

Guideline *for* Restarting Tourism in Maldives



MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Government of Maldives



©Copyright 2020

The material contained in this guideline is subject to copyright protection unless otherwise indicated. The copyright protected material may be reproduced free of charge in any format or media without requiring specific permission. This is subject to the material being reproduced accurately and not being used in a derogatory manner or in a misleading context. Where the material is being published or issued to others, the source and copyright status should be acknowledged. The permission to reproduce copyright protected material does not extend to any material in this guideline that is identified as being the copyright of a third party. Authorisation to reproduce such material should be obtained from the copyright holders.

Acknowledgement

This document outlines the guidelines for re-opening the Maldivian Tourism Industry with the eases in restrictions due to Covid-19 (2019-nCoV). It sets out the minimum standard requirements which must be met by tourist facilities to achieve the trust among potential tourists for Maldives as a leading tourist destination.

This document would not have reached its ultimate conclusion without the assistance and technical input of the multiple stakeholder agencies and organisations.

Policy committee:

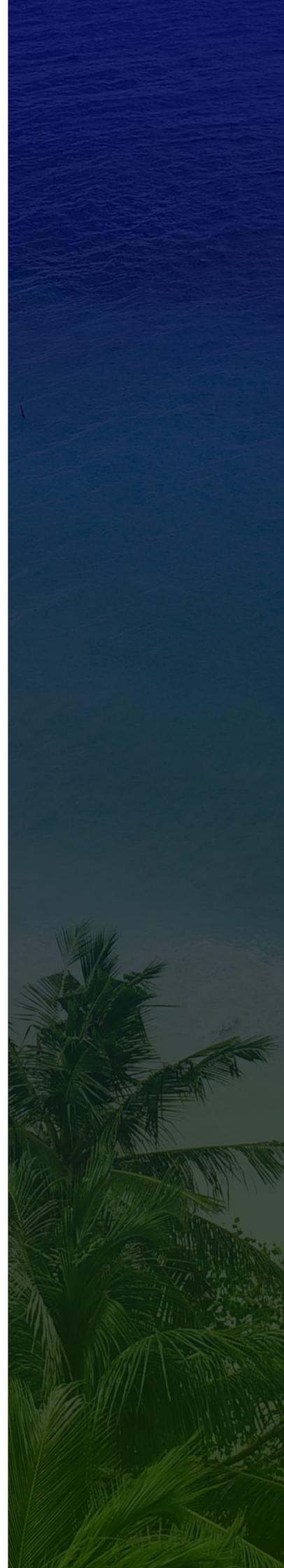
Ali Waheed, Minister of Tourism
Mohamed Khussan, Senior Policy Director
Ali Razzan, Senior Executive Director
Fathmath Sharuma, Senior Planning Officer
Fathimath Zaina Shareef, Quality Auditing Officer
Aminath Shiuna Basheer, Legal Officer

Photo credit: *Hussain Shayaah, Ministry of Tourism*

Layout design: *Ali Razzan, Ministry of Tourism*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
INTRODUCTION	5
ENTRY INTO MALDIVES	7
Booking	7
On Arrival Visa Procedures	7
ENTRY AT AIRPORT	8
Airport Arrival	8
Luggage Collection	10
Receiving of Tourist by Tourist Facility Staff	10
LUGGAGE HANDLING	11
Safe Handling of Luggage	11
DOMESTIC TRANSPORTATION	12
Airport Transfers	12
Transit Movements	13
RESORTS	14
Standards for Reopening	14
Staffing	15
Check-in Procedures	17
Common Facilities	17
Emergency Procedures	18
CHECKOUT FROM TOURIST FACILITIES	19
Checkout Procedures	19
Room Cleaning	19
TOURIST VESSELS	20
Procedures for Tourist Vessels	20
Emergency Procedures	21
Cruise Ships and Foreign Flagged Yachts	21
GUEST HOUSES	23
Procedures for Guest Houses	23
Emergency Procedures	23
GENERAL	24
Easing of Restrictions	24
Recreation Activities	24
Responsibility for Isolation and Quarantine	24
Compliance with this Guideline	25
Hotels	25
TIMELINE	26
Tentative Opening Dates	26
APPENDIX	27



