



## **Travel Industry Update**

December 16, 2020

### **Delta launches ‘COVID-free’ flights to Europe on Tuesday**

- Delta will fly its first “COVID-free” flight Tuesday, part of an effort to demonstrate that international travel can occur even at the height of the coronavirus crisis.
- Delta Flight 76 will depart Atlanta at 9:55 p.m. Tuesday and arrive Amsterdam at 12:10 p.m. Wednesday, all times local. Only a few dozen passengers will occupy the Airbus A330-300, but Delta sees the flight as “just a first step,” said Perry Cantarutti, Delta senior vice president for alliances and international.
- Passengers must undergo three COVID tests: one three or four days before departure, one at Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and one on arrival at Schiphol Airport. Negative results will enable passengers to avoid quarantine.

### **United Airlines to begin collecting contact-tracing information from passengers in coming weeks**

- United Airlines announced Wednesday the latest addition to its health and safety protocol, confirming that the airline has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to begin a voluntary contact-tracing program for all passengers arriving from international destinations, before expanding to all passengers on outbound domestic or international flights.
- The news follows a similar announcement from Delta Air Lines, which announced its own CDC-partnered program to institute voluntary contact-tracing for passengers entering the U.S. from international locales.

### **Marriott cuts 852 jobs at Times Square Hotel**

- As the coronavirus crisis keeps New York City’s hospitality industry in a chokehold, Marriott International (NASDAQ:MAR) to permanently lay off 852 workers at the New York Marriott Marquis on March 12, 2021.
- “These are actions we never thought would become necessary at our location,” the hotel’s general manager told the laid-off staffers in a Dec. 9 letter, according to The Wall Street Journal. “The unprecedented severity of the COVID-19 crisis, however, has forced the location to make these difficult decisions.”
- The Times Square Marriott initially furloughed 1,265 employees this past March.

### **Have a trip to Mexico coming up? The CDC says you should cancel**

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its recommendation for travel to Mexico in light of the worsening global health crisis.

- The CDC has now assigned Mexico a Level 4 “very high” COVID-19 designation and said that “all travel” to the country should be avoided.
- The CDC recommends that travelers who still plan to travel to Mexico should get tested for coronavirus one to three days before travel to Mexico and again one to three days before departure back to the U.S. Upon return to the U.S., the CDC recommends another test three to five days after travel. The CDC also recommends that you stay home for seven days after travel, or for a full 10 days if you don’t get tested.

### **Bipartisan group to release Covid relief bill as Congress faces pressure to send help**

- Congress aims to approve another coronavirus relief package and a government funding bill this week as millions are set to lose financial benefits during the pandemic.
- A bipartisan group plans to release its \$908 billion aid legislation Monday, but lingering disagreements over state and local government aid, liability protections and direct payments could make reaching a deal a challenge.
- The measure would also put \$6 billion into vaccine distribution.

### **AAA expects 30% fewer holiday travelers between Dec. 23 and Jan. 3, due to COVID concerns**

- AAA says it expects about 34 million fewer U.S. residents to travel over the Christmas and New Year's holidays (Dec. 23-Jan 3.) than last year. That's a drop of nearly 30%.
- AAA's forecast estimates 2.9 million Americans will travel by plane, down 59% from last year's 7.3 million.
- And it predicts the vast majority of holiday travelers – about 81 million in total – to go by car. But that's still a nearly 25% drop from 108 million in 2019.
- “While Thanksgiving is traditionally spent gathering with friends and family, the year-end holidays are when Americans often venture out for longer, more elaborate vacations. That will not be the case this year,” said Paula Twidale, senior vice president of AAA Travel. “Public health concerns, official guidance not to travel, and an overall decline in consumer sentiment have encouraged the vast majority of Americans to stay home for the holidays.”

### **Loss of 'Snowbirds' Amid Pandemic Another Hit to U.S. Tourism**

- “Snowbirds,” often retirees who live somewhere warm like Arizona or Florida part time to escape cold weather, won't be flocking south this winter. For Canadians who drive, nonessential border travel is banned until at least Dec. 21. For some, it's fear of the virus.
- A huge chunk of the snowbird population is Canadian.
- For those who go, they may face recommendations to quarantine for up to two weeks, though states often don't enforce it. They're also going into communities where hospitals are normally busiest during the winter months, and Covid-19 could overwhelm them.
- Snowbirds' plans have a huge impact on tourism. In Florida, 3.6 million Canadians visited last year, making up a quarter of its foreign tourists, according to the state tourism office. Visit Florida estimates that only 15,000 Canadians arrived between April and September, the last month with available statistics. That's about an 99 percent decrease from the same period last year.

- The Arizona Office of Tourism said an estimated 964,000 Canadian visitors were responsible for \$1 billion of the \$26.5 billion in tourism spending last year. In September, visitors overall spent \$752 million, down 60 percent from the \$1.9 billion expected in a normal year.

### **Singapore to Open for Business Travelers and House Them in Bubble**

- Singapore will start a new travel lane for business, official and high-economic-value travelers that will allow people to come to the city-state without quarantine for short-term stays and reside in a dedicated bubble facility near the airport.
- The travel lane, announced by Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing on Tuesday, builds on Singapore's efforts to reopen its borders in a controlled manner. The Southeast Asian nation, which has largely beaten back the coronavirus, announced Monday that it will progress to the third and final phase of its national Covid-19 response strategy on Dec. 28.
- Singapore's small and open economy is largely dependent upon the tourist and service sectors for growth. To that end, it's been trying to reopen its borders by establishing green lanes and special travel arrangements with countries where the virus is also under control, like New Zealand and Australia.

### **Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers May Receive Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine, with Appropriate Precaution**

- The FAA has determined that pilots may receive the vaccine under the conditions of their FAA-issued airman medical certification. FAA Air Traffic Controllers, who are subject to FAA medical clearance, may also receive the vaccine.
- To maintain the highest level of safety in the National Airspace System, the agency will require aviation professionals with medical certifications or medical clearances to observe a period of 48 hours following the administration of this vaccine before conducting safety-sensitive aviation duties, such as flying or controlling air traffic.

### **Albany Airport Begins Offering COVID Tests to Employees, Travelers**

- Albany International Airport on Friday began offering the first of what will be regular COVID-19 tests based on saliva samples that were developed by the State University of New York's Upstate Medical University.
- Available free of charge for the approximately 500 people who work at the airport and for \$30 or \$60 for travelers, depending on whether they turn in the swab or mail it in from their homes, it marks one of the first such test programs nationwide at airports.
- "This is all voluntary," said Airport CEO Philip Calderone, who went to the testing station set up in the facility's lower level for what officials said was a "soft opening" of the new program.
- The hope is that the widespread testing can help trace and contain new cases of the virus. And being tested can provide a layer of reassurance both for employees who work at the airport day in and day out as well as for travelers.
- Employees will be able to take weekly tests if they want.

- The swab results are initially pooled or combined in batches of about a dozen people. If those tests come back negative then health authorities know that all of those 12 people are virus-free.
- If one of the batches turns up positive, testers then home in on each of the dozen people by testing their samples individually to pinpoint the source.