

What you need to know: Airline operations: Southeast Asia

April 7, 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
Cebu Pacific	Domestic operations grounded until April 14. Limited international services continue from Manila
Indonesia AirAsia	Domestic flights suspended until April 21 and international until May 17
Jetstar Asia	Grounded until April 15
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	All flying suspended from March 20
Thai AirAsia	International flights suspended from March 22 until April 25. Domestic flights suspended for April
Thai Lion Air	All operations suspended between March 25 and April 15
VietJet	Flights across Southeast Asia suspended from March 20

AirAsia grounded

Malaysian short-haul carrier AirAsia will suspend all operations from March 28 due to growing border restrictions imposed by countries across Asia. The airline will be grounded until April 21. Long-haul sister airline, AirAsia X, has also suspended operations, but will remain grounded until May 31.

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 17.² On March 20, all remaining domestic flights operated by Cebu Pacific and regional subsidiary Cebgo were cancelled until April 14.

Cebu Pacific continues to operate international services from Manila to 13 destinations: Bali (Denpasar), Bangkok, Dubai, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, Nagoya, Osaka, Singapore,

² [Cebu Pacific Air](#), March 17, 2020

Sydney, Taipei and Tokyo (Narita). This list is likely to change as more countries impose travel restrictions.

Indonesia AirAsia grounds all operations

From March 30, Indonesia AirAsia suspended domestic flights until April 21 and international services until May 17.

Jetstar Asia grounded

Singapore-based Jetstar Asia suspended all services from March 23 until April 15.

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 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.³

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 halts all operations

Following the imposition of travel restrictions on the country's main Luzon island group, Philippines AirAsia halted all flying from March 20.

Thai AirAsia suspends all flights

Thai AirAsia suspended international flights on March 22 and plans 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.

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 suspends all operations

The Thai division of Indonesian low-cost carrier Lion Air is suspending all operations from March 25 until April 15. China, Japan, Indonesia and Singapore are its biggest international markets.

³ [The Jakarta Post](#), March 19, 2020

VietJet suspends Southeast Asian services

VietJet suspended its Southeast Asian services from March 20, ceasing flights to Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand. The airline had previously suspended its flights to South Korea.

To give passengers the confidence to fly on the domestic flights it continues to operate, VietJet is offering Sky Covid Care insurance against COVID-19 infection.⁴ With the insurance, which offers coverage of US\$857-8,570, passengers are covered within 30 days of their departure date, up until June 30.

Other airlines

Airline	Action and plans
Bangkok Airways	All international and most domestic flights suspended until October. Service on three domestic routes may resume on May 1
Philippine Airlines	Grounded from March 26 until April 14
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, with resumption expected at the end of April. Most domestic services suspended until April 15

Bangkok Airways suspends international services

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 between April 7 and April 30.⁵ From May 1, it may resume some flights from Bangkok to Phuket, Samui and Lampang. All other domestic services will remain suspended until October 24.

Philippine Airlines grounds all flights

Philippines Airlines (PAL) ceased all domestic flights from March 17. It had also scaled back its international operations, maintaining flights only to Jakarta, Los Angeles, New York JFK, San Francisco and Tokyo. All remaining flights were suspended from March 26 until April 14. PAL concluded the collapse in demand for travel caused by strict travel and entry restrictions in more and more countries had made its remaining international services unviable.⁶

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.

⁴ [Breaking Travel News](#), March 27, 2020

⁵ [Bangkok Airways](#), March 31, 2020

⁶ [Philippine Airlines](#), March 24, 2020

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

Vietnam Airlines suspended all international flights, starting with services to Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand from March 21. Services to the U.K. and Japan ended on March 23, while flights to Australia and Germany stopped on March 24. Vietnam Airlines had previously suspended services to China, France, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea and Taiwan.

The airline estimates that the suspension will remain in place until the end of April. Its decision was prompted after the Vietnamese government stopped issuing visas to visitors for a period of 30 days.

Following a government directive issued on March 27 aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19, Vietnam Airlines has also suspended most domestic services from March 30 until April 15. It continues to operate double daily services between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and daily flights from both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to Da Nang and Phu Quoc.⁷

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).⁸

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 April 7, 2020.

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

⁷ [Vietnam Airlines](#), March 29, 2020

⁸ Cirium, April 6, 2020