

What you need to know: Airline operations: Southeast Asia

June 5, 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	Most operations continue. Services to mainland China suspended
Malaysia Airlines	Services reduced networkwide until June 30. Some international services reinstated until mid-May
Singapore Airlines	Singapore Airlines, SilkAir and Scoot effectively grounded until April 30
Thai Airways	Most international services suspended by April 1. Domestic flights transferred to Thai Smile

Garuda Indonesia maintaining most operations

From February 5 until further notice, 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

The airline has since been making changes in flight frequency on a number of routes, advising passengers to check with the airline before flying. These changes may become more extensive following government advice for all Indonesian citizens to restrict their travel from March 20.

Malaysia Airlines reduces services across its network

From March 22 until June 30, Malaysia Airlines is reducing services across its network. Cancellations range from specific flights to entire routes and will change over time. Passengers can view the latest information [here](#).

The airline has decided to reinstate select flights from Kuala Lumpur to Auckland, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Guangzhou and Jakarta between April 1 and May 18.

Singapore Airlines grounds almost entire fleet

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 is also suspending most of its network and grounding all but two of its 49 aircraft.

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

Thai Airways virtually grounded

With Thailand implementing a state of emergency on March 26, Thai Airways International is suspending international flights. It has previously suspended flights to South Asia, the Middle East, New Zealand, Italy and parts of Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia. It will cease most of its remaining international services, with flights to Australia ending on March 27, while flights to Europe with the exception of Munich and Zurich end on April 1.

From March 25, Thai Airways transferred its domestic services to Chiang Mai, Krabi and Phuket to subsidiary Thai Smile.

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	Grounded until May 31
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 for the remainder of March
Philippines AirAsia	Domestic flights resuming during June, with international flights restarting from July 1
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 planning to resume domestic services

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 29.² It will initially operate low-frequency services from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Miri, Penang, Sandakan, Sibul and

² [Anna.Aero](#), April 22, 2020

Tawau. There will be 40 weekly frequencies across these eight routes, compared to 487 in the same week of 2019.

Cebu Pacific grounds domestic operation

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 17.³ 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.

With the Philippines easing lockdown from June 1, Cebu Pacific has advised that it will operate repatriation flights from Manila to four domestic points during the first week of the month. International flights remain suspended for June.

Indonesia AirAsia grounds all operations; plans restart

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 AirAsia had planned to reopen its first two international routes – from Surabaya to Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru in Malaysia – on May 18.⁴ 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 grounded

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 1.⁵

Jetstar Pacific resumes domestic services

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.⁶ 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 suspends Malaysia flights

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

³ [Cebu Pacific Air](#), March 17, 2020

⁴ Jakarta Post, May 4, 2020

⁵ [CNA](#), May 1, 2020

⁶ [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.⁷

Nok Air suspends international flights

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 suspends all services during March

Long-haul low-cost carrier NokScoot has suspended all services to China, India, Japan and Taiwan for the rest of March. It will announce its April schedule in due course.

Philippines AirAsia preparing to restart domestic operations

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.

Thai AirAsia resumes domestic flights

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.⁸

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 resumes domestic flights

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 1.⁹

Thai VietJet resumes domestic flights

From May 1, Thai VietJet resumed domestic flights from Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.¹⁰

VietJet resuming domestic services

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.

⁷ [The Jakarta Post](#), March 19, 2020

⁸ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

⁹ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

¹⁰ [Pattaya Mail](#), May 4, 2020

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 resuming on May 15
Philippine Airlines	Resuming flying on selected domestic and international routes during June
Royal Brunei Airlines	Network scaled back to four routes until April 30
Thai Smile	All international flights suspended from March 23
Vietnam Airlines	All international flights suspended until the end of May at the earliest. Ramping up service on key domestic routes during May

Bangkok Airways resuming limited domestic service

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.¹¹

From May 15, Bangkok Airways will resume domestic flights, starting with a twice-daily service from Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport to Samui.¹² All other domestic services remain suspended until October 24, but some may resume earlier as conditions allow.

Philippine Airlines resumes flying during June

Philippines Airlines (PAL) ceased 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 14.¹³

On June 1, PAL resumed operating scheduled flights on selected domestic and international routes, progressively adding new routes and increasing frequencies during the month.¹⁴

- Northeast Asia – Hong Kong (June 19), Nagoya (June 22), Osaka Kansai (June 22), Taipei (June 16), Tokyo Haneda (June 22), Xiamen (June 17)
- Southeast Asia – Ho Chi Minh City (June 15), Jakarta (June 13), Kuala Lumpur (June 13), Singapore (June 3)
- Middle East – Dammam (June 15), Doha (June 15), Dubai (June 15), Riyadh (June 15)
- North America – Guam (June 12), Honolulu (June 13), Los Angeles (June 8), New York (June 11), San Francisco (June 1), Toronto (June 14), Vancouver (June 10)
- Still suspended – Auckland, Bangkok, Beijing, Brisbane, Busan, Denpasar, Fukuoka, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Macau, Melbourne, Phnom Penh, Perth, Port Moresby, Quanzhou, Sapporo, Seoul Incheon and Shanghai

Starting June 3, PAL is also restarting domestic flying, beginning with services from Manila to Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Dumaguete and Tacloban. As the month progresses, it also plans to resume flights from

¹¹ [Bangkok Airways](#), March 31, 2020

¹² [Bangkok Airways](#), April 28, 2020

¹³ [Philippine Airlines](#), March 24, 2020

¹⁴ [PAL](#), May 31, 2020

Manila to Basco, Busuanga (Coron), Bacolod, Butuan, Caticlan, Cebu, Cotabato, Dipolog, General Santos, Iloilo, Kalibo, Laoag, Legazpi, Ozamiz, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, Roxas, Tagbilaran and Zamoanga. PAL will also relaunch flights from Cebu to Davao from June 8.

During June, PAL plans to operate 22 domestic routes and 22 international routes.

Royal Brunei Airlines operating just four routes

Royal Brunei Airlines has been operating on a limited basis since March 23. It plans to maintain twice-weekly services to Hong Kong, Manila, Melbourne and Singapore until April 30. It is operating these flights to retain vital connectivity and for essential passenger travel.

Thai Smile suspends international operation

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.

Vietnam Airlines suspends all international and most domestic flights

By March 24, Vietnam Airlines had suspended all international flights. Flights from Vietnam to Northeast Asia (Busan and Seoul) and from Ho Chi Minh City to Australia (Sydney and Melbourne) were suspended until May 31. Hanoi-Sydney flights will not resume until the end of 2020. Vietnam Airlines' European services (Frankfurt, London, Moscow and Paris) are suspended until June 30.¹⁵

Vietnam Airlines also suspended most domestic services from March 30 until at least April 24. With Vietnam claiming "effective containment" of the COVID-19 outbreak, Vietnam Airlines announced on April 27 plans to ramp up its domestic services. From May it operated 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.¹⁶

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).¹⁷

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 June 4, 2020. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we can accept no guarantee or liability for the accuracy, completeness and topicality of the information.

Do you have questions or comments regarding this report? Please email mike.eggleton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.

¹⁵ [Vietnam Airlines](#), April 8, 2020

¹⁶ [Breaking Travel News](#), April 27, 2020

¹⁷ Cirium, April 6, 2020