

What you need to know: Airline cleanliness & hygiene: Southeast Asia

August 25, 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 Southeast Asia are doing.

Major carriers

Garuda Indonesia

The airline has implemented a number of preventive measures affecting inflight service, aircraft hygiene and passenger health.

Aircraft hygiene

- Aircraft are disinfected and sterilized to assure cabin cleanliness
- Disinfection is applied thoroughly to areas that directly contact passengers: toilets, seats, tray tables, headrests, seat armrests, overhead compartment and galleys
- Before departure, aircraft undergo deep daily cleaning and transit cleaning
- All aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, removing 99.999% of dust particles and airborne contaminants such as viruses and bacteria

Passenger health and social distancing

- Passengers may only fly on Garuda's domestic services after presenting a health certificate indicating a COVID-19 negative result not older than 14 days.
- Cabin crew check their health before and after duty. Inflight, they wear masks and gloves
- Airline is actively educating passengers to take care of their health, especially when planning a flight
- Passenger body temperatures are checked upon boarding
- Hand sanitizers are available at every touch-point pre-flight and onboard
- For social distancing, a seat is left empty between each passenger

Inflight service

- Single-use cutlery introduced in all classes of domestic flights and some international routes
- Book Your Meal service suspended and availability of Special Meal reduced on international flights and removed on all domestic flights
- Welcome drink service, galley snack service, tablecloths, menu cards temporarily suspended
- Newspapers and pillows removed, with availability of blankets limited
- Headrest covers changed after each flight

Malaysia Airlines

Malaysia Airlines has introduced enhanced protective measures to support the wellbeing of its customers and employees.¹ To inform passengers it launched the Fly Confidently campaign.

Keeping everyone safe

- Passengers are reminded to be aware of the travel rule and restrictions at the departure and arrival country
- Passengers should check in via web or mobile
- Self-service kiosks are available for passenger traveling on domestic and regional routes
- Passengers with symptoms are advised to postpone their trip or risk being denied boarding and entry into some countries

Physical distancing

- Passengers and employees to follow floor markers to ensure social distancing
- While in flight social distancing is no longer required by Malaysia's Ministry of Transport, Malaysia Airlines will apply social distancing rules wherever possible

Face coverings and masks

- All passengers must wear face coverings or protective masks from check-in through to baggage collection on arrival
- Applies to domestic and international flights
- Airline employees wear personal protective equipment, including gloves
- Passengers should bring extra masks and hand sanitizers limited to 100ml

Routine sanitation

- Aircraft cabins are regularly sanitized and disinfected, including wiping down of frequently touched surfaces and areas before each flight
- If a suspected COVID-19 infected passenger is carried, the seat row and the ones in front and behind will be disinfected
- Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters and an upgraded filtration capability
- Check-in counters feature protective sneeze guards and are cleaned throughout the day
- Luggage is sanitized using UV light technology before collection

Health screening and contact tracing

- All passengers are temperature screened at select destinations
- Passengers should arrive early and proceed to the boarding gate 90 minutes prior to departure for screening
- On arrival in Malaysia, all passengers receive a Health Alert Card, to be kept for 14 days
- All Malaysians and non-Malaysians entering Malaysia must download the government's MySejahtera app

¹ [Malaysia Airlines](#)

Philippine Airlines

Philippine Airlines (PAL) has added more safety measures to protect passengers. It is the responsibility of passengers to find out and comply with all travel requirements.

Before the flight

- Passengers must bring their own face masks. These may be surgical, ear loop or do-it-yourself masks. On flights to/from Singapore, Xiamen, Macau or Honolulu, only surgical masks are allowed. On flights to/from Auckland, only medical grade masks, such as surgical masks and N95 respirators, are allowed.
- From August 15, all passengers must also wear a face shield in addition to a face mask. Passengers without a shield or a mask will not be allowed to board a flight.
- Online check-in is encouraged

At the airport

- All ticket offices have thermal scanning, managed social distancing and transparent counter screens
- Passengers should arrive at Manila airport 4 hours before departure for international flights, and 3 hours for domestic
- Social distancing in place for queues and inside PAL shuttle buses
- Thermal scans at all entry points
- Hand sanitizers in designated areas
- Airport staff and passengers must wear face shields and face masks at all times

On board aircraft

- Aircraft undergo rigorous cleaning and disinfection
- All contact surfaces are wiped down using stronger cleaning agents
- Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, which are regularly maintained

