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# In Unwelcome News To USVI, U.S. Department of State and Federal Health Officials Urge Americans to Avoid Cruise Travel and Long Airplane Trips

Tourism / **Published On March 10, 2020 05:16 AM /**

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**Cruise ships docked at the West Indian Company, Limited in St. Thomas on February 11, 2020. By. Ernice GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its Traveler's Health page on the CDC website this week to include warnings that cut close to the heart of the Virgin Islands' economy: cruise and air traveler.

Here are the key points from the CDC's "COVID19 and Cruise Ship Travel" Recommendations:

**The CDC is recommending that travelers, particularly those with underlying health issues, defer all cruise ship travel worldwide.**

Cruise ship passengers are at increased risk of person-to-person spread of infectious diseases, including the deadly novel coronavirus, also called COVID19. Older adults and travelers with underlying health issues should avoid situations that put them at increased risk for more severe disease. This means avoiding crowded places, avoiding non-essential travel such as long plane trips, and especially avoiding embarking on cruise ships, the CDC said.

According to the Wall Street Journal, air travel bookings around the world are falling sharply. U.S. carriers are following Asian and European airlines in cutting flights, grounding planes and enacting draconian cost reductions, such as hiring freezes and unpaid leave.

Relative to cruise ship travel, the outbreak has cost U.S. cruise lines nearly \$750 million since January, according to company financial reports.

Shares of Carnival, Norwegian and Royal Caribbean have dropped 60 percent to 70 percent since the beginning of 2020.

What is the current situation?

CDC typically posts travel health notices for countries and other international destinations, not conveyances, such as ships, airplanes, or trains. Because of the unusual nature of the novel coronavirus outbreak, however, the U.S. government is advising U.S. travelers, particularly those with underlying health issues, to defer cruise ship travel.

Recent reports of COVID19 on cruise ships highlight the risk of infection to cruise ship passengers and crew. Like many other viruses, COVID-19 appears to spread more easily between people in close quarters aboard ships.

Person-to-person spread of COVID19 is occurring and countries are reporting both travel-related cases and community spread of the disease. As the outbreak of COVID19 continues, there remains a risk of infected travelers and crew boarding cruise ships.

It has become clear that people with underlying conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and other conditions that cause suppression of immune system particularly among the older adults, are at a high risk of serious disease if infected with the novel coronavirus, said the CDC.

"To best protect these vulnerable individuals, we recommend that such individuals avoid situations that increase their risk of acquiring infections. This entails avoiding crowded places, avoiding non-essential travel such as long plane trips, and especially avoiding embarking on cruise ships," the CDC said.

### **State Department Recommends Against Cruise Ship Travel**

In addition, the U.S. Department of State recommends against cruise ship travel.

"This is a dynamic situation and those traveling by ship may be impacted by travel restrictions affecting their itineraries or ability to disembark or may be subject to quarantine procedures

implemented by the local authorities," the State Department said. "While the U.S. government has successfully evacuated hundreds of our citizens in the previous weeks, repatriation flights should not be relied upon as an option for U.S. citizens under the potential risk of quarantine by local authorities. U.S. citizens should evaluate the risks associated with choosing to remain in an area that may be subject to quarantine and take the appropriate proactive measures. Passengers who plan to travel by cruise ship should contact their cruise line companies directly for further information on the current rules and restrictions and continue to monitor the [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) website for updated information."

For more information about information about coronavirus and travel abroad, visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

If you plan to travel abroad, also see the Department of State suggestions at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/cruise-ship-passengers.html>

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