

In the Future -Using An Agent Should Be The 'New Normal'

If anything good has come out of the absolute mess that is COVID-19, it should be that using a travel expert is the way to go for when we can all travel again. Here are some facts.

If navigating the world of airline rules, visas, tour operators, cross-borders, changing seasons, health precautions, and visas were difficult before; things are about to get a whole lot more complicated for travellers post COVID-19.

That is, unless you have a knowledgeable travel expert, by your side for all things travel related.

Professional, well established and experienced Travel agents are wizards. You could even say the Hermione Grangers' of the travel world' if you're a Harry Potter fan.

Time and time again, Travel agents prove themselves, with resilience, knowledge, a passion to learn continuously, and an impeccable customer-focus for making your travel dreams come true.

A travel agent's professional and personal recommendation, service, care and compassion are four things that can *never* be replicated by an online competitor.

So as we try to navigate our way through this unravelling new world, we hope that travel agents will get a little more credit for the work they put into each and every booking.

Here are 7 reasons why using a travel professional should be new norm ,when planning a post-COVID-19 trip.

1. GET THE PERSONAL, HUMAN TOUCH

Isn't it nice when someone actually knows your name and curiously wants to hear why and where you want to go and what you'd like to do?

By using an agent, you should feel special and heard. It's like someone wants to get a deep dive on who you are and what floats your boat.

This enables your agent to get a better understanding of the things you're into and gives you personalised recommendations and insider tips, to make your trip even more memorable.

It should also give you the confidence to know that your trip is in the hands of the right person.

2. PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Travellers can save precious time, and trust that their travel plans are going to run seamlessly, as your trip is being planned by an expert.

Need a visa? No worries, your travel agent is already onto it. Need to BYO facemask for the flight? Your travel agent has already popped one in your ticket pack. Want to stop over in a place you've never been before? Brilliant! You're going to love it as I did.

Oh, and if there is something unforeseen that does happen on your trip, like a Virus, a country War, a Terrorist strike , your own personal tragedy , volcanic ash in Bali or whatever you can rest easy that you're Travel Agent will be on hand to help sort out alternative plans for you.

Any travel agent will tell you endless stories about people who booked with online travel companies, only to call the agent up to rescue them when something happens, and they can't get hold of anyone from the online company's offshore call centre.

Consider a Travel Agent an extra (and crucial) element of your insurance policy and your invisible but necessary travelling companion.

As correctly noted by Industry expert Max Najar, of Axis Travel centre , South Australia *"If they ask you to pay a deductible or extra planning or research fee, then do so. They are worth it.*

You get more options, professional advice, save heaps of time and are then backed legally that they have to deliver what they say !

Ever seen an accountant, a lawyer, a Plumber or an Architect do it for free ! In fact most of these professions ask you for a non-refundable call-out or appointment fee !! "

3. TRAVEL AGENTS ARE NOT MORE EXPENSIVE THAN ONLINE

Travel Agents aren't in the industry for the money; they're in it for the passion.

Yes, of course, they still need to make a living like the rest of us, but they live for travel and they want to ensure their clients experience exactly what they want from their trip.

By using a travel professional, you'll be offered unique travel experiences you may not have even known about if you'd booked online.

Online sites are mostly biased, lack credibility in offering all the options and choices, can be wonderfully anonymous and then trying to get answers or suing an internationally based website or operator will cost you thousands!

And they know a good deal when they see one. Travel Agents are often privy to exclusive deals and airfare specials others can't access.

Their toolkit of using privy Computer Reservation Systems that allow them to compare on one screen all Airlines, Cruises, Hotels, Tours, Visa requirements, Health advice and International rules and regulations can not be emulated by any consumer system.

Don't forget that travel agents still have the same access to all consumer sites that you have plus their own coded and password controlled links that you will never get a hold of!

Once your trip has been put together, the value of your overall booking and travel experience, plus the ongoing support you'll receive should be extremely competitive and a no brainer.

4. IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

While travel might seem easy to book at first glance, the opposite can often be true once you go past just booking a simple flight somewhere.

The last thing you want is to turn up to your city hotel after a long overnight flight, to be told that check-in opens in 5 hours, at 8am. This is your precious holiday time and there's not a minute to waste.

Thankfully, because you used a travel agent, they booked you into a 24hr check in hotel and you'll be whisked away to your room ready for a restful night's sleep upon arrival before you begin exploring.

They also requested a high room for you as they know you have a thing for dreamy skylines, and told the hotel you're there celebrating your 40th birthday.

Bring on the good time sparkles!

5. KNOWING THE WORLD OF TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

Agents are always up to speed in knowing each and everyone one of their hundreds of tour, cruise, car, rail, accommodation and attraction partner products.

They know what travellers would most enjoy experience-wise, and they are confident in offering what is best for every client and their budget.

Agents also have expert knowledge in airlines fare types and rules, so they can book a fare suitable for their client's requirements. They know the best time to amend or cancel or read "between-the-lines"

Many of these products (including terms, conditions and rules) will have changed extensively post COVID-19 with networks & connectivity drastically different. Travel Agents are the go-to to help navigate the world.

6. HAVING YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART

Agents care for their clients. We knew this before, but have seen it in the spotlight recently; with so many incredible heartwarming stories, about travel professionals going above and beyond, to help travellers affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Booking with an agent guarantees care and support that is absolutely invaluable. Especially during these changing times.

7. THEY'VE GOT THE CONTACTS (AND THE DIRECT PHONE NUMBERS!)

It's about who you know, right? And let me tell you, travel agents know a lot of useful people that can make good things happen.

Agents can use their personalities and a plethora of contacts and years of experience to work to their client's advantage. This is only a handful of the wonderful pros of booking with a travel professional.

You cannot put a price on human contacts, extending or reinterpreting conditions, asking for favours or just getting a job done. No internet, one-night booking or "once off" traveller can do this. A great Travel Agent can, and will-as you are a client for life and not a one-off traveller!

So here's to the future of travel; the future of travel experts and the treasure trove that is personalised knowledge, passion, and people supporting people.