

What you need to know: Airline cleanliness & hygiene: Latin America

October 1, 2020

In an effort to reassure travelers that they are doing all they can to protect them against COVID-19, airlines are implementing new and improved cleanliness and hygiene processes. In some cases, these measures may be exceeded by the hygiene procedures implemented by individual airports. When taking it trip, it's worth travelers knowing what hygiene measures airports are implementing, too.

This report summarizes what airlines in Latin America are doing.

Major carriers

Aerolineas Argentinas

With passenger safety its priority, Aerolineas Argentinas has implemented hygiene and sanitary protocols and preventative measures across of stages of the journey.¹

At the airport

- Check to ensure you have the necessary current documentation and additional requirements, such as medical insurance, PCR tests, required by the destination
- Arrive at the airport early, as preventive measures require extra time
- Wearing a face mask is mandatory at all times. Passengers should carry a spare, as masks should be replaced when wet or dirty
- Only departing passengers may enter the airport terminal at Buenos Aires airports
- Passengers have their temperature checked at the terminal entrance

Check-in

- Passengers should check-in online if this option is enabled
- Signs help passengers respect a minimum separation distance in the check-in queue
- Passengers should avoid checking in bags
- The Condor Room lounge in Buenos Aires Ezeiza airport is currently closed

Boarding

- Passengers self-scan boarding passes
- Boarding is in small groups to ensure distance is maintained
- Customers traveling in the Business or Premium Economy cabins are the last to board
- Where bus transfers are required, extra space will be provided. Buses are sanitized and disinfected frequently

In-flight

- Wearing a face mask is mandatory
- Passengers should limit their movement during the flight
- Reading material, blankets, pillows, headphones, special meals and bassinets have been suspended

¹ [Aerolineas Argentinas](#), Ready to take care of you

- Crew hand out health forms, in case required by the destination
- Snack and beverage services on domestic and regional flights have been temporarily suspended
- Individually packaged snacks and beverages are offered on international flights
- Disembarkation is by row, from front to back, and only once the row in front is vacated

Aircraft hygiene

- Staff wearing personal protective equipment clean and disinfect aircraft before and after each flight
- Intense cleaning is applied to high-touch areas such as seats, armrests, seatback tables, seat belts, entertainment screens
- Headrest protectors, safety cards and motion sickness bags are replaced after each flight
- Aircraft feature HEPA filters, eliminating 99.9% of bacteria and microbes

Aeromexico

Aeromexico has introduced a Health and Sanitization Management System to protect passengers during every step of their journey.²

Face masks are mandatory throughout the journey. Passengers may use disposable medical face masks. They can also use reusable masks. These must be made from a multi-layered absorbent material, cover the mouth and nose without any gaps, be secure when worn, and keep their shape after washing.

Airline staff are all subjected to regular medical examinations and must use protective equipment (face masks and gloves).

At the airport

- Only alternate check-in counters are used, to maintain space
- Passengers are asked to keep their distance at all times
- Hand sanitizer is available at check-in counters and in waiting areas
- All passengers have their temperatures checked and have health interviews
- Boarding passes are scanned contactlessly

On board

- Aircraft cabins are completely disinfected using a rigorous sanitization process
- Face masks are mandatory throughout the flight
- Aircraft are boarded from back to front
- Passengers are offered hand sanitizer when boarding
- All food and beverages are individually packaged and sealed
- All aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters, eliminating 99.99% of microparticles like viruses and bacteria

Avianca

To enable passengers to travel safely again, Avianca has introduced Avianca BioCare, a series of biosecurity measures and recommendations.³

Before the flight

- Prepare a bio-security kit containing a mask (mandatory for passengers over 6 years old), gloves, anti-bacterial gel. Masks should be changed every 4 hours (disposable) or every 8 hours (fabric).

² [Aeromexico](#), Your safety is our top priority

³ [Avianca](#), Avianca BioCare

- Check for any restrictions or procedures required at the destination
- Keep personal items with you – passengers flying to/from Colombia are not allowed to bring carry-on bags into the aircraft cabin
- Check-in online and download boarding passes to your mobile phone
- Only travelers should arrive at the airport

At the airport

- Cleaning procedures have been reinforced at counters, check-in kiosks and VIP lounges
- Each passenger has their temperature taken, to ensure it is not higher than 38°C
- Face masks are mandatory from the airport entrance
- Passengers departing from Bogota must self-check in their bags
- Maintain a minimum social distance of 2 meters
- All staff wear personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks and gloves
- Food and beverages served in VIP lounges are individually packaged; reading material has been removed
- Passengers board aircraft in small groups, always maintaining the required social distance

During the flight

- Aircraft are carefully disinfected
- Masks must be worn throughout the flight and changed every 4-8 hours
- On board announcements include hygiene and safety reminders
- Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, capturing 99.97% of all air particles
- Crew wear face masks, gloves and other items of PPE
- On board service has been simplified, with food and beverages individually packaged
- Passengers should bring their own entertainment on board, as magazines and other reading material have been removed

Copa Airlines

Copa has worked with health authorities to implement the necessary measures and regulations to ensure travelers' wellbeing.

