

# COVID-19 Tourism Impact Update



## Falkland Islands Tourism Sector Information and Guidance Concerning the Impact of COVID-19

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## INTRODUCTION

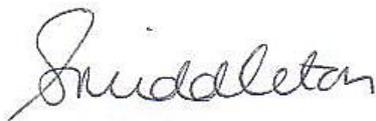
There is a definite stirring of the travel sector at present, and if June is the month of awakening then July will see a considerable growth in tourist arrivals worldwide. Over the last two weeks there have been some very significant developments in the way destinations are preparing for visitors arriving by air and on cruise vessels.

This edition of *COVID-19 Tourism Impact Update* focuses on these, as they have a very real relevance on tourism here in the Falklands and how we could operate safely for land-based and cruise tourism. We have excluded any data on the spread of the pandemic as this is well documented elsewhere - overall worldwide infections increase however in many countries there is a considerable drop in new infections and deaths, with most of the Falklands' key markets falling into this bracket.

Iceland is one country that has been a leader in suppressing the spread of the virus, keeping its population safe, but still welcoming overnight and cruise visitors. Through the implementation of testing, tracing and sensible requirements for tourist arrivals it expects to keep the virus at bay whilst letting the tourism sector thrive and local people enjoy a normal life.

Iceland, Saint Lucia and Cyprus have taken three different approaches to opening up to tourism, and they represent the key approaches many countries are starting to deploy, in particular island destinations like the Falklands. Further information is included in this issue, which we hope will be useful and relevant.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact the Falkland Islands Tourist Board for more details or any further assistance.



**Stephanie Middleton**

**Executive Director**

*19<sup>th</sup> June 2020*

*Next Update: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020*

## DESTINATIONS OPENING TO TOURISM

### Overview

June has been the month when the tourism sector worldwide has started to slowly and cautiously open up again. These are the first steps of an industry that has been almost paralysed for three months. Consequently the numbers of international tourist movements in June will still be small, but these will increase considerably in July when the airline sector starts to operate many more flights (for example, on the 1<sup>st</sup> July British Airways will operate one flight a day to Athens, but by the end of the month these will increase to five).

Whilst COVID-19 remains a serious issue, most destinations worldwide are amending their immigration policies to open to tourism in a measured and safe way, balancing the economy, well-being of the population and health concerns. Below are some examples of how other destinations are doing this, and they provide some useful examples that could be applied to the Falklands.

### Iceland

Throughout the pandemic Iceland has aimed for moderate but targeted measures based on the best available information. Primary schools have remained open and no lockdowns have been imposed - all borders have remained open. There are currently only two active C-19 cases in Iceland, eight cases were diagnosed in May and none since June. Iceland continues to follow a strategy of high-volume, rigorous testing and contact-tracing as in the Falklands.



Arrivals to Iceland (from 15<sup>th</sup> June) have two options: pay for a COVID-19 test on arrival (free until the end of June, and £88 thereafter) or self-isolate for two weeks. Children born after 2005 are exempt. At present 2,000 samples can be analysed daily. Passengers are required to fill out a pre-registration form before their departure to Iceland. The entire scheme is in line with the recommendations of their chief epidemiologist to ensure the progress made to date is not jeopardised.

### Saint Lucia

The borders of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean opened to international travellers on June 4<sup>th</sup> for all regional and international flights. Most international airlines that provided a service prior to the COVID-19 border closing have indicated dates in July for resuming services. This includes carriers in the USA, Canada and UK.



For entry to Saint Lucia visitors must present proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 48 hours of boarding their flight. These tests are widely available in most European countries and the USA. In the UK most private clinics offer an online service with 24 hours results from around £120.

## Cyprus

Cyprus started welcoming back tourists from 9<sup>th</sup> June. Cyprus, like many other destinations, is using the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) list of high risk areas (worldwide) to determine how they process arrivals:

<https://www.easa.europa.eu/SD-2020-01/Airports>.



For all arrivals on airlines that have departed from airports on this list, passengers will face COVID-19 testing upon arrival. After being tested, visitors must spend the night in a designated hotel to await their results. Depending on the outcome of the test, travellers will either have to self-isolate for a week, or quarantine under supervision for two weeks. Travellers from areas not on this list will only be subject to random testing.

In a bid to encourage visitors back to the island, the Cyprus government will pay for the accommodation, meals and medication of any tourist who contracts COVID-19 whilst visiting.

## AIRLINE SECTOR

### IATA directions of air travel

Whilst destinations start to put in place their own administrative procedures for dealing with arrivals, the airline sector is implementing recommendations from IATA and other bodies which are strongly driven by the need to increase confidence amongst travellers. IATA has developed a three-phase international recovery plan as follows:



- **Phase 1 Mid-June to July:** countries with weekly new COVID-19 of less than 50 per 100,000 population and daily new cases less than 1,000 will start to open up between each other. These are mainly countries within Europe and within Asia.
- **Phase 2 August to September:** regions that are affected by COVID-19 with a lag compared to Europe are assumed to contain the virus and will start to open
- **Phase 3: October to December:** long haul travel assumed to resume.

