Travel Industry Update
May 21, 2020

Travel bubbles are replacing quarantines

- All around the world, as countries decide how to restart international travel amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of a travel bubble — sometimes called a travel corridor — is gaining steam.
- The notion is simple: Two or more countries that have successfully curtailed COVID-19 agree to create a bubble. People who live inside the bubble could then travel freely and avoid a mandatory self-quarantine requirement. Such a move would cut red tape so people can cross borders with minimum hassle.
- Australia and New Zealand have been talking about forming a travel bubble.
- China is considering allowing Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea in its bubble.
- Israel is in bubble talk with Greece and Cyprus.
- Last week, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania created the first European travel bubble. Other travelers — even fellow Europeans — arriving from outside the bubble still must self-isolate for 14 days.
- Authorities at London’s Heathrow Airport have recommended that Britain get its own travel bubble.

Southwest phasing snacks and water back in

- Southwest Airlines will start serving in-flight snacks and drinks on Friday after a two month absence due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- For now, the airline will offer cans of water and a package of snack mix that includes pretzels, cheddar cheese squares and ranch bagel chips on flights of more than 250 miles.
- No resumption of snack and beverage service on shorter flights yet.
- Southwest, the nation’s largest domestic carrier, told flight attendants in a memo that the decision stems from a pick-up in travel ahead of the usually busy summer travel season. The airline expects its flights to be 35% to 45% full in June, compared with 8% in April.

Easyjet to resume some flights on June 15

- U.K.-based airline easyJet’s initial schedule will comprise mainly domestic flying in the U.K. and France and will add further routes over the coming weeks.
- Customers, cabin and ground crew will be required to wear masks; disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be available but there will be no onboard food service initially.
Emirates to clean onboard bathrooms every 45 minutes while in-flight

- Beginning today, each flight will feature a Cabin Service Attendant (CSA) who will ensure the onboard lavatories are cleaned every 45 minutes throughout the flight.
- Emirates is known for having shower suites on A380s, and each suite had a CSA who cleaned the suite after each use. Currently all Emirates A380s are grounded and when Emirates resumes A380 service, they won’t be offering showers to first class passengers. Rather than laying off CSAs or just keeping them grounded, Emirates is shifting their responsibilities in a way that reflects the times.

TSA changing security screening procedures to limit contact

- Travelers should expect more distance between passengers at security checkpoints.
- Passengers will also have to place their electronic or paper boarding passes on readers themselves, instead of handing them over to TSA agents.
- Travelers should remove food from bags and put items like belts, wallets, keys and phones into their carry-on bags to “instead of into the bins to reduce touch-points during the screening process.”
- TSA said 590 people in its roughly 60,000-person workforce have tested positive for COVID-19 and six have died.

Singapore’s Changi Airport to allow transit passengers again

- Travelers will once again be allowed to transit through Singapore's Changi Airport from June 2 as the city-state prepares to ease some coronavirus restrictions and gradually reopen its borders.
- Duty-free shops and airline lounges will remain closed.
- Transit passengers will "remain in designated facilities in the transit area and not mix with other passengers whilst at Changi Airport," said the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore in announcing the relaxed restrictions overnight.
- Airport staff will wear personal protective equipment when interacting with passengers, while existing precautionary measures, such as safe distancing and temperature checks for passengers and staff, will remain in place.
- Changi Airport is among the region's busiest, with 65.6 million travelers passing through in 2018.
- Allowing transit passengers at Changi should also help boost the outlook for Singapore Airlines, which has been hobbled by the closure of its gateway hub, although it's unsure if British Airways will resume its London-Singapore-Sydney route in light of the UK's move towards a 14-day quarantine period.
- The aviation authority said that airlines "should submit their proposals for transfer lanes through Changi Airport to the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore. The proposals will be evaluated taking into account aviation safety, public health considerations, as well as the health of passengers and air crew."

American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) releases Roadmap to Recovery; calls for Congressional help

- "The hospitality industry is in a fight for survival," said Chip Rogers, president and CEO of AHLA. "We are grateful to the leadership of both parties during one of the most
difficult health and economic challenges we have faced. We are urging Congress to do even more to help the hotel industry so that our small business hotel operators can keep the lights on and retain and rehire employees.”

- COVID-19 continues to devastate the hotel industry: 2020 is projected to be the worst year on record for hotel occupancy, and experts estimate it will be at least 2022 before hotels return to their 2019 occupancy and revenue levels.
- So far, the impact of COVID-19 on the travel industry has been nine times worse than September 11.
- Prior to the pandemic, hotels were proud to support one in 25 American jobs—8.3 million in total—and contribute $660 billion to U.S. GDP.
- See the roadmap here.
- See the letter to Congress here.