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# Airbnb makes big changes to its cancellation policy, eliminating certain guest protections

By Mitra Sorrells (/Mitra-Sorrells) | September 24, 2020

After **[bungling refunds and angering both guests and hosts \(https://www.phocuswire.com/airbnb-gives-hosts-250-million-for-coronavirus-cancelations\)](https://www.phocuswire.com/airbnb-gives-hosts-250-million-for-coronavirus-cancelations)** in the early days of the COVID-19 crisis, **[Airbnb \(https://www.airbnb.com/\)](https://www.airbnb.com/)** is now revamping its policy with sweeping changes that eliminate many covered circumstances while adding others not included before.

The new “Extenuating Circumstances Policy” will apply to accommodation check-ins and experiences on or after January 20, 2021.

The new cancellation policy will no longer cover guests’ personal situations that prevent them from

traveling, such as “unexpected disease, illness, or injury; government obligations like jury duty, court appearances or military duties; travel advisories or other government guidance (that fall short of a travel ban or prohibition); cancellation or rescheduling of an event for which the reservation was made; and transportation disruptions unrelated to a covered Event like road closures, as well as flight, train, bus and ferry cancellations.”

What is covered under the new policy includes unexpected changes to visa or passport requirements; government-declared emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic; government-imposed travel restrictions; military action or acts of terrorism or civil unrest; and natural disasters, except those that are common in certain location such as hurricanes during hurricane season in Florida.

In addition, the new policy states that guests impacted by a covered event can receive “a cash refund, travel credit and/or other consideration.”

When asked who decides which of those the guest receives – Airbnb or the host – the company replied in email, “Airbnb will make a decision on the options provided based on the facts of the event, industry practice, and applicable law. And as mentioned before, our practice has been to offer only cash refunds, but we added the option of travel credit for some guests during the current pandemic.”

An Airbnb spokesperson says the company made these changes based on host feedback “to help provide more balance in the two-sided marketplace, increase transparency and align with best practices in the travel industry.”

In addition, Airbnb says host cancellations always result in a refund to guests, whether or not they fall under the policy.

One thing noticeably missing from the new policy – any mention of death, which is the first item in the current extenuating circumstances policy.

When asked if the death of a host or guest is covered, Airbnb replied that death is not part of the new policy but “Airbnb will provide refunds at company discretion, based on appropriate documentation being submitted. This refund is not part of Extenuating Circumstances and would not affect any potential payout to the host, according to the reservation's normal cancellation policy.”

Airbnb says the majority of its listings have policies that provide full refunds for cancellations made at least five days prior to check-in, regardless of reason, so in general the Extenuating Circumstances Policy is intended for cancellations within the five-day window or for those properties with more strict cancellation policies.

The policy does not apply to reservations for Airbnb Luxe properties, which have a separate refund policy.



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Currently, Airbnb has a **separate policy (<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2701/extenuating-circumstances-policy-and-the-coronavirus-covid19>)** for COVID-19-related cancellations that is only for stays through October 31, 2020. The company says if that policy is extended, it would supersede the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Airbnb says it will also soon announce a partnership with an insurance company to offer trip protection to guests, initially for properties in the United States and then expanding to other countries.

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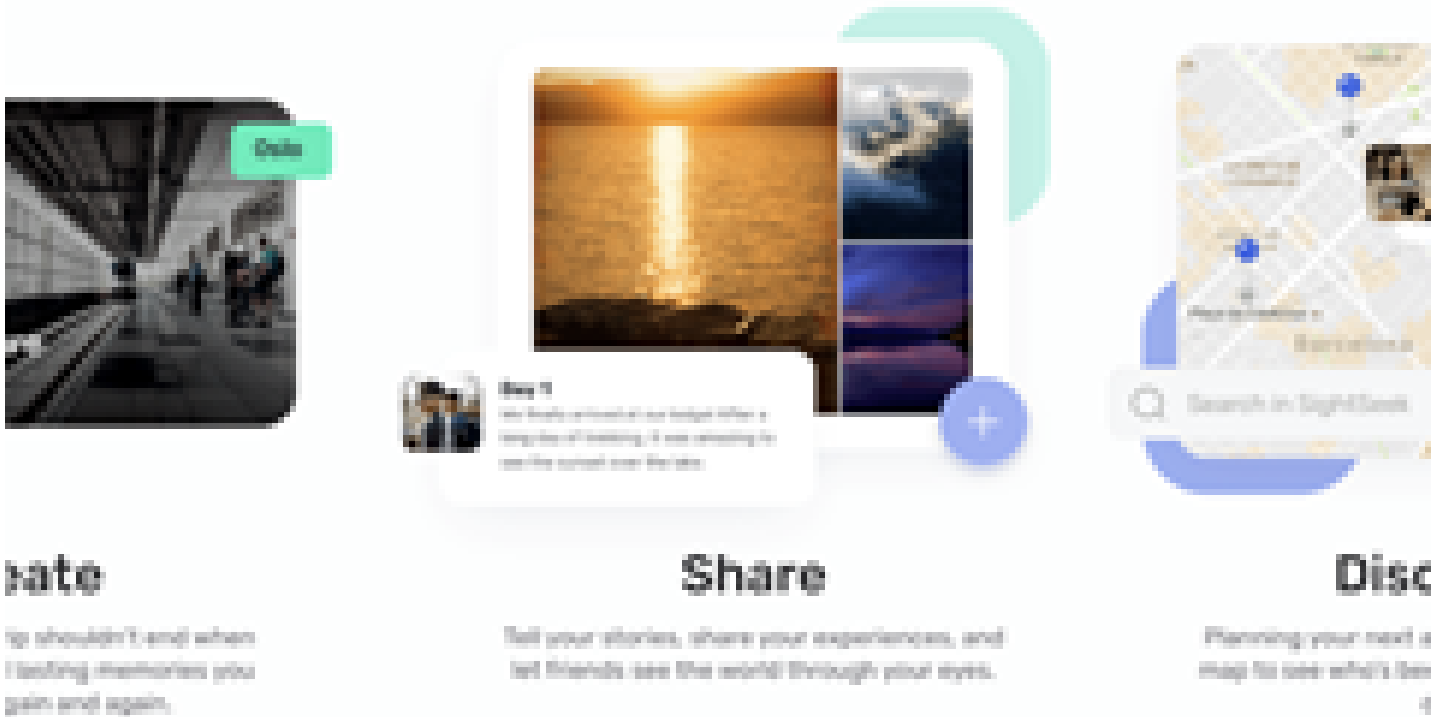
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