KlasJet - Q1/Q2 Private Charter Travel Trends Foresight

Monday 22 February, 2021

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In the past, travel was something we just did. Of course, we planned in advance, organised our itinerary and accommodation, and then, without further fuss or concern, we arrived at the airport and boarded a flight. But, that was then.

In the early days of 2021, those innocent times couldn't seem further away, at least not for now.

There has never been another point in time when the future of travel has been so uncertain. The only thing that can be agreed upon with *any* level of certainty, is that the longing for travel still exists, and always will exist.

In the past year, the aviation industry has experienced unprecedented losses of almost $180 billion. In addition, the IATA is predicting that further losses will reach almost $39 billion in 2021, with no signs of pre-COVID passenger traffic figures returning to near normality until 2022.

Despite these seemingly depressing statistics, people are still travelling where and when they can, and many proactive destinations around the world are busy preparing for that day while seizing the opportunities that the situation presents.

Safety and security for travellers

In a report commissioned for *Euronews* Travel 2020, and according to Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of the European Travel Commission (ETC), "People are going to make choices in a very different way. Taking much more responsibility for their decisions and actions while being on holiday or planning a holiday. Safety and security will be the most important priority for everybody, for both destinations and travellers."

Around the world, several forward-thinking destinations are already laying the groundwork in a bid to kickstart commercial travel and tourism responsibly. Others, who arrived late to the game, are having to add new restrictions to their rules and regulations for entry, and in doing so, are visibly slowing their return to the market. The US is an example of this late arrival.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have decreed that from January 26th all air passengers of age two years and older, travelling to the US from abroad, are required to take a viral COVID-19 test within 72 hours of departure for the US, they must also provide a negative PCR or Antigen result to their airline before being allowed to board their flight.

Also, and according to the Canadian government, the border between the United States and Canada is likely to remain closed until COVID-19 cases stop climbing in the US. Hopefully, with swift and decisive action, both of these measures may be short-lived and prove themselves as catalysts for recovery in the long-term.

Rita Domkute, Chief Executive Officer of KlasJet, sees an opportunity in such a complex and rapidly changing environment, where travellers encounter additional and often unpredictable difficulties. "VP travel airlines like KlasJet can create added value for their customers by facilitating, and where possible, simplifying any Covid-related procedures that passengers must endure. Given the nature and scope of our operations, we are in a unique position to micro-manage every flight and provide necessary bespoke services to make air travel for our clients as convenient as possible, given the limitations of the Covid environment.

Ensuring the survival of their industry

By contrast to the US, the luxury destination of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean is currently open to visitors from 48 countries. The countries approved by the government have been divided into two categories. Travellers from Category 1 countries are required to have been tested for a COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours prior to arrival. Travellers from Category 2 countries must present a negative test taken within 48 hours before departure and must self-isolate in a designated space for 10 days, with a second PCR test being performed on the sixth day.

Dubai is one of the more proactive destinations and appears to be doing much to prevent further damage to its hugely important tourism sector. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the city

is currently ranked as the third most important destination (by city) in the table of international tourism spending, with an income of approximately $28 billion annually. Any significant damage to the tourism sector could potentially spell disaster for the destination's long-term future.

Travellers arriving in Dubai from outside GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries must provide a negative PCR test obtained within 96 hours of arrival at the destination. For arrivals from within the GCC, there is the option of taking a PCR test upon arrival at Dubai International Airport, with results provided within 90 minutes.

However, even with Dubai's attention firmly focused on retaining its status as a safe and open travel destination, there are some worrying signs that despite all of the best efforts the daily infection rate is still climbing, albeit slowly.

Preparing to embrace the changes

Every country and every destination are handling the situation as they see fit. Some are more successful than others. But armed with the knowledge that the global tourism industry is worth a staggering US$ 2.9 trillion, it is in the best interests of everyone concerned, from aviation and hospitality to national governments and local municipalities, to ensure that travel and tourism can once again regain its place at the table, and as quickly as possible.

There can be no doubt that the face of travel and tourism will change dramatically in the near future. New travel trends will emerge, and forgotten practices will be reinvented. There will be a further embracing of technologies which will help us travel more safely and with greater confidence. Crowded resorts may give way to open spaces, and countries will look inward with thoughts of harnessing the very things which lie on their doorstep.

Change in every industry has the power to create new opportunities. It is the foresight of visionaries within the various industries to possess the ability to recognise these opportunities, to overcome the obstacles, and to seize the day with both hands that will keep the global travel and tourism industries alive, and in a position to grow with the estimated demand.

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