



Travel Industry Update

October 19, 2020

Hard hit by virus, airlines push for tests over quarantines

- Airlines are in trouble, and nowhere more than on international routes.
- What will it take to get people flying again? International air traffic is down 92% this year as travelers worry about catching COVID-19 and government travel bans and quarantine rules make planning difficult. One thing airlines believe could help is to have rapid virus tests of all passengers before departure.
- Scattered experiments on improving safety are under way around the world, and a UN organization is leading talks to set guidelines. There is a lot at stake. With no end in sight to the pandemic, the near total halt to international travel will hinder economies as they try to bounce back from recession and return to normal levels of business activity. Millions of jobs - at airlines, airports and travel related businesses such as hotels and restaurants - are affected.
- WHY IS THE FOCUS ON TESTING?
 - One major factor keeping people from taking long-haul flights is the fear they will be seated next to someone with COVID-19, according to a survey by the International Air Transport Association. While flying helped carry the virus around the world initially, airplanes themselves have so far not been proven to be super-spreader locations the way business conferences and meat-packing plants have been.
 - Most people are also reluctant to fly into a quarantine that restricts their activities for up to two weeks after arrival. Quarantines themselves aren't perfect in terms of stopping the virus from spreading, as in some cases they're not strictly enforced.
 - "Testing all passengers will give people back their freedom to travel with confidence. And that will put millions of people back to work," says Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.
- HOW WOULD TESTING WORK?
 - Initial trials focus on testing passengers before departure, either at the airport or remotely. Information about the test result could be documented through a smartphone app. Newer tests can give results in less than an hour.
- WHAT DO HEALTH AUTHORITIES SAY?
 - They are open to the idea but are still assessing how effective it would be.
 - The U.S. Centers for Disease Control noted that testing technology, capacity and access to testing is improving. It added that "efforts are currently ongoing internationally to assess the risk reduction, determine what a feasible testing regime for air travel may look like, and gain some level of agreement on standards for a harmonized approach to testing globally in air transportation."
- WHO'S GOING TO DECIDE THIS?
 - The IATA is calling for rapid, accurate and scalable testing for all passengers. After airline executives appealed for help on this from the European Union and the White House's COVID-19 task force, the issue appears to have moved to a

United Nations forum, the International Civil Aviation Organization based in Montreal.

- The ICAO is working on guidelines based on scientific advice that countries could use in establishing testing regimes. The issue is on the agenda for an Oct. 29 meeting, but that's not a guarantee that guidelines will be approved.
- WHAT TRIALS ARE UNDER WAY?
 - Various forms of testing have been tried for weeks in different places. What airlines want is a larger-scale international approach.
- WHAT'S THE HOLDUP?
 - There are a lot of moving parts to any testing regime. First off, the test must be accurate, fast and cheap enough to deploy on a large scale. Governments must agree to accept the results; while governments are represented in the ICAO, the organization's guidelines will not be mandatory. There has to be a way of certifying the result, while at the same time protecting privacy of passenger medical information, and a procedure for handling people who test positive.
 - Scientists warn there are concerns about the accuracy of some rapid tests. People can test negative for a couple of days after being infected. People can be infectious before they show symptoms, and these people may also test negative.
- IS TESTING THE ONLY SOLUTION?
 - The International Air Transport Association advocates a layered approach. In addition to testing, that means: social distancing at the airport, touchless check-in, wearing masks in flight, and limiting passenger movement in the cabin.
 - In a survey published in May, consulting firm McKinsey asked 40 corporate travel planners what would give them the confidence to book travel. Seventy-five percent said they would want a vaccine, while 39% said testing.

