

What you need to know: Airline operations: Southeast Asia

August 28, 2020

As demand declines and governments around the world restrict travel, airlines are adjusting their operations, and, in some cases, suspending all services.

This report summarizes what airlines in Southeast Asia are doing and planning.

Major airlines

Airline	Action and plans
Garuda Indonesia	40 domestic routes operated from Jakarta and low frequency service to 11 international destinations
Malaysia Airlines	13 domestic and 23 international destinations served with low frequency
Philippine Airlines	Operating 21 domestic routes from Manila. Serving 27 international airports by the end of August
Singapore Airlines	Singapore Airlines and SilkAir operating 6-7% of pre-COVID-19 capacity in July and August
Thai Airways	Domestic flights transferred to Thai Smile. International flights suspended until the end of September

Garuda Indonesia

From February 5, Garuda suspended all flights to mainland China, covering services from Jakarta to Guangzhou and Shanghai, and from Denpasar to Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Xi'an and Zhengzhou.¹

Up to the end of July, Garuda operated around 40 domestic routes from Jakarta. The schedule included daily services to 18 destinations including Balikpapan, Banda Aceh, Banjarmasin, Batam, Denpasar, Medan, Padang and Pekanbaru.² As at August 8, Garuda has yet to update this information.

Until the end of August, Garuda also operates flights from Jakarta to 11 international destinations:

- Europe – Amsterdam (1)
- Northeast Asia – Hong Kong (3), Osaka (1), Seoul (2), Tokyo Haneda (2)
- Southeast Asia – Bangkok (1), Kuala Lumpur (3), Singapore (5)
- Southwest Pacific – Melbourne (1 per 14 days), Perth (1 per 14 days), Sydney (1 per 14 days)

From September, Garuda will steadily increase service to Amsterdam, rising to 5 per week during October. It will also increase Singapore to a double daily service and launch new twice-weekly services to Singapore from Denpasar and Surabaya.

All other international routes remain suspended until further notice.

¹ [Garuda Indonesia](#), March 20, 2020

² [Garuda Indonesia](#), July 15, 2020

Malaysia Airlines

From March 22 until June 30, Malaysia Airlines reduced services across its network. Cancellations ranged from specific flights to entire routes and changed over time. During July, it operated the following:³

- Domestic from Kuala Lumpur
 - Alor Setar, Johor Bahru, Kota Bharu, Langkawi, Terengganu, Labuan, Miri, Sandakan, Tawau (all twice weekly)
 - Bintulu, Kuantan and Sibul (all weekly)
 - Kuching (5 times weekly)
- International from Kuala Lumpur
 - Europe: London (2)
 - Northeast Asia: Guangzhou (1), Osaka (2), Seoul (2), Taipei (1), Tokyo (2)
 - South Asia: Bangalore (1 per week), Chennai (1), Colombo (1), Delhi (1), Dhaka (2), Kathmandu (2), Kochi (1), Mumbai (1)
 - Southeast Asia: Bangkok (4), Jakarta (4), Manila (3), Singapore (5), Surabaya (1)
 - Southwest Pacific: Adelaide (1), Brisbane (1), Melbourne (1), Sydney (1)

During September, Malaysia Airlines will increase the frequency of flights operated from Kuala Lumpur to three destinations in Sabah: Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and Tawau.

Philippine Airlines

Philippines Airlines (PAL) grounded all domestic flights from March 17. It also scaled back its international operations, maintaining flights only to Jakarta, Los Angeles, New York JFK, San Francisco and Tokyo. These remaining flights were suspended from March 26, initially until April 14.⁴

On June 1, PAL resumed operating scheduled flights on selected domestic and international routes, progressively adding new routes and increasing frequencies during the month.⁵ As at August 7, it linked Manila to 25 international airports, but service to at least 19 points remained suspended:

- Europe – London Heathrow (1 per week)
- Northeast Asia – Fukuoka (1), Hong Kong (1), Nagoya (2), Osaka Kansai (3), Taipei (1), Tokyo Haneda (3), Tokyo Narita (3)
- Southeast Asia – Bangkok (1 per 14 days), Ho Chi Minh City (1), Jakarta (1 per 14 days), Kuala Lumpur (1), Singapore (3-4)
- Middle East – Dammam (2), Doha (1), Dubai (2), Riyadh (2)
- North America – Guam (1), Honolulu (1), Los Angeles (4), New York (1), San Francisco (2), Toronto (1), Vancouver (2)
- Southwest Pacific – Sydney (single flight operated during July)
- Still suspended – Auckland, Beijing, Brisbane, Busan, Denpasar, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Macau, Melbourne, Phnom Penh, Perth, Port Moresby, Quanzhou, San Francisco, Sapporo, Seoul Incheon, Shanghai and Xiamen

By the end of August, PAL plans to resume service to Port Moresby and Seoul. The airline is also operating international services linking Cebu and Tokyo, with one flight operated every two weeks.

