

# SQUARE VENUES

## **WHITE PAPER** **POST CORONAVIRUS** **TRAVEL SAFETY** **GUIDE**

## **POST CORONAVIRUS TRAVEL SAFETY GUIDE**

### **Is it safe to travel now? It depends.**

Here are the best practices for getting on the road without endangering your health—or anyone else's. Although many restrictions are still in place, travel is slowly starting up again. People locked down for months want to stretch their legs, see something other than a screen, and boost the economy. Restaurants and some tourist attractions (Florida's Universal Orlando Resort, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) are opening for local and domestic travel. A few countries (Greece, Italy) are starting to welcome international travelers.

But how can you safely explore a world of potentially deadly encounters with friendly people who might infect you (or who you might expose to the virus)? Is the airplane really a soaring petri dish? Is visiting a national park possible while social distancing? And if you choose a seemingly safer road trip, can you stop to use a public restroom?

As National Geographic recently reports, travel planning is good for our mental health (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/2020/05/planning-a-trip-is-good-for-you-especially-during-pandemic/#close>). Knowing more about real and perceived COVID-19 risks might help you feel better about getting out as roadblocks lift. Here are best practices for travelers.

### **Should I get on an airplane?**

Providing everyone follows the World Health Organisation's guidelines (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>) the risk of transmission aboard planes, and anywhere else, is significantly reduced.

There are also safety guidance taken seriously into account by all airlines who are in operation that are issued and are updated regularly by International Air Transport Association (IATA) - the regulatory authority for travel industry.

(<https://www.iata.org/contentassets/5d42ffd2b6ee43a8963ee7876584de5a/aircraft-cleaning-guidance-covid.pdf>).

IATA further explains the quality of air on an aircrafts that use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters in their briefing paper on 'Cabin Air Quality-Risk of Communicable diseases transmission.

(<https://www.iata.org/contentassets/f1163430bba94512a583eb6d6b24aa56/cabin-air-quality.pdf>).

Airports and airlines are trying to minimize the risks of contagions in their often-crowded environments. Intensive cleaning is now the norm; planes are now being fogged with

electrostatic disinfectant that sticks to surfaces like seatbelts. Most airlines give away disinfection wipes to use for further facilitation of travel safety and cleanliness comfort.

Face coverings are required to board most flights. Airlines are trying to seat people so they have more space. But that doesn't necessarily mean middle seats are remaining empty, especially with reductions in numbers of flights. There's no national U.S. policy yet, but several airlines are checking for fevers. They won't let you fly with a temperature above 100.4°F (though testing is far from foolproof).

Internationally, some destinations require proof of a negative COVID-19 test; other destinations test passengers on arrival. Many have mandatory 14-day quarantines, sometimes requiring you to submit a quarantine plan for approval, download an app, or get a tracking bracelet to ensure you follow the rules. Vaccination certification may eventually be needed for travel, but so far the science doesn't support "immunity passports" or proof that a person has had COVID-19 and is, in theory, immune.

## What's the safest seat on the plane?

National Geographic reports on a study conducted to learn that a passenger in the window seat technically is the furthest away from the aircraft aisle—the most often used route by other passengers and cabin crew throughout the flight. Those who chose to sit in the front rows located close to the captain cabin may have a chance to get the freshest air. (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/01/how-coronavirus-spreads-on-a-plane/>).

## Should I head to a national park?

Although, avoiding big crowds in the great outdoors is commonly advisable, there are many health benefits to being outside in nature, and the risks are low and manageable. The key is keeping a six-foot (two-meter) distance, watch hands, use sanitisers as often as possible as well as simply use a common sense when in a situation of unavoidable interaction with others who are not part of your household.

Check the National Park's website to see if the park is closed or partially closed (restrooms and food services, in particular), for limits on numbers of visitors, and other rules like mask-wearing. Avoid group activities that involve close contact and practice social distancing at camp sites.

