How to nail your business travel policy

A hassle-free policy is the heart of your travel program

Booking headaches. Safety risks. Budget blowouts. Dissatisfied travellers. Missed savings. Sound familiar?

Managing business travel can be complex. What to book, how to book, when to book—it's personal, but it also has to be within budget, aligned with company values, and put duty of care first.

The solution to this balancing act: an airtight travel policy.

A travel policy serves as a comprehensive guide, outlining budgets and specifying options for airfares, hotels, and car rentals, alongside any flexible perks. This ensures your team are clear on their options and your budget is protected.

Explore our expert advice on crafting the right policy to set your business up for success, along with our top tips on how to implement it effectively!

Do we really need a travel policy?

The short answer ... YES!

As the heart of your travel program, your travel policy is responsible for keeping every aspect of business travel functioning smoothly. From bookings and approvals to payments and safety, it keeps everyone—from the travel arranger juggling itineraries to the business managers meeting flagship clients—on the same page and moving in the right direction. Plus, it keeps your finance and HR managers happy!

In short, a travel policy keeps all the checks, balances and procedures in place so everything runs smoothly.

Top five ways a travel policy helps your business:

1. Controls travel costs
2. Makes reimbursements and expense policy crystal clear
3. Builds a trusted network of approved suppliers
4. Prioritises your team's safety and comfort
5. Eliminates rogue bookings and simplify approvals

Okay, we're convinced.
What should a travel policy include?

Keep it short, sweet and simple

- ☑ Avoid jargon or complex language so it's easy to understand.

- ☑ Keep it concise with only necessary details.

- ☑ Tailor it to your business's unique needs and travel priorities.

The nitty gritty

- ☑ **Where and why:** Who travels where, and for what reasons? Set clear guidelines for domestic and international trips.

- ☑ **When:** Are there no-fly zones on your calendar, like EOFY or budget crunches?

- ☑ **How:** Decide how trips are booked— through an online tool, a TMC, or something else. And how far in advance?

- ☑ **Preferred suppliers:** Lock in preferred suppliers for flights, stays, transport, and insurance.

- ☑ **Approvals:** Spell out who gives the green light on business trips.

- ☑ **Show me the money:** What's the process for handling expenses, payments, and reimbursements?

- ☑ **Uh-oh:** How will policy non-compliance be managed or prevented?

- ☑ **Noise level:** Are there recurring questions or confusion about your policy? If so, where's the stumbling block?

The perks of the job

- **Classy, baby:** Who gets to book business class, fancy hotels, or premium rides? What about upgrades or lounge access?

- **Bleisure bliss:** Can employees add personal leave to business trips? If yes, who pays for what?

- **Points, please:** Are there any corporate rewards or loyalty programs in play?

- **Pocket money:** Specify allowances for meals and incidentals. Can travellers expense room service, mini bar drinks, or in-house laundry?

In case of emergency

- **Safety first:** Use suppliers with top-notch safety standards for flights, stays, and transport. Include clear travel insurance guidelines.

- **SOS plan:** Prepare for disruptions like natural disasters or strikes, with clear contacts for immediate help.

- **Keep it current:** Regularly review and update your policy to keep it relevant and effective.

Clear is kind

Ensure your policy is clear and communicate it to your employees to save a whole lot of frustration. Your TMC can work with you to develop either a visual or written travel policy that's no more than two pages long, is tailored for your business and covers all the key travel areas. It also needs to be housed somewhere easy to find and accessible outside of internal workplace servers.

Keep calm and consult your team

> **❝** Our travel manager has gotten to know why people are booking out of the travel platform. They have identified whether it's a hotel or car supplier, then added them into policy and into the platform, which saves us time and money. **❞**
>
> **Clare McKenzie**
> **Office Manager at Fintran**

Your TMC team

When it comes to travel policy, it pays to call the right experts. At Corporate Traveller, setting up a travel policy is one of the first things we'll tackle with you. We've crafted more policies than we can count. Plus, our travel managers, paired with our intuitive booking tool, drive compliance across your team, taking the pressure off you.

Our experienced account managers will take the time to:

- Dig into your travel data

- Set realistic cost-per-trip goals

- Recommend time to book and fare classes for air bookings

- Evaluate potential preferred supplier deals

- Assess online vs offline booking for your business

- Create a policy that balances your business needs and traveller experience

- Integrate it into your online booking tool and wider business

Whatever your goals, we'll work with you every step of the way to nail it. And with a customer success team boasting an average tenure of nine years, you'll benefit from a depth of experience and expertise that few can match.

Your own team

As with everything else, your travel policy should reflect your company culture, hierarchy and business objectives.

Get your internal team involved from the get-go. Tap into senior management, your finance leader, and even a couple of frequent travellers. Their input will help shape a policy that works for everyone.

