

What you need to know: Airline cleanliness: Southwest Pacific

August 13, 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 Southwest Pacific are doing and planning.

Australia

FlyPelican

This regional airline has implemented a number of measures to protect passengers:

At the airport

- Hand sanitizers available at check-in
- Regular cleaning of check-in areas and equipment
- Regular communication with airports and security staff on cleanliness and protective measures at screening points and within terminal facilities
- Body temperature checks for passengers and crew at Ballina and Canberra airports. More airports may provide this shortly
- Rigorous cleaning, social distancing and other required measures in place
- New signage at all check-in desks, encouraging sick people not to fly. Travelers are asked about their current health by check-in staff
- Baggage handlers and ground staff issued with gloves and protective equipment

Onboard aircraft

- Hand sanitizer available for all passengers and crew
- Passengers who wish to wear a face mask are encouraged to do so
- Aircraft are deep-cleaned daily
- Regular cleaning of seats, seat belts, cabin items and touch areas with an approved cleaner that kills 99.9% of viruses, germs and bacteria
- Deep cleaning of flight deck surfaces
- Daily checks and restock of cleaning and hygiene products onboard each aircraft
- Seat allocation procedures, where possible, ensure social distancing within the aircraft itself. Where possible there will be a free seat between passengers not travelling together

FlyPelican staff

- Rostering crew to reduce changes throughout week, ensuring same crew members remain together
- Daily temperature check of all office and admin staff before start of shift
- Anti-bacterial gel issued to all flight crew
- Separation of Flight Crew and Office Staff at head office
- Social distancing rules adhered to by all staff
- Reduction in the number of staff in office areas at one time

- Hand sanitizer, masks and Isopropyl cleaning solvent available to all staff
- Daily cleaning of office facilities
- Internal processes ensure unwell staff remain at home until cleared by medical staff to return to work

Qantas

For the safety and wellbeing of customers and staff, Qantas has launched the Fly Well program, bringing together a number of temporary and existing wellbeing measures to provide peace of mind for passengers returning to its domestic network.¹

At the airport

- Contactless/online check-in recommended
- Self-service bag drop strongly encouraged
- Self-service check-in kiosks are cleaned regularly and can print bag tags for checked baggage
- Social distancing operates at all airports
- Hygiene screens at service desks and regular cleaning of highly frequented areas protect travelers and staff
- When re-opened, Qantas lounges will feature physical distancing, hand sanitizing stations, enhanced disinfection and changes to food and drink service

At departure

- Social distancing at gate and during boarding and disembarkation
- Self-scanning of boarding passes

Onboard

- Qantas and Jetstar aircraft are fitted with HEPA grade filters
- Cabin air is refreshed very few minutes
- Food and beverage offering reduced, inflight entertainment and inflight magazines have been removed
- Passengers receive a Fly Well pack containing masks and sanitizing wipes. Masks are not mandatory but are recommended. Passengers can use the wipes to sanitize seat belts, trays and armrests.
- Once seated, passengers must limit their movement around the cabin
- Aircraft undergo enhanced cleaning with a disinfectant effective against coronaviruses, with a focus on high contact areas – seats, seatbelts, overhead lockers, air vents and toilets

Health and wellbeing

- If feeling unwell in the week leading up to a flight, Qantas advises passengers to defer travel
- Qantas recommends passengers stay healthy by regularly washing hands, using hand sanitizer, coughing/sneezing into the arm, and keeping hands away from the face

Regional Express (Rex)

In response to COVID-19, regional carrier Rex continually monitors advice from the authorities and has implemented extra protective measures in accordance with official recommendations.² It provides the following advice and support to passengers:

¹ [Qantas](#), June 11, 2020

² [Regional Express](#), Coronavirus Safety Information

Before you fly

- Don't travel if unwell
- Use online check-in
- Wash hands often
- Download the Australian Government's COVIDSafe app
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Provide contact details

At the airport

- Physical distance where possible
- Enhanced cleaning
- Touchpoint sanitization
- Hygiene stations
- Terminal signage reminding of social distancing
- Passenger information
- All passengers must comply with body temperature testing

