



Travel Industry Update

September 21, 2020

Dubai Suspends AI Express Flights Till October 2 for Flying Infected Passengers

- The Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) has suspended Air India Express flights between India and Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) biggest city, from Friday until October 2.
- The flights have been temporarily barred because a passenger on a recent Jaipur-Dubai flight operated by Air India Express, the low-cost airline of the national carrier Air India, was found to be coronavirus disease (Covid-19) positive by the DCAA authorities. This was the second time the airline flew an infected passenger.

Coronavirus can spread on airline flights, two studies show

- The young woman and her sister had traveled across Europe just as the coronavirus pandemic was taking off there, visiting Milan and Paris before heading to London.
- When the woman left London on March 1, she had a sore throat and cough as she boarded a flight home to Vietnam, but no one noticed.
- By the time she got off the flight in Hanoi 10 hours later, 15 other people who had been on the plane with her were infected, researchers reported Friday.
- In another incident, passengers on a flight from Boston to Hong Kong appear to have infected two flight attendants.
- Both cases involved long flights early in the pandemic, before airlines began requiring face masks.
- Report links [here](#) and [here](#)

Airlines Say It's Safe to Fly. Travelers are Skeptical. Who's Right?

- For months now, Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian has appeared regularly on cable TV news trying to convince the public it is safe to fly.
- "Getting on a plane is safer than in a car or getting in an Uber or ride-sharing or any other form of public transportation. We've proven that over time," he said on CNN last month. "I am 100% confident it is safe to be on air travel."
- Half a year into the coronavirus pandemic, Bastian points to longstanding evidence that you're more likely to die on the way to the airport than aboard a plane. Airline executives also highlight sophisticated air filtration systems, enhanced cleaning like electrostatic spraying between flights and face-mask requirements. Delta is among a few carriers also keeping middle seats empty for more spacing.
- Many would-be passengers remain extremely wary, convinced that packing into a cabin and breathing the same air with dozens or hundreds of other people for hours is the opposite of safe during a pandemic. U.S. airline traffic is only about a third of what it was before the virus scrambled travel plans.

- Who's right? The answer appears to be somewhere in between: Flying is not as unsafe as many Americans fear, but not risk-free.
- Walking through an airport and getting on an airplane requires more of a leap of faith than before COVID-19. Data and studies are still scant, and experts disagree on the relative safety of a plane, car or office.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says airplane ventilation systems filter and circulate air frequently, so that "viruses and other germs do not spread easily on flights." But the agency notes "social distancing is difficult on crowded flights, and sitting within 6 feet of others, sometimes for hours, may increase your risk of getting COVID-19." It also flags the risk of close contact with other people in airport terminals or when going to or from the airport.
- As for flying or driving, "There's no straight answer what's safer," said Emory TravelWell Center Director Henry Wu, a professor specializing in infectious diseases, adding it depends on the trip, including its length, where you'll be stopping and other variables.
- "The plane may be one of the safer places, in the sense that the air filtration and the sanitization on the plane is outstanding," Wu said. "But, you don't have total control over who you sit near, and there could be other issues like airport lines or crowds at baggage claim."

City O'Hare Debt Document Indicates COVID-19 Could Delay Huge Airport Terminal Revamp

- The devastating impact of COVID-19 on the number of airline passengers using O'Hare International Airport could delay completion of the massive airport terminal modernization project, city officials acknowledge in a recent document.
- While Lightfoot administration officials have said the \$8.5 billion project is moving ahead in spite of the steep downturn in passengers and the revenue they generate to help fund the work, documents submitted this week to try to refinance airport debt show the city hedging its bets on the timing.
- "The city continues to assess COVID-19 and its potential effects on" the project, the document reads. It's in "the early stages of design and the estimated completion date remains subject to change due to the impacts of COVID-19 or other economic and operational factors."

Boeing Lays Off Another 750 to Reach Initial Reduction Target, but Further Cuts are Likely

- With the airline business showing scant sign of significant recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic downturn, Boeing cut more jobs this week to reach its initial workforce reduction target. However, further job losses are likely ahead.
- This week another 750 employees received layoff notices companywide, about 580 of those in Washington state. Most have a termination date of Nov. 20, Boeing spokesperson Jessica Kowal said Friday.
- The white-collar union, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, said this included about 400 of its members.
- Kowal said the total job cuts announced so far in Washington state through a combination of voluntary buyouts and layoffs now stand at about 12,600.

- Companywide, the number of job cuts from buyouts and layoffs together stands at about 19,000, including this week's announced layoffs. But this is offset by about 3,000 new hires in some critical skill areas, mostly in the defense units, she said.
- Kowal said the result is that the overall job reduction at Boeing companywide is now roughly at the initial target Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun announced in April of 10% or about 16,000 employees.
- Calhoun said then that Washington state would be hit harder because of the concentration of Commercial Airplane work here and that the job cuts here could be "more than 15%."
- The 12,600 Washington state employees leaving this year already amounts to about 17% of Boeing's workforce in the state, but with some unspecified number of new hires in the state, the overall percentage reduction will be less than that.
- Despite reaching the initial Boeingwide reduction target, this is unlikely to be the end of the job cuts.