FOREWORD

Tourism accounts for 1/3 of the Maldives' national revenue. In March this year, for the first time in 47 years since tourism was introduced to the Maldives, the country had suspended the issuance of tourist visa resulting in zero tourist arrivals for about 3 months. Global pandemic COVID-19 had more of a socio-economic impact on the Maldives than the 2004 Asian Tsunami and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

As a small island state, the Maldives has unique vulnerabilities to external shocks. As a result of the downturn in global travel and trade due to COVID-19, the Maldives' economy is expected to contract significantly.

Measures taken in the Maldives to contain COVID-19 have been stringent but necessary. A strict lockdown and timely restrictive measures have proved effective in containing cases well below that expected by projected models. Maldives is now easing out of lockdown and preparing to open borders to the new normal. As we do so, we want to protect our hard fought gains against COVID-19.

This requires strong precautionary measures for the tourism industry, from ports of entry, to transfers, and to places of accommodation. This guideline is a product of consultations between the country's health authorities and tourism industry. It facilitates a reopening of the Maldives' world class tourism industry while ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors. They are also guidelines that will evolve as the world continues to learn more about COVID-19.

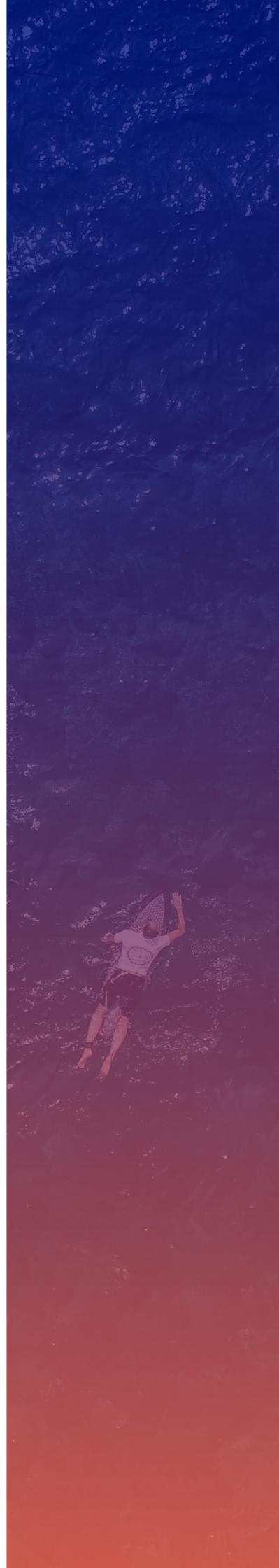
The Maldives believes the key to successful post pandemic tourism is a balance between confidence and convenience. That is what we offer when we reopen this July. We hope to see you soon, in the sunny side of life.

