Outbreak of 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China

Travel Brief
26th February 2020

An outbreak of Coronavirus Disease causing severe acute respiratory illness was reported in Wuhan, China since December 21, 2019. The virus has not been previously identified and so, since it is new, there is still little known about it including its origin. As of 30, January 2020, there were 7818 confirmed cases and 170 deaths. Whist most cases are from China, the virus has now spread to 17 other countries. There is evidence of human to human transmission among cases both in and outside of Wuhan City, China and internationally. Human-to-human transmission has been confirmed largely in Wuhan city, but also some other places in China and internationally.

On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China, as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The International Health Regulations’ Emergency Committee is not recommending trade or travel restrictions at this time.

CARPHA maintains that the risk of importation of the coronavirus disease remains low for the Caribbean. There are currently no reported cases of the COVID-19 in the Region. The risk is deemed low as there are no direct flights from China to the Caribbean and travellers will receive multiple screenings before arrival to Member States.

1. Economic Impact of Travel in the Caribbean

The Caribbean region is known as the world’s most prominent travel destinations, famous for its tropical weather, crystal clear blue waters, white sand beaches and rich culture. These features make the region an attractive destination to foreigners, particularly those seeking to escape colder climates. The tourism industry is especially important for the Caribbean economy as it is one of the main sources of revenue. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council’s (WTTC) Tourism Satellite Account (WTTC 2001), tourism accounted for approximately 2.5 million jobs or 15.5% of total employment in 2001 and contributed 5.8% (US $9.2 billion) to region’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These figures illustrate the dependency of the Caribbean region on the tourism industry.

Caribbean tourism is vulnerable to many external factors, health being one of them. Negative health publications against an island or unmanaged epidemics can seriously harm the inflow of tourists and tarnish the reputation of Caribbean tourism destinations. Without a market, the Caribbean economy suffers from a fall in tourism generated revenue. Additionally, high and increasing numbers of visitors to the Caribbean threatens the health, safety and security of both resident and visitor populations by contributing to disease
spread. Due to its tropical climate, the region is mainly vulnerable to outbreaks associated with chikungunya, malaria, dengue, zika and measles. Adding to this list, we now must account for the possible spread of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease.

*Reports of suspected cases in Europe and North America puts the Caribbean region on alert as 72% of visitor arrivals come from these regions. We must also note that the occurrence of this outbreak coincides with the peak of carnival activities in the region, which usually sees approximately 42% increase in visitor arrivals for this period.*

2. **Impact of novel 2019-Coronavirus Travel: Global and Regional**

The coronavirus outbreak in China will significantly impact on the overall travel and tourism industry, as the country now represents the largest source market in the world for international travel, according to a new analysis by Global Data, large industries data analytics company.

As reported cases of the coronavirus increase and spread beyond China, concern within the global tourism industry is peaking. Travel stocks have been among the biggest losers on global markets within the last two days, as the realization of the damage that would be caused by a long-term reduction in both inbound and outbound tourism through China dawns on investors.

Global Data figures show that China has grown from the fourth largest source market in the world, with 47.7 million outbound tourists in 2009, to become the largest, with a staggering 159 million outbound tourists in 2019. This accounted for 12.2 percent of all outbound travellers globally. Furthermore, the Chinese outbound market was the second highest spending in 2019, with expenditure of $275 billion.

These figures highlight the importance of the Chinese market on the tourism industry and are a warning of the economic impact the coronavirus could have. There have already been changes in travel advice from the likes of the UK and U.S., while restrictions have been put in place within areas of China. Any increase in domestic and international travel restrictions, as well as increasing apprehension from travellers, could mean a significant decline in global tourism if the spread of the virus continues to exacerbate.

Since there are still no direct flights to the Caribbean from China, the risk of the disease entering our shores remains low, as travellers would have been screened multiple time before entering the region.

3. **WHO Advice on Travel**
As of 27th January 2020, WHO advises that “that measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions of international traffic.” Countries should provide to traveller’s information to reduce the general risk of acute respiratory infections, via health practitioners, travel health clinics, travel agencies, conveyance operators and at Points of Entry. Several technical guides to aid in prevention and control of COVID-19 are readily available on the WHO website.


Released Guidelines on how to screen travelers but also advises against the application of any restrictions of international traffic based on the information currently available on this event.

