

Walking Adventures International

Coronavirus Update

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We live in unprecedented times! For the past few weeks, much of the world has been focused on the health threat of COVID-19. It has consumed our attention at WAI, as well. We would like to have been more communicative with you during the past couple of weeks, but the pace of change and the rate of new information from hour to hour and day to day has rendered much of what we would have wanted to share outdated.

One of the aspects of travel we value greatly is that of gaining perspective by seeing things from different points of view. Perspective is easy to lose under the glare of the 24/7 news cycle. Making plans during uncertain times with a whirlwind of anxiety-inducing headlines is challenging, at best.

Rest assured that WAI's top priority is the safety of our travelers; we will only travel if we believe we are taking you someplace inherently safe. At the same time, life does not come with guarantees and there are calculated risks inherent with every new day that we greet. One of the realities of operating tours is that the money flows from you to WAI to providers of service located throughout our destination. The purpose of cancellation policies and deadlines is to recognize that when that money is paid, we usually do not have recourse to get it back. At some point in time, our suppliers need that commitment from us and we, in turn, need that commitment from you.

Our goal at WAI is to find the balance between remaining flexible in order to operate adventures as scheduled and offering maximum control to travelers. The Coronavirus situation has upset all of that. Finding a balanced perspective that addresses traveler expectations and honors our commitments to our suppliers is proving difficult. We are a small, family-owned travel business with limited ability to refund payments to travelers that we are not getting back from our suppliers.

We still believe in the incomparable value of travel, when and where it's safe to do so. Below we've laid out our best attempt to date to find a balanced perspective and present you with our model of decision-making. The situation is extremely fluid, and we are evaluating conditions on a daily basis. We recognize, however, that the decision about travel is ultimately yours and highly personal, based upon your own research and understanding of what is best for you.

Going forward, we are regularly monitoring the [World Health Organization](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and the [US State Department](#) for updates on how global conditions related to COVID-19 are unfolding.

What are current travel situations monitored by WAI?

Conditions for travel in Europe are rapidly changing. The United States announced on March 11 that it will restrict travel by foreign nationals between Europe (the 26 countries that are part of the visa-free travel area known as the Schengen Area) and the United States for 30 days, effective March 13 through April 10. This will not include UK or Ireland. At this time, the ban does not apply to US citizens or legal permanent residents.

- WAI has no European programs scheduled during this 30-day period.

A Global Level 3 Health Advisory has been instituted by the US State Department. This health advisory highlights that traveler mobility may be unexpectedly impacted by quarantines or border restrictions enacted on short notice. For those traveling abroad, the State Department recommendation is to visit travel.state.gov to view the individual Travel Advisories for your destination countries to understand the level of threat to your specific destination.

- WAI has two international programs with start dates in the next month - *Costa Rica: Land of Natural Wonders*, beginning March 24, and *Mosaic of Morocco*, beginning April 15. Because of uncertainties generated by recent events and pronouncements, WAI has decided to cancel these two programs. Though WAI, tour participants, and partners in-country have invested countless hours in planning for these two adventures, risks of negative impacts of operating these two tours at this time, and the tension of traveling under these conditions, outweighs disappointments caused by cancelling them. WAI will be in touch with participants to discuss their options.

Italy is under “lockdown” conditions effective March 9 through April 3. Travel is not possible during a lockdown.

- WAI’s *Oberammergau Passion Play* departure on May 20 was scheduled to end in the Lake Como region of Italy. We’re continuing to monitor how things unfold in Italy, and throughout all regions we’ll be traveling through on this tour, and are developing an alternative ending to the Oberammergau program that takes us into the French Alsace wine country instead. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide regular updates.

Ireland is under “lockdown” conditions, effective March 12 through March 26.

- WAI has a program in Ireland starting on June 23. We are optimistic that this tour will depart as planned. We will continue to monitor vigilantly and provide regular updates.

All WAI scheduled departures after May 1, 2020, are anticipated to depart as scheduled at this time. WAI will be diligently monitoring and will continue to provide frequent updates.

How does WAI determine when to cancel trips?

Traveler safety is our utmost concern. We are constantly monitoring global conditions via the US State Department, as well as sources mentioned above, to understand the potential impact to our programs.

- **If a specific destination is given a Level 1 or Level 2 Travel Advisory by the State Department:**
 - We will continue to operate our programs as scheduled in these countries, while monitoring the situation with our local partners.
 - If you choose to cancel your trip to a Level 1 or Level 2 destination, our standard terms, conditions, and cancellation policies will apply.
- **If a specific destination is given a Level 3 Travel Advisory by the State Department:**
 - We will plan to operate these programs as scheduled, while monitoring the situation with our local partners, and may choose to alter our itinerary to avoid the affected area(s).
 - If you choose to cancel your trip to a Level 3 destination, our standard terms, conditions and cancellation policies will apply. If you have already paid in full, we will do our best to obtain partial refunds from our local partners on your behalf. However, this may not always be possible.
- **If a specific destination is given a Level 4 Travel Advisory by the State Department:**
 - We will not operate trips that pass through these areas. We may choose to alter our itinerary to avoid the affected area(s) or fully cancel the trip departure. If a group is already in the affected country when it is reclassified to Level 4, we will either leave the affected area or facilitate your return home as soon as operationally possible. In the case that we must fully cancel the trip departure, WAI will issue a full refund.

If I decide to travel, what actions will WAI take if the risk of Coronavirus is still prevalent?

- Guides will implement regular, robust disinfecting practices for all common surfaces in motor coaches. We’ll prioritize social distancing by minimizing seat rotation while on the coach.
- If we are mid-tour and restrictions within the country are established, we will continue operating the tour as planned but will adapt as needed depending on the circumstances. Our guide teams are flexible, and are well-versed in altering itineraries as needed throughout tours. We will do everything we can to assist travelers should they decide they wish to leave mid-tour.
- If you happen to get sick during your program, regardless of the cause, your WAI guides and local partners are trained to get you medical care. Local hospitals and clinics within the regions we travel through are identified for all programs.
- If a tour member is diagnosed with coronavirus, our tour will follow all directives from the local authorities. This may include a quarantine, and we are working with our local partners to ensure that we have local advocates in place should that occur. We will work with local and international authorities to ensure your needs are met.

WAI has operated tours for over 30 years, and we are well practiced in adapting nimbly to evolving circumstances. Although small, our team, both in the field and in the office, is world-class. Every tour relies on 24/7 support from our home office. Local WAI partners are reliable, responsive and effective. Our ongoing commitment is to respond consistently to all unforeseen events with professionalism, compassion, and competence. Thank you for being part of the Adventure!