> **❝** You should leverage Corporate Traveller's relationships and expertise to negotiate direct deals where possible. Integrate your travel policy into your online booking tool, and with Corporate Traveller, your travel manager will help hold travellers accountable to your policy—even for offline bookings. **❞**
>
> **Ben Povall**
> **Corporate Traveller**
> **Head of Customer Success (QLD)**

CORPORATE TRAVELLER™

Let's talk tech

Beyond simplifying bookings, the right booking platform keeps your team compliant and within budget.

Savi: Smarter booking, better compliance

Corporate Traveller's all-in-one platform, Savi, embeds your policy into the travel process to enable:

- **Complete trip booking options:** Flights, hotels, and transport options that fit your guidelines.

- **In-policy bookings:** Only policy-approved options show up, keeping things simple and compliant.

- **Budget alerts:** Savi calculates potential savings, and notifies you if a booking is over budget to avoid unwanted surprises.

- **User-friendly design:** Fast, intuitive booking for even the busiest team members.

- **Advance planning perks:** Simple comparison tools encourage early bookings for better rates.

Reporting for tracking and smart decision making

Data, data, data, we all know its value! Our Power BI Reporting Suite digs deeper, putting insights at your fingertips. Drive smarter decisions by:

- **Tracking compliance:** Spot where policies are followed and where they aren't.

- **Analysing spend:** Get a clear picture of travel costs across your business.

- **Refining your policy:** Use data to make adjustments that save time and money.

Always accessible, always effective

Technology can also be used to make sure your travel policy is always accessible for employees. Will staff remember to download it from the internal server before a trip? Think outside the box and find ways to make your travel policy instantly accessible.

Stuck for ideas on how to do this? Consider sending updated versions to everyone's email. Upload it to the company's cloud network. Or make the travel policy a favourite post in the work WhatsApp group.

Real-life story:

The difference a travel policy can make

Before a leading health tech company joined Corporate Traveller, their travel policy lived in one or two people's heads—it was not in writing anywhere. That meant inconsistent bookings, budget uncertainty, and a whole lot of stress. They knew they needed a proper system but worried about losing control.

Then, we stepped in. The first step was to put a clear, structured travel policy in place—one that was built to support their needs. From there, everything changed:

- **Booking rules, built in:** Their policy was built into our online booking tool, ensuring every trip followed the rules.

- Approvals on autopilot: No more chasing approvals; the process became seamless, with built-in cost centre tracking.

- **Better traveller experience:** Travellers could book on the go through the mobile app while staying compliant.

- **Scalable:** A flexible setup that could grow with them, so they only paid for what they needed.

- **Smarter payments:** A trading account made cashflow and reconciliation a breeze.

By locking in a strong travel policy, they finally had a structured, scalable travel program—without losing control.

The REALLY important stuff

Now that you see why a travel policy is essential, here are some travel and business considerations to ensure it's top-notch:

- How will you keep in touch with your travellers while they are on the road?

- How will you track everyone's whereabouts for safety and security?

- What is the emergency protocol should something happen?

- How many employees, senior leaders or management team can fly on the same flight?

- What's covered under your travel insurance and medical plans?

- Which countries and regions are regarded as high-risk and what's your company's stance on travel to these destinations?

PRO TIP: Your travellers don't need to know every line of your policy. Just focus on the parts that affect their bookings, spending, safety, security and comfort while they're away.

Keep it relevant

Travel is unpredictable, but a solid policy is your safety net when the unexpected strikes. Keep these questions in mind to make sure yours stays up to scratch:
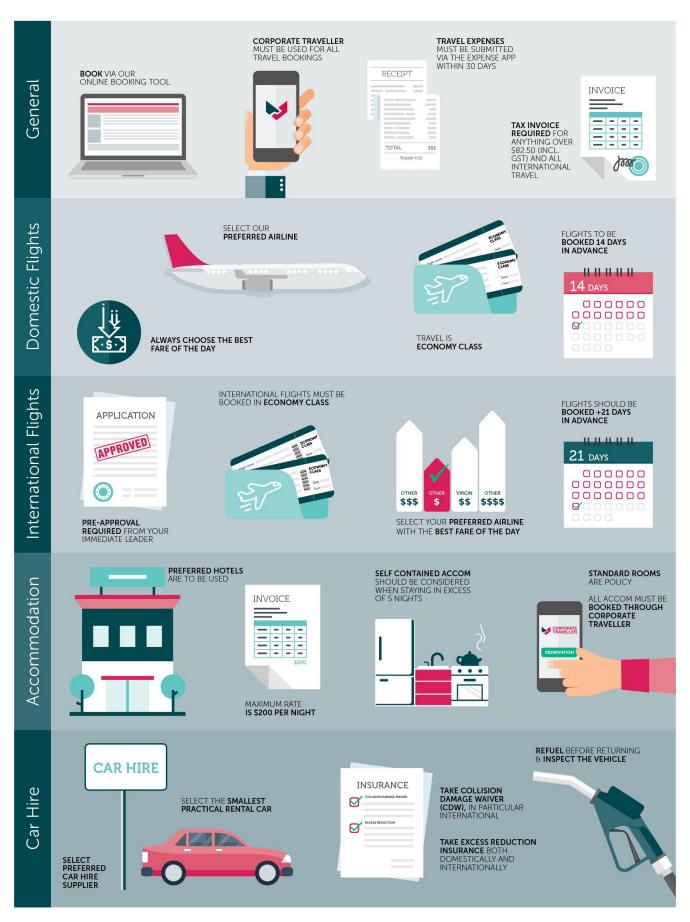
- How will you manage groups, VIPs, or those travelling to high-risk destinations?

