

# 7 CHANGES OF THE WAY WE TRAVEL AFTER COVID-19



Tourism, the industry hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, begins to introduce measures for its recovery, just as it did after the 9/11 attacks in New York City that stopped air travel for several weeks and changed security controls forever, or during the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The truth is that there is no going back to normal. It is a fact that, at first, some changes will be quite drastic, but companies and businesses will have to get used to it until everything starts flowing again and, hopefully, in a better way. Travel after COVID-19 will bring the following changes.

## Back to the International Certificate of Vaccination (ICV)

For years, it was necessary that travelers had received a “yellow card” showing that they were vaccinated against the main international diseases (yellow fever, typhoid, hepatitis...) in order to enter many countries. But the improvement of global health and mass vaccination campaigns made it unnecessary.

The new certificate will be known as the immunity passport or so, which may be issued in many ways, including apps and other digital formats. Travelers will have to be more responsible and will vaccinate against diseases that can be prevented in some destinations.

## Personal protection

In 2020, and perhaps for a long time, masks, hand sanitizer and a well-stocked vanity kit will become part of the luggage of any responsible traveler. Those wearing masks not only protect themselves but also others. When aboard a plane, it is best to keep your face mask on as much of the flight as possible when physical distancing is not possible. Also, wash your hands well for at least 30 seconds with soap and water every time you go to the restroom and use a paper towel when touching sink knobs, toilet handles, and door handles. Moreover, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth after touching plane surfaces and use antibacterial gel that has at least 60% alcohol if you are not able to wash your hands with soap and water. Travelers should also turn the air vent towards their face so that it will keep the area around them as well-ventilated as possible.

## Airports and planes checkpoints

Airline personnel would also join security to carry temperature and immune passport checks. There is no doubt that this protocol could also be enforced in hotels, resorts and cruise ships, which could mean an increase in medical services, including COVID-19 tests and expanding medical facilities.

Some airlines like Alaska and Delta have announced that they will keep middle seats empty in economy class in a move to enforce social distancing between travelers and reduce risks of spread. The downside is that this could increase ticket prices by up to 50%, as many publications have stated, but at the same time, travelers can expect a better service, more space and more security.

Natalia Bayona, Expert in Innovation, Digital Transformation and Investments at UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) explains: “We are partnering with Airbus to bring solutions as soon as

possible through a technology that can control and guarantee traveler safety before boarding a plane through a COVID-19 visa in coordination with governments and health centers.”

## **Hotels - more distance between clients and COVID-Free certification**

Many hospitality businesses are already introducing measures such as temperature checks, handing out masks and gloves, greater distance between tables, and even setting up screens to separate some areas from the others. In China and Korea, measures like these have allowed businesses and stores to reopen.

In Spain, for example, the Madrid Hotel Business Association (AEHM) is designing an action protocol to create a COVID-Free certificate for hotels, which guarantees the safety of customers and workers. Radisson Hotel Group also launched its Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, which is a new program of procedures focusing on thorough cleanliness and disinfection.

In many hotels, daily cleaning routines could be more spaced, for example, cleaning the room only at the beginning of the stay to avoid constant housekeeping, meaning that the cleaning staff could focus on keeping common areas clean more often.

## **Museums - no more crowds and pre-reservation**

To avoid crowds, museums could limit capacity, although this could be offset by extending opening hours and distribute visitors throughout the day by managing visits only through prior reservations. Besides buying the tickets online, museums will offer audio guides with disposable headphones, or marked tours to avoid crowds. Safety distance between the visitors will need to be maintained and disinfection solution will be available.

## **Insurance**

Some companies have temporarily stopped selling travel insurance. For example, Aviva and Admiral in the UK and other companies around the world have modified or limited insurance plans in their new policies.

However, travel assistance remains as well as coverage of health expenses derived from it, unless governments roll out new measures and protocols for each country.

The insurance companies, governments and those in the tourism industry are interested in creating new products and services to restart the business. At this stage, it is already unthinkable to go on a trip without financial and health insurance for travelers.

In any case, travel experts suggest buying insurance with CFAR coverage (cancel for any reason). This type is 50% more expensive than a basic policy, but it's far better than going through what many travelers have during this situation.

## **Alternative destinations**

Hidden beaches, rural and mountain tourism, unknown countries, unexplored neighbourhoods in large cities... The least visited destinations will become more appealing and safer, just like remote beaches and coves on any coast. Mass tourism will give way to more selective and slow tourism.

Moreover, most trips will be within one's borders - thus the domestic tourism sector will be the main revenue source of the industry.

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