

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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Emirates
sets industry-
leading safety
standard
for customers

**Airlines and
face masks**

Azerbaijan
unveils plan to
revive tourism

Oberoi Group
rolls out enhanced
health, safety
programme across
all hotels



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January



February



March



April



May

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Traveling Through 2019



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

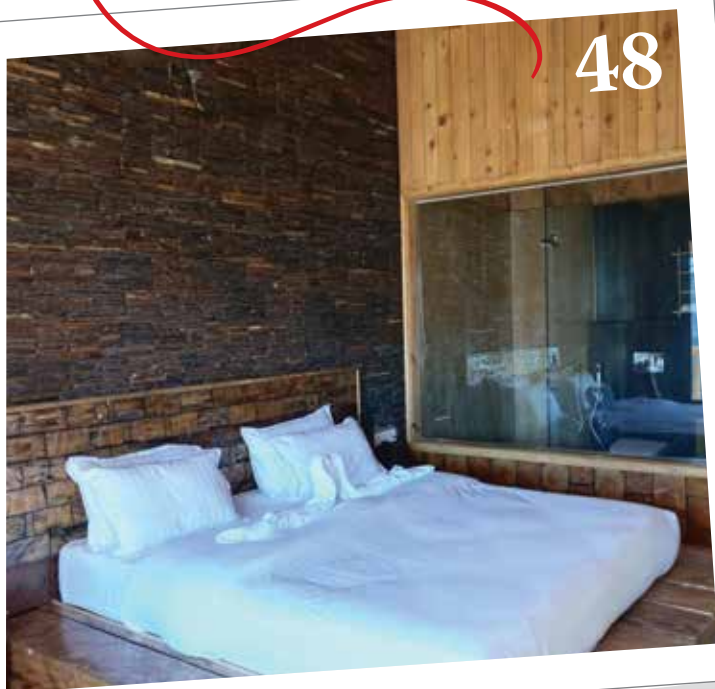
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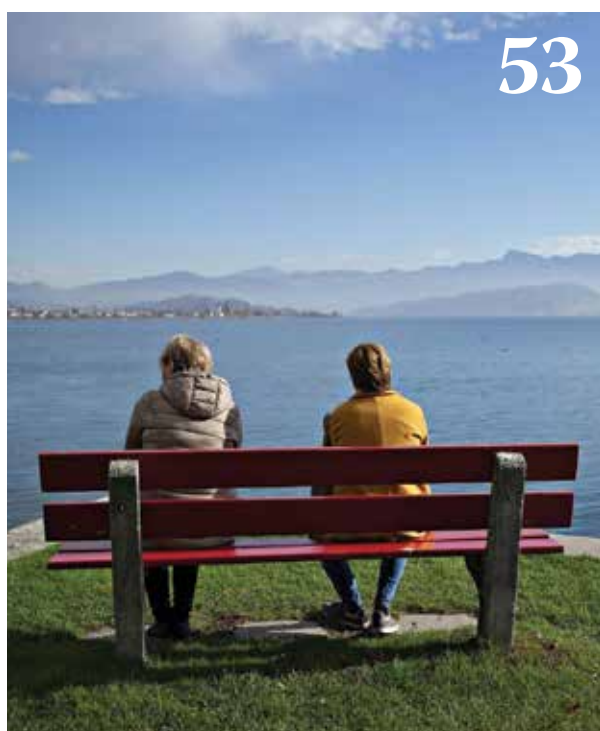
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Sun will shine again: Maldives to unveil tourism reopening plans on 8 June. Tourism promotion officials in Maldives are preparing to host a grand virtual event to kickstart the island nation's efforts to reopen its lucrative tourism industry.



Editor's Letter



LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE
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As travel and tourism restrictions begins to ease, the world continues to remain cautious, says UNWTO

The world is slowly opening up again, new research from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) indicates, with destinations cautiously easing travel restrictions introduced in response to COVID-19. As the United Nations specialized agency releases its Global Guidelines for Reopening Tourism, signalling a transition into gearing up for stronger and better recovery, 3% of all global destinations have now taken steps to ease travel restrictions.

UNWTO has been monitoring the global response to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. The fourth edition of its COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions: A Global Review for Tourism report, released recently, again looked at the measures of 217 destinations worldwide as of 18 May 2020. The research shows that 7 destinations have eased travel restrictions for international tourism purposes. At the same time, several more destinations are engaged in significant discussions about the re-opening of borders.

Caution Remains - The report notes that 100% of all destinations worldwide continue to have some form of COVID-19-related travel restrictions in place. Furthermore, as of 18 May 75% continued to have their borders completely closed for international tourism. In 37% of all cases, travel restrictions have been in place for 10 weeks, while 24% of global destinations have had restrictions in place for 14 weeks or more.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "The timely and

responsible easing of travel restrictions will help ensure the many social and economic benefits that tourism guarantees will return in a sustainable way. This will contribute to the livelihoods of many millions of people around the world. The sector is a driver of sustainable development and a pillar of economies. UNWTO stresses the need for vigilance, responsibility and international cooperation as the world slowly opens up again."

Pololikashvili also welcomed the growing confidence in the global tourism sector, noting it stands ready to return to growth. While tourism has been the hardest hit of all the world's major economic sectors, UNWTO has led a joint response and last week released its Global Guidelines to Reopen Tourism. These guidelines outline the steps governments and the private sector can take to accelerate recovery in the months ahead.

Tourism-Dependent States Locked Down - Looking into global travel restrictions more closely, the UNWTO research shows that, the more important tourism is to the economies of individual destinations, the more likely they are to have introduced complete border closures. In the case of SIDS destinations (Small Island Developing States), 85% continue to have their borders completely closed for tourism purposes.

All UNWTO regions have more than 65% of their destinations completely closed to tourism: Africa (74%), Americas (86%), Asia and the Pacific (67%), Europe (74%) and the Middle East (69%).

We are on    

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India sets 14-day quarantine for international arrivals

According to new guidelines issued by the Indian Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare, all international passengers arriving in India will have to undergo mandatory quarantine for a period of 14 days. During his recent social media address, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri hinted at the possibility of reopening international travel by July-August, this year.

Before boarding a ship or a flight, all travellers will have to give an undertaking for the quarantine. The period, however, would include seven days of paid institutional quarantine at their own expense, followed by seven days of isolation at home with self-monitoring health.

The ministry said, "For exceptional and compelling reasons such as cases of human distress, pregnancy, death in the family, serious illness and

parents accompanied by children below ten years, as per assessment by the receiving states, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days.

"For such cases, the use of the Aarogya Setu app has been made mandatory."

All inbound travellers have been advised to download Aarogya Setu app on their mobile devices.

At the time of boarding, only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to board after the thermal screening.

The guidelines further said that those who will be arriving through land borders will also have to undergo

the same protocol, and those who are asymptomatic will be allowed to cross the border into India.

Other requirements include, "A self-declaration form in duplicate shall be filled by the person in the flight or ship and a copy of the same will be given to health and immigration officials present at the port of entry. The form may also be made available on Aarogya Setu app.

"On arrival, the thermal screening will be carried out for all passengers by the health officials present at the airport, seaport or land port.

"The passengers found to be symptomatic during screening shall be immediately isolated and taken to a medical facility as per health protocol. The remaining passengers shall be taken to suitable institutional quarantine facilities, to be arranged by the respective state and union territory governments."

Anyone who is found to be coronavirus positive will be assessed clinically. The guidelines said, "If the cases are mild, they will be allowed home isolation or isolated in the Covid care centre, both public and private facilities, as appropriate.

"Those having moderate or severe symptoms will be admitted to dedicated Covid Health facilities and managed accordingly."





OTOAI

hopeful of International Operations restarting soon

It has been over two months since the lockdown has been in place and there is no doubt left that the Travel and Tourism Industry has been one of the worst hits sectors. Not only have the people lost almost all of their existing business but the future too looks grim, given the norms of social distancing. However, a silver lining on the cloud has been the recent announcement regarding opening of the Domestic flights, which is something that many people were looking forward to.

“Yes the move regarding opening of Domestic flights is a welcome one but I am a little cautious and would rather wait and see how things will function.

The first people to travel, in my opinion, would be those who are stuck away from home – people who were travelling before lockdown, students and similar such, once this traffic is taken care of, then the real picture will surface. Are people ready to travel for work? For leisure? To take a break? All these questions will be answered once the initial couple of weeks of domestic travel is over. Having said this, I do hope the government will look into opening International flights also soon,” says **Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI.**

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), like many others, is also disappointed

with not being considered as part of the Government’s stimulus package and is in talks with senior officials in the government to request for certain things. “We have written to the PMO and asked them to grant us relief on five fronts –**roll-back of the TCS, not make Pan Card mandatory for foreign remittances for foreign nationals and non-resident Indians, grant relief from GST, allow outbound tour operators to take interest free loans and expansion of working capital,**” adds Riaz Munshi.

“We at OTOAI are constantly striving to work for the benefit of our members and our industry. These are exceptionally challenging times and we each need to stand for the other otherwise we will all come crumbling down. It is tough but the travel fraternity should collectively try to boost domestic tourism and give it the push it needs. Once international skies open – which I think will happen in a phased manner, maybe in another month or so, we must practice responsible tourism and offer our customers safe and new options where the scare of virus is not threatening. Going forward, we have to be patient and outbound travel will definitely revive soon,” shares **Himanshu Patil, Vice President, OTOAI.**

ixigo

launches ixigo Assured, offers full refund on all Domestic Flight Bookings



Built during the lockdown, 'ixigo assured' offers the most competitive free cancellation product in the Indian OTA market.

With domestic flights opening up with one-third capacity effective 25th May 2020, travellers are looking for reassurance on refunds in case they need to cancel their flights amid COVID-19 concerns. To reduce this travel anxiety, AI-based travel app ixigo has announced the launch of 'ixigo assured' fares - allowing a full refund guarantee upto Rs. 5000 for cancellations made by travellers, for any reason whatsoever, prior to their date of departure.

The ixigo assured option is available on all new bookings made on or after

22nd May with departure dates within 90 days of the booking date. This move is expected to benefit millions of travellers who may be unsure of booking for a future travel date due to uncertainty on various fronts and seek the flexibility of cancelling their domestic travel plans starting from a price point of just Rs.399 per passenger.

Commenting on the launch, Alope Bajpai, Co-founder & CEO, ixigo said, "With the current pandemic situation there is an increase in anxiety and uncertainty among travellers with respect to planning their next trip and

movement restrictions in containment / red zones. The constantly evolving state-specific rules complicate this calculus further. Our recent travel sentiment survey, with over 5000 respondents, revealed that nearly 50% of air travellers planning to book a flight in the next few weeks are looking for a fully-refundable booking option for their travel. ixigo assured is the product anxious travellers were craving for."

In addition to full refunds of upto Rs. 5000, 'ixigo assured' also provides a travel insurance cover for trip delays (upto Rs. 10,000) and baggage loss (upto Rs. 5,000). 'ixigo assured' also provides emergency accidental hospitalization for Rs.3 Lakh Sum Insured and medical emergency evacuation for Rs.1 Lakh Sum Insured. The convenience fees and ixigo assured fees charged by ixigo shall remain non-refundable, and such refunds shall be credited directly into the bank accounts of travellers within 15 days of making a claim. ixigo assured can be availed by passengers in the age group of 2 to 70 years.

Rajnish Kumar, Co-Founder & CTO, ixigo said, "We conceived, partnered, developed and launched this product within a record span of 3 weeks, as soon as it became evident that travellers would increasingly face a dilemma while booking their next trip as soon as flights resume. As travel demand recovers, we want our users to feel confident and safe and give them a flexible, stress-free booking experience."

Though most domestic airlines have been offering credit shells or waivers on rebooking and modification charges over the last three months, there is still a need for options that protect travellers who may want to cancel their flight bookings and avoid heavy penalties on cancellations. 'ixigo assured' will benefit travellers who are uncertain of their travel plans at the lowest price point in the entire OTA market. Other zero cancellation or free cancellation products in the market are currently at least three times more expensive.



This is how IATA sees air travel working in a post- COVID-19 world

IATA's new guidelines for airport and airline operations offer the clearest picture yet of what air travel could look like as the world emerges from COVID-19 travel restrictions.

IATA says its newly released *Biosecurity for Air Transport: A Roadmap*

for *Restarting Aviation* offers a roadmap for airlines and airports looking to nail down best practices for a post-COVID-19 world of global travel.

Alexandre de Juniac,
IATA's Director General and
CEO, says: "There is no single

measure that will reduce risk and enable a safe re-start of flying. But a layering measures that are globally implemented and mutually recognized by governments can achieve the needed outcome. This is the greatest crisis that aviation has ever faced. A layered approach has worked with safety and with security. It's the way forward for bio-security as well."

Here are IATA's proposed guidelines, which IATA says should be temporary, regularly reviewed and replaced when more efficient options are found (or removed should they become unnecessary) ...

PRE-FLIGHT

IATA says it can see the need for governments to collect passenger data in advance of travel, including health information, "which should be accomplished using well-tested channels such as those used for eVisa or electronic travel authorization programs."



AT DEPARTURE AIRPORT

Access to the terminal building should be restricted to airport / airline workers and travellers (with exceptions being made for those accompanying passengers with disabilities or unaccompanied minors)

- **Temperature screening** by trained government staff at entry points to the terminal building
- **Physical distancing** through all passenger processes, including queue management
- Use of **face coverings** for passengers and masks for staff in line with local regulations.
- **Self-service options for check-in** used by passengers as much as possible to reduce contact points and queues. This includes remote check-in (electronic / home printed boarding passes), automated bag drops (with home printed bag tags) and self-boarding.
- **Boarding** should be made as efficient as possible with re-designed gate areas, congestion-reducing boarding priorities, and hand luggage limitations.

- **Cleaning and sanitization** of high touch areas in line with local regulations. This includes wide availability of hand sanitizers.

IN-FLIGHT

- **Face coverings** required for all passengers and non-surgical masks for crew
- Simplified cabin service and pre-packaged catering to reduce interaction between passengers and crew
- **Reduced congregation** of passengers in the cabin, for example by prohibiting queues for washrooms.
- Enhanced and more frequent deep cleaning of the cabin

AT ARRIVAL AIRPORT

- **Temperature screening** by trained government staff if required by authorities
- **Automated procedures for customs and border control** including use of mobile applications and biometric technologies (which have already proven track record by some governments)
- **Accelerated processing and baggage reclaim** to enable social distancing by reducing congestion and queuing
- **Health declarations and robust contact tracing** are expected to be undertaken by governments to reduce the risk of imported chains of transmission

POTENTIAL 'GAME-CHANGERS'

Barring the best-case scenario, i.e. the discovery of a vaccine for COVID-19, IATA also said that two 'game-changers' that could lessen or eliminate many of the above guidelines could be scalable, accurate and efficient COVID-19 testing, and/or immunity passports. IATA says would support the development of immunity passports to segregate no-risk travellers, 'at a time when these are backed by medical science and recognized by governments'.

OPPOSITION TO QUARANTINE MEASURES

IATA also reiterated its opposition to

social distancing on board aircraft and quarantine measures on arrival.

Instead of quarantine measures, IATA advocates temperature checks and contact tracing, which work toward the same goal of containment and risk management, without crippling the air and travel industries. "Temperature screening reduces the risk of symptomatic passengers from traveling, while health declarations and contact tracing after arrival reduce the risk of imported cases developing into local chains of transmission," says IATA.

IATA also reconfirmed its stance against social distancing on board (i.e. leaving the middle seat open). There's no need to leave the middle seat open when passengers and crew are wearing face coverings, plus other on-board health and safety protocols (e.g. everybody is front facing, air flow is from ceiling to floor, seats provide a barrier to forward/aft transmission, and air filtration systems that operate to hospital operating theatre standards).

"THE VITAL ELEMENT IS COORDINATION"

IATA says it is reaching out to governments with its guidelines, in support of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

"The Roadmap is the industry's high-level thinking on safely re-starting aviation. Timing is critical. Governments understand the importance of aviation to the social and economic recovery of their countries and many are planning a phased re-opening of borders in the coming months. We have a short time to reach agreement on the initial standards to support safely reconnecting the world and to firmly establish that global standards are essential to success. This will change as technology and medical science advances. The vital element is coordination. If we don't take these first steps in a harmonized way, we will spend many painful years recovering ground that should not have been lost," said de Juniac.



Urgent Implementation of ICAO COVID-19 Guidelines Needed

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) urged governments to quickly implement the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO's) global guidelines for restoring air connectivity.

Today, the ICAO Council approved *Takeoff: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis (Takeoff)*. This is an authoritative and comprehensive framework of risk-based temporary measures for air transport operations during the COVID-19 crisis.

"The universal implementation of global standards has made aviation safe. A similar approach is critical in this crisis so that we can safely restore air connectivity as borders and economies re-open. The Takeoff guidance document was built with the best expertise of government and industry. Airlines strongly support it. Now we are counting on governments to implement the recommendations quickly, because the world wants to travel again and needs airlines to play a key role in the economic recovery. And we must do this with global harmonization and mutual recognition of efforts to earn the confidence of travelers and air transport workers," said **Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.**

Takeoff proposes a phased approach to restarting aviation and identifies a set of generally applicable risk-based measures. In line with recommendations and guidance from

public health authorities, these will mitigate the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus during the travel process.

These measures include:

- **Physical distancing** to the extent feasible and implementation of "adequate risk-based measures where distancing is not feasible, for example in aircraft cabins";
- **Wearing of face coverings and masks** by passengers and aviation workers;
- **Routine sanitation and disinfection** of all areas with potential for human contact and transmission;
- **Health screening**, which could include pre- and post-flight self-declarations, as well as temperature screening and visual observation, "conducted by health professionals";
- **Contact tracing** for passengers and aviation employees: updated contact information should be requested as part of the health self-declaration, and interaction between passengers and governments should be made directly through government portals;
- **Passenger health declaration forms**, including self-declarations in line with the recommendations of relevant health authorities. Electronic tools should be encouraged to avoid paper;
- **Testing**: if and when real-time, rapid and reliable testing becomes available.

"This layering of measures should give travelers and crew the confidence they need to fly again. And we are committed to working with our partners to continuously improve these measures as medical science, technology and the pandemic evolve," said **de Juniac.**

Takeoff was one element of work of the ICAO COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART). The CART report to the ICAO Council highlighted that it is of "paramount importance to avoid a global patchwork of incompatible [aviation] health safety measures." It urges ICAO Member States to "implement globally- and regionally-harmonized, mutually accepted measures that do not create undue economic burdens or compromise the safety and security of civil aviation." The Report also notes that COVID-19 risk mitigation measures, "should be flexible and targeted to ensure that a vibrant and competitive global aviation sector will drive the economic recovery."

