Travel Industry Update  
May 12, 2020

United

- After a photo of a full flight went viral, the company has updated its policies.
- Starting next week customers will be notified if their flight is "expected to be closer to full capacity," and will have the option to rebook a different flight or receive a travel credit. The airline said it will try to notify customers before they come to the airport, but offer the option at the gate as well if more than 70 percent of passengers have checked in for the flight.
- United noted that even though they are operating at a significantly lower capacity, customers have fewer options to choose from which may lead to a fuller flight.
- The policy will continue through June 30.
- Last month, United’s Chief Customer Officer Toby Enqvist wrote an email to customers promising the airline was “automatically blocking middle seats to give you enough space on board.”
- In addition to its new policy, United said it will try to alternate window and aisle seats when people are seated in pairs. But the airline cautions that “While we cannot guarantee that all customers will be seated next to an unoccupied seat, based on historically low travel demand and the implementation of our various social distancing measures, that is the likely outcome.”

Qantas seeking exemption from social distancing requirements

- Although the carrier has suspended domestic flights through June, the company is asking the Australian government for an exemption on social distancing requirements.
- Qantas CEO Alan Joyce said adopting social distancing on flights by leaving middle seats vacant would lead to few passengers and very high airfares.
- As other airlines have pointed out, leaving middle seats empty does not give the recommended amount of space between passengers.
- Joyce also said the national airline has been operating repatriation flights from India to Australia in which middle seats were filled up and the “government is very happy with that.”

Ryanair

- The carrier plans to reintroduce 40% of flights from 1 July, subject to travel restrictions being lifted and safety measures being brought in at airports.
- The airline will operate nearly 1,000 flights a day, bringing back nearly all of its pre-COVID-19 route network.
- The airline is introducing new rules, including: face coverings must be worn by all passengers and crew, all on-board transactions will be cashless, and queues for the toilet
will be banned during flights and passengers will have to request access from crew members.

- Ryanair will ask its passengers to check in online and bring fewer bags, while they will also have to download their boarding pass to a smartphone.
- On arrival at the airport, people will have their temperature checked and will have to wear a face mask or covering at all times in the terminal and on planes.
- The company says it uses air filters in its planes similar to those used in critical hospital wards and that all interior surfaces in planes are disinfected every night.
- Previously, CEO Michael O'Leary had said that it was “idiotic” to leave middle seats empty as airlines can only function when they sell the majority of seats on a plane.
- "We accept in July and August that the load factors will be lower than that, but we don't need social distancing” said O'Leary.
- "In fact the government has already recommended that where social distancing isn't possible, wear face masks. That is the effective measure against the spread of COVID-19, not the ineffective measures like a 14-day isolation that nobody will observe anyway” O'Leary said.

**Today, O'Leary had the following to say about the UK's 14-day quarantine:**

- “We can’t be imposing these entirely arbitrary and non-scientific 14-day isolations, which are entirely unenforceable and unpoliceable anyway.”
- “This is a country that can't even do testing and tracing, never mind following up on people on where they are spending their 14-day isolation.”

**Hyatt to lay off 1,300**

- The company announced it will lay off 1,300 employees worldwide, cut pay for senior management, board members and all employees as a part of a restructuring.
- The staff being laid off will be eligible for severance pay.
- “Due to the historic drop in travel demand and the expected slow pace of recovery, Hyatt has made the extremely difficult decision to implement layoffs and restructure roles across its global corporate functions, beginning June 1, 2020,” Hyatt said in a statement.
- The hotel chain reported a wider-than-expected quarterly loss last week and suspended its dividend and share buyback program.
- It had 55,000 employees as of Dec. 31, 2019, according to Refinitiv Eikon data.

**Sandals and Beaches resorts reset their opening dates**

- Previously the company had said resorts would re-open May 15, but those dates have been revised.
- June 4 is the rescheduled date for the Sandals and Beaches resorts in Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Turks & Caicos to re-open.
- “We will monitor and abide by the CDC recommendations concerning guest protocols at the time of the openings. To ensure guest safety and satisfaction, we will provide complimentary masks and gloves for all guests,” Sandals said.
- As was previously mentioned, the resorts have instituted new cleanliness policies for every aspect of its company, including: airport lounges, guest transfer vehicles, guestrooms, restaurants and bars, housekeeping and laundry, butler and Club Sandals concierge services, resort activities, fitness centers and the Red Lane Spa, public restrooms, kids clubs, and waterparks.
• Hand-sanitizing stations will be located throughout the resorts, at all dining locations and within each guest room.
• Housekeeping measures for guest rooms include use of hospital-grade disinfectants, electrical aerosol sprayers, ultraviolet light equipment to inspect cleanliness, air duct sanitization for each arrival and departure, weekly steam cleaning of carpets, and antibacterial gels and soaps in each bathroom.
• Social distancing measures include more airport transfers with fewer guests per vehicle; extending check-in times between visitors; setting up safe distances across restaurants, bars and beaches; replacing handshakes with a nod and a smile; and restricting elevator trips to one couple per trip at Sandals resorts and one family per trip at Beaches resorts.
• All team members will have temperature checks before the start of each shift. Uniforms cannot be worn during travel to and from work.
• Suppliers and vendors will be held to the new standards, as well. Delivery windows will be restricted to one party at a time. All touch points, including equipment storage spaces will be sanitized, and all outer packing will be removed upon arrival.
• All resorts currently have a health and safety manager on site as well as a group health and safety manager. They are currently training team members on these heightened standards.

Some Caribbean countries to require a test for COVID-19 at the airport

• Antigua and Barbuda have already announced plans to have tourists undergo rapid COVID-19 testing before boarding their aircraft for entry onto their islands.
• Bahamas and Haiti are also considering “virus-free” certificates, to ensure tourists (and their own citizens who have traveled abroad), are free of the novel coronavirus before entering back into the country.
• Some doubt the effectiveness of these policies.
• Here is a link to WHO’s brief on “immunity passports: https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/immunity-passports-in-the-context-of-covid-19

Disney CEO comments on re-opening of Disneyland Shanghai and when Disney might re-open its parks in the US

• Disney’s CEO said Monday that it is still unclear when parks in Central Florida will reopen, but added that he is very encouraged with how things have gone at Shanghai Disneyland.
• Disney Springs, near Orlando, which is filled with shops, restaurants, and entertainment, is set to re-open on May 20. The amusement parks have no confirmed opening date.
• A similar approach was taken in Shanghai. Disney re-opened Disney Town, and then Shanghai Disneyland.
• Capacity limits are in place in both Disney Town, Shanghai Disneyland, and will be in place when Disney Springs re-opens on May 20.
• “You know, we, we stuck our toe in the water if you will, in Shanghai, with Disney Town, and we operated that for about a month and everything went extremely well. Once again, the guests really cooperated our operations people were phenomenal and we held to the standards that we set up. And hopefully we’ll see that at Disney Springs as well. And this will be the beginning of a great new rebirth of Disney parks,” Chapek said.
• So how did it go in Shanghai? [Tickets to the park’s reopening day sold out Friday. As of Monday afternoon, tickets to the park were also sold out for the week. Chapek says the company plans to increase capacity by 5,000 a week.
• "We certainly want to open as soon as we can across the world but we’re going to do so in a responsible way,” said Chapek.
• Capek also said, “A lot of it has to do with guest behavior as much as it has to do with Disney operations. Everyone knows COVID-19 is a serious manner. Therefore, we’re all playing a part of this ecosystem of safety. We’re going to do our part and we need our guests to do their part too.”