



Top tips on how SMEs can save money on business travel in a recession

Cutting back on travel budgets is a potentially dangerous false economy for SMEs, according to Hillgate Travel, a leader in its field for tailoring services for smaller clients.

While it handles multi-million pound travel budgets for major corporations, Hillgate Travel has developed a range of services targeted at SMEs, ensuring they get maximum value for money, manage costs in line with company policy – and get support facilities that might normally only be expected to be given to bigger clients.

Hillgate Travel, the UK's largest independent travel management company (TMC), believes that travel costs should be regarded as part of a company's marketing drive – helping to win new customers and maintaining valuable customer relations.

As the economic downturn bites even harder, SMEs looking to control overheads may see UK and overseas travel as an easy target.

Indeed, a report released last week by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and KPMG revealed that 38 per cent of UK employers had reduced business travel to save money.

But Hillgate Travel believes companies should be asking how they are going to drive forward their business in a recession if they cut back on visiting potential and existing customers and suppliers.

Many SMEs may think that their overall travel spend does not warrant working with a specialist business travel agent, a TMC. They would be wrong – not least because working with the right TMC will probably save them money, allowing them to continue – even increase – their business trips.

Hillgate Travel is able to achieve this via an online booking tool they have developed themselves and which they are able to tailor-make for every single client, particularly SMEs. This allows companies with even the most modest travel spend to get the benefits of Hillgate's considerable buying power on flights, hotels, car rental and more.

Here are Hillgate Travel's five top tips on how to book and plan travel wiser during the economic downturn

- Manage the reason for travel – not the method
- Pre-trip approval complying with company travel policies and absolute control of travel budgets
- Online booking
- 24-hour support during a large-scale crisis such as the recent Mumbai attacks or travel frustrations with fog and snow at key UK airports. This provides peace of mind and can avoid wasted trips to airports that are shut
- Creative ticketing – the skills of a TMC which avoid wastage

“Our secret is that we tailor our service to the individual needs of every client, large and small,” said Hillgate Travel's Head of Sales, Paul Spencer.

“SMEs should not necessarily think they should cut back on travel or think they get the best deals by booking it themselves. We can manage budgets and policies for them, potentially saving them money with our buying power and industry-wide expertise. By using their budgets more effectively, we can make sure they can save money – or get more for their budget.”

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