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Traveling Post-COVID-19: Seizing the Day By Caroline Purtle

Since the U.S. is steadily blooming again due to massive vaccination rollouts, travel plans are in order. Major events have been rescheduled, flights and hotels are opening up and many countries prepare to welcome outsiders as well as tourism in the near future.

It is of no surprise that after being contained for over a year that people are longing to get out. And after the pandemic's toll which has impacted innumerable lives-- some who tragically lost family and friends-- individuals are now inspired to "carpe diem."

[Destination Analysts](#) (DA) is a travel and tourism market research firm based in San Francisco that studies consumer sentiment and has routinely researched pandemic trends. According to DA, "about 87 percent of American travelers expect to be taking trips this summer, be it a vacation, visiting friends or relatives, business trip or meeting at a conference."

The online travel agency [Priceline](#) calculated their top-booked and top-searched locations for this summer. 2021's No. 1 travel destination: Orlando, Fla.

29-year-old Madeleine Russell is one of these many vacationers who saw Florida as a much needed escape.

"After two years of essentially no travel, I wanted to plan a trip to have something to look forward to," said Russell. "My two best friends and I decided as soon as we were fully vaccinated we wanted to take a trip together. We decided on Siesta Key in Sarasota, Fla. and plan to go this July. We just wanted a destination where we could relax, have fun and still be able to distance from others if we needed."

Both of Russell's travel companions tested positive for the coronavirus in the past year. One friend and her entire family fell ill when they woke on Christmas morning. Another also contracted the virus along with her parents, where after a two month-long battle, she suffered the loss of her father.

Russell says she finds solace among loved ones. "Thankfully, my immediate family and no grandparents got [COVID]," said Russell, "but several of my cousins had it. Specifically, one cousin who was a nurse on a COVID floor in Dallas. I'm just happy we're all doing OK."

There is no doubt that the populace has endured immense loss. Restoration of the life once had before the pandemic begins with honoring the little things.



Source: World Health Organization

Florida represents a place for celebration, says 24-year-old Harrison Benefield, who is flying to Key West in June.

“My best friends and I all grew up together,” said Benefield, “and we are doing one big trip before one friend goes into his second year of medical school, and our other friend starts year one of [physical therapy] school. It’s also a way to shed off COVID since we couldn’t see each other as much over the last year.”

COVID-19: Know the Numbers

99% of infected individuals have been diagnosed with the mildest strain of the coronavirus. Only 1% are in serious/critical condition.

"Most infected people recover without hospitalization."

There are currently over 40,000,000 active cases worldwide with more than 30,000,000 recoveries recorded.

96%
Recovered/Discharged
Majority of closed cases are individuals who have been discharged and have recovered completely.

4%
Deaths
Out of the 30,000,000 closed cases, 4% were deaths.

SARS-CoV-2 infection occurs through direct and indirect contact, short range droplet sprays, and aerosol in long-range (airborne transmission).

Wear a mask and help stop the spread.

Learn more at
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/texas-covid-cases.html>

It appears domestic travel is this year’s trend with several Hawaiian islands and San Juan, Puerto Rico topping the list behind Florida. If [U.S. domestic travelers](#) are fully vaccinated, then they are free to journey anywhere within the country, though, masks are still mandatory in airports and other public places.

“Now nearly 7-in-10 American travelers have or plan to get vaccinated from COVID-19,” according to DA. “Just over half [51.5 percent] of American travelers report now being fully vaccinated— and nearly 90 percent of these vaccinated travelers are now comfortable with the idea of traveling, another pandemic record.”

While the CDC is not mandating proof of [testing](#) prior to airline travel, some states like Alaska, Hawaii and Washington D.C. require visitors and returning residents to present a recent, negative coronavirus test. Several states have a mandatory quarantine period but may be bypassed with testing. Having your “[Vaccine Card](#)” on hand best avoids further hassle.

International travel is where things get complicated. Although a good deal prepare to open their borders under set guidelines, the vaccine disparity in numerous countries prevents the allowance of foreigners, thereby prolonging the economic ramifications caused by the coronavirus. And with

Americans staying domestic, there’s global expense. According to [Euronews](#), “international tourist arrivals worldwide were down on average by 72 percent” this past year.

Without question, it will take time to rehabilitate society and it comes with its complications, but the vaccine marks the beginning of the post-COVID era. Travelers are inclined to look through rose-colored spectacles, once more.

“I have a countdown on my calendar and cannot wait,” says Russell, “I want to start living again.”

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