³ [Malaysia Airlines](#), June 8, 2020

⁴ [Philippine Airlines](#), March 24, 2020

⁵ [PAL](#), May 31, 2020

From June 3, PAL also restarted domestic flying. During August, it operated flights from Manila to Bacolod, Basco, Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Catarman, Cebu, Cotabato, Davao, Dipolog, Dumaguete, General Santos, Iloilo, Kalibo, Laoag, Legazpi, Ozamiz, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, Roxas, Tacloban and Zamboanga. PAL has also relaunched flights from Cebu to Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Dumaguete, Tacloban and Zamboanga, and from Clark to Davao.

Singapore Airlines

On March 18, Singapore Airlines (SIA) announced a 50% cut in capacity until the end of April. But as border controls around the world tightened further, it decided to cut 96% of scheduled capacity, resulting in the grounding of 138 of the 147 aircraft operated by SIA and regional carrier SilkAir. Low-cost division Scoot also suspended most of its network and grounded all but two of its 49 aircraft.

Together, SIA and SilkAir will operate 6% of pre-COVID-19 passenger capacity in July, rising slightly to 7% in August.⁶ During August, service was restored to XX destinations: Istanbul, Milan, Perth, Phnom Penh, Surabaya and Taipei. Between August and November, the two airlines will operate the following schedule to 34 destinations:

- Europe – Amsterdam (3 per week), Barcelona (1), Copenhagen (1), Frankfurt (5), London (13), Milan (1), Paris (3), Zurich (3)
- Middle East – Istanbul (1)
- North America – Los Angeles (3)
- Northeast Asia – Chongqing (1), Hong Kong (7), Osaka (3), Seoul (6), Shanghai (1), Taipei (3), Tokyo (3)
- Southeast Asia – Bangkok (3), Cebu (2), Hanoi (1), Ho Chi Minh City (2), Jakarta (10), Kuala Lumpur (7), Manila (2), Medan (2), Phnom Penh (2), Surabaya (2)
- Southwest Pacific – Adelaide (2), Auckland (5), Brisbane (4), Christchurch (3), Melbourne (5), Perth (3), Sydney (6)

Thai Airways

With Thailand implementing a state of emergency on March 26, Thai Airways grounded all international flights by April 1. From March 25, it had transferred its domestic services to Chiang Mai, Krabi and Phuket to subsidiary Thai Smile. Since June 1, Thai has offered bookings on Thai Smile domestic services from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phuket, Krabi, Surat Thani, Narathiwat, Hat Yai, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani and Khon Kaen.

On July 31, Thai Airways announced an extension to the temporary suspension of its international operations until the end of September 2020.⁷ It had previously grounded flights until the end of August. The airline does operate special international flights to a number of destinations, including Copenhagen and London.

⁶ [Singapore Airlines](#), July 17, 2020

⁷ [Thai Airways](#), Temporary Suspension of International Flights

Low-cost carriers

Airline	Action and plans
AirAsia	Short-haul operations suspended from March 28 until April 21; long-haul flights grounded until May 31. Domestic flights resuming on April 29
Cebu Pacific	Domestic operations grounded until the beginning of June. International services suspended until July
Indonesia AirAsia	All flights suspended. Domestic flights may resume June 8, and international flights on June 19
Jetstar Asia	Operating low-frequency services to eight destinations during August
Jetstar Pacific	Resuming domestic services from May
Lion Air	Indonesia-Malaysia flights suspended until March 31
Nok Air	International services suspended until May 31
NokScoot	All flights suspended. Carrier is being liquidated
Philippines AirAsia	Domestic flights resuming during June, with international flights restarting from July 1
Scoot	Low frequency services to nine destinations operated during July
Thai AirAsia	International flights suspended from March 22 until April 25. Domestic flights resumed on May 1
Thai Lion Air	All operations suspended between March 25 and April 15. Domestic flights from Bangkok restarted on May 1
Thai VietJet	Resumed some domestic flights from May 1
VietJet	Flights across Southeast Asia suspended from March 20. Flights on three domestic routes resuming soon

AirAsia

Malaysian short-haul carrier AirAsia suspended all operations from March 28 due to growing border restrictions imposed by countries across Asia. The airline was grounded until April 21. Long-haul sister airline, AirAsia X, also suspended operations, but will remain grounded until May 31.