## Should I stay in a hotel or a holiday rental?

When choosing a holiday rental check with the host before making the reservation on the steps they took to adhere to the health and safety guidance.

You might also check safety tips and guidelines offered by Airbnb – the world's largest accommodation rental site used by international travellers

<https://www.airbnb.co.uk/help/article/2839/what-are-the-health-and-safety-guidelines-for-hosts-and-guests-on-airbnb>)

Hotel stay some find still a better option for leisure or business trips due to distancing safely and trusting housekeeping. Hotels that take better care of their employees (by providing them with personal protective equipment and paid sick leave) are more likely to take better care of you. Check the website of any hotel you're considering to determine how they're responding to COVID-19.

Choose properties that base their protocols on science, rather than things that sound good but have little effect or take focus away from areas that really matter. Look for hotels that have installed plexiglass at reception and that require staff to wear masks, or where you can check-in online and use your phone as your room key.

Avoid elevators and, if able, take the opportunity to exercise and use the stairs. Room service may be safer than the restaurant. Go for a swim if the pool isn't crowded: Standard pool cleaning kills viruses, so the pool is probably safe. While clean rooms are important, what's more important is staying six feet (two meters) away from others. And, of course, wash your hands when you arrive in your room and again before you leave.

## Should I use a public restroom?

It's best to assume public restrooms might not be properly disinfected. When you do, choose single-stall and well-ventilated bathrooms if you can, and put the lit down before flushing. Good hand hygiene is key after using a public bathroom, meaning wash and dry your hands; if there's no soap, use hand sanitizer.

## What about people who don't wear masks?

Staying safe while respecting others' boundaries is imperative. Following all the new COVID-19 protocols takes some getting used to. It's easy to revert to pre-pandemic habits in new situations, when we're stressed, and when we're trying to relax and have fun. Being as kind and understanding as possible helps minimize stress.

If it's someone you know who is non-mask-wearing [or] non-social-distancing, it might be worth discussing the reasoning behind these measures. Let's remember that not everyone can wear a mask and that we're all human and can forget the new norms. You could politely ask anyone who gets too close "would you mind giving us a bit more space, please?" but it might be easier just to move away from them. It's likely not worth the risk, or the stress, to confront a stranger. If you can't escape the situation, ask a store manager or flight attendant for help.

## Do you know the safety basics?

We're still learning about COVID-19. But one consensus is that it seems to spread most easily by close contact between people. This means that whenever you're away from home, the most important thing you can do is maintain a six-foot or more (two-meter or more) distance from people you don't live with. Wearing a face and nose covering also minimizes the chance you'll pass a virus or other illness to others.

Other key prevention measures, outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other public health authorities: washing your hands well, avoiding touching your face, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, disinfecting frequently touched items like your phone, and staying home if you're sick. Practicing these measures keeps you—and everyone else—safer, regardless of how far you roam. COVID-19 has shown that we have shared responsibilities to reduce spread.

## General considerations for travel.

During a pandemic, going to the grocery store—let alone traveling to another city or country—requires new protocols. Follow policies about lockdown restrictions and mandatory quarantines, both at home and at your planned destination. Every country with open borders international visitors keeps updating guidelines for safety travel, rules and regulations required to obey by its residents as well as short or long stay visitors.

Examine your personal situation. Check post-travel quarantine rules, including your employer's. Just as important as protecting you and your loved ones is shielding other people. You don't want to bring the virus from your community, especially to places with low case numbers, or bring it to your own home. Consider whether the benefits of travel outweigh the risk that you might spread the virus.

When deciding where to go and how you'll get there, scrutinize how easy it will be to stay away from other people. Generally speaking, driving is going to be safer than flying commercially from an infection standpoint because you can control how you reach your destination—who is sharing the car with you, what measures are used for disinfecting surfaces, where you stop along the way, and when you return.

Square Venues we wish you to stay healthy and travel safely.