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*By Erik J. Martin, Bankrate.com (via TNS).*

You've probably heard of "workcations" that combine work travel with leisure trips, often in desirable locations. But there's a new twist on this trend: The "hush trip," in which employees don't tell their bosses they're actually working from vacation locales. These secret getaways by remote workers while on the clock seem to be gaining in popularity and frequency, although many companies frown upon this activity.

Thinking about taking a hush trip, especially during the upcoming holiday season?

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Hush trips are growing more popular because more workers see opportunities to work remotely in places other than their homes," she says. Salemi cites a recent Monster poll that reveals approximately one-third of workers didn't think their managers needed to know that they were working from somewhere other than their home. A further one-fifth of respondents didn't think their managers would approve of a "workcation," and 16 percent believed their managers and colleagues would have a negative view of hush trips.

Joshua Bienstock, an associate professor at New York Institute of Technology's School of Management and a practicing employment and labor lawyer, says he understands why hush trips have become more common.

"Employees are stressed out in a 24/7 world," he explains. "As more workplaces recognize the utility of remote work, many employees can do their work in any place. So the thinking seems to be, 'Why not combine my work and vacation by taking a hush trip?'"

Peter Strebel, president of RateGain, a provider of SaaS solutions for the travel and hospitality industry and former chairman of Omni Hotels & Resorts, isn't surprised by the rise of hush trips.

"Many times, they occur when workers do not have vacation time to spare or are saving vacation days for a longer trip. Hush trips are in-demand among remote workers because they allow them to do their jobs during work hours and take advantage of amenities after work or on the weekends," says Strebel. Given that 64% of full-time workers support fully remote work schedules, according to Bankrate data, there's clear demand for the type of flexibility that enables hush getaways.

## Pros and cons of taking a hush trip during the holidays

Thinking about taking a hush trip? It's important to weigh the pluses and minuses of

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Hush trips can also enable you to travel at non-peak times, such as flying mid-week on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, when rates are often cheaper.

“This allows you to avoid the peak vacation travel time of weekends and the higher rate of business travel on Mondays and Fridays,” Stebel points out. “For example, a person planning a hush trip from Boston to New York City for the holidays could take an early flight on Tuesday morning, work from the hotel lobby until the room is ready and plan to take in Rockefeller Center after work.”

On the other hand, it's easy to get distracted during a hush trip. “The holiday season can feel more chaotic and stressful than non-holiday times of the year. Being in a new location and trying to concentrate on work with distractions at your fingertips may be challenging and could compound your stress,” cautions Salemi.

Strebel agrees, adding that traveling anywhere during the holiday season can be complicated. “A large number of travelers are on the move at this time of year, which increases the risks of flight delays or hotel overbookings,” he continues. “A delayed flight, for example, could force a remote worker to take calls from the airport, which is not an ideal scenario.”

Likely the biggest disadvantage of engaging in a hush trip is that your company could find out. This could land you in hot water with your employer — perhaps jeopardizing your job.

## **What do companies think of hush trips?**

Hush trip acceptance and employer policies vary from company to company. But rest assured that most employers would like to know ahead of time if you expect to work in a different location than your home.

“The issue essentially comes down to whether you can effectively do your job with a

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done discreetly and the work is completed to satisfaction.”

Ideally, employers would encourage workcations, creating cultures in which employees don't need to keep secrets — including where they're working from — from them.

“But other employers may have the mindset that everyone needs to be accountable and only work in the office or from a home office where they know your technology is reliable and where you can be easily reached,” Salemi explains. “Even though you may be doing an amazing job and can work well or even better while sitting on the beach, there may be a stigma around it.”

“A hush trip can positively impact employees who plan on traveling for the holidays,” adds Salemi. “For instance, maybe the trip involves staying with relatives who bring you immense joy. Rather than having to choose between working from home or seeing your relatives, you can do both.”

## **Paying for a holiday hush trip**

If you're expecting to travel this holiday season and make it a hush trip, think carefully about how you'll fund this getaway. Cash always comes in handy, but using credit cards can make it safe, convenient and simple to pay for a flight, hotel stay, food and other transactions.

Consider that the majority of credit cards provide zero-liability fraud protection for unauthorized charges, as long as you report them within 30 days. Even if your card issuer doesn't offer zero liability, the Fair Credit Billing Act limits your liability for unauthorized charges to a maximum of \$50.

Moreover, if unauthorized charges occur on your credit card, you can often address the issue before your payment is due, preventing any actual loss of funds. That's one

reason using credit cards while traveling is preferred to using a debit card: If the

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spending patterns. For instance, frequent travelers might prefer a travel credit card, which earns points or miles for future travel and offers perks like lounge access and credits for traveler programs like TSA PreCheck. Alternatively, a cash back card with bonus rewards on everyday spending categories such as groceries and gas stations might provide more value for others.

Additional credit card perks can significantly enhance your experience, including travel protections, no foreign transaction fees, annual statement credits for specific purchases and discounts with partner brands.

Just remember to be careful when using credit cards during a hush trip. If, for instance, you use a credit card given to you by your employer, they may be able to track where your purchases were made. This could get you in trouble if your company doesn't know where you're working from.

## The bottom line

Think carefully about taking a hush trip between now and New Year's, rather than telling your employer you're going on a "workcation." The latter may prove less risky and stressful, but still allow you to enjoy some needed leisure time in a desirable spot.

"Do your research ahead of time to ease worries and anxiety," recommends Salemi. "Your destination should have a dedicated workspace and fast Internet speed so you won't miss a beat. Consider time zone differences, as well. If you are going overseas and it's six hours earlier, ensure that you are working the same six hours that you would have been if you had remained at home."

Lokenauth agrees. "Be discreet when taking a hush trip, and don't publicize your actions on social media," he advises. "Try to sync your schedule with your coworkers to avoid suspicions. And limit long or frequent hush trips to avoid getting caught."

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