"The leadership of ICAO and the commitment of our fellow CART members have combined to quickly lay the foundation for a safe restoration of air transport amid the COVID-19 crisis. We salute the unity of purpose that guided aviation's stakeholders to a solid conclusion. Moreover, we fully support CART's findings and look forward to working with governments for a well-coordinated systematic implementation that will enable flights to resume, borders to open and quarantine measures to be lifted," said **de Juniac.**

Etihad Airways launches health and hygiene programme



Etihad Airways has launched 'Etihad Wellness', an expanded and more comprehensive health and hygiene programme and customer guide. This builds on the stringent measures already put in place by the airline to deal with COVID-19. The programme will be championed by the introduction of specially trained Wellness Ambassadors, a first in the industry, who will provide essential travel health information and care so guests can fly with greater peace of mind.

Etihad Wellness initiatives will be communicated through an easy-to-use online guide highlighting the high standards of cleanliness, health and hygiene being applied at every stage of the customer journey. This includes culinary hygiene at the airline's catering facilities and food testing laboratory, aircraft cabin deep-cleaning, check-in, health screening, boarding, inflight experience and product, crew interaction, arrival, and ground transportation. Comprehensive information on these travel health and hygiene measures is available at www.etihad.com/wellness.

For those needing more specific and personalised information, skilled Wellness Ambassadors can be contacted directly 24/7 by emailing wellness@etihad.ae. This dedicated multi-lingual team will offer reassurance to customers by sharing advice on travel wellbeing and details of the health and sanitisation measures being implemented throughout their journey. Etihad will expand the service to include a web-chat option. All Wellness Ambassadors will undergo special training at the airline's training facilities in Abu Dhabi, and online.

Tony Douglas, Group Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Aviation Group, said: "Providing for our guests, and their wellbeing, is one of Etihad's core values, and we have a responsibility to protect them, to keep them fully informed, and to provide even greater levels of genuine warmth and personal care. We must guarantee they can travel assured in the knowledge that we have every aspect of their journey with us covered, while still providing a top-quality travel experience. The Wellness Ambassadors will play an important role

in delivering this. For us it is not simply about dealing with a new normal – this level of genuine and innovative customer care has always been part of Etihad's DNA since our inception."

Over the coming weeks, Etihad will also introduce Wellness Ambassadors at Abu Dhabi International Airport in partnership with Abu Dhabi Airports (ADAC). This will make sure the same levels of care and support are provided at every point of the customer journey through the airport, from check-in to security, immigration, the retail areas, lounges and boarding, so that guests can fly with added comfort, security and confidence.

Once travel restrictions to and from the UAE are lifted, and the airline resumes an expanded network of international flights, Etihad will introduce Wellness Ambassadors on board, complementing the roles performed by other Cabin Crew, and providing an enhanced level of customer care focused on health and wellness inflight.

"The wide-ranging measures we are taking are a strong reflection of those already in place across the emirate of Abu Dhabi. When restrictions are fully lifted and travellers can once again enjoy the best our wonderful home has to offer, they can rest assured their trip will be to one of the cleanest and most well-maintained destinations in the world. This will of course also apply to those transiting onwards through the capital. We are grateful to our partners, including Abu Dhabi Airports, and the Department of Culture and Tourism, for their close cooperation in this far-reaching programme," **concludes Mr. Douglas.**

Etihad continues to follow UAE and international government, regulatory and health authority directives, and is playing its part in helping to limit the spread of COVID-19.



Vistara Brings Temporary Modification to Inflight Services for Health and Safety Reasons

Vistara, a joint venture of Tata group and Singapore Airlines, continues to take strong steps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The airline today announced intended temporary changes to its inflight products and services on domestic and international flights to ensure health and safety of passengers and its staff upon resumption of services, when allowed by the authorities. In line with social distancing norms, the airline aims to introduce new operating procedures to minimise touchpoints of human contact on board by up to 80%. The airline may make further changes in compliance with regulatory guidelines once they are finalised and notified.

Vistara intends to continue serving food and beverages in all cabins while reducing the cabin crew's time

spent on aisle and interaction with customers. On Vistara's domestic flights, the service alterations include reduction in meal choices and withdrawal of services such as onboard sales, welcome drink, hot meals and beverages in Premium Economy and Economy cabins, Starbucks coffee and Turkish towels. Water-pouring will be replaced with distribution of 200ml sealed water bottles on all flights, and cold refreshments will be served to customers in Premium Economy and Economy cabins, including to customers opting for Economy Lite fares. To further reduce the risk of spreading the virus by touch, the airline has implemented a temporary fleetwide removal of its inflight magazine and other reading material. Services on international flights will also be reviewed accordingly to curtail contact with customers.

Vistara's cabin crew are receiving appropriate training on minimising their chances of contracting or spreading the coronavirus. They will undergo thermal screenings before the departure and arrival of flights, and will be quarantined/tested if any colleagues or passengers show symptoms of infection or test positive for COVID-19. The cabin crew will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks and disposable gloves at all times.

Vistara shall implement social distancing across all possible passenger touchpoints and encourage the usage of self-service facilities such as web check-in and airport check-in kiosks.

Vistara maintains the highest standards in hygiene, including disinfectant cleaning of all aircraft at the turn-around of every single flight and deep cleaning of all aircraft every 24 hours with higher concentration of approved disinfectant cleaners. Vistara will equip all its aircraft with surgical masks, gloves, sanitizer wipes and contact-less infrared thermometers. The airline will also ensure a precautionary check-up with the Airport Medical Support team for any passenger showing symptoms of COVID-19.

Vistara Opens Bookings

For Domestic Flight

Operations Resuming 25 May

Vistara, India's finest full-service carrier, has announced resumption of its domestic flights from 25 May 2020, following an order of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt. of India. The airline will temporarily operate on a reduced network and scale up gradually, subject to necessary regulatory approvals on the revised schedule of operations. Vistara will follow strict compliance with all new guidelines issued by the authorities across touchpoints to ensure health and safety of all passengers and staff.

Vistara's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Leslie Thng said, "Aviation is a growth engine for the economy and resumption of air travel will give great impetus to the government's overall efforts in helping the country eventually return to normalcy. We thank the government for taking this step and for their consultative approach in putting together the new SOPs/guidelines for all stakeholders in the aviation sector. We will support the government's initiatives and maintain the highest level of safety, hygiene and security in our operations to provide a flying experience to passengers that they can continue to trust."

Vistara will be operating a reduced network for the next few weeks, connecting 24 cities across the country. As part of the new SOPs/guidelines issued by the Govt. of India, the airline will take multiple measures to minimise contact between passengers and staff and for overall health and safety reasons. This includes but is not limited to temporary suspension of Vistara's well-regarded on-board meal service, mandatory web check-



in and self-printing of boarding pass and baggage tags for all passengers, implementing baggage limitations with only one check-in bag and one piece of carry-on bag allowed and acceptance of passengers after certification of their health status on the mandatory contact tracing Aarogya Setu app.

Health and hygiene inside the cabin are ensured in all of Vistara's aircraft manufactured by Airbus and Boeing that use multiple highly efficient airflow and filtration systems that continuously refresh cabin air with air from outside. Powerful HEPA filters trap 99.9% of particulates such as viruses (including coronaviruses), bacteria and fungi and purify the air inside the cabin every two to three minutes, thereby making flying a highly safe mode of transportation.

To complement all health and safety measures, customers will be required to report to the airport at least two hours prior to their flight's departure, factoring in more time required to maintain social distancing norms and to clear necessary security/health checks. Each customer will be given a safety

kit by the airline consisting of a face mask, face shield and sanitiser. They will be required to wear face masks at all times throughout their journey – at the airport and on board their flights – and use hand sanitizers frequently. Scanners will be used at the boarding gates to enable self-boarding wherever possible, while following a staggered and sequential boarding process. Vistara will temporarily suspend priority boarding and follow reverse zone boarding, with the passenger in the last row entering the aircraft first.

All of Vistara's staff will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times, including cabin crew that will wear protective gowns, face masks and face shields. The airline will also ensure disinfectant cleaning of all aircraft at the turn-around of every single flight and deep cleaning of all aircraft every 24 hours with approved disinfectant cleaners. All aircraft will also be equipped with surgical masks, gloves, sanitizer wipes, and contact-less infrared thermometers for any need arising on board.

Emirates protects and prepares its all wide-body fleet

While the world yearns to travel once again, meet and hug loved ones, seek new adventures and close those business deals, Emirates is busy protecting and readying the world's largest all wide-body fleet to take to the skies. This could have proved daunting, but Emirates Engineering, a division of the airline and one of the world's most technologically advanced aircraft maintenance facilities, has it all covered – literally!

Ahmed Safa, Emirates' Divisional Senior Vice President Engineering said: "Emirates moves to a different drumbeat – one where the highest standards are absolutely fundamental to our entire organisational rhythm. Everything we do ladders up to ensuring the best customer experience and people feeling safe and reassured while flying with us.

"That philosophy also extends to our Engineering team and how we maintain and secure our multibillion dollar fleet with the world's largest number of Airbus A380s and Boeing 777s. We don't just cover our engines, but have a comprehensive aircraft parking and reactivation programme that strictly follows manufacturers' guidelines and maintenance manuals, and we have enhanced standards and protocols of our own.

"We also have the enviable challenge of a full wide-body fleet – 115 A380s and 155 B777s – and the most sophisticated systems and avionics in the industry. While a narrow-body aircraft only requires

around 3-4 employees working for eight hours or so to cover it, our aircraft need 4-6 employees working a 12-hour shift. And taking extra precautions while maintaining social distancing adds its own interesting twist to the proceedings."

The parked fleet

Of the 270 aircraft in its fleet, Emirates had initially parked and wrapped up 218 aircraft – 117 at Dubai World Central and 101 at Dubai International airport – that involved more than 15,500 man-hours of work.

Now around 75 Emirates aircraft, both passenger and freighter, are crisscrossing the planet carrying people on repatriation



and cargo on essential missions. These continue to be maintained as per standard operating procedures. Some aircraft are undergoing scheduled heavy maintenance in Emirates Engineering's hangars.

It's been done before

Routinely, Emirates covers all aircraft that are taken out of operations for more than 48 hours. Much before the pandemic, Emirates has had to cover a significant part of its fleet during the runway closures at Dubai International airport, and even during the 2010 volcanic ash cloud disaster that partially grounded the fleet.

Securing the fleet and ultra-sensitive avionics systems

All apertures and openings through which environmental factors – sand,

dirt, water, birds and insects – can find their way inside an aircraft are wrapped up and made watertight. That includes engines and air data probes – such as pitot, static, temperature, angle of attack sensors – engine intakes and exhausts, and APU intakes and exhausts.

The interiors – whether cabin monuments, seats or inflight entertainment equipment – are also protected from the elements. Potable water systems and aircraft fuel tanks are preserved, and engine and APU systems are protected. The process also involves the greasing, cleaning and preservation of landing gear and flight control systems. The team turns off all cockpit switches, disconnects batteries, and installs control lever locks and window blinds.

Routine checks

After concluding the protection

and preservation works, the team completes periodic checks at 7-, 15- and 30-day intervals across the fleet. These can include simple walk-around inspections to ensure all covers are in place, and there are no visible damages or external leaks. Complex checks include removing the covers and reactivating aircraft systems, idling engines and testing engine bleed air and flight control systems.

Reactivating the fleet

Ahmed Safa said: "We need around 4-5 dedicated employees and at least 18-24 hours to put one of our aircraft back into service. Our customers and our employees can't wait to see our majestic A380s and our powerful 777s grace the skies again, operating our normal schedules and delighting travellers worldwide."



Eurostar makes face masks obligatory for all passengers

Eurostar passengers will be required to cover their faces from Monday 4 May or risk being refused travel.

Eurostar has joined an increasing number of transport providers in requiring its passengers to wear face coverings.

The operator's website confirms that "From May 4, passengers must wear a face mask or face covering at our stations and on board in line with guidelines announced by the French and Belgian governments".

Eurostar asks that customers bring their own masks with them, adding that

"Any type of mask is suitable as long as it effectively covers your nose and mouth".

It also says that those turning up for travel without masks may be refused travel, and warns that "fines may be imposed in France and Belgium if you're not wearing a mask".

France recently announced that the wearing of face masks will be compulsory on public transport and in secondary schools, when the country

starts to relax its lockdown restrictions from May 11.

France is also set to extend its health emergency for a further two months to July 24, and there are proposals for a 14-day quarantine period for all arrivals into the country.

Eurostar is currently operating a significantly reduced service between London, Paris and Brussels, with just a handful of trains per day.

eurostar.com



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2

Emirates

sets industry-leading safety standard for customers travelling as it resumes operations



3

1. Emirates has introduced complimentary hygiene kits to be given to every passenger upon check in at Dubai International Airport and on flights to Dubai. These kits comprise of masks, gloves, antibacterial wipes and hand sanitiser.

2. To uphold the highest standards of safety and hygiene, Emirates has added a cabin service assistant (CSA) to the crew complement on flights over 1.5 hours. The CSAs will ensure lavatories are cleaned at frequent intervals of every 45 mins.

3. The airport team has also installed protective barriers at each check-in desk and immigration counter to provide additional safety reassurance to passengers and employees during interaction over the counter.

Emirates has unveiled multi-faceted measures for employee and customer care at every step of the travel journey, redefining safety and hygiene standards on board and on the ground. The new measures took effect today, with the resumption of regularly scheduled passenger flights to nine destinations.

“Emirates is implementing a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the traveller’s journey, to enhance the sanitisation of all touchpoints, and ensure the health and safety of our customers and employees. The risk of catching an infection on an aircraft is already very low, but we have spared no effort in reviewing and redesigning every step, from check-in to disembarkation. Every measure implemented is an additional reduction in risk, and taken altogether, our aim is really to make flying as safe as possible.

“We are working with all the stakeholders in Dubai - including the airport, immigration, health and aviation authorities to implement such measures, and we will continue to review and consult expert advice for any development and changes. We are all aware that we have to adapt to different practices during this pandemic in our day to day activities.

All these measures, in combination with the proactive pandemic management strategies that the UAE has taken, show the seriousness with which we are taking the health and safety of our local and global communities and will give confidence to the public,” said Adel Al Redha, Emirates’ Chief Operating Officer.

Check-in

Emirates has introduced complimentary hygiene kits to be given to every passenger upon check in at Dubai International Airport and on flights to Dubai. These kits comprise of masks, gloves, antibacterial wipes and hand sanitiser. The hygiene kits supplement a slew of additional measures already introduced to keep customers safe.

Gloves and masks are mandatory for all customers and employees at the airport in Dubai, while only masks are mandated on Emirates flights. On arrival at the airport, thermal scanners at various areas monitor the temperatures of all passengers and employees. Physical distancing indicators have been placed on the ground and at waiting areas to help travellers maintain the necessary distance at check-in, immigration, boarding and transfer areas.

The airport team has also installed protective barriers at each check-in desk and immigration counter to provide additional safety reassurance to passengers and employees during interaction over the counter.

Transit passengers

Customers travelling through Dubai International Airport and transferring onto another flight, will go through thermal screening upon disembarkation. Transfer desks at the airport have also been installed with protective barriers as a precautionary measure. Airport staff, dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE) will direct customers from a safe distance for extra assistance. Customers will be given an additional hygiene kit at the gate before boarding their connecting flight.

Boarding

The boarding sequence has been staggered and passengers board by row, from the last row to the first, in small numbers. The waiting area has also been modified to ensure all customers observe social distancing. Emirates boarding agents, dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE), will facilitate the boarding sequence. The boarding gates are deep cleaned and disinfected after the boarding of every flight.

On board

All cabin crew on board will be fully kitted out in PPEs. To uphold the highest standards of safety and hygiene, Emirates has added a cabin service assistant (CSA) to the crew

complement on flights over 1.5 hours. The CSAs will ensure lavatories are cleaned at frequent intervals of every 45 mins. Each lavatory has been equipped with sanitising soap and hand washing instructions.

To minimise the risk of infection by touch, magazines and print reading material will not be available during this time. In premium classes, single use menus and wine lists will be provided to passengers. Comfort items such as mattresses, pillows, blankets, headphones and toys will be hygienically sealed. Emirates will resume its service with hot meals, using high quality, cutlery and crockery, sterilised before each use.

Cabin baggage have to be checked-in, and customers can only bring essential items such as a laptop, handbag, briefcase or baby items on board. Customers are reminded to bring pens to fill out Health Declaration Forms required for some destinations.

Emirates’ modern aircraft cabins have been fitted with advanced HEPA air filters which remove 99.97% of viruses and eliminate dust, allergens and germs from cabin air for a healthier and safer on-board environment. After its journey and on landing in Dubai, each aircraft will go through enhanced cleaning and disinfection processes to ensure safety and proper sanitation.

Emirates crew

To safeguard its employees, Emirates’ flight and cabin crew are provided with cars for pick up and drop off at their home at the beginning and end of their duty. Operating crew check in for their rostered flights in a dedicated crew airport facility before being transported to the aircraft. Layovers in destination cities have been reduced where possible and on long-haul flights, where layovers are necessary, crew are put up in individual rooms in hotels. On return to Dubai, where all Emirates cabin crew are based, COVID-19 tests are done on all crew. Every crew member has been mandated a 14-day quarantine in their homes after every flight, unless they are on duty.

Checklist for domestic air travel from May 25



Indian carriers including Air India, Indigo, Vistara, Goair and Spicejet have reopened bookings for domestic flights on their respective platforms.

As per Civil Aviation Ministry's recent directive, only 1/3rd domestic flight capacity of the approved summer schedule will be permitted to operate from May 25. The provisional summer schedule for domestic flights can be viewed [here](#).

The Tata-SIA airline Vistara announced that will be operating a reduced network for the next few weeks, connecting 24 cities across the country.

Vistara's chief executive officer, Leslie Thng said, "Aviation is a growth engine for the economy and resumption of air travel will give great impetus to the government's overall efforts in helping the country eventually return to normalcy. "We thank the government for taking this step and for their consultative approach in putting together the new SOPs/guidelines for all stakeholders in the aviation sector."

Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India has issued guidelines that need to be followed by passengers from origin to airport; while boarding, inside aircraft and from airport to destination.

Do's (From origin to the airport)

- Ensure web check-in and get a boarding pass.

- Download baggage tag/identification number, print it and affix it on the bag. In case, you are unable to download the tag, mention the PNR number along with your name on a thick piece of paper and affix it with a strong string.

- Passengers need to travel in an authorised taxi/personal vehicle following the norms prescribed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Make digital payments.

- Certify your health status through Aarogya Setu app or a self-declaration form.

- Before entering the terminal, wear a mask or face cover.

Do's (While boarding)

- Passengers need to collect safety kit (three-layered surgical mask and sanitiser) from the airline near the boarding gate.
- Wear a mask and sanitise before proceeding to the boarding gate for boarding pass scanning.
- Be attentive to the boarding announcement and be in the boarding queue while social distancing.
- Display of identity cards is mandatory and check-in will be done by the passenger through self-scanning of e-boarding pass.

Do's (Onboard)

- Face to face interaction to be minimised.

- Limit the use of lavatory and avoid non-essential movement in the aisle. No queuing outside the lavatory and only one companion for children and elderly would be allowed.

