



Consumer Awareness: Travelling in the “new normal”

Issued: 12th April 2021 (Updated 15th April 2021)

Background

With summer around the corner, many Gibraltar residents will be thinking about travelling abroad for a well-deserved holiday break. As part of its awareness program, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is issuing this post-Brexit and COVID-19 travel guidance for consumers in an effort to minimise disappointments with holidays in the “new normal.”

Deciding where to go

There are a number of things you should consider before deciding where to go in 2021. When deciding where to travel to we recommend you do the following:

1. Use the [UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office website](#) to find out about the country you are visiting or travelling through. This website gives you very useful and important information, including:
 - a) updates on [COVID-19](#) situation there;
 - b) entry requirements and travel restrictions, including visas;
 - c) other safety and security issues; and
 - d) travel advice, help and support.
2. Check the latest information on COVID-19 risks and other health issues for the country on the [TravelHealthPro website](#).
3. Think about the level of risk that you might be subjecting yourself and your family to. Whereas Gibraltar has had a very effective vaccination campaign to protect its population against COVID-19, this is not necessarily the same in the country you may be considering travelling to. Also note that health systems in other countries may be over stretched. If you or your family require medical assistance this may be difficult to get. [Note the latest Government advice for Spain](#).
4. Many destinations that are popular because of the events they host and their atmosphere (e.g. festivals, nightlife, celebrations, entertainment venues) may not be able to offer you the same experience if they are operating under COVID-19 restrictions. Is now the right time to visit them? This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

These things may significantly affect your travelling arrangements, so before booking your holiday make sure you have looked at these things carefully.

Booking your trip

Once you have decided on your destination, consider the following COVID-19 and Brexit issues before booking:

1. [COVID-19 considerations](#):
 - a) [Tests & Vaccinations](#) – Check if you need to be vaccinated or require a negative test result to enter your destination or to join tours and events. Pre-book tests in advance to ensure you can

get it before travelling and it is valid on the day you need it. Make sure the document you will receive is acceptable. You may need to complete specific forms at your destination. Consumers should be aware that getting tested and obtaining necessary documentation shall incur extra travel costs, locally and abroad.

- b) COVID-19 Isolation on arrival – Check if you will be required to isolate when you arrive to your destination. Factor it in to your travel arrangements and also factor in the cost of any further tests at the end or during the isolation period.
- c) Check COVID-19 travel restrictions - Once again check restrictions both at the place you are intending to visit and places you are travelling through. These may change often and you should check prior to booking. Additionally it is important that you check and follow the [latest local official coronavirus restrictions and updates](#). You should also check [the latest Government press releases](#) for related updates.
- d) Cancellation policies & refunds – COVID-19 restrictions can change overnight. Check the terms and conditions when making your bookings as if they are cancelled you may not be entitled to your money back. If you can, book with a provider that provides redress to you if you are affected by new restrictions. This is becoming common in the industry.

2. Brexit considerations

- a) Passports - Gibraltar is no longer part of the EU, therefore travelling with your ID card alone is not possible. Check passport requirements for the country you are visiting and travelling through. Many countries require you have at least 6 months left on a passport by the time you leave the country. Check for any other entry requirements: [here](#)
- b) Visas – If you are applying for a Visa to enter a particular country look for the country's official visa portal. This is normally simple to do. Be wary of private entities that charge you significant fees to assist you with visa applications.
- c) Driving abroad - Make sure you have all the documents you need to drive in the country you are visiting. There is a strong probability that you will require an International Driving licence. You can apply for one from the [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department](#).
- d) Travel & Medical Insurance - Gibraltarians no longer enjoy free health cover when travelling in the EU (E-111). Gibraltar has an agreement with Spain which extends emergency medical cover until June 2021. Please check with the GHA for arrangements after this date. For any other countries (except UK) you will have to pay for medical care if this is needed. We recommend you purchase travel & medical insurance for your needs. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the terms and conditions of your insurance policy to understand what is covered in an emergency.
- e) Pets - You should get the necessary vaccines, certificate and/or passport to take your pet abroad. Contact the Animal Welfare Centre for further information: +350 20043352.

Other General Travel Tips

We have compiled a list of guidelines and tips based on the common and recent travel related complaints received by the OFT for you to consider:

- 1. Mobile Phones charges - Check your mobile phone network provider for information on any data roaming charges in order to avoid high roaming fees. It may be worth getting a sim card at your destination.

2. Research – Knowledge is key to a good holiday:
 - a) Do not book the first thing you see! Shop around for the best deal. Do some independent research on the place you are travelling to and determine what you want to see and experience. You can then ensure that travel offers provide you what you want.
 - b) Before responding to travel offers get recommendations from family and friends on travel agencies, vacation rentals, hotels and travel package providers that offer a good service.
 - c) There are many websites that will provide you with good reviews from other travellers. Note however that some online website reviews can be easily manipulated or may be fake.
3. Additional Costs - Look for additional costs that may not be immediately obvious. Resort fees (also known as destination, facility and amenity fees) can increase your daily costs.
4. Taxes – Many offers are advertised as tax free. Taxes may need to be paid at your destination. Ask about taxes and note that these may be significant.
5. Avoid scams – Holiday scams are very common:
 - a) If a deal is too good to be true research the travel service providers with the words “scam,” “review,” or “complaint” online.
 - b) If you are booking through a third party website (e.g. Booking.com or Air BnB) always make payments through these websites. Never pay a host directly.
 - c) While on holiday, say “no thanks” to anyone who tries to rush you without giving you time to consider an offer or to ask around. Always agree a price for a service in advance.
6. Cancellations - ask about cancellation and refund policies before you pay. If possible, obtain a copy of these. If any aspect of your holiday has been cancelled as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, please refer to [our specific guidance](#).
7. Booking confirmations – Make sure you can check what you booked upon your arrival. You may want to check the rate and amenities you booked, particularly if these were booked through a third party website. This is also essential if the host says your reservation is ‘lost’ or ‘cancelled’.
8. Payment – Using your credit card to pay for the booking and your travel spending may give you extra protection than paying by cash or debit card. Check your credit card provider’s terms and conditions for details.
9. Travel Insurance - Purchase travel insurance as soon as you book your holiday. Check the insurance agency is licensed and make sure the insurance cover is fit for your particular purpose. Before travelling, familiarise yourself of the process to follow in a medical emergency with your travel insurance provider.

Useful links & information

<https://youtu.be/0qOAT6aHxag> - GBC interview with the OFT’s CEO

<https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/brexit>

<https://healthygibraltar.org/>

<https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/covid19>



<https://www.facebook.com/gibraltargovernment>

<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

<https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/press/press-releases>

COVID-19 Civil Contingency Office - 20049522

Contact us

We hope the above is of assistance. If you have any queries or have encountered any problems, please contact the OFT's Consumer Protection Team:

Email: consumer.protection@gibraltar.gov.gi

Tel: 20071700

Web: www.oft.gov.gi



Facebook - OFT Gibraltar



Instagram - @OFTgib



Twitter - @OFTGib



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