

COVID-19 Tourism Impact Update



Falkland Islands Tourism Sector Information and Guidance Concerning the Impact of COVID-19

No. 12
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INTRODUCTION

With FIG's package of incentives for domestic travel now revealed, in this edition of *COVID-19 Update* we've focussed on domestic tourism, and in particular the accommodation and tour guide sectors. We've identified a number of ideas for individuals and businesses to think about, and perhaps adopt and act upon in order to encourage residents of the Falklands to spend their vouchers this coming season.

It is a great opportunity to showcase accommodation and destinations to a market that might otherwise not travel. If these visitors have a good time, perhaps they will travel more in the future, and therefore this initiative might give the Falklands a long-term domestic tourism boost.

The other thing to remember is that domestic tourists (being residents) will look for different things when travelling than our usual international visitors. So there is a need to adapt, in many cases, and offer alternative attractions. Residents might, for example, be attracted to a weekend break to learn about photography or to do some wine tasting, rather than for birdwatching. We hope that some of these ideas will help make this a successful season, in adversity!

As always, please don't hesitate to contact the Falkland Islands Tourist Board for more details or any further assistance.



Stephanie Middleton
Executive Director
2nd October 2020

Next Update: Friday 30th October 2020

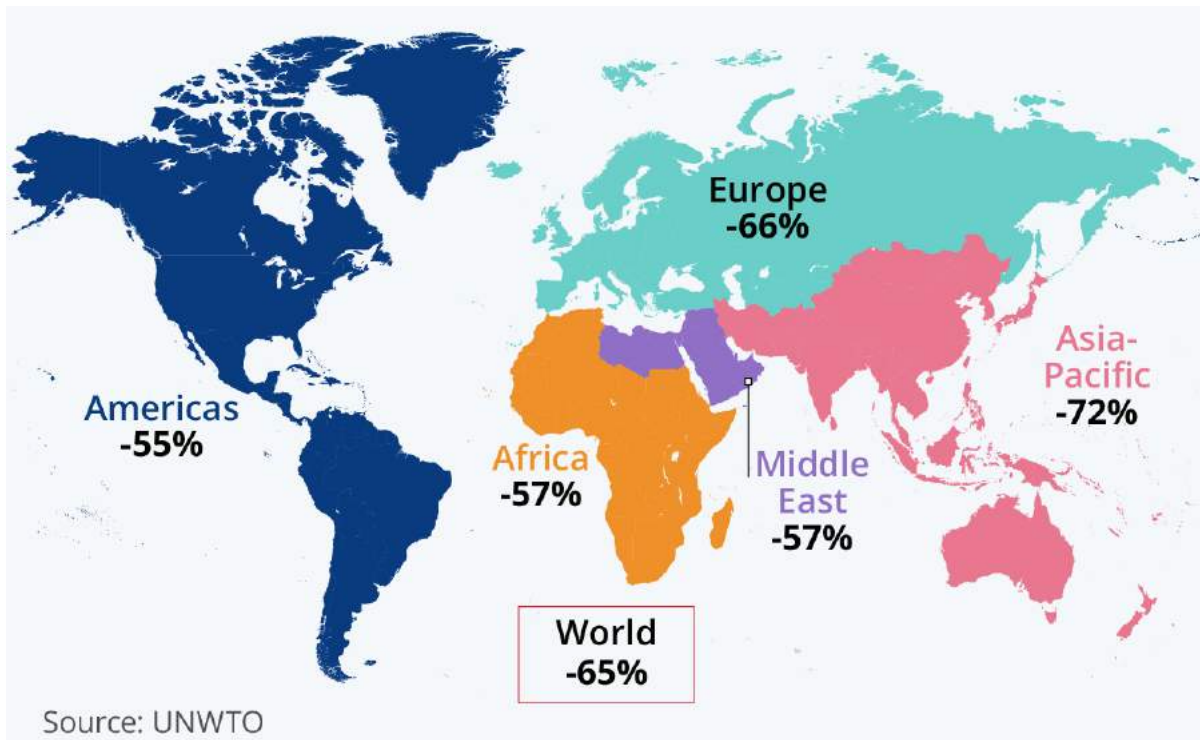
THE CURRENT SITUATION

Since the last edition of *COVID-19 Update* there has been an update from LATAM on airlinks to the Falklands:

- Santiago-Punta Arenas Route: will remain suspended until at least 2nd January 2021. The situation will be reviewed nearer the date.
- São Paulo Route: will remain suspended until at least the 20th October 2020. The situation will also be reviewed nearer the date.

Whilst international tourism to the Falklands is unlikely for the foreseeable future, it is worth having a quick look at how the rest of the world is faring. Perhaps not surprisingly the Asia-Pacific region has been the most affected (arrivals down by 72%). Maybe most interestingly, however, is that up to June the Americas was the least affected, with international arrivals falling by 55%. This is expected to rise when Q3 figures come in, and of course the emergence of South America (in particular) from the pandemic has huge implications for the accessibility of the Falklands to international visitors.

Change in International Tourist Arrivals (Jan-Jun 2020 compared to Jan-Jun 2019)



DOMESTIC TOURISM OPPORTINITIES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND GUIDES

FIG has now announced the details of a domestic tourism promotion scheme that will see all adults who reside in the Falkland Islands being entitled to a voucher worth £400 to be used on Falklands tourist accommodation and activities; children will be entitled to a voucher worth £200. This is a great opportunity for accommodation establishments and guides to engage with residents of the Islands for what is expected to be a tourist season that will be different to usual.

However, although most individuals and businesses will experience lower demand than usual, there are significant opportunities due to this scheme, not only for domestic tourism this season, but also to maintain domestic interest in future seasons, as well as preparing for the (hopeful) return of international tourists in 2021.

