

## **Airbnb boosts COVID-19 safety**

**Despite crisis, bookings are on the rise, it says**

### **TRAVEL**

**By Kevin Smith**

[kvsmith@scng.com](mailto:kvsmith@scng.com) @sgvnbiz on Twitter

As the economy starts its thaw from coronavirus lockdowns, Big Bear Lake is among the top trending destinations for Airbnb customers looking to get away.

The hospitality company says it has enhanced its cleaning protocols for host properties amid the COVID-19 health crisis. It's also reporting an uptick in travel bookings after stay-at-home mandates put the tourism industry on ice.

Travel in California has been restricted to essential personnel only. Beginning June 12, some travel was loosening as the state shifts to stage 3 reopenings. Travelers should check their destination city recommendations before booking.

### **There's a quiz**

Airbnb enlisted the help of former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy and other experts in hospitality and medical hygiene to help develop a step-by-step cleaning handbook for its travel hosts. The handbook is available to hosts in the U.S. and soon will be available to hosts worldwide.

"It's 38 pages and quite extensive," said John Choi, policy manager for Airbnb's Southern California region. Choi said the guidelines have specific instructions on sanitizing hard surfaces, including door handles, countertops and other high-touch surfaces like appliances and electronics.

"Hosts will be required to go through the handbook and take a quiz afterward to make sure they understand all of the elements," he said.

Those unwilling to comply with the guidelines will be placed in a 72-hour "vacancy" period in which cleaning is the only activity that can take place at their host properties.

"Hosts who adhere to the handbook will receive a designation on their property listing that shows they are abiding by these protocols," Choi said. "We find that this builds a stronger track record of

**AIRBNB » PAGE 2**

---

**Airbnb**

**FROM PAGE 1**

cleanliness, and this is incredibly important to guests."

Despite stay-at-home orders and a steep drop-off in air travel, Airbnb says its bookings are on the rise.

From May 17 to June 6, more nights were booked for travel to Airbnb listings in the U.S. than during the same time period last year, the company said, and last weekend Airbnb posted year-over-year growth in the gross value of its travel bookings for the first time since February.

That doesn't include cancellations or alterations, however.

"Consumers are prioritizing cleanliness and private spaces," Choi said. "There is a tremendous pent-up demand for travel, but people are traveling more locally to places they can get to on one tank of gas."

Although bookings for future travel are allowed, for states such as California — where stay-at-home mandates are still in place — travel is permissible only for activities such as health care, food, stages 1-3 work, and local or activities shopping related to open sectors.

The state will lift the stay-at-home mandate in stage 4, according to the state's reopening road map,

### **Shorter trips**

In a survey commissioned by Airbnb, nearly half of U.S. respondents said they'll prefer to stay within a day's drive for their first trip once lockdown restrictions lift. Since the pandemic began, the percentage of bookings made on Airbnb within 200 miles has grown from one-third in February to more than half in May.

Airbnb's top 10 trending destinations in the United States are:

- Big Bear Lake
- Miramar Beach, Florida
- Panama City Beach, Florida
- Smoky Mountains
- Hilton Head Island, South Carolina
- Destin, Florida
- Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
- Branson, Missouri
- Palm Springs Desert
- Port Aransas, Texas Other Southern California spots, including Joshua Tree National Park and Idlewild, remain popular among travelers as the pandemic continues, Choi said.

Airbnb also announced a series of partnerships with local communities from around the world to promote travel and economic growth.

One of the partnerships with the National Park Foundation is designed to connect Airbnb guests to lesser-known parks near their destinations.

Road trips may be on the rise, but air travel has taken a heavy hit amid the virus outbreak.

Figures from Airlines for America show domestic air travel in the U.S. was down more than 80% as of Tuesday.

That was far better than early April, when it was off by nearly 100%.

In the latest effort by an airline to address health concerns about flying, United Airlines said passengers now must answer a series of health questions as they check in for flights.

Travelers will be asked to confirm that they haven't been given a diagnosis of COVID-19 in the past 21 days and haven't had related symptoms over the past two weeks, such as a temperature of more than 100.4 degrees, a cough, chills, muscle aches or a sore throat.

"We're the only U.S. airline with a full-time, on-site medical director, who's been providing guidance throughout the coronavirus outbreak," United says on its website.

United, like other airlines, has instituted a host of protocols to guard against the spread of COVID-19, including putting sneeze guards at baggage and check-in counters, disinfecting high-touch areas and having state-of-the-art air filters to circulate air and remove up to 99.97% of airborne particles inside passenger planes.



Big Bear Lake, seen above, is among Airbnb's top trending travel destinations. Others include Myrtle Beach, S.C.; the Smoky Mountains; and Miramar Beach, Fla.

PHOTO BY DREW A. KELLEY

---

[Copyright \(c\)2020 Orange County Register, Edition 6/14/2020. Please read our Privacy Policy and User Agreement. Please review new arbitration language here.](#)  
[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)

---

Sunday, 06/14/2020 Page .Y001

Copyright (c)2020 Orange County Register, Edition 6/14/2020. Please read our Privacy Policy and User Agreement. Please review new arbitration language here.