:

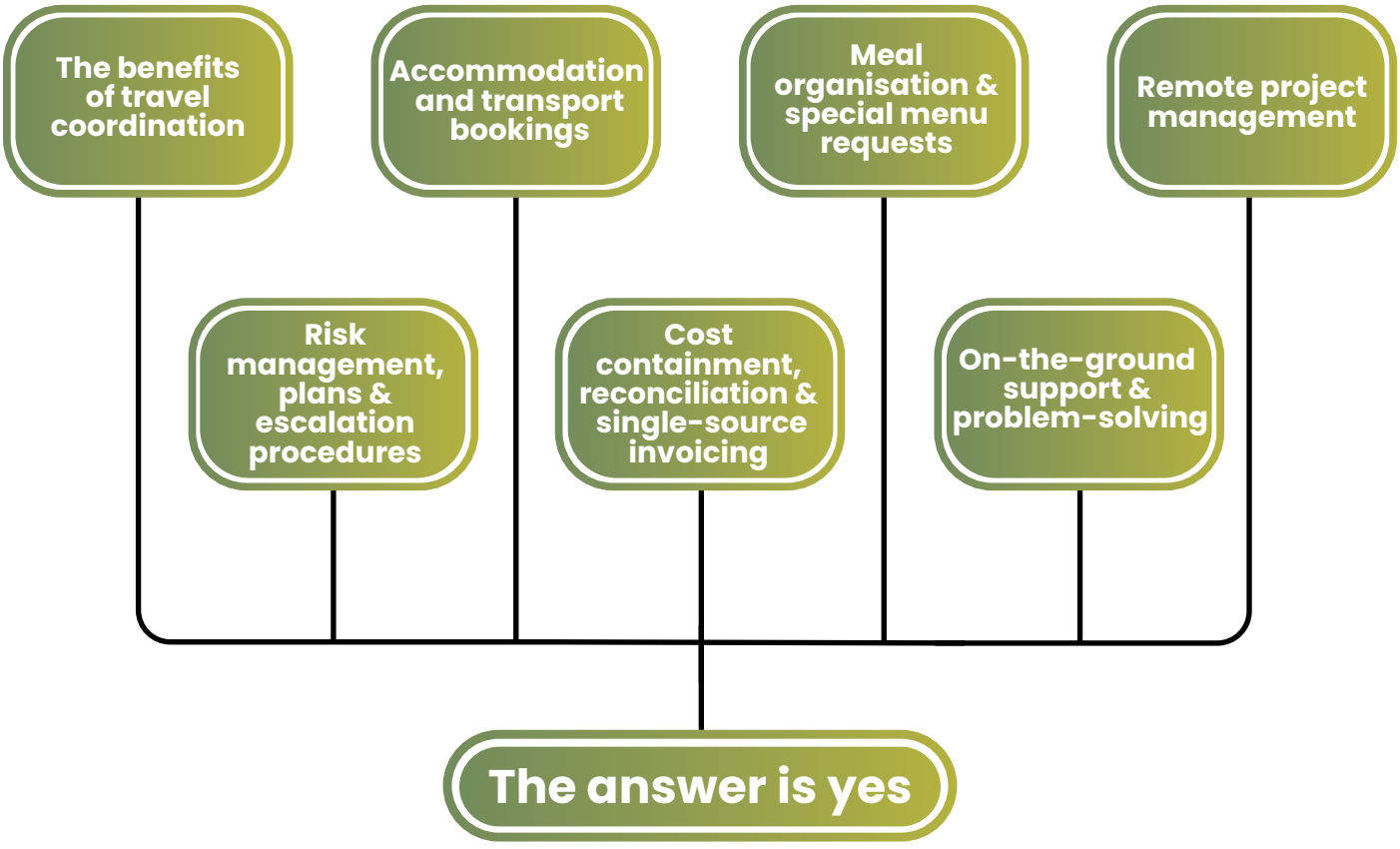
Risk management
How can travellers stay safe in the wake of covid-19 outbreaks and changing accommodation regulations, political protests and unrest, or if they fall ill?

Cost containment and spend reconciliation
this becomes a nightmarish paper trail, never mind trying to handle VAT

These stresses are on top of the general disruption that comes with working away from home – a change in people and personalities, work versus leisure routine, as well as diet. Something else business travellers lament is the lack of healthy food options when moving from hotel to hotel. And these are just some of the stresses and that excludes the day-to-day hiccups mentioned.

And what if we add another layer of complexity into the mix? You're travelling for business with a team of 40. And of those 40, about half have special dietary needs. And it's not a quick trip 200 km away and back, it's a 1200 km trip...into the middle of the Karoo. Accommodation is few and far between, and the other services you'll need like transport and meals are too. How would a travel agent handle that?

So, is there an all-in-one solution that provides:



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With iLodge you can take advantage of over a decade of experience in managing business transport, accommodation and meal bookings for medium to large projects, most of which are in remote locations. Our excellent relationships with Service Providers mean we can keep costs contained on top of dealing with problems promptly. Project managers check in on your needs regularly, both face to face and digitally. Regardless of the time, our team is standing by to resolve any hiccups.

Here's an example of how we're more than just a travel agent, and can help not only facilitate accommodation bookings for large teams, on top of meals three times daily, but also offer clients a fast turnaround time and problem-solving mindset.

Example #1

We were contacted to source accommodation, transport and catering services for a team of 60 who were due to begin work at Grand Central Airport in Midrand, Johannesburg. We were given very little detail to go on when first contacted by the client, but worked quickly to secure accommodation, as well as meal and transport Service Providers.

Right out the gate the requirements shifted almost daily – from needing always-on ground transport to take the team to a helicopter pad (which took them to the Airport four people at a time), to only needing ground transport for night shift workers, we had to stay on our toes making call after call, sending email after email, and meeting with the team and Service Providers daily.

Just as quickly as we seemed to get a handle on requirements, they would change. Laundry was never a requirement and suddenly it became one, and we got new totals for the number of night and day shift workers which meant an increase in the number of meals we needed to provide. A new meal Service Provider was brought on to handle this increased capacity, all while keeping costs within the client's budget. This is where our history and relationships with Service Providers really shine – we can negotiate to ensure the best possible outcome for our clients.

To make matters more complex, all of this was happening while a strike was underway and when it was over, the client requested we move the team closer to the Airport which involved another full round of sourcing accommodation, catering and transport services and re-quoting. There were countless other hiccups that we handled both face to face and digitally.

In the first week of this client request coming in, the Account Executive responsible made over 400 phone calls and sent close to 60 emails in correspondence to ensure the client's needs were met and that the team working on this project had three hot meals a day, suitable accommodation and on-time transport. Never mind other members of the bigger iLodge team who were brought on to assist. We're not so sure a travel agent could handle all of that!

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