- No meal service onboard. Water bottles to be made available in the galley area or on the seats. Eatables not to be consumed during the flight.

- No newspaper/magazine will be available. No onboard sale of items.

- If the passenger feels uncomfortable, fatigued or has respiratory distress, it should be brought to immediate notice of the crew.

Do's (Airport to destination)

- The disembarkation from the aircraft would be sequential.
- Social distance/sanitisation to be maintained at the arrival gate, aerobridges, coaches, jet ladders and ramps etc.
- Trolleys in the arrival area to be used sparingly.
- Passengers to wait at the baggage hold area until baggage arrives in batches.
- Transit passenger will not be allowed to come out of the transit area.
- Passengers to hire only authorised taxis to the destination.
- On arrival, the passenger needs to follow health protocols prescribed by the destination state/Union territory.

Tags: domestic flights, hardeep Singh Puri, social distancing

United makes face masks obligatory for all passengers



United Airlines is the latest carrier to insist that all passengers wear face coverings when travelling with the airline.

Last week United became the first “major US-based carrier” to require all of its flight attendants to wear face masks when on duty.

The airline has now gone one step further in requiring passengers to do the same, starting from May 4.

United said that it would provide face masks free of charge to all customers, as part of a raft of measures

designed to keep customers and employees safe.

Last month the carrier implemented social distancing on its flights, including restricting advanced seat selection for adjacent seats in all cabins, and boarding fewer customers at a time to allow for more distance during the boarding process.

For a round-up of which carriers are introducing face masks for staff and passengers, please see the following details:

Turkish Airlines plans to resume domestic and international flights

Turkish Airlines is resuming its domestic services today with a limited number of flights operating from Istanbul to Ankara, Izmir, Antalya and Trabzon. The details of flights scheduled from June 1 to June 3 can be viewed [here](#).

The airline is expected to recommence its international flights from June 10.

The flag carrier of Turkey has announced a set of guidelines that will be followed for a safe and hygienic air journey.

As a part of this, passengers can perform contactless check-in at the airline’s counters and kiosks.

Passengers will be called to the checkpoint in small groups and no-contact boarding procedure will be carried out.

The aircraft are disinfected by a

dedicated team after each flight. HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) will ensure high-level filtration in the aircraft.

A hygiene expert will be appointed across all Turkish Airlines’ flights. The crew takes a temperature check and is equipped with protective equipment.

Only a limited number of personal belongings will be allowed inside the cabin. A hygiene kit including mask and sanitiser will be provided for the flight

journey. The inflight services will be single-use only.

The disembarkation process will be controlled and guided by the cabin crew.

Other safety measures issued are online check-in, carrying extra mask throughout the flight journey; undergoing temperature check and maintaining 1.5 metres physical distance.





Airlines and face masks

While most airlines around the world have drastically cut their flying schedules, many are still operating a small number of flights. One of the safety measures a growing number of carriers have begun adopting, in addition to social distancing, is requiring either their cabin crew or passengers to wear protective face masks during flights to limit the spread of Covid-19.

Here's a look at which airlines are mandating face masks (this list will be updated with more carriers as new announcements are made):

Air Asia (Thailand)

Air Asia Thailand will resume domestic flights from May 1 with "strict health controls and social distancing protocol in place" including requiring passengers to wear face masks their own face masks throughout the journey, including during check-in and baggage claim. Guests will also undergo a temperature check.

The carrier said its cabin crew on these domestic flights will have to wear protective equipment such as masks, goggles and gloves throughout the flight.

The resumed routes in Thailand include Don Mueang to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Panom, Roi Et, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Trang, Hat Yai, Surat Thani, as well as the Chiang Mai- Hat Yai route.

Air Canada

Passengers travelling with Air Canada will have to wear a face covering following a directive from Transport Canada, the carrier said on April 17.

Air Canada said travellers will be required to show that they have a "suitable face covering" prior to boarding Air Canada flights. Passengers on all flights have to wear the face covering at check-in, during boarding, and upon entering the aircraft "where social distancing is not possible". Air Canada added that customers will be asked to lower their masks to help with full ID checks at check-in. While on board, customers will be required to wear their face coverings during the journey.

Canada's flag carrier also said travellers

can bring non-medical coverings such as cloth masks, scarves or a “similar item”.

American Airlines

The US carrier said that from May 1, 2020, all flight attendants will be required to wear face masks.

The masks will be required for flight attendants during every mainline and regional flight and the airline has added a drawer in the galley on every mainline flight containing personal protective equipment, including masks for flight attendants and pilots, and other sanitising items.

Delta

Delta has announced that from May 4, 2020, all employees and customers must wear a face mask “or appropriate face covering” when travelling with the airline.

“Aligning with best practice guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control, this move comes on the heels of our announcement earlier this week requiring employees worldwide to wear face masks if they are unable to maintain six feet of distance with customers or each other.”

Emirates

Travellers will now have to wear their own masks and gloves throughout the journey from check-in until they disembark, Emirates said earlier this month.

According to the Dubai-based carrier, all cabin crew, boarding agents and ground staff who have direct contact with passengers are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) which includes a protective disposable gown over their uniforms, and a safety visor, in addition to masks and gloves.

Eva Air

Passengers travelling with Taiwanese carrier Eva Air are required to wear face masks throughout the flight except for when they are eating or drinking to minimise the risk of infection in accordance with regulation from Taiwan Centers for Disease Control, the carrier said on its website.

Jet Blue

From May 4, 2020, all Jet Blue customers will be required to wear a face covering during travel. The policy comes after the airline began requiring all crewmembers to wear face coverings while working.

“Wearing a face covering isn’t about protecting yourself it’s about protecting those around you,” said Joanna Geraghty, president and chief operating officer, Jet Blue. “This is the new flying etiquette. Onboard, cabin air is well circulated and cleaned through filters every few minutes but this is a shared space where we have to be considerate of others. We are also asking our customers to follow these CDC guidelines in the airport as well.”

This new policy will require customers to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth throughout their journey, including during check-in, boarding, while in flight and deplaning. Customers will be reminded of this requirement before their flight via email and at the airport by both terminal signage and announcements. Small children who are not able to maintain a face covering are exempt from this requirement.

CDC guidance defines a suitable face covering as an item of cloth that should fit snugly against the side of the face, be secured with ties or ear loops, include multiple layers of fabric and allow for unrestricted breathing. The CDC recommends surgical masks and N-95 respirators be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

Lufthansa Group

From Monday May 4 all member airlines of the Lufthansa Group will insist passengers wear a face mask.

Lufthansa says, “It’s recommended that passengers wear them [face masks] throughout the flight and at the airport both before and after the flight whenever the required minimum distance cannot be guaranteed without restriction.”

“All passengers are requested to bring their own mouth and nose cover. A reusable fabric mask is recommended but all other types of covering such as

simple disposable masks or scarves are also possible.”

“The airline will inform passengers in advance by SMS or email on their respective websites.”

Lufthansa Group says “the obligation to wear the mask will apply until August 31, 2020 at the earliest.”

Singapore Airlines

The carrier has asked its cabin crew to wear face masks onboard.

“Crew are provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like masks and gloves. As a precautionary measure, all cabin crew are required to wear a mask while operating flights,” said a Singapore Airlines’ spokesperson in an email sent to Business Traveller Asia-Pacific.

United

United Airlines said last week that it became the first “major US-based carrier” to require all of its flight attendants to wear face masks when on duty. Cabin crew will be supplied with one mask each per duty day, and attendants may also choose to wear their own cloth mask. From May 4 all passengers will also be required to wear face coverings, with United providing face masks free of charge.

Wizz Air

As Wizz Air announced the reopening of its Luton base (May 1, 2020), it also brought in additional hygiene measures to ensure the health and safety of its customers and crew.

The measures include the requirement that throughout the flight, cabin crew are required to wear masks and gloves and will distribute sanitising wipes to each passenger. Onboard purchases are encouraged to be made by contactless payment, to minimise physical contact.

Wizz also clarified that passengers will also be required to wear face masks and onboard magazines will be removed from the aircraft.

Airlines are requested to share information from on whether they are requiring passengers or cabin crew to wear face masks.
(travelspan@gmail.com)

Airline health and safety data key to business travel confidence

As domestic travel restrictions begin to ease around the world, access to health and safety insights will be key to the resumption of business travel activity, according to global customer research conducted by Corporate Travel Management (CTM). Australian states and territories will begin assessing their interstate travel restrictions from mid-June, with most expected to be eased by the end of the July-September quarter, while New Zealand commenced easing restrictions last week allowing domestic travel to resume.

This week, CTM launched integrated airline reassurance data into its proprietary online booking tool Lightning, enabling CTM's customers globally to view COVID-19-related airline service

features alongside flight search results at the time of booking.

The airline data, powered by ATPCO's Routehappy Rich Content, incorporates new Reassurance UPAs (Universal Product Attributes) from more than 100 airlines (representing over 70% of global flight schedules). Qantas' new Fly Well program, announced yesterday, includes a range of wellness features which will be reflected in their Reassurance UPA's in coming weeks and made available in Lightning.

The data spans health and safety measures such as airport and cabin cleaning, health screening, food and beverage hygiene, passenger and crew wellbeing, as well as flexible booking conditions. CTM CEO Australia and New Zealand, Greg McCarthy said that CTM has responded quickly to customer feedback, integrating an extra layer of travel intelligence into its proprietary booking technology to allow customers to make more informed choices and feel confident about their return to business travel.

"Our survey data clearly showed the negative impact that not travelling is having on our customers' business performance, and we understand the challenges they now face in getting their teams back on the road with maximum safety and peace of mind.

"As Australia and New Zealand prepare for a return to domestic travel, we're thrilled to be able to deliver enhanced service information from airlines to help our customers make travel decisions that will increase traveller confidence and aide business recovery at the earliest opportunity," he said. Seth Anagnostis, Head of Global Sales at ATPCO said, "It's important to see more companies like CTM acting quickly to address the travel concerns of their customers globally and provide them with the information they need to get back to flying with maximum confidence. Partnering with CTM on their global roll-out of ATPCO's Reassurance UPAs within the Lightning online booking tool is another step forward for consumer confidence."



Alitalia will resume direct services to New York, Spain and from Milan to southern Italy



Alitalia will resume from 2 June the non-stop Rome-New York service, direct flights to Spain (Roma-Madrid and Rome-Barcelona) and non-stop flights between Milan and southern Italy. The Airline will operate 36% more flights compared to May, flying on 30 routes to 25 airports, including 15 in Italy and 10 abroad.

In detail, from Milan Malpensa airport, where the Airline will carry on its operations until the reopening of Linate airport, Alitalia will operate, in addition to the 8 daily services with Rome Fiumicino, two daily flights to and from Bari, Catania and Palermo (except for any extension of the restrictions on air transport to and from Sicily currently in force) and 4 daily flights to and from Cagliari, Alghero and Olbia.

From Rome, after having already increased services with Cagliari (from 4 to 6 flights per day), beginning tomorrow, 21 May, Alitalia will increase its flights with Catania and Palermo (from 6 to 8 per day) and in June the Airline will connect its hub in Rome Fiumicino airport with Alghero, Bologna, Bari, Genoa, Lamezia Terme, Milan, Naples, Olbia, Pisa, Turin, Venice and, abroad, besides New York, with Barcelona, Brussels, Frankfurt, Geneva, London, Madrid, Munich, Paris and Zurich.

For the third quarter of 2020, Alitalia expects to increase its activity at about 40% of what was planned before the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Flight offering will increase according to the trend in demand, which is already recovering on some domestic routes, and benefiting from the progressive abolition by foreign countries of restrictions on flights and passengers from Italy, as well as from lower disincentive guidelines for travels to Italy.

During June and July, Alitalia will also continue cargo services with China which have allowed to import so far over 70 million of protective face masks and other medical supplies (such as respirators, safety gloves, protective glasses and lab coats) necessary to manage the Covid-19 emergency. Besides the 15 services operated between March and April and the 24 flights that will be operated in May, the Airline has scheduled 25 further cargo services for June.

Alitalia also continues to organize special flights, in coordination with

the Crisis Unit of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even operating to and from airports not usually served by the Airline, in order to repatriate Italian citizens still stranded abroad. The Airline is organizing new special flights with Argentina for the next few days.

All passenger flights are operated with the aircraft capacity more than halved, in order to comply with the provisions of the Italian law on social distancing on board aircraft.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Alitalia has never suspended its flight operations ensuring an essential public service for travelers and operating, on average, more flights than the main European airlines, in particular the low cost carriers. Despite the need to adopt a limited flight program, in April, for instance, Alitalia operated about 10% of flights compared to the same month of the previous year, against an average of 6% of flights operated by the main European flag carriers and about 2% of flights operated by no frills airlines.

Domestic flights resume: **Read** state-wise **p**rotocols you should follow

Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal will not immediately restart domestic flights. States such as Maharashtra have only allowed a few flights each day from Mumbai airport.

Indian skies opened up for domestic passenger services after a hiatus of two months due to coronavirus-induced lockdown across India. Indigo's Delhi-Pune and Mumbai-Patna flights were among the first to take off. Most of the states in India have given go ahead to the flight resumption services from Monday. The two exceptions being Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

Various states have also put in place protocols for incoming air travelers. Andhra Pradesh and West

Bengal will not immediately restart domestic flights, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. States such as Maharashtra have only allowed a few flights each day from Mumbai airport, India's second busiest. Andhra Pradesh will start resume flights from 26 May, and West Bengal from 28 May.

All scheduled commercial passenger flights have been suspended since March 25 when the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to curb the coronavirus pandemic.



As flights resume, these are state-wise rules and protocols for flyers:

TRIPURA

Domestic air operations will not resume in Tripura from Monday as all flights operating to and from Agartala stand cancelled, according to Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) Airport's officials. Services were halted as all the flights are connected to Kolkata and the Kolkata airport is not available till May 27, in view of cyclone Amphan.

TAMIL NADU

It is mandatory for all the domestic air travellers flying into Tamil Nadu to register their details online in TNePass Portal. After obtaining the flight tickets, the travellers shall register their details in TNe-pass portal following the link <https://tnepass.tneaa.org> duly selecting the airport of arrival in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu government has decided to allow only 25 domestic flights per day to Chennai, no restrictions for Covai, Madurai & Trichy sectors. Flights from Maharashtra & Gujarat may be kept at the "barest minimum possible," no restrictions for outgoing flights.

MAHARASHTRA

The Maharashtra government on Sunday said it will allow 25 passenger flights to take off from and as many to land in Mumbai from Monday, adding that the number will be increased gradually.

Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik said the state has agreed for 25 departures and an equal number of arrivals each day from Mumbai.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that limited flights will operate from Mumbai as per the approved 1/3rd schedule from other airports in the state.

The Mumbai airport has even offered two slots per day to Air India from Monday in place of 10 slots offered earlier. One slot will be used for operating wide-body aircraft between Delhi and Mumbai preferably in the evening.

UTTAR PRADESH

In Uttar Pradesh, travellers to the state will be under home quarantine for 14 days unless they are staying for less than a week or if they clear the coronavirus test earlier. They can get themselves tested for the virus on the sixth day from their arrival and end their quarantine if the results come out negative, PTI quoted Principal Secretary Medical and Health Amit Mohan Prasad as saying.

Outsiders on visits of less than a week to the state need not go into quarantine if they furnish details of their return journey. All passengers coming to UP will have to register themselves on <http://reg.upcovid.in> and furnish details of themselves and family members travelling with them. A message will be displayed on their phones after this and CISF personnel will let them leave the airport only after checking it.

WEST BENGAL

Government officials said on Sunday night that airports in Kolkata and Bagdogra in cyclone-hit West Bengal will not operate any domestic flights between May 25 and 27 but will handle 20 flights each per day from May 28.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier said that she will urge the Centre to postpone the resumption of domestic flight services at Kolkata and Bagdogra airports by a few days.

KARNATAKA

In Karnataka, anyone coming from states where there is "high prevalence" of Covid-19 will be kept in institutional quarantine for seven days and if tested Covid-negative, the passenger will have to spend the next seven days in home quarantine. Karnataka has classified Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh as "high prevalence" states. The passengers coming through remaining states in the country will have to undergo 14 days of home quarantine. However, special cases where businessmen are coming for urgent work will not require to undergo any quarantine if they bring test results that are not more than two days old.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

In Himachal Pradesh, the Dharamshala administration has said only persons with a valid address proof of the state should book tickets to the city and the flyer will have to obtain a district entry-pass. Dharamshala will have two flights from Delhi and one from Chandigarh daily.

The incoming person will have to obtain an entry pass from the concerned district administration, which will have to be shown on de-boarding the flight at Gaggal airport of Dharamshala.

UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand has announced institutional quarantine for all incoming passengers.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Passengers coming to Andhra Pradesh will be put under home quarantine. However, once their test results for Covid-19 come negative, they will be relieved from quarantine.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The J&K government informed that all passengers coming to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by train or domestic flights will be kept in institutional quarantine for 14 days and will be tested for coronavirus using RTPCR test. If tested negative they will be sent home otherwise they will be sent to a hospital. Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, too, announced similar precautionary measures.

KERALA

Kerala announced all travellers have to register online and undergo home quarantine for two weeks. However, the government has made an exception for those coming for business purposes or for a short duration.

The state's health minister KK Shailaja has announced that "Even if the domestic flight services resume, those coming in must remain under strict home quarantine as per the guidelines... [Since] most people will be coming from the major hotspots of the country."

DELHI

As per the guidelines similar to that released by the home ministry earlier, asymptomatic passengers can exit the IGI airport after the mandatory thermal screening. Passengers with mild symptoms can home-isolate or choose government or private facility, the guidelines stated. Moreover, appropriate medical health will be provided to those showing symptoms. People showing severe symptoms will be isolated and taken to a government facility.

PUNJAB

In Punjab, all incoming passengers will be screened. Those found symptomatic would be sent into institutional quarantine, while the others will have to undergo a mandatory 14-day home quarantine.

BIHAR

The Bihar government said that 34 flights will operate from Patna's JP airport that boarding pass will act as a permission pass.

Domestic travellers will be placed in home quarantines, while international travellers can use institutional quarantine.

The state government further said travellers will be put on "paid quarantine" for 14 days.

The first flight to Patna will arrive from Mumbai early Monday morning.

CHHATTISGARH

The Chhattisgarh government said those showing no symptoms would be placed in 14-day quarantine at government centres, homes or paid facilities. Passengers will have to submit a written undertaking they will strictly follow isolation norms.

"Baggage will be sanitised at the airport and only select vehicles whose details are with the transport department will be allowed to pick and drop passengers," General Administration Department Secretary Dr Kamalpreet Singh said.

ASSAM

Assam will be putting flyers on a 14-day quarantine. The passengers will be

distributed equally in home quarantine and government quarantine.

