

# Dirk Lazarus

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## Plastic Surgeon

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## Tourism Information

Cape Town, South Africa is a premier destination for medical tourism and plastic surgery in particular. The surgery is affordable, the care is highly professional and Cape Town remains a prime tourist destination. Treating medical tourists requires a particular standard of care - something I have learnt in the many years I have been treating medical tourists from around the globe.

Much can be achieved prior to your journey via email. Photographs are helpful in the planning of surgery.



Should you deal with one of the now burgeoning group of medical tourism companies, or should you liaise directly the surgeon? Whilst some of these companies may offer packages suitable for some patients, I believe that dealing with the surgeon directly carries a number of significant advantages. Direct contact with the surgeon allows you to ask your questions and deal with your fears and anxieties before you leave home. It allows the surgeon to assess your likely suitability for surgery and for the particular procedure(s) you may be interested in. You know who you will be dealing with, who will be doing your surgery and who is responsible. Commissions and excessive involvement of non-medical third parties are avoided. Following your surgery, you should allow yourself the time for your recovery. It is often not ideal to throw yourself into a program of tours and safaris that is too busy.

## Planning your trip

The primary issue to consider when planning your trip is safety. The secondary issues are those around your surgery; are you a candidate for surgery and what is the most appropriate procedure for you. To ensure that your surgery away from home is as safe as possible, I recommend that you adhere to the following advice:

- Avoid too much surgery. If you want an extreme makeover, have it at home. Ideally you should travel for only one or two procedures, not a shopping list of operations. I will guide you in this regard via email.
- Schedule enough time here to allow for recovery. Surgery is demanding on your body and you will need to rest afterwards. Do not plan on having too much of a holiday. Nevertheless, most medical tourists do get to see the sights in and around Cape Town, but I would not suggest that you travel too far afield.

- Go for a check up before you leave. This can be done by your family doctor who in addition to doing the usual medical check, should also check your haemoglobin levels (Hb) and your blood pressure (BP).
- Ensure that you are healthy when you travel. Get down to your ideal weight before you consider surgery. Eat healthily and have an exercise routine. Give up cigarettes if you are a smoker. Have a dental check-up prior to your departure. Bring a spare pair of spectacles.
- Ensure that required immunisations and vaccinations are up to date. If in doubt, check with your doctor or travel clinic at home before you leave. Cape Town is not a malaria area, although parts of the north of the country and other parts of Southern Africa are. If you are considering going to these areas, ensure that you have anti-malaria prophylaxis.
- If you are on routine medication, bring it with you in the original packaging.
- Take out travel health insurance.

If you are generally healthy and not overweight, then most cosmetic surgery procedures should be safe. As to the correct procedure for you, this can only ever be decided at the consultation although a lot can be achieved via email especially with appropriate photographs.

### **Duration of your stay**

Surgery always entails some downtime necessary for recovery. You should allow for this when planning your trip. Guidelines for minimum duration of stay are presented below. Longer is always better, especially if you know you are a slow healer. Check with me before finalising travel arrangements.

- Single consultation: Botox, fillers (Restylane, Perlane)
- 8-10 days: eyelids, ears, tip rhinoplasty, liposuction, breast augmentation, brow lift
- 2-3 weeks: facelift, breast reduction, tummy tuck, rhinoplasty

### **Before you travel**

Before you leave home:

- Ensure that you are healthy. Go to your GP for a check up, including blood pressure and haemoglobin.
- Eat sensibly to achieve your ideal weight.
- Do moderate exercise, involve a personal trainer if possible.
- Live a healthy lifestyle.
- Avoid smoking especially 2 weeks prior to and after surgery.
- Avoid aspirin-containing medication for 2 weeks prior to surgery. Aspirin can increase bleeding.
- Avoid the oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy for one month prior to surgery as this increases the risk of leg clots.
- Avoid any medication or substance, including vitamins (vit E) and homeopathic treatments, which can affect the clotting of your blood.
- Avoid arnica until about 2 days post-operatively.
- Bring sunglasses and a scarf for face surgery; loose fitting clothes for body surgery.

## On the flight

On the flight to Cape Town, it is recommended that you follow these precautions to prevent **leg clots**:

- Use graduated pressure stockings for your legs when you fly, such as TED stockings or flight socks, pre-op and post-op
- Drink plenty of water on your flight over. Avoid alcohol.
- Exercise on the airplane - follow the instructions in the in-flight magazine.

## On arrival

Further precautions to be taken after you arrive in Cape Town:

- Go for a good walk soon after arrival to improve the circulation in your legs. Walk as much as you can.
- Wash well the night before surgery and the morning of surgery. If possible use an antiseptic soap such as Betadine and shower rather than bath.
- At the pre-op consultation ensure that all your questions are answered and that you are confident that you understand your procedure, the risks, possible complications and the likely post-op course. The better prepared you are, the easier it will be. If you are unsure about anything, ask me.
- On the day of surgery you must wear no makeup or jewelry. Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothing and bring a scarf and sunglasses if you are having facial surgery.