During the flight

- Cabin crew wear full personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Simplified inflight service is offered to minimize contact
- Passengers given flexibility over seat selection
- Seats assigned to maximize personal distance between passengers

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines has introduced some precautionary measures designed to safeguard the wellbeing of passengers.²

Before the flight

- Passengers must complete a health declaration, three days before the flight if flying to Singapore
- Check in online 48 hours to 90 minutes before flight departure
- If departing Singapore, use the airline's app to generate a mobile boarding pass and print bag tags at self-service kiosks at selected airports
- As inflight shopping has been suspended, passengers can pre-order duty-free shopping for delivery onboard or at home
- All lounges are closed, except the SilverKris Lounge at Changi Airport Terminal 3

² [Singapore Airlines](#)

On board

- Cabin crew wear face masks during the flight, and goggles or eye visors when interacting with passengers
- Each passenger receives a SIA Care Kit containing a face mask, hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial wipes
- Designated seating zones separate transit and non-transit passengers. Passengers must remain in their designated zone throughout the flight
- Snacks have replaced meals on flights to Mainland China and within Southeast Asia. A simplified meal service is offered on other flights
- Aircraft are thoroughly cleaned with extra care taken to sanitize common surfaces. Toilets are cleaned more often during the flight using high-strength disinfectants
- All aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters. Cabin air is refreshed every two to three minutes. Fresh linen is provided on each flight, with headsets, headrest covers, pillow covers, bedsheets and blankets changed.
- SingaporeAir mobile app can be used to control inflight entertainment and provides free access to an e-library of more than 150 publications

What passengers can do

- Wash hands regularly
- Use the SingaporeAir app for a more contactless experience
- All passengers must wear a face mask during the flight

Other carriers

Bangkok Airways

To ensure safe travel, Thai regional airline Bangkok Airways has enhanced precautionary measures and social distancing practices.³ The measures comply with regulations laid out by the Ministry of Public Health and the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand for domestic air travel.

- Passengers with a temperature above 37.3°C or respiratory symptoms will not be allowed to travel
- Seats are pre-allocated onboard to ensure a safe distance between passengers
- Floor markings ensure social distancing at all service counters, waiting areas and on transfer buses
- In-flight food and beverage service has been suspended
- Passengers are not allowed to bring their own food and drink on board
- All cabin crew wear face masks and gloves
- Passengers must wear masks at all times during the flight

Cebu Pacific

Cebu Pacific and Cebgo have implemented enhanced bio-security preventive measures to keep passengers and staff safe.⁴ These include daily extensive cleaning and disinfection protocols for all aircraft and facilities, rapid antibody testing for all customer-facing staff and contactless flight procedures.

From August 15, 2020, in line with a Philippine government directive, all passengers must wear face shields during the entire flight. This is in addition to the mandatory wearing of face masks from entering the airport terminal until arrival at the destination.

³ [Bangkok Airways](#)

⁴ [Cebu Pacific](#), August 10, 2020

Jetstar Asia

To keep passengers safe, Singapore-based low-cost carrier Jetstar Asia provides advice to travelers and has implemented a number of safety measures.⁵

Stay healthy with good hygiene

- Regularly wash your hands
- Use hand sanitizer
- Cover your sneeze or cough with your arm
- Passengers with 'flu-like symptoms should seek a doctor's advice before traveling

On board

- All flights operate with a reduced number of passengers to allow for safe distancing on board
- Inflight duty-free sales and meals have been suspended
- All magazines and menus have been removed
- All passengers and crew are required to wear face masks. Crew also wear appropriate personal protective equipment in accordance with regulatory guidelines

Aircraft cleaning and hygiene

- Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, removing 99.999% of dust particles and airborne contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria
- Aircraft are cleaned between services in Singapore, with additional cleaning every night, including disinfecting all toilet and cabin surfaces.
- All interior surfaces including the seats, tables, trays, overhead compartments and galley are wiped down with disinfectant.

Lion Air Group

Indonesia's Lion Air Group includes the country's largest airline, low-cost carrier Lion Air, as well as regional airline Wings Air and full-service carrier Batik Air.

