

Retirees, See the World Without Leaving Home

You can still visit museums and marvel at their great works of art, tour historical landmarks and stroll through foreign cities ... from the comfort of your home.

In February 2020, the U.S. State Department issued a Global Level 4 Health Advisory—its most dire warning—that it summarized in three words: "Do Not Travel." Passing through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints a day later were 146,348 fliers, 93% fewer than the same date a year earlier.

The coronavirus grounded even the most avid travelers. In an April 2020 survey by market research firm Longwoods International, 67% said the pandemic had affected their travel plans for the next six months.

So what's a globe-trotting, nature-loving, house-bound culture vulture to do? Plenty. You can still visit museums and marvel at their great works of art, tour historical landmarks and stroll through foreign cities. And you can do it all from home as a virtual sightseer because these sights can be toured online for free.

Fine Art. If you like fine art, for example, you will love Google Arts and Culture. The website, which the Paris-based Google Cultural Institute launched in 2011, has organized more than 3,000 professionally curated online exhibitions of artifacts, photographs and paintings from museums around the world. Now you can get up close to view famous masterpieces like Edvard Munch's "The Scream" or lesser-known works like Claude Monet's 1875 portrait of his fellow Impressionist artist Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Visit artsandculture.google.com.

Landmarks. Social distancing won't keep you from virtually visiting some of the world's famous structures. On the same Google Arts and Culture site discover what it's like to stand atop the Taj Mahal or stroll through the rooms of the Palace of Versailles, enjoying 360-degree views of both places and a zoomed-in look at the details. Elsewhere online, take a hot-air balloon ride over the Buddhist temple complex in Bagan, Myanmar, or walk through Petra, the Jordanian city of palaces, temples and tombs carved out of sandstone 24 centuries ago. Visit the "Amazing Places on Our Planet" YouTube channel.

History. In the U.S., the National Women's History Museum has exhibits on women's suffrage as well as the considerable contributions black women have made to the civil rights movement and as mathematicians for NASA and its predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Visit womenshistory.org.

The Museum of Flight in Seattle offers virtual tours of aircraft from long-range bombers to Alaskan bush planes. Not surprisingly, Boeing, which used to be based in Seattle, dominates the museum's lineup. It includes a pair of World War II bombers, the B-17F and B-29; the Boeing

VC-137B that was the first "Air Force One"; an Antonov An-2, the largest single-engine biplane; and the supersonic Concorde airliner. Visit musuemofflight.org.

National Parks. When you are tired of being stuck indoors, explore the great outdoors. The National Park Service is creating a library of virtual assets depicting some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. Visit nps.gov.

So far, this includes Yellowstone National Park and Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming, and Denali National Park in Alaska. For a more interactive experience, Google Arts & Culture takes you on 360-degree tours of Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah and Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico.

Street Life. Often, the best and most relaxing part of a vacation is the time spent strolling through a city or rambling in the countryside. There are stay-at-home options here as well. You can, for example, watch streaming videos of what it is like to wander through Seoul's Myeong-dong shopping district on a busy day or appreciate the sophistication and skills of the Incas who built Machu Picchu in Peru. Visit the "Wind Walk Travel Videos" YouTube channel and youvisit.com/travel.

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