

# Travel Risk Management for Small and Medium Size Businesses

Avoiding risks to your people and the environment;  
eliminating risk of tax and visa liability.

Creating peace of mind for you and your teams.



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## Abstract

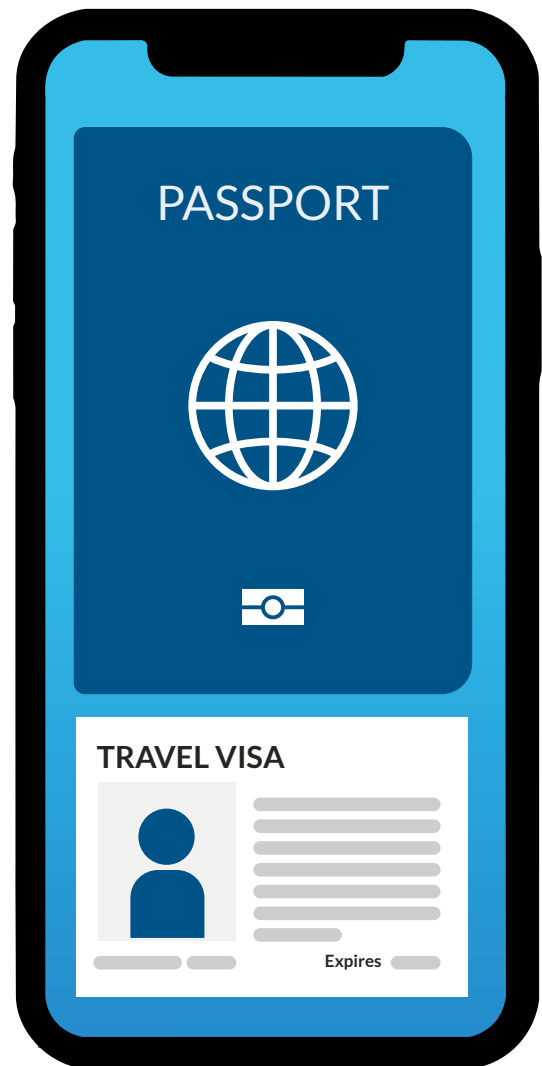
Travel risk management is a key element of your duty of care for your people and the environment.

- It is your moral and legal obligation to make sure your people are as safe as possible whilst travelling.
- It is also your financial responsibility to guard your company against liability, should someone travelling for you be injured or killed.
- You need to ensure your travellers and your company don't incur tax liability or visa violations, if they're spending extended periods out of their home country or US state on your behalf.
- If travel is an unavoidable part of your business, you should do so in a way that reduces your impact on the climate.

At Voyage Manager, we approach travel risk management from an ESG (Environmental Social Governance) perspective. The goal is peace of mind, for you and your teams.

Combined, small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) are by far the world's largest employers. We believe in the collective power of SMEs to effect positive change on the work environment and the planet's environment.

This white paper outlines basic steps for carrying out your responsibilities.



## What is Travel Risk Management?

The goal of travel risk management is peace of mind

We interpret travel risk management broadly to include

- duty of care for your people who travel, for their personal safety and for safeguarding your company against liability, should they be injured or killed;
- ensuring your people and your company don't become liable for tax or visa violations; and
- mitigating your impact on climate change.

Travel tracking and travel security are the building blocks of physical safety. The way you implement travel policies is key to giving your people a feeling of psychological safety in the work environment.

Tax compliance – ensuring your people don't become personally liable for tax when they work in other countries – or other US states – frees them from anxiety.

Tracking travel for tax compliance also means that your company will not become liable for corporation tax in the countries where your people work.

Visa compliance ensures your people aren't refused entry, fined, detained, expelled, or a combination of these consequences.

Finally, it is your responsibility, first, to know the carbon footprint of your business operations, including your vehicles, properties and travel. You can then begin mitigating your climate impact, with the goal of being carbon neutral.

Voyage Manager offers a suite of tools that comprises

- Travel Tracking
- Travel Security
- Tax Compliance
- Visa Compliance
- Climate Impact

The self-service online platform can be used by travellers and their travel administrators. The Voyage Nucleus app incorporates all of our tools in one app.

## The Environmental Social Governance Framework

In many countries, the largest organisations have some mandated level of duty of care for their people and the environment. This is not true of small and medium size businesses. At Voyage Manager, we believe it is the responsibility of SMEs to lead the way in implementing the principles of Environmental Social Governance (ESG),

- by eliminating toxic work environments (social and governance);
- by creating psychological safety in the workplace (social and governance); and
- by helping to reverse climate change (environmental).

