

UK Travel and the Algarve

One sector that has been affected significantly by COVID-19 is the travel sector and the situation in the UK remains confused and uncertain, with overnight stays even in the UK prohibited. The whole situation has prevented our planned visits to the Algarve and our magnificent Club.

As early as February I have been immersed in the constantly changing challenges that the pandemic has thrown at us, from repatriation from all over the world, to advising on future travel. However, I would like to focus on the factors to consider when planning a trip to the Club.

Our Club is like a home away from home, we feel very comfortable and at ease, however, we should consider the other obstacles that may be thrown in our path.

UK Quarantine

The UK Government has announced that anyone returning from another country after 8th June must go into quarantine for 14 days on return, for many of us who are retired or work from home, this may not be a problem, however, it is an important consideration. There are reports (27th May) that the UK and Portuguese governments are in talks to allow an “air bridge” between the two countries to eliminate this restriction.

Flights

Although the Algarve and our Club is opening for business, there are still virtually no flights from the UK and it is unlikely there will be many scheduled prior to July 1st. Jet2 and Easyjet recommencing their programme from 1st July, with British Airways, and Ryanair indicating a reduced programme. However, it is important to be prepared for changes and very late operational cancellations.

It is worth noting that the air you breath on a plane is changed about every three minutes and flow from ceiling to floor with strong filters that remove bacteria and viruses.

Assuming flights are operational there will be restrictions and social distances requirements and a link is provided to a video from KLM which will give some indications, other airlines will have similar arrangements: <https://youtu.be/1-200j9DyPE>

Insurance

This is a very important area, currently the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises “Against all but essential travel” to all countries even if transport is available. This is an important statement because it means that most travel insurance becomes invalid, if the individual travels. The E111 Health card provides a safety net for treatment in medical emergencies, however, if an individual requires medical repatriation, they would have no insurance to cover the cost. Even reimbursement for theft or emergency curtailments would not be covered. If the “air bridge” mentioned earlier is agreed, the FCO advice is likely to change from the same date this is implemented - so let’s keep our fingers crossed.

Any Member needing travel advice on their particular circumstances should feel free to contact me at ian.gifford@travelcounsellors.com or 01865 987310.

Kind regards,

Ian Gifford