



TOUR OPERATORS & ACCOMMODATIONS

Guidelines for

POST COVID HANDLING OF GUESTS

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Introduction

Covid-19 has had widespread impact on every facet of society the world over. The travel and tourism industry is no exception, indeed, it may be argued that this industry is the hardest hit of all and global travel is largely at a standstill. However, the world will emerge from this too, and the purpose of these guidelines is to serve as broad recommendations for the safe handling of guests in a post Covid-19 world.

The intended audience for these guidelines are

1. Accommodation providers including hotels, resort and homestays
2. Tour operators

This document is NOT intended to serve as the definitive mandate for these operations, nor is it intended to cover every aspect of accommodation and tour operator businesses. We have focussed on the most common guest touch points, collating publicly information from a variety of sources (*see list of references at the end of this document*).

One should also not expect that following these guidelines guarantees no infection. Present knowledge about this virus is sketchy and the global pool of Covid-19 research grows by the day. Therefore it is important that all readers continue to monitor publicly available information for improved guidelines and always follow all government mandates.

Receiving Guests

Protocol for representative or driver receiving guests at the airport or railway station

Greet the guest with a Namaste!

- Person going to receive should wear mask (cotton/reusable/washable) and disposable gloves (Nitrile gloves can be reused after sanitizing)
- Maintain minimum 6 feet distance from the guest (as or as directed by govt. mandate)
- Check temperature of all guests. Guests running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be immediately directed to get in touch with local health authorities. **DO NOT LET THE GUEST BOARD THE VEHICLE.** *(A detailed communication about what will happen in case the Guest has fever should be sent in advance by the Tour Operator/ Hotel to the Guest, clearly mentioning that if the guest has temperature, we will have to inform the health authorities and cannot allow the guest to board the vehicle. Please see suggested template in the Appendix)*

If the guest has no temperature, proceed with the next steps:

- Give all guests a mask (if they are not carrying one) and a bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The cost may be billed to the guest, if necessary.
- Ask them to use the sanitizer immediately and also before touching anything.
- For guests staying for a shorter time like day trips, etc., a sanitizer dispenser can be provided in the vehicle and the driver can dispense the sanitizer onto the guests' hands.
- Inform the Guest that his bags will be disinfected.
- Spray and Wipe down luggage and luggage handles with the disinfectant surface cleaner before handling. The disinfectant should be sprayed and left on the surface for minimum one minute before wiping off with a tissue or cloth. *(see recommendations for disinfectants)*
- Avoid giving water bottles, towels for refreshing, newspaper, etc.
- A communication can be sent to the Guest at the Time of reservation to bring their own refillable water bottle or the Tour Operator/ Hotel can gift an aluminium/stainless steel bottle to guest. This can have the Tour Operators/Hotels branding
- *Considering all above points are okay, continue to hotel/sightseeing.*

Guest Transport

- The car/coach should be disinfected after every use. High touch areas (door handles, seats, seat backs, steering wheel, power window buttons, door locks, windows, screens, small portable TV screens etc.) should be sprayed with disinfectant surface cleaner. The disinfectant should be sprayed and left on the surface for minimum one minute before wiping off with a tissue or cloth. (*see recommendations for disinfectants*)
- Ensure the driver is wearing protective gear such as mask (cotton/reusable/washable), reusable gloves (Nitrile gloves can be reused after sanitizing), etc.
- Car should have sanitizer and mask for guest (if they are not carrying one). As before, it may be billed to the guest, if necessary.
- Driver should be instructed to keep conversation to a minimum
- Avoid air-conditioning since the virus can remain in recirculated air. Keep windows open.
- Guests should leave adjacent seat empty in coach or taxi unless it is a family of people travelling together.
- Guest instructions (this may include tour itinerary; safety precautions being taken by the Tour Operator/ Hotel for hygiene and disinfection) to be sent to the guests via Email/WhatsApp in advance or given via Email/WhatsApp at pick up point by the Representative/Driver.
- Alternatively, a vinyl sticker with the hygiene precautions/safety standards can be placed at the back of the front seat.
- The sticker/WhatsApp booklet/Email must cover all the steps being taken by the Tour Operator/Hotel; for safety and sanitization along with the operational norms for restaurants, room service, housekeeping & laundry procedures for Hotels.
- No brochures/Handouts/collaterals to be given to guests as these are touch points. Everything should be sent digitally.

Reception and Checkin

Entrance

- Temperature checks at entrance should be mandatory for all Guests, unless they have been received by the establishment and already checked as per the previous section. As far as possible, the check should be conducted outdoors before entering the accommodation building itself i.e. reception in the case of a hotel/resort, or the house in case of a homestay.
- Depending on the recommendations of the government health departments and public information about their efficacy, establishments may explore installation of sanitizing tunnels, or other technologies that may be introduced going forward.

Walk in guest

- Guests running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be advised to go to the closest hospital/medical facility. A signage displaying the hotel policy for Guests with fever should be displayed outside the establishment, clearly mentioning they are not allowed to enter the establishment. DO NOT LET THE GUEST ENTER THE HOTEL.
- If the Guest has no fever, proceed with the next steps.
- Have a sanitizer Dispenser placed outside which can be used by Guests to sanitise their hands.
- Provide the Guest with a mask, if they are not wearing one, if required (can be nominally priced or included in the cost). This will be applicable till govt. mandates are in place.
- Spray and Wipe down door handles, glass etc., all touch points after each touch with Surface disinfectant cleaner, if doorman not available the disinfectant should be sprayed and left on the surface as per manufacturer's instructions before wiping off (*see recommendations for disinfectants*)
- Disinfect and clean Guest luggage after informing the Guests. Spray first then Wipe down with surface disinfectant cleaner.

