

What you need to know: Airline cleanliness & hygiene: Europe

July 6, 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 differ from the hygiene procedures implemented by individual airports.

This report summarizes what European airlines are doing.

Major carriers

Air France

Air France has put special measures in place to guarantee the safety of its passengers.

- At the airport
 - Signage to facilitate social distancing
 - Protective Plexiglass screens on all counters
 - Regular disinfection of counters and self-service kiosks
 - Provision of hand sanitizer throughout the airport
 - Reorganization of check-in and boarding to reduce physical contact
- Boarding
 - All passengers on international flights have their temperatures checked using a non-contact infrared thermometer
- Inflight
 - Wearing a surgical mask is compulsory on all flights
 - All aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, with cabin air refreshed every 3 minutes
 - Aircraft are thoroughly cleaned before every flight, including vacuuming carpets and all seats, disinfecting of all hard surfaces (tables, arm rests, screens, remote controls and toilets)
 - Blankets systematically changed and cushions removed on short- and medium-haul flights
 - Crew have access to cleaning wipes, vinyl gloves, disinfectant sprays, protective masks and cleaning kits
 - Beverage and dining suspended on domestic and short-haul flights within Europe
 - Sealed or individually wrapped snacks served on long-haul flights

British Airways

To welcome passengers back on board, British Airways has introduced new protective measures on the ground and in the air and also provides passengers with safety and hygiene advice.

- Before the flight
 - Download the BA app to check in online and download up to eight boarding passes
 - Keep contact details up to date in Manage my Booking
 - Minimize luggage
 - Download the PressReader app for digital magazines and newspapers to read on the flight
- At the airport
 - Passengers must wear a face mask at all time, allowing each mask to last for 4 hours
 - Observe safe distance markers throughout the airport to minimize social contact

- Arrive no earlier than 3 hours before a long haul and 2 hours before a short haul flight
- Check local airport for any measures to follow
- Use self-service bag drop (where available)
- Have boarding pass ready when being security screened
- Boarding:
 - Only go to the departure gate when boarding is “open”
 - Listen carefully to the boarding process to minimize queuing at the gate
 - Have boarding pass and passport ready to self-scan at self-boarding gates (where available)
 - Remove essential items from hand baggage to reduce movement during the flight
- Onboard
 - Passengers must wear a face mask at all times and stay seated if possible
 - Each passenger is offered a personal protection pack comprising an antibacterial wipe and hand sanitizer gel
 - Inflight food options and service have changed to reduced physical contact with crew
- Clean aircraft
 - Every surface is disinfected after every flight with deep cleaning every day
 - Key surfaces are sanitized before every flight, including seats, screens, seat buckles and tray tables
 - Air is completely replaced every 2 to 3 minutes passing through HEPA filters

Iberia

Iberia has implemented the health and safety recommendations of both EASA (European Union Aviation Safety Agency) and AESA (Spain Aviation Safety Agency) to protect the safety of passengers and staff.

- Before the flight
 - Download boarding pass to mobile phone
- At the airport
 - New queuing system introduced to increase distance between people
 - Protection screens at check-in and customer service desk
 - Enhanced cleaning
- Boarding:
 - Boarding aircraft from back to front to minimize passenger movement
 - Boarding by groups suspended, including priority boarding
 - Wherever possible, use of jet bridges prioritized over buses for boarding and disembarking flights
- Inflight
 - All staff wear personal protective equipment
 - Medical face masks are compulsory during boarding and throughout the flight
 - All aircraft are equipped with HEPA air filters
 - Where permitted by occupancy levels, Iberia ensures maximum distance between passengers
 - On-board sales suspended and all paper-based material removed

KLM

Until at least August 31, passengers must wear a face mask from the first boarding call until passing through arrivals at the destination airport. Passengers without a face mask are not allowed on board KLM flights.