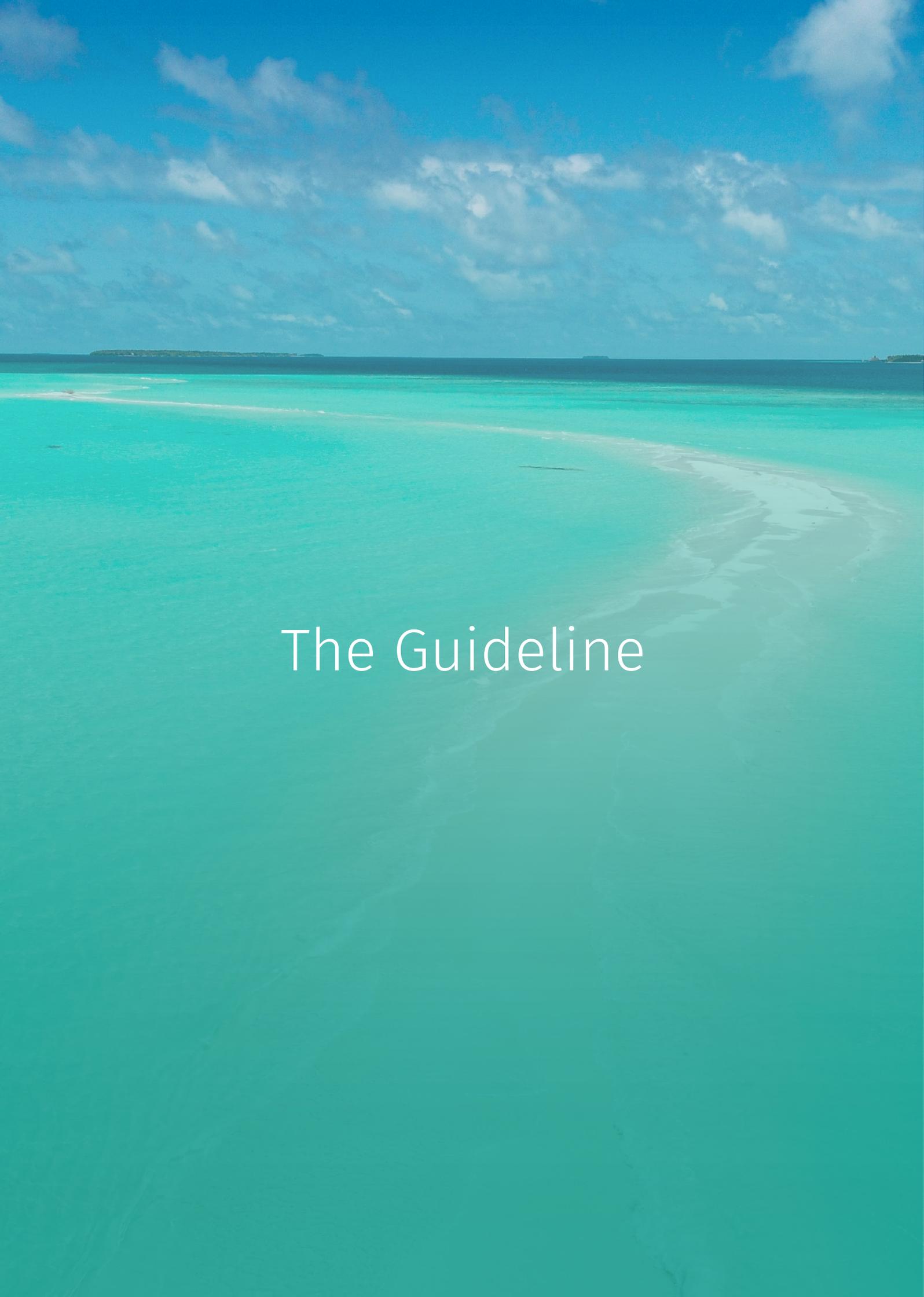
ALI WAHEED
MINISTER OF TOURISM

INTRODUCTION

The guideline for restarting tourism in Maldives sets out the standards which have to be met by all stakeholders in order to reopen the border and welcome back visitors into the country. This document provides the minimum standards upon which each individual property has to formulate a tailored plan before commencement of operations.

This set of guideline is based on research, international best practice, case studies and industry consultation. It is a practical tool that aims to assist industry stakeholders who have a role in supporting, developing and growing the tourism economy in the Maldives. This includes central government agencies, local governments, resorts, hotels, guest houses, tourist vessels and supporting businesses.



An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. A long, narrow white sandbar runs diagonally across the frame, separating the shallow lagoon from the open ocean. The sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered white clouds. In the distance, a low-lying island with green vegetation is visible on the horizon.