- What's your protocol for unforeseen events like flight cancellations or emergencies?

- Are you regularly updating your policy to keep it relevant and aligned with your business needs?

Your travel policy isn't a "set it and forget it" document—it needs regular review to stay sharp. Need a second opinion? Lean on your TMC, senior team, or even your frequent travellers for insights.

At Corporate Traveller, our account management program is led by experts with an average of 9 years' experience, guiding your travel program with unparalleled knowledge and care. We specialise in simplifying policy reviews, conducting regular travel program evaluations to ensure alignment with your business goals, budgets, and the evolving needs of your people. With actionable insights and proactive solutions, we help you create travel policies that work harder for your business—so you can stay focused on driving it forward.

Example of a visual travel policy

General

BOOK VIA OUR ONLINE BOOKING TOOL

CORPORATE TRAVELLER MUST BE USED FOR ALL TRAVEL BOOKINGS

RECEIPT
TOTAL $$$
THANK YOU

TRAVEL EXPENSES MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA THE EXPENSE APP WITHIN 30 DAYS

INVOICE

TAX INVOICE REQUIRED FOR ANYTHING OVER $82.50 (INCL. GST) AND ALL INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Domestic Flights

SELECT OUR **PREFERRED AIRLINE**

ALWAYS CHOOSE THE BEST FARE OF THE DAY

ECONOMY CLASS

TRAVEL IS **ECONOMY CLASS**

FLIGHTS TO BE **BOOKED 14 DAYS IN ADVANCE**

14 DAYS

International Flights

APPLICATION
APPROVED

PRE-APPROVAL REQUIRED FROM YOUR IMMEDIATE LEADER

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS MUST BE BOOKED IN **ECONOMY CLASS**

ECONOMY CLASS

OTHER $$$ | OTHER $ | VIRGIN $$ | OTHER $$$$

SELECT YOUR **PREFERRED AIRLINE** WITH THE **BEST FARE OF THE DAY**

FLIGHTS SHOULD BE **BOOKED +21 DAYS IN ADVANCE**

21 DAYS

Accommodation

PREFERRED HOTELS ARE TO BE USED

INVOICE
$200

MAXIMUM RATE **IS $200 PER NIGHT**

SELF CONTAINED ACCOM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN STAYING IN EXCESS OF 5 NIGHTS

STANDARD ROOMS ARE POLICY

ALL ACCOM MUST BE **BOOKED THROUGH CORPORATE TRAVELLER**

CORPORATE TRAVELLER
RESERVATION

Car Hire

CAR HIRE

SELECT PREFERRED CAR HIRE SUPPLIER

SELECT THE **SMALLEST PRACTICAL RENTAL CAR**

INSURANCE
COLLISION DAMAGE WAIVER
EXCESS REDUCTION

TAKE COLLISION DAMAGE WAIVER (CDW), IN PARTICULAR INTERNATIONAL

TAKE EXCESS REDUCTION INSURANCE BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

REFUEL BEFORE RETURNING & **INSPECT THE VEHICLE**

In a nutshell:

10 ways to take your travel policy from "meh" to "masterful"

Remember, your travel policy is the heart of your travel program, setting the rhythm for smooth, efficient travel. If it's due for a refresh—or missing altogether—it's time to get it back on beat with these ten tips.

Put people first

Cost control matters, but so does traveller wellbeing. We can help you strike the perfect balance between maintaining budgets and employee wellness.

Be flexible within reason

Offering reasonable choices in flights, hotels, and perks boosts satisfaction without breaking the bank.

Lean on smart tech

Booking tools aligned with your policy ensure compliance and convenience. Already using one? Let's make sure it's configured perfectly.

Simplify approvals

A simple, well-defined approval process keeps trips moving without endless back-and-forth.

Automate what you can

Save time and reduce errors by automating approvals, bookings, and reports.

Spell out the no-gos

Clear guidance on what's not allowed avoids confusion and keeps everyone on track. Our experts can help you clarify any grey areas.

Make reconciliation easy

Make sure your policy details how to manage the reconciliation processes for travel expenses, and provide links to any software or apps needed.

Keep it handy

A policy that's easy to find is one your team is more likely to follow. We'll help you bring it front and centre.

Revisit and refresh your policy

Update your policy yearly to keep it relevant and effective. Consider this your nudge to make it happen.

Keep it simple with a visual travel policy

A clear, easy-to-understand visual policy is one your team will want to follow.

Let's take your travel policy to new heights

It's time to call in the pros.

At Corporate Traveller, we've been living and breathing corporate travel for over 30 years. Let us take care of the details so you can focus on what really matters: running your business.