

The logo for Trendsetters Travel features the word 'Trendsetters' in a large, green, sans-serif font. Below it, the word 'TRAVEL' is written in a smaller, blue, spaced-out font. Underneath 'TRAVEL' is the tagline '... The University of life!' in a blue, cursive font. The entire logo is set against a white background with a green border. A stylized blue and green airplane is depicted flying from the top left towards the right, with a green trail behind it.

# Trendsetters

T R A V E L

... The University of life!

17 March 2020

## **CORONAVIRUS TRAVEL UPDATE**

Dear teachers and parents,

In these uncertain times for the travel industry globally, we want to reach out to thank you for the loyalty and trust you have placed in us as your travel tour partner. Given the ongoing uncertainty that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing globally, our priority will always be to ensure the safety of our clients and staff. As such, we wanted to provide you with an update on what we are doing at Trendsetters Travel to adjust and shift our priorities in light of the outbreak and the travel restrictions imposed by our President this past week.

Our passion is to show children the world and to show the world to children, which makes our current reality particularly hard to bear. Aside from being an extremely difficult situation for us to manage as a business, we share in the children's disappointment that their dreams for 2020 tours may be put on hold due to the impact of this virus. In 12 years of operating as a small owner-run business, we have never experienced anything quite as extraordinary as this.

### **Supporting you and your travel plans**

As the situation evolves, we will continue to work with great care to ensure that safety is not compromised and will also do everything in our power to provide you with maximum flexibility around potential cancellations and postponements of tours affected by current travel restrictions.

### **Refunds**

Our reputation is built on providing world class tours by using world class suppliers. We do not take shortcuts. The way that our expenditure works is that the majority of elements that it takes to arrange a tour – including flights, hotels and other tour related expenses have to be paid well in advance. As payments are received from parents, we pass these payments onto our suppliers to avoid the risk of exchange rate fluctuations. This means that costs for many of our 2020 tours have already been incurred, which has a direct impact on our ability to reclaim these monies from our suppliers and we are thus not in a position to offer refunds that deviate from our standard terms and conditions. Despite this, our team is investigating all avenues with our suppliers that could make it possible to provide you with more relief and we will keep you updated on these discussions.

### **Communication**

We have over 1600 tour members scheduled to travel with us this year. Whilst it remains our intention to provide you with the great level of service you have always enjoyed from us, the current influx of queries is stretching our resources to beyond capacity. As we navigate this difficult period, we commit to responding to every enquiry we receive, but appeal for your understanding that this is taking significantly longer under our current restraints. These constraints include us being able to communicate with our service providers (including airlines, hotels, bus companies, etc.) who are experiencing equally high volumes of requests.

### **Achieving a win-win**

Despite the current changing travel landscape, we are working hard to give our school groups the opportunity to fulfil their travel dreams. We are therefore asking that you: *Don't Cancel, Postpone*. The benefits of travelling at a later date and committing to consider postponing provides tremendous negotiation power. Cancellations really are a lose-lose situation for all involved.

### **The way forward for 2020 tours**

Our President's address unfortunately left certain travel guidelines open to interpretation. Effective immediately, South African citizens have been asked to refrain from travelling international to or through high risk countries. For the ordinary citizen, all non-essential international and local travel is to be avoided. Unfortunately, this is **not an official travel ban** announcement as South African citizens are only **advised** to refrain from non-essential international and domestic travel. **The decision on whether or not to undertake a tour in 2020 currently sits with each school group.**

### **Groups departing in March/April 2020**

As your planned departure date is imminent, you will receive confirmation from us or the school management that your tour has either been postponed or cancelled. Please be assured that we are doing everything in our power to minimise additional cost or financial loss to parents.

### **Groups departing in June/July 2020**

A decision regarding your tour has not necessarily been taken. We must reiterate that it is up to each school group to make the decision on whether to proceed as planned, postpone or cancel your tour. Globally, any travel restriction or border closure is normally valid for 30 days and at this stage, these restrictions do not extend to the June/July period. We appreciate the anxiety that this uncertainty causes. Should the school decide to postpone/cancel the tour, we will do all we can to provide maximum flexibility.

### **Groups departing in August or September/October 2020**

As your tour is still 5-6 months away, we appeal to you not to make a hasty decision on whether or not the tour will go ahead as we remain hopeful that the situation will improve. Since the impact of the virus is evolving daily, giving yourself more time will enable you to make a more informed decision on your tour.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

We have endeavoured to answer the most pressing questions in this update but we appreciate that some questions may remain unanswered. We are working on more detailed FAQ document which we hope will address and answer all your queries.

Please be assured that under these incredibly trying circumstances, we will continue to do our best and we thank all parents and schools for your support and patience over this very difficult time.

Best wishes,

**Lizette and Marco**

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