Advice for exit screening in countries or areas with ongoing transmission of COVID-19 (currently People’s Republic of China)

- Conduct exit screening at international airports and ports in the affected areas, with the aims early detection of symptomatic travelers for further evaluation and treatment, and thus prevent exportation of the disease. while minimizing interference with international traffic.

- Exit screening includes checking for signs and symptoms (fever above 38”, cough), interview of passengers with respiratory infection symptoms leaving the affected areas with regards to potential exposure to high-risk contacts or to the presumed animal source, directing symptomatic travelers to further medical examination, followed by testing for COVID-19, and keeping confirmed cases under isolation and treatment;

- Encourage screening at domestic airports, railway stations, and long-distance bus stations as necessary.

- Travelers who had contact with confirmed cases or direct exposure to potential source of infection should be placed under medical observation. High-risk contacts should avoid travel for the duration of the incubation period (up to 14 days).

- Implement health information campaigns at Points of Entry to raise awareness of reducing the general risk of acute respiratory infections and the measures required, should a traveler develop signs and symptoms suggestive of infection with the COVID-19 and how they can obtain assistance.

Advice for entry screening in countries/areas without transmission of COVID-19 that choose to perform entry screening

- The evidence from the past outbreaks shows that effectiveness of entry screening is uncertain, but it may support risk communication strategy by providing information to travelers from affected countries/areas to reduce the general risk of acute respiratory infections, and to seek medical attention early if they develop symptoms compatible with the infection.

- During the current outbreak with the Coronavirus Disease COVID-19, a number of exported cases were detected through entry screening implemented by some countries. Symptomatic cases may be detected through temperature screening at Point of Entry, for whom medical examination and laboratory tests will be conducted for confirmation. Temperature screening to detect potential suspect cases at Point of
Entry may miss travelers incubating the disease or travelers concealing fever during travel and may require substantial investments. A focused approach targeting direct flights from affected areas could be more effective and less resource demanding.

- Currently the northern hemisphere (and China) is in the midst of the winter season when Influenza and other respiratory infections are prevalent. When deciding implementation of entry screening, countries need to take into consideration that travelers with signs and symptoms suggestive of respiratory infection may result from respiratory diseases other than COVID-19, and that their follow-up may impose an additional burden on the health system. National policy and capacities should be taken into account during the decision-making process.

- If entry screening is implemented, temperature screening should always be accompanied by dissemination of risk communication messages at Points of Entry. This can be done through posters, leaflets, electronic bulletin, etc., aiming at raising awareness among travelers about signs and symptoms of the disease, and encouragement of health care seeking behavior, including when to seek medical care, and report of their travel history.

- Countries implementing temperature screening are encouraged to establish proper mechanism for data collection and analysis, e.g. numbers of travelers screened and confirmed cases out of screened passengers, and method of screening.

- Public health authorities should reinforce collaboration with airline operators for case management on board an aircraft and reporting, should a traveler with respiratory disease symptoms is detected, in accordance with the IATA guidance for cabin crew to manage suspected communicable disease on board an aircraft.

https://www.who.int/ith/COVID-19_advice_for_international_traffic/en/

4. Global Actions to date

Despite the WHO’s travel advisory recommending “no unnecessary restrictions of international traffic”, several countries have chosen a proactive response to COVID-19.
International:

US State Department (31st January 2020)

_The US state department has issued a Level 4 Travel advisory – DO NOT TRAVEL._

“Do not travel to China due to Coronavirus Disease first identified in Wuhan, China. On January 30, the World Health Organization has determined the rapidly spreading outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Travelers should be prepared for travel restrictions to be put into effect with little or no advance notice. Commercial carriers have reduced or suspended routes to and from China.

Those currently in China should consider departing using commercial means. The Department of State has requested that all non-essential U.S. government personnel defer travel to China in light of the Coronavirus Disease.”


Japan (26th February 2020)

According to the CDC Japan has issued a Level 2 Alert – Practice Enhanced Precautions. Many cases of COVID-19 have been associated with travel to or from mainland China or close contact with a travel-related case, but sustained community spread has been reported in Japan.


South Korea (26th February 2020)

According to the CDC South Korea has issued a Level 3 Warning – Avoid Nonessential Travel. CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to South Korea. There is limited access to adequate medical care in affected areas.