United Says 2,700 Jobs It Cut During the Pandemic Likely Won't Return, Though It Sees 'Light at the End of the Tunnel'

- United Airlines said the 2,700 corporate jobs it has cut since the coronavirus pandemic began likely won't return, even as CEO Scott Kirby said the airline is starting to see the "light at the end of the tunnel."
- "The next 12 to 15 months are still going to be difficult and the recovery will not be a straight line. But we've done what we believe it takes to get through," Kirby said during a call with analysts discussing the company's third-quarter results. "We can see the recovery on the horizon and our attention can now be firmly focused there."
- United executives said they continue to believe demand for air travel will plateau at around half of last year's levels until a vaccine is widely available. Even when that happens, white-collar jobs that were cut as the airline worked to slash costs may not return, the airline said.
- United said last month it would lay off 1,400 management and administrative employees, after 1,300 left voluntarily earlier this year.
- "These reductions are expected to be largely permanent, even as demand recovers," the Chicago-based airline said Wednesday, while announcing its third-quarter earnings.
- That's fewer than the 3,400 white-collar jobs United warned it could eliminate in May. Still, the airline has cut about 23% of the roughly 11,500 management and administrative employees the airline said it had at the time, many working in Chicago, home to the company's Willis Tower headquarters.
- Overall, United said it has cut about 22,000 of the 96,000 employees it had at the end of last year through a combination of voluntary leave and early retirement programs and

furloughs. About 13,000 employees were furloughed and could be called back as demand for travel returns.

Potential coronavirus exposure reported on 2 Air Canada flights from Toronto to Halifax

- Nova Scotia Health is advising of potential COVID-19 exposure on flights from Toronto to Halifax on Oct. 12.
- In a statement released on Saturday, NSHA said the potential exposures have been identified on the following flights:
 - Air Canada flight 610 on Oct. 12 from Toronto to Halifax
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 - The Air Canada Flight 610 departed Toronto at 2:10 p.m., health officials said.
- Public Health said that passengers in rows 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 seats D, E, F on that particular flight are more likely to have had close contact.
- The second flight departed Toronto at 8 a.m., with passengers in rows 27, 28, 29, 30 seats A, B and C being most likely to have had close contact — they're being asked to self-monitor for symptoms.

TSA reports largest uptick in screenings since March 17

- The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) said they screened more than one million people on Sunday which reportedly represents the highest number of passengers screened at TSA checkpoints since March 17.
- TSA said in addition to screening one million passengers in a single day, 6.1 million passengers were screened at checkpoints nationwide during the week of October 12 through October 18 which represents the highest weekly volume for TSA since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Royal Caribbean to Beef Up Onboard Medical Centers

- With the Quantum of the Seas sailing from Singapore in December, Royal Caribbean International has seriously updated its health and safety standards.
- As part of the brand's "Royal Promise" campaign, each ship will have additional doctors and nurses onboard and ashore, as well as enhanced equipment.
- The onboard medical centers include dedicated controlled care centers where potentially infectious guests or crew can be cared for, away from other, non-coronavirus healthcare practices. A new layout is pictured above.
- The ships will also carry an infection control officer who monitors and coordinates the implementation of the company's infection control plan onboard.
- Every onboard physician will have received mandatory acute respiratory training before the journey.
- So how will the medical center operate if there's a possible COVID-19 case?
- "If a guest starts to feel ill, they can report the need for immediate medical attention by phone, to the nurse on duty. Our medical team will evaluate the guest in the comfort and privacy of their stateroom and determine if a SARS-CoV-2 test is needed," reads the information on the Royal Caribbean International website.

- “Our onboard medical facilities are prepared to offer robust treatment with rapid RT-PCR testing onsite, state-of-the-art equipment enhancements like hospital-grade ventilators with CPAP and BiPAP capabilities, a dedicated controlled care center; and more critical care beds on each ship.”
- Thanks to rapid technology-enabled contact tracing, the cruise line will also be able to advise guests in the event they had extended contact with any known case.
- COVID-19 testing, treatment, and travel home are free for each passenger up to the amount of \$20,000. The passenger who tests positive for coronavirus onboard, as well as their traveling party, will receive a 100 percent refund of the price of their cruise.
- The aforementioned is only guaranteed for customers who book their journey before Nov. 30. Health and safety protocols are subject to change without notice based on ongoing evaluation, public health standards, and government requirements.