## After surgery

Guidelines for after your surgery:

- Allow yourself time to recover. Do not plan too busy a schedule. Although pain and discomfort are likely to last only a couple of days, plan on resting rather than a busy holiday schedule.
- Follow the post-op instructions diligently.
- Do not expect to see the result immediately. Your body takes time to heal and to recover. Swelling and bruising take on average 2-3 weeks to settle.
- Allow for the routine post-op consultations. I will see you a number of times after surgery and before you leave for home.
- Follow the same precautions for your flight home as you did on your flight to Cape Town.
- Once you are back at home, keep in touch and keep me informed of your progress via e-mail.

## What it complications occur?

Complications, if they occur, can be problematic for any patient and even more so if you are a traveller away from home, or if you have already returned home. Although rare, complications can occur, even the healthiest patient who has the best surgeon can get complications! Fortunately most complications are minor and are resolved without the need for further surgery. In addition, most complications are likely to occur soon after surgery, hence the recommended duration of stay.

Complications which occur once you are back home will have to be dealt with by a doctor or plastic surgeon in your home country. I can keep in touch and give advice, but obviously cannot treat a problem from some distance away. I do have plastic surgery colleagues, mainly in the UK, who will be available to see problems on a fee-for-service basis. In addition, being a member of ISAPS, I can refer you to any other ISAPS member who will see you.

To avoid complications I try to operate with an awareness of the potential for problems and my surgical philosophy is one of conservatism. On the whole, plastic surgery is safer than many other types of surgery because procedures are relatively minor and superficial and surgery is being performed on a fit, healthy individual.

Safety is my primary concern. I do not take on unsuitable or high risk cases. Having plastic surgery in another country should really be restricted to the routine case rather than the extraordinary. Careful patient selection is important so that the great majority of patients can undergo uneventful surgery and return home healthy and happy.

## Deep vein thrombosis

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is the formation of a blood clot in the deep veins of the legs. The blood clot can break off and travel in the blood stream to the lungs as a pulmonary embolism (PE). Pulmonary embolism can cause problems with breathing, blood flow in the lungs and can even be fatal. Prior to undergoing surgery, it is appropriate to have perspective on DVT, its causes and risk factors and what you can do to minimise the chance of its occurrence.

The risk factors for DVT are:

1. Long haul flights
2. Surgery: major surgery, abdominal surgery
3. Previous DVT or PE
4. Patient age (increase risk with increased age)
5. Obesity
6. Disease (diabetes mellitus, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, polycythemia)
7. Medication: oral contraceptive pill
8. Pregnancy
9. Cancer

Preventative measures:

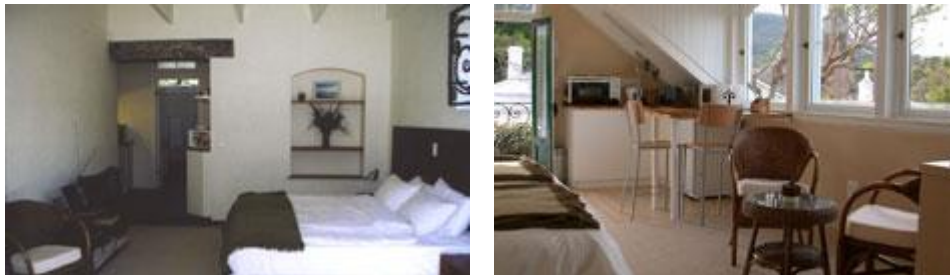
1. Avoid risk factors such as the oral contraceptive pill, etc. If you are on the pill, I recommend stopping it one month prior to surgery. Don't forget to take other contraceptive measures!
2. Stop smoking: Not only does smoking increase the risk of DVT, but it also increases the risk of other complications.
3. Graduated compression stockings such as TED stockings can be obtained prior to your departure from home, used on the aeroplane coming over, and during and after surgery. This is well worth doing and I would urge all patients traveling from abroad for surgery to do this.
4. Exercise routinely post op and on the flights here and home. Every hour on the hour: knee bends, ankle movements, wiggle toes. Walk around. Follow the guidelines in the in-flight magazine.
5. Avoid sleeping pills and alcohol on the flight.
6. Drink plenty of fluids, water in particular.
7. All patients will receive treatment in theatre with graduated pressure calf/foot pumps.
8. High risk patients should avoid traveling for surgery. The use of Clexane injections prior to flying and before and after surgery are useful.

## Accommodation

Patients who are not from Cape Town can stay at the Coach House. The coach house is a small historic cottage with a garden and pool. It is well situated in Cape Town close to amenities with views of the mountain. The Coach House is about three or four blocks from my rooms, about a ten minute gentle walk - [see the map](#).



The coach house has 3 units, each for one or two people. Each unit has a bathroom en suite and a fully equipped kitchen as well as a bedroom with 2 single beds. The coach house is self-catering, but we provide basic provisions. Let us know if there is anything specific you would like and we will endeavour to provide it for you. You can eat in by ordering from delivery services or explore some of the good restaurants in the area. The Mount Nelson Hotel is almost next door and offers a sumptuous afternoon tea amongst other things. The Garden's Centre, a major shopping centre in Cape Town, is 400 meters from the coach house. The Company Gardens, museums, galleries, theatres and cinemas are close by.



For other accommodation in proximity to my rooms, such as backpackers and other hotels, please contact [Anneli](#) on [anneli@plasticsurgery.co.za](mailto:anneli@plasticsurgery.co.za).