



COVID19 : Remarks from ASTA- USA:

“Travel advisors are among the heroes of the pandemic and ASTA has been making sure that their colossal efforts do not go unsung during COVID-19 and always. As flights were cancelled and borders shut down, travel advisors kicked into gear to help their clients, working harder than ever with little or no revenue coming in. Drawing on their industry connections and expertise, travel advisors did whatever it took to get their clients home from far-flung destinations and pushed hard to obtain refunds for trips that were interrupted or not taken at all. The solutions were often complicated and required a lot of savvy and creativity.

Unfortunately, travelers who had not booked through a travel advisor were left to navigate these uncharted waters on their own.

“Travel advisors are innate problem solvers,” said Zane Kerby, president and CEO of ASTA. “The advisor serves as the consumer’s advocate... We saw this play out in full force during the early phases of the coronavirus pandemic where travel advisors spent countless hours navigating the maze of cancellation policies while monitoring the best routes and options to safely bring their clients home.” “Every travel advisor could tell you multiple stories of what they did to get people out of countries that were being shut down, to get people rebooked on flights that were canceled, and to get money back when money wasn’t supposed to come back,” said Dave Hershberger, VTA, some of the amazing rescues travel advisors were able to pull off. “During a year filled with unprecedented challenges for the industry, the travel advisory community has gone the extra mile and helped to connect us to their travelers,” said Don Moore, senior vice

“They have displayed amazing resiliency and shown incredible value, helping us to be part of the solution to so many travellers during this time. We appreciate their longstanding partnership and unwavering commitment to their customers.”

Some advisors even charge an annual retainer, now how about that. Tell your curators and designers of vacations, advising our clients on when to travel, guiding them on the right restaurants, activities, where to shop and so much more, and counseling them before, during, and after their vacations.” Travel advisors are not just a retail ‘agent’ processing transactions on behalf of suppliers. Rather, we are trusted advisors and fill a role that’s more similar to a financial advisor or attorney.”

“It helps to distinguish us as consultants, not ‘order takers,’ and to differentiate ourselves from the OTAs [online travel agencies] that book only what you ask for, whether it is the right product for you or not.”

As travel resumes, many industry watchers are predicting an increased reliance on travel advisors.

“If you’re planning a trip after the pandemic, maybe it’s time to call a professional. A competent travel advisor can help you navigate the strange new world of airlines, hotels, and rental cars. At a time like this, you want to have access to a real person 24/7 who knows the business inside out, can help you navigate a cancellation or another outbreak, and has the best connections. That’s why you need a travel advisor for your post-pandemic trip,” consumer advocate Christopher Elliott told Forbes.com readers in a May 14, 2020 article entitled, **“This is Why You Need a Travel Advisor for Your Post-Pandemic Vacation.”**

“I think the COVID-19 crisis is a turning point for the travel industry, and our message is being actively received by people who want the handholding and peace of mind that only a professional travel advisor can provide,” “One of the silver linings coming out of the pandemic is that consumers, more than ever, understand the value of working with a travel advisor.