The Guideline

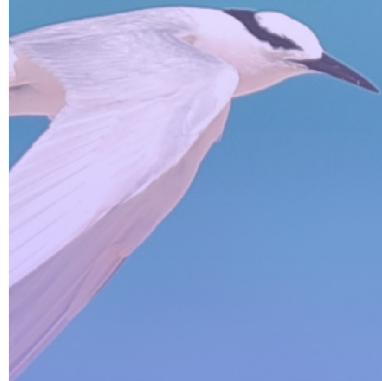
A. ENTRY INTO MALDIVES

A1. BOOKING

- A1.1** A prior confirmed booking in a registered tourist facility is compulsory.
- A1.2** The entirety of the stay shall be booked in one facility. However, exemptions shall be made for those requiring transit arrangements.

A2. ON ARRIVAL VISA PROCEDURES

- A2.1** A confirmed pre-booking in a registered tourist facility is a prerequisite for the visa.
- A2.2** Tourist visa extensions shall be made available to long stay tourists and tourists who may require visa extensions due to quarantine measures without any further fees.
- A2.3** Tourists must provide emergency contact information during the visa issuance process.



B. ENTRY AT AIRPORT

B1. AIRPORT ARRIVAL

- B1.1** Temperature checks and screening measures will be carried out at the first point of entry for tourists and special attention will be paid to individuals exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms including, but not limited to, cough, runny nose or shortness of breath.
- B1.2** Those exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms on arrival must undergo a PCR test. If one member of a group traveling together displays symptoms, all members of the group shall be tested. Tourists or the tourist facility, where the tourist is booked to stay in the Maldives, shall bear the cost of the PCR test conducted on symptomatic tourists.
- B1.3** Health Authorities may elect to conduct randomized PCR tests on individuals arriving in Maldives. Government will bear the cost of random tests.
- B1.4** In the case of a positive PCR result, the tourist facility, where the tourist is booked to stay in the Maldives, shall be given the option of transferring the tourist to their booked accommodation to isolate in their designated room or to isolate in a government run facility. These options will also be subject to the individual's medical condition. Tourist facilities shall bear responsibility for ensuring that the costs related to the transfer and accommodation of individuals who require treatment at a government managed facility are met.

- B1.5** Vessels, guest houses and hotels on inhabited islands may not accept tourists who have tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival. The tourist facility, where the tourist is booked to stay in the Maldives will be responsible for ensuring that associated costs are met.
- B1.6** At the airport, tourists will be isolated from the point of identification of symptoms or based on positive test results.
- B1.7** Tourists requiring PCR testing on arrival shall be accommodated in a transit facility until their PCR results are received.
- B1.8** Tourists or passengers and airport staff must maintain a distance of at least 1 metre at all times.
- B1.9** Tourists or passengers must wear face masks.
- B1.10** The practice of good hand hygiene through hand washing and/or use of hand sanitizer is recommended.
- B1.11** All visitors to the Maldives' are encouraged to install the contact tracing application 'Trace Ekee' upon or before arrival into the country.

B2. LUGGAGE COLLECTION

- B2.1** Tourists or passengers must maintain a safe distance of at least 1 metre at luggage collection areas.
- B2.2** Airport authorities will ensure that luggage trolleys are disinfected after each use. Disinfected trolleys and used trolleys will be kept and marked separately for users.

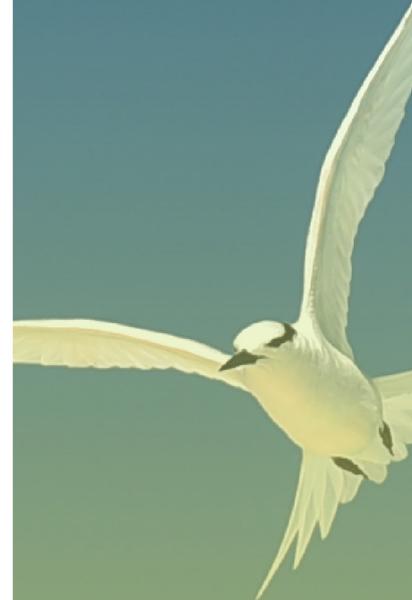
B3. RECEIVING OF TOURIST BY TOURIST FACILITY STAFF

- B3.1** All tourists shall be met by an authorised representative from a tourist facility at the arrival airport.
- B3.2** Basic details required for check-in to the accommodation shall be collected at this point.
- B3.3** Luggage shall be identified and tagged to allow for easier management.
- B3.4** Staff to handle luggage with gloves, ensuring minimal contact.
- B3.5** Receiving staff shall be equipped with masks and sanitizer. Provision of the required PPE shall be the responsibility of the facilities being represented by the staff.
- B3.6** Tourist facility representatives commuting from inhabited islands to airports shall be restricted from traveling to resorts.
- B3.7** All tourist facility representatives shall install and utilize the 'Trace Ekee' Application.

