

Life in Lockdown for a Travel Agency

May 2021

By working with East Grinstead Museum, we have a series of case studies on our website that capture the pandemic experience and issues from the point of view of businesses, Individuals, and community groups.

About the organisation

Hallmark Travel

Hallmark Travel is just off the High Street in East Grinstead. They are 30 years old. Their clients are discerning travelling to destinations like Australia, New Zealand, the Far East, Indochina, and Japan.

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Hallmark Travel office has been closed since March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, but it's been '*business as usual*' by phone, email and zoom! With regular customer evenings and training, they have kept in touch with customers and their team. They have provided presentations of the countries in which they specialise these have become renowned as they make the *work* of arranging complicated itineraries a great deal of fun and enjoyment - so the holiday starts with Hallmark Travel, in the planning stage!

Hallmark Travel are an Independent Agency, which means they have no obligations to any suppliers. They are impartial and give totally unbiased advice. They are fully licensed by ABTA and IATA and have their own ATOL licence.

Hallmark Travel mission is to focus on specialist destinations and develop their expertise to better serve their customers.

Website: [Hallmark Travel](#)

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Life in Lockdown

A Day in the Life of a Travel Agent in Lockdown.

'No need to set the alarm these days, I can *'pad' down to my office in just 13 steps! I can start work in my PJs with a cup of tea*, in the company of my cat and breakfast TV!



Yes, life is very different to 12 months ago - negotiating the traffic and finding a parking space. But this new routine took some getting used to, don't get me wrong. I stressed and worried as *my business stopped. It didn't grind down, it stopped...* abruptly! *Like coming to the end of a road and falling off a cliff.*

At first life was a maze of form filling for grants and loans to survive - advice was coming from all directions. Then there was a mountain of cancelled holidays to deal with, refunds, credit notes, cash flow problems.... Worst of all clients were stranded on the other side of the world, in different time zones pleading for help and advice. Insurance companies were just passing the buck. *I worked on my reserve tank.*

But life has settled down now, there are no holidays to book and the refunds and airlines I am chasing are dwindling in number. I check my emails, mostly deleting junk and clutter. Some good news - a credit note, great... and a client wanting to defer their holiday to 2022, instead of cancelling altogether, also good news.

I have a *Zoom meeting with my staff - they are all on furlough*, and have been since March 2021. We gather together from our homes and chat about the office, the future, exchange ideas and have a laugh remembering funny moments and missing our customers. We zoom weekly, but we also have a WhatsApp group for pictures of our pets and jokes... anything to keep us upbeat and feeling like we still belong together.

Lunch time, and a chance to catch up with the news. Oh dear, it's the same old, same old. *Then I take my one-hour exercise - usually a walk to the post box.* I know all the post boxes within a 2-mile radius of my house, and I know all the collection times too. I've watched all the seasons in the gardens, and now we have turned a full circle... it's Spring again!

Later on, we have another Zoom arranged. This time we have invited a holiday company to join us. The object of this Zoom is to meet our customers, it's important to stay in touch. While we cannot actually go anywhere now, we still can enjoy talking about holidays, foreign lands and adventures. Our Zoom travel-hours take place at 6pm - *wine o'clock time!*

Life in Lockdown

Then dinner with the family - *these have been the happiest times in lockdown*. Preparing a proper evening meal together and sharing it around the table. A year ago, I would often eat on the hoof and often a take away or a ready meal - tut tut tut... bad habits! But taking care of *myself and my own mental health well-being has become a priority* this year.

I usually spend a half hour or so after dinner, checking emails and making a 'to do list'. I have always had a '*to do list*' as far back as I can remember. Its strange, but if it's on my list... it gets done, no matter how long the list is! And I get great satisfaction ticking everything off at the end of the day. Very satisfying.

Then time to relax, some TV - escape. Put the problems of non-existent travel and COVID-19 away. We never used to watch TV as a family before, but now we enjoy an hour together mostly following a drama series or a film (which we break up into 2 evenings!) We watched Bridgerton... and none of were able to guess who was Lady Whistledown. I won't spoil it for you, but I recommend it for some light entertainment.

Will they ever come back? Those headless chicken days of meetings, conferences, networking, business lunches, and coffee with clients? I must believe they will - I, for one, cannot wait to get on a flight and go somewhere. There is so much more of the world I want to see. Waterfalls, mountains, oceans, rainforests, deserts. Sunrises and sunsets and rainbows - and somewhere over that rainbow is April 12th and our route map to normality!



Life in Lockdown



East Grinstead Museum is to document life in lockdown, in our town. We are keen to capture diverse experiences - sad or joyful - and to reflect East Grinstead's diversity. Contributions are welcomed from people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Using these collected items, the museum plans to create an exhibition documenting how COVID-19 impacted life in East Grinstead and the surrounding villages.

To learn more about this exhibition call 01342 302233.

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We have a simple ambition, at Healthwatch West Sussex... to make local health and social care services better for people that use them. We are here to listen, take action and influence positive change for local people living in West Sussex.

We record what people tell us and share this anonymously with those who make decisions about our health and care services.

You can contact us in several ways:

-  **Telephone** 0300 012 0122
-  **Email** helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk
-  **Website** www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

You can also follow our social media channels to always be updated with the latest in health and social care news across West Sussex: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#).

If you have questions about the content of this update, please either call 0300 012 0122 or email cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