"The pilot[s] and crew members and other engineering staff of a flight will not be quarantined. They will come into an isolated way to the hotel and go back. But excluding them, every traveller in Assam will be quarantined," state health minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma said. This could mean some form of institutional quarantine as Biswa went on to say: "The state government will cover the expenditures of the people coming into the state from outside including food, hotel rent during the quarantine period... The state has allowed district deputy commissioners to spend a maximum Rs.500 for food per person per day and Rs.200 for hotel rent under facility quarantine. The deputy commissioners will also spend a maximum Rs.2,000 against the people under home quarantine."

GURUGRAM

If you're flying to Delhi to head to Gurugram, note that the administration has not only made a 14-day home quarantine mandatory for those coming on flights, but those arriving at Delhi airport will also need to apply for a movement pass to enter Gurugram. Passengers need to acquire one at least two days ahead of arrival on the *Saral Haryana website*.

Revised Guidelines for domestic travel (air/train/inter-state bus travel)

1) Dos and Don'ts shall be provided along with tickets to the travellers by the agencies concerned.

2) All passengers shall be advised to download Arogya Setu app on their mobile devices.

3) Suitable announcement about COVID-19 including precautionary measures to be followed shall be made at airports/railway station/bus terminals and in flights/trains/bus.

4) The States/UTs shall ensure that all passengers shall undergo thermal screening at the point of

departure and only asymptomatic passengers are allowed to board the flight/train/bus.

5) During boarding and travel, all passengers shall use face covers/mask. They will also follow hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and maintain environmental hygiene.

6) At airports/railway stations/ bus terminals required measures to ensure social distancing shall be taken.

7) Airports/railway stations/bus terminals should be regularly sanitized/ disinfected and availability of soaps and sanitizers shall be ensured.

8) Thermal screening at exit point shall be arranged.

9) Asymptomatic passengers will be permitted to go with the advice that they shall self-monitor their health for 14 days. In case, they develop any symptoms, they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the state/ national call center (1075).

10) Those found symptomatic will be isolated and taken to the nearest health facility. They will be assessed for clinical severity at the health facility.

11) Those having moderate or severe symptoms will be admitted to dedicated COVID Health facilities and managed accordingly.

12) Those having mild symptoms will be given the option of home isolation or isolated in the Covid Care Centre (both public & private facilities) as appropriate and tested as per ICMR protocol. If positive, they will continue in COVID Care Centre and will be managed as per clinical protocol. If negative, the passenger may be allowed to go home, isolate himself/herself and self-monitor his/her health for further 7 days. In case, any symptoms develop they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the state/national call center (1075).

Govt has also given states power to develop their own protocol with regards to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment.

It was announced last Thursday that one-third of pre-lockdown domestic flights will operate from Monday. All international scheduled commercial passenger flights remain suspended.

Air Canada

to lay off 20,000 workers amid COVID-19 fallout

Air Canada will lay off more than half of its 38,000 employees next month as it grapples with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The layoffs, which will take place June 7, will affect a minimum of 19,000 staff and could go as high as 22,800.

The country's largest airline — along with its competitors — has seen demand for air travel evaporate amid ongoing border shutdowns and confinement measures, prompting Air Canada to ground some 225 airplanes and slash flight capacity by 95 per cent.

"We therefore took the extremely

difficult decision today to significantly downsize our operation to align with forecasts, which regrettably means reducing our workforce by 50 to 60 per cent," the airline said in an email Friday evening. "We estimate about 20,000 people will be affected."

The airline made a similar decision in March to let go of nearly half of its workforce under a cost reduction scheme, only to rehire some 16,500 laid-off flight attendants, mechanics and customer service agents in April under the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy — a program it has not committed to participate in past June 6.

To minimize the number of layoffs, Air Canada will ask flight attendants to slash their schedules, go on leave for up to two years or resign with travel privileges, according to an internal bulletin to members from the Canadian Union of Public Employees sent out Thursday night and obtained by The Canadian Press.

The memo states that CUPE is in discussions with Air Canada over continuing the federal wage subsidy.

"We know this news is not what any of us were expecting," states the bulletin, signed by the president of CUPE's Air Canada component and two other union officials.

"The reality is that COVID-19 has severely impacted the demand for air travel over the past few months and into the foreseeable future. As such, there is no denying that we are dealing with the largest surplus of cabin personnel in our history."

Though traffic is expected to pick up somewhat before year's end, Air Canada CEO Calin Rovinescu said last week the recovery will be slow, with at least three years of subpar earnings.



Air Canada says it's “ready for take-off”, new sked has close to 100 cities



Air Canada is forging ahead with its new summer 2020 flight schedule to close to 100 destinations in Canada, the U.S. and around the world, as some economies begin to open up, even if the advisory against non-essential travel is still in place for Canadians.

New options for passengers with refundable and non-refundable tickets come amid a *mounting consumer furor in the refunds vs. vouchers debate*. Options for new, fully-transferable vouchers or Aeroplan Miles with 65% bonus starting June 1 mean more choices and flexibility for rebooking flights should travel plans change, says the airline (see more details below under ‘Bookings and Cancellation Policies’).

Meanwhile the Air Canada CleanCare+ biosecurity program offers peace of mind with the COVID-19 pandemic, says Air Canada.

“Air Canada has put in place an

abridged summer schedule offering a choice of nearly 100 destinations across Canada, in the U.S. and internationally,” says Lucie Guillemette, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer at Air Canada.

“As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, during which as much as 95% of our flights stopped operating and which has left us flying to less than half last year’s destinations, our customers are expressing their eagerness to travel, where it is safe to do so. We are accordingly gradually opening for sale flights for the summer and beyond as we rebuild our network, leveraging our strong position as a global airline,” she adds.

“Air Canada is ready for take-off, and we look forward to welcoming our customers onboard.”

Guillemette notes that “while the world is making great progress against COVID-19, we know we must remain vigilant, which includes being flexible.

This is why we are introducing two new solutions for customers should their travel plans change.”

In addition to Air Canada’s regular goodwill policies, starting June 1 the carrier says it will offer customers the choice of a travel voucher with no expiry date that is fully transferable or to convert their booking into Aeroplan Miles and get an additional 65% bonus miles.

Both options are retroactive to March 1.

SUMMER 2020 SCHEDULE

Air Canada’s abridged schedule for summer 2020 offers 97 destinations, down from 220 last year:

- Within Canada, the schedule will increase from 34 routes in May to 58 routes in June, with more routes added in August and September.

- Air Canada has also updated its schedule until the end of July with resumption of some services to the U.S., Caribbean, South American, European and Pacific markets.

- In accordance with provisions for air travel to the U.S. for Canadians, Air Canada will resume service to the U.S. on May 22, with six destinations being served by May 25, including New York-LaGuardia, Washington-Dulles, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston and Chicago. There are tentative plans to resume more U.S. service as of June 22, pending regulatory changes and demand.

- Internationally, Air Canada will continue to operate from its major hubs to key global destinations in June. This includes service from Toronto to Frankfurt, London, Zurich, Tokyo and Tel Aviv; from Montreal to Frankfurt, London, Paris and Brussels; and from Vancouver to London, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Seoul.

- International services will expand further starting in June and early July, including: Montreal to Athens, Rome, Geneva; Toronto to Munich, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Rome and Athens; Calgary to Frankfurt; and, subject to government approval, Vancouver to Shanghai.

BOOKING & CANCELLATION POLICIES

Under Air Canada's revised goodwill policy, new bookings made up to June 30, 2020 can be changed without fees for original travel between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

In cases where Air Canada cancels flights due to COVID-19, customers with refundable tickets will continue to have the option of refunds. Since Jan. 1, 2020, Air Canada has refunded nearly \$1 billion to customers.

Both customers with refundable and non-refundable tickets will have two new options to choose from:

- An Air Canada Travel Voucher for the remaining value of their ticket that

has no expiry date, is fully transferable and retains any residual value, or;

- The ability to convert the remaining value of their ticket into Aeroplan Miles, with 65% more value versus the normal rate for buying Miles.

For voluntary changes, customers with refundable tickets will continue to have the option of refunds or the above new options. For Air Canada customers with non-refundable tickets making voluntary changes on tickets issued up to June 30, 2020, with an original travel date between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 inclusive, they have the option to choose from the two above new options of an Air Canada Travel Voucher or Aeroplan Miles.

The new goodwill policies and cancellation options are retroactive for customers with original travel between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

Customers whose flights have been cancelled due to the impacts of COVID-19 and who have already received travel credit valid for 24



months, will be able to select one of the applicable options depending on their fare at aircanada.com beginning June 15, 2020.

Customers with Aeroplan Flight Rewards can continue to cancel their redemption bookings free of charge through June 30, 2020.

Air France Retiring All Airbus A380s Immediately

Air France is retiring all nine of its A380s immediately.

The Airbus A380 has become the latest victim of the global pandemic. Air France recently announced that it would be phasing out its entire fleet of double-deckers with the "definitive end" taking effect immediately rather than by the end of 2022, as previously scheduled. Air France currently has nine Airbus A380s in its fleet – five are owned by Air France or are on a financed lease, and four are on operating leases. This move is expected to result in a write-down of 500 million euros (approximately \$549 million) as the airline looks to conserve cash in any way possible.

While Air France is the first airline to retire its entire raft of A380s, it is not the only airline to indicate that it will leave the once-promising jumbo jet in its wake. In April, German carrier Lufthansa announced it would retire six of its 14 A380s earlier than scheduled, and Emirates, the world's largest operator of the aircraft with over 100 in its fleet, is reportedly considering retiring nearly half of them early as a result of the pressures now facing the aviation industry.

Airbus originally conceived the A380, with two complete decks, as an answer to Boeing's iconic 747. Even as

Boeing shifted toward a leaner design direction with the single-deck 777 and 787 aircraft, Airbus continued developing the A380 in the late 1990s and early 2000s. With seating for around 500 passengers in a typical configuration, Airbus pitched the plane to airlines as a capacity-rich option to shuttle large numbers of passengers from their hubs to major destinations on high-traffic routes.

The A380 made its debut in 2005 and was touted as the future of aviation, with companies like Singapore Airlines, Emirates, British Airways and Qantas all betting on the bird. Air France has had the enormous plane in its fleet since 2009, using it to operate routes from its hub at Paris Charles De Gaulle to Los Angeles, New York JFK and Shanghai Pudong, among others. But, like other carriers, it always struggled to make the jet a profitable part of its fleet due to high operational and maintenance costs.



Air Canada anticipates return of worldwide air travel by Christmas

Airlines changing cleaning process and working to educate public about safety measures

Air Canada vice president suggests that by the time winter holidays roll around again, Canadians will be able to board his company's planes and fly almost anywhere in the world.

But Tim Strauss said he knows that one of the biggest tasks involved in bringing air travel back to life after pandemic restrictions lift will be convincing the public it's safe to fly.

"I think by Christmas you will see a significant amount of flying again," said Strauss, vice president of cargo at Air Canada. "We'll be flying to most places around the world and certainly domestically." There may be fewer flights available and more connections than travellers are used to, he added.

The airline industry has been hammered by the pandemic. Some Canadian airlines have stopped flying entirely while others, including Air Canada, have scaled back more than 90 per cent due to the dramatic drop in demand.

At a virtual Canadian Club Toronto event today, executives at several major airlines talked about what the North American airline industry could look like post-pandemic. Air Canada, Sunwing and American Airlines said corporate conversations about post-pandemic operations are focused on making sure planes are kept clean. Some airlines are changing how often they sanitize their planes and are even considering changes to how air is circulated in passenger cabins.

'We are rolling out completely new procedures'

"That is the absolute centre focus of

almost all of our product discussions at this point," said Strauss, regarding cleanliness. "The whole industry will be working in tandem with one another to make sure it's good no matter what airplane you're on, anywhere in the world."

American Airlines said that, as it learned more about COVID-19 over the past two months, it overhauled its cleaning process and now considers it a key part of ensuring a plane is safe to fly.

"We're rolling out completely new procedures that are disinfecting all parts of the aircraft that a customer touches before every flight," said Jim Butler, senior vice president of airport operations and cargo at American Airlines. "Before this, while that disinfection happened, it tended to happen more overnight."

His airline is boosting its cleaning staff while looking for ways to make boarding more efficient, so that flights aren't delayed by cleaning.

The airline also has been handing out personal protective equipment to all its customers and limiting the number of people onboard by blocking off the centre seats. Butler said the most difficult part will be educating the public about the measures being taken.

People check in at an Air Canada ticketing kiosk at Pearson International Airport. Transport Canada has made it mandatory for travellers to wear masks on planes and in airports when physical distancing isn't possible.

No point in travelling unless countries are open for business

Air Canada also is looking at how

air is circulated onboard its planes. "That's one of the things we need to adjust to make the flight safer," said Strauss.

The World Health Organization cites research showing there's very little risk of communicable diseases being shared in-flight through a plane's ventilation system. The plane's cabins use filters which trap virus particles, according to the WHO's website.

While Air Canada predicts better times for the industry by Christmas, Helene Becker, an airline analyst at Cowen and Company, points out that other countries will need to lift their pandemic restrictions and reopen their economies first, in order to convince people to travel.

"You can't go to London and quarantine for 14 days," said Becker. "If your vacation was going to be a long weekend and you go, it doesn't work."

"We need to get all these governments on the same page to kind of open things up. Everyone wants it to be done safely because no one wants the recurrence of cases."

Strauss said there are signs the economy is about to turn around. Manufacturers are moving parts around the world on Air Canada's cargo flights, he said, and his company is getting ready to transport retail goods from clothing manufacturers to North America.

"These are companies that only make these moves when they think there's an economy coming back," she said. "That makes me very optimistic, that we are at the beginning steps of a rebound."



Temperature screening equipment now being trialled at Heathrow

Starting 21st May, thermal screening technology is being trialled in Terminal 2's immigration hall to detect elevated temperatures of arriving passengers. Learnings from these trials will be shared with the UK Government, to aid the rapid creation of a Common International Standard for health screening, needed to unlock global trade and travel.

The technology under trial uses camera detection systems capable of monitoring the temperatures of multiple people moving through the airport. Passengers will be alerted to the trials through signage placed at the immigration hall, but will otherwise see no visible change to their arrivals journey as no other screening methods will be needed. No personal data will be stored or shared through these trials.

If successful, the equipment may be rolled out across the airport into departures, connections and colleague search areas to further stress test its capabilities. Heathrow is clear any measures or technology must satisfy certain tests if it is introduced as mandatory in the future, including:

satisfy medically grounded science; able to build confidence amongst passengers; and be practical for airports to deliver.

Temperature screening is part of a wider set of processes and technology set to be trialled at Heathrow that are looking at how the risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 while travelling can be reduced. From this week, all operational Heathrow colleagues will be wearing face coverings and will be handing out face coverings to any arriving and departing passengers who do not have their own. This is in addition to the provision of over 600 hand sanitiser stations, enhanced cleaning regimes, prominent signage featuring government health advice, perspex barriers for frontline contact points and social distancing reminders.

Heathrow will also explore the use of UV sanitation to quickly and efficiently sanitise security trays and contact-free security screening equipment to reduce person-to-person contact.

The launch of the trials comes as the UK Government considers the implementation of "air bridges" across destinations with low COVID-19 risk,

to protect public health while enabling the travel of goods and services that is needed to kick-start the economy. Current expert advice suggests that temperature checks at UK airports are not required, however, it is hoped learnings from this trial will help governments introduce the policy framework leading to a global Common International Standard for health screening.

Heathrow CEO John Holland-Kaye said: "We welcome the Secretary of State for Transport's 'air bridge' proposals to allow trade to continue between destinations with low COVID-19 risks.

"To unlock the full benefits of aviation for the economy, a Common International Standard for health screening must be agreed by the global authorities – and the technology we are trialling now could be a part of this solution.

"As one of the world's great trading nations, the UK should take a lead in setting a global plan to reopen borders, when it is safe to do so. This will help protect millions of British jobs that rely on aviation, but are currently at risk."

Debut Arabian Travel Market (ATM)

Virtual event gets underway

- ATM Virtual will place focus on emerging trends, opportunities and the challenges directly impacting the travel and tourism industry amid COVID-19
- The event, which runs from 1-3 June 2020, will feature a host of webinars, conference sessions, roundtables, speed networking, and one-to-one meetings
- Over 12,000 participants from 148 countries have registered



Dr. Taleb Rifai

Chairman of ITIC and Former Secretary General of UNWTO

Travel trade professionals from across the world will gather online tomorrow (Monday, 1 st June 2020) for the first day of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) Virtual, a newly-launched three-day event for the region's tourism community.

The debut event, which will run from 1-3 June 2020, will place a focus on emerging trends, opportunities, and the challenges which are directly impacting the travel and tourism industry amid the COVID-19 global health pandemic. Over the course of three days, ATM Virtual will feature comprehensive webinars, live conference sessions, roundtables, speed networking events, and one-to-one meetings, as well as facilitating new connections and offering a wide range of online business opportunities.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director



Fahd Hamidaddin

Chief of Investment Strategy and Tourism Marketing Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia

ME, Arabian Travel Market (ATM), said: "Our debut event not only underscores ATM's mission to support and guide the region's vast travel and tourism industry during and beyond COVID-19, but it also demonstrates our commitment to delivering positive business and networking opportunities to the entire community, during even the most challenging times.

"With up to four live high-level sessions each day, industry experts will address a range of topics including a road map to recovery, tourism strategies for the future, the hotel landscape in a post-COVID-19 world, and the resilience of the travel industry, as well as exploring the 'new normal' that lies ahead, emerging travel technology and sustainability trends."

Kicking off proceedings, the opening

session 'A Conversation with Sir Tim Clark' will take place from 11:00am – 12:00pm GST (8.00am – 9.00am BST) on Monday 1 st June.

The President of Emirates Airline will speak to John Strickland about his time at the airline, its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its plans for the future, as well as unveiling Emirates strategy, including planned fleet and network changes. Another key event taking place on the first day is 'OTAs & Distribution for Tours & Attractions post-COVID'. Run by Arival, the global research authority on the tours, activities and attractions sector, this session will focus on the rise of online travel agencies, the re-opening of operations, and what this means for tour and attraction operators across the Middle East.

Meanwhile, other highlights from day one include 'Communicating and Building Confidence Now' and 'The Hotel Landscape in a post-COVID-19 World' sessions.

Day two will feature The Virtual ATM China Forum. Taking place from 11:00am – 12:00pm GST (8.00 – 9.00am BST), the forum will focus on the recovery of outbound travel from the country and how Chinese travellers have been changing their way of accessing information about foreign destinations.

The packed agenda will also feature the debut Travel Forward Virtual event. Over the course of three days, suppliers and senior executives will be provided with innovative insights of what travel technology has to offer

beyond 2020. Addressing the impact of COVID-19, the event will help bridge the gap between uncertainty and resilience during these unprecedented times. Highlights of on the second day will include the following sessions: 'Catapulting Resilience Through Technology and Analytics' and 'Conversational Commerce for Travel Brands.'

Another highlight of our second day will be live webinar 'Bouncing Back: Tourism Strategies for the Future' which will see industry experts including Fahd Hamidaddin, Chief of Investment, Strategy and Tourism Marketing for the Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia and Keith Tan, CEO, Singapore Tourism discuss how the long-term tourism development strategies implemented by the region's governments will become a catalyst for recovery when travel patterns adjust to the 'new norm'.

