

SECURITY WATCH: JOHANNESBURG 

On arrival, travellers will notice the excellent state of OR Tambo International Airport's infrastructure. It's an efficient, clean airport with a metro link system, the Gautrain, that quickly whisks commuters into the business hubs of Sandton and Rosebank, as well as Pretoria. However, travellers should be cautious of unsolicited offers from unofficial baggage porters and taxi drivers inside the airport.



Julian Moro, Regional Security Director, International SOS and Control Risks, provides business travellers with security advice

While Johannesburg offers an environment conducive to business, beneath the impressive exterior is a city of economic disparities. The Central Business District possesses an unusual blend of business infrastructure located in close proximity to inner-city slum areas, which are notorious for gang-related crime. Having local knowledge of where to go and which places to avoid is essential to staying safe.

Using the Gautrain is helpful, but only as a starting point. A reliable vehicle and driver are essential for safely navigating the city. Some roads do meet international standards, but there are poor driving habits and an accident fatality rate roughly three times the international average. Traffic delays are regular and frequent power outages mean that traffic lights are often blacked out, causing increased challenges. Driving at night brings an increase in opportunistic crime such as carjacking.

Low-income neighbourhoods, known as townships, should be avoided, especially at night due to high rates of violent crime. But being aware of the 'no go' areas is insufficient. Crime in Johannesburg can affect you almost anywhere, and the ubiquity of the problem is evident in the physical security measures in place at most hotels and residences.

Avoid walking at night, keep valuables out of plain sight, exercise vigilance and be aware of your surroundings. Remain alert to moments when you may be more vulnerable.

Sandton, Melrose, Rosebank and Bedfordview are upmarket, better-secured areas of the city. Many foreign corporate offices are situated there, and the area has appropriate business hotels. Exposure to crime increases while in transit, so be sure to select accommodation which is as close as possible to your meeting venues.

GSM and data-roaming networks are of a reasonable standard, albeit calls can sometimes drop without warning. Most business hotels offer the full range of services, and English is widely spoken.

InterCon Dubai Marina opening May

COMPETITION IN 'New Dubai' looks set to rise with the temperatures this summer with the 328-room InterContinental Dubai Marina slated to open in May. It's not only the added room inventory that's significant, but also the addition of nine F&B venues in an increasingly venue-packed district, among them Michelin-star Jason Atherton's first restaurant & bar in the region. The hotel forms part of the Bay Central development and is close to The Walk on JBR.



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Meliá bringing Ininside to Dubai, opens Doha

THE INSIDE DUBAI will open on the edge of Jumeirah Lakes Towers (JLT) in 2016, marking Meliá Hotels International's third brand in the UAE. The 125-room, four-star hotel will contain two restaurants, gym, spa, pool and rooftop lounge. It joins the already operational Meliá Dubai and upcoming ME Dubai in the operator's city portfolio. JLT has been one of the hot hotel development districts in recent months – the Pullman Dubai Jumeirah Lakes Towers Hotel & Residence recently opened – as operators look to capitalise on corporate and residential growth.

The 317-room Meliá Doha has opened its doors, raising competition in the hotel-studded West Bay district. Meliá Hotels International's first Qatar hotel contains 280 rooms and 37 suites, including a 436sqm Royal Suite on the 39th floor.

F&B includes Signature by Sanjeev Kapoor, Nidaaya (all day dining) Aceite (Spanish/traditional tapas), Noir (cocktail bar), Le Pool Club (third floor, casual snacks and drinks) and RiQQa, a modern boutique and coffee shop.

Guests staying on The Level have exclusive access to the Level Lounge and benefit from early check in/check out, access to a conference room and private airport transfers. The health club has a gym and pool.

Gabriel Escarrer, Vice Chairman and CEO of Meliá, said the Middle East is a key growth market "and we anticipate significant interest from both the business and leisure markets as the region continues to evolve and grow."

Turn to page 24 to read more on Doha's new hotels

