

## Travel experiences and tips for essential travel to Sal from UK via Lisbon and Praia - September 2020 (Sara and Mark).

We were fortunate to know of a test facility for Antibody Tests and PCR tests near our home in Cambridgeshire. Sara said she'd received an antibody test there a few months ago after Mark contracted the covid-19 virus. The PCR test would cost £110 each.

We'd made an appointment to have our PCR test on Thur 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020. The date and time of this test would be used to identify the start of our 72hour window, in which we had planned to enter Cape Verde at the airport in Praia, on the island of Santiago, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>. From Praia we'd need to catch an inter-island flight onto Sal with TICV. **The 72 hour window needs to cover up to landing in Sal**, we were fortunate to get away with it after a delay in Praia!

We had planned our flights so we would arrive on Sal before the end of the 72hrs ..... when you leave things to chance, its risky, it could have gone wrong at any time!

We had help from the test centre assistant who kept phoning the laboratory where the tests had been sent, to see if we could get Sara's result through in time, Mark was lucky he'd already got his. Then there is the possibility of delays of flights arriving or departing on time! Our plan nearly didn't work out for a number of reasons! As well as the necessary documentation, you do need some patience and some luck!

We'd been informed by the test centre that there was no guarantee as to when we would receive our test results, we just prayed we would receive them **BOTH**, in time for us to check-in at 16:45p.m. at Heathrow Airport, for the TAP flight to Lisbon, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> Sept, which was due to depart at 18:45p.m.

We received Mark's results of PCR test on Friday evening at 7p.m. in an email, so we were able to print his off. It was now Saturday morning they were planning to leave their home to travel to Heathrow at 11a.m. but Sara's results still hadn't arrived. Sara made some calls to the test centre, fortunately they were open and working. The assistant at the test centre said she would try and see if they could get in touch with the test laboratory to see if they could fast-track Sara's results. They rang them every 30mins or so. Sara and Mark headed off to Heathrow as planned and during the car journey, Sara received her confirmation of her test result and, it was negative for covid-19..... they were both so relieved, it was such a close call!

Mark says 'We wouldn't have been able to check-in without confirmation of our PCR test results (being negative), as we were asked to produce both of our results at Heathrow, they would not have let us through without them'. NOTE: Sara had confirmation of her PCR results on her phone, as she couldn't get it printed off at the airport, while Mark had a paper copy of his. Sara and Mark were also asked if they had a return flight booked to the UK, they answered they had thirty days in Cape Verde and would look at return flights when back on Sal. Sara and Mark had also obtained a 90 day multi entry visa through Jonathan Lux, to cover themselves. They were also asked if they had the form for airport tax on the 'Ease' website, we said yes.

When you first book your flights with TAP and then return to check-in on line, they require you to log-in to the 'www.ease.gov.cv' website and fill in a form for your Airport Tax, this is a payment for landing in Cape Verde (its not a visa). The Airport Tax costs around 32e per person. You are directed

to the [www.ease.gov.cv](http://www.ease.gov.cv) website where you make an application and pay separately. You then get an email with a reference number to prove you have completed the process and paid.

They weren't asked any further questions at check-in with TAP at Heathrow.

We had decided not to indulge in too many alcoholic drinks during the journey, we wanted to remain calm and not provide too much info to help void any confusion, just provide what was necessary.

Heathrow was well organised to cope with travellers moving through the airport, that was a very comfortable experience. However, it was a totally different story at Lisbon airport!

## **LISBON**

Our flight from Heathrow was with TAP airlines, with a connecting TAP flight at Lisbon onto Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde. TAP has had a reputation for delays, people losing luggage or people missing a flight because the previous flight was delayed and arrived late. We were thankful our flight from Heathrow was on time. We didn't dilly dally, we knew we had to move quickly, keep calm, be polite and have answers and documentation at the ready.

We arrived at Lisbon airport at 21:10p.m. We knew we only had 90 mins in which to depart the plane, enter arrivals, go through Passport Control, answer questions, go to departures and queue for the onward connecting flight from Lisbon to Praia (Santiago Island).

Our onward connecting flight to Praia was due to depart at 22:40p.m.

The 90 mins went quickly. We all departed the plane at Lisbon and were crammed into a transfer bus for what seemed a long ride to the arrivals area. Honestly it was awful, some people still wearing masks, others more relaxed about it, (we weren't happy).

As we entered arrivals at Lisbon, our hand luggage was scanned, then from there we went over to check-in. At check in we were only asked if we had an essential reason to travel, we replied yes and they accepted that without proof of documentation. We then headed straight to our departure gate 41a to get in the queue. We were at the front of the queue and didn't get asked any questions, we don't know if others behind us were asked any. We went through to boarding area and relaxed before another crammed bus ride to the TAP plane. Not sure if it was the same plane we'd arrived on, but we did have the same seat numbers.

The plane from Heathrow was only about 50% full, however the onward flight from Lisbon was a lot busier. After boarding they noticed some passengers were pulling down their masks down then putting them back on, we really felt uncomfortable with this behaviour, so we complained to the stewardess who, could see some people with their masks off and, she went and spoke to them, however she did offer to move as and we were moved to an area where fortunately, there were fewer people around us.

## **PRAIA**

We landed at Praia at 00:55a.m. on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>. We had 7.5hrs to wait before our onward flight to Sal which was at 08:30a.m..