- Pre-trip
 - Passengers are advised to check the health and entry requirements at their destination

- At the airport
- Passengers should follow airport staff instructions about hygiene and social distancing. Guidelines can vary by country
- KLM has closed some airport lounges and reduced opening hours at others
- Depending on the destination, passengers may have their temperatures checked
- Anyone showing signs of illness (at Amsterdam) will be referred to Airport Medical Services for a health check and a fit-to-fly certificate
- Boarding
 - KLM has for the most part resumed the regular boarding process, with Business Class and SkyPriority passengers boarding first
 - KLM uses zone boarding at many airports
 - Until at least August 31, passengers must wear a face mask from the first boarding call until passing through arrivals at the destination airport. Passengers without a face mask are not allowed on board KLM flights.
- On board
 - Every day, aircraft are thoroughly cleaned with approved disinfectants
 - Aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters which capture 99.99% of viruses and bacteria, including coronaviruses
 - Catering service has been adjusted to limit physical contact between passengers and cabin crew
 - Whenever possible, KLM creates as much space around passengers by keeping seats empty
 - To care for passengers taken ill during a flight, aircraft carry coronakits containing personal protective equipment for passengers and crew to limit the risk of infection

Lufthansa

Lufthansa has introduced special measures and advice to protect its passengers from COVID-19.

- Pre-flight
 - Passengers should review and observe entry requirements at both departure and destination airports
 - Check-in via Lufthansa's website or app is strongly recommended
 - Passengers should confirm they are not experiencing any common COVID-19 symptoms
 - At check-in, passengers must confirm not contact with a COVID-19 person or a positive test within the last 14 days
- At the airport
 - Passengers must wear a face mask at all times
 - Check in bags using contactless self-service kiosks
 - Lounge access has been limited
- Boarding
 - Only one item of hand luggage allowed
 - Passengers are boarded by groups
 - Each passenger receives a disinfectant wipe to clean the surfaces in and around their seat
 - Automatic boarding gates are available for contactless boarding
- Onboard
 - Passengers and crew must wear a face covering
 - Aircraft cabins thoroughly cleaned before and after each flight
 - Air is refreshed every 3 minutes

- High air quality combined with mask wearing means it is not essential to maintain minimum distances between passengers. If occupancy is low, seats will be allocated as widely as possible throughout the cabin
- Onboard service has been simplified
- Deplaning
 - Passengers should maintain social distancing when disembarking

Other carriers

Aer Lingus

Since May 21, all passengers flying with Aer Lingus (and cabin crew) have been required to use a mask or suitable face covering from the point of boarding the aircraft until they are inside the destination airport.¹ The requirement remains in force until August 31, 2020.²

Aer Lingus has also introduced enhanced cleaning processes on all aircraft. Hospital-grade disinfectant is used to treat all hard surfaces. Tray tables, arm rests and windows are deep cleaned by hand. The interior of every aircraft is thoroughly disinfected daily. Aircraft are equipped with state-of-the-art air filtration technology.

Passengers board and disembark aircraft in small groups and according to seat row numbers. Customers must scan their own boarding card and show ID/passports to ground staff.

Aer Lingus encourages passengers to check in online, to self-check in luggage and use self-service kiosks where available. The airline has suspended food and drink services on short-haul flights and reduced it on long-haul services.

Brussels Airlines

As it prepared to resume operations on June 15, Brussels Airlines introduced a number of hygiene measures, while still allowing passengers to travel in comfort.³

- At home
 - Check entry rules for the destination
 - Travelers must confirm they are on good health
 - Check-in online
- At the airport
 - Wearing a face mask covering mouth and nose is mandatory
 - Passengers traveling from Brussels Airport will have their temperatures checked before being allowed into the terminal
 - Courtesy lines remind passengers to social distance
- On board
 - Enhanced disinfection and hygiene measures
 - Maximum one item of hand luggage; passengers traveling on European flights may check in hand luggage (for free)
 - Boarding row by row

¹ [Aer Lingus](#), Flight Disruption Information

² [Aer Lingus](#), May 29, 2020

³ [Brussels Airlines](#), June 5, 2020

- Passengers scan own boarding pass
- HEPA filters ensure clean air
- Modified inflight service – meal and drink service suspended on European flights; electronic payment only for service on intercontinental flights
- Mandatory wearing of face mask covering mouth and nose

LOT Polish Airlines

The airline has brought together its hygiene and safety rules under the #FlySafeFlyLOT banner.⁴