On the plane

- Aircraft cleaning has been enhanced, with extended cabin cleaning during turnarounds using broad-spectrum disinfectants
- Hand sanitizers available in onboard toilets
- Modified service (pillows and blankets removed) and limited movement onboard
- HEPA air filters are fitted to all aircraft
- Seating allocated as alternating occupied and unoccupied seats (unless passengers traveling together)
- Personal protection and hygiene – all passengers must wear face masks on board. Masks can be purchased at check-in desks. Cabin crew wear masks and gloves

Virgin Australia

As it ramps up its domestic flying, Virgin Australia has introduced new safety and wellbeing measures.³

Pre-trip

- Passengers should ensure they are well enough to travel
- Contact details should be up to date
- Downloading the Australian Government's COVIDSafe contact tracing app is recommended

Check-in

- All passengers must complete a health acknowledgement within 48 hours of departure to ensure they are fit to fly
- Virgin recommends contactless/online check-in, downloading boarding passes from website or airline app
- Some self-service kiosks have been closed to enable social distancing

At the airport

- The airline has worked with airports to introduce social distancing measures throughout terminals
- Lounges remain closed

³ [Virgin Australia](#), June 15, 2020

Boarding and disembarkation

- Passengers scan their own boarding passes
- Boarding and disembarkation is staggered into zones and managed via crew announcements

Cleanliness

- Virgin Australia more frequently cleans aircraft using special long-lasting antibacterial and antimicrobial cleaning agents
- Seats, tray tables, armrests, window shades, seatback entertainment screens, lavatories, galleys, doors and interior walls are disinfected
- Between flights, seatbacks and headrests are wiped down and sanitized

Cabin air

- All jet aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters
- Directional airflow, high seat backs and ongoing intake of fresh air reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmissions

Personal hygiene

- Crew maintain high hygiene standards, including proper hand sanitizing
- Aircraft carry appropriate personal protective equipment
- Passengers are encouraged to bring and use their own face masks and hand sanitizer. These are available onboard on request

Inflight service

- Only complimentary water and a snack will be served
- Passengers are recommended to bring their own food and drinks onboard

Inflight seating

- Wherever possible, Virgin Australia will try to keep an empty seat between passengers traveling alone
- Passengers are asked to avoid unnecessary movement around the cabin and avoid gathering in the aisles

New Zealand

Air New Zealand

As New Zealand entered Alert Level 2 in mid-May, Air New Zealand announced how it planned to keep customers and staff safe with more flights taking to the skies.⁴

Customers are encouraged to check in via the airline's app. The airline has reduced the number of self-service kiosks at airports to support social distancing. It has installed queue floor markers at check-in counters, service desks, bag drops and departure gates. Passengers will also board and disembark flights in smaller groups.

Onboard, seating is allocated to allow an empty seat between customers traveling alone.

High-touch surfaces are cleaned regularly, with aircraft, lounges and airport facilities cleaned throughout the day. Jet aircraft feature hospital-grade air systems.

⁴ [Air New Zealand](#), May 13, 2020

Domestic lounges reopened on May 25, but the self-service buffet is not available. Air New Zealand offers passengers packaged snacks and beverages.

With New Zealand returning to Alert Level 3 on August 12, after recording local transmission of COVID-19 for the first time in more than 100 days, Air New Zealand amended its health and safety protocols.⁵ It closed its Auckland lounges and valet parking service for the duration of the change in alert levels. The airline is also taking extra precautions to keep passengers and staff safe. Ground staff and domestic cabin crew now wear masks and gloves, and pilots will wear masks when interacting with customers or walking through airport terminals.

Customers departing on flights from Auckland must now wear masks. They are welcome to bring their own, although the airline will also provide them. Air New Zealand recommends wearing a mask when traveling from other airports, although this is not yet a requirement.

On board the aircraft, Air New Zealand has suspended food and beverage services on all domestic flights to minimize contact between passengers and crew. The in-flight magazine has been temporarily removed. For a short period, initially from August 13 until August 16, seating will be allocated to allow an empty seat between customers traveling alone. The airline will allow families and companions to continue traveling together, with no spacing between passengers.

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.⁶ 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 August 13, 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.eggletton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.

⁵ [Air New Zealand](#), August 12, 2020

⁶ [IATA](#), Briefing Paper, Cabin air quality – Risk of communicable disease transmission