C. LUGGAGE HANDLING

C1. SAFE HANDLING OF LUGGAGE

- C1.1** Luggage handlers should utilise gloves when handling tourists' luggage.
- C1.2** Proper care should be taken when transporting luggage to ensure minimal contact.
- C1.3** Gloves should be disposed of in a foot operated closed bin immediately after luggage transportation is complete.
- C1.4** Personal disinfection procedures shall be undertaken at the end of each duty shift.



D. DOMESTIC TRANSPORTATION

D1. AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Airport transfers will only be allowed through pick-ups by pre-booked tourist facilities.

- D1.1** Transport vessels and aircraft shall comply with health & safety standards set forth by HPA.
- D1.2** Wearing of masks and use of hand sanitizer shall be made compulsory before boarding transfer vessel or aircraft.
- D1.3** A safe distance of at least 1 metre shall be maintained during communication.
- D1.4** Disinfection and decontamination procedures approved by HPA to be undertaken on vessels and aircraft after passenger disembarkation.
- D1.5** All requirements stated in this guideline in relation to transfers are applicable to all passengers.
- D1.6** Tourists with positive PCR test results shall be transferred to their destinations via separate transfers conforming to protocols set forth by HPA.

D2. TRANSIT MOVEMENTS

- D2.1** Ministry of Tourism may allow guest houses and hotels on inhabited islands to accommodate tourists for overnight stay under special arrangements, until tourist facilities in inhabited islands are officially allowed to resume operations.
- D2.2** Tourists shall be transferred to these guest houses or hotels in vehicles adhering to safety guidelines as defined by HPA.
- D2.3** Tourists shall follow procedures on movement restrictions applicable to the island at the time.
- D2.4** Food and beverage shall be made available within the premises of the guest houses or hotels during this period.
- D2.5** Staff shall maintain a physical distance of at least 1 metre with guests at all times.
- D2.6** Staff shall wear masks at all times while serving guests.
- D2.7** Section D2 shall be in effect until the general reopening of guest houses and hotels in inhabited islands.



E. RESORTS

E1. STANDARDS FOR REOPENING

Resorts shall comply with all relevant legislation and the following set of standards when reopening.

- E1.1** Resort must designate areas for isolation of the guest if and when required.
- E1.2** Resorts shall allocate facilities and make arrangements for staff to self-isolate when necessary as instructed by HPA.
- E1.3** Guest service staff shall be trained in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- E1.4** Staff should be trained on social distancing procedures.
- E1.5** Staff should be trained on disinfection procedures.
- E1.6** Staff shall wear face masks in enclosed public spaces and during circumstances where social distancing is not possible.
- E1.7** Emergency procedures shall be put in place to deal with suspected cases of COVID-19 including isolation procedures. All staff shall be trained on these procedures.
- E1.7** Adequate stock of medically certified PPE (Masks, Gloves, Face Shields, Gowns, Caps and Boots or Boot Covers) shall be maintained by the resort.
- E1.8** Resort shall have resident medical officers on site who have undergone HPA certified training on COVID-19 management, isolation procedures and sampling.

- E1.9** Resort clinics shall comply with minimum standards applicable under existing regulations.
- E1.10** Resorts shall appoint a safety manager responsible for the communication and compliance regarding COVID-19 measures and issues.
- E1.11** Resorts may develop their own internal guidelines while adhering to the basic standards stated in this document.
- E1.12** Resorts shall submit a health and safety plan to the Ministry of Tourism for approval prior to reopening. This plan shall detail how the resort intends to provide separate accommodation and other facilities for staff who directly interact, staff who have to travel off site frequently and back of house staff.

