

Cruise Holidays slammed by COVID-19 cancellations, still advises wait it out

Sarah Sobanski

Cruise Holidays owner Cheryl McDonald says she only had one [COVID-19](#) related travel cancellation before government agencies across North America began telling people not to cruise.

Now her phones won't stop ringing and she says she doesn't think it's justified.

"I've been too busy to gather exact figures on the number of cancellations, but am sure we are in the mid-six figures in terms of dollar value. I believe this is just the beginning," she says.

Earlier this week, [the Public Health Agency of Canada](#), as well as the United States and Center for Disease Control, advised the public to cancel their cruise vacations among COVID-19 concerns.

McDonald says that the information coming from the south, especially, is convoluted. She points out that the advisories single-out cruising.

"Not not to travel, but not to cruise, as if the spread of (COVID-19) is unique to cruising and not other forms of travel," she says.

"There are literally hundreds of ships cruising around the world week after week and only a handful of ships have reported issues with the (COVID-19)."

First it's don't cruise, then it's don't cruise if you're young or elderly, then it's you can cruise if you're healthy, she adds. "But the damage has been done and the floodgates are open now."

McDonald says everyone at the agency is working hard trying to keep up with constant updates from travel providers. They're spending long hours on the phone with clients and their insurance providers to get answers and start claims.

A lot has happened since we last talked to McDonald about what area travellers should be doing if they have plans to leave the country and cruise amid the outbreak.

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...

Besides the advisories not to cruise, the World Health Organization has upgraded the status of the novel coronavirus outbreak from an epidemic to a pandemic. According to [Infection Prevention and Control Canada](#), 120 countries around the globe were reporting cases. [The Public Health Agency of Canada had reported 152 confirmed cases as of March 13.](#)

The same day, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Canada would be

tightening its borders and advised against international travel.

Canada has begun social distancing measures, such as shutting down public schools for an additional two weeks after March break. Major events, such as the JUNOs, and major sports leagues have been cancelled or postponed.

We asked McDonald if her advice to travellers to hold off on cancelling for now still stands. She says as long as they check up on their cancellation and insurance policies, and if they have low health risk, it does.

“We have many clients who have booked 'bucket list' trips or trips in celebration of special milestones that they really don't want to give up on. Since this situation is evolving hour-by-hour, it would be a shame to make a hasty decision without having all the pertinent and current information,” she says.

McDonald says her business has been impacted by the COVID-19, but [Cruise Holidays](#) is still getting a few new bookings for late 2020 and into 2021. That said, her business has taken substantial losses to date and the number of new bookings isn't as high as it would be without the outbreak.

“I'm also worried about other spinoff businesses like clothing stores, who might be suffering because people aren't buying new travel wardrobes, or pet kennels, who have also lost business because people have cancelled their travel plans,” she says.

When asked if she thought [Canada should extend the \\$1 billion it announced to prop up health care and those impacted by the virus](#) to businesses, she said it depends on how long the crisis goes on.

“While it would be great to get some financial support, when you consider how widespread the economic impact has become, this could become prohibitively expensive,” she says.

If there's any good news for the travel industry to come out of COVID-19, at least it's proving the value of having a good travel agent to see travellers through tough and confusing times.

HEADLINES NEWSLETTER

TOP STORIES, delivered to your inbox.