Below we have set out a number of ideas that could help you attract visitors and get them to spend their vouchers with you. Not all will be applicable to your situation (and some are specifically for accommodation and other for tour guides), but we hope that some will help to boost the cashflow and potentially improve business in future years.

Maximise the Stay

Guests become more profitable the longer they stay. Washing sheets and towels needs to be done between guests, not every night. Also there are the extras such as spend on drinks and tours which usually increase with the length of stay. Offer free nights to make bookings more attractive – everyone loves a free night! *4 nights for the price of 3, or 3 nights for the price of 2* are worth considering.



Encourage Guests to Return

This season is likely to see many people travel who would not usually think about taking a domestic tourism trip. Make the experience memorable and give them a good reason to come back. Offer a discount off their next stay. *"25% off your next visit"* might make the difference between them coming back to stay at your accommodation or going elsewhere. You might want to be a little bit strategic about this. In a normal season, think about when you have quiet periods that you want to fill. These may be in October or March – so perhaps offer your discounts (or bigger discounts) for stays in these periods.



Guide Them Again

For independent guides, continue building that rapport with someone you've just taken out. Chances are they will have only spent half their voucher with you. Get them to come back, but make it attractive by giving them a discount on their next tour.



Free Guided Tours

For those accommodation that usually offer tourists a 4WD guided tour around camp, offering a free tour as part of their accommodation booking might make the difference between them choosing your destination and another one in the Falklands.



Themed Weekends or Breaks

Many residents will just be looking for a break away from Stanley (or camp) and might not be interested in the things that your usual (international) guests are. Therefore offering themed nights, weekends or longer periods can make you stand out. The more entertaining the better! These could vary from food and drink related activities such as gin tasting, wine tasting, or a seafood “festival”. You may need to bring in a specialist for some activities; otherwise think about what you know yourself – what you can offer as an “expert” (or partial expert!). We can all turn our hand to something, and if it’s fun, no one will mind too much! The great thing about themed breaks is that if they are a success you can repeat them. Word-of-mouth will sell them!



Study and Special Interest Breaks

Similar to the Themed Weekends, but perhaps a little more serious, is putting on study or special interest breaks. For these you might need to bring in one of the Falklands’ experts on a topic, which might include birdwatching, flower arranging, flora, geology, star gazing or photography. Perhaps work with the guides to develop a joint package.



Make a Special (Self-Catering) Welcome

As the tourists are Falklands residents this season, more than ever before the key marketing medium will be word-of-mouth. For self-catering accommodation, a little extra effort can go a long way. A “welcome pack” with some goodies (food and drink) for guests when they arrive might make a difference when they tell their friends about their stay.



Lay on the Transport

This can make you stand out and you don’t need to be on an island to offer this. Create a package that includes accommodation and transport. This might be a vehicle pick up and drop off in Stanley for accommodation on East (and potentially West) Falkland which could appeal to those who are not so comfortable driving in camp.



Treat them like a Rock Star!

Why not offer the ultimate pick up and drop off...by helicopter from Falklands Helicopter Services. There’s bound to be some people out there looking for the ultimate treat and will be prepared to pay for it. Stand out by offering an inclusive package that includes flights to and from your accommodation.



Guide Recommendations and Midweek Bookings

Reward people who recommend you to others by giving a discount. Simply advertise your guide services, stating that a (say 20%) discount will be given to anyone recommending a client who books with you. Smart friends might recommend each other to get discounts, so be sure you're happy to offer your tour at the lower price! However hopefully this will be offset by more bookings. Something else to think about is trying to smooth out demand by giving discounts when you have the least bookings, such as midweek.



Ride the Latest Biking Trend

The hottest items in the cycling world at the moment are electric bikes. Sales are soaring as these bikes are rapidly growing in popularity with all ages. They are not cheap, with an average mountain bike model costing around £1,000. However, you could expect to recoup this cost within a season with hire rates of around £30 per day. The key is offering something that makes your destination stand out as being different.



Glamping Under the Stars

Another big trend is sleeping outdoors in comfortable accommodation. This is the sort of investment that will pay dividends with the international markets, but why not try out some concepts now with domestic visitors. It is particularly popular with those visitors that want the best photo shots, to catch the best bird life, and to enjoy the stars and the sounds of nature. Investment is required, but should be rapidly repaid.



Promote and Sell Local Produce

Whether it is something you make, or something someone else has made in the Falklands, offering a selection of local produce (which may range from alcoholic drinks through to jewellery and soap) might not attract additional visitors but it is a good way to either generate some extra revenue for yourself or someone else. Getting a good production line or supply chain going will pay dividends when international visitors return, as they are likely to be big buyers of your wares.



Get Online and Social Media

As every day goes by, it becomes more and more important to have an online presence to make the most of your business. This is not just for the domestic market but in particular for international visitors. A good website is not expensive or difficult to build, and there are people in the Falklands who can help with that. But be sure you know how to update it and keep it fresh with new pictures and stories. For the domestic market Facebook is particularly important. You can even use it for your bookings, showing when you have availability. Instagram is also growing in popularity in the Falklands and worldwide, and is easy and fun.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Economic Support Packages

FIG has announced that it will extend the period of support for businesses and individuals impacted by the pandemic. The Business Grant Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will continue until September 30th 2021. The Job Retention Scheme and the Unemployment Subsidy Scheme will continue until March 31st 2021. More details can be found at:

<https://www.fig.gov.fk/covid-19/information/support-package-applications>

<http://www.fidc.co.fk/library/covid-19>.

The websites provide clear advice regarding the eligibility of each scheme..

FIG Guidance and Information

For guidance and information for individual businesses operating in a COVID-19 environment, including restaurants, public houses and retail, see:

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19/guidance>

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19/information/general-information>