This time on exiting the plane, we were escorted across the tarmac and into arrivals. Everyone having to keep 2m distance and there were marked spots showing safe distance. The Police walked along the queue of people asking them why they were entering Cape Verde. They wanted you to tell them the reason for 'Essential Travel'. We had our documentation to hand, so we could produce it when asked. In addition to those documents, we had asked our Cape Verde Lawyer on Sal, to write an official letter that we could produce if needed during our travel, it was written in Portuguese and that explained our circumstances for 'Essential Travel' into Cape Verde. In his letter he included our names, our registered business on Sal, our NIF number, our CIP property ownership document for our property on Sal and the fact he was in the process of applying for our Residence on Sal.

We presented to the Police, the Lawyers letter for him to read, our Certidao Comercial (Business Registration) and our CIP. We really think the Lawyers letter was our 'ace', followed by our business registration document, but we're not 100% sure. It may be different for others if using the same documents for Essential Travel.

When we reached the front of the queue and Passport Control kiosk, we were then asked to provide proof of 'Essential Travel' so we presented him with the letter from the lawyer which he read, then he wanted to know if we had paid the airport tax on the Ease website, we said yes, but then he could see on the screen that we had pre-paid it. Then he asked to see our PCR test result, Sara showed hers on her phone and Mark his printed copy. He could see we had arrived within the 72hours. He then asked if we had a visa and we showed him the one we'd got through Jonathan Lux.

After this we had to have a temperature test.

We went through to luggage collection and had to wait an hour for our luggage to arrive.

We were then directed out of airport as we were informed we had to re-enter the 'Departures' through another entrance (as there was no internal linking corridor like there is on Sal).

We wished we'd been quicker at getting to Departures! It was now around 3a.m. and it was pouring with rain outside. There was a Policeman and a security guard outside controlling who could enter the entrance into building for departures. The Policeman told us to queue outside in the rain. However, we noticed others from our previous flight inside the building. The Policeman had now gone, so we politely insisted to the Security Guard that we should be let in as well, it took a bit of effort, but the Security Guard eventually let us enter and we waited there until it was time to check-in.

A few hours later, we noticed 3 people in white coats outside the departure entrance, carrying out temperature tests on those outside in the queue, waiting to come into departures. Each person had to stand in front of a camera and checked covi-19 test results before they were allowed into the building to check-in, we'd missed that bit.

The minute we noticed the check-in desk opening we dashed forward to check in our luggage. It was here we were asked if we had been given approval by Passport Control at arrivals to enter Cape Verde, we said yes. Then she asked to see our PCR test results which we showed her, she could see

we were still within the 72hr window for travel. She gave us our boarding passes for the inter-island flight with TICV to Sal Island. We then went to through to the security section where they check your hand luggage etc. We wanted to get through quickly as you know you can sometimes get stuck in a long queue when going through security and waiting to have belongings x-rayed. When we got through, into departure waiting area, we were relieved.

It was here we experienced our first delay with flights, but thank goodness we were already in Cape Verde and more importantly through and into departures for Sal.

Our flight to Sal was due to leave at 8.30a.m. and arrive on Sal at 9.15a.m.

We were informed the TICV flight departure was delayed due to the visibility being too bad. Then we were told the crew could not get to the airport because of flooding. Then they tried to repair and engine but after about 40 mins they condemned the plane. We had to switch over to smaller Binter plane and we weren't sure if all passengers (including us) would be allowed on or, if there weren't enough seats.

Eventually after boarding the Binter plane, the plane departed from Praia at 11.44a.m. and we landed on Sal at 12.30p.m. This was now, 90 mins over the 72hour window!!

From the plane we were taken into the inter-island arrivals area (where tourists used to arrive and needed to pay for a visa). Here, they asked to see the reasons for 'Essential Travel' (Lawyers letter) and our PCR test results. Then we had to have another temperature test.

After this, we went through to wait for our luggage, then out of airport to our waiting taxi. We were so relieved we'd got through!

NOTE:

As at 13<sup>th</sup> September - There was no requirement for us to self-isolate, we will just be very careful ourselves as, although the risk is extremely low, it seems sensible to do so.

Having read Ken's experience and of travel last week, we had carried out some research and received some feedback on what we needed to do or obtain before we travelled, this was a tremendous help. May we add we were fortunate there were no delays with TAP to get us into Praia departures before our 72 hour window expired, however, we could have come unstuck at Praia and Sal with the flight delay at Praia.....we only had till 11.00a.m on Sunday before our 72hr window ran out ..... we were later than planned arriving on Sal at 12.30p.m. (90 mins after our 72hr window expired).

We knew we needed to be more prepared for this journey. However, we feel we were lucky!!!

Sara and Mark

TIPS:

Buy all flight tickets (including Inter Island) in advance.

Note: it has been known for inter-island flights to be delayed. On occasions travellers have also been bumped off a plane for some reason or other (so they miss that flight time, they have to get a later one).

Since obtaining our multi-entry 90 day visa, we are now aware that people can also apply online for a 6 month visa from the Cape Verde Consulate in Las Palmas which you can apply for online.

Arrive as early as possible for every official check point, go through into departures as soon as you can at each stage of your travel.

Stay calm and polite.

Don't over explain, just provide what is asked for. We had more documentation than was eventually needed. We took;

1. Certidao Commercial for our business
2. Letter from a lawyer in CV explaining it is essential for us to gain entry to Sal for business reasons
3. CIP for our property ( ours had been updated in Feb 2020)
4. Ease registration code
5. In date PCR tests

You must have a VISA of some kind to allow entry.

The Airport Tax with Ease is not a Visa!