Before flying

- To travel of Lion Air's domestic routes, passengers must provide a negative COVID-190 test result not older than 14 days or a symptom-free certificate from a hospital doctor
- For international flights, a negative Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test result is mandatory

At the airport⁶

- Passengers should arrive 4 hours before departure
- Passengers must wear a mask before the flight, while on the plane and until exit at the destination airport
- Washing hands regularly is recommended

Aircraft cleaning and hygiene⁷

- Aircraft are sterilized, with disinfectant sprayed in flight decks, toilets, galleys, baggage compartments, seatback tables, seat backs, seat head covers, windowblinds, cabin walls and carpets, and the aircraft hold

⁵ [Jetstar Asia](#), May 18, 2020

⁶ [Lion Air](#), July 21, 2020

⁷ [Lion Air](#), July 31, 2020

- Aircraft and support equipment, such as pushback tugs and aircraft stairs, are regularly cleaned
- The airline's Airbus aircraft are all equipped with HEPA filters, with air fully updated every 2-3 minutes
- HEPA filters on board aircraft are regularly inspected
- Special attention is given to backup aircraft, so they are clean and hygienic if required at short notice

Royal Brunei Airlines

The safety of guests and crew is Royal Brunei Airlines' (RBA) highest priority. It has introduced a number of preventative measures.⁸

At the airport

- Check-in and bag drop queues have been designed with 1-2 meter social distancing in mind
- Passengers must undergo pre-flight temperature screening
- Before each flight, cabin crew and pilots have their temperatures taken
- Passengers must submit the required health and travel history disclosures
- Check-in counters and priority boarding areas are cleaned throughout the day
- Airport staff wear masks and gloves where appropriate
- Staff are given clear guidelines regarding wellbeing and not reporting to work if unwell
- Passengers should wear face masks at check-in, when boarding, in the aircraft cabin and when disembarking

In the air

- Cabins are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, with tables, seat trims, inflight entertainment screens and headsets all wiped down
- Special, approved disinfectants are used on hard surfaces, such as arm rests, chairs, table trays, galleys and toilets
- All headsets, pillows and blankets (used and unused) are removed after every flight
- All aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, which are replaced frequently
- Hot meal service replaced by light snacks on flights of less than 3 hours
- All crew wear masks and gloves when handling food and drink
- Seats are allocated to maximize available cabin space, with middle seats allocated only where necessary
- Revised onboard announcements explain new processes and procedures
- Sanitizing wipes are given to all passengers

Vietnam Airlines

The wellbeing and safety of passengers is Vietnam Airlines' utmost priority. In response to COVID-19, it has implemented a number of measures under the Travel with Confidence initiative. These follow guidelines from Vietnamese authorities – Ministry of Health, Civil Aviation Administration – as well as IATA and the SkyTeam Alliance's Skycare&Protect initiative.⁹

Before you go

- All passengers must submit a health declaration online before travel
- Check in online from 24 hours to 60 minutes before departure
- All passengers must take their temperature to confirm it is not above 37.5°C

⁸ [Royal Brunei Airlines](#), Flying with us

⁹ [Vietnam Airlines](#), Travel alerts

At the airport

- All passengers must wear a face mask at the airport and throughout the flight. They should bring their own mask plus a spare
- Kiosk check-in is available at Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang and Cam Ranh airports
- Passengers departing from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City can also check in by telephone from 12 to 2 hours prior to departure
- Ticket counters, check-in counters and check-in kiosks are wiped down and sanitized frequently throughout the day
- Passengers should frequently wash and sanitize their hands

In the Lotus Lounge

- Staff wear masks and medical gloves, especially when serving food and drink
- Working, entertaining, food and bar areas, as well as restrooms and shower rooms are wiped down and sanitized many times per day
- Hand sanitizers are placed in high-traffic and high-touch locations, such as the lounge entrance, check-in counter, shower room and restroom
- Food is well-cooked and preserved in sealed containers

On board

- A disinfected carpet is placed at the aircraft door during boarding
- All staff have health screenings and must wear face masks and medical gloves while serving
- Medical protective suits are available for crew and passengers on flights with a high risk of infection
- Passengers receive anti-bacterial hand wipes with 65% Isopropyl alcohol content
- Anti-bacterial soap is available in aircraft toilets
- Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, removing 99.99% of particles, including dust, pollen, human skin cells, bacteria and viruses
- Cabin air is renewed every 3 minutes
- Publications, blankets and the pet on board service have been temporarily discontinued

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.¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ IATA, Briefing Paper, Cabin air quality – Risk of communicable disease transmission

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 August 25, 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.