

# An overview of the GUIDELINE FOR RESTARTING TOURISM IN MALDIVES

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The Ministry of Tourism (“**MoT**”) has published a guideline for restarting tourism in the Maldives, which outlines the essential standards which have to be met, by the stakeholders of the industry, in order to resume the operations of tourist facilities, as the borders of the country reopen. This overview provides a brief summary of the requirements laid down in the aforesaid guideline.

## GENERAL HEALTH PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Tourists, all staff and representatives who attend to travellers on behalf of tourist facilities must maintain the following protective measures:
  - Ensure minimal contact and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter.
  - Practice hand hygiene and use sanitizers.
  - Wear gloves while handling luggage.
  - Wear a mask at all times.
  - Tourist facility representative are required to install the contact tracing application “Trace Ekee” while visitors are encouraged to install the app.
  - Receiving staff at airport must be provided with the required PPE by the tourist facility.

## ARRIVAL TO THE MALDIVES

### Prior to Arrival

#### *Bookings*

- A confirmed booking at a registered tourist facility must be obtained.
- Booking must be made at one facility.
- Exemption: transit requirements.

#### *Requirements for on-arrival visa procedure*

- Confirmed pre-booking at a registered tourist facility.
- Provision of emergency contact.
- Visa extension to be provided free of charge for tourists who prefers long stay and those who require extension due to quarantine measures.

### Arrival

#### *On-arrival procedure*

- Temperature checks and screening will be conducted at the point of entry, with special attention to any passengers showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- PCR tests will be conducted on tourists if one member of a travelling group is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, the cost of which must be borne by the tourist or tourist facility at which the booking was made.
- Government will bear the cost of any random PCR tests.
- If any samples test positive, subject to the medical condition of the tourist, the tourist facility will be given the option whether to accommodate the tourist in their designated isolation arrangements or to opt for government isolation facilities. The cost of any shall be fully borne by the tourist facility.

- At the Velaana International Airport (VIA), symptomatic tourists and those who require PCR test will be isolated and accommodated at a transit facility until receipt of the PCR test results. If tourists who test positive on arrival are not accepted by vessels, guest houses and hotels on uninhabited islands, the tourist facility they were booked to stay on the Maldives will have to bear the associated costs.

### ***Luggage collection & receiving of tourists by tourist facility staff***

- Luggage should be tagged for easier management.
- A distance of at least 1 meter must be maintained at luggage collection areas.
- Trolleys will be disinfected by VIA staff and kept and marked separately.
- All tourists must be met by an authorised staff of the tourist facility at which they have made the booking.
- Basic details for check-in to be collected upon receiving the tourist.
- Representatives commuting from facilities at inhabited islands are restricted from traveling to resorts.
- Luggage handlers must wear protective gloves and must practice personal disinfection procedures after handling the luggage.

### ***Domestic transportation***

<b>Airport Transfers</b>	<b>Transit Movements</b>
Only allowed to be picked-up by pre-booked tourists facilities.	MoT might allow tourists to stay in guest houses and other tourist facilities in inhabited islands for overnights, under special arrangements.
Transfer vessels or aircrafts must adhere to safety guidelines of HPA.	Transfer vessels or vehicles must adhere to safety guidelines of HPA.
A safe distance of at least 1 meter shall be maintained while communicating. Masks shall be worn and hands must be sanitized before boarding.	Staff shall wear masks and maintain a safe distance of at least 1 meter with all the guests.
Disinfection procedure approved by HPA must be followed after disembarkation of passengers.	Arrangement of food & beverages must be made within the premises of the guest houses or hotels.
HPA protocols must be conformed to whilst transferring tourists with positive PCR tests, in a separate transfer.	Tourists must comply with any movement restrictions applicable to the island at the time.

## **Resorts**

### ***Standards for re-opening***

- Areas to be allocated for isolation purposes for guests, if and when required.
- Facilities must be allocated and arrangements must be made for staff to self-isolate when necessary.
- Guest service staff must be trained in the usage of PPE and medically certified PPE stocks to be maintained.
- Staff to be trained in social distancing procedures, disinfecting procedures and to wear masks when social distancing is not possible.
- Emergency procedures to be put in place to deal with suspected COVID-19 isolation procedures.
- Resorts shall have medical officers on site who have undergone all HPA certified training and all resort clinics must comply with minimum standards applicable.
- Resorts to appoint a safety manager responsible for communication and compliance regarding COVID-19 measures.
- Resorts may develop their own internal guidelines adhering to basic standards of MoT Guidelines.
- Resorts must submit a health and safety plan prior to opening, for approval from MoT.

## ***Staffing***

- All staff arriving in resorts from overseas before 15 July 2020, shall be quarantined for 14 days.
- All staff arriving from islands not under monitoring can report to work without any restriction.
- All staff arriving from islands under monitoring can only report to work after being quarantined for 14 days.
- The only staff that will be able to leave a resort without being subjected to the national guidelines recommended by HPA will be staff travelling to airports for the purposes of escorting arriving and departing tourists.
- Airline crew will be able to exit resorts without undergoing COVID-19 screening.
- Daily workers, entertainers and artists will be able to work and perform at resorts without any additional restrictions but will be subject to the same requirements of testing as tourists from the date of opening the guest houses, hotels and inhabited islands.
- Movement between resorts and islands will be permitted without quarantine requirements from the date of opening of guest houses.

## ***Check-in procedures***

- Tourists who have positive PCR results must be escorted directly to rooms once at resort as per HPA guidelines and are to remain in isolation unless advised otherwise by HPA.
- Minimal staff to be involved when receiving tourists.
- Safe distance of at least 1 meter to be maintained between tourists and staff at all times.

