



Travel Industry Update

September 10, 2020

U.S. Airports to Stop Screening International Passengers for COVID-19 Starting Monday

- As of Monday, September 14, the U.S. government will cease to conduct COVID-19 screenings of arriving international travelers.
- The order reportedly came from the White House, though no public announcement has been made at the time of publishing. The screenings in question have taken place across 15 select airports—including New York's John F. Kennedy, Los Angeles International, and Atlanta—since January, and have included temperature checks and health questionnaires (which gather contact information for tracing) administered by government officials to incoming international travelers. These efforts have coincided with a routing of all flights from "high-risk" countries, like China, Iran, and much of Europe, into these airports, which is also reported to end at 12:01 a.m. on Monday.
- This warning comes as COVID-19 numbers rise in the U.S., and travel restrictions are in place in nearly 20 states. It also comes on the heels of reporting by Megan Sauer for Condé Nast Traveler that screenings at U.S. airports have been inconsistent in past months—and notably weaker than efforts by other countries). Some experts say such shortcomings may be to blame for the extent of the virus's spread within the states.
- It is unclear if airlines will step up their own screenings in the absence of government efforts, though previous calls by U.S. airlines for the Transportation Security Administration to take a larger role in screening responsibilities makes that seem unlikely. Most U.S. airlines' current screening procedures are limited to health questionnaires at check-in, with industry trade group Airlines for America having called "all screening processes for the traveling public ... the responsibility of the U.S. government."
- Currently, the government does not conduct any screenings of domestic airline passengers. Travel restrictions remain for international travelers from a handful of countries, including China, Iran, Brazil, and the European Union, though the state department lifted its "Do Not Travel" advisory for U.S. travelers in early August.

Delta, TSA will add antimicrobial bins in Atlanta, other hubs

- Delta Air Lines and the Transportation Security Administration are adding plastic screening bins with built-in antimicrobial technology this month for customers moving through security checkpoints at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.
- A 2018 study by Finnish and British researchers found plastic security screening trays posed the highest potential risk for respiratory viral surface contamination at airports, noting that "handling [the bins] is almost inevitable for all embarking passengers." The bins had more virus detected than toilet surfaces.

- Antimicrobial bins have been deployed since last year at other airports' security checkpoints. SecurityPoint Media, known for security bins with advertising on them, has rolled out bins with Microban antimicrobial technology at airports across the country.
- The bins from engineering firm Leidos continuously minimize microbes through an additive.
- However, TSA still advises travelers to wash their hands before and after going through security screening. And Delta said it will still have hand sanitizer throughout the airport.

United Airlines bets on Africa, India and Hawaii in 2021 expansion

- United Airlines is setting its sights on Africa and India, regions that have long been minor players in its network as it tries to expand as profitably as possible during the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Chicago-based airline on Wednesday said next spring it will launch three weekly nonstop flights from Washington Dulles International Airport to Accra, Ghana, and Lagos, Nigeria, a bid for travelers visiting friends and family. It had discontinued a Houston-to-Lagos route, at the time its only Africa flight, in 2016 in the wake of the oil bust. United will also add a daily nonstop flight from Newark, New Jersey, to Johannesburg, adding to the South Africa service it launched with a Cape Town flight last December as it chases leisure travelers.
- “We are looking to places where we have low share that has more upside for the future United and our travelers,” United’s chief commercial officer, Andrew Nocella, said in an interview.
- The airline is also planning to add daily service to Bangalore, India, from San Francisco next summer, a move that aims to capture business travelers between the two major tech hubs. That sets it up for a battle with American Airlines, which is planning to launch a flight from Seattle to Bangalore this winter. United will also add daily nonstop flights between Chicago and New Delhi late this year.
- “Bangalore has been one of the most requested destinations at United over the last few years,” said Nocella, adding that United could expand service beyond a once-daily flight there later on.
- The new flights’ success hinges on how the pandemic develops and a web of travel advisories and restrictions. Dozens of countries remain off limits for U.S. citizens, including most of Europe.
- “We all know that Covid will someday come to an end and we know that borders will reopen, so we’re looking toward the future,” Nocella said. “This is the time to do it.”
- As part of that domestic push, United will add more service to Hawaii with nonstop flights between Chicago to Kona and between Newark and Maui next summer.
- Another major change in consumer behavior is that travelers are booking closer to departure, Nocella said. “We think the vast majority of travelers are waiting a bit longer” to make holiday reservations “but we expect them to be strong.”
- And facing a dearth of business travel, United’s customers are skewing younger than before the pandemic, he added.