Adopting ESG policies improves the bottom line

For SMEs, there is currently no requirement for ESG reporting, although we believe this will come. Already, some corporations require their suppliers to prove they are mitigating their climate impact. Increasingly, knowledgeable customers are choosing to buy from socially responsible companies. So adopting ESG policies improves the bottom line.

However, if you promote ESG policies simply to tick boxes, it's likely to backfire. If your operations don't match your public words, you risk losing customers and prospects and doing your reputation irreparable damage. You also risk losing your most highly valued staff.

Voyage Manager helps make your operations transparent, whilst it speeds and validates ESG reporting.

## Risks to People

This would be a different white paper if our customers were organisations that regularly sent their people into high-risk areas. For most SMEs, however, business travel destinations are usually safe.

Travel safety policies have three goals:

- Peace of mind for travellers and your company
- Procedures for the rare occasion on which something goes wrong
- Potential mitigation of your company's liability should one of your people be injured or killed



Daily safety check-ins and notifications if no response

### Travel Tracking

The most basic element of safety is travel tracking – knowing where your people are. Passive tracking is based on travellers' itineraries alone. This tells you where they're supposed to be; it doesn't tell you where they actually are.

Active tracking combines multiple sets of data. It represents itineraries, real-time flight status data, and confirmations from the travellers themselves, by text or email (e.g., "Are you about to board flight 357 to Frankfurt?" or "Have you landed at LAX?").

And if – and only if – the traveller consents and intentionally turns on this feature, active tracking can locate a traveller by the GPS signal of their phone. A number of our customers use this function only in certain circumstances. For example, if people are driving long distances across the US, they might turn GPS on, in case they get stuck by the side of a road with no town in sight.

Voyage Manager offers both passive and active tracking.

Voyage Manager also lets travel administrators view the

locations of all their people on one map, with the ability to drill down into the specifics of an individual person. Administrators can receive notifications that the traveller has confirmed departure or arrival, and more importantly, notifications if a traveller fails to confirm.

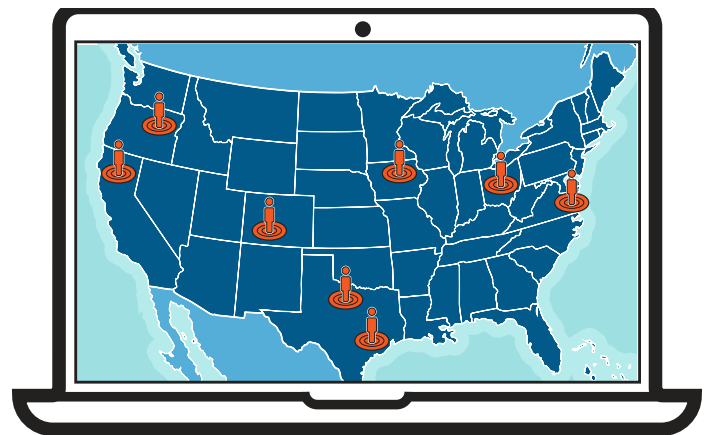
The most basic element of safety is knowing where your people are

### Travel Security

Travel security is about knowledge. Unlike with large organisations, it can be financially beyond the reach of most SMEs to obtain up-to-the-minute information about the safety of their travellers and their destinations. We created our travel security tools to close that gap.

People need advance information about staying safe at their destination. Our Country Guides range from basic tips, such as "only take a taxi that's booked by the hotel", to information such as the general incidence of crime, whether it's safe to drink the water, and social norms.

Voyage Manager sends a traveller a Country Guide as soon as a trip to another country is entered into the system, and again two weeks before departure.



Travel security is about knowledge

We also provide a daily safety check-in service. This is a simple email or SMS message on the traveller's phone, which asks them to confirm they're OK. The mobile app also includes an SOS button for emergencies. Once again, travel administrators receive notifications of confirmation, or failure to confirm.

Finally, travellers and their administrators alike can receive real-time security alerts for their locations. Administrators can view all alerts for all their people on a single map.

Even with the best planning, civil unrest or extreme weather sometimes happen. Immediate notification of potential danger is the first step in getting your people to safety.

### Global Security Operations Centres

GSOCs are generally 24/7 call centres that are expert in assisting people in trouble. Some providers are large enough to have their own aircraft to evacuate employees. Others act as coordinators, using sub-contractors to carry out rescues.

Either way, the GSOC's fees only cover the coordination; rescue services cost extra. So if you use a GSOC, you must also have adequate funding or insurance to cover these costs.

Voyage Manager doesn't have a Global Security Operations Centre, but we partner with a number, should you need one.

### Implementing Duty of Care Policies

Effective travel safety procedures require the consent and participation of your travellers. You could impose policies as a condition of employment, but we don't recommend it. It can lead to people feeling resentful, or that they aren't trusted.