In addition to this, IATA has released criteria for the use of COVID-19 testing in the travel process, but makes it clear that testing should not be a necessary condition for re-opening borders or resuming air services. This is important guidance not only for the airline industry, but also governments in destinations.

The document is available online but the key points are:

- **Speed:** testing results should be delivered quickly, with results available in under an hour as the minimum standard.
- **Scale:** if testing takes place at an airport, testing capacity of several hundreds of tests per hour must be achievable. The use of saliva for taking samples rather than nasal or throat swabs would facilitate this and would also be expected to reduce time and improve passenger acceptance.
- **Accuracy:** Extremely high accuracy is essential. Both false negative and false positive results must be below 1%.

Ideally COVID-19 testing would be required in advance of arrival at the airport and within 24 hours of travel. Passengers arriving at an airport “ready-to-fly” reduces the risk of contagion in the airport and enables early re-accommodation for any traveller who tests positive.

### Where does testing fit into the travel process?

If testing is required as part of the travel process, it is recommended at departure. Governments would need to mutually recognise test results and data transmission should take place directly between passengers and governments in a similar manner as e-visa clearances are currently handled.

### Who should pay?

Cost is an important consideration. Testing should facilitate travel and not provide an economic barrier. With testing at some European destinations costing in excess of £120, this is a real concern. IATA supports the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations which requires governments to bear the costs of mandatory health testing. Where a test is offered on a voluntary basis, it should be charged at cost price.

### What happens when someone tests positive?

Ideally, testing should take place prior to travel or at the point of departure, and a positive result would mean that the passenger could not travel as planned. In this case, airlines have been offering flexibility to consumers. This includes re-booking or refunds in line with the airline’s commercial policy. Many airlines are offering the same flexibility to passengers who suspect that they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 as well as members of the same traveling party, particularly when they are members of the same household.

If testing is mandated on arrival and a passenger tests positive, then the passenger should be treated according to the requirements of the receiving State. Airlines should not be required to repatriate the passenger(s) or ‘punished’ with financial penalties such as fines or through operational penalties such as the withdrawal of the right to operate in the market.

## CRUISE SECTOR

### General situation

The general situation in the cruise sector is not too dissimilar to the airlines, although it is tinted with a little more uncertainty.

The good news is that cruise lines are back in operation! These are mainly for European passengers at present and heavily focussed on the expedition vessels. With flights still limited, these cruises are mainly aimed at a local audience that can, in many cases, get to departure ports by car.



Some key developments:

- Norway has launched its first ocean cruise since lockdown when Hurtigruten set sail on its famed 34-port journey along the Norwegian coast on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, from Bergen to Kirkenes. On the 20<sup>th</sup> June, SeaDream will depart from Oslo to Tromsø on its first cruise. Interest in both cruises has been significant.
- Iceland has opened up to vessels of all sizes, although it is the expedition vessels that are expected to arrive from mid-July.
- Ponant is repositioning five of its vessels to the French coast to launch five domestic cruise itineraries.

Cruising in smaller (less than 500 passenger) vessels is expected to gain earlier traction than the larger mass tourism ships. All the cruise lines restarting operations are promising new medical screening measures for passengers, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of ships and other measures designed to reduce the chance of the spread of illness.

The not-so-good news is that the large cruise lines continue to put back their dates for a resumption of their operations. Carnival is currently talking about August, but has made it very clear that this will only take place if they are confident that it is safe to do so. Meanwhile Norwegian Cruise Line has cancelled all August and most September departures. It has held back cruises to Alaska and is hopeful it can operate them.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Entry Requirements for the Falklands

The Executive Council has extended restrictions on non-essential visitors to the Falklands for a further 30 days from 11<sup>th</sup> June. However it has been agreed that the Principal Immigration Officer is authorised to consider an expansion of the essential visitor list, to include family members, business visitors, volunteers and conservation and environmental specialists.

### Flights to the Falklands

LATAM will resume its 21.10 direct departure from London Heathrow to Saõ Paulo on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June. However, they have confirmed that the current suspension of flights to the Falklands from Chile and Brazil will continue throughout July.

### Economic Support Packages

FIG and FIDC are now ready to take applications for the Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employed Income Supplement Scheme, and the Business Grant Scheme. FIDC is administering the latter. More details can be found at

<https://www.fig.gov.fk/covid-19/information/support-package-applications>  
<http://www.fidc.co.fk/library/covid-19>.

A new unemployment subsidy scheme has also been announced, targeted at workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the crisis. The websites provide clear advice regarding the eligibility of each.

### Keeping Safe - Hygiene

Advice for restaurants, takeaways and supermarkets regarding food hygiene can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

For the latest updates on the COVID-19 situation in the Falkland Islands:

<https://fig.gov.fk/covid-19#LatestUpdate>