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Is it Safe to Travel? AAA Offers Travelers Advice Amid Coronavirus Concerns

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With new coronavirus cases being announced every day, Americans with spring break excursions, upcoming business trips or those thinking about summer travel have one thing on their mind: Should I travel? AAA can't make that decision for its members, but is providing information on travel safety and insurance to help travelers make the decision that is right for them.

"Research is important to any traveler ahead of a trip. It's no different with the coronavirus," said Paula Twidale, senior vice president, AAA Travel. "Become familiar with the Center for Disease Control's recommendations, consult your healthcare professional, talk to your travel provider about waiver policies and chat with a travel agent about travel insurance possibilities before making any decision."

Travel – Is it still safe?

Currently, the United States recommends travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea and Italy. Traveling anywhere else is a personal decision you have to make based on all facts available.

First and foremost, if you are feeling sick, don't travel. Even if you are not sick, talk to your health care provider about their medical recommendations, especially as it may relate to your age and personal health.

For travelers considering a cruise vacation, AAA advises that the decision whether to go is a personal one that must be made by the individual. Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) has announced the adoption of new screening policies for its member cruise lines, including denying boarding to anyone who has traveled in South Korea, Iran, China, and parts of Italy within 14 days prior to embarkation. Additionally, cruise lines are conducting enhanced illness screenings for many passengers prior to departure.

"AAA travel counselors are knowledgeable, caring and available to assist members if they have questions or concerns about cruises or other travel," said Twidale.

Quarantine – What is the likelihood I could be quarantined if I travel?

If you choose to take that trip:

- Travel with all necessary travel documentation, including health insurance cards.

- At the top of your packing list, AAA recommends that travelers pack an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and disinfecting wipes.

- Pack any extra supplies you may need, including additional doses of medication, in the event your return trip is delayed.

- Know the nearest location of and contact information for the U.S. embassy or consulate. Also, enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (https://step.state.gov/step/) (STEP), so you can be reached if the situation changes while abroad.

- U.S. citizens who have been in China in the preceding 14 days who attempt to return to the United States will be redirected to one of 11 designated U.S. airports and undergo enhanced health screenings by CDC staff for fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Travel Insurance – Does it cover the coronavirus?

Coverage options can vary widely. If you purchased travel insurance before the coronavirus was recognized as an epidemic, your policy likely provides at least some level of protection. Customers who purchased "cancel anytime" or "cancel for any reason" insurance prior to February 3, when coronavirus was recognized as an epidemic, or soon thereafter may be able to cancel their trip and receive reimbursement for a portion of their non-refundable travel deposits.

Travel insurance generally excludes epidemics. If you have a trip already booked, check with your travel providers (cruise line, airline, hotel, etc.) to see what waivers they have put in place. If you are planning a trip, also check with travel providers to understand their coronavirus-related policies and connect with a travel agent. Depending on your situation, there could be some travel insurance options for your needs.

No matter where you travel, make sure you are taking everyday preventive measures (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html) to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases.

- Wash your hands frequently

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Media Contacts

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