

From: [Carrie Wallace](#)
To: [Alex Gertsburg](#)
Subject: Re: Need some travel tips
Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 6:13:32 PM
Attachments: [image007.png](#)

Hi Alex,

(Warning: this ended up being longer than expected...I apologize in advance...)

Thanks so much for your message. It's great to hear you and your fiancée are interested to get back out there - the world is still a beautiful and interesting place! And very cool you've already experienced so many amazing places for extended periods of time.

You're correct that travel is a bit different now – there's a lot more to think about with Covid and the associated testing, paperwork, protocols, visitor registrations and the like. The good news is that it's still possible to visit many places, and people are indeed traveling.

We don't compile and send deals like other travel agencies – we're in a different side of the business than them. The travel we design is completely customized and high touch as opposed to package or deal-driven. There are certainly merits to both approaches, depending on the traveler.

Whatever the answer is for you Alex, I'd like to be helpful!

Let me see if I can provide some structure to your thinking, with the goal of helping you reason through where you might like to go and what it will take to get there:

1. **Time frame:** When are you hoping to go? This will have a lot of bearing. For instance, if you'd like to go to Europe in April, probably not going to happen given current closures to Americans. If you are thinking more like September, then that seems more realistic as the summer season and the vaccine are likely to make it more possible then. Also, with September, maybe you don't want to go to the Caribbean given hurricane season.

If you'd rather go sooner rather than later, then it's best to focus on regions that are open already – Caribbean, Mexico, Costa Rica & other Central America, parts of South America, parts of Africa.

(Side note: Europe this summer is still up in the air – we hear rumor that Greece may open first, possibly in May, however it's not certain and a lot can change. Italy is discussing plans for opening for some portion of the summer season as well. Croatia has previously been more open than the rest of Europe so fingers crossed for their earlier opening as well.)

2. **Covid:** Covid has and will make traveling more challenging, however difficult is not impossible, right? The pain points with Covid right now vis a vis travel are:

- **Testing and pre-registration:** making sure you comply with regulations to enter the

country and get back to the US. Not all countries have testing requirements (Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia), but most do. This usually means you need to:

- Find a good lab that can return results reliably within 24-48 hours. They do exist but it might be a private lab that isn't part of your health care system. Most countries still require a PCR test rather than a rapid antigen test. If you have the vaccine it doesn't exempt you from most testing requirements currently, and likely won't in the next 4-6 months.
 - Read detailed entry requirements (especially about quarantines), fill in required online forms, purchase any required insurance, print required documents and upload test results.
 - Know how you are going to get your return test. Many overseas hotels now offer testing. If at an Air BNB you'll want to find a mobile testing service (comes to your place) or local laboratory and know how it's going to work before you go.
- **Travel non-refundability:** The last thing you want is to put down a bunch of money, have the world change, and be out your travel investment. Things to note:
 - Fortunately airlines are still offering credits far into the future and most (not all) are still waiving change fees.
 - It's important when booking to understand the cancel policy so if the world changes, you know by when you have to cancel. Book more flexible fares and rooms where possible, even if they are a little more.
 - And if the funds are not something you are willing to lose, then consider a travel insurance policy with a "cancel for any reason" clause in it (usually about 12-15% of your trip cost but can vary)
- **Travel Safety:** It can indeed be done safely – airports are doing a very good job with masking, social distancing and cleaning. Points to note:
 - Flights can be full, however Delta is still blocking middle seats, or you can opt for business class with fewer passengers (but no blocked seats).
 - many people are wearing face shields in addition to masks, and some even travel in Tyvek jump suits. Fortunately airports are not as busy as they used to be. My belief is that people are not getting Covid in the process of travel right now – it's when they take off the masks and socialize afterwards that it spreads.
 - Be conscious of where you choose to go: Tanzania is in Covid denial, we know Brazil has been more like the US in their laissez-fair approach, and Mexico isn't too exacting with their management of the virus, for example.
 - Recognize that if you do get sick in country, you may be moved into an isolation ward or quarantined, which could delay your return, so it's wise to be prudent while traveling too.
- **Flight cancellations and "getting stuck":** One can't count on flights flying as scheduled

right now – with decreased load factors flights can be cancelled or changed, even last moment (<24 hours). Some mitigation strategies:

- Say you have a 72 hour PCR test requirement. Try to get it within 48 hours instead so if your flight changes you can go the following day and still have a valid test result.
- Try to travel on the busier days of the week (e.g. Saturdays) when the load factors are higher and flights more likely to go.
- Monitor both flight schedules and local regulations closely (before and after travel). React quickly once the situation changes.
- Plan your return date for a 2-3 days before you really need to be back to have a buffer.
- Be open to changes and smile when they happen, because they will.

A good travel advisor or personal assistant can manage all the Covid logistics on your behalf. Ultimately the traveler today has to adopt a flexible, relaxed and positive attitude and roll with whatever happens.

3. **Budgetary considerations:** Even during Covid you can still look for destinations that offer good value. Some countries in general just offer more for your money. Places that come to mind are Costa Rica and Panama, The Dominican Republic, Croatia (you might really enjoy a stint there – thinking of European locales), some of the less-visited Greek Islands (Sifnos is fantastic!!), and South Africa.

While hotels and resorts that offer more space and privacy have seen increased demand and have increased their rates, there are alternatives. As you noted, Air BNBs, especially with a young one like yours, are attractive and offer space and value. They're perfect for a city or town environment (e.g. would be great for Cape Town), although may not be the best solution if doing something like Machu Picchu, where more support and structure is good to have. Larger hotels and resorts that are not so private, spacious or high service are where the deals are right now, if you aren't as concerned with distancing and privacy.

We help our clients through all of the above, which gives them peace of mind and saves hours of headache. I'm happy to speak further Alex – if you'd just like to do some further brainstorming about destinations, have questions, or would like a little more perspective on the process of travel right now.

Please let me know what you think would help from here! You deserve to get away and travel – it's hard to keep that side of our personalities in hibernation for too long.

Warmly,
Carrie



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