Fahd Hamidaddin, Chief of Investment, Strategy and Tourism Marketing, Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia, said: "As global travel restrictions ease, our focus is on ensuring that Saudi Arabia is ready to welcome visitors as soon as they are ready to travel. We are collaborating across the public and private sectors, to safeguard the wellbeing of visitors, while continuing to invest in high quality tourism experiences. Saudi Arabia offers endless appeal to the modern traveler. We are optimistic about the future of tourism in the Kingdom and we remain committed to our long-term targets."

Drawing the debut ATM Virtual to a close, the third and final day, Wednesday 3rd May, will include highlights such as an interview with Wizz Air CEO, Jozsef Varadi, the International Travel Investment Conference summit and a webinar titled 'What are you doing to energise your operational performance?' which will discuss the power of data analytics in helping to maximise performance.

Also, on the third day will be the Responsible Tourism session, 'The Implications of Covid-19 for Responsible Hospitality', with an



Danielle Curtis

Exhibition Director ME Arabian Travel Market

interview between Harold Goodwin, the WTM Responsible Tourism Advisor, and Inge Huijbrechts, Global Senior Vice President Responsible Business and Safety & Security, Radisson Hotel Group. Inge will be speaking about the latest thinking on post-COVID-19 hospitality, managing hotels and the supply chain and about advancing the responsibility agenda when resources are limited.

The Influencers' Summit will also take place the last day and will include a session entitled 'Make Your Connection: Influencers as a Key Part of the Marketing Mix – COVID-19 The Road to Recovery,' featuring a panel of prominent travel and lifestyle influencers including Abdullah al-Jumah, Author, Lawyer and Influencer and Talel al-Rashed, Hospitality and Gastronomy Expert, who will discuss the importance of best practices and how to create relevant, engaging and impactful travel and lifestyle content in the current climate. This will be followed by a special networking event focusing on the Influencer Tourism market.

Meanwhile, a series of independently moderated, pre-recorded on-demand roundtables have been designed to discuss emerging hot topics such as domestic travel, luxury travel trends, corporate travel, the challenges faced by travel providers and agencies and tourism recovery plans.



Sir Tim Clark

President of Emirates Airline

And, one-to-one pre-scheduled 30-minute meetings between editors, exhibitors, and buyers will also take place, while live video sessions will include Q&As and polls which will be run alongside the presentations to enable audience interaction. Curtis added: "In addition, a host of hour-long speed networking sessions, between key buyers and exhibitors, will culminate in over 900 5-minute meetings that can then be extended into more in-depth meetings where a business need is identified. "Targeting exhibitors from this region predominantly, the dedicated networking events will feature one Middle East-focused session per day, as well as sessions for buyers, focused on purchasing European and Asian products, plus a session specifically targeting Chinese buyers."

As well as addressing the impact the global health pandemic has had on the hospitality industry, the debut ATM Virtual will provide travel professionals with a wealth of information, advice and support to cope with the current crisis and planning for the future. Arabian Travel Market would like to thank the Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia and the Italian Tourist Board for their support of ATM Virtual as Gold Sponsors.

ATM Virtual takes place from Monday 1st to Wednesday 3rd June 2020.



Hyatt

announces
global
care and
cleanliness
commitment

In a bid to ensure the safety of colleagues and guests during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic phase and beyond, Hyatt has pledged to enhance its operational guidance and resources.

The initiative involves an accreditation process by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) at all their hotels worldwide. The hospitality brand plans to introduce a GBAC STAR accreditation through a performance-based cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention programme, thereby enabling safe and healthy hotel environment. Detailed training will come into effect at more than 900 Hyatt hotels around the globe.

By September 2020, every Hyatt hotel will have at least one person on property trained as hygiene manager who will look after the improvised operational guidance and protocols.

These include increased frequency of cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants on all high-touch surfaces, guestrooms and shared spaces; implementation of enhanced food safety and hygiene protocols for restaurants, room service and group meetings and events; prominently placed hand sanitiser stations throughout the property; protective masks and other equipment for hotel colleagues and social distancing

guidance in public areas across hotels.

Daily surveys will be conducted to examine colleague comfort, a hotel's cleanliness, working order and customer service, thereby allowing hotel leaders to make the necessary changes immediately.

Additionally, a working group of trusted medical and industry advisors will be deployed to address specific health and hygiene issues.

Hyatt has also set up a The Hyatt Care Fund, to support colleagues with financial pressures during these difficult times.

Mark Hoplamazian, president and CEO, Hyatt said, "The world as we knew it has been fundamentally changed by Covid-19 and when we are all ready to travel again, we want to make sure that every Hyatt colleague and guest feel confident that each aspect of our commitment is designed with their safety in mind, and that we're putting their wellbeing first.

"To do this, we must critically examine the hotel experience from every vantage point – from our rooms and our lobbies to our spas and dining – bringing in the latest research, technology and innovation to make that happen. Hyatt's Global Care and Cleanliness Commitment is an important expression of our purpose to care for people so they can be their best – now and in the future."

Hotels, Bars & Restaurants offer Govt. to Consider Abeyance of Liquor Licenses

HRAWI appeals for time extension on fee installments.

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) has written to the Maharashtra Government, requesting to devise a policy whereby hotels, restaurants and bars in the State would be able to keep their licenses under abeyance or in custody for a period of one year or until the next renewal date. The Association has further requested the State Excise Department to provide an extension of time on the installment scheme by two months in view of the severe loss to business incurred by hospitality players during the lockdown.

The Association had earlier asked the Government for a waiver of the 15 per cent increase in annual excise license fee. To this, the Government offered liquor license holders the choice to either pay the entire fee by June 1st to receive a waiver or to pay the whole in three installments spread over one year.

"Since 22nd March, 2020 hotels and restaurants have been closed and in-dining specifically has been prohibited. We are not generating any revenue nor are we sure when will we be able to in the foreseeable future. We aren't even being allowed to sell liquor as take away or deliveries. Against this backdrop we have been asked to pay the liquor license fee with a 15 per cent increase and our request for the rollback of the increase has been ignored. Furthermore, we are not being allowed to sell liquor as take away or deliveries. So now we are requesting the Government to devise a policy whereby restaurants & hotels are able to keep the license under abeyance or in custody for a period of one year or till the next renewal date during the subsistence of this pandemic or till such time that the circumstances are not favorable for doing business. I am sure that this is a very reasonable demand and which is fair to both the Government and



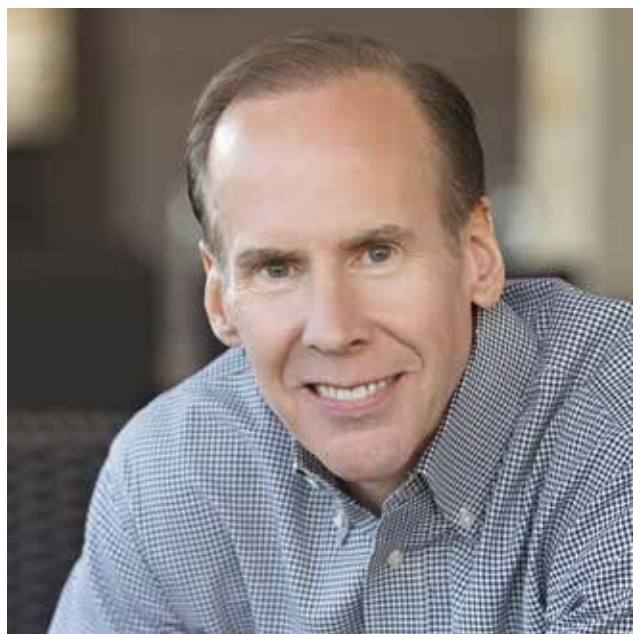
the businesses," said **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, President, HRAWI.**

HRAWI has also suggested that establishments that choose to keep their licenses in custody should be free to revive their licenses upon payment of fees and with no further new or additional conditions attached when reviving.

"For many small establishments Rs.8 lakhs is a significant amount of money especially, to be paid in advance, at once. There is zero cash flow and no assurance if business will continue to survive tomorrow. Under this situation, paying such a huge fee is difficult and it will drain whatever little liquidity an establishment may have in reserve for the uncertain times to come. There are around 18,000 FL III license holders and if the situation persists, the industry will partially collapse. We are afraid that 40 to 50 per cent of businesses will be forced to shut and the fee is an unwarranted financial burden at this time," said **Pradeep Shetty, Vice President, HRAWI.**

Pursuant to the Excise department circular dated 25.03.2020, in view of the pandemic and lockdown, renewal of license was subject to two schemes whereby the license holders could pay full amount as per old fees rate without 15 per cent hike before 30th April and OR pay the fee at the new increased rate in 3 installments. The time to pay in the first scheme above has now been extended up to 1st June, 2020.

"The lockdown is still in force and there is no likelihood of service of liquor to resume in Hotels and Restaurants. It will not take any less than 6 to 8 months after the lockdown opens for the industry to revive. Keeping this in mind and the fact that our industry is severely impacted, we request that the installment scheme be modified by extending the time to pay fees by 2 months on each of the installments. We plead that the payments to be due on 31st August, 2020; 30th November 2020 and 28th February, 2021," **Kohli** concluded.



OYO Hotels & Homes Announces the Appointment of Troy Alstead as Independent Member of the Board

Former Starbucks veteran will help the company strengthen its focus on corporate governance at multiple levels

OYO Hotels & Homes has announced the appointment of Troy Alstead as an independent member of the company's board of directors. He will join the board that has Industry experts like Gerardo Issac (Gerry) Lopez, Operating Partner at SoftBank Vision Fund, Betsy Atkins, CEO & Founder of Baja Corporation, Munish Varma, SoftBank Investment Advisers, Bejul Somaia, Managing Director, Lightspeed Venture Partners and Mohit Bhatnagar, Managing Director, Sequoia Capital and Aditya Ghosh making it a powerful, diverse, and truly global combination.

As an independent member of the Board, Troy will play a supervisory role and provide guidance to the Founder and the management on key business decisions. His depth of experience in operations, financial management, business resilience planning and growth cycle management will strengthen the company's ability to deliver on sustainable growth, operational and service excellence, and help us continue building a strong culture of corporate governance.

Troy Alstead

Troy's experience from ground-up in building the solid foundations of Starbucks Corporation through 24

years of dedicated service to the company, having most recently served as Chief Operating Officer, (responsible for leading the global operations of the business and its family of brands around the world), is a treasure-trove of knowledge and business resilience. Troy Alstead is founder, president, and CEO of Ocean5, the unique new place for playing, meeting, and dining, and Table 47, the new farm-to-table, fresh from the scratch restaurant, both located in Gig Harbor, Washington. His ability to determine what the new-age customer needs and curate a product that successfully helps satisfy the said need, at scale will be valuable as OYO goes about its journey of helping people live the good life. He is also on the Board of Topgolf Group Ltd, Harley-Davidson Inc, and Levi Strauss & Co.

"We are delighted to welcome Troy to OYO's board of directors," said Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and Group CEO, OYO Hotels & Homes. "Troy brings tremendous operating and governance experience that will help us continue delivering on our mission to help millions of middle-income people around the world gain access to quality accommodations at different price points. As we continue to grow and to deepen our relationships with asset owners and consumers around the world, we are fortunate to have seasoned professionals like Troy on our board of directors."

"OYO, with its unique asset-light business model and strong data capabilities, is creating something entirely new for more than 3 billion middle-income travelers and city dwellers who need accommodations that meet their standards and also their budgets," said Troy Alstead. "I look forward to working with Ritesh, the management team, and my fellow board members as OYO strives to become the world's most beloved and preferred hotel brand," he added.

Known worldwide as a new age young hospitality startup, OYO Hotels & Homes has attracted some of the world's leading investors, including Airbnb Inc., SoftBank Vision Fund, Sequoia Capital, Lightspeed, and Hero Enterprise.

Ruby Hotels plans Stuttgart opening

Ruby Hotels is planning a new 150-room hotel and 1,700 m² co-working space in central Stuttgart's Gerber shopping centre.

The Munich-based hotel brand which it calls 'lean luxury' will launch its first Stuttgart property in the Spring of 2023.

Combining a hotel and 'Ruby works' co-working space in the city's central Gerber shopping centre, the new hotel will be Ruby's 10th project in Germany as it aims for a total of 17 properties by 2023, increasing from its present eight including a new addition in London which opened at the end of 2019.

The new hotel and co-working space with approximately 190 workstations will be on the top floor of the city shopping mall and have an industrial style with high, open ceilings and exposed concrete.

Guest rooms will range in size from 'Nest' rooms (14-15 m²) to 'Loft' rooms (21-23 m²), with the property also housing a 24-hour bar and a library. All guest rooms will have soundproofing,

blackout curtains, high-quality linen and extra-long and wide custom mattresses.

It is the second time a Ruby Hotel has been integrated into a shopping mall. The first was the Ruby Coco in Dusseldorf, which opened in 2018, and is based on top of the famous "KÖ-Galerie", directly on one of the most famous shopping streets in Germany, the Königsallee.

and the first time actual retail space has been converted for this purpose. The conversion work of the 8,000m² space is scheduled to start in the autumn of 2021 in collaboration with the Stuttgart architecture firm, BWK Architekten.

"As a conversion of former retail space right in the heart of the city, the Gerber project represents a ground-breaking milestone for us. We have created completely new room types for this project, adapted to the challenging floor layouts. The excellent location, high ceilings and unusual style of the building are a perfect match for our lean luxury philosophy and the project therefore

represents an attractive new addition to the Stuttgart hotel market," commented Michael Struck, CEO and founder of Ruby Group.

The Gerber shopping mall is owned by the life and pension assurance company, Württembergische Lebensversicherung AG. Klaus Betz, Head of real estate at the company said: "We are delighted that the Gerber shopping mall is increasingly turning into a mixed-use development and indeed is being perceived as such. This is where an attractive building offering local amenities such as retail units and restaurants focusing on quality and sustainability, also accommodates office space and a hotel development. The fact that we were able to acquire Ruby is an important milestone in Gerber's strategic development and a sensible addition to our overall concept. This project means that we are combining more than six types of use in one development which complies with "The City of Short Distances" concept."



Centara Hotels & Resorts Launches Exclusive Deal

Offering Voucher with Extra
50% Value for All of Its Resorts
in Destinations Worldwide



Buy Now, Travel Later with **Centara Hotels & Resorts**, Thailand's leading hotel operator has launched a special deal that gives an extra 50% for its vouchers sales for hotels and resorts in different destinations around the world.

Prepare to enjoy your dream destinations soon whether it's the "city-center" locations or beautiful beaches and islands, Centara Hotels & Resorts will bring you to experience a range of upscale hotels and resorts. You will be able to have memorable experiences in both facilities and services of the "Centara" brand. These are the best travel deals offering to

those who wish to travel the world when it is safe to travel again.

Buy a Centara cash voucher for a future escape with a value starting at THB1,000. Vouchers can be redeemed for hotel stays or spending in the hotel while staying at any Centara Hotels & Resorts' properties in Thailand and overseas. Centara will add a further 50% value to the purchase. Half will go to the buyer, with the value of the voucher being increased by 25% to get more out of the next adventure. The other half will be made as a donation to "Help the Heroes," a campaign aimed to support health workers and frontlines who work tirelessly during

the COVID-19 crisis. The voucher is valid for purchase on its website from now until October 31, 2021.

Each Centara hotels or resorts will feature at least one premium restaurant, each has a spa and fitness center. The hotel designs and style vary ranging from family-friendly beachfront resort to romantic beachside hideaway, adult-focused resort, residential setting, long-term comfort in residences and suites, villa luxury, and barefoot paradise in a secluded setting.

There are 76 properties of Centara Hotels & Resorts that span across all major Thai destinations plus the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, China, Japan, Oman, Qatar, Cambodia, Turkey, Indonesia and the UAE. Centara's portfolio comprises seven brands – Centara Reserve, Centara Grand Hotels & Resorts, Centara Hotels & Resorts, Centara Boutique Collection, Centra by Centara, Centara Residences & Suites and COSI Hotels – ranging from 5-star city hotels and luxurious island retreats to family resorts and affordable lifestyle concepts supported by innovative technology. It also has its own award-winning spa brand, Cenvaree. Centara's distinctive culture and diversity of formats allow it to serve and satisfy travelers of nearly every age and lifestyle.

At present, Centara Hotels & Resorts also has implemented the safety measures in the hotels that remain open with secure protective measures and hygiene cleaning which incorporates guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) for safety trips of all guests.

Centara Hotels & Resorts launches 'Help the Heroes' campaign with donations to support healthcare workers and communities in need

Centara Hotels & Resorts, Thailand's leading hotel operator, has launched 'Help the Heroes', a campaign aimed at supporting those in need during Covid-19, with donations going to the Chaipattana Covid-19 Aid Fund (and other pandemics) and Thai Red Cross Society. 'Help the Heroes' is an initiative designed to directly benefit health workers and vulnerable communities impacted by Covid-19. When a consumer buys a Centara cash voucher for a future escape, Centara will add a further 50% value to the purchase. Half will go to the buyer, with the value of the voucher being increased by 25% to help them get more out of their next adventure, when it is safe to travel again. And the other half will be made as a donation to those in need, with the customer able to choose which of the two charities Centara donates to.

Both selected charities support the fight against Covid-19. The Chaipattana Covid-19 Aid Fund (and other pandemics) provides support for under-resourced hospitals with items such as personal protective equipment and other essential medical supplies. The Red Cross Society provides medical supplies to hospitals and masks to the most vulnerable people.

To help Thailand's heroes, people can visit the company's website and buy Centara cash vouchers. Valid from now until 31 October 2021 and with a value starting at THB1,000, the vouchers can be redeemed for hotel stays or spending in the hotel whilst staying at any Centara Hotels & Resorts' properties in Thailand and overseas.

"We are enormously grateful for the fantastic and selfless work being carried out by medical workers in the



*fight against COVID-19 and we are very serious about supporting the global efforts to beat the disease. That's why we created this initiative and we are very happy to be contributing to both honourable charities. We also understand the current strain on families and communities who are unable to leave their homes or provinces, or see friends and loved ones, so we hope by providing a little extra to customers too, it can give them something to look forward to when it is safe to travel again", said **Thirayuth Chirathivat, CEO, Centara Hotels & Resorts.***

'Help the Heroes' is part of Centara's ongoing efforts during Covid-19. The company is also providing complimentary hotel accommodation and meals to healthcare workers while flagship property, Centara Grand at CentralWorld in Bangkok, has hosted doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff from the Police Hospital since 1st April 2020. The company is also poised to launch a social media campaign to thank the healthcare heroes from Thailand and around the world.

Centara Hotels & Resorts supports social distancing and the Thai government and global initiatives

to stay at home. The company also recently introduced a high-quality delivery service to take food to people's homes during the crisis.

