

New US travel guidelines could boost Las Vegas tourism

By Bailey Schulz Las Vegas Review-Journal

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New U.S. guidance on travel could drive more tourism to destinations like Las Vegas, experts say.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its travel guidance on Friday to say that people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can travel, provided that they continue to wear masks and social distance. The agency had previously asked that all Americans avoid unnecessary air travel.

“This definitely, at least domestically, helps open up travel a little bit more and should be good for the destination,” said gaming consultant Brendan Bussmann of Global Market Advisors.

For people who haven’t been fully vaccinated, the CDC is sticking to its recommendation to avoid unnecessary travel. If they do travel, the agency says to get tested one to three days before the trip, and three to five days after. People should also stay home and quarantine for seven days after travel, even if their COVID-19 test is negative, the agency says.

Still, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky urged caution and said she would continue to “advocate against general travel overall” given the rising number of infections.

“If you are vaccinated, it is lower risk,” she said.

Impact on Sin City

The agency’s loosened [guidance](#) comes as pent-up demand and vaccines drive up foot traffic in Las Vegas. About 22.4 percent of the American adult population has been fully vaccinated, according to Friday data from the CDC.

“There’s definitely an increased desire to get out and about,” Bussmann said.

“Some people are still going to be hesitant being around large groups ... (but) things are starting to head in the right direction, and obviously vaccinations are helping with that effort.”

Bussmann and other experts say the new guidance should be a boon to domestic travel this summer.

“Expect record crowds this summer to be traveling around the country,” Scott Mayerowitz, executive editor at The Points Guy, said in a Friday statement.

“Many families have been saving extra money during the pandemic and (are) ready to spend it.”

Mayerowitz added that with most of Europe still closed to Americans, domestic destinations should be “even more crowded than usual.”

Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, said the new travel guidance is a “major step in the right direction” for the travel industry and should bring back more jobs to the sector. Travel-supported jobs accounted for about 65 percent of all U.S. jobs lost last year, according to the group.

“The travel industry’s mantra throughout the pandemic has been to be guided by the science, which clearly shows that now is the right time for this move,” Dow said in a Friday statement.

A long road to recovery

The travel industry still faces hurdles on its road to recovery.

For one, air travel remains far below pre-pandemic levels. In February, McCarran International Airport recorded [1.6 million passengers](#), 58 percent less than the same month last year.

“One of the biggest challenges we still face is getting enough lift into the market,” Bussmann said. “(This would) keep tourists — and hopefully conventioners — coming back to the destination.”

Experts expect international travel will take even more time to recover. Bussmann said more countries will need to reopen their borders before Las Vegas can see a substantial return from international visitors.

“I think we’re really going to have to wait on the international,” he said. “Hopefully we’ll see signs as we head into summer.”

Contact Bailey Schulz at bschulz@reviewjournal.com.

Follow [@bailey_schulz](#) on Twitter.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s updated travel guidance differs slightly for domestic and international travelers.

Domestic travel:

- People who have been fully vaccinated with a Food and Drug Administration-authorized vaccine can travel safely within the United States.
- These travelers do not need to get tested before or after travel, unless their destination requires it.
- Fully vaccinated travelers do not need to self-quarantine.

International travel:

- Fully vaccinated international travelers do not need to get tested before leaving the United States unless their destination requires it.
- All passengers flying into the U.S. will need to have a negative COVID-19 test result no more than 3 days before travel and should get tested again three to five days after returning. Travelers getting ready to enter the U.S. can also show documentation with proof of recovery from COVID-19 in the past three months.
- Fully vaccinated international travelers do not need to self-quarantine after arriving in the United States.

All air travel:

- American travelers should continue to wear a mask over their nose and mouth, stay 6 feet from others, avoid large crowds and wash hands often or use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.