E2. STAFFING

- E.2.1** All staff arriving in the resort from overseas before July 15, 2020 shall be quarantined for 14 days.
- E.2.2** All staff arriving in the resort from islands not under monitoring or without reported cases can report to work without any restriction.
- E2.3** Staff arriving from islands under monitoring shall be subjected to a 14 day quarantine period in the resort prior to reporting to work.

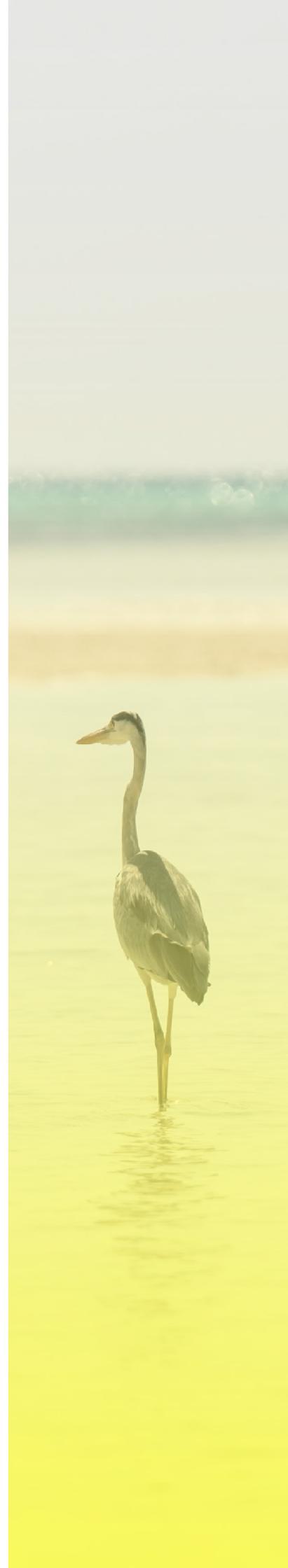
- E2.4** Staff shall be allowed to exit resorts in-line with national guidelines as recommended by HPA (staff travelling exclusively to airports for the purpose of escorting arriving or departing tourists will be exempted from this procedure). Exemptions shall be made in cases of emergencies under authorization and guidance from HPA. Airline crew shall be made exempt from this procedure.
- E2.5** Staff shall comply with social distancing and personal hygiene guidelines as set forth by HPA.
- E2.6** Daily workers, entertainers and artists may work or perform in resorts without additional restrictions from the date of opening of guest houses and hotels on inhabited islands subject to the same requirements for testing as tourists.
- E2.7** Movements between resorts and islands will be permitted without quarantine requirements from the date of opening of guest houses.

E3. CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

- E3.1** Tourists transferred to the resort with a positive PCR result shall be escorted directly to their rooms upon arrival at the resort and isolated in the room as outlined by HPA guidelines.
- E3.2** Minimal staff shall be involved with receiving tourists at the resort.
- E3.3** A safe distance of at least 1 meter shall be maintained between tourists and staff at all times.
- E3.4** Tourists under isolation shall be instructed to stay in their rooms until advised by HPA.

E4. COMMON FACILITIES

- E4.1** Social distancing guidelines shall be followed in common areas of the resorts.
- E4.2** Frequently contacted surfaces shall be disinfected regularly.
- E4.3** Staff must practice good hand hygiene while on duty.
- E4.4** Food and beverage services shall be served at tourist facilities with safety measures as set forth by HPA to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- E4.5** Utilisation of all common areas shall be subject to HPA guidelines.



