



Corporate Travel in Asia Pacific: One Programme, Many Markets

The governance challenge for multinational travel programmes across
Asia Pacific

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Asia Pacific has become the fulcrum of global business travel and yet, few corporate travel programmes have caught up.

GBTA forecasts the region will account for US\$700.9 billion in business travel spend in 2026 with over 40% of global expenditure.¹

Growth is also becoming more broadly distributed across the region. China remains the largest market but Singapore, India, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea are all forecast to record strong year-on-year growth in 2027. For multinational organisations, this is more than an increase in travel volumes. It represents a structural shift in where global business activity is centred.

Travel programmes have not kept pace with that shift: most were built market by market - local airline content, local booking behaviours, local tax and invoicing rules, local payment rails, local service expectations.

Each addition was a reasonable response to a real local requirement. Collectively, however, they have often created a collection of local programmes that work within individual markets but are difficult to govern consistently at regional level.

This is the distinction that now separates leading travel programmes from the rest. The question is no longer whether a market has coverage. It is whether every market operates inside the same programme, one set of governance standards, one data architecture, one service model, and clear accountability, while retaining the flexibility required for local market realities.

That changes the measure of programme capability. Airfare negotiation was the old lever. The new one is architectural: the ability to convert a patchwork of local operations into a single, connected regional programme: visible, governed, and accountable from the centre.

GBTA forecasts 2026

US\$700.9B

Projected Asia Pacific business travel spend in 2026 more than 40% of global corporate travel expenditure.

SECTION 1

Business Travel Is Following The New Geography Of Growth

Business travel has proven remarkably resilient.

Despite geopolitical uncertainty, shifting supply chains and rising operating costs, demand continues to grow. As GBTA Chief Executive Suzanne Neufang observed at the GBTAAPAC Conference 2026, held at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore:

"Travel didn't stop. It just found new routes."^{*2}

Manufacturing investment is diversifying across Southeast Asia. Supply chains are becoming more distributed. Organisations are establishing regional headquarters while simultaneously expanding manufacturing, engineering and commercial operations across multiple markets, a trend GBTA attributes largely to growth in Manufacturing, Utilities, Construction and Administrative Services.¹

Nowhere is this concentration of decision-making clearer than in Singapore. According to Singapore's Economic

Development Board, more than 4,200 multinational corporations now base their Asia-Pacific regional headquarters in the city-state - a figure that has grown consistently for three decades.³ GBTA's own economic impact research puts a number on what that hub status is worth in travel terms alone: business travel to and within Singapore generated US\$8.1 billion in industry-driven revenue in 2024, supported 33,636 jobs, and contributed US\$1.3 billion in tax revenue, with 56 cents of every dollar spent remaining in the local economy.⁴

Business travel follows investment

For multinational organisations, regional expansion is no longer defined by entering one additional country. It increasingly means operating simultaneously across Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, India, China and beyond.

That changes the role of the corporate travel programme.

Its purpose extends beyond moving employees efficiently between destinations. It must also support an organisation's ability to operate consistently across different markets, while accommodating the requirements that make those markets different.



4,200+

MNC with APAC regional headquarters in Singapore



US\$8.1B

Business travel revenue generated in Singapore (2024)



56¢

Of every dollar spent stays in the local economy

FIGURE 1

41%

of global business travel spend
in 2026 is **Asia Pacific**

US\$700.9 billion of a US\$1.69 trillion
market



Global Business Travel
Spending

US\$1.69 trillion



China's Share of APAC
Spend

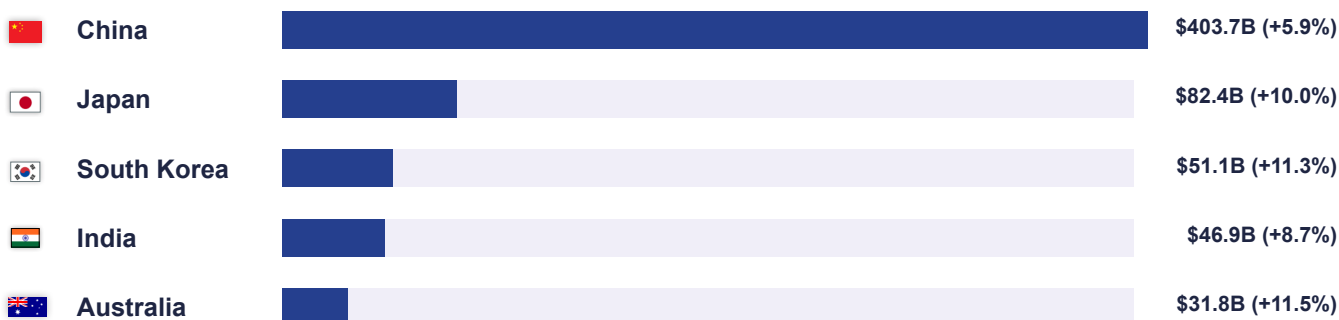
US\$403.7 billion
(58%)



Top 5 APAC Markets Combined
China, Japan, South Korea, India,
Australia

US\$623.2 billion

2026 Business Travel Spend by Country - APAC Top 5



Source: 2026 BUSINESS TRAVEL INDEX Annual Global Report & Forecast - August 2026

SECTION 2

Why Regional Travel Programmes Fragment In Practice.

