

## Tourism - Maintaining the Algarve as a Safe Destination

Last month I highlighted the reason why the Algarve is a very safe place to visit, a fact that most of us living here and have previously visited would agree.

This month I would like to focus on how we can all work together to keep it that way to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

At the time of writing this article, there are around 200 active cases of Covid-19 in the Algarve, with four in hospital and none in ICU. This is out of a population of around 450,000 plus reportedly double that of tourists - the figures speak for themselves!



However, this is not the time for complacency and it is vitally important now that Portugal is finally on the UK travel corridor, that it remains there to avoid the problems that occurred in Spain, France and Croatia.

It is essential therefore, that visitors here are aware of the rules and laws concerning Covid-19 and in particular the level of compliance expected. This may be very different from their own countries. Everyone has a responsibility in keeping Portugal safe.

A day following the announcement that Portugal was on the travel corridor, Safe Communities Portugal made a Facebook post asking visitors planning to visit Portugal, or who were already here, to adhere to the restrictions in place. It reached over 78,000 people, was shared nearly 500 times with some 800 likes. What was more pleasing, however, were the very supportive comments pledging to do just that!

### Compliance and Enforcement

From what I have observed and read the level of compliance is generally high here, although of course there will always be those cases where laws are breached. In some countries restrictions are in the form of guidelines or recommendations, which people often choose to ignore, but in Portugal they are mandatory backed up by law and that in itself makes a big difference as far as compliance is concerned.

The GNR and Maritime police are enforcing these laws in particular to group sizes of no more than 20 and the consumption of alcohol in public areas, including beaches which is prohibited. Visitors should note that large group gatherings outside bars are prohibited and action will be taken by police accordingly.

### Some tips for tourists

Based on the type of active tourists most commonly undertake Safe Communities officers follow advice based on DGS guidelines.

### Facemasks

Must be used for those 10 years or over indoor areas such as stores, public buildings etc. In practice younger children are wearing as well as are people in the street, where social distancing may not be possible.

### Fuel stations

Wear a glove when using the fuel pump, it's not always convenient for people to wash hands etc or use alcohol gel before they use the petrol pumps, and you can imagine how many people use the pump daily. If no gloves certainly use gel afterwards before getting in your car.

### Supermarkets

Most main supermarkets have security at the entrance to control entry and avoid capacity being exceeded. On some there is a red and green light system as well. Please be patient if you have to queuing. A tip is to shop early or at other less busy times which also helps concerning social distancing. Inside supermarkets please respect floor markings (especially when queuing at checkouts). Use gel before and after using trolleys and of course facemasks if queuing and inside the store.

If you enter an establishment of any kind use the gel provided and if you exchange money, use the card machine, touch goods, use the toilet or eating for example use the gel on exit.

### Transport

Carry a mask with you so it's handy in your bag, as you will need this for public transport. Put it on upon boarding or at transport termini.

If your vehicle has more than 5 seat capacity, under law it can only be used with two thirds capacity except if it is the same family. Remember this if hiring a vehicle.

### Beach capacities - "InfoPraia" App

For safety reasons beaches now have a capacity level to avoid overcrowding and allow sufficient social distancing to help avoid the spread of Covid-19

To avoid exceeding the capacity of beaches there is an occupancy status system in Portuguese and English: App 'Info Praia' (Beach Info) with three colours: Green (1/3 occupancy), yellow (2/3 occupancy) and red (Full occupancy). These colours on signs will identify the occupancy level of each beach. The information will be updated in real time on the website of the Portuguese Environment Association – [www.apambiente.pt](http://www.apambiente.pt). Remember NO alcohol on beaches.

### Restaurants

One of the great attractions in living and visiting Portugal is eating out at restaurants, especially rural restaurants which can offer very traditional food and very reasonable prices. To get the best from these experiences, Safe Communities offers the following tips in line with the laws in place.

Firstly book beforehand where possible as restaurant capacities may be limited, due to spacing requirements.

Upon entry into a restaurant always wear a mask and also whilst moving around and going to the washroom etc. Await to be seated, as tables will need to be cleaned beforehand. When seated you can off course remove your mask. On no account move tables and chairs around as they have been placed where they are for safety reasons. Although hand sanitizer should be available, take some with you as well.

Groups are restricted to 20 in public places so please avoid large gatherings outside, and drinking alcohol in public areas which is also prohibited.

We are living in unprecedented times so be patient and help restaurant staff who are doing their best.

If this measures sound restrictive there is good reason for that. By following the rules will help you have a Covid-19 free holiday and help keep the Algarve safe.