



Leisure Travelers Hopeful for July Cruising Restart

As we celebrate the upcoming Memorial Day Holiday Weekend, many people may have thoughts of a summer vacation that may not be possible this year, with the travel industry essentially shut down and tourism continuing at a standstill.

Most major cruise lines, tour operators and resorts look to restart operations hopefully in July, or later if necessary, as they work to meet new safety and health protocols prescribed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Even then, I anticipate a gradual reopening as conditions around the world allow. The European Union, for example, plans to open leisure travel between its member countries June 3, while international flights to Argentina are halted until at least September.

Yet, according to a recent study, nearly 50 percent of Americans are ready to travel now under certain circumstances, and they are looking for **value**, **safety** and **flexibility** in their travel choices.

As I see it, there are three types of travelers already considering their next vacation trip:

People seeking a “hot deal” for travel later this year – Deep discounts, added amenities and flexible cancellation policies for late summer and fall Caribbean cruises and all-inclusive resorts are enticing new reservations from many people seeking escape from the last few months and comfortable with various health and safety precautions and procedures being implemented.

People reserving 2021 travel with Future Travel Vouchers – When cruise lines, resorts and other suppliers were forced to cancel reservations, most travelers were offered refunds or future travel vouchers (some worth up to 125% of what they paid initially). Those vouchers are already being redeemed *en mass* for travel next year and in 2022.

People waiting for a vaccine before traveling again – Some older travelers and people with chronic medical conditions subjecting them to greater risk are delaying travel until anti-virus vaccines and treatments are readily available.

Most of us probably can identify with at least one of these profiles and that’s okay because it’s all about your personal circumstances and travel style.



Dozens of cruise ships shelter in place in South Florida ports or anchored at sea, while airlines around the world have grounded the majority of their planes.

EXPECT CHANGES WHEN YOU DO TRAVEL — Enhanced cleaning and sanitation has become the utmost priority for all travel providers, particularly hotels and cruise lines. I also expect they will be making numerous facility modifications to permit greater social distancing in entertainment venues, swimming pools, bars, casinos and dining services before reopening. For example, I anticipate the ubiquitous self-service buffets found onboard most cruise ships will disappear, at least short-term.

Airport and cruise terminals have intensified passenger screenings and, at least for the foreseeable future, you should anticipate face mask requirements in airport terminals and aboard planes. You also may see tour operators modify itineraries, adjust transportation arrangements and possibly offer escorted tours encompassing smaller groups to ensure more sanitary conditions while touring.

Also look for new technologies deployed in hotels and onboard ships to reduce or eliminate common “touch points” for guests. Meanwhile, I suspect the changes guests **do not see** – such as enhanced air filtration systems, staff training and expanded medical services – will provide added assurance for a healthy resort or shipboard experience.

CUSTOM VACATION PACKAGES — In light of recent travel and tourism developments, I have re-evaluated my travel practice and implemented several changes I believe will benefit clients when it is safe to travel again. First, I plan to serve fewer clients, focusing primarily on those who value professional planning, recommendations and back-up support from an experienced travel advisor. I’m also reducing the number of travel partners I recommend in the future. The best travel providers responded quickly to address traveler needs and issues, as the pandemic unfolded and rapidly evolved into a crisis. Those are the travel companies on my new supplier “A-List”.

Finally, I created two custom vacation packages designed to provide travel support seldom found elsewhere. My **Silver Package** matches the needs of most travelers seeking a cruise, escorted tour or all-inclusive resort vacation. The comprehensive **Gold Package** is relevant for clients desiring detailed custom travel itineraries. Both packages add value and custom services adapted to your personal travel planning needs, as well as ongoing support enabling you to travel with confidence. Details are summarized on our Website.

WE WILL TRAVEL AGAIN — Vacation travel closer to home will be the norm in the short-term, with several options potentially available later this year. Here are a few ideas: U.S. National Parks are beginning to reopen on a limited basis for travelers seeking outdoor adventure; Caribbean resorts and private villas, accommodating as many as 16 guests, are perfect for extended family vacations or year-end holiday retreats; and touring Alaska’s interior by rail or RV may be worth considering for August or early fall. You also might consider a nearby beach vacation but practice safe distancing.

Clearly, pent-up demand is accelerating for international travel next year and beyond as tourism rebounds. For example, several European river cruise lines and small-ship ocean voyages have already opened 2022 itineraries for reservations, given the strong demand next year. So, if you are looking to travel internationally in the next two years, now is the time to begin serious planning.

Please call or email me, if I can assist with your travel needs or you simply have a travel question. Stay healthy and enjoy the Memorial Day Holiday Weekend with your family and close friends.

Yours in Travel,



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