## ***Common facilities***

- Social distancing to be observed.
- Frequently contacted surfaces to be disinfected regularly.
- Food and beverage service to be served with safety measures set forth by HPA to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- Utilisation of all common areas to be subjected to HPA guidelines.

## ***Emergency procedures***

- Any persons displaying COVID-19 symptoms to be immediately reported to the medical staff on site and the PCR test must be carried out.
- Any person displaying COVID-19 symptoms to be immediately isolated with immediate effect until further guidance from HPA and MoT.
- Isolation rooms to be maintained and serviced under HPA guidelines.
- Staff to remain isolated until all symptoms clear up.
- Tourists will be allowed to exit isolation with restrictions on utilising the common facilities of the resort if the test results are negative.
- HPA will decide if any individual requires transferring for further observation and treatment should the need arise.
- If a staff tests positive, they will be taken to a government managed facility and the resort must ensure all associated costs are met.

## ***Check-out from tourist facilities***

### ***Check-out procedures***

- No symptoms/no positive PCR result = no restriction on guest checkout.
- Masks to be used during transfers.
- Tourists in isolation may only checkout as per HPA guidelines.
- Exemption: tourists who require transfer to a government facility under MoT guidance (facility shall bear all associated costs).

## ***Room cleaning***

- HPA guidelines to be followed in cleaning and disinfecting rooms used for quarantine and isolation.

## **Tourist Vessels**

### ***Procedures for tourist vessels***

- Calling into harbour & embarking & disembarking of staff/tourists allowed only at designated harbours.
- Vessel to be disinfected as per HPA guidelines after departure of guests and prior to embarkation of new guests.
- Crew going ashore on inhabited islands are subjected to HPA guidelines on quarantine and COVID-19 screening.
- Loading of supplies & bunkering to be conducted at designated jetties with social distancing.
- Crew shall wear masks when in direct contact with tourists in enclosed spaces.
- Vessel operator to facilitate isolation of guest if guest presents COVID-19 symptoms.
- Tourist vessels to submit health and safety plan to MoT for approval before resuming operations.

## ***Emergency procedures***

- Any flu-like symptoms?
  - Shall be immediately reported to the captain.
  - Captain shall inform HPA & MoT and make arrangements for sampling & testing with HPA.
  - Shall be isolated immediately.
  - Shall be released if test results are negative - but must wear masks at all times when in contact with others, until all symptoms clear up.
  - If the results are positive, shall be transferred to a government facility for monitoring and treatment.
- Isolation rooms to be maintained and serviced as per HPA standards.

## ***Cruise ships & foreign flagged yachts***

- Cruise ships and yachts arriving in Maldives to be exempt from these guidelines - must adhere to International Maritime Organisation (IMO) regulations and guidelines.
- Not allowed to embark or disembark passengers on or off inhabited islands till 1 August 2020.
- Exceptions:
  - Can embark/disembark at international airports (with valid air tickets if disembarking).
  - Vessels which do not fall under IMO regulations may disembark onto island with approval from Port Health.
- Entire crew and passenger complement to declare symptoms to local health authority/responsible person at point of disembarkation
  - Prior authorisation required for those who are symptomatic.
- Screening and declaration of symptoms to be conducted at first port of call or clearance.
- Vessel's agent (where not appointed, operator of the vessel) shall bear all associated costs of isolating/treating a passenger/crew member at a government facility.

## **Guest houses**

### ***Procedures for guest houses***

- Indicative date for opening – 1 August 2020 (subject to change based on national situation).
- Resident doctor must have undergone HPA certified training in the following, prior to guest houses in the jurisdiction reopening:
  - COVID-19 management;
  - Isolation procedures; and
  - Sampling
- Must provide for isolation of guest in the guest's resident room as per HPA standards.
- Tourists may only travel to their guest house upon receiving the results of the on-arrival PCR test.

- Contact tracing records must be maintained by:
  - Vessels carrying tourists during their stay; and
  - Places of business serving tourists.
- Social distancing guidelines to be followed by places of business serving tourists.
- Tourists must maintain social distancing when traveling to local islands.
- Guest houses to submit a health and safety plan to MoT for approval prior to restarting operations.

### ***Emergency procedures***

- Any flu-like symptoms to be immediately reported to local health authorities and HPA.

### **General**

#### ***Easing of restrictions***

- Easing of entry procedures and restrictions applied to resorts and vessels in lodging tourists, as set herewith effective from 1 September 2020 (subject to extension by government).
- Operators will be notified of any changes after fortnightly review of the guideline.

#### ***Recreation activities***

- Additional safety measures for diving and water sports to be governed by HPA approved regulations.
- If showing symptoms, tourists shall be restricted from taking part in such activities as diving or excursions until all symptoms fully clear, regardless of testing negative for COVID-19.

#### ***Responsibility for isolation & quarantine***

- Should the tourist require it, the tourist facility where the tourist booked his stay upon entry into the Maldives shall bear all associated costs of quarantine, isolation, or treatment in a government facility.

#### ***Compliance with this guideline***

- Applicable to all tourist facilities (including those already in operation) prior to accepting new guests.

#### ***Hotels***

- Located on uninhabited islands - same procedure as resorts to be followed.
- Located on inhabited islands - same procedure as guest houses to be followed.

#### ***Tentative opening dates***

- Resorts, marinas, tourist vessels, and tourist hotels on uninhabited islands - 15 July 2020
- Tourist guest houses and tourist hotels on inhabited islands - 1 August 2020

#### **Disclaimer:**

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