

Covid has completely altered the travel industry - and it's not all bad

 By Sue Garrett

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There's a running joke on social media about how 2020 has been a complete disaster of a year, and just when you think the world has hit rock bottom, it only continues to go downhill. The underlying theme is unexpected 'change'. In most cases, these many, many changes have been for the worse - but there are a few of them that could prove to be for the better, particularly in relation to the travel and tourism industry.



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A renewed appreciation for travel

A year ago, nobody would have believed it if they were told that they would soon be confined to their homes for months on end, except to venture out for essential goods. It would have been simply incomprehensible to imagine that enjoying a meal at a restaurant or even an outing to the park would soon be deemed a notable event.

The long and short of it is that the world has been through a lot, and South Africa is certainly no exception. After having endured one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, it is understandable that people have become much more appreciative of the prospect of travel and the many joys that it brings to their lives.

Suddenly, there is drastically less emphasis on amenities (unless it is around safety) and what one can get out of one's holiday or business trip, and more emphasis on experience and the destination itself.

Suddenly, indoor swimming pools and all-you-can-eat buffets aren't quite as important anymore, and people are starting to yearn for the natural beauty and freedom of jetting off to an exciting, faraway land.

Suddenly, it is less about indulging in countless spa treatments and more about getting outdoors and reconnecting with nature.

Suddenly, after having been cooped up for so long, people are realising just how wondrous travel can be, and why and how they should have been going about it in the first place.

Connecting people

Another 'silver lining' is the fact that despite never having been further apart from one another due to lockdowns, border closures and social distancing, the pandemic has managed to connect people from all around the globe. It has given us all the time and space necessary to re-think our priorities and how we treat one another.

As a result, experts hope that more and more individuals will be driven by the opportunity to play a part in reviving smaller communities that have been devastated by the virus. They will be keen to 'give back' to these communities, support local, and perhaps even volunteer for a short portion of their trip.

After seeing how quickly parts of the earth 'bounced back' when humans were locked away for months on end, it is likely that a huge majority of travellers will be placing a greater emphasis on sustainable travel going forward.

Getting back to basics

Over the last decade or so, humans' expectations have multiplied due, in large part, to the swift advancement of technology. Before Covid hit, instant gratification was the name of the game and everyone was rushing around day in and day out. Life revolved around making money and getting as much done as possible, rarely stopping to take notice of anything around us or to savour the simple pleasures that used to be so gratifying not so long ago.

On the plus side, Covid has flipped the switch and reminded the world of what is most important – health, family, and finding happiness in the little things, such as a memorable, quiet getaway with loved ones to a particularly stunning location. We have been forced to get back to basics and, in many ways, it's a fresh reminder of what is most important.

ABOUT SUE GARRETT

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