Italy (26th February 2020)

Italy has confirmed 322 cases of the virus, the Italian Civil Protection Agency said Tuesday. That’s the highest number of coronavirus infections outside Asia.


Countries that have banned flights to China (2nd February 2020)

The following countries have imposed travel restrictions on China: Australia, Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, New Zealand, Netherlands, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Tanzania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam.

CDC (28th January 2020)

On January 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated travel guidance, noting a Level 3 alert (Warning – Level 3 Avoid nonessential travel) for China, recommending that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to all of the country.

https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0128-travelers-avoid-china.html

CDC (26th February 2020)

CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to the following destinations; China and South Korea.


Additionally, some airlines and cruise lines have also chosen to follow prevention protocols:

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., British Airways, Air China, China Airlines, American Airlines, United Airlines and Delta (29th January 2020)

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. reports that it has cancelled three sailings through February 8 on Spectrum of the Seas due to the spread of the coronavirus, which is currently its only ship homeported in China.

British Airways reports that it has suspended all of its flights to and from Beijing and Shanghai through Friday, January 31, as it assesses the situation.

Air China will issue refunds for all flights booked before midnight on January 28.

China Airlines is offering passengers who file an application by March 31 the option to rebook without a change fee or difference in tax and far, or a full refund.

American Airlines is offering travelers scheduled to fly to Wuhan through March 31 a refund for all unflown segments of their trip.

United Airlines is offering refunds to travelers scheduled to fly through Wuhan who booked by January 22 and who are scheduled to fly through March 29.

Delta is offering travelers scheduled to fly through Beijing and Shanghai through February 29 the chance to rebook through March 31 with no change fee or difference in fare, so long as travel is between the original city pair.


Regional:
Anguilla (3rd February 2020)

The Ministry of Health and Social Development in a press release has advised persons to avoid travel to China until the WHO has indicated a reduction in threat level from the Coronavirus Disease. Persons who are traveling from China or have travelled via another country from China within 14 (fourteen) days are asked to remain where they are and not to travel to Anguilla. Persons who have travelled to China within the last 14 (fourteen) days will be subjected to secondary screening measures at all ports of entry and will be detained for quarantine purposes up to 14 (fourteen) days at an appropriate facility based on a risk assessment.

Antigua and Barbuda (31st January 2020)

“St John’s, January 31... The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has decided to close its borders, effective immediately, to travellers from the People’s Republic of China. The decision has been taken in light of the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) that the fast-spreading coronavirus, which has infected more than 8,200 people across the world, is a global health emergency”.

Antigua and Barbuda (31st January 2020)

Two people are in quarantine in Antigua and Barbuda as health officials battle on to keep the deadly coronavirus away from the nation’s shores. The two individuals left China’s Beijing and Gansu provinces, respectively, on Wednesday and transited through France, the US, Trinidad, and finally Antigua.


Barbados (5th February 2020)

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has stated categorically that there are no cases of coronavirus in Barbados at this time. No business has been closed in connection with the coronavirus.

https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/02/05/no-cases-of-coronavirus-in-barbados/

Bermuda (29th January 2020)

The Ministry of Health has confirmed that “there are no cases or known suspect cases of the coronavirus currently in Bermuda,” and also noted that officials are working to “enhance screening of arriving travelers” and “there is a health officer at the airport to assist.”


Trinidad and Tobago (30th January 2020)

Trinidad and Tobago have banned all travelers from China to prevent Coronavirus for a fourteen (14) day period. The Minister of Health, Terrance Deyalsingh indicates that persons who are presently living in China or visiting China, regardless of their nationality, will not be allowed to enter Trinidad and Tobago for fourteen (14) days after leaving China as the virus has an incubation of fourteen (14) days.
Trinidad and Tobago (1st February 2020)

Minister of Health, Dr. Terrance Deyalsingh has confirmed that anyone living in or visiting China who slips through Trinidad and Tobago fourteen (14) day travel restriction and enters the country may be subject to quarantine. He also reassured that there are no suspected cases in the country. Travel bans will be put in place.

[link](https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/cabinet-announces-14day-travel-restrictions-from-china-6.2.1042978.7a4c342a7f)

Trinidad and Tobago (5th February 2020)

Nationals who are currently in China are free to return home as the fourteen (14) day travel restriction does not apply to them.