E5. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- E5.1** Any COVID-19 symptoms from staff or tourists shall be immediately reported to the medical staff on site.
- E5.2** Anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms shall be isolated with immediate effect until further guidance from HPA and Ministry of Tourism is received.
- E5.3** Isolation rooms shall be maintained and serviced as per standards set forth by HPA.
- E5.4** Tourists and staff presenting with symptoms shall be subjected to a PCR test for COVID-19. Tourists will be allowed to exit isolation with restrictions on utilising the common facilities of the resort if the test result is negative until all symptoms clear up. Staff shall remain isolated until all symptoms clear up.
- E5.5** Testing should be carried out as per HPA guidelines.
- E5.6** Any tourist with a positive PCR test result shall remain isolated in the room. Resort shall be given the option of hosting the tourist if requirements for adequate medical facilities and personnel as stated in Section E1 are complied with. Even if the resort opts to host the individual, the condition of the individual shall be reported regularly to HPA and the Ministry of Tourism. HPA will decide on the transfer of the individual for further observation and treatment should the need arise.
- E5.7** If a member staff tests positive for COVID-19, they will be transferred to a government managed facility by HPA and the resort shall be responsible for ensuring that all associated costs are met.

F. CHECKOUT FROM TOURIST FACILITIES

F1. CHECKOUT PROCEDURES

- F1.1** No restrictions will apply on guest checkouts if no symptoms are displayed or no positive PCR result is recorded. However, masks shall be utilised during transfers.
- F1.2** Tourists in isolation shall only be allowed to checkout as per national guidelines by HPA. An exemption will apply to tourists who require transfer to a government managed facility under guidance from the Ministry of Tourism. Under these circumstances the facility shall bear responsibility for ensuring that all associated costs are met.
- F1.3** Luggage handling should be conducted as per the guideline stated in Section C.

F2. ROOM CLEANING

- F2.1** HPA guidelines shall be followed in cleaning and disinfecting rooms utilised for quarantine or isolation purposes.

G. TOURIST VESSELS

G1. PROCEDURES FOR TOURIST VESSELS

- G1.1** Tourists and staff will be allowed to embark and disembark from Tourist Vessels only at predesignated harbours as listed by the Ministry of Tourism.
- G1.2** Tourist vessels shall not be allowed to call into any other harbour besides designated ones until further notice.
- G1.3** The vessel has to be disinfected as per HPA guidelines after departure of guests and before new guests can be accepted onboard.
- G1.4** Crew of tourist vessels going ashore on inhabited islands shall be subject to HPA guidelines on quarantine and COVID-19 screening.
- G1.5** Loading of supplies or bunkering must be conducted at designated jetties with social distancing procedures in place.
- G1.6** Crew shall wear masks when in direct contact with tourists in enclosed spaces.
- G1.7** Vessel operator must facilitate isolation of the guest if the guest presents COVID-19 symptoms.
- G1.8** Tourist vessels shall submit a health and safety plan to the Ministry of Tourism for approval before resuming operations.



G2. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- G2.1** Any flu-like symptoms from staff or tourists shall be immediately reported to the captain.
- G2.2** Anyone displaying flu-like symptoms shall be isolated with immediate effect until further guidance from HPA is received.
- G2.3** The captain shall inform HPA and the Ministry of Tourism with regard to the symptoms and make arrangements for sampling and testing with guidance from HPA.
- G2.4** Tourists and staff presenting with symptoms shall be tested for COVID-19. Tourists and staff shall be released from isolation if the test is negative with the provision that they wear masks at all times when in contact with other people until all symptoms clear up.
- G2.5** Isolation rooms shall be maintained and serviced as per standards set forth by HPA.
- G2.6** Any individual (tourist or staff) with a positive PCR test result shall be transferred to a government managed facility for monitoring and treatment.

G3. CRUISE SHIPS AND FOREIGN FLAGGED YACHTS

- G3.1** Cruise ships and yachts arriving in Maldives shall be exempted from these general guidelines and adhere to International Maritime Organisation (IMO) regulations and guidelines.



