

Inspiring and Educating Sellers of Affluent Travel

SEPTEMBER 2020

LUXURY

TRAVEL ADVISOR

www.luxurytraveladvisor.com

TRAVELING TO
TURKEY NOW

ROUNDTABLE:
ADVISORS AND
GMS CHECK IN

CARIBBEAN CRUISES

ADVENTURE VOYAGES

KAREEM GEORGE

Personal connections
are key for Culture
Traveler's growth plans

TRAVELING TO TURKEY NOW

BY JONATHAN ALDER

Jonathan Alder, CEO and Travel Planner of Jonathan's Travels, TravelStore affiliate, reports back on what to expect on airlines and at hotels.



THE MUSEUM HOTEL in Turkey was built through a project of restoring caves and stone houses thousands of years old.

Traveling and planning a trip during the age of COVID-19 is a challenge but also has certain perks. We have just completed two weeks in Turkey, where we were able to experience some of the best of the country without the crowds but with all safety precautions in place.

To start at the beginning, we had originally planned a totally different trip — Portugal was supposed to be the first stop. One of the key attributes for any travel advisor or client is to have patience and flexibility. Rules are changing minute to minute therefore plans are subject to change too. The trick of surviving this is never to give up and roll with the punches. While it can have its ups and downs, with the right attitude and perseverance one can travel the world now with relative ease.

While not a requirement at the time, we were COVID-19 tested just prior to departure so just in case rules did change, we were all set. We chose to fly Lufthansa in their first class and connected to Istanbul via Frankfurt. Services have not been cut or diminished at all. Their business is also almost fully the same as it was before, the only changes now are masks are required and there is a lot of sanitizer to go around. Flying here was still a joy and luxury pleasure.

Upon arrival there was a health questionnaire, temperature screening and then we passed right through.

We had planned this adventure with Sea Song Tours — who from start to finish did an excellent job. There were separation dividers in all of the vehicles, kits provided with masks, wipes and sanitizer all at your disposal at all times. Tons of attention spent to providing clients with a safe and fun journey. Crowds during this time of course are a fraction of normal especially in the biggest sites. We had many to ourselves — it felt as if we privatized the sites. Ephesus had around 100

others vs the normal of thousands this time of the year. With all the need for social distancing, this is the best time to travel I've ever witnessed. Why be home when you can see the best of the world and have it to yourself?

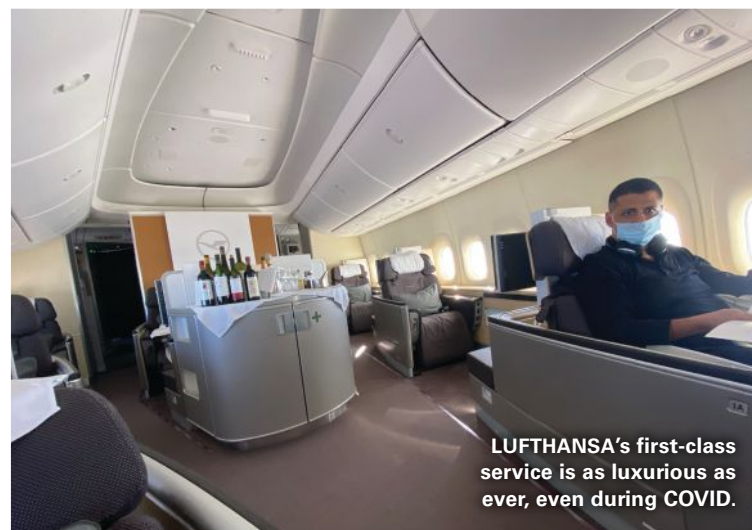
We started in Istanbul, staying at the **Istanbul at the Bosphorus by Four Seasons**. A beautiful hotel with a great waterfront location, it was five star all the way. With the new app that the brand provides to guests, you can access any service of the hotel in a chat from inside or outside of the hotel, therefore allowing you to keep distance from the staff as much or as little as you wish.

From there we flew off to Kayseri with our driver and guide

almost all parts) were at the lowest crowd levels ever. Other than the high heat of summer, we will never get an opportunity to enjoy these places without all of the people probably ever again.

Hotel in Izmir is a Swissotel. It's modern, remodeled and it had our second favorite restaurant — Aquarium. Again, all safety precautions are taken on site. We were very impressed with this very well-located hotel.

On the weekend we were driven to Alacati, which is about one hour from Izmir. This is a party town that I would compare to the Hamptons or Buzios. While touristy, it has some great beaches nearby, lots of dining options and a huge party scene.



LUFTHANSA's first-class service is as luxurious as ever, even during COVID.

bringing us to the Cappadocia region. Again, all of the major sites were nearly empty — 100 or less in each place approximately. We stayed at the **Museum Hotel** for the cave experience. It's truly something everyone should try once. Dining here is another level for breakfast but especially for dinner. While dining in Turkey is a highlight — their restaurant is the best we had.

After Cappadocia, we flew off to Izmir. As mentioned before, the sites of the House of the Virgin Mary (totally private), Ephesus (very few people) and Pergamon (totally private at

At this time we didn't partake but when it's safe enough to, this is a great place to end a trip and just have fun. While Bodrum is the common place, here is one to let your clients experience Turkey as only the locals do.

We stayed at the **Alavya**, a five-star boutique, which is part of Design Hotels. Cool, modern, luxury and sophisticated are the key words I would use to describe it. It's fun but totally high class. Service here is at another level. You will feel like family in just a day. From staff spending their day to show you the city or beach in an electric



EPHESUS in Turkey is witnessing very little crowds these days.

Jaguar to a follow up within seconds (even finding you in the restaurant) to take care of any issues — this hotel really shines.

The only downsides I found traveling now is some airlines in particular have chosen to use COVID-19 as an excuse to cut back dramatically even when fares were not lowered, and flights were full. Turkish Airlines' business class has been diminished to a low-fare airline economy class in terms of service and amenities. Nothing is left but the seat

itself. We had flown them both domestically and internationally to our next destination, only to find the staff apologizing for having nothing to give any longer. No amenities or bedding; water is now only in a small coach cup — even a bottle is not provided. Food on a six-hour flight is a box — a shift from the onboard chef of before. Our key takeaway from this is to find those carriers who take safety seriously, but don't use this as an excuse just to cut costs. In the airports, air

conditioning has also been cut way back. Expect hot terminals in Turkey right now.

One great thing is that the new Istanbul airport has an onsite COVID-19 testing center. Within three to five hours, you can have an ISO-certified PCR test result. When you or a client is traveling on to a country with a test requirement, you can have it easily within the time required. We were flying to Kenya next and while they require 72 hours prior, we had it eight hours prior.

While to many, taking that first step to travel outside of the country can come with major anxiety, once they get on the first flight and definitely to the first destination, they will be so happy they chose to go. Since starting to travel again in June, we have been on 10 flights and to three countries. Once outside of the U.S., life is dramatically more normal — just with safety measures in place. I never felt any were an inconvenience and that they only should be applauded. ■



AT THE GRAND BAZAAR in Istanbul (left). Here, the bountiful breakfast at the Museum Hotel