- General guidelines
 - Passengers are recommended to check-in online
 - Passengers should arrive earlier than usual at the airport
 - A face mask is required during the entire journey and passengers must socially distance at all times
- At the airport
 - All employees are equipped with personal protective equipment
 - Only people with valid tickets may enter the airport
 - Hand sanitizers are widely available
 - Temperature checkpoints operate at the airport
 - Passengers board and de-board aircraft according to assigned seat number
- Onboard
 - All aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters
 - Aircraft are regularly disinfected with a special biocide solution
 - Cabin crew are equipped with masks, gloves and hand sanitizer
 - LOT has implemented a limited contact rule between crew and passengers
 - Drinks and snacks are served in individual packets
 - Passengers receive hand sanitizer or antibacterial tissues
 - Only credit card payment is accepted
 - Traditional newspapers replaced with digital e-press

SAS

The airline has introduced SAS Safe Travel; measures to ensure passenger safety and wellbeing.⁵

- Check-in:
 - Passengers should try to check in online, using the airline's app or website
 - All SAS Lounges are temporarily closed
 - Passengers must social distance in queues at check-in, security and at the departure gate
- Boarding:
 - Until August 31, passengers must bring their own face covering and wear it from boarding to disembarkation on all flights
 - Hand luggage is limited to one piece per traveler
 - Boarding will be by zone
- On board:
 - Passengers are seated to create as much space as possible between them.
 - All meal services have been suspended to reduce contact.
- Aircraft:

⁴ [LOT](#), FlySafeFlyLOT

⁵ [SAS](#), SAS Safe Travel

- All Airbus and Boeing aircraft in the SAS fleet are equipped with HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) air filters.
- ATR regional turboprop aircraft use a different type of air filter.
- All aircraft are cleaned and disinfected according to EASA standards.
- All non-essential loose items have been removed from the seat pocket.
- Crew:
 - Crew wear protective face masks on board.

Virgin Atlantic

To ensure passenger health and safety, Virgin Atlantic is implementing additional measures to offer peace of mind at the airport and on the aircraft. These include:

- Enhanced and thorough cleaning practices at check-in, boarding gates and onboard, where cabins and toilets are cleaned with high-grade disinfectant dispensed by electrostatic spraying.
- Safe distancing will be adhered to wherever possible, particularly at check-in and boarding. Where safe distancing is not possible, masks will be required.
- All customers receive a personal Health Pack containing medical grade face masks required to be worn onboard, surface wipes and hand gel.
- A simplified meal service in Economy and Premium Economy prepared in a COVID-19-safe monitored environment. Upper Class customers will receive a tray-delivered meal service.
- Aircraft are cleaned after every flight using a high-grade disinfectant.
- All aircraft are equipped with HEPA filters, with cabin air completely changed every three minutes on average.

Low-cost carriers

easyJet

EasyJet wants passengers to prepare to fly with confidence, as it sees their safety and wellbeing as its highest priority. It has introduced a range of measures to keep passengers safe.

- Before travel
 - Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms must not travel
 - Complete in advance any health declaration and/or locator forms required by the destination
- At the airport
 - Maintain social distancing rules
 - Wear a suitable protective face mask
- Onboard
 - Boarding and disembarkation will be different, so passengers should listen closely and follow instructions
 - Passengers must stow hand baggage in the overhead lockers themselves
 - Passengers and crew must wear face masks, which should be replaced every 4 hours
 - Crew manage the use of toilet facilities
 - Bistro or Boutique service is suspended. Drinking water is available on request
 - Only contactless payment will be accepted when onboard service is reintroduced
 - Aircraft are fitted with HEPA filters, replacing cabin air every 3 to 4 minutes
 - Cabins are thoroughly disinfected daily, with protection lasting 24 hours

Wizz Air

At the airport Wizz Air recommends passengers check in online. It has introduced more self-service points and a bag drop option. Wizz Air requires passengers and crew to wear face masks on board its aircraft. For flights of more than four hours, it recommends passengers bring a spare mask. The airline disinfects its aircraft daily and hands out complimentary sanitizing wipes during boarding.

Wizz Air asks passengers to respect social distancing guidelines on and off its aircraft. Seat allocation takes social distancing into consideration wherever possible.

Onboard its aircraft, Wizz Air allows contactless payments up to €25 and has temporarily removed the WIZZ Magazine, directing passengers to its mobile app for more information.

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 July 6, 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.

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