The group has implemented the following safety measures in the hotels that remain open: social distancing arrangements, installation of additional hand washing hand sanitising stations in public areas of hotels and resorts and in common areas frequented by guests and employees; expanded employee training in transmission prevention, which incorporates guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO); notices in public areas to inform guests about the situation and protective measures they can take; frequent periodic sanitising of common areas within each property, including food preparation areas, restaurants that remain open and common guest areas; and providing updates to guests on the situation as needed. In addition, thermal scanners check the temperature of guests and visitors; those with high fever or other symptoms may undergo additional screening. When checking in, all hotel guests are also asked to fill out a questionnaire enquiring about their prior trips.

Hotel Product Adaptations and Impact on Operations in the post-COVID-19 Era

- by Manav Thadani

In our 25 years of hospitality consulting, we had never thought we would see a period quite so transformative for hotels. The next few years will witness a much greater push in terms of how hotels operate: owner-operator relationships could well be re-defined, as could management-employee relationships. Moreover, the consumer behaviour of travellers and the hotel product itself will be studied closely to determine what's relevant and what's not.

This article focuses on the hotel product: most importantly, on Rooms, F&B and Public Area adaptations that would need to take place from a product perspective. Travellers are going to look for a unique and special reason to travel to a country, city or hotel. Unless the hotels (and guest houses) out there do more than cater to a basic set of travel needs – in other words, create a genuinely compelling and differentiated offering – they will be in big trouble.

Branded hotels have been playing with brand standards to meet their own requirements of segmenting hotel products, to avoid area-of-protection clauses in hotel management contracts and to be able to have multiple hotel products in the same market. Too many brands within each hotel company that have been created, mainly to keep growing and not because of any serious customer needs. This will either start getting rationalised by the brands themselves or they will be forced to do so by owners. Brand standards should be based on the returns owners make, what customers need and most importantly what they are ready to pay for.

Frankly, most travellers and, in particular business travellers, are looking for a clean room, efficient WIFI and a comfortable bed and shower.



Notwithstanding, marketing executives utilise a lot of fluff and jargon to differentiate their hotel product. Brands instead need to shift their emphasis to maintaining strong safety and hygiene standards: if hotels can be built cheaper because they can become simpler to use, then that would be the way to go for brands. Here's a look at certain things that should change and help bring about standardisation.

Room Size Matters

We believe there could potentially be a big shift in focus from room sizes and amenities to safety and health. The past few years have seen owners complain that it's become too expensive to build hotels. Large room sizes have become the easiest way for large multi-branded hotel companies to ask for differentiation: for a given brand, rooms in the US may be 32-34 sq metres, but be of a different size in Europe. In Asia, brand development

teams have insisted on a size which in most cases is 15-20% larger. And we have seen this again and again. The unsuspecting owner therefore ends up spending more on a per-square-foot basis. Unfortunately, for many owners, this expenditure is also about being able to satisfy their ego. I think going forward we will need to be smarter and focus on investments that are productive and meet a new set of needs.

We believe that if a Upscale hotel was earlier built with a gross area of 900-1100 per sq ft or a mid-scale hotel was built at 800-900 per sq ft then the general rule should be as to how we can reduce this by 10% to 15% at the very least for all new builds. If we truly expect that the number of permanent employees will go down by, say, 20% in times to come, then we need smaller locker rooms, administration areas, smaller staff cafeteria etc. With sustainable

development a key subject in today's world, the time for conservation has come and every inch of the developed space needs to be re-engineered. Room design and fit outs may become much simpler and more standardised. Ideally, the brand will provide four ready options and the owner gets complete designs and plans for the one he/she picks. Instead of larger, we believe rooms will need to become simpler with less 'stuff', making them easier to clean and allowing fewer objects that guests can touch. Expect the same in the bathrooms. Finally, we think some of the minimum room inventory requirements may go away and the focus will instead be on the most appropriate inventory for that location and market.

F&B Adaptations

Perhaps the time has come for full-service hotels in urban locations to examine their F&B offerings. With the aim of reducing cost it may be important to restrict F&B outlets to one or two. Freestanding restaurants have already taken a march over many hotel restaurants and this may be a good time to evaluate the restaurant product. The use of technology will grow and so will the guest's ability to order / pay by using QR codes (see our article 'Who Moved My Cheese? – Disruptions That Will Redefine Hospitality in a post Pandemic World'). Menus may well be displayed in large display units or the old-fashioned blackboard; for now, buffets will certainly find their way out and therefore smaller menus may come back in fashion. Coffee shops will need to have potentially larger areas and may spill outdoors or into the corridors for now, as it may not be physically possible to maintain social distancing otherwise. How about instead of an open kitchen we have a visible dish washer?

Other Adaptations

Banquet sizes may need to be reviewed as it may become difficult to provide buffets for weddings and social distancing guidelines may get

defined by state authorities. However, on the other hand back of the house areas could actually reduce as people combine job roles and there are fewer employees. Certain functions will get combined to bring payroll under control, as highlighted in our article Talent Management, Engagement and Compensation. Further, the need to be sustainable may result in engineering areas becoming more compact, as new plant and machinery is generally smaller, more efficient and sustainable.

In terms of hotel operations, some adaptations required at department level will be as follows:

- **Hygiene and Safety:** Security departments will have to continue thermal scanning for guests and staff at all points of entry into hotels. A sustainable method will need to be devised to sanitise guest luggage coming in. Front Office team members will need to ensure adequate social distancing between guests at all times and procuring details of travel histories and possible symptoms may continue in the immediate to medium term. In the longer term, the Housekeeping department will become a key player in ensuring that stringent room checks are carried out in an effort to ensure maximum levels of hygiene being maintained throughout the hotels. Sanitisers will not only become available throughout the hotels but will also form an essential part of the housekeeping caddy. The Hygiene and Quality Control department will become essential to ensuring safe receiving of raw materials, as well as quality checks of staff, food products and surfaces. Food related hygiene and sanitation has been covered in detail in the section titled Food and Beverage: The Way Forward. Brands may consider introducing a position for the Chief Health/ Hygiene Officer who would be responsible for creating guidelines for hygiene and sanitation practices at a corporate level and monitoring these at unit level.

- **Reforecasting Exercise:** In the immediate term, hotels will need to undertake an extensive re-budgeting exercise for the financial year with

crucial inputs from the Finance, Sales and Marketing and Revenue departments. The Finance department will have to give insights into the government relief packages available to them as well as legal requirements to be fulfilled by the hotels. Sales and Marketing departments will need to identify different markets to attract business from and consortium marketing is expected to gain momentum. We highlight the need for Sales teams to accept the fact that simply lowering rates would not attract more guests (refer to our article: Road to Recovery Through Revenue Management). Weekend demand in city hotels may need to be turbo-induced using attractive pricing. Additionally, departmental costs will have to be relooked at and stringent cost control measures will need to be put in place.

- **Digital Marketing:** As consumers in general become more tech-savvy in lockdown periods, digital marketing will gain popularity now more than ever before. Marketing Communication Managers will need to focus their energy on connecting with existing and potential guests across various digital platforms, re-iterating for guests the initiatives taken by their brands and individual units during the COVID-19 crisis to ensure guest comfort and guest and employee safety.

- **Contact-less Services:** Contact-less services that are yet to gain popularity in Indian hospitality may well become the trend in the post COVID-19 era, such as: a) Self-check-in kiosks b) Online check-in and check-out c) Electronic minibars and d) Digital Key technology

- **Public Areas:** Public areas, especially swimming pools and fitness centres, will have to be closely monitored by trained staff. Guests will have to undergo thermal scanning and number of guests using the facility at any given point of time will have to be controlled. Spa and Fitness Centre memberships for non-resident guests may lose popularity in the medium to long term. Equipment at the fitness centres and business centres will need to be sanitised after every use.

Obero Group rolls Out enhanced health, safety programme across all hotels



Hospitality firm The Oberoi Group on Friday said it has rolled out an enhanced health and safety programme at all Oberoi and Trident hotels for its guests and employees in the wake of COVID-19.

The health and safety standards and procedures will be supervised by dedicated hygiene and safety managers at each hotel, as well as by senior members of the hotel management team, Oberoi Group said in a statement.

The Oberoi Group has also collaborated with Bureau

Veritas, a world leader in laboratory testing, inspection and certification services to validate and review their programme, it added.

Bureau Veritas will also undertake various virtual and in-person training sessions to supervise the implementation of the hygiene and safety standards at Oberoi and Trident hotels, it added.

Vikram Oberoi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of The Oberoi Group said, "At The Oberoi Group, we have always prioritised the health and safety of our guests



Vikram Oberoi,
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
of The Oberoi Group

and colleagues and have been working relentlessly to welcome guests back at our hotels. It is imperative for us to take extraordinary measures to ensure the wellbeing of our guests, and our people.”

“Our stringent health and safety standards are now available on the Oberoi Hotels & Resorts and Trident Hotels websites in their entirety. We hope this will help our guests understand in detail the measures we have implemented for their safety and perhaps others too may find these standards useful.

Every effort will be made to ensure our award winning hotels continue to be the safest and most desirable option for our guests and our employees,” he added.

It is imperative for the group to take extraordinary measures to ensure the wellbeing of its guests, and its people, he added.

“Every effort will be made to ensure our award winning hotels continue to be the safest and most desirable option for our guests and our employees,” Oberoi said.

Food and beverage at Oberoi and Trident

hotels are prepared under impeccably hygienic environments. Restaurants across Oberoi properties ensure safe distancing with necessary safety precautions without diminishing the dining experience of guests, the statement said.

Hotels will additionally ensure their fleet of hotel-owned and operated cars are thoroughly sanitised before and after each trip, it added.

The hotels will use technology to minimize contact, whether it is for guests checking in or checking out or for dining



at the restaurants or in their rooms, the statement said.

Founded in 1934, The Oberoi Group operates 33 hotels, two Nile Cruisers and a Motor Vessel in the backwaters of Kerala.

The Lodhi, New Delhi announces appointment of Rajesh Namby as GM

Specializing in luxury hotels and resorts, Namby has a rich experience spanning over two decades.



The Lodhi, New Delhi has announced the appointment of *Rajesh Namby* as the General Manager of the hotel.

Specializing in luxury hotels and resorts, Rajesh has a rich experience spanning over two decades, during which he was associated with renowned hotel chains like The Leela, Hyatt, Hilton and Taj Group. His last assignment was as General Manager of *The Leela Palace*, Udaipur, and prior to that he was the Resident Manager of The Leela Palace, Chanakyapuri.

During his 17 years of association with the Leela Group, he was an integral part of their culinary operations and played an instrumental role in transforming their F&B by introducing new standards of service and pioneering new levels of dining

experiences. At The Leela Palace, New Delhi, he spearheaded the launch of one of the most comprehensive culinary portfolios in the city to much acclaim and success. Under his leadership, The Leela Palace, Udaipur saw new developments and consecutively won several accolades, including being the No. 1 Hotel in the country on TripAdvisor, and the prestigious title of the ‘World’s Best Hotel’ and ‘Asia’s Best Resort’ by Travel+Leisure in 2019.

Rajesh was conferred the Food & Beverage Professional of the Year in the Rude Food Awards 2012 by Vir Sanghvi and won the Jury Award for Outstanding Performance as General Manager in the BW Hotelier Indian Hospitality Awards 2018. He has also been recognized as the Game Changer in the F&B Trends in the Country by the Food and Nightlife Magazine.

The Fern Hotels & Resorts unveils Staygiene



Suhail Kannampilly,
the CEO of the company

The Fern Hotels New Normal

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has unveiled its new operational standards, **Staygiene** - The Fern Hotels New Normal, where health and hospitality come together for heightened guest and employee safety, Suhail Kannampilly, the CEO of the company said.

The organisation has executed these hygiene and

safety measures across all its Fern and Beacon hotels, based on the directives received from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, FSSAI and the local government authorities, Suhail added. The CEO also stressed that these guidelines and procedures would be continuously evolving and would be subject to change or

modifications, as directed by circumstances and the local authorities.

The carefully drafted document lays guidelines and protective measures to ensure the safety of its guests as well as employees. Daily temperature checks, regular sanitization, enhanced awareness training sessions on hygiene and preventive actions, regular medical check-ups and doctor visits are some of the salient features of the new Operating Procedures (OP) for the employees.

The document stresses the optimal use of technology to reduce human touch to the bare minimum. Online e-registration options before arrival, scanned ID proofs before check-in, e-version of reservation confirmation voucher are some of the new OP's to ensure minimal guest interaction during check in.

Right from the time the guest is picked up from the airport, utmost care will be taken while transporting the guests. All hotel cars will be sanitized before and after every use, only two guests will be allowed per car and chauffeurs will be equipped with protective gear at all times.

Precautionary measures for guests include checking of prior travel history, regular temperature checks during stay, health check protocols, disinfecting luggage etc.

The lobby floor will have clear demarcations at the reception for social distancing. All guest touch-points in public areas will be cleaned continuously using leading sanitizers and disinfectant products like Diversey. Correctly-formulated hand sanitizers will be in place in all the public areas.

To ensure that the guest feel safe inside the room, enhanced cleaning protocols have been formulated for all rooms prior to and after each guest's stay. All room and bathroom surfaces, floorings and high guest touch-points will be cleaned and disinfected daily. Moreover, all guest rooms will be rested for a mandatory minimum period before being allocated to the next guest. All room linen and guest laundry treated using enhanced wash cycles and approved chemicals to provide added safety for guests and all laundry services will be contact less.

Right from the time we pick up a guest till he checks out, each and every thing has been planned in detail. We want to inform our guests that we are doing everything in our control to safeguard the health of our guests and our employees. We promise our thoughtful hospitality to each and every guest with utmost care, one we open our hotels, Suhail added.



Marriott International

prepares to Welcome Back Guests with Limited Time Offer

Save Now, Stay Later!

An amazing 30 per cent and above off on all bookings, offer open till 30th June 2020!

Marriott International today announces the launch of a steal deal!

A limited time offer curated specially for their hotels across South Asia. Starting today, guests can avail any of the 3 complimentary offers while making their bookings till 30th June 2020. Whether booking for leisure or business, guests can avail their stays from now* until 30th June 2021. Making the deal all the sweeter, one can earn Marriott Bonvoy™ points with the booking of each stay.

A variety of exciting holiday destinations are available, with over

90 hotels to choose from across India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Guests can opt for any of the following offerings, coupled with the flexibility to modify their reservation at any point in time. Whatever the kind of holiday you plan next, with Marriott you will find safe environs, first-class amenities and distinctive service.

Details of the offer

Guest can use code ADR and choose from any of the below offers while booking their stay via Marriott.com:

- Minimum 30 per cent off on the room rate across all hotels

- Stay 2 nights and pay for 1 night
- Stay 3 nights and pay for 2 nights

Booking period: Until 30th June 2020

Stay dates: 01st June 2020 - 30th June 2021

In recognition of the current scenario, guests can request for contact-less room check-in along with convenience of paying digitally. Marriott International believes foremost in the health and safety of every guest and has in place enhanced hygiene & sanitization practices across all their hotels. We look forward to welcoming you back!

Signum Hotels & Resorts to offer a Contactless, Sanitized Experience

All precautions and all norms are now being followed as per the WHO, CDC and local health authorities by upgrading the cleaning and sanitisation protocols.

Signum Hotels & Resorts continues to be bullish on the upcoming domestic demand. Due to the fact that post-COVID hospitality will require less congested venues, more manageable properties and iconic driveable destinations, it believes its hotels are perfectly poised to benefit from the coming uptake in domestic travel.

With clear SOP's and unique COVID safety assurance practices, Signum has invested its time in the last two months to adapt, create and fortify its operations to offer a contactless and more sanitized experience. Starting from confirmation emails to contactless key drops, it has mapped the complete guest journey and ensured all facets of the same have been meticulously taken into consideration and safeguarded.

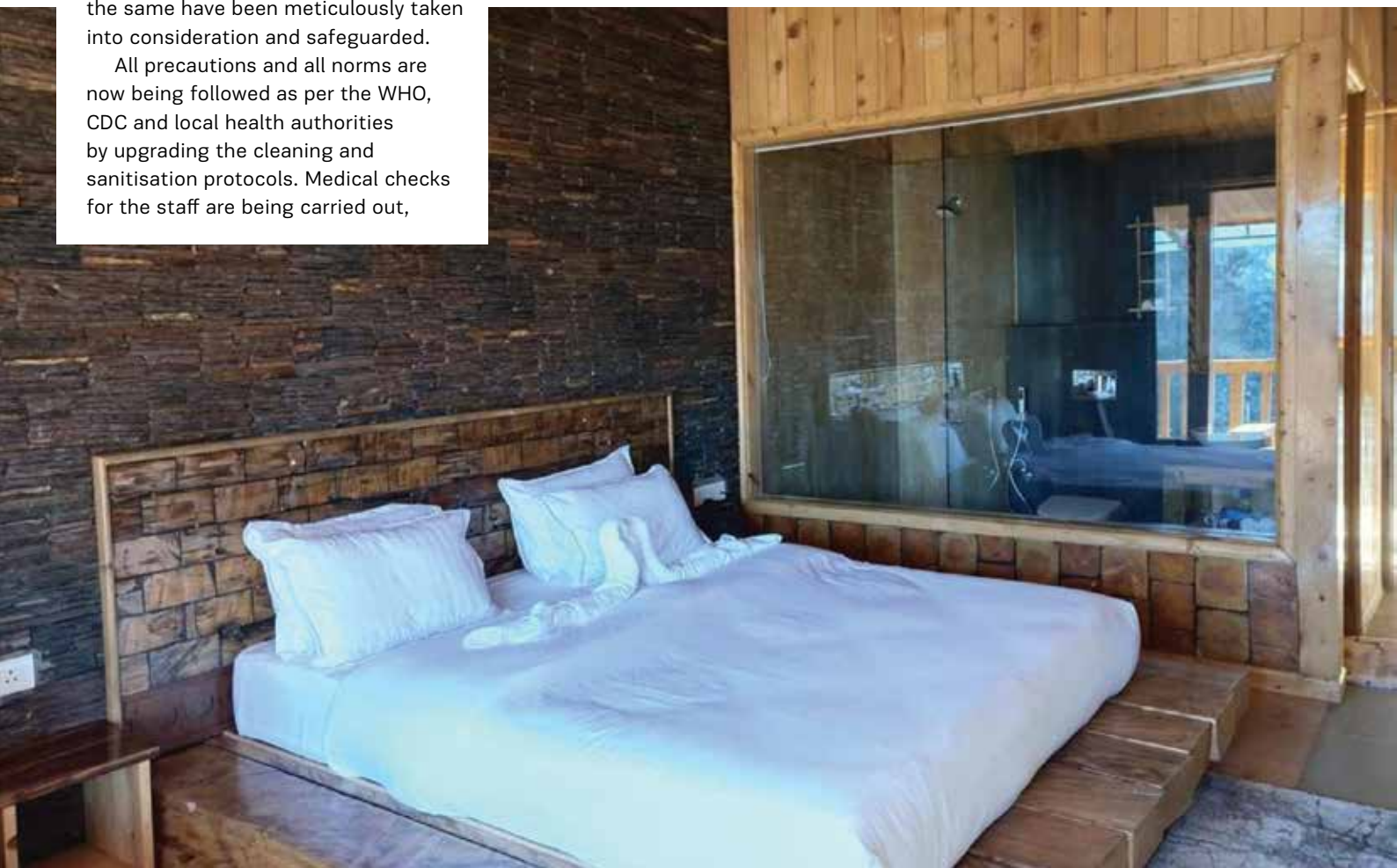
All precautions and all norms are now being followed as per the WHO, CDC and local health authorities by upgrading the cleaning and sanitisation protocols. Medical checks for the staff are being carried out,

advanced technology in the regular operations is being implemented and social distancing norms are being incorporated. A new vendor's policy is also being implemented to ensure stringent measures in terms of health, safety and security. The safety of its team is as important as the guests, and we have ensured that they will be provided with masks and gloves and other necessary personal protective equipment.

