

The long road to goodbye

It all started with a phone call. On Dec. 3, David Mosuela*, a Filipino resident, received news from the hospital informing him that his ailing sister was in critical condition, and asked him to come as soon as he could. The problem? The hospital was all the way in Orlando, Fla.

Due to the heightened travel restrictions and stricter safety protocols in order to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, it has become difficult even for immediate families to be with their ailing loved one who is overseas, with some not being able to say their goodbyes in person at all. Moreover, different countries have different protocols in place which adds to confusion for travelers. In a rush to book a flight, he first booked a flight with Korean Air to Los Angeles, Calif. with a layover in Korea for the same day. Upon checking, he was told that he did not need a swab test to board the flight. When he got to the airport in the evening, he was informed that a negative swab test was [mandatory](#) based on the Korean government's policy. Because of this, he was forced to cancel his flight.

The next available flight was from Philippine Airlines two days after, which was not bound to have any layover. However, it was around the same time that California was going on [lockdown](#), so it was unclear whether or not they were requiring travelers to quarantine for 14 days. Luckily, he was not required to go through quarantine since he was only transiting as he was taking another flight to Florida. He got on the full flight wearing his personal protective equipment, mask, and face shield to protect himself from the virus. Knowing that he was yet to face another battle when he landed in the United States with mixed feelings of uncertainty and dread, he tried to get some rest despite his uncomfortable protective gear.

After taking another domestic flight from Los Angeles to Orlando which was relatively easier compared to his first flight, he immediately checked in his hotel and rushed straight to the hospital to see his sister. To his glee, he was still able to accompany his sister on her last days. "*Parang nakahinga ako*, even if I had to go through the hassle of traveling all the way there, because at least I got to say goodbye," Mosuela added.



A grieving family member over the grave of their deceased loved one. Photo by The Associated Press.

Though most family and friends in the Philippines weren't able to say their farewell to the deceased through the usual [traditions](#) of gathering for vigils, wakes, and funerals, they were able to hold an online memorial service. After processing all the necessary documents in order to return to Manila, he booked a flight back home with the ashes of his sister for her to be buried here. Due to the new strain of the COVID-19 virus, he was required to undergo a 14 day quarantine, giving him time to process his lament in isolation without the comfort of other people's touch.

As he reflects on his whole experience while in quarantine, Mosuela finds himself wondering how much harder it must be for those who can't afford to say their goodbyes with all the challenges the pandemic has brought. "I'm sure it's much harder because it costs money to travel, *at sa totoo lang* everyone now is really just struggling because of lost jobs, businesses closing down... *sana lang talaga* this pandemic ends sooner rather than later, just so we can all have a semblance of normal, even when it comes to processing our grief," he adds.

**Note: The interviewee's name has been withheld upon his request.*