AirAsia is planning to resume domestic operations from April 29.⁸ It will initially operate low-frequency services from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Miri, Penang, Sandakan, Sibul and Tawau. There will be 40 weekly frequencies across these eight routes, compared to 487 in the same week of 2019.

Cebu Pacific

In line with the national and Cebu provincial government directives on community quarantines to contain the spread of COVID-19, Filipino carrier Cebu Pacific cancelled all domestic flights from its Manila and Cebu hubs from March 17.⁹ On March 20, all remaining domestic flights operated by Cebu Pacific and regional subsidiary Cebgo were cancelled.

Cebu Pacific continued to operate some international services, but eventually suspended all operations.

⁸ [Anna.Aero](#), April 22, 2020

⁹ [Cebu Pacific Air](#), March 17, 2020

All international flights remain cancelled until August 30, 2020, with the exception of twice-weekly services from Manila to Dubai and Singapore, and weekly services to Seoul.

Because of the imposition of Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) over Metro Manila, all Cebu Pacific and Cebgo domestic flights from Manila are cancelled until August 18. The airline continues to operate weekly flights from Cebu to Clark and Davao.

Indonesia AirAsia

From March 30, Indonesia AirAsia initially suspended domestic flights until April 21 and international services until May 17. It since delayed the resumption of domestic flights until May 7. Indonesia AirAsia now aims to restart domestic services on June 8, initially operating a limited schedule.

Indonesia Asia had planned to reopen its first two international routes – from Surabaya to Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru in Malaysia – on May 18.¹⁰ However, due to operational reasons and extended periods of social restrictions in some markets, it delayed the start of the two services to June 19 and July 1 respectively.

All passengers must wear face masks from check-in through to baggage collection at their destination. Passengers must also bring a spare mask, hand sanitizer and avoid carrying too much luggage.

Jetstar Asia

Singapore-based Jetstar Asia suspended all services from March 23 until April 15. It then extended the flight suspension until May 31, after the Singapore Government decided to maintain “circuit breaker” border restrictions until June 1.¹¹

With border restrictions remaining in place across Asia, in mid-June, Jetstar Asia extended the suspension of all flights until July 31. It also delayed the launch of a new Singapore-Colombo service from July 1 until October 26, 2020. The airline subsequently extended the suspension of most services until August 31, with services to Darwin and Shantou suspended until October 24 and 25 respectively.

As at August 7, Jetstar Asia was operating low-frequency services to Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Manila. On August 10, it reintroduced weekly services to Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta and Penang, with weekly services to Clark and Medan following on August 17.

Jetstar Pacific

From May, Vietnam Airlines-backed low-cost carrier Jetstar Pacific is resuming domestic services. It will restart daily flights from Hanoi to Da Lat, Nha Trang and Phu Quoc, and from Ho Chi Minh to Hai Phong, Thanh Hoa, Vinh, Hue, Da Lat, Nha Trang and Phu Quoc.¹² It will also three-times daily service from Hanoi to Can Tho, Tuy Hoa, Quy Nhon, Buon Ma Thuot, Pleiku, Hue, Vinh and Chu Lai, and from Ho Chi Minh City to Quy Nhon, Buon Ma Thuot, Pleiku, Dong Hoi and Chu Lai.

Lion Air

Indonesia’s largest domestic carrier appears so far to have only suspended international flights to and from Malaysia between March 18 and March 31 after that country went into lockdown. These flights are

¹⁰ Jakarta Post, May 4, 2020

¹¹ CNA, May 1, 2020

¹² [Breaking Travel News](#), April 28, 2020

mainly operated by Lion Air Group airlines Malindo Air, Batik Air and Wings Air. The suspension affects 10 routes: Aceh-Penang, Medan-Penang, Jakarta-Penang, Pekanbaru-Malaka, Pekanbaru-Subang, Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur, Bandung-Kuala Lumpur and Denpasar-Kuala Lumpur.¹³

Nok Air

Thai short-haul low-cost airline Nok Air has halted the three international routes it operates from Bangkok to Hiroshima, Yangon and Ho Chi Minh City until the end of May. It will maintain domestic flights according to demand.

NokScoot

Having suspended all operations since March, NokScoot's two main shareholders, Scoot and Nok Air, entered discussions in June over the carrier's future. On June 26, seeing no path to recovery, the airline's board voted to liquidate the company.

Philippines AirAsia

Following the imposition of travel restrictions on the country's main Luzon island group, Philippines AirAsia halted all flying from March 20. It plans to resume four domestic routes from Manila and Clark on June 5. Five other routes will restart from June 8, with international flying resuming on July 1.

