



A year most travelers would like to forget

Many of us have experienced previous years we would just as soon forget ever happened. With less than five months remaining this year, I am now certain that 2020 will go down as the most forgettable year of my life – and probably yours, too!

When the coronavirus mess unfolded in late March, I was confident that cruising would be back in business and life returning to normal by July. Well, cruising remains at a standstill, with most cruise lines halting operations at least through October and one major cruise company already cancelling its cruises for the balance of the year.

Limited resumption of cruising along the Norwegian coast ended abruptly last week when 40 guests and crew members became infected by the virus. Meanwhile, 11 time zones away in the South Pacific, Paul Gauguin Cruises cut short its first voyage since late March after an American guest tested positive for the virus. At this point, especially given the recent uptick of infections in the United States, I would not be surprised to see the cruising hiatus continue at least into 2021's first quarter.

Obviously, restarting the cruise industry is a complex process further complicated by isolated new outbreaks of the virus. Yet, I remain confident cruise lines will not resume operations until everyone, including the CDC, believes effective measures are in place to ensure a safe and healthy onboard environment – it's simply too risky!

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT EUROPE THIS YEAR

While several European countries have begun to open borders to summer vacationers, America still has not made the EU's list of countries whose citizens are welcome. At the same time, visitors eligible to enter usually must have a certificate confirming a negative coronavirus test result within 72 hours of arrival, or be subject to such testing after they arrive. Testing positive at Europe's borders will likely result in a two-week quarantine for you and travel companions – hardly the vacation you expected. With new cases still rising in several countries around the world, including in Europe, travel protocols are subject to change almost daily. So, forget about Europe in 2020 unless such travel is absolutely necessary.



Instead of cruising or jetting off to Europe, more than a third of Americans are traveling closer to home this summer but that strategy can be complicated even when traveling by car. At least five states now limit or bar entrance for visitors from states with virus hot spots. Furthermore, many hotels have adopted protocols that may limit available accommodations or eliminate customary amenities. Before heading to the airport, make sure your flight has not changed or cancelled, monitor entry requirements at your destination and don't forget your mask.

As air traffic continues to rebound from springtime lows, I believe domestic airlines are doing a reasonable job keeping travelers informed about flight changes, screening passengers and employing health protocols, although cancellation refunds are still slow reaching your credit card. In my opinion, Delta Airlines stands above the others in responding to the pandemic.

WHEN LESS IS MORE

If your "bucket list" is as long as mine, you probably won't have the time or the budget to visit every destination on your list. So, now might be a perfect time to pare down your list to what I call "**my essential bucket list**" – including only those destinations or travel experiences of the highest personal preference. At the same time, plan to stay longer at each essential destination to savor the experience to the fullest extent because you may not return again.

Today also may be great time to plan your next bucket list journey. Cruise lines, tour operators, and airlines currently offer discounted pricing, upgrades and other amenities for travel next year and beyond. Although pricing is beginning to creep up, be patient as you look for the best travel values coinciding with destinations on your bucket list. Just make sure your investment is refundable should your circumstances change. Also remember, it's never a great deal if you select the wrong vacation.

WE WILL TRAVEL AGAIN

With work on vaccines and advanced therapeutic treatments rapidly advancing, I am confident we will be able to travel again without undue risks for our health and safety – possibly sooner than we think. In the interim, I invite you to visit my website for travel ideas and other information related to leisure travel.

Please stay happy and healthy!



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