

# WELCOME TO VIRUS-FREE AIR TRAVEL



Be at the airport four hours before departure? A new job "aircraft janitor"? No more in-flight magazines? The new flight experience that experts have in mind does not look very inviting - and the airlines are doing their utmost to prevent extensive hygiene measures.

In 83 % of the countries worldwide, travel restrictions have been in force for over a month now, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). **This has brought the tourism industry as a whole and air travel in particular to its knees.** As is well known, the coronavirus pandemic is to be blamed for this. And getting it under control is a top priority. In order for the population to feel more at ease again, numerous measures need to be taken, especially in air travel.

The consultancy firm SimpliFlying has now defined over 70 points in which future flying will differ from the flying we have known up to now. Of course, this is an estimate only and is not guaranteed to happen. Tourism Review points out the most important elements of the study:

## Check-in

It is assumed that in the future there will be a health passport that must be presented at check-in - whether online or at the airport. The check-in staff, protected by plexiglas shield, could at best assign seats manually - so that distance rules are observed and families can still be together. This slows down the check-in process at the airport considerably or changes the online check-in process significantly.

## New obligations for airlines

Have you ever noticed that all airlines' compulsory mask notifications state that you have to bring your own mask? Of course, masks or even gloves - which the flight crew will probably have to wear in the future - can also be sold during the online booking process or, if necessary, on board (or perhaps in the travel agency as an additional product?). And what about insurance? In addition to conventional insurance, there will probably have to be a new product that guarantees full reimbursement if you are unexpectedly not allowed to board the aircraft for health reasons.

## Arrival time at the airport

Up to now, it was possible to arrive at the airport 1-3 hours before departure; for domestic flights more limited, for international flights longer, and again somewhat different depending on the airport. The study assumes that you have to arrive at the airport at least four hours before departure. This is because there are still health checks to be carried out - the health passport alone is probably not enough. There will be measures such as temperature checks (already done at certain airports) or walking through a disinfection tunnel. Blood tests are also conceivable, as is already the case at Emirates. In addition, luggage will also have to undergo a disinfection process and be declared as "virus-free".

There are still no generally accepted health standards in the airport process and it is questionable whether this should be done at national or regional (e.g. EU) level. The WHO, together with IATA and ACI (Airports Council International), should be working to develop standards.

## Security

Security control is also subject to strict hygienic measures and therefore requires more time. Hand luggage must also undergo a disinfection process. The problem of security cameras no longer allowing face recognition when everyone is behind masks has not yet been solved.

## Boarding

The passengers sit in the boarding zone with a suitable spacing. So that boarding can take place bit by bit, one is called individually via mobile phone to board. Catering is possibly only available from contactless vending machines. There will be no more queues in the gangway, as you will be called and have to board immediately. It is also perfectly possible that a (further) disinfection tunnel is installed in the gangway.

## Onboard

Travelers and flight personnel wear masks and possibly gloves. In addition to the security declarations before departure, there is now information on hygienic security measures. Meals are pre-packed and served sealed (in all classes), and in-flight entertainment is shifting even more towards personal devices such as tablets and mobiles so that touchscreens are no longer necessary. In-flight magazines are probably a thing of the past, while there is a new job: An "aircraft janitor", who regularly cleans and disinfects the cabin and especially the onboard toilets.

## Arrival

Here, too, one is again passed through thermal scanners - those who got sick during the flight can still be put into quarantine. And here too, the health passport must be presented. Airlines will probably need a thorough cleaning after each flight - which will significantly increase turnaround times and could, therefore, be a problem especially for low-cost airlines, which rely on extremely high frequencies thanks to short turnaround times.

## So flying would be a horror

Many airlines are opposing various suggestions of governments and organizations because of economic reasons. For instance, the middle seat cannot be left vacant because otherwise the capacity of the aircraft will be massively reduced and it will no longer be possible to fly economically, or else the prices will have to be increased so much that demand will drop massively.

Airlines argue that the measures are exaggerated: On one hand, because the recirculated air in the aircraft is already germ-free thanks to HEPA filters, and on the other hand because there has been practically no case of coronavirus transmission within an aircraft to date, and this even before measures were implemented. This may be true, but there is also no question that the virus was able to spread globally thanks to global air traffic. And that gives rise to fears.

And exactly these fears are the biggest problem: We are not only talking about fears of the virus but also about fears or worries about the "new flying world". **If all these measures are actually implemented then air travel will become so uncomfortable that it will sink demand.**

And even if only some of the measures described above are implemented: carefree flying is off the table for the time being. This is why the crisis will last longer than just the eagerly awaited easing of restrictions.

Date: 2020-05-18

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/virus-free-air-travel-may-be-a-nightmare-news11541>