

Stay Calm and Commute on...

It's as simple as getting from point A to point B. Or is it? Travel is part of the daily grind of life. Long gone are the days of a nice, relaxing drive to clear one's head. Traffic congestion, an increase in the number of cars on the road, ill-maintained roads and traffic lights on the blink all contribute to getting to work being an ordeal. Have you noticed that every hour is rush hour lately? Sure, there are certain times that are busier than others, but it has become impossible to quickly zip off to a meeting or appointment in the neighbouring city without clearing half a day in your diary.

A new breed of commuters have emerged called the super commuters. A super commute is loosely defined as longer than 90 minutes or as longer than 270 km.

Most places of work are situated in business hubs and city centres which are located far from homes. Town planning initiatives have taken the view that residential areas are developed on the edges of cities, while the inner regions are reserved for business zoning. Given the choice, very few people would opt to live within areas where their work is situated. It boils down to a matter of aesthetics and atmosphere. Work zones do not offer feelings of homeliness and comfort that residential areas do. Cities have developed in a skewed proportion, in that, while job availability is on an upswing, living options are a distant second.

The rise of the "super cities" globally is where people of all classes go to seek employment. These cities provide jobs and opportunities. In the same breath, in our world of economic uncertainty, securing a job in any location does not guarantee a long period of job security. This leaves people with the choice of "follow the money" and move closer to work or retain your current home and brave the commute.

An increasing number of people are choosing to commute for the following reasons:

- It is cheaper to have a home in a residential area than close to business centres
- It is preferable for one partner in a home to travel and earn a substantial living which then affords the family more income and conveniences. The other partner would then have to maintain a home and family life, while the working partner is only at home for 2-3 days a week
- A higher standard of living can be maintained by an income earned by one partner in a lucrative job in a distant location than by two people's average local incomes
- There is an increase in the number of jobs that allow for remote work or working from home. Almost any profession can cater for at least one "work from home" day and employees are keen to offer more hours during the week in exchange for more time at home during longer weekends
- People are more willing to work harder and for longer hours during the week in exchange for uninterrupted downtime at a home in a deluxe location that is far from the office. Commuters prefer to live in the countryside, close to the beach, nature reserves or merely at a location that caters for their family life and to commute, in order to have it all
- Current transport modes allow for cheap and quick long distance commuting being possible. Low cost airlines make it viable to travel by air to long distance work and home destinations
- Super commuters are more likely to make use of public transportation, leaving them hands free and able to work. Within busy cities, the public transport systems are more established and reliable. Trains and buses are convenient to utilise and speedier than driving in cars. People with shorter commutes tend to make use of their own cars. Even though the distance is shorter, the time spent in the car is longer

- The augmentation of transport with technology means that it is conceivable for commuters to be productive while travelling to and from work. This eliminates “dead time”. Laptops, tablets, even cell phones, the prevalence of Wi-Fi, modems and the all-round availability of an internet connection makes working on the move a plausible option
- Overcrowded routes to and from work will encourage a professional to maintain a primary home in a distant location, while renting a studio or one bedroom apartment close to work in order to maximise work time and then escape to a haven during the weekends
- Productivity is helped by a shorter commute. A commute of 90 minutes twice a day is energy sapping, time consuming and depletes a worker’s efficiency

To paraphrase the words of an older super hero, He Man: super commuters have the power.