

# COVID-19 Tourism Impact Update



## Falkland Islands Tourism Sector Information and Guidance Concerning the Impact of COVID-19

*No. 21*

*September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021*

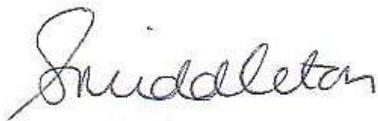
## INTRODUCTION

This time last year (Issue 11 - 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020) we focussed on some of the trends that were expected to come out of the pandemic and how we, in the Falklands, could prepare and benefit from them.

Now, one year on, we are revisiting tourism trends, in particular those that have been brought about by COVID-19. Whilst this coming season we will once again be very much focussed on domestic tourism, some of these trends are still very relevant. Also, looking at the trends now and thinking about how we can adapt will put us in a stronger position for next season when we hope to welcome back international visitors.

One thing for sure, we must not stand still. Many other destinations are already open and adapting to what visitors need first hand. When we reopen we need to be ready and welcoming. Today, the reviews that really matter are those posted on social media. Destinations can thrive or fall by them.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact the Falkland Islands Tourist Board for more details or any further assistance.



**Stephanie Middleton**  
**Executive Director**  
*3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021*

*Next Update: Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021*

### 1. Safety and Hygiene Tourism Trends

Whether it is airlines, cruises, hotels, restaurants or bars, since the outbreak of COVID, safety and hygiene standards have been absolutely paramount. With this in mind, there are a number of tourism trends that are related to this, such as increased cleaning, socially distanced seating, providing hand gel and enforcing masks in some settings.

This is also now a vital part of tourism marketing, with businesses needing to make clear what their hygiene and safety policies are and what measures they are taking to keep customers safe. The threat of COVID has meant people are more reluctant to travel, so they will need to be persuaded that it is safe.

**FITB Says:** we are currently applying for World Travel and Tourism Council *Safe Travels* accreditation. We hope to have achieved this by December this year, enabling businesses to apply for this from us. It is the international standard of COVID-safe travel, and is what visitors are looking for.

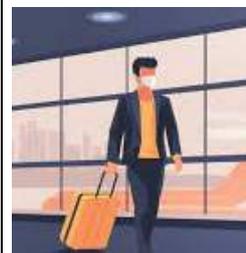


### 2. Increased Emphasis on Leisure

COVID has forced countries to adopt travel restrictions, while many businesses are encouraging employees to work from home and use video calling. As a result, business travel has been particularly badly affected and one of the resulting tourism trends has been a switch in focus towards leisure customers.

The pandemic has been hard on people, and many are desperate for a holiday. Destinations that rely on business customers may want to look into ways to change this approach, at least temporarily. This will require changing marketing messages and even the distribution channels you use to generate sales.

**FITB Says:** before COVID (in 2019) 27% of all visitor arrivals to the Falklands were for business purposes. We will be affected when tourism resumes with a drop in business arrivals, and accommodation in Stanley is likely to be most affected.



### 3. Shift from International to Local

The various travel restrictions and the reluctance of many people to travel abroad has meant many in the tourism industry are having to focus on local customers, rather than international ones. This does not mean giving up on international travellers entirely, but it is likely to require a change in your core marketing strategies.

For accommodation it could be best to highlight the kinds of facilities and activities that may appeal to the local market, such as your food, Wi-Fi, or super-comfy beds!

It is worth remembering that local customers are less likely to cancel too, as they will only have to pay attention to local restrictions and are not as likely to have to quarantine before/after their visit.

**FITB Says: TRIP was a huge success and will be repeated in 2021-2022. Now you have had experience from last season, make the necessary changes so that you give visitors the best experience, and get your prices right so that you benefit too.**



### 4. Growth of Contactless Payments

Contactless payments have been increasing for some time now, but the emergence of options like Google Pay and Apple Pay has helped to take this to the next level, meaning customers do not even need to carry around a debit card or credit card to pay for meals, hotel stays, transport, and other services.

Allowing contactless payments has enabled tourism companies to reduce friction and improve the speed of check-ins and check-outs. It also means goods can be paid for swiftly, encouraging spontaneous purchases. With coronavirus, contactless payments are in greater demand than ever, as staff and customers often prefer to avoid handling cash.

**FITB Says: Square has really helped move the Falklands forward with contactless payments. But if you can't take cards/contactless, make it a priority. Travellers now expect contactless not cash. The long debate about needing an ATM in Stanley is over!**



### 5. Virtual and Augmented Reality Tourism Trends

Virtual reality is another of the major tourism trends disrupting the industry and capitalising on the technology can give you an edge over rivals who have not yet adopted it. Through online Virtual Reality (VR) tours, customers can experience hotel interiors, restaurant interiors, outdoor tourist attractions and more, all from their home.



Crucially, they are able to do this at the decision-making phase of the customer journey. This can then be the difference between customers completing a booking or backing out and VR is especially useful within the context of COVID, where customers may have second thoughts and may need extra encouragement to press ahead with their plans.

Most modern VR tours are also web-based, meaning they can be viewed through any mainstream web browser. The quality of the VR tour and the extent of immersion can then be improved further through VR headsets.

Where VR simulates entire environments and experiences, Augmented Reality (AR) combines real-world experiences and virtual elements. A familiar example would be the smartphone game Pokémon Go, where imaginary creatures are superimposed on real-time footage of the player's environment. In the tourist industry, this is obviously very useful: instead of fantasy monsters, AR smartphone apps can show tourists information about the area they're exploring. This could be historical details about buildings and landmarks such as battlefields. Museums make increasing use of AR, allowing visitors to view artefacts with their original appearance as a virtual overlay. Other augmented reality applications might include internet-enabled virtual maps.