Trinidad and Tobago (6th February 2020)

A Chinese woman, Yan Fang Hong, who arrived in Trinidad on Saturday 1st February from China was not allowed to attend court on Wednesday as a precaution against the novel Wuhan coronavirus. The judge explained the reason for her absence, saying it was because of the information in the public domain regarding the “notorious” coronavirus outbreak in China.

[link](https://newsday.co.tt/2020/02/06/court-cautious-over-coronavirus/)

Cayman Islands (January 30th, 2020)

Shortly before the World Health Organization declared coronavirus as a global emergency on Thursday, Cayman Public Health Department announced that surveillance is being stepped up at local borders, and visitors coming to the Caribbean from coronavirus-affected countries would undergo “entrance screening”.

[link](https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/01/30/cayman-issues-coronavirus-travel-advisory/)

Cayman Islands (3rd February 2020)

Health officials in the Cayman Islands are set to request Cabinet approval for just over one million dollars as part of local coronavirus response preparations.

[link](https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/02/03/1m-sought-for-coronavirus-fight/)

Dominica (30th January 2020)
Dominica Minister for Health and Wellness, Dr. Irvin McIntyre urged its citizens that the island is putting precautionary measures in place to ensure that the virus stays off the island.

Active surveillance will be conducted at the health facilities and at various points of entry and dissemination of reporting tools to healthcare providers is currently in place.


Jamaica (29th January 2020)

The Ministry of Health and Wellness in Jamaica is in the process of issuing a travel advisory for persons wishing to come to Jamaica from China and those planning to leave the island to visit. Dr. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health has asked persons to defer their travels to China. Additionally, further measures are being put in place for those with relatives in China:

- For persons in transit to Jamaica, quarantine protocols will be put in place where persons (suspected of having the virus) will either be quarantined in a health facility or at home, depending on the risk assessment that is done.

- For families who are concerns about their relatives and friends in China who are there for work or study, conversations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicate that plans have been put in place to facilitate their needs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will speak more broadly to those plans.


Jamaica (31st January 2020)

Jamaica imposed a ban on travel to and from China on Friday 31st January 2020, a day after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus outbreak a global emergency.

Those persons who are entering the country from China will undergo an immediate quarantine for a minimum of fourteen (14) days.


Jamaica (2nd February 2020)

Jamaica acted on the travel ban to and from China, with local authorities sending back nineteen (19) Chinese nationals as the island seeks to minimize the risk from the deadly coronavirus outbreak globally. The Chinese, on vacation, arrived on the island Friday 31st at the Norman Manley International Airport. They were denied entry and placed in quarantine in a holding area in Kingston before being sent back home on Saturday morning.
Jamaica (4th February 2020)

A WestJet flight that was scheduled to land in Montego Bay, Jamaica diverted from its route when a twenty-nine (29) year old man who is a resident of Ontario falsely indicated he had contracted the Novel Coronavirus. The plane, following protocols, returned to Toronto’s Pearson International airport and the man was charged with mischief.

Two (2) flights were cancelled and WestJet indicated an extra flight will be added on Tuesday, both to and from Montego Bay.


Jamaica (26th February 2020)

A MSC Meraviglia cruise ship that arrived in Ocho Rio, St Ann from Miami on the 25th February, 2020 has been ordered to remain at sea over health concerns. The decision was taken after it was discovered that a crew member, who has a travel history to countries with cases of the Coronavirus, was placed in isolation aboard the vessel.


Grenada (1st February 2020)

Due to the Coronavirus Disease outbreak as of December 2019, a new and updated threat assessment by the Ministry of Health Grenada, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO); the Government of Grenada has decided to not allow any non-national with a travel history within the last fourteen (14) days from mainland China, whether in transit or originating, to enter any local port as 2nd February 2020.


Grenada (9th February 2020)

Grenada’s Ministry of Health released a statement on February 2, issuing new restrictions for individuals traveling from China due to the ongoing COVID-19. Any non-national who has travel history to mainland China within the past fourteen (14) days, either originating or in transit, will not be allowed entry at any local port. All nationals with similar travel history will be placed under a fourteen (14) day quarantine as a precaution.

