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OFF DUTY TRAVEL

Where to Travel After Covid? 25 Inspiring Escapes

After nearly a year of vacation deprivation, frustrated globe-trotters are starting to dream about traveling freely again. We highlight six getaway goals for 2021 and new ways to realize each one.



READY TO ROLL What type of post-pandemic vacation are you craving? Pick your poison and let the planning—or dreaming—begin. Suitcase, \$4,700, louisvuitton.com. F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (SUITCASE); JOHN W. TOMAC (ILLUSTRATIONS)

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By *Matthew Kronsberg*

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TEXT

LINDA LAU IS looking forward to being jet-lagged as hell, sipping soju and dining at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Seoul with a bunch of strangers. This October, she hopes to attend the kickoff dinner of a “culinary retreat” to South Korea that she was supposed to take in fall 2020—that is, before the pandemic stopped travel cold. The rollout of Covid vaccines is giving her—and many of us—confidence to begin

planning trips again. In a survey conducted in December 2020 by research firm Destination Analysts, over 53% of U.S. respondents said the vaccine made them optimistic that they can travel safely within the next six months; more than 80% said they have “at least tentative” plans right now.

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immunity is achieved—which Dr. Chen hopes might happen by fall in some regions—should continue to take precautions. That means wearing masks, distancing and observing other safety measures to protect the unvaccinated and the vulnerable.

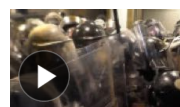
Still, planning abounds. Troy Haas, president and CEO of Birmingham, Ala.-based Brownell Travel, sees people making travel arrangements as a form of self-care. “People just want the ability to find small ways to draw some joy back into life with travel and human connection,” he said. “Travel is a drink of water in a parched life.”

Here, we present six typical goals this year—from planning a getaway with the extended family to fleeing the pod for some overdue time alone—plus a few suggestions on how to achieve them. And since the international travel landscape could change dramatically in the coming months, we also offer a few domestic travel options. Even if you’re not ready to commit to vacation plans just yet, the following should help quench some of that travel thirst.

Getting vaccinated, however, shouldn’t be seen as an immediate passport back to our former easygoing travel habits, cautions Dr. Lin Chen, president of the International Society of Travel Medicine and director of the Travel Medicine Center at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Mass. “There’s a little bit of data that suggests we may have reduced ability to transmit or carry” the virus, post vaccination, said Dr. Chen, “but it’s not enough.” More encouraging data may emerge, but, for now, even vaccinated travelers who hit the road before herd

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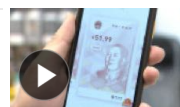
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A cooking class at Francis Ford Coppola's Palazzo Margherita in southern Italy, ideal for a family retreat.

PHOTO: GUNDOLF PFOTENHAUER

Chic Family Reunions

The Goal Zoom calls with the extended family are growing tiresome. Your first priority is getting the whole gang back together in the flesh.

Where To Go: Anyone starved for a sea journey might take a page from the ambitious travel itinerary of Dr. Gina McRae Karcher, a Birmingham, Ala., radiologist. Dr. McRae Karcher plans to reunite with three generations of her family—17 people, aged 14 to 80—aboard Silversea's Silver Whisper on a June cruise from Southampton, England, to Reykjavík, Iceland. They hope to be vaccinated before going and then maximize outdoor time—dinners on deck, and hiking and cycling tours during port calls like Dublin and Belfast, rather than museums and tour buses (*from about \$8,370 per person, [silversea.com](https://www.silversea.com)*). Prefer to stick to dry land? Bring the family to Francis Ford Coppola's nine-room hotel, the Palazzo Margherita in Bernalda, Italy, which recently began offering buyouts of the entire palazzo. The property also serves as a retreat for the filmmaker and his family, which explains the salon that converts into a snazzy screening room (*from about \$10,500 per night, 4 night minimum, [thefamilycoppolahideaways.com](https://www.thefamilycoppolahideaways.com)*).