Effective travel safety procedures require the consent and participation of your travellers.

The social aspect of ESG involves a collaborative approach. We recommend that travellers be given all the available options for personal travel tracking and security, and then choose the level of oversight they want.

### The Worst Case

During market research, we were surprised to learn that many small employers don't know this basic fact: If people travelling for you are injured or killed, you are liable. Full stop.

If you have taken all reasonable precautions to protect your people – and have documented the steps you took – this could mitigate your liability, should the traveller or their families sue, but it doesn't eliminate it.

If people travelling for you are injured or killed, you are liable.

Voyage Manager keeps a permanent record of your travel tracking and travel security operations.

### Risk of Tax Liability

If your people travel to the same jurisdictions often, they may be at risk of becoming tax residents. They could then potentially owe tax to those jurisdictions on all their income, no matter where it was earned.

For companies, the laws are similar: If the combined days-in-country of all your people exceeds a jurisdiction's threshold, you could be considered to have a permanent establishment there. That would make you liable for corporate tax in that jurisdiction.

### What is a Tax Jurisdiction?

Most countries have laws concerning tax residency (for individuals) and permanent establishment (for businesses). In addition to laws that govern US federal tax, most US states also have state tax laws. Working too long in individual US states could also make a person, or a company, liable for tax.

Some cities, such as San Francisco, are also tax jurisdictions. So if you spend time working in San Francisco, you could end up owing both California state tax and San Francisco city tax.

We've been tracking tax for frequent travellers since 2012



## Tax Tracking

Tax tracking automates tax compliance. Voyage Manager tracks your people's days in their home country, in other countries and US states. It pulls this data from their itineraries and all other available data, depending on the Voyage Manager tools your company uses.

These additional data sources can be traveller confirmations, safety check-ins, and purchases captured with our expense management tool.

The traveller, and their travel administrator, can view not just a traveller's days in a jurisdiction, but how many days they have left. Similarly, your administrator can view the days in any jurisdiction of all your people combined.

**Tax tracking software does not replace an international tax advisor.**

Voyage Manager incorporates the general tax laws of 180 countries and all 50 US States. Although the system will warn the traveller, and your travel administrator, when you're approaching a legal threshold, we recommend that companies set their own, more conservative thresholds. Using these, you can plan travel that keeps your people, and your company, inside tax thresholds.

Voyage Manager also provides a permanent record of all your people's travels, should they or your company be tax audited.

## Tax Compliance versus Visa Compliance

It's easy to get into trouble by confusing tax compliance with visa and immigration compliance. For example, some countries now offer "digital nomad" visas that permit a person to live and work there for a year.

In many cases, this does not exempt them from tax residency status. If they stay for an extended period, they're likely to owe tax.

## Caveat

Tax tracking software does not replace an international tax advisor. A jurisdiction's general tax laws don't cover specific circumstances. For example, in some countries, people can become tax resident simply by owning property in the country they're visiting for work.

If you're an independent consultant, it's possible you could be taxed on any income you earn in country (or US state), if you're physically there and paid by a business that's based

there. Many US states are beginning to implement these policies.

Before taking on, for example, a contract that requires your people to spend significant time in a jurisdiction, we strongly recommend you consult a tax advisor.

## Risk of Visa Violations

If your people travel, you mostly likely know much of this information, but it's worth going over the basics.

We calculate the number of days in each location



Most countries limit the number of days you are allowed to be in country. These limits always apply, whether or not you need a visa to enter. If you overstay, you can be denied entry, fined, detained, expelled, or a combination of these.

Depending on the passports your people hold, they may not need a visa to enter certain countries (or regions), but they may need a visa waiver. Visa waivers are designed to pre-screen travellers who aren't required to have visas.

Some countries that offer visa waivers to certain passport holders include

- Australia
- The EU (the European Travel Information and Authorisation System, or ETIAS)
- The US (the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA)

**If you overstay, you can be denied entry, fined, detained, or expelled.**

If you are planning travel to a new destination, it's best to discover the visa requirements as soon as possible. For some countries, the application process can take weeks, if not months.

Some waivers, like the ESTA and ETIAS, can be processed online in a day.

Whilst some visas require minimal information, some require much more detailed information. For example, some countries require travellers to list all the countries they've visited in the past five years.

With Voyage Manager, finding this information in a traveller's trip history is simple. Without it, travellers could find themselves flipping through passports to find entry and exit stamps.

The purpose of your visit can affect how long it takes to get a visa. A tourist visa may be simple to acquire, but a business trip may require more documentation.

In most countries, your visa limits your stay to a certain number of accumulated days, or consecutive days, within the "valid from" and "valid to" dates. Even if, for example, you have a six-month visa, you may not be able to stay the entire six months. You can usually find this information on the government website that offers the visa application.

