



Despite the Delta Variant and Other Blips

Vacation Travel Regaining its Lost Momentum

With an ever growing number of countries re-opening to tourists, including the United States welcoming foreign visitors again beginning this month, vacation travel finally appears to be regaining the momentum it lost during its 20-month COVID hiatus.

Since cruising resumed from U.S. ports in late June with strict CDC protocol mandates in place, at least half a million guests have boarded cruise ships around the world without major virus outbreaks onboard. Cruise line medical staffs successfully treated fewer than 200 cases aboard ships, while avoiding major spread of the virus and without impeding the vacations of healthy guests.

Wide distribution of COVID vaccines worldwide has been a game changer for the travel industry working to regain its lost momentum, despite setbacks such as the Delta variant. In addition, travel providers, as well as the traveling public, have been forced to deal with contradicting government mandates, protocols and other information purportedly “following the science.”

For example, CDC mandates for cruise lines originally set to expire November 1st will remain in place until at least mid-January when such protocols *may* become voluntary. These mandates currently require vaccinations for all crew and cruise guests, who also must wear masks in onboard public areas.

Meanwhile, much of the world has reopened to American tourists, especially across Europe as vaccines reduce new infection rates. In my mind, the world-wide “pandemic” has increasingly become more of an “epidemic” primarily effecting the unvaccinated.

GIVEN TODAY’S STRONG DEMAND FOR VACATION TRAVEL, certain cruise itineraries, escorted tours and other travel products already are selling out for next year, prompting cruise lines and tour operators to open reservations early for 2023 and beyond. To meet that demand, I expect major cruise lines will have most of their fleet back in the water and sailing at near capacity by mid-summer 2022.

Typical international destinations — London, Paris and Rome — will still attract millions of North American’s each year. Yet, in the post-pandemic environment, I see travelers increasingly drawn to smaller cities and towns to experience the local cuisine, culture and lifestyle. Avoiding major crowds and enjoying outdoor spaces will be major goals for many travelers next year.

I also am currently helping several multi-generational families plan long-awaited vacations together. Again, travelers prefer off-the-beaten-path destinations to crowded major cities. Many of our clients, for example, will be touring remote regions of Northern Mediterranean countries from Greece to Portugal or cruising the Baltic Sea in 2022.



Ancient Greece has become a popular destination for post-COVID visitors diving into 5,000 years of antiquities and a great culture.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WILL BE DIFFERENT, at least in the short-term. Check-in, excursions, dining reservations and varied activities and dining reservations aboard cruise ships will be easier due to touchless technology installed during the shutdown. At the same time, major hotels, resorts and other vacation attractions also used down time to upgrade with new conveniences and many now offer new experiences. Some 20 new ships will be sailing the high seas in 2022, including several traveling to remote destinations. Meanwhile, a growing number of tour operators now offer small-group tours to destinations that were not generally available previously.

However, **P-A-T-I-E-N-C-E** must become your watchword as you travel. With health protocols and other local travel requirements changing frequently, travelers must become more flexible and allow more time especially at airports and at other stops along your journey (arrive at least three hours in advance of international flights and allow ample time making connections en route). Airline, hotel and support staff may be limited in certain destinations due to circumstances, so be patient with the people trying to help you.

At the same time, it's important to realize that the virus and its potential variants are not going away anytime soon, so follow the health guidelines and exercise good judgement. It may be some time before we can totally forget about COVID-19, so your decision about when and where to travel must consider your personal situation. For many people, the year ahead may mean several "bucket list" trips, while other people with health issues may decide not to travel abroad again until at least 2023.

Personally, I am ready to travel now and will be off to East Africa later this month for a trip originally planned for 2020. Kenya has been on my "must see" list for many years and the opportunity to travel with a top-rated safari outfitter should be a magical experience. Watch for my blog articles after I return.

Whatever your plans, please know that I have access to the latest worldwide travel protocols and health requirements, which can change quickly — not just at your final destination but also in countries you must transit to reach your destination. Vacation travel is indeed returning to normal as more people get vaccinated. Travel safely and be a smart traveler wherever in the world your travels take you.

Yours in Travel,



Silverseas Silver Moon, a new luxury cruise ship accommodating 596 guests began operations this summer to rave reviews for its Mediterranean voyages, white-glove butler service and outstanding locally-sourced cuisine.

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