

Why travellers should take a second look at travel insurance

According to the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation, there are some instances in which medical treatment can be withheld by a foreign country if a person has no proof of funds or travel insurance. Therefore, travellers should carefully review their travel insurance to ensure they are sufficiently covered should an unexpected injury or event take place while abroad.



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This is according to Annelie Smith, corporate executive at RBS, independent insurance and risk specialists, who says that with the recent decision by the Department of Home Affairs to amend its international travel requirements for minors' unabridged birth certificates, more families may be holidaying abroad this school holiday. "The current Rand exchange rate may result in consumers searching for the best deals and looking to cut costs where possible, including on travel insurance. Opting for a policy that covers the minimum requirement for the purpose of obtaining a visa permit could, however, leave the travellers inadequately insured."

Medical costs can be crippling

Smith says that one element that must not be compromised is health insurance, as unexpected medical expenses can financially cripple travellers if they are caught unprepared.

She points to a 2013 study conducted among 20 countries by global insurance provider, AXA, which indicated that the average estimated costs for the three most common health claims including ear infection, gastroenteritis or a broken bone, is between R73,000 to R300,000.

Political or natural evacuation cover

Apart from medical costs, consumers also need to ascertain if they will require political or natural disaster evacuation cover should there be a political uprising or a hurricane. "With over 15 terrorist attacks taking place globally in 2016 alone, these attacks are among the threats that face international travellers nowadays. Political or natural evacuation cover can ensure that the cost of early evacuation for the insured parties is taken care of in the event of a terrorist attack, political uprising or natural disaster."

It is thus important for tourists to consider the destination and the risks attached to this area carefully, in order to determine which types of cover will be necessary, explains Smith.

“People tend to ‘switch-off’ during the holiday season and details, such as adequate insurance, could fall by the wayside. During a well-deserved holiday, the last thing one expects is an accident or a political disaster, but these things can happen and if they do, it is best to be prepared.”

She says that given that there are a variety of products in the marketplace, deciding on the right cover can be a daunting experience for consumers. “A specialist, such as a broker, would be able to guide consumers about the various products on offer and what they should be considering in light of their selected travel destination. Not only will this ensure comprehensive cover, but could also possibly save the individual massive cost and maybe even their life,” concludes Smith.

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