Regional expansion introduces operational complexity that extends far beyond booking travel.

Each Asia Pacific market has its own air and hotel content, distribution environment, point-of-sale requirements, payment infrastructure, tax treatment, invoicing standards, data regulations, traveller behaviours and servicing expectations.

These differences are both necessary and expected. They reflect the realities of operating across one of the world's most diverse business regions.

The challenge is not accommodating local market requirements. It is integrating them into one global programme with consistent governance, service and control.

Many multinational travel programmes may be globally contracted while remaining operationally fragmented. In reality, local delivery can involve a combination of TMC-owned operations, network partners, local fulfilment providers, technology platforms and specialist suppliers.

Each component may perform effectively within its own market. However, when technology, service configurations, data standards, payment processes and governance structures are not integrated, complexity increases at every programme handoff.

The consequences can include:

- Fragmented management information and incomplete spend visibility;
- Inconsistent service delivery and traveller experience;
- Slower payment and invoice reconciliation;
- Varying policy application and online adoption;
- Unclear escalation and accountability during disruption;
- Reduced duty-of-care visibility; and
- Difficulty measuring regional supplier and TMC performance consistently.



Bookings made outside approved channels can become invisible spend



1 in 3

Surveyed Organisations
Using An Online Booking
Tool



20%+

Of Their Travel Spend
Booked Outside The
Approved Platform



53%

Of Off-Channel Bookers Cited
Missing Content As The Primary
Reason

Nearly one-third of surveyed organisations using an online booking tool reported that at least 20% of their travel spend was booked outside the approved platform. Among respondents booking off-channel, 53% identified missing content as the primary reason.

Off-channel transactions matter because they can fall outside the systems used to manage the wider travel programme. Spend may not be captured fully within consolidated reporting, supplier negotiations or policy measurement. Traveller location data may be incomplete.

Duty-of-care processes may have less visibility. Finance teams may also have to reconcile transactions through different channels.

The issue is rarely whether an individual market can fulfil a booking.

It is whether that transaction contributes to the same programme view as every other market.

Executive Perspective

The question has changed.

Yesterday's Question

Can our travel management company support this market?

Today's Question

Can this market operate within the same governance framework, data environment and service model as the rest of our programme?

SECTION 3

Technology Is Only As Effective As The Operating Model Behind It

The business travel technology ecosystem has never been more sophisticated.

Online booking tools, NDC-enabled content, virtual payments, AI-assisted servicing and traveller risk platforms continue to evolve rapidly. Yet technology alone does not create programme visibility. On the supply side, adoption looks strong: an IATA global survey of over 150 airline employees found that 81% of airlines now have live NDC channels, with some already routing more than half of their indirect bookings through NDC.⁵

However, airline-level NDC adoption does not automatically create complete content or a consistent booking experience within a corporate travel programme.

“

Yet technology alone does not create programme visibility.

For that content to create programme value, it must be:

- Available through the organisation's approved booking channels;
- Displayed in a way that enables appropriate comparison and policy application;
- Fulfilled and serviced consistently;
- Connected to approved payment methods;
- Reconciled with expense and finance systems; and
- Captured within consolidated programme reporting.

Technology simplifies transactions. Connected operating models create visibility.

Without integration, organisations risk digitising fragmented processes rather than operating as one connected travel ecosystem.

FIGURE 2

81%

of airlines now have live NDC channels — supply-side adoption is **not the constraint**

Some already route more than half of their indirect bookings through NDC

How fragmentation could happen across every layer of the travel programme

Programme Layer	Typical Fragmented Environment
Booking and content	Multiple online booking tools, content sources and point-of-sale configurations
Travel Management Company and fulfilment	TMC-owned locations, network partners and local fulfilment providers
Policy and Approval	Different policy configurations, approval workflows and compliance rules
Payments	Lodge accounts, corporate cards, virtual cards and local payment providers
HR	Independent employee and profile systems
Expense	Separate finance and ERP platforms
Reporting	Country-specific reporting environments and data structures
Service	Different SLAs, servicing configurations, languages and after-hours arrangements
Risk and duty of care	Incomplete traveller data and different risk-management integrations

The issue is not that different systems, providers and configurations exist.

In many markets, they are necessary.

The programme challenge is whether they can contribute to one consistent view of policy, spend, service and traveller activity.

