

## The Pandemic Doesn't Stop When We Go on Holiday!



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My dear readers,

It is time for thoughts from the island again. It's time for the nurse's thoughts!

I wanted to share with you all that, as a staff nurse, I still work on COVID-19 wards. I risked it and flew to the Canary Islands in March for sunshine and switching-off time. I needed the urge of summer like a sunflower. I thought in my 'naïve' way that I would get the relaxation in Gran Canaria (my first trip to the Canary Islands...and, unfortunately, my last one, though!), which I so needed. Instead, I was shocked by what I saw.

What I saw and experienced was beyond my cerebral capacity to soak all in. I stayed with my partner (also a healthcare professional) in a lovely, lovely mountain village, which was epic. The little sleepy beauty of the village reflected the Spanish culture's beauty. I really felt like I was on holiday; hooray – after 24 months of exhaustion from being a staff nurse! But being high up in the mountains meant we had fog, rain, and a max of 12 degrees Celsius. Actually, it's like the English weather.

The people in the village followed their strict COVID-19 guidelines by wearing their masks inside bars, restaurants, supermarkets, petrol stations, etc. and even outside when the Spanish were strolling around within their village, i.e., being at the little gorgeous market square, outside the church courtyard, in front of their townhouse, etc.

I felt absolutely relaxed and safe!

My partner and I then decided to drive to the South end of the island (where the sun was) and wanted to discover the island in our little rental car. BUT what we saw was really shocking. TONS of tourists (mainly Germans, English and Scandinavians) were hoarding in the HUGE hotel areas like cities within cities. Well, that was one thing which I never saw while being on holiday. What really shocked me was the question: Where was COVID-19 here? No masks wearing, no keeping distances, parties non-stop... where did I land? On which planet was I?

I could really feel the disgust coming up in me and was 'sooooo' embarrassed by being a tourist myself (a German living in the UK), even when I walked along with an FFP2 mask as the Spanish did.

No one gave a damn old thought about the pandemic at all. Have we all not learned anything from the last 24 months, when the societies were clapping for us nurses, midwives, doctors, and healthcare staff in general? What was this all about?

As we all know, over 1,500 nurses died (according to the International Council of Nurses) while they were on duty and caring for their COVID-19 patients. For what did they die when we all behaved like that? While I write this article and those words, I still feel the anger inside me. Why did our colleagues, who died, give their relentless good nursing practice to those who might be at the Spanish beaches and behaving like that? It is in beyond a nurse's understanding, I guess.

Remember people out there: The Pandemic Doesn't Stop When We Go on Holiday!

The lovely Spanish people, who work in those massive hotel resorts, must be sick of the tourists when the majority behave like that.

How often did I hear '*Hola, Senior, please wear a mask!*' when I was in the supermarket to buy some water bottles. The Spanish lady was too kind to her customers, who were too stupid to get it. If I had worked in the Super Mercado, I would just have yelled at the 'stupidos', that's for sure.

Honestly, how hard can it be not to follow a country's COVID-19 guidelines? It is utterly disrespectful if we ignore them. Actually, pretty dangerous to the Spanish population if we behave like that.

The Spanish society was one of the first European to get the 85% vaccination status and was leading with Portugal. They set a great example for all of us because they think and handle for and within their society. I call it a fantastic civil duty that the Spanish people implemented and still follow. Until March, it was not even allowed to smoke in public places in the bigger cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, etc., due to the aerosols that might contain the virus load. The Spanish government wanted to protect their people by implementing this law.

Can you all imagine this would happen in London, Berlin, Oslo, Copenhagen, and Helsinki, where those people would need to obey these strict orders regarding smoke and wearing masks outside?

I don't think so, after what I saw on the beach of Las Palomas! It was AWFUL!

I don't want to see this all again; therefore, in July, I am not flying around during my summer break; I will stay on a cold, wet, and windy Scottish island. Hooray! I know the beauty of Scotland will take me away even when sunshine might be rare.

I would rather stay my days off in wellies and a woolly jumper in Scotland than see those ignorant hordes again. No way, Jose!

Many thanks for taking your time, and do stay safe!

Until next month so long,

Your Nurse,  
Sabine

Published on : Thu, 14 Apr 2022