Before the flight

- Passengers should check the travel requirements and restrictions at origin and destination
- Check-in online and download boarding passes
- Bring face masks as these are mandatory on Copa flights and at most airports
- Bring hand sanitizer, but take note of carry-on liquid restrictions
- Arrive at the airport at least 3 hours before departure
- Bring food and drink to take on board the aircraft

At the airport

- Passengers must comply with social distancing rules
- Flights will be boarded by groups from back to front
- Passengers must self-scan boarding cards and passports
- Masks must be worn at all times, and passengers may have their temperatures taken
- Ground staff are protected by transparent shields

On board

- Crew members are not allowed to handle passengers' personal belongings

- Each passenger receives a sanitary kit with a face mask and disinfecting wipes
- In-flight magazines and pillows have been removed
- Blankets only available on flights longer than 6 hours and provided in sealed, disinfected packaging
- Food and beverages will be prepackaged
- Movement in the aisles should be minimized during the flight
- Passengers may not change seats once on board
- Where possible aisle seats in the last three rows will be left unoccupied for the comfort and safety of passengers queuing for the toilets and passengers seated here
- Toilets are well-stocked with soap and paper towels, and will be cleaned and disinfected every 1.5 hours on all flights
- Crew members may only use toilets at the front of the aircraft
- Boarding and disembarkation is by rows

LATAM Airlines

To ensure the safety of its passengers, LATAM Airlines is following the recommendations of international organizations, including IATA, the WHO, governments and more to implement a range of health and safety measures.⁴

Pre-flight

- Passengers are sent emails regarding COVID-19 protocols and recommendations for safe flying
- At check-in, app alerts and signs remind passengers about safety protocols and mandatory mask use
- Self-bag drop is available at some airports
- Only one family member should queue for check in
- Passengers may be asked to move to maximize social distancing in the terminal and departure lounge
- Common areas, such as kiosks and counters, are being cleaned constantly

Boarding

- Crew will organize passengers in order to avoid crowding when boarding the plane, and when deplaning at the destination

Sanitization and cleaning

- Aircraft are deep cleaned after each flight
- All contact surfaces are manually thoroughly cleaned with 70% alcohol-based disinfectant
- All aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters, removing 99.9% of viruses and bacteria and renewing cabin air every 3 minutes

Precautions on board

- Boarding and disembarking processes have been adjusted to avoid crowding
- Face masks are mandatory, and they may comprise traditional surgical masks, N95 masks and hand-made fabric masks, as long as they completely cover the nose and mouth
- Passengers are only exempt from wearing a mask if able to provide a medical certificate
- Crew must wear masks and gloves
- Alcohol-based sanitizing gel is available on board
- Crew protocols have been adjusted to minimize contact with passengers
- Following IATA guidance, LATAM has decided not to block middle seats

⁴ [LATAM Airlines](#), COVID-19 – What are we doing at LATAM?

- Food service has been simplified to minimize the handling of items and limit interaction with passengers
- Items, such as inflight magazines, have been removed from seatback pockets
- Blankets are cleaned and dried at very high temperatures to eliminate viruses and bacteria

Other carriers

Interjet

The safety of passengers and employees is Interjet's number one priority.⁵ The Mexican airline is in contact with airports and health authorities, so that it is prepared to deal with any issues resulting from COVID-19.

Before the flight

- Check-in online or on the Interjet app and download boarding passes
- Prepare a kit with facemasks, antibacterial gel and sanitizing wipes
- Remember to wear a face mask at the airport, during the flight and while disembarking
- Facemasks can't be purchased at some airports
- Arrive at the airport earlier than usual because of the extra security measures

At the airport

- All passengers are checked for COVID-19 symptoms
- Plastic shields reduce contact between staff and passengers at counters
- Counters and computer equipment are regularly disinfected
- Maintain a safe distance of at least 1 meter when in a queue
- Antibacterial gel is available in the airport

Boarding

- Antibacterial gel is available at departure gates and lounges
- Passengers should keep at least 1 meter apart from others
- To reduce contact, have ID/passport and boarding pass ready to show

Aircraft cleaning

- Aircraft are cleaned and disinfected before and after every flight
- Only disposable materials and products recommended by health authorities are used for cleaning
- Air purification systems completely change cabin air every 3 minutes
- All aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters that remove 99.99% of viruses, bacteria and fungi

On the plane

- Crew wear masks throughout the flight
- Crew are prepared to deal with any passengers presenting any COVID-19 symptoms
- All products on the free Snack & Fly menu on board is prepared in compliance with strict safety standards issued by health agencies

At the destination

- When collecting luggage, maintain a distance from other passengers

⁵ [Interjet](#), Travel safely with Interjet

- If traveling in a group, only one person should collect the luggage from the carousel