More Than a Mall for Travelers: Redesigning Airports in the Age of Coronavirus

- "An audience that is both captive and often affluent has made airport commercial square footage some of the most lucrative in the world," the New York Times recently asserted. "But the pandemic has crushed the commercial calculus at airports, and no one is sure what comes next."
- We need to dump the sales-per-square-foot metric. For a while now, retail watchers have questioned its relevance in an age where the line between digital and physical sales has blurred beyond recognition. In today's environment, there is a deep disconnect of the metrics and the desired outcomes for consumers. We can't continue to pack products into square feet and expect success.
- Every alert observer, and certainly every human-centered designer, understands that retail space, in 2020, must be stretched to be safe. Today's airport tenants, and tomorrow's, will need to sprawl and allow for distanced experiences—and this has to be figured into how we view, design in, and charge for airport space. Airports will need to be open to experimenting with new retail and experience models.
- A second change that must take place: Our attitude toward the denizens of our airports.
- Don't view them as an "audience" that's "captive" and "affluent," but rather as people who will be frustrated and frightened by their newly distorted travel experiences.
- Consumer behavior will no doubt be changed as retail spaces open up, and understanding how to design for those new norms will be critical. Especially with projects that are under construction.
- But it's not just space that will need rethinking. Airport time will need to head back to the drawing board. The hours travelers will be spending at airports will surely—ugh, yes—increase due additional COVID-related screening and the potential for long delays.
- What will passengers will do in all this extra time? One thing's for sure: The standard offerings won't be enough. Airports need to think beyond Sbarro and Hudson News stores and ask, "What if we created engaging, time-intensive experiences that people could only have at an airport." We should recall here that a tremendous number of millennials—72%—would rather spend their cash on experiences rather than things.
- I don't envision a point solution here but something that looks at screening more holistically by integrating passengers, security, terminals, and airlines. To avoid disruptions, airlines and airports should look at creative solutions to distribute the complexity of passenger screening across different players and environments with an intelligently designed and integrated system.

First Routine International Flight Since Pandemic Takes Off from Vietnam

- Flight VN310, conducted by national flag carrier Vietnam Airlines, left Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi at 6.30am for a five-hour journey to Narita Airport in Tokyo.
- It marked the beginning of the resumption of regular flights to a number of selected countries in Asia since planes were grounded back in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Onboard were Vietnamese trainees, workers, and experts heading back to Tokyo to continue their studies and work after months of disruption.
- It also carried a number of Japanese citizens heading home.
- All 60 passengers boarding the Vietnam Airlines flight had to present a mandatory proof of a negative coronavirus tests (PCR diagnostics) issued three days before the flight, declare their travel history in the 14 days prior and download contract tracing apps as per health protocols set by the host country.
- The flight crew will all undergo health examinations and be quarantined when they returned to Vietnam.
- Vietnam Airlines is set to organize two more flights from Hanoi to Tokyo on September 25 and 30, and one from HCM City to Tokyo on September 30.

Tests, masks, temperature checks: 'Healthy Sail Panel' submits 74 COVID-19 cruise recommendations to CDC

- On Monday, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian's "Healthy Sail Panel" submitted a 65-page report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of the agency's request for public comment. The CDC's comment period closes Monday, and its current "no-sail" order is set to expire at the end of the month. Industry trade group Cruise Lines International Association has issued a voluntary suspension through Oct. 31.
- [The panel's report](#) contains 74 recommendations to prevent the introduction and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on board cruise ships, including COVID-19 testing, face coverings and temperature checks, among others. The recommendations were also published on each cruise company's website.
- The CDC will ultimately decide appropriate guidelines when cruising resumes.
- The recommendations for safe cruising begin before passengers and crew embark, and they include contingency plans in case of a coronavirus outbreak on board.
- Some of the specific recommendations include:
 - Passengers should be tested for COVID-19 between five days and 24 hours prior to boarding and share a negative result with the cruise operator.
 - At embarkation passengers should undergo an additional health screening.
 - Crew members should be tested between five days and 24 hours before leaving their home. After receiving a negative result, they should quarantine on board for seven days and take another test before beginning duties with a negative result.
 - Passengers and crew should undergo a daily temperature check.
 - Passengers and crew should wear a face mask or cloth covering in accordance with CDC guidelines.
 - Ships should have lowered crew and passenger loads.
 - Cruise lines should implement shorter sailing itineraries.
 - Cruise operators should also implement contact-free check-in.
 - Increased sanitation on board and in ports should be implemented with attention paid to both low-touch and high-touch areas.

Royal Caribbean CEO warns anti-cruise group is flooding CDC to extend no-sail order

- Royal Caribbean International President & CEO Michael Bayley took to social media to urge cruise fans to share their thoughts on cruises restarting, following a number of comments by a "a small anti-cruise group" against cruise lines.
- Mr. Bayley posted on his Facebook page a short message urging everyone to submit their comments to the CDC prior to the September 21st deadline for input on how cruise lines should restart cruising.
- He did not mention the group by name, but sifting through recent comments in the CDC's database of public comments showed one such post by a member of the group Stand.Earth.

Carnival Cruise Line Terminates Thousands of Crew Members and Senior Shipboard Officers

- Carnival is sending as many as 7,000 termination letters to Carnival officers and crew members. As many as eight captains (masters), five staff captains, five guest service managers, six executive chefs and six hotel directors are among the top ship employees who are being laid off.
- Carnival terminated the jobs of as many as one hundred and twenty crew members and officers working in the bridge across the Carnival fleet of ship.
- The current round of terminations represents a little over 20% of the approximately 33,000 ship employees employed on Carnival Cruise Line's diminishing fleet of ships.