Closer-to-Home Alternative: Hutton Brickyards in Kingston, N.Y., expects to open in April. With 31 cabins and suites on 73 acres of rolling hills along the Hudson River, it's perfectly situated to give you all the togetherness you need, and not a drop more (*from about \$195, [huttonbrickyards.com](https://www.huttonbrickyards.com)*).





A pit stop in the Texas Hill Country on a Trek Travel bike tour.

PHOTO: TREK TRAVEL

Alone-Together Tours

The Goal: Maybe you've been quarantining on your own during the past year? Or isolating with your pod and fantasizing about "me" time a few time zones away from them? In either case, you're craving a change of scenery with simpatico souls. Just be sure you don't share too many tempting details about your trip before you go, or the pod might tag along and you won't have escaped them after all.

Where To Go: High-end culinary trips to South Korea, Japan or Galicia organized by Rani Cheema, a trip planner who stuffs each itinerary with opportunities to meet local chefs and farmers. For example, the 9-day South Korea tour includes cooking with a monk in a forest monastery (*from about \$7,500 a person, cheematravel.com*). Ace Camps offer similarly focused itineraries, like a trip to Laos for a deep dive into textile arts and basketry, and a November excursion to France, where you'll stay and cook in Julia Child's house in the countryside north of Cannes (*from about \$3,000 for the Laos trip, acecampstravel.com*).

Closer-to-Home Alternative: Try Trek Travel's multiday Ride Camp bike tours—30% of the participants are solo travelers—such as a 7-day trip through Texas Hill Country, where you'll be fortified with BBQ and beer (*from about \$1800, trektravel.com*).





The dahabiya chartered by Black Tomato for a Nile cruise, a bucket-list staple.
PHOTO: BLACK TOMATO

Bucket-List Blowouts

The Goal: After such a difficult year, a run-of-the-mill vacation just won't do. You want to plan your dream trip without a moment to spare. But word of warning: Covid restrictions and even outbreaks will still impact travel this year; not a big deal for a weekend away, but if your bucket-list trip requires everything to go off without a hitch, maybe plan this year and go next.

Where To Go: Egypt is often at the top of a serious traveler's bucket-list, said Tom Marchant, co-founder of luxury travel company Black Tomato. Mr. Marchant notes that Black Tomato's 13-day itinerary is in high demand for 2021. Included in the trip is a visit to the much-anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum (slated to open in June), a Nile cruise on a private dahabiya and an after-hours tours of the Valley of the Kings led by an Egyptologist (*from about \$19,000 a person, blacktomato.com*). More rugged adventure awaits those who sign on to explore Iceland with Overland Travel. You'll pilot your own expedition vehicle—a luxury camper capable of negotiating rivers and rocky terrain (*from about \$15,860 for two for an 11-day expedition, bliss.overland.travel*).

Closer-to-Home Alternative: Venerable outfitter Abercrombie & Kent offers a new twist on the old safari—taking the wild out of America's Wild West. This 12-day excursion—restricted to 22 guests and complete with private air travel—takes travelers on game drives in Grand Teton National Park, and road trips from San Francisco to Napa Valley in vintage cars (*from about \$125,000 per person, abercrombiekent.com*).

Endless Retreats

The Goal: Now that it's been widely established that you can work from anywhere with a reliable internet connection, you're in no hurry to rush back to the office.

Where To Go: Travel company Embark Beyond recently added services that help you plan extended stays in hotels or rental properties. Along with typical jet-setter destinations like St. Barts and Miami, Embark has been sending clients to the picturesque Mexican mountain town of San Miguel de Allende, where a month at Belmond's

majestic Casa de Sierra Nevada hotel can be had for \$8,000 (embarkbeyond.com). Countries are also making longer visits possible, said Ursula Petula Barzey, a Caribbean travel expert. She considers Barbados, with its Barbados Welcome Stamp visa program, an ideal place to set yourself up for a spell. The three-bedroom “Sugar Hill-Toubana” home from One Caribbean Estates comes with water views (\$4,500 a month, onecaribbeanestates.com).

