

Tips on European Travel In Times of Covid

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This writer recently had an extended vacation in Europe recently and has tips to share to make travel easier during the global pandemic.

Before leaving the US. Covid tests are required at least 72 hours before flights. Walgreens has drive-through testing at no cost and verifications are sent by e-mail or text. For smoother and faster airport screening, PreCheck TSA boarding passes are \$85 and good for 5 years. Apply early since it can take a couple weeks to get it. www.tsa.gov/precheck. For differences between Global Entry and PreCheck, go to <https://ttp.dhs.gov/>. Consider getting a small luggage scale to reduce stress if you have multiple flights where luggage will be weighed. Amazon has lots of options in the \$10-20 range.

Getting to SFO. The Sonoma County Airporter is a convenient way to get to SFO; the schedules and senior fares are online at <https://airportexpressinc.com/schedule.php>. Think about whether to pay up front for round trip shuttle - what if your flight home is delayed? When checking in, have passport, vaccination card, and TSA PreCheck number and keep these with you as you travel from country to country in Europe.

A Note About Vaccination Cards and Masking. Don't forget to take *printed* vaccination cards and have a copy in digital format on smartphone. California digital OCR cards were not valid in some places because they don't show the second dosage date. Airports and restaurants did not have scanners available. At restaurants and other stores, most required masks and validation of a vaccine test or your "printed" vaccination card showing first dosage and second dosage dates.

Traveling within Europe. Covid tests were a must with the 72 hour timeframe. In Germany a local pharmacy (Apotheke: <https://www.howtogermaany.com/pages/pharmacies.html>) cost 30 Euros. Registration online was necessary. Test results were within 30 minutes and **printed copies are a must**. Flying from Germany to Italy, people who did not have a vaccine-test were able to sign up directly at the customs desk and get tested, adding another ½ to one hour delay in entering Italy. Another Covid test (20 euros) leaving Italy was required for a flight back to Germany.

Another tip regarding customs. Stay together with your spouse when going through customs in Europe; married couples seemed to have a better experience. Going through customs dealing with electronics and medications can be challenging with one doesn't speak the language and/or have hearing challenges. Another site for Covid travel information is: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/safe-covid-19-vaccines-europeans/eu-digital-covid-certificate_en.

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