British Airways owner IAG to cut more flights

- British Airways owner IAG is cutting more flights over the next three months as it adjusts to the continuing collapse in demand for air travel.
- IAG, which also runs Aer Lingus and Iberia, said quarantine restrictions meant capacity this autumn would be 60% below 2019 levels.

- IAG's decision to cut more flights than planned follows its previous forecast of a 46% reduction for the October-to-December period compared with the same quarter last year.

Lufthansa has delivered over 150,000 PCR tests at Frankfurt Airport

- Lufthansa has delivered over 150,000 PCR tests at Frankfurt Airport since June, after setting up a partnership with biotech company, Centogene.
- The airline says that the additional offer “relieves the testing capacities of the health care system” and serves as a “blueprint for a successful test concept [helping] passengers entering Germany from high-risk countries.”
- Since the end of June, the partners have been jointly enabling passengers departing from or arriving at Frankfurt Airport (FRA), as well as those from the region, to have access to the tests for a charge of €59 for results arriving in six to eight hours, and €139 for results within three hours.
- More than 150,000 passengers have been tested at Frankfurt Airport using Centogene’s “Sars-CoV-2 PCR test”. The airline says that “On average, about one percent of the samples were positive during the last six weeks.”
- Passengers who had registered for the test in advance only had to wait on average 20 minutes before being tested. Most of them came from Spain, followed by the USA, Turkey and Croatia. In addition, almost 50,000 passengers were tested before departure, for example to travel to China or Dubai, where a negative test result is mandatory for entry. Since mid-August, another centre has also been in operation at Hamburg Airport.
- The airline says that in terms of the time-lag between testing and delivering results to those who had been tested, over 97 percent of the Covid-19 test results were digitally transmitted to passengers in August 2020 in less than 24 hours.
- Results are made available to passengers via a secure digital platform and linked to the flight ticket to ensure automated confirmation for travelers flying to countries with entry restrictions. In addition, passengers can choose an identity confirmation service that certifies to the authorities that the test results match the passengers’ identity.
- On average, around 4,500 tests per day were carried out in the summer months of July and August, though in recent weeks the testing capacity at the test center at Frankfurt has been expanded so that it has a capacity of around 10,000 tests per day.
- The Centogene test center is available to all passengers, but Lufthansa Group passengers can use the fast lane at the test center and there are also priority lanes for Lufthansa Group status customers, business and first class travelers.

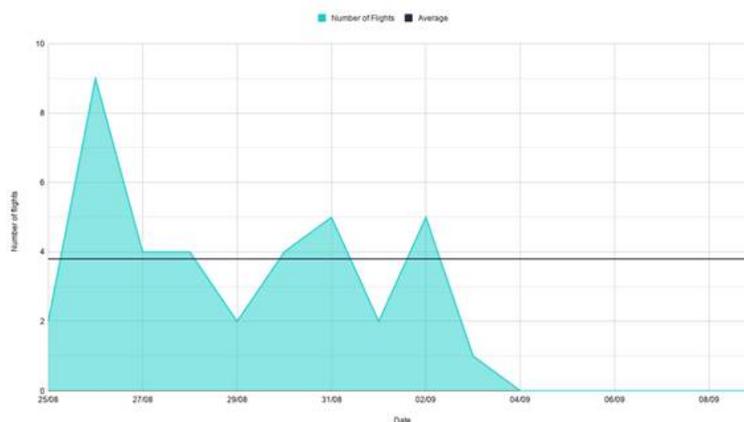
Singapore Air Makes ‘Agonizing Decision’ to Cut 4,300 Jobs

- Singapore Airlines Ltd. is eliminating about 4,300 jobs as it contends with the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation industry.
- The cuts will be made at Singapore Airlines and its SilkAir and Scoot units. Discussions are underway with unions and arrangements will be finalized as soon as possible, the carrier said in a statement late Thursday.
- “Having to let go of our valuable and dedicated people is the hardest and most agonizing decision that I have had to make in my 30 years with SIA,” Chief Executive Officer Choon Phong Goh said in the statement. “The next few weeks will be some of the toughest in the history of the SIA Group.”
- Singapore Airlines is particularly vulnerable because it has no domestic market to fall back on.

