

Itching to Start Traveling Again? Here's What You Should Consider First

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For people with a bit of wanderlust, being stuck in one place isn't easy.

With stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions and closed borders, travelers are stuck at home wondering when it will be safe to pack a suitcase and head out again just for fun.

"I feel like my wings have been clipped and I just can't wait to spread them out again and flap them and get somewhere," says Malori Asman, owner of Amazing Journeys, a Pittsburgh-based travel company. "I think there is a huge pent-up demand."

What Needs to Happen Before Travel Can Resume

Even though some people may still want to travel, they can't.

Many flights have stopped, and even if you *can* get a flight, many countries have states of emergency in place and have closed their borders, barring entry for non-citizens.

"If you were to try to get a visa for most countries being from the U.S., you could not get it," Asman said. "And if they had no visa before, they might have a visa now."

Some countries are announcing quarantine requirements for visitors, limiting movements for a duration of time upon arrival. Many of these restrictions will be only temporary, but there is no clear indication of when they will relax.

The United States government and other governmental agencies have also taken several measures to limit travel and encourage people to stay home

On March 31, the United States Department of State issued a Global Level 4 Health Advisory, which advises American citizens not to travel to international destinations. The department has also stopped issuing or renewing passports, except in extreme circumstances.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization have also issued travel warnings discouraging unnecessary travel.

Before international leisure travel resumes, several things need to happen:

- Countries need to open their borders.
- Airlines need to resume flights.
- Hotels and tourist attractions need to open.

- Government health agencies need to lower or remove travel advisories.

Some of the same restrictions apply to domestic travel as well. Many flights are not operating, hotels are closed, and places people want to go or see are not open.

Travel Companies Cancelling Upcoming Trips

Due to the warnings and restrictions, most travel companies have canceled upcoming trips. Amazing Journeys has canceled trips through August, making the decision so its clients did not have to.

“My two summer trips were both cruises, so my thought was people are anxious right now,” Asman said. “They’re anxious about getting on a cruise and they’re anxious about spending and so the last thing I wanted to do was give my clients anxiety.”

The CDC has also issued a no-sail order for cruise ships. Once cruising and other travel resumes, Asman says she expects changes to the maximum capacity of ships, busses and planes to allow for some physical distancing, as well as new cleaning rules.

“Now that this pandemic has happened, all of the suppliers are taking a look inside and seeing what they can do better,” she said.

Some airlines are already blocking middle seats, changing boarding procedures, and making other accommodations. Others are taking the temperatures of all passengers before they get onboard.

Barriers to Non-Essential Travel

If you’re looking to travel for non-essential reasons, be aware that a few things will have to happen first, like borders opening, reductions in travel advisories, easing of quarantine requirements, etc.

“You can’t make these decisions unilaterally – governments are involved,” Asman said. “Depending on when these bans are lifted depends on where you go. We take things day by day and even hour by hour.”

Travelers can do the same. Keep track of all bookings you have and their cancellation policies. Cancel them if you need to or feel you want to.

“Travel should be fun and exciting and something to look forward to and nobody has that kind of energy going,” Asman says.

Asman is being cautious about plans for 2021. She says she expects some people might want to stay closer to home in the beginning and save the faraway locales for the future.

But Asman warns would-be travelers who are looking for certainty right now.

“Oftentimes people start on this hamster wheel where they’re [saying], ‘What if this happens, what if that happens?’” she said. “One of the things we’re really clear about with our clients is we know you’re going to come at us with a lot of ‘what if’ questions, and at this point we don’t have those answers.”

Tiffani Sherman is a contributor to The Penny Hoarder.