- 
- G3.2** Cruise ships and yachts will not be allowed to embark or disembark passengers on or off inhabited islands until August 1, 2020. However, embarkation and disembarkation of passengers and crew at international airports (in possession of valid air tickets if disembarking) will be permitted. Additionally, vessels which do not fall under IMO regulations shall be exempt from this requirement and disembark onto islands with the approval from Port Health.
- G3.3** The entire crew and passenger complement shall declare symptoms to the local health authority or responsible person at their point of disembarkation. If any passenger or crew is symptomatic prior authorization from HPA is required for disembarkation.
- G3.4** Screening and declaration of symptoms of crew and passengers shall be conducted at the first port of call or clearance.
- G3.4** It is the responsibility of the vessel's agent to ensure that all costs associated with isolating or treating a passenger or crew member at a government managed facility are met. In the instance where an agent has not been appointed, the operator of the vessel shall bear all associated financial responsibilities.

H. GUEST HOUSES

H1. PROCEDURES FOR GUEST HOUSES

- H1.1** The indicative date for opening tourist guest houses is August 1, 2020; however, this is subject to change based on the national COVID-19 status.
- H1.2** The resident doctor on an island must have undergone HPA certified training on COVID-19 management, isolation procedures and sampling before the guest houses in the jurisdiction may reopen.
- H1.3** Guest house must provide for isolation of the guest in the guest's resident room as per standards set forth by HPA.
- H1.4** Contact tracing records must be maintained by any vessels carrying tourists during their stay.
- H1.5** Contact tracing records must be maintained by places of business (such as restaurants, cafes, shops) serving tourists.
- H1.6** Social distancing guidelines must be followed by places of business serving tourists.
- H1.7** Tourists travelling to local islands must maintain social distancing.
- H1.8** Guest houses shall submit a health and safety plan to the Ministry of Tourism for approval prior to restarting operations.

H2. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- H2.1** Any flu-like symptoms from staff or tourists shall be immediately reported to the local health authorities and HPA.



I. GENERAL

11. EASING OF RESTRICTIONS

- I1.1 The entry procedures and restrictions applied to resorts and vessels in lodging tourists as set forth by this guideline will be eased on September 1, 2020 unless extended by the Government.
- I1.2 Operators will be notified of any changes after the review of guideline.
- I1.3 This guideline shall be reviewed every 14 days.

12. RECREATION ACTIVITIES

- I2.1 Additional safety measures for diving and water sports shall be governed by detailed regulations approved by HPA.
- I2.2 Tourists shall be restricted from partaking in activities such as diving or excursions if they are symptomatic even if they have tested negative for COVID-19. They will only be allowed to partake in diving after symptoms have cleared fully.

13. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE

- I3.1 If a tourist needs to be quarantined, isolated or treated at a Government managed facility the tourist facility where the tourist booked his or her stay upon entry into the Maldives shall ensure that all associated financial responsibilities are met.

14. COMPLIANCE WITH THIS GUIDELINE

14.1 All tourist facilities including those already in operation must comply with the standards set forth in this guideline before accepting any new arrivals.

15. HOTELS

15.1 Hotels located on uninhabited islands shall follow the same procedure as resorts, and hotels located on inhabited islands shall follow the same procedure as guest houses.



J. TIMELINE

J1. TENTATIVE OPENING DATES

- J1.1** Resorts, Marinas, Tourist Vessels and Tourist Hotels on Uninhabited Islands; July 15, 2020.
- J1.2** Tourist Guest houses and Tourist Hotels on Inhabited Islands; August 1, 2020.

APPENDIX: USEFUL LINKS & INFORMATION SOURCES

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

COVID-19 updates: <https://www.tourism.gov.mv/latest-update-on-novel-coronavirus/>

Official website: <https://www.tourism.gov.mv>

VISIT MALDIVES

COVID-19 updates: <https://visitmaldives.com/en/covid19-updates>

Official website: <https://visitmaldives.com/en>

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COVID-19 updates: <https://foreign.gov.mv/index.php/en/covid-19>

Official website: <https://foreign.gov.mv/index.php/en/>

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

COVID-19 updates: <https://covid19.health.gov.mv>

Official website: <http://health.gov.mv>

MALDIVES CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (CAA)

<http://caa.gov.mv>





MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Government of Maldives