



[The Travel Detective's Cinco de Mayo Swine Flu Update](#)



Well what a week this has been. I think I have to interview for the job of press secretary to Joe Biden.

Now, I'm not a doctor, I don't play one on TV, but regarding the flu hysteria, the worst four-letter word that starts with the letter "f" is "fear."

I was [on television all last week](#) letting people know about that fear and also letting them know about some historical context about that fear.

Let's go back to the days of the SARS epidemic. What epidemic? There was a SARS crisis, but why was there a crisis? Because no one was traveling. What did I do during the SARS crisis? I flew to Hong Kong, where the hotel occupancy was 3 percent!

Now, to answer this question, did I have a great time? You bet I did.

What about the avian flu, well let's take a look at those numbers. Most of the people infected worked full time on chicken farms!

And now we have the swine flu.

Now I'm not telling anyone they shouldn't be concerned about it. You should be concerned about any communicable disease.

disease.

But there are ways to deal with it with you traveling or living your daily lives. It all gets down to personal hygiene and common sense.

Do you wash your hands before and after eating? Do you wash your hands before and after going to the bathroom? And if you're flying here's something you don't often do—wash your hands before getting on and off the plane!

I mean, have you seen the interiors of most airplanes? This is nothing new; there's no news bulletin here. They haven't cleaned those planes since 1947! So why wouldn't you want to practice good hygiene? This has nothing to do with the flu.

Practice this, and then pack a little common sense—talk to your doctor before you leave to make sure your immune system is not compromised, and to make sure you don't have a pre-existing medical condition.

You know where I'm going in 12 days? Mexico! You thinks I'm nuts? No. As a contrarian traveler, when the going gets tough, the smart people travel. You know all those people who wanted to cancel their vacation plans in Cancun and didn't ... right now they own the beach and they are having a great time.



What Joe Biden did last week was not only inflammatory, but it was inaccurate! It has no scientific data to support it. What is he saying? Telling his family not to fly on an airplane, and not to take a subway because you could basically catch the flu from an enclosed area? Here's a little news bulletin Mr. Vice President: The White House is an enclosed area. Better stay away.

My job is not to promote travel and my job is not to sell travel; my job is to give you credible information from which you can make intelligent travel choices.

Now having said that, let's talk about the law of supply and demand. I checked the Web sites recently, and do you know what the airfare is from JFK to Cancun this week? On American Airlines each way, \$71. I mean, hello, you can't even wake up in New York for \$71! Why wouldn't you want to travel there?

Now let's talk about the cruise lines. You know, based on F-E-A-R, they stopped all port calls in Mexico over the weekend. There are now nine ships that did that. Nine large cruise ships are in San Francisco with people in their Bermuda shorts hoping to go to the beach. Well guess what, they're in San Francisco and I think it's raining.

Cruise lines have this knee-jerk reaction—this is not the plague, this is not the day the earth stood still, this is the day the earth stood stupid!

Now, obviously it gets worse, the H1N1 flu. Do you want to know what's going on in Egypt right now? The government is slaughtering pigs! This has nothing to do with pigs. I mean people are acting in the most immature, stupid childish ways.

The bottom line here is to do your homework. You know, when people say to me, "I don't want to travel to this location because it's not safe to travel, I'd rather stay home." I have to remind them of a very interesting statistic: Each week in this country nearly 1,000 of our fellow citizens are killed or injured in accidents involving their own bathtubs!

So when someone says to me that "I don't want to travel to Cancun because there's this flu" OK with me, but if you want to take a bath you are on your own!

You know what's scary? Not the disease, but your reaction to it. Isn't it interesting almost every administration official within six hours of [Joe Biden's comments on the Today show](#) was backtracking: "That's not what the Vice President meant to say," and "he didn't mean that." Do you know how many cancellations there were from a direct result of those statements?

I mean look, the travel industry has been hit hard enough as it is by a bad economy and the fact is that people are staying home just because they're worried. So my bottom line here is: Go see your doctor, make sure you're in good shape, practice good hygiene and then get on the plane!





This is not a situation you want to stay at home especially when evidence doesn't support it. What Biden was saying ... he basically said this: If someone sneezes in the second row then the 16th row gets the disease.

You know what? That's not true, there is no scientific data to support that and never has been.

It's a myth! Look I'm more worried about the bacteria on the plane in general! This has nothing to do with the swine flu.

So here's my advice, just don't lick the tray table, OK? Please don't eat the fabric on the seats.

If you follow that advice you know what's going to happen? Get to where you want to go and when you get there you're going to own the place, whether it's Mexico or Montana.

By Peter Greenberg for Peter Greenberg Worldwide Radio.

Related links on PeterGreenberg.com:

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4 Responses to "The Travel Detective's Cinco de Mayo Swine Flu Update"

1. [Pam S](#), on [May 5th, 2009 at 1:15 pm](#) Said:

Amen!

2. [Brian from nodebtworldtravel.com](#), on [May 5th, 2009 at 2:05 pm](#) Said:

Thanks Peter! I said the same thing on my blog yesterday @

<http://tinyurl.com/cvpad4>

and everyone who commented agreed that the whole situation is overblown. It is the FLU! That is it...

3. [Deniz](#), on [May 6th, 2009 at 9:15 am](#) Said:

Thank you Peter!

4. [Liz from Four Seasons Travel](#), on [May 7th, 2009 at 7:04 am](#) Said:

Everything you said is true, but HOW do you get the public to keep up with the news? By late last week, it was known that the virus was missing an important protein making it less virulent...but few saw the story. With info coming down the pike from Twitter and other social networks at such rapid speed, it's only a matter of MINUTES before a flare up is launched. The global economy can fall in a matter of months, country by country.

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