**FITB Says:** we invited SoundView (based in Plymouth, Devon) out to film some virtual reality footage three years ago, and we have used this on headsets at trade fairs. It is good, and gives a real feel for what it is like to stand amongst elephant seals on Sealion Island (one of the films we took). However, there is so much more that can be done. It isn't expensive, but equally it requires a special camera. It's one to look out for – as soon as someone in the Falklands owns one of these and can provide VR/AR services, we can look forward to making big steps forward.

## 6. Solo Travel

Leisure travel used to be a family affair or something that couples undertook together. While that's still the case for many, more and more people are choosing to strike out on their own. Enjoying a solo trip is no longer so unusual and tourist trends increasingly reflect this. The needs of solo travellers are diverse. Some simply want to travel without the distraction of a companion. Others are young singles looking for social activities or to find a partner. These tourism trends are set to grow and grow.

**FITB Says:** generally speaking we are "solo" friendly in the Falklands with accommodation not discriminating against individual travellers. However if you do run an accommodation establishment, think about



<p>how you deal with solo travellers, make them feel welcome, and not over-charge them for single occupancy. We don't often think of the Falklands as a place people travel to for meeting other people, but due to the social nature of meal times at many accommodation (communal dining) it is ideal for solos – so market it! Don't miss out on this opportunity.</p>	
<p><b>7. Eco Travel</b></p> <p>Tourism trends are heavily influenced by the concerns and mores of the customer base. As a new generation becomes increasingly relevant in the marketplace, the ideals driving their purchasing decisions create new tourism trends. Eco travel is just one example of these tourism trends, reflecting a growing concern among today's travellers for ethical and sustainable tourism options. Eco travel includes simple changes, such as the availability of carbon credits when booking a flight, the option to rent an electric instead of a conventional vehicle, or ensuring accommodation is eco-friendly and responsible. More sophisticated examples might include tourism with a volunteer element, perhaps working on a nature reserve or engaging in conservation work.</p> <p>FITB Says: our <i>Green Seal</i> scheme was developed with this trend in mind. We've just re-vamped the entire scheme making it easier to get accredited whilst making sure it is in line with international standards. No matter what your business, if you're in tourism you can apply. We strongly advise that you do so as we'll be following up and issuing badges and certificates in January.</p>	
<p><b>8. Local Experience</b></p> <p>Today's tourists don't want to be insulated from the places they visit inside a cultural bubble. They want to engage with and participate in the local culture. From enjoying local cuisine to celebrating festivals and holidays, local experiences are set to become some of the top tourist trends to watch</p> <p>FITB Says: we tend to think of ourselves as a wildlife/nature-based destination rather than a cultural one (such as Chile or Italy). However we know from our surveys that when visitors arrive "wildlife" is what they are most excited about, but when they leave they usually say "people" were the highlight of their trip. Our culture as a remote Atlantic Island is special, and it is what makes us different from anywhere else. Use it for marketing and make the most of it.</p>	

## 9. Personalisation

You're probably familiar with those ads that pop up on social media and certain other websites, ads related to things you've looked at or purchased online. This is just one example of personalisation. As well as in marketing tourism more effectively, personalisation can apply to every aspect of the tourist experience. Today's consumers expect experiences that closely match their personal preferences, from destinations to accommodation and the kinds of activities they'll engage in. The more closely an experience can be tailored to a client's desires and expectations, the more likely they are to return and to use the same service again.

**FITB Says:** getting to know a little bit more about visitors before they arrive can make all the difference. Do they have any special dietary requirements? Is there anything special they want to see? Have they been before? Is there anyone they know and want to look up? It doesn't take much to make some enquiries by email before guests arrive...or do it as soon as they arrive on your doorstep!



## 10. Healthy and Organic Food

Healthy food and the kind of fare consumed by tourists used to be the complete opposites in the minds of many travellers, with holidays traditionally representing a chance to break one's diet and indulge in forbidden treats. Today's travellers know that delicious and nutritious are not exclusive concepts. Demand for excellent cuisine with a view to better nutrition is driving new tourism trends. The modern tourist wants to know that the food they're eating is as healthy as it is delicious. The organic food movement is also affecting tourism trends, with more eateries and hotels offering organic options. Other special diets are also represented.

**FITB Says:** if you are serving food, think about what you are offering. Make sure you have a vegetarian/vegan option, and be sure that any other dietary requirements are considered. Whilst most accommodation in camp do not offer alternatives at meal times, travellers are used to some form of option – so try to adjust your catering to allow for this. Use local produce wherever possible and make sure visitors know it!



## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Flights Update

At present, commercial airlines with both Chile and Brazil will remain suspended until 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022.

### Tourism Recovery Incentive Programme

FIG has announced that TRIP will be open again for the 2021-2022 season (1<sup>st</sup> October 2021-30<sup>th</sup> April 2022). More details about how this scheme will be operated be found at:

<https://www.fig.gov.fk/covid-19/tourismscheme/trip-scheme>

### FIG Guidance and Information

For guidance and information for individual businesses operating in a COVID-19 environment, including restaurants, public houses and retail, as well as frequently asked questions see:

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19/>

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19/information/general-information>

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19/faq>