From conducting various sessions with owners and staff members to making them feel comfortable and steering them through these times to educating and talking to owners about the various steps being taken

to reduce costs and improve the business in the times to come, all bases have been covered. To add, Signum Hotels & Resorts hasn't carried out any retrenchment instead it has changed the way its hotels will operate and is working to ensure owners and employees are aware of it.

An emerging hotel company with 18 Hotels in India and UK, Signum Hotels & Resorts, delivers world-class hotel management services that make owners and guests alike feel valued. With state-of-the-art methodologies to run and manage the best of properties, each in prime locations, Signum simplifies processes, increases revenue, reduces expenses, and drives direct bookings.





Anantara

Announces Extension of 'Stay with Peace of Mind' Programme To Include MICE Facilities

As the world begins to reopen, and colleagues, families and friends start to reconnect and look to the future, Anantara announces the extension of its recently launched 'Stay with Peace of Mind' programme to include MICE facilities. To ensure guest and meeting delegate confidence, Anantara will be implementing stringent new health and hygiene measures, with enhanced levels of sanitation extending throughout the

hotels' meeting, events and conference spaces and focusing on wellbeing for guests and team members.

Beginning at Thailand's flagship property, Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel, the measures will be rolled out to all Anantara hotels and resorts globally. Preventative measures being introduced to safeguard guests and team members will include:

- Socially distant seating arrangements for all meetings and conferences
- Online pre-registration

with QR code passes and assigned seating

- Individually sealed water bottles and glasses with covers
- Individual clickers and presentation material
- Coffee break refreshments and lunches in individual, sustainably packaged single use boxes
- Outdoor lunch and coffee break areas
- Physical distancing in bathrooms
- Meeting room sanitaiton after each event
- Air-conditioning and ventilation system sanitation on a daily basis

Health and hygiene measures throughout the hotel focus on guests' wellbeing, with enhanced levels of sanitation. They include:

- Easy access to health stations with hygiene gel and wipes

• Temperature screenings at entrances

• Face masks and gloves worn by team members at all times and changed regularly

• Regular and thorough cleaning with special attention on high-touch areas, using disinfectants approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and electrostatic spray technology for full coverage

• Guidance on physical distancing in elevators and other public areas

• Ongoing training to ensure that team members are fully updated on sanitation requirements

As new science and technology evolves in helping to combat the proliferation of Covid-19, Anantara will be alert and responsive to continuously ensure the safety of guests and team members.



The world-renowned Flame Towers buildings in the capital city Baku of Azerbaijan



Florian Sengstschnid,
CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board

Azerbaijan

Unveils Plan to Revive Tourism Post-Coronavirus

The Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB), who manages the Caspian country's destination brand, has developed a four-phase plan designed to get the tourism sector back on track after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

ATB CEO Florian Sengstschnid said the **first phase** focuses on utilizing the ongoing lockdown period to connect with stakeholders and partners virtually and create digital content.

*"The **second phase** will be focused on domestic tourism, which we are in the process of rolling out as soon as the special quarantine regime will be lifted," Sengstschnid said.*

*"The **third phase** will be when a few travel restrictions are lifted and borders reopen; we will use a staggered approach to roll out communications in our operational markets and restore key campaigns," he explained.*

The **fourth phase**, according to

him, will be when the world shifts to a new normal in a post-COVID-19 era that will comprise of new experiences and campaigns tailored to a different type of global traveler.

Tourism is among Azerbaijan's key sectors impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. In March, the country's borders were closed, while incoming and outgoing passenger flights have also been suspended under government-led measures to curb the spread of the virus. The restrictions will remain in force until May 31, when the lockdown in the country is expected to end.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Azerbaijan, momentum behind the country's tourism sector was growing. In *January and February* of this year, 426,000 tourists from 149 countries traveled to the country, accounting for 17 percent year-over-year growth. However, tourist

numbers plummeted in April, when the novel coronavirus began to spread more rapidly. The overall number of international visitors to Azerbaijan *decreased* by 92 percent.

The Azerbaijani government adopted a series of measures to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on various industries, including tourism. It has allocated 2.5 billion AZN (€1.35 billion) or 3 percent of the GDP to contain the negative effects of the virus on the national economy. Hotels, travel agencies and tour operators have begun receiving support under an *entrepreneurship relief package* launched by the government. The package includes payroll support, a financial support program for individual (micro-) entrepreneurs, tax holidays, rebates and exemptions program and a credit support program.

Sengstschnid noted that ATB is preparing for the post-quarantine

period in Azerbaijan with the first target being reviving domestic tourism.

"We are in the process of launching a domestic tourism campaign, in the framework of which we collaborate with local hotels and tourism agencies in order to provide various tour packages to people traveling within Azerbaijan," he said.

He went on to add that once international travel restrictions are lifted, travelers will be back on track, and Azerbaijan will continue offering unique experiences and opportunities under the national "Take Another Look" slogan.

"Once travel restrictions are lifted, I believe people will be eager to travel to less crowded places and discover hidden gems. In this context, Azerbaijan has so much to offer, with its diverse landscapes, 9 out of 11 climatic zones, dozens of unique languages, and people who have lived here for thousands of years," he said.

ATB has re-launched its 2 websites – *tourismboard.az* (B2B) and Azerbaijan. travel (B2C) alongside a new innovative health & safety program, called SAHMAN (Sanitation and Hygiene Methods and Norms), for local industry players to improve the standards of hygiene and sanitation.

ATB launched SAHMAN project in cooperation with the State Tourism Agency (STA) of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AQTA) in April of this year. "SAHMAN," meaning "immaculateness" in Azerbaijani, is a nationwide campaign aiming to simultaneously maintain Azerbaijan as a high-quality destination for tourism and business, and promote existing health, safety, and hygiene standards. Supported by the World Tourism Organization, it focuses on three key aspects of the tourism value chain – accommodation, food & beverage, and touristic transportation providers,

inviting stakeholders in Azerbaijan to pursue even better healthcare practices in their businesses for the sake of safeguarding public health and supporting the regrowth of the industry.

Spokesman to the State Tourism Agency, Kanan Guluzade said if the government approves the end of the lockdown on May 31, the new tourism season in Azerbaijan will be launched on June 1. However, ATB officials expects the country to see a mass influx of tourists to the country by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, officials at the Operative Headquarters under the Cabinet of Ministers, announced that the government is developing a set of instructions for hotels and recreation centers that will outline their activities in the post-quarantine regime. One of the requirements is the allocation of a special room at the hotels for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases.

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Swimming in the Dead Sea

The Dead Sea lies at the lowest point of dry land on earth, more than 1,300 feet below sea level. Completely landlocked, it is actually a saltwater lake. Tourists are drawn from all over the world to bathe in this unique body of water, which is bordered by Israel on the west and Jordan on the east.

“Swimming” in the Dead Sea

In actuality, it is nearly impossible to swim in the Dead Sea. Because of the high salt content of the water, people who bathe in the Dead Sea can actually float on the surface of the water. Several photos taken from the Dead

Sea show bathers casually reading newspapers or books while relaxing on the water with no visible means of support.

The unique salt and chemical content of the waters of the Dead Sea make it toxic upon contact to fish and nearly all marine life. The only living beings that reside in the dead sea are bacteria and an especially hardy species of algae. Contact with the water of the Dead Sea is not toxic to human skin, however, the water may cause stinging in open cuts or wounds, according to Frommer's.

Therapeutic Properties

The high salt and rich mineral content of the Dead Sea waters is what makes it possible for bathers to float on its surface without effort. This unique chemical composition also gives the waters of the Dead Sea special therapeutic value to bathers. According

to the Department for Jewish Zionist Education, Cleopatra and Herod the Great visited the Dead Sea for its curative powers. Mud from the Dead Sea has been beneficial in treating psoriasis and rheumatic disorders. Among the minerals found in the waters and mud of the Dead Sea are bromide, magnesium and potash as well as mineral salt.

Visiting the Dead Sea

Spring and fall are ideal times to visit Israel and its beaches, including the Dead Sea, as the weather hovers between 60 to 80 degrees during this time. Israel also enforces strict standards for its beaches. However, travelers to the Israel side of the Dead Sea should plan their trips around Passover in the spring and the High Holy Days in the fall, when accommodations are scarce and at peak rates.





Switzerland to reopen borders with France, Germany, Austria

With the positive development in containing COVID-19, Switzerland plans to reopen its borders with France, Germany and Austria on June 15, the Federal Council announced on Wednesday.

Karin Keller Sutter, federal councillor as well as head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, said

at a press conference that the decision was taken jointly with the three countries concerned, and the condition was that the pandemic curve remained positive in the following days, Xinhua reported.

France, Germany and Austria are currently in a period of deconfinement and present a situation

similar to Switzerland at the epidemiological level, noted the official, but Italy is in a different situation where circulation within the country is still restricted, thus the reopening of borders with Italy could only be considered later.

Regarding the border issue, Michael Ryan, head of the Health Emergencies Program of World Health Organization (WHO), commented on Wednesday that it brings no additional risk in the decision to reopen the land borders between Switzerland and the three of its neighbours.

"If the risk of disease in your country is like mine, and your comprehensive measure like mine... then you are not adding any extra risk by moving your citizens between the countries," Ryan said in a virtual press conference from Geneva.

As of Wednesday, Switzerland reported 30,413 confirmed COVID-19 cases in total, 33 more than the previous day. The fatality number is 1,564.



Paradise Seychelles is COVID-19 Free

After 9 weeks of battling tirelessly the deadly COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, Seychelles – the small island holiday destination in the Indian Ocean with a population of less than a hundred thousand inhabitants – is now COVID-19 Free.

The country, which reported a number of 11 cases in total, has announced the last infected patient tested negative for a continuous number of days and is now considered to be healed from the COVID-19 virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic was

confirmed to have reached Seychelles in March 2020 as the announcement of the first two cases of COVID-19 was made on March 14, 2020.

The number of cases on the island increased slowly during the next three weeks and reached its peak on April 6, 2020 when the 11th case was confirmed including the only two local transmitted cases following which there has been no other positive cases reported on the islands.

Behind the successful handling of the delicate situation, resulting from

this pandemic is the local authority known as the Public Health Authority under the supervision of its Seychelles' Public Health Commissioner, Dr. Jude Gedeon.

The public health team reacted promptly and effectively to establish emergency protocols with the directions of the WHO, to respond to the COVID-19 crisis to treat the active cases and curb the spreading of the COVID-19 virus within its population. Provision for quarantine facilities and an immediate rapid response team



was created from the time WHO had declared COVID-19 a pandemic in mid-January.

Following the detection of the last person subjected to the infection and acting in a precautionary manner to restrain the inflation of infection numbers in the Seychelles, a travel ban order imposed by the authorities came into effect at midnight on Wednesday April 8 in Seychelles, restricting movement for citizens except essential service workers. This measure was maintained for 21 days.

On April 28, 2020, Seychelles' President Danny Faure announced a lifting of restrictions on the movement of people on May 4, while travel restrictions will end on 1 June when the Seychelles International airport will reopen on June 1, 2020.

For the moment, Seychelles is free from the COVID-19 pandemic and the

Seychellois authorities remains on high alert for any eventualities. The Public Health Authority alongside other organisations are working hard to keep citizens, expatriates and visitors safe from the pandemic.

As announced by the President on April 28, 2020, visitors and returning residents arriving in Seychelles will be subjected to strict measures imposed by the Public Health Authority, including a 14-day compulsory quarantine.

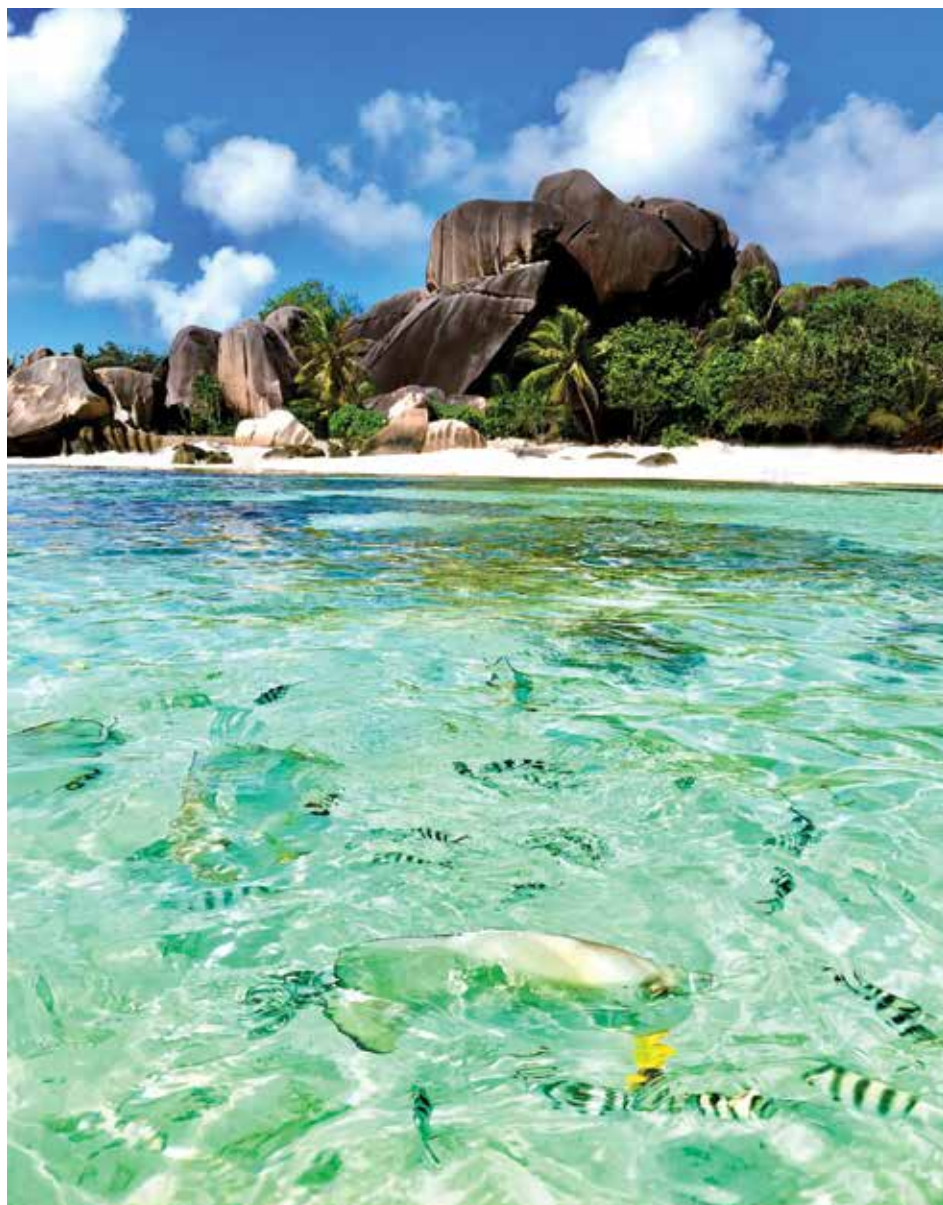
Speaking about the destination being free from COVID-19, the Minister for Tourism Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine, Minister Didier Dogley stated that the exceptional work done by the health authorities has been tremendous and it has enabled the Tourism stakeholders to get back to the drawing board to plan for the arrival of our first visitors.

"As the situation around the world remains precarious, it is a blessing for our small nation to have been able to curb the spread of the COVID-19 on our shores. As a destination, this is a very big advantage for Seychelles; there is a lot of preparatory work here on the ground with our partners to make sure that Seychelles sends a strong message of being a safe destination. When the world opens up and people start travelling, safety in regards to COVID 19 is going to be a major factor for visitors planning to go on holiday," said Minister Dogley.

He further mentioned that with the opening of the airport on June 1, 2020, Seychelles will be in a very strong position to market itself as a safe destination; something that most tourists will be yearning for after being confined to their homes for months.

Composed of 115 islands, the Seychelles Archipelago land of lush vegetation and natural pristine beauty lies scattered across their secret corner of the western Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa, some thousand miles away.

All cases have been reported and treated on Mahé. No cases have been reported on the inner island of Praslin, La Digue, Silhouette Island and the Outer Islands.





Sun Will Shine Again

**Maldives to
unveil tourism
reopening plans
on June 8**

Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) said the “Maldives, The Sun Will Shine Again” event will take place at 8pm local time on June 8.

During the three-hour Facebook live event, well-wishers from around the world, including celebrities, influencers, artists and fans of Maldives will join tourism promotion officials from the Maldives “to show their love, sentiments, wishes, memories and messages to remind that ‘The Sun Will Shine Again’ in the Maldives.”

“... [the event aims] to announce [to] the world that we are on the road

to recovery and we are committed to welcoming the tourists to the sunny side of life,” a statement read.

MMPRC is inviting tourism industry partners to participate in the event by sending a recorded video message of not more than 60 seconds. Interested partners can review the video guidelines [here](#).

The Maldives official tourism promotion body has earlier *said* that it was ready to launch new tourism promotion campaigns as soon as the government set a timeline for reopening the country’s borders.

Maldivian officials have been bullish on their ability to contain the coronavirus outbreak and *reopen* the

country in the third quarter of the year.

The government has formulated five scenarios with possible timelines for reopening borders and the tourism sector.

The best case scenario sees the country reopen borders by May, but the most likely scenario projects a July date for reopening the borders and restarting tourism in October. In the worst case, borders may only open by January 2021.

The coronavirus outbreak has hit the Maldivian economy hard, as travel restrictions and other preventive measures affect the country's lucrative tourism industry, which contributes the bulk of the island nation's state revenue and foreign reserves.

Before the pandemic, the government had been bullish about tourism prospects, targeting two million, high-spending holidaymakers this year after last year's record 1.7 million.

However, tourist arrivals saw a year-over-year decline of 22.8 per cent in the first 10 days of March. Officials say the number of tourist arrivals to the Maldives could drop by half in 2020.