**The purpose of your visit can affect how long it takes to get a visa.**

### Visa Tracking

To maintain visa compliance, travellers need to keep track of

- All the visas, or visa waivers, they have
- The "valid from" and "valid to" dates for each
- How many days they have spent in each country they've visited
- How many days they have left to visit those countries

Voyage Manager lets administrators access all this information for all their people in one view.

Voyage Manager also sends warnings – to the traveller and to your company's travel administrator – if someone is about to breach, or has breached, a threshold. The system also sends warnings if visas are about to expire.

Finally, Voyage Manager provides a permanent record, in case of audits, and to help with visa applications.

**Just because a traveller has a visa, that doesn't mean they are exempt from tax residency.**



### The Effect of Brexit on UK Passport Holders

Most European countries are part of the Schengen area, in which there are no external borders, and people can move freely among countries. When the UK was part of the European Union, UK citizens could spend any number of days in the Schengen area.

Now that the UK has withdrawn from the EU, UK travellers can only spend 90 days in any 180-day period, in all Schengen countries combined. From 2023, they will also need an ETIAS waiver to enter the Schengen area.

If your people regularly stay weeks or months working with clients in the Schengen area, Voyage Manager can automatically track their days in the region.

(We have simplified this explanation. Rules vary, for example, if you are a UK citizen planning to become resident in a Schengen area country.)

### Visa Compliance versus Tax Compliance

As we mentioned above in the tax section, just because a traveller has a visa that permits them to stay in a country for an extended period, that doesn't mean they are exempt from tax residency. They must still track their days in country against the tax laws of that jurisdiction.

### Risk to the Environment

Because combined, small and medium size enterprises are the world's largest employers, we believe it is your responsibility to play the largest role in reversing climate change.

We appreciate the irony of being committed environmentalists who work in the travel industry. When we say “your”, we also mean “our”. We work diligently to keep our carbon footprint negative.

We encourage you to limit travel to the best of your ability. When you must travel, we believe you should take every possible step to travel conscientiously, as well as take every other avenue to becoming carbon neutral.

First, you should calculate the carbon footprint of all your operations, and take steps to reduce it. Next, if it is still necessary to purchase carbon offset, purchase it from verified projects that are actually removing greenhouse gases from the environment, not just projects that keep levels from getting worse.

By far, the most affordable form of offset that removes greenhouse gases from the environment is tree planting, at around USD \$10 per metric tonne. We are following other developments closely, such as kelp farming and direct air capture technologies. When they become affordable, we will add them to the Voyage Manager site.

**Purchase carbon offset from projects that are actually removing greenhouse gases from the environment.**

### Calculate, Publish, Reduce and Offset

The Voyage Manager climate impact tool allows individuals and companies to calculate the carbon footprint of their vehicles, properties and any mode of travel. We’re passionate about good data, and have used all publicly available sources to make the calculator as accurate as possible.

Voyage Manager lets individuals and companies publish their carbon balance, on our website or theirs. This balance is not a static number, but a live table that changes as data come in.

The Climate Impact tool also permits businesses to assign each staff member a carbon budget, and tracks that person’s travel against their budget.

Within 2026, it will also be possible to enter a proposed trip and receive options for that trip, each with its carbon emissions. For example, if one flight will be a 737 and one a Dreamliner, the user will see that the Dreamliner consumes 30 percent less fuel.

Finally, if necessary, you can purchase carbon offset on the Voyage Manager site, from one of our verified tree-planting partners.

## A Bit More About Voyage Manager

All Voyage Manager tools are integrated. For example, if you enter an upcoming trip into Travel Tracking, the platform will automatically begin updating the Tax Compliance, Visa Compliance and Climate Impact tools when the trip begins.

We also offer a secure Document and Vaccination Vault, which can be used to store any documents a traveller might need on the road, with warnings if documents (e.g., passports, vaccination certificates) are about to expire.

The final tool is Expense Management, which lets the traveller capture expenses on the go and tag them with the location of the purchase. This information is integrated into the traveller’s complete travel record, for additional validation during tax or visa audits.

### Pricing

Voyage Manager subscriptions are available in three tiers.

- Basic, which adds Travel Tracking, the Document Vault and Expense Management, and costs USD 4.99 per month/per user
- Standard, which adds Travel Security, for USD 9.99 per month/per user
- Premium, which adds Tax and Visa Compliance, for USD 14.99 per month/per user

If you are interested in talking about whether Voyage Manager might be useful for your company, please be in touch with John Scott, at [john.scott@voyagemanager.com](mailto:john.scott@voyagemanager.com).