

## A TRAVEL LEADER'S VIEW OF COVID-19

Jill Swaim

I have had “the best job in the world” for the last 16 years and it all came to a crashing end (most likely) in March. I have been a Group Leader for the adult education/travel not-for-profit company, Road Scholar. I would spend about 12 weeks of the year traveling with these groups in Southern California, meeting wonderful people, staying at great places, and seeing many beautiful and educational sights. I learned so much and figured that I would be doing this until I couldn't anymore, (perhaps when I turn 80 some years from now.)

I also was an Ambassador for them, having given 300 plus presentations across California and in a few other states over the last eight years. Although, this was a volunteer position, I received vouchers to go on Road Scholar trips, so my travel was almost all paid for because I was the volunteer that gave more presentations than any other person in the country. I also had three Road Scholar programs that I planned to attend in 2020: in May, (France), June, (New York “Five Boroughs in Five Days) and August, (Vegetarian Cuisine and Buddhism at a Buddhist Retreat in Soquel). These have all been cancelled.

Travel has been my primary hobby over all of my adult life. I have been to all continents except Antarctica, and to almost 100 countries, plus every US state. I also had planned to spend a week in Palm Springs in May, and a week in Vancouver, BC in August. These, of course, have been canceled as well.

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There is no telling if Road Scholar will survive the pandemic. They are trying hard not to collapse. They have let many long-time employees go, have stopped publication of their catalogs and are now all online. Their hope is to ride this out and come back to where they were before 2020 some day.

**My husband, who was in Cambodia at the time, was unable to return home because of COVID-19.**

Meanwhile, I am alone at home since my husband was in Cambodia when this happened and was unable to return in June, as the airlines stopped flying from there except to China, so he has been happily stranded there. There is little or no Covid there, and he lives a free life, in a nice apartment going to music events, pool tournaments and walking the city daily. He does not want to return here until a vaccine is developed, Covid is gone, or there is no quarantine for those returning to the US. There are many expatriates in cities all over the world, who are living better lives than we do in the US at this time. Cambodia is locked in, and all are accounted for, so the virus did not spread. They do have mosquito borne diseases like dengue fever however and rampant poverty because the clothing factories have been shut down, and poverty has reared its ugly head.

I have respected the local, county, state, and scientists' pleas to isolate, and I have mostly done so. I have gone once to a pharmacy, once inside a bank, and walked through a restaurant several times to pick up food. I have my groceries delivered, take walks in the neighborhood almost daily, swim in our condo association's pool almost daily, do “Jazzercise On Demand” online and Chair

Yoga on You Tube. I call friends and family daily, see one son and those grandchildren once a week from a distance and speak to the other son and those grandchildren once in a while. It is a lonely time, but I try and keep busy, and stay positive. I listen to many lectures online, do jigsaw puzzles, and have a few streaming episodes of shows that I like on tv to watch at night, besides baseball, which has been a great diversion for me.

My great grandmother died in the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, leaving four children still at home, with my grandmother, age 15 in charge of the 3 younger siblings. She married quickly and had a hard life living with her mother in law, who used her like a housekeeper. No one in my family who is still around ever asked their mothers or grandmothers about what life was like during that time. How did my great grandmother, Rose, contract the disease? Why did no one else in the family get it? Etc. That is why I

**My great grandmother died in the Spanish Flu pandemic.**

think that this record that SDIS is compiling will be of interest to many in the future. I know that I am lucky to live in the beautiful city of Carlsbad, have a pool to swim in, comfortable surroundings, money to have my groceries delivered as necessary, and a car if I need to go anywhere that is too far to walk.

One new interest of mine, is Improv. I am taking lessons once a week on Zoom, and it is the highlight of my week. I have hopes to teach it both virtually and in person at our local Senior Center when it reopens sometime in the future. I wear a mask when leaving the house, wash my hands often, and stay 6 feet from others.

My life has changed over the last six months, and it has been life-changing for me. Yet I am adaptive, look on it as a learning experience, and hope to survive without contracting Covid.

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Jill Swaim graduated from the San Diego State University, taught elementary and middle school for 39 years in San Diego and Ventura Counties, and loved being a Group Leader for Road Scholar for 16 years. She has traveled to six continents and over 50 countries. She is a member of SDIS.

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