In 14 Days 38 International Flights To Canada Carried COVID Cases

- In the last 14 days, 38 international flights to Canada have been identified as carrying passengers who have since developed COVID-19 symptoms. The government maintains a list of all affected flights for a maximum of 14-days.
- The Canadian government maintains a list of international flights that carried passengers with confirmed cases of COVID-19. While not identifying the passenger, the government typically gives the rows around such individuals. This allows others who may have been on the flight to determine that they may be at risk.
- However, many countries are going with a 14-day rule for maintaining COVID-19 tracing chains. For example, after 14 days, previous interactions are deleted from Germany's Corona-Warn app. Similarly, Canada is only listing each affected flight for 14 days.
- The full list of affected flights is available [here](#).

Number of flights carrying COVID-19 Cases per day



Amtrak Partners With Lysol to Enhance Their Cleaning Protocols

- Amtrak took cleaning trains and stations to the next level this week as the train line teamed up with cleaning brand Lysol in their latest effort to stem the spread of coronavirus.
- As part of the new partnership, announced on Wednesday, Amtrak will use Lysol's EPA-approved disinfectant solutions, including products certified in July to be proven effective against COVID-19. Microbiologists from RB, the makers of Lysol, will also consult on disinfection protocols.
- At Amtrak, the health and safety of our customers and employees is our top priority. We're excited to build on our industry-leading safe travel standards through this partnership," said Steve Predmore, Amtrak's executive vice president and chief safety officer. "By coupling RB's products and expertise with the guidance of our full-time medical director, and public health and safety teams, travelers can feel a renewed sense of confidence and peace of mind aboard our trains and in our waiting areas."
- The new cleaning protocols will first launch in stations on the Northeast Corridor and Pacific Surfliner trains before expanding nationwide.

Amtrak Chief Pleads for Nearly \$5 Billion to Survive Pandemic

- Amtrak's chief executive, William J. Flynn, urged House lawmakers on Wednesday to provide \$4.9 billion for the national passenger rail agency, warning that additional cuts

to its service and work force would be needed to “stave off bankruptcy” if Congress did not provide any further emergency funding.

- His request for funding is an increase from previous levels. In May, Mr. Flynn requested nearly \$1.5 billion in emergency funds in addition to the \$2 billion in annual funds that Amtrak receives from Congress. The rail agency receives federal funding but is independently run.

Travel industry calls on administration to establish testing protocols for international travel

- Major travel industry groups called on the Trump administration to establish a globally accepted framework for testing protocols in order to support the return of international travel on Wednesday.
- The groups, including Airlines for America, the U.S. Travel Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, wrote a letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf, and Transportation Department Secretary Elaine Chao, noting that other governments have implemented pre-travel or post-arrival testing requirements.
- “We ask the U.S. government, working with the aviation industry, to move forward expeditiously to establish similar protocols,” the groups wrote. “We are cognizant of the many complexities and issues surrounding COVID-19 testing. It is precisely because of these complexities that we call on the U.S. government to work on a bilateral and multilateral basis to establish a globally accepted framework for testing protocols for international travel.”
- The groups suggested a testing pilot program between the U.S. and either Europe, Canada or the Pacific and asked that the government partner with the industry on new concepts for airports and airlines like bubbles or airbridges.
- In addition, they asked that testing protocols be medically based, affordable, dependable, privacy-oriented and nondisruptive. The groups asked that the testing measures be ones that can be conducted within a reasonable time window prior to departure, and that U.S. tests be accepted elsewhere.
- “Coordinated and deliberate action must be taken to safely reopen the international travel market. These markets must be reopened to unite loved ones with their families, reinvigorate business travel including allowing U.S. citizens access to travel to key economic partners, and spur the travel and tourism market that so many communities in the U.S. depend on,” the groups wrote.
- Other groups on the letter include the Airport Council International – North America, American Association of Airport Executives, National Air Carrier Association and the Travel Technology Association.
- Last month, San Francisco International Airport became the first U.S. airport to provide on-site rapid coronavirus testing for its employees and said the goal is to eventually extend the service to passengers.