



## For Immediate Release

### **BAHAMAS MINISTRY OF TOURISM & AVIATION, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNTRY'S TOURISM READINESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE, ANNOUNCES PLAN FOR REOPENING TOURISM SECTOR**

*Bahamas Preparing to Resume International Tourism on July 1 with New Health & Safety Protocols in Place*

NASSAU, Bahamas, June 2, 2020 – The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation, along with the Tourism Readiness and Recovery Committee, a group comprised of public and private sector partners, announced today a collaborative plan for re-opening the country's borders and tourism sector, as well as the resumption of international commercial travel starting July 1. A press conference provided details of the "Tourism Readiness and Recovery Plan" to be used as an approved, comprehensive guide of health and safety protocol to be followed consistently across the country.

From procedures pertaining to entering and departing The Bahamas via airports and seaports, to a Clean & Pristine certification program implemented across hotels, restaurants and other consumer-facing tourism entities and touchpoints, the plan outlines extensive health and safety protocols that will be enforced throughout The Bahamas to mitigate risks for all visitors and residents alike.

"Our top priority has and will always be our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors" said Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation Director General Joy Jibrilu. "We must remember that we are living in a new normal in the wake of COVID-19 and a lot is going to change across the tourism sector. We are putting an even greater emphasis on making sure The Bahamas is safe and clean for everyone, and look forward to once again providing travelers with the tropical experience our islands are known for."

#### **A Phased Approach**

The Bahamas' tourism dependent economy will gradually come back online, following a strategic, phased approach that ensures critical health and safety protocols are being adhered to, and that the Health sector remains well equipped and ready to respond as necessary.

- Phase 1, beginning on June 15, will allow for boaters, yachters and private aviation to return to the destination.
  - These smaller special interest groups will allow a more controlled segment to test the country's new measures.

Also, during this phase, commercial airlines will be allowed to bring in Bahamian citizens, legal residents, home-owners qualifying for economic permanent residency, or the immediate family members or significant others of any of these groups.

- All returning persons will continue to have to register at a Bahamas embassy or consulate and obtain a COVID-19 test with a negative result.
- It is anticipated that during this period of time there will be a reduced flight schedule as airlines begin adding The Bahamas to their schedules once again.

Additionally, during Phase 1 hotels will re-open for staff to return to work and put in place all the measures required to ensure they are ready to welcome guests at the onset of Phase 2.

- Phase 2, beginning July 1, allows for the resumption of international travel, including:
  - Commercial airlines, both international and domestic
  - Hotels and vacation rentals, inclusive of Airbnb and HomeAway
  - Transportation ranging from taxis to jitneys and buses

The timing of the other phases and sectors will be announced shortly.

### **What Travelers Should Expect**

Travelers should expect to follow The Bahamas' "Healthy Traveler Campaign" that encourages both visitors and residents to continue practicing social distancing measures, regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizers, and pack appropriate PPE such as face masks, just as they would their swimsuits and sunscreen.

At airports and seaports, temperature screenings for all incoming visitors will be conducted by healthcare personnel. Travelers will be required to wear a face mask in any situation where it is necessary to enforce physical distancing guidelines, such as when entering and transiting air and sea terminals, while navigating security and customs screenings, and at baggage claim. When departing, flights will be scheduled to every other gate to provide as much distance between flights as possible, and greater time will be provided for boarding to ensure that physical distancing can be maintained.

In addition, several new procedures will be present throughout the on-island experience, including:

- Accommodations:
  - Hotels, resorts and vacation rentals will enforce extensive health and safety protocols like enhanced cleaning for guest rooms, public spaces, high touch point areas on frequent, regulated schedule
  - Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes will be readily available across properties
  - Employee health monitoring and temperature check points will be enforced
  - A limited number of guests will be permitted in elevators at one time
  - Unnecessary literature in guest rooms will be eliminated
- Taxis and Independent Cars:
  - Passengers and drivers should wear face masks at all times throughout their journey.
  - Vehicles must reduce the maximum number of people by 50% (sedans can carry up to two persons and SUVs up to four persons) and passengers should not ride in the front seat.
- Excursions, tours, local attractions and shopping:
  - Businesses must establish a maximum number of guests and limit the duration of each guest visit to allow for social distancing.
  - When possible, guests will be encouraged to use personal gear (such as snorkeling gear) and businesses will have items available for purchase.
  - Guests will not be allowed to touch products unless with the intent to purchase and cashless sales will be encouraged.
  - Beach chairs must be arranged to allow six feet of social distancing between family units.
  - A regular cleaning timetable and checklist must be established, reviewed, and maintained.

- Vessel and Ferry Operations
  - Staff must wear a water-repellent or marine grade face mask during all passenger interactions and where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
  - A maximum number of passengers permitted on-board will be reduced by 50% and passenger seating may be assigned to ensure proper distancing.
  - Vessel sanitizing must take place before any passenger embarks the vessel and between all passenger exchanges. All high touch surfaces must be constantly and consistently cleaned during passage and at the end of each day.
- Restaurants, Food & Beverage Services
  - Buffets will be discontinued until further notice. All meals must be single or prepackaged.
  - Businesses must utilize disposable menus or offer on monitors or static display boards.
  - Staff must wear PPE (disposable mask and gloves).

Reopening of borders will continue to be monitored and guided by The Bahamas government and health officials. Dates are subject to change based on COVID-19 trends, if there is a deterioration in improvement or if government and health organizations deem these phases unsafe for residents or visitors.

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism & Aviation believes it is an absolute baseline requirement for consumers to have a comfort level that The Bahamas is a safe and healthy destination to visit, and the ultimate goal is for that to remain the case. For more information, or to view the Tourism Readiness and Recovery Plan, please visit: [www.Bahamas.com/TRRCPlan](http://www.Bahamas.com/TRRCPlan).

All COVID-19 inquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Health. For questions, or concerns, please call the COVID-19 hotline: 242-376-9350 (8 a.m. – 8 p.m. EDT) / 242-376-9387 (8 p.m. – 8 a.m. EDT).

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