Closer-to-Home Alternative: Look to the area of the California desert around Joshua Tree, where Homestead Modern offers stylish, solitary rental properties. Many of the houses, like the Trails End Modern, set on 11 acres dotted with pinyon, juniper and Joshua trees, can be built to order in the area, if you want to make your stay a permanent one (\$595 a night, homesteadmodern.com).



Kenya's Ol Jogi Wildlife Conservancy, one of the stops on a philanthropically minded African safari organized by the Explorations Company.

PHOTO: THE EXPLORATIONS COMPANY

Do-Good Diversions

The Goal: The world proved a fragile place this year and you're eager to help repair it, even in a small way.

Where To Go: In Kenya, you can take a philanthropically minded safari with the Explorations Company. Among the highlights: stays at the Ol Jogi Wildlife Conservancy, and visits to the Mara Elephant Project and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, a rescue and rehabilitation program for orphaned elephants and rhinos (\$23,000 per person, based on four people for eight nights, explorationscompany.com). Too pricey? Even a simple hotel stay can yield dividends. Good Hotel, with locations in London and the Guatemalan city of Antigua (and, coming in March, Guatemala City) combines high design with a higher calling; they contribute all profits to the Good Global Foundation and to the educational organization Niños de Guatemala (goodhotel.co).

Closer-to-Home Alternative: The new Mālama Hawai‘i program invites visitors to contribute time to initiatives like beach cleanup and reforestation, and in exchange, get benefits such as free hotel nights from partners like Marriott and [Hyatt \(gohawaii.com/malama\)](http://gohawaii.com/malama).



Visitors to Barbados who'd prefer to stay awhile can rent villas or townhomes like the 3-bedroom Sugar Hill-Toubana, by the month.

PHOTO: ONE CARIBBEAN ESTATES

Joyfully Crowded Events

The Goal: You're fed up with virtual entertainment. You want to be at the center of the action, with the hum of humanity all around you. Just keep in mind that any events involving gatherings of people will be among the first to be rescheduled in the event of a Covid flare-up; research alternative activities (just in case) if you're committing to travel for an event.

Where To Go: Remember concerts? Moon Crush, calling itself "a safely connected music vacation," takes advantage of the surfeit of holiday houses and condos around Miramar Beach in the Florida panhandle, letting you stay safely with your bubble while experiencing live music. Performances from artists like Sheryl Crow and Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit will take place on a nearby golf course, where your group will have its own "cove"—a Contained Open-air Viewing Environment (*April 26 to May 1, from about \$750 per person, mooncrush.live*). Classical music fans may want to keep an eye on the Santa Fe Opera. Its season starts in July with regular performances at their gorgeously situated outdoor amphitheater. There's even tailgating. Beat that, La Scala! (*seats from \$36, santafeopera.org*).





The restaurant at the Tokyo Edition, Toranomom hotel overlooking Tokyo Tower.

PHOTO: NIKOLAS KOENIG

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What kind of vacation are you hoping to take in 2021? Join the conversation below.

Farther-from-Home Alternative: Still reeling from the postponement of the Olympics, bustling Tokyo is in the running for a summer revival. While finding tickets for the

games is typically in and of itself Olympic-grade competition, doing so this year is a task within reach of mere mortals. You might also get into the sporting spirit at a Yakult Swallows baseball game at Meiji Jingu Stadium. Games or not, the recently opened, centrally located, 206-room Tokyo Edition, Toranomom offers gold-medal city views from its high-altitude restaurant terrace, and from its serene, stylish rooms (from about \$580, editionhotels.com).

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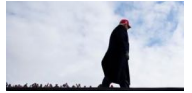
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