Sky Airline

As the safety of its passengers and staff come first, Chilean low-cost carrier Sky Airline has implemented a number of measures towards safe flying.⁶

At the airport

- Check-in online
- Check-in counters are only available for bag drop and check-in by passengers with a disability or if traveling with a pet
- Cash payment for tickets is no longer available
- Passengers should arrive at least 2 hours and 45 minutes before scheduled departure time if travelling from Santiago, and 1 hour 45 minutes from other airports
- Health control requires mandatory use of a face mask, temperature monitoring, COVID-19 declaration and certificates to prove residence or travel for work

On board

- Aircraft are disinfected rigorously every day
- Aircraft are boarded in small groups to maintain social distancing
- Window and aisle seats are allocated first, increasing the chances that the middle seat will be left free
- Cabin air is completely renewed every 3 minutes
- Its Airbus A320 NEO fleet is fitted with HEPA filters, trapping microscopic particles, with 99.9% removal efficiency
- When disembarking, passengers are asked not to leave any items or waste behind
- Passengers disembark two rows at a time
- Checked luggage is disinfected with a sanitizer spray

Viva Aerobus

Mexican low-cost carrier Viva Aerobus has taken a number of actions to enable passengers to travel safely.⁷ It has implemented a number of COVID-19 preventive measures and offers recommendations.

Before the trip

- Remember to bring a face mask to wear throughout the trip
- Bring your own hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes
- All passengers are required to complete a Questionnaire of Identification of Risk Factors in Traveler and present it (digital or paper version) of the day of travel
- Check-in online up to ten days before travel and up to 70 minutes before departure

At the airport

- Try to avoid checking in bags if possible. Carry-on baggage allowance has been increased to 33 pounds
- Checked bags are sanitized by the airline
- Maintain a safe distance when checking in, during boarding, and at baggage reclaim
- Staff manage queues to ensure social distancing is maintained
- Passengers board aircraft row by row; they should remain seated at the departure gate until called

⁶ [Sky Airline](#), Let's fly, for sure!

⁷ [Viva Aerobus](#), Viva for You

- Passengers must scan their own boarding passes
- Passengers disembark by rows
- All customer-facing employees wear gloves and face masks or shields

On board the aircraft

- After the flight, passengers are asked to take their rubbish with them
- A food and beverage service continues to be offered onboard, but payment must be made by credit or debit card to limit physical contact

Hygiene and cleaning

- In addition to normal cleaning procedures, all aircraft are disinfected with chemicals approved by national and international authorities
- All aircraft are equipped with medical-grade HEPA filters purifying the air every 3 minutes

Volaris

The Mexican low-cost carrier has adapted its service to make passengers feel safer while traveling. It has implemented a number of new biosecurity and preventive measures.⁸

Check-in

- Face masks must be worn during the entire journey
- Only people with a boarding pass may be allowed to enter airport terminals
- Passengers should check-in using the airline's app and download their boarding passes
- All surfaces are being constantly cleaned with industrial-grade disinfectants
- Signs and markings help travelers maintain a safe distance in all queues
- Check-in staff wear masks, gloves and face shields and sit behind protection glass

Boarding

- Passengers scan their own boarding passes, avoiding contact with airline staff
- Disinfectant mats have been placed at aircraft entrances
- Staff check passenger temperatures using an infrared forehead thermometer
- Boarding is in groups of no more than 30 people at a time

On board aircraft

- Cabin crew wear masks, gloves and face shields
- Passengers are provided with hand sanitizer gel
- All aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters, recycling 100% of cabin air every 3 minutes and removing 99.9% of viruses and bacteria
- Aircraft interiors are deep cleaned before each flight
- All surfaces are disinfected using industrial-grade cleaning products – tables, backrests, armrests, seats, safety belts, partitions and luggage compartments

On arrival

- Passengers disembark row by row
- Baggage is disinfected to keep it free from viruses and bacteria
- Safe distances are maintained in baggage reclaim areas

⁸ [Volaris](#), With Volaris Fly Sure

Note – HEPA filters

When outlining their safety and hygiene measures, many airlines refer to the use of HEPA filters onboard their aircraft. According to the European air filter efficiency classification, high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can be any filter element rated between 85% and 99.995% removal efficiency.⁹ Aircraft manufacturers have chosen to install the higher efficiency filters, which are similar to those used in hospital operating theaters. Most modern, large commercial aircraft, which recirculate cabin air, use HEPA filters. Some older aircraft may use less-efficient filters.

Air filters can remove very small particles, such as bacteria and viruses. With an efficiency level of 99.995%, HEPA filters can remove virtually all viruses and bacteria.

Note

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving, and the situation is changing on almost an hourly basis. The information presented in this report represents the latest view as at October 1, 2020. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the correctness, completeness or topicality of this article and do not accept any liability for any damage or loss as a result of the use of the information contained within this article.

Do you have questions or comments regarding this report? Please email mike.eggleson@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.

⁹ [IATA](#), Briefing Paper, Cabin air quality – Risk of communicable disease transmission