Scoot

Singapore Airlines' low-cost division Scoot operated scheduled services to nine destinations during July:¹⁴

- Northeast Asia – Guangzhou (1 per week), Hong Kong (3), Nanjing (1), Taipei (1)
- Southeast Asia – Ipoh (1), Kuching (1), Penang (1), Surabaya (1)
- Southwest Pacific – Perth (3)

Thai AirAsia

Thai AirAsia suspended international flights on March 22 and had planned to resume them on April 25. Flights to China, Cambodia, Singapore and Vietnam were hardest hit by the suspension.

Thai AirAsia continued to operate domestic flights, but it suspended these also during April. The airline resumed domestic flying from May 1 with services from Bangkok Don Mueang International, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Hat Yai airports.¹⁵

Long-haul sister airline Thai AirAsia X suspended flights to Japan and South Korea on March 17 for up to three months. It will also permanently end its Bangkok-Brisbane service from April 7.

Thai Lion Air

The Thai division of Indonesian low-cost carrier Lion Air suspended all operations from March 25 initially until April 15. China, Japan, Indonesia and Singapore are its biggest international markets.

Thai Lion Air resumed domestic services from Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport on May 1.¹⁶

¹³ [The Jakarta Post](#), March 19, 2020

¹⁴ [Scoot](#), July 17, 2020

¹⁵ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

¹⁶ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

Thai VietJet

From May 1, Thai VietJet resumed domestic flights from Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.¹⁷

VietJet

VietJet suspended its Southeast Asian services from March 20, ceasing flights to Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand. It had previously suspended its flights to South Korea.

On April 16, VietJet was approved to resume daily services to Da Nang from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It currently operates six daily flights on the Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City route.

Other airlines

Airline	Action and plans
Bangkok Airways	All international and most domestic flights suspended until October. Service on Bangkok-Samui resumed May 15
Royal Brunei Airlines	Network scaled back to six routes until October 31
Thai Smile	All international flights suspended from March 23
Vietnam Airlines	Most international flights suspended. Comprehensive domestic operation offered during July and August. Da Nang service temporarily suspended

Bangkok Airways

Full-service regional airline Bangkok Airways suspended all international passenger flights from March 29 until October 24. The airline has also suspended all domestic flights from April 7 until further notice.¹⁸

From May 15, Bangkok Airways will resume domestic flights, starting with a twice-daily service from Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport to Samui.¹⁹ All other domestic services remain suspended until October 24, but some may resume earlier as conditions allow.

Royal Brunei Airlines

Royal Brunei Airlines has been operating on a limited basis since March 23. Until October 31, the airline will conduct flights only to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Melbourne, Hangzhou, Hong Kong and Manila. It is operating these flights to retain vital connectivity and for essential passenger travel.

RB Link flights operated in partnership by Malindo Air to destinations in Borneo are suspended until November 30, 2020.

Thai Smile

Since March 23, Thai Smile, the domestic and regional subsidiary of Thai Airways, has suspended its international operation, ending flights to Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Laos, Malaysia and Taiwan.

¹⁷ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

¹⁸ [Bangkok Airways](#), March 31, 2020

¹⁹ [Bangkok Airways](#), April 28, 2020

Vietnam Airlines

By March 24, Vietnam Airlines had suspended all international flights. Until October 24, Vietnam Airlines will operate weekly flights on just three international routes:²⁰

- Hanoi-Seoul
- Ho Chi Minh City-Seoul
- Hanoi-Frankfurt

Having suspended them from March 30, Vietnam Airlines began to resume its domestic operation during May, offering 11 flights a day between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and five daily services to Da Nang from both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.²¹

At the end of August, Vietnam Airlines offered a comprehensive domestic network comprising 12 routes from Hanoi, 11 from Ho Chi Minh City, three from Vinh, two from Hai Phong, two from Thanh Hoa, two from Hue and a single route from Da Lat.²² Vietnam Airlines' domestic schedule includes high frequency services on some routes, with 16 flights per day offered from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City.

Because of a localized COVID-19 outbreak, Vietnam Airlines was forced to suspend all flights from Da Nang from July 29 until August 31. It also suspended a number of domestic routes to destinations including Tuy Hoa, Van Don, Ca Mau and Rach Gia.

To ensure the mandatory COVID-19 testing of all arrivals at Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International airport operates effectively, Vietnam Airlines has been restricted to carrying 180 passengers on the aircraft it's operating to the airport (Boeing 787-9 281 seats; Boeing 787-10 367 seats; Airbus A350-900 305 seats).²³

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 28, 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.

²⁰ [Vietnam Airlines](#), June 26, 2020

²¹ [Breaking Travel News](#), April 27, 2020

²² [Vietnam Airlines](#), August 10, 2020

²³ Cirium, April 6, 2020