

Is international travel really cheaper than local travel?

The affordability of local travel is a heated conversation topic in South Africa. Many South Africans hold firmly on to the belief that it is cheaper to visit Thailand or Zanzibar than to trek to the coastlines of Cape Town or Durban.

By [Sharmila Ragunanan](#) 19 Mar 2018



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However, put this theory to the test, and you'll see this assumption simply isn't true.

South Africans looking for an affordable holiday in Thailand will need to budget around R9,000 per person for a seven-night package. Zanzibar is slightly more expensive at R12,000 for the most affordable seven-night package. That means an international budget holiday will set a family of four back between R36,000 and R48,000 on average.

If we look at a local package in a resort in Durban, such as Dream Hotels and Resorts' Blue Marlin Hotel, a week's accommodation for four people including flights from Johannesburg on a local low-cost carrier would cost a family of four an average R14,700.

Flights to Cape Town are slightly more costly, but travellers can still find affordable packages. With flights, a seven-night stay at Piekensskloof Mountain Resort in the Western Cape will cost a family of four on average R15,000.

South Africans not taking to local skies

Despite the affordable prices to explore their own backyard, South Africans are not rushing to take to the local skies. ACS passenger statistics show that total domestic passenger traffic remained largely static in 2016 and 2017.

According to the spokesperson for FlySafair, Kirby Gordon, the stagnant picture of local flights isn't 'too bad' given the very slow economic growth in South Africa. He mentions there is a direct link between passenger numbers and economic growth.

Statistics South Africa paints a much bleaker picture. According to the latest Domestic Tourism Survey, the total number of day trips decreased by five million while overnight trips decreased by about three million from 2015 to 2016.



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A visit to friends and relatives was the most popular reason for undertaking overnight trips, with approximately 12 million trips taken for this reason in 2016. Nearly three out of four people who undertook overnight trips opted to stay with friends and relatives rather than pay for accommodation. One of the key reasons South African Tourism offers for this lack of interest in local tourism is that South Africans do not have an “inherent travel culture”.

Another factor I feel could play an important role in the lacklustre performance of our domestic tourism is that travellers do not view local travel as exciting or exotic as overseas travel. As tourism stakeholders, it is our role to encourage South Africans to consume local tourism products – accommodation, tourist attractions and experiences.

Durban and KwaZulu-Natal have so much more to offer than just the beaches. Tell travellers about the possibility to hike, mountain bike and explore the spectacular scenery of the Oribi Gorge or the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Game Reserve. Open their eyes to the high adrenaline activities on offer in the Western Cape.

Like I mentioned in a [previous article](#), it is my firm belief that taking a family holiday is a right, not a privilege. So, it's up to us as tourism industry stakeholders to make domestic travel seem less intimidating and easier to access with such initiatives: family deals, self-catering products, packaging experiences and products together, and loyalty programmes that encourage more regular travel.

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