All international airlines have suspended scheduled operations to the Maldives, as the island nation enforced a blanket *suspension* of on-arrival visa in late March in a bid to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Even before the visa suspension, the Maldives had closed its borders to arrivals from some of the worst-hit countries, including mainland China, Italy, Bangladesh, Iran, Spain, the United Kingdom,

Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Visitors from three regions of Germany (Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg), two regions of France (Île-de-France and Grand Est) and two regions of South Korea were also banned from entering the country.

All direct flights to and from China, Italy, South Korea and Iran were also cancelled.

Cruise ships and foreign yachts were also banned from docking at any of the country's ports.

With arrival numbers falling and the visa suspension in effect, several resorts across the Maldives had been *closed*.

Tourism has been the bedrock of the Maldives' economic success. The \$5 billion-dollar economy grew by 6.7 per cent in 2018 with tourism generating 60 per cent of foreign income.

However, the government is at present projecting a possible 13 per cent economic contraction this year — an estimated \$778 million hit.

On March 8, Maldives reported its first cases of the novel coronavirus, as two hotel employees tested positive for Covid-19 at a luxury resort in the archipelago.

Eighteen more cases — all foreigners working or staying resorts and liveaboard vessels except five Maldivians who had returned from abroad — were later identified.

A six-case cluster of locals, detected in capital Male on April 15, confirmed community transmission of the coronavirus. Several more clusters have since

been identified, bringing the total number of confirmed case in the Maldives to 1,078.

Three deaths have been reported and 58 have made full recoveries.

The Maldives announced a state of public health emergency on March 12, the first such declaration under a recent public health protection law.

The public health emergency declaration has allowed the government to introduce a series of unprecedented restrictive and social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders in capital Male and its suburbs, a ban on inter-island transport and public gatherings across the country, and a nationwide

closing of government offices, schools, colleges and universities.

Non-essential services and public places in the capital such as gyms, cinemas and parks have also been shut.

Restaurants and cafes in the capital have been asked to stop dine-in service and switch to takeaway and delivery.

A nationwide shutdown of all guesthouses, city hotels and spa facilities located on inhabited islands is also in effect.

Tourism promotion officials in Maldives are preparing to host a grand virtual event to kick-start the island nation's efforts to reopen its lucrative tourism industry.





THE GRAND PALACE to reopen to visitors from 4 June

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in its latest updated has said that the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaeo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) in Bangkok will be reopened Thursday, 4 June, 2020. The update was posted on the Royal Office website (<https://www.royaloffice.th/en/2020/05/25/the-grand-palace-will-normally-be-open-on-june-4-2020/>).

TAT understands that the reopening

will be under strict health and safety measures to control and prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Therefore, when visiting the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaeo, TAT would like to remind all to stay safe through this difficult time and follow the health and safety recommendations by keeping social distancing, wearing a mask or cloth mask, and frequently washing hands.

About the Grand Palace

The Grand Palace complex was established in 1782, and it consists of not only royal and throne halls, but also a number of government offices as well as the renowned Temple of the Emerald Buddha. It covers an area of 218,000 square metres and is surrounded by four walls, 1900 metres in length.

After King Rama I the Great ascended the throne in 1782, the Palace was built. Prior to this, the royal palace and centre of administration had been located in Thon Buri, on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River.

For various reasons, the new King considered the former capital to be unsuitable and decided to establish a new capital on the other side of the river.

By his royal command, a palace was built to serve not only as his residence, but also as the site of administrative offices. The royal compound has been known since then as the Grand Palace. The two earliest buildings erected within the complex were the Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall and the Phra Maha Monthian. <https://www.royaloffice.th/en/the-palaces/>.

Mauritius overcomes Covid-19

How Mauritius became COVID-19 free



World-renowned tourist paradise, the Republic of Mauritius has not escaped the Covid-19 pandemic. However, whilst the World Health Organization (WHO) predicted more than 20,000 cases and 1,139 deaths in the group age of over 60 years, there will have been only 332 positive cases and only 10 deaths for the whole population, of which only five directly related to the coronavirus. As of Sunday, May 17, no new cases have been recorded in Mauritius for 20 days. The reasons for this control of the

pandemic are to be found in the responsiveness of the Mauritian authorities and the effectiveness of a primary health system well-seasoned in dealing with epidemics such as malaria or dengue.

To put the records straight, Mauritius did not wait for the WHO to declare the coronavirus as a pandemic before implementing precautionary and control measures.-

As of January 23, passengers inbound from China are quarantined. A measure extended to other Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan

thereafter. February 2 will be the outright ban of these nationals.-

On March 16, Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth announces the closure of the borders of Mauritius to the countries of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland from Wednesday, March 18 for a period of two weeks.-

On March 19, after the announcement of the first three cases of the Covid-19, the Prime Minister declared a state of national containment from the next day for 14 days. The entire economy is shut down except for essential services and a few grocery stores and pharmacies.-

Sanitary confinement will be tightened three days later and then extended for the first time until April 15, a second time on May 4 and finally a third time on June 1 with a gradual opening of certain sectors of the economy, from 15 May. The Prime Minister justified this extension so that the stabilization of the spread of the virus would not be annihilated by a second wave of the disease.

Mauritius's success in controlling and stabilizing the coronavirus can, therefore, be explained by the importance attached to this pandemic by the Mauritian authorities. The closure of the borders first for the Asian countries affected by Covid-19 and then for the other countries and the quarantine of Mauritians and residents coming from abroad demonstrates the will to prevent the coronavirus from reaching the coasts of Mauritius.

We also note a desire for transparency and continuous

communication with daily press conferences of the National Communication Committee of Covid-19 and regular interventions by the Prime Minister even when he was himself in self-isolation. An application, beSafeMoris, has also been launched for continuous information on the situation and the precautions to be taken.

In practice, the experience of health services for diseases such as malaria has greatly helped in monitoring contact tracing of people found to be positive. In addition, the centralization and creation of isolation units for people in need of intensive care has helped to minimize the spread of the virus. A policy also helped by the creation of quarantine centres to accommodate all returnees. It should be noted that there is a good synergy between the government and the private sector, including hotel groups which have made no less than eight hotels available to the government for quarantine purposes.

Finally, it should be added that Rodrigues Island, another part of the Mauritian Republic, located 600 km from Port-Louis, and also a popular tourist destination, recorded no case and that the sanitary confinement only lasted 14 days there. If no case has been detected for 20 days, vigilance has not been relaxed and tests for the Covid-19 continue for all those who worked during the confinement period, including medical personnel, police, and employees of grocery stores. To date, 87,177 tests of Covid-19 have been performed and 149 people are still in quarantine.

Thailand launches certification scheme to enhance tourism health and hygiene standards



Thailand's tourism and health authorities have teamed up to launch a unique certification scheme aimed to prepare the Thai tourism industry for the recovery period and enhance confidence amongst international and domestic tourists.

The "Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration: SHA" project was launched today by Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakan, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Mr. Chote Trachu, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Dr. Panpimol Wipulakorn, Director-General, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, and Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand at a press conference "Amazing Thailand Safety & Health Administration: (SHA)" at the Grand Ballroom, Floor 2, The Athenee Hotel, Bangkok.

Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakan, Minister of Tourism and Sports, said, "The Covid-19 virus spread quickly and widely to many countries around the

world, infecting and killing many people. Currently, Thailand has been able to control the spread of the disease thanks to the quick action taken by the Royal Thai Government and the whole-hearted support of the general public.

"However, Thailand is still at risk of being hit by a "second wave", which will require continued vigilance and public support for the prevention and control measures. At the same time, we must ensure a gradually phased-in economic recovery with behavioural change in accordance with the new way of life or New Normal."

With the gradual phasing in of the New Normal, the government wants the Thai people to make a living and return to normal life while protecting them from a further spread of the virus through a broad range of preventive hygienic and health-control measures, as announced daily by the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). As such, through the combination of preventive measures and social and

economic recovery measures, the Thai people will safely pass through these critical phases.

Mr. Chote Trachu, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Tourism and Sports, said, "The policy of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports is to prepare tour operators and tourists for the period after the country has ensured safe conditions for travel. The virus has caused widespread travel disruption resulting in a negative impact on the global economy. Tourism is the first industry to have been

affected and may be the last industry to recover to normal. It is necessary to make a major adjustments to ensure its future sustainability."

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports has assigned TAT to adjust the tourism policy to be in accordance with the Cabinet's resolution under TAT's mission. The urgent policy is to upgrade the standard of cleanliness and hygiene under the concept of "Repair – Rebuild", so that tourism establishments can adjust their products and services in accordance with the New Normal and boost tourist confidence after the crisis has eased.

"The SHA project aims to make tourism a part of the overall national preventive measures and ensure that both Thai and foreign tourists have a positive experience, and that they are happy and confident in the sanitation and safety of Thailand's tourism products and services", Minister Phiphat said.

Dr. Panpimol Wipulakorn, Director-General of the Department

of Health, Ministry of Public

Health said, "The cooperation between the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports is designed to improve the 'New Normal' situation in three areas: Leisure Tourism, sports and MICE. The Public Health measures will help to promote tourism by 1) reducing the risk of infection and transmission from travel, and 2) building confidence in travel because it impacts on all sectors of tourism.

"The Ministry of Public Health would like to request people travelling to various destinations to please strictly abide by the various preventive measures in order to facilitate a speedy return to normal travel. Even after the relaxation measures, we would like to request all travellers to abide by the prescribed guidelines in order to reduce the risk of infection."

Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, said, "Ensuring high

health and safety standards will be one of the key criteria for Thai tourism to establish its competitive advantage in the recovery period. The desire to travel will remain strong, but when it actually comes to the decision-making time, visitors will opt for those destinations where they feel confident about their personal safety."

The Governor said that all applying establishments will undergo strict inspection and be assigned the SHA logo as a mark of quality certification of the service standards of that establishment. The logo will be issued by TAT and have a validity period of two years. All the names of the accredited establishments will be entered into a database. If any violations are reported, the logo will be revoked.

Ten types of business can request the SHA standard as follows:

1. Restaurants / food outlets
2. Hotel / accommodation and convention centres

3. Recreation and tourist attractions
4. Tourist transport vehicle
5. Travel agents / tour operators
6. Health and beauty parlours
7. Department stores and shopping centres
8. Sports stadiums for tourism
9. Theatres / cinemas
10. Souvenir shops and other stores.

The names of the SHA certified establishments will be publicized via www.tourismthailand.org/thailandsha and through the communication channels of TAT's domestic and overseas offices to build confidence for tourists.

Tourism operators and those interested in tourism service providers or wanting to apply to participate in the Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA) programme, can obtain further information <https://thailandsha.tourismthailand.org/>, or contact E-mail: info@thailandsha.com; Official Line: @thailandsha.



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France lays out tourism plan that includes €18 billion for tourism-related businesses



The government of France has unveiled a one-off support plan to support the country's tourism industry in the wake of COVID-19.

Following an interministerial meeting on May 14, France's Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe laid out the plan to major players in the industry, including Atout France's Christian Mantei, President of the Administration Council, and Caroline Leboucher, Director-General.

The plan concentrates on three key areas: health measures, information and reassurance for travellers; €18 billion to go towards supporting tourism-related businesses, sporting and cultural events in order to "move from emergency to recovery"; and preparing a contract for tourism

recovery and transformation.

Atout France, the France Tourism Development Agency, has been enlisted to perform the following tasks as part of this new plan:

- The Agency will work to bring together industry players under one distinctive logo that will encourage everyone to identify and pass on health protocols across all tourism activities. It will also be involved with a national campaign to promote such protocols, which is being rolled out by the government's Information Service.

- Starting June 2020, Atout France will roll out a communications campaign in partnership with relevant public-sector and local tourism professionals to assist with the

recovery of the tourism sector and encourage people to travel to France.

- Financial support for engineering in local areas across France will be significantly increased by the Banque des Territoires and, in particular, capacity building for those involved in Atout France's 'France Tourisme Ingénierie' initiative.

- Atout France will fully commit to supporting digital innovation and transformation in the tourism sector. Along with Welcome City lab, it will send a call for projects to businesses and startups that are willing to suggest solutions that will help build the tourism of tomorrow. An online platform for sharing data on France's tourism offering will be created to highlight the digital component of the tourism recovery plan.

- Atout France will play an active role in developing roadmaps for different sectors and territories in preparation for the tourism recovery and transformation contract, due in autumn 2020. The first round of feedback is scheduled for July 2020. Atout France will propose a formalization process with local authorities as well as the various regions already involved.

- In addition to the tourism plan, Prime Minister Philippe also highlighted several advancements towards the reopening of France's tourism sector. These include the following:

- The reopening date for cafes and restaurants will be decided in the week commencing May 25. In designated 'green' departments, it may be possible to reopen on June 2 if the current state of the pandemic doesn't worsen.

- French residents will be able to go on holiday in France in July and August. Overseas territories will be included.

- The hotel and tourism industries have committed to promising a full refund to anyone who has cancelled a reservation or had a reservation cancelled for COVID-19-related reasons.

- The government is putting in place a plan designed specifically for social tourism that will allow everyone to go on holidays and business trips. It will be presented in the coming weeks.

Trust is the new currency, says UNWTO Secretary-General

Dear Friends,

It is imperative that we get the world moving again - once it is safe to do so.

We are monitoring the introduction of travel restrictions around the world. Our latest data shows 100% of all destinations have restrictions in place.

Depending on when and where travel restrictions are lifted, international tourist numbers could fall between 60 and 80% this year.

The global tourism decline has already taken a toll on national economies, people's livelihoods, and on our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Without a strong and vital tourism sector, many millions of jobs and small businesses are at risk.

UNWTO has been calling for concrete steps which put words of support into action. This week, we have been encouraged by the action plan set out by the European Union to relaunch tourism in a timely, responsible and coordinated manner.

The lifting of travel restrictions, first within nations and then across international borders, will allow the many social and economic benefits tourism brings to return not just in Europe but around the world.

The EU plan, which owes much to the work of Commissioner Breton, is an example for the rest of the world to follow.

The coordinated rolling out of new health and safety protocols for every part of the tourism value chain - including travel, accommodation, food and leisure - will make it safer to travel.

Trust is the new currency of our 'new normal'. And tourism is ideally positioned to be the vehicle to channel trust.

If people trust in governments and in the tourism sector to keep them safe from harm, they will indeed travel tomorrow.

As the ultimate person-to-person sector, and one that promotes solidarity and friendship, tourism will play a key role in spreading trust more widely, with benefits traveling far beyond tourism itself. Only this way can we drive our economies back towards growth and start rebuilding our societies.

Thank you.

Zurab Pololikashvili

UNWTO Secretary-General

Radisson Hotel Group appoints new General Counsel for the Asia Pacific



Radisson Hotel Group Asia Pacific President Katerina Giannouka.
Source: Radisson Hotel Group

Radisson Hotel Group has appointed Nisha Menon as its new General Counsel for the Asia Pacific

Radisson Hotels
General Counsel for the Asia Pacific, Nisha Menon



Radisson Hotel Group has bolstered its legal representation in the Asia Pacific with the appointment of Nisha Menon as its new General Counsel for the region.

Based in Singapore, Ms Menon sits on Radisson Hotel Group's Asia Pacific Executive Committee and will report directly to the group's Asia Pacific President, Katerina Giannouka.

Speaking about her new position, she said it was pleasing to join an "exciting company with a positive mindset".

"I look forward to joining the team and facilitating the company to expand its presence across Asia Pacific," she said.

At a glance:

- Radisson Hotel Group has appointed Nisha Menon as its new General Counsel for the Asia Pacific.
- Ms Menon joins Radisson from Parkway Pantai Ltd. where she was Senior Legal Counsel.
- As General Counsel at Radisson Hotel Group, Ms Menon will be responsible for all legal matters and issues of

corporate governance in Asia Pacific.

With more than 13 years of legal experience and expertise, Ms Menon graduated with a Bachelor of Law Degree (First Class) from the University Law College at Bangalore University in 2007, and went on to enroll as an Advocate with the Karnataka State Bar Council in the same year.

In 2016, she qualified as a Solicitor of England and Wales.

Throughout her career as a legal advisor, Ms Menon has concluded multiple major deals, including mergers, joint ventures, asset sales, private equity transactions and more.

Since 2011, she has worked with companies in Singapore, most recently as Senior Legal Counsel for Parkway Pantai Ltd.

In the hospitality industry, she has been involved with numerous projects involving some of the world's leading hotel groups, such as Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide and InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), including management agreements,

cross-border joint ventures and licensing contracts in Singapore, Indonesia, India and Thailand.

Ms Giannouka said Ms Menon's experience spoke for itself.

"In the last decade she has worked on an impressive number of prestigious projects, involving complex cross-border transactions for multinational companies.

"Her intricate familiarity with legal matters in various Asia Pacific countries, accompanied by her knowledge of the hospitality industry, will play a key role in helping Radisson Hotel Group to achieve our strategic goals across the region."

As General Counsel at Radisson Hotel Group, Ms Menon will be responsible for all legal matters and issues of corporate governance in Asia Pacific.

This will include advising on investment and development projects, handling real estate and hotel management matters, including leases, local regulatory framework and permits, and managing all areas of employment law.

Vijay Kesavan appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing for Jalesh Cruises

Jalesh Cruises, India's first premium cruise liner, has appointed Vijay Kesavan as Director of Sales & Marketing in March 2020. In his new role, he will be responsible for driving the company's sales and marketing strategy and expanding its presence in new markets.

Kesavan brings over 20 years of sales and leadership experience to Jalesh. Prior to this he was associated with organisations like Akbar Travels, Thomas Cook and Musafir.com. Vijay is a travel industry veteran and brings a wealth of experience from across the travel distribution chain. He has also earlier worked at companies like Indigo Airlines, Abacus International and



Amadeus India.

Commenting on the appointment, **Jurgen Bailom, President & CEO, Jalesh Cruises**, said, "We welcome Vijay onboard the Jalesh family. He brings with him a rich experience and we look forward to working alongside with him to take Jalesh to the next level".

Commenting on his new role, **Vijay Kesavan** said, "I am truly honoured with my association with the first premium cruise liner in the country. Together, we will capture the next wave of growth for Jalesh. I look forward to the new challenges and great experiences the brand has to offer".

Sanjay Rai joins Sarovar Hotels as Sr VP sales & marketing

In his new role, he will be responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of sales, marketing and product development programs for each brand targeted towards existing and new markets

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His last stint before joining Sarovar was with The Oberoi as executive vice-president global sales, where he was responsible for leading domestic and international sales function for The Oberoi Group, including The Oberoi and Trident brands.

Prior to this, he has worked with ITC Limited for over fourteen years, handling different roles in sales and marketing. With The Oberoi Group for nineteen years, in two stints, and in Max HealthCare for close to six years as executive director-marketing and customer management.



Sarovar Hotels and Resorts has announced the appointment of Sanjay Rai as senior vice president- sales & marketing. A seasoned professional with an experience of close to four decades, he has demonstrated success in areas of brand management, customer acquisition, sales promotions, alliances & partnerships and stakeholder management.

In his new role, he will be responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of sales, marketing and

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