Guyana (29th January 2020)

Although Guyana’s risk for the presence of the mysterious new coronavirus is relatively “low,” health authorities yesterday assured that the country is “ready and equipped” in the event of an infection.


Guyana (11th February 2020)

The Chinese embassy in Guyana is seeking an arrangement to have sixteen (16) Chinese doctors who travelled to China for the Chinese New Year returned to Guyana despite the travel ban.

Guyana indicated it will most likely deny entry to those who travel from China and those who do will be screened and subject to an isolation period.


The Bahamas (22nd January 2020)

“Based on currently available information, however, WHO does not recommend any restriction of travel or trade. Today, at the conclusion of the first meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee the decision for declaration as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) was deferred until a second meeting scheduled for tomorrow. At this time, it is expected that additional information from WHO experts on the ground in China would be considered.”


The Bahamas (30th January 2020)

Any non-resident regardless of nationality who has visited China in the last 20 (twenty) days will be denied entry into the country and all residents returning to the Bahamas will be strictly quarantined and monitored for development of symptoms for the duration of the incubation period with a maximum of 14 (fourteen) days.

Dr. McMillan, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health stated that the WHO’s current recommendation is against all non-essential travel for persons to China at this time.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines (31st January 2020)

Non-essential travel to mainland China and countries with significant person to person transmission of COVID-19 should be avoided. All travelers to the island from mainland China and countries with significant transmission will be isolated in their homes as appropriate for a period of 14 (fourteen) days after departure from China. Public Health Officials will conduct daily monitoring of these individuals. Travelers will be asked by immigration officials about their travel history as part of our heightened surveillance.

Belize (31st January 2020)

All travel to China from Belize is postponed and persons arriving from China will be subject to quarantine protocols. There is a recommended ban on non-essential travel to and from China.

Belize (5th February 2020) – Press Release

The Government of Belize, and by extension the Ministry of Health, applauds Taiwan’s key public health measures that include electronic monitoring of quarantined cases and the provision of masks and other items to support the prevention efforts. The Ministry is also aware of the level three travel advisory that has been implemented for those visiting China, which limits unnecessary travel there. This also is in line with Belize’s current recommendations. The Government of Belize cherishes the strong diplomatic relations with Taiwan which have been ongoing for more than three decades as can be seen in the various fields, including the public health sector, that has benefited the Belizean people. The Government of Belize will continue to work with Taiwan to safeguard the interest and welfare for our people and beyond and will continue to advocate for a voice and vote at the WHO, and representation at the upcoming World Health Assembly.

Belize (10th February 2020)

Foreigners and non-residents who have been in mainland China in the past 14 days are not allowed to enter Belize.

https://fortune.com/2020/02/06/countries-china-travel-restrictions-coronavirus/

Suriname (5th February 2020)

All non-nationals traveling from mainland China for less than fourteen (14) days, are not allowed in the country. Nationals of Suriname coming in from China mainland are placed in a fourteen (14) day quarantine.
**Caribbean Countries that have issues Travel Bans**

*Table 1 Caribbean Travel Ban as of 14th February 2020*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Travel Related Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid non-essential travel to China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anguilla</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruba</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>✓ (Hubei province only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BES Islands</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Virgin Islands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cayman Islands</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curacao</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Maarten</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Country Travel Related Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Avoid non-essential travel to China</th>
<th>Denied entry to persons travelling from China</th>
<th>Screening at Port of Entry</th>
<th>Quarantine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turks and Caicos</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Other

The Airline, LIAT has stated that the islands they operate in and out of have restricted travel to persons who have visited or resided in the following countries:

- People’s Republic of China
- Hong Kong
- Singapore
- Japan
- South Korea
- Macau
5. Advise to Travellers Visiting the Caribbean

Avoid nonessential travel to China. If you must travel:

- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Discuss travel to China with your healthcare provider. Older adults and travellers with underlying health issues may be at risk for more severe disease.
- Avoid animals (alive or dead), animal markets, and products that come from animals (such as uncooked meat).
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

If you were in China in the last 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should:

- Seek medical care right away. Before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
6. Communications

CARPHA will continue to monitor the situation and provide regular updates via email, on their website and social media. Teleconferences will be scheduled as necessary. The latest media release is available from CARPHA’s web.