

How to Alleviate Travel Anxiety in a “Post”-COVID World

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When COVID-19 officially stamped its way into our minds, letting us know it wasn't just a “silly little virus” that'd blow by in a few weeks or months, it changed a lot of our plans. Travel was among them. I was living abroad during the early days of the virus and had to cancel upcoming trips for that spring and summer. Let me start by saying that this is a privileged situation, as many more people lost their jobs (I among them), their homes, their lives, or the lives of their loved ones. In the grand scheme of things, travel is definitely a “first-world problem.”

Yet I still remember the wave of anxiety I felt when having to leave Europe to go back to the U.S. before the borders closed and it was a chilling experience. Some of the busiest airports in the world were near empty. My flight was bare, me having an entire row to myself for eight hours (okay, that was kind of nice). Going without travel for two years was tough for the explorer within me. Now, COVID is both a constant force in our lives and somewhat invisible as

the use of masks has decreased. But when I took my first trip “post” COVID, the anxiety was still there.

If you also felt anxious traveling post-2020, you’re not alone. Here are some tips to help you alleviate travel anxiety in a COVID-19 world.

Why It Matters to Address It



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Some of you may be wondering why we should even address it in the first place. “COVID hysteria is a thing of the past!” or “I’m vaccinated, so I have no reason to worry.” Perhaps those are beliefs you hold. However, I think it’s important to mention it because it’s so much different when you’re booking your vacation and planning your Trip Advisor-approved itinerary than

when you're standing in a tightly-packed line waiting to check your bags or board the plane and someone starts coughing. The world is different now. Travel is different now. That is a truth we all have to accept.

Keep Up-to-Date on Country-Specific Guidelines



Image courtesy of [Pexels](#)

Knowledge is power, and knowing you did your homework will help put your mind at ease. My first trip after COVID was to the beautiful country of Spain and I didn't know I had to have a booster to be considered fully vaccinated, not just the two initial doses. No big deal, huh? Except I found out just over a day before my flight left. So I had to scramble to get a valid PCR test and spend a bunch of money that could've gone toward my trip.

Do better than me. Look up what the guidelines are in your country of origin and your destination, and check the requirements coming to and from. To be on the safe side, even if you are fully vaxxed and boosted, I'd recommend still getting a COVID test just for extra peace of mind. When I went to Spain there was also a QR code we needed to have. And though that may have changed now, it's best to keep yourself abreast even as we get farther and farther from the thick of it. Check out [this link](#) for travel advisories.

Sources of COVID-related Travel Anxiety



Image courtesy of [Unsplash](#)

Contracting the virus is of course a primary concern. But it's not simply getting the positive test results that send us into a panic, it's what that positive result can lead to. A canceled trip, sending you back home before you reach the gate. Keeping you stuck in a foreign country unable to return from your getaway. Losing money from canceled hotels, excursions, etc. Having to pay

more money to extend your accommodations to isolate. Having to seek medical care – at home or abroad. And if you're an American, that may not be cheap. Waiting all year to get your few days of vacation to escape a job that's draining you only to have to sit at home, not get that break, and head back to work when you're better. The fear of having potentially exposed others when you were unaware of your status.

The list. Can. Go. On.

To help alleviate your travel anxiety in our post-COVID world, step back and identify which of these worries (or ones not mentioned) are causing your anxiety. It's important to get to the root cause and try to calmly lay out the possibilities if things went well or wrong, but not to dwell on either. The key is to remember it's simply out of your control. I was terrified of catching COVID and continued to wear my mask when walking the street even when it wasn't required anymore, only to contract it from a family member. Whereas I know people who traveled to Florida multiple times when cases were peaking and never got it.

Identify your worries. Analyze them. Then let them go.

Research Particular Attraction Regulations



Image courtesy of [Pexels](#)

To avoid the disappointment of getting turned away at a much-awaited tourist destination, make sure you're informed about the safety protocols and measures for each sight. Even if entering the country was quite lax, some attractions are stricter. Pro tip: while many places offer disposable masks, do yourself a favor and carry your own. Whenever you can lessen your anxiety by adequately preparing, do it. Etsy has tons of [cute masks](#) for you to choose from.

Pack for Our “New Normal”



Image courtesy of [Pexels](#)

Another good item to keep with you—hand sanitizer! Seriously, this may seem obvious but don't rely on those pumps some places have and instead carry your own. My favorites are the ones from [Bath & Body Works](#), or [Lululemon](#).

Other great products:

- Disinfecting wipes
- Melatonin (in case anxiety is making it difficult to fall asleep)
- Headphones
- Book (physical, ebook, and audiobook are all great options)
- Sleep mask
- Stress ball

Try Not to Isolate



Image courtesy of [Pexels](#)

We spent over two years of our lives heavily isolated, including from close family and friends. I get the urge to do that now. Try to resist this urge. I'm not saying it's the smartest thing to go to a rave in the middle of a big city. That might make your anxiety about getting COVID worse. But remember that you are in a new place and try to connect with others. If you are traveling with people, still make an effort to connect with the locals or other travelers. This can be a simple exchange at a grocery store or restaurant, or while waiting in line.

The thought of greeting someone with a hug or a kiss on the cheek as is customary in many countries can be anxiety-inducing in and of itself. While waiting at the Seville airport, this man was coughing a lot and you could feel the tension and anxiety amongst the passengers ready to board and hoping they wouldn't be seated next to that guy. He could've had a cold. He could've

had a tickle in his throat. COVID changed the way we see the world. It's another fact we have to accept. But one of the greatest joys of traveling is socializing with different people, so even if you have to modify how you do so, don't let it stop you completely.

A New Journey On the Horizon

Remember why you love to travel to begin with. Whether you're a seasoned explorer or just starting on your journey, there was that kernel of inspiration, wanderlust, excitement, that propelled you to book that ticket in the first place. Hang on to that. Remind yourself that you are opening yourself up to so many more opportunities and cultures. I hope these tips can help you alleviate some of your anxiety before your next trip.

Travel is a luxury and it's enriching. Stay safe. Stay grateful. And stay exploring.