



Council of Australian Tour Operators

COVID SAFE TRAVEL PROTOCOLS

While it is essential that each sector within the Travel & Tourism industry develops clear and practical protocols to enable post COVID recovery, such an approach is even more important for tour operators given their dependence on suppliers.

The approach of destinations, airlines, hotels, transportation, and travel insurance providers as well as government policies around border restrictions will all have an impact on tour operators that are principally responsible for a guest's journey.

CATO recommends the following suggested protocols for tour operators and wholesalers based on direct reference to published [World Travel & Tourism Council \(WTTTC\) guidelines](#) that were compiled via input from leading tour operators around the world.

Objectives

- Have the land-supply sector lead the definition of industry best practice as we move from crisis management to recovery.
- Put the safety, health and security of travellers and the Travel & Tourism workforce at the core of the development of global protocols.

Approach

- Ensure coherence through a coordinated, collaborative, and transparent approach, supported by medical evidence, within the Travel & Tourism sector as well as with governments and public health authorities.
- Share harmonised and consistent protocols which are outcome driven, simple and practical across destinations and countries.
- Rebuild trust and confidence with travellers through effective communication & marketing; letting them know the protocols implemented and assurances available to keep them safe.
- Advocate for the implementation of enabling policies to support the recovery and demand regeneration for the sector.

Operational and Staff Preparedness

As tour operators restart their operations, they should;

- Ensure they can optimise operational quality and delivery and have trained staff to prepare and execute on operational plans
- Establish with suppliers and partners including restaurants, hotels, parks, transport partners and venues that they follow likeminded health and hygiene protocols and guidelines to protect guests as required by local legislation.
- Introduce a COVID-19 contingency plan should new cases emerge in collaboration with suppliers and partners
- Request that key stakeholders such as partner venues, hotels and transport partners have trained their staff on the basis of likeminded protocols to enable a consistent industry approach.

“Inspiring innovative & sustainable travel”

Delivering a safe experience

As tour operators work to deliver a safe experience for their staff and their guests through enhanced cleanliness and hygiene best practices, they should have:

- Worked with suppliers to understand what additional measures have been introduced
- Implemented or confirmed with suppliers' processes focused on enhanced sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning practices for coaches and other vehicles used as well as increase their cleaning/disinfection frequency through;
 - Selecting disinfecting products approved by health authorities
 - Enhancing cleaning frequency as appropriate and revisit guidance to cleaning teams with a specific focus on high-frequency touch points, including handrails, door handles, tables, onboard toilets, air conditioning filters, overhead lockers, and headsets as applicable
 - Ensuring sanitation stations are available to guests for alcohol-based hand washing
 - Providing or make available for purchase additional individual disinfecting products for guests if possible
 - Allocating seating plans with no rotation and implement seat spacing if required by local legislation
 - Where possible provide bins with liner bags and regular disposal
- Establish with transport partners that they have likeminded processes for sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning practices.
 - Implemented guest health checks and testing if appropriate and required by local legislation
 - Limited physical contact and queuing where possible
 - Make masks available to guests if required by local authorities
 - Utilise online check-in and contactless check-out tools and procedures where appropriate and possible
 - Explore staggered timing when possible of access to venues, hotels, and restaurants
- Established with partners and suppliers, including shops, showrooms, tasting venues/shops, museums, shows, theatre, concert halls, factories & farms, that they follow likeminded health, sanitation, disinfection, and hygiene protocols aligned with local regulation.
- Established that partner restaurants follow likeminded health, sanitation, disinfection and hygiene and food safety protocols to protect guests, such as:
 - Approved disinfecting products made available at entrance to guests in the form of alcohol-based hand sanitiser as appropriate.
 - Established with restaurant that restaurant staff are trained and adhere to likeminded health, hygiene, and physical contact guidelines
 - Avoid guest own handling of food at buffets
 - Regular cleaning of coffee/drink machines and where possible operated by staff
 - Enhanced cleaning, including disinfecting of tables and chairs after guest has left and using dishwasher other handwashing where possible
 - Minimised physical contact through table spacing and guest seating if required by local legislation
 - Considered minimising what is placed on guest tables and provide mono-packaged items if feasible
 - Reviewed payment method to prioritise contactless and pre-payment methods
 - Considered having longer opening hours to reduce the number of guests served at any given time and facilitate the implementation of the new measures

Rebuilding Trust and Confidence

As tour operators work to enhance trust and confidence through transparency and communication with their guests, they should:

- Provide clear, consistent, and up-to-date communication to customers on new health & hygiene protocols via the organisation's channels, both digitally and physically.
- Work with suppliers to implement clear signage to inform guests of the enhanced cleaning protocols, avoiding physical contact, and recommendations
- Share guest guidelines ahead of trip and where applicable in person upon commencement of trip on the basis of advice from health authorities which may include the wearing of face masks or coverings, guidance on hand hygiene and avoiding physical contact.
- Consider having consumers acknowledge guidelines and inform guests about support available if questions or concerns arise. Guest facing staff should be trained and prepared to answer questions, resolve challenges such as the detection of new cases, address situations where guests are not complying and share protocols before and during trip to reassure traveller
- Explore collaboration with medical/travel insurance companies to offer traveller insurance covering COVID-19 who could assist with arrangements should they be necessary such as emergency repatriation and medical care
- Promote contact tracing apps if required by local legislation

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