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The 411 on Safe Travel**

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**The 411 on Safe Travel**

Vaccinations continue to roll out. For many people, gaining protection from COVID-19 isn’t the only benefit of getting vaccinated. The shots also confer the ability to travel with confidence and to reconnect with family and friends, according to the findings of a survey conducted by a peer-to-peer lodging company.1

“Once people feel safe to travel, they will. But it will look different than before the pandemic. Travel will be viewed as an antidote to isolation and disconnection. People don’t generally miss landmarks, crowded shuttles, and lines and lobbies packed with tourists…What people want from travel now is what they’ve been deprived of – spending meaningful time with their family and friends,” wrote the company co-founder.1

**Fully vaccinated and safe to travel**

The *Centers for Disease Control* (CDC) have confirmed, once Americans are fully vaccinated, they can travel safely within the United States. While the *CDC* still cautions against unnecessary travel, its domestic travel recommendations state people who are fully vaccinated:2

* **Do not** need to get tested before or after travel, unless their destination requires it.
* **Do not** need to self-quarantine after arrival.
* **Do** need to wear masks over their noses and mouths.
* **Do** need to stay six feet from other people and avoid crowds.
* **Do** need to wash their hands often or use hand sanitizer.
* **Do** need toself-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, and isolate and get tested if they develop symptoms.
* **Do** need to follow all state and local recommendations or requirements.

You are considered to be fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving a second dose in a two-dose vaccine series or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine.

It’s important to remember current COVID-19 vaccines were designed to prevent people who receive shots from becoming seriously ill with the virus. The vaccines were approved on an emergency basis and it has yet to be established how long the protection lasts or whether vaccinations will prevent transmission.3

**Hit the road or fly the sky?**

If you’re vaccinated and ready to travel within the United States, one of the decisions you’ll need to make is whether to drive or fly to your destination. Early in 2021, Natalie Compton of *The* *Washington Post* consulted with six experts – doctors and infectious-disease specialists – and discovered there is no consensus about which is best.4

There are pros and cons to both options.

Before deciding whether to drive or fly, consider factors such as the distance to your destination, the number of people you may come into contact with along the way, and how many people will be traveling with you.

***The pros and cons of driving***

*Pro*: Being inside your car is a lot like being at home. You have better control over travel variables. A critical-care medicine specialist at the Cleveland Clinic, who was interviewed by *The Washington Post*, thinks driving is a lower-risk option because travelers can limit contact with strangers.4

*Con*: If you are traveling a long distance through areas where infection rates are high or if you will need to make one or more overnight stops along the way, flying may be the better option.4

*Tips*: If you prefer driving and will stay overnight in hotels, the experts recommend traveling with 70 percent alcohol wipes and sanitizing critical surfaces in hotel rooms and hotel bathrooms. These include counters, television remote controls, phones, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, and other surfaces. Also, one expert suggested it is not wise to drink from hotel-provided glasses.4

***The pros and cons of flying***

*Pro*: The chair of the department of medicine at the University of California at San Francisco said he is, “…quite reassured about flying as a general mode [of transportation].” Other experts suggested flying isn’t all that different from eating in a restaurant or going to a place of worship.4

*Con*: Flying is likely to put you in close quarters with a significant number of strangers for an extended period of time.4

*Tips*: Experts had a number of suggestions for people who choose to fly. These included flying at off-peak times when airports and airplanes are likely to be less crowded; wearing double masks to provide additional protection; and turning down food and drink to remain masked throughout your flight.4

Another tip is to visit the *CDC’s* ‘Travel Planner,’ which provides destination-specific information about quarantine requirements, mask mandates, testing options, and other information.5

**Traveling overseas requires caution and careful planning**

Of course, not everyone’s family is in the United States. If your travel plans will take you out of the country, visit the *CDC’s* website and review ‘Travel Recommendations by Destination.’ It provides information about coronavirus risk in various countries. There are still many countries the CDC recommends Americans not visit yet.6

International travelers also should check the *State Department* website to learn more about travel restrictions and requirements. On January 25, 2021, the site cautioned:7

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect countries differently. Challenges to any international travel at this time may include mandatory COVID-19 testing requirements, quarantines, travel restrictions, and closed borders. Foreign governments may implement restrictions with little notice, even in destinations that were previously low risk. If you choose to travel internationally, your trip may be severely disrupted, and it may be difficult to arrange travel back to the United States.”

No matter where you go, we wish you safe travels.

Sources:

1 <https://news.airbnb.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/01/Travel_Report_2021.pdf>

2 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

3 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/tips/flights-drive-safety-vaccine-covid/>

5 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-planner/index.html>

6 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notices.html>

7 <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/covid-19-information.html>

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