SECTION 4

The APAC Reality: Why “One Programme” Is Harder Than It Sounds

It is easy to state that a regional programme should operate under common governance. The complexity becomes clearer when individual market requirements are examined side by side.

Differences appear across content, payments, servicing, regulation and technology; but nowhere more visibly, or more measurably, than in tax.

Tax and invoicing are the most visible fault line, because they're highly regulated and therefore easy to identify. But that visibility is misleading: fragmentation in service, payment and governance is just as real, it's simply harder to see. Content, distribution, approval workflows, duty of care and servicing standards diverge just as sharply from market to market; they don't show up on an invoice.

A regional travel programme may operate under a single policy, but it rarely runs on a single process. Singapore is home to several thousand multinational corporations and is a major regional headquarters base.^{6, 7} As a result, travel decisions are often made there. But when a Singapore entity contracts or invoices for travel across the region, it has to navigate local GST and invoice-reporting rules, and those rules change depending on the service, the customer, and the phased rollout of Singapore's InvoiceNow system.^{8, 9}

Move into India, and the picture changes again. India has a separate GST and e-invoicing framework that applies to specific B2B and export invoices. It is not a blanket rule for every travel transaction; in fact, passenger transportation services are generally exempt from the e-invoice mandate.¹⁰ Add in a distinct domestic rail-ticket

process managed through IRCTC, and it becomes clear why a regional programme must understand exactly who issues each invoice and how local content is sourced.¹¹

Vietnam and Indonesia present their own hurdles. Vietnam has required e-invoices since July 2022.¹² Depending on the invoice type, businesses may need a specific tax-authority code or must transmit data electronically within a strict timeframe. If a regional operating model was built around different tax controls, Vietnam will often force a local integration or a bespoke invoicing process.^{12, 13} In Indonesia, VAT invoicing runs through Coretax and e-Faktur channels, while payments rely on national rails like QRIS and BI-FAST.^{14, 15} You cannot simply drop an Australian or Singaporean reconciliation process into Jakarta and expect it to work.

None of these requirements is unreasonable. Each reflects a legitimate local tax or market reality. But taken together, they mean a regional programme must reconcile different points of sale, regulations, payment rails, and content sources within one governance framework. Good governance sets the common policy, data definitions, and reporting standards, but it must allow for local processes where the market demands them.

This is why geographic coverage and programme integration are not the same thing. A TMC might have a legal entity, a local servicing team, and a signed contract in every market. That footprint alone does not guarantee a connected programme with consistent data, controls, or traveller experience. Those capabilities have to be proven at the programme level.

SECTION 5

From Coverage To Connected Governance

Historically, multinational organisations often evaluated travel partners primarily according to geographic footprint.

Today, geographic coverage is the starting point rather than the final measure of programme capability. A more useful maturity model evaluates four connected capabilities:

Coverage → Consistency → Connectivity → Governance

Programme Capability

Leadership Question

Coverage

Can we support travellers and fulfil transactions in every required market?

Consistency

Are policy principles, service standards and traveller experiences aligned across markets?

Connectivity

Are booking, profile, payment, expense and reporting data connected across the programme?

Governance

Can leadership manage every market through one operating model?

The organisations progressing furthest are moving beyond geographic expansion towards programme integration.

Their objective is no longer simply to operate in more countries. It is to govern them consistently.

SECTION 6

Questions Corporate Travel Leaders Should Be Asking

As travel programmes become increasingly global, executive conversations are changing.

Leading travel, procurement and finance leaders are asking different questions:

01 Can we see total travel spend and booking activity across every market?

02 How much spend is being booked outside approved channels?

03 Are travellers receiving a consistent level of service regardless of point of sale?

04 Is relevant local and NDC content available through approved booking channels?

05 Are policy, approval and payment configurations aligned with local requirements?

06 Can TMC, card, expense and HR data be consolidated into a trusted programme view?

07 Are regional SLAs and KPIs measured consistently?

08 Is traveller location data available when disruption occurs?

09 Are escalation paths and ownership clear across every fulfilment partner?

10 Can leadership make regional decisions using complete, timely and comparable data?

These questions increasingly distinguish programmes that are regional from those that are genuinely integrated.

CONCLUSION

Coverage is what a programme reaches. Governance is what it controls.

Business travel has always evolved alongside the way organisations grow.

Today, organisations are growing differently. Regional expansion is no longer the exception; it is the operating model which changes the role of the travel programme.

Success is no longer defined solely by negotiated savings, transaction fees or geographic coverage. It is defined by the ability to create consistency across complexity, to connect local expertise, technology, servicing, governance and data into one regional operating model.

For travel managers, the question is no longer whether another market can be supported.

It is whether every new market strengthens the programme as a whole.

The organisations that will lead the next decade of managed travel will not necessarily be those operating in the greatest number of countries.

They will be those that can make many countries operate as one consolidated programme.

Global reach may provide coverage.

Unified governance is what turns that coverage into control.

Sources

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