Guests with prior booking

- If the Guest is arriving from overseas or another city ensure that detailed information about their travel and medical history since January 2020 is received at time of making the reservation
- Recommend they purchase Health and Cancellation/Travel Insurance.
- All check-in formalities should be completed online to reduce contact time at the front desk.

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- Give safety, hygiene and other instructions to the Guests as per the new SOP

Reception

- For all pre-booked Guests all check-in formalities should be completed online to reduce contact and time at the front desk.
- Guest details to be sent in advance for guest registration along with government approved identity card, any other information required by the hotel via Email/WhatsApp.
- Payment for the room etc. can be made in advance to eliminate exchange of bank notes (touch points) or encourage e-payments to be made. Touch screen-based terminals/credit Cards should be disinfected after each use.
- Give safety, hygiene and other instructions to the Guests as per the new SOP via WhatsApp/email in advance or on spot.
- Ensure markings on the floor at reception to maintain Social Distancing of minimum 6 feet (or as directed by govt. mandate).
- Ensure Associates are wearing masks & gloves. They should be advised not to touch their faces and to practice social distancing.
- Reception needs to be cleaned frequently. Preferable to disinfect with Surface Disinfectant cleaner between guests.
- High touch areas in public spaces include tables, pens, room keys and key cards should be cleaned with disinfectant.
- Keep sanitizers for Guests to use (automatic dispensers are preferred)
- Keep paper, envelopes and all equipment sanitized. Sanitise the pen after the guest register is signed. E-BILLS to be sent instead of paper bills.
- Obtain a disclaimer from guest in the event a Covid-19 related issue impacts a guest arising from a stay at your hotel.
- Guests can sanitise their phones /credit card with the surface disinfectant/sanitizer dispenser kept in the reception. Kindly use surface disinfectant/sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards
- No sweets/fruits to be provided on the reception desk
- Suggest that guests take a shower as soon as they get to their room before touching anything in the room like furnishings
- Inform Guests that newspapers are not being delivered due to safety reasons, but e-papers will be made available through WhatsApp etc.

Guest Rooms

- Signages with information on sanitization norms should be placed (preferable vinyl printing pasted on the back door/wall with easy visibility)
- Guests instructions given at the reception should include instructions on how the rooms are sanitized at regular intervals
- Remove any furnishings such as extra display cushions and bed runners which cannot be washed/sanitized after each Checkout
- Room linen to be changed once in two days or ONLY on request; no turn down services to facilitate minimal contact.

Check-out

- Advise Guests to inform reception about their check-out plans in advance so that bills can be made ready and wait times minimized
- During checkout have social distancing floor markers demarcated at the reception.
- Wherever possible use e-check out by emailing the bill & accepting online payments. Promote cashless transactions. In case physical handling of credit cards is required, wear gloves and wipe the card with an alcohol-based sanitizer before and after use. Make sure that payment terminals are also sanitized before and after use, especially key pads.

Common Areas and Facilities

- Current studies indicate a causal link between the spread of the Covid-19 virus and air-conditioning. We therefore recommend the guidelines issued by ISHRAE (approved by the DG, CPWD), which may be downloaded from the ISHRAE website: <https://ishrae.in/>
- Keep sanitizers at regular intervals on the floor. (This can be taken as a standard of placing one between 20 rooms approx. at a distance of 120 ft. assuming guests have their own hand sanitizers)
- Sanitise public telephones and vending machines
- Ensure social distancing in all common areas
- Instruct guests to give bulk of the laundry together for wash in a laundry bag. The Housekeeping staff should wear gloves. It is recommended to use tongs to pick up the Laundry bag

Public Toilets

- Do not use air-hand dryers. They spray water droplets all over the place and may lead to further contamination of the area and other users
- Ensure that the WC lid is closed before flushing. An open WC results in micro droplets, which may be potentially contaminated with infected faecal matter, being dispersed all over the washroom.

Elevators

- Ensure that safety instructions, including the number of Guests allowed at one time, is placed outside and inside the elevator and is easily visible; apologize for the delay and inconvenience caused to the Guests due to the new safety norms (maximum number of people allowed in the lift to be calculated by the hotel authorities keeping in mind social distancing norms advised by the government).
- Ensure elevator floor buttons and handrails are regularly sanitized by the Housekeeping Associates with surface disinfectant.
- Regularly sanitize the floor and walls of the elevators with surface disinfectant
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers outside the elevators.
- Use elbows/folded finger to press elevator buttons (sanitize your hands after disembarking)
- Consider a lift attendant for larger, busy lifts

Pool, Gym & Spa

- It is recommended to keep these closed until the government gives the all-clear
- Suggest alternate options / drop to open parks or walks which may be safer, keeping in mind any governmental regulations
- Include Yoga sessions or health channels in the morning for Guests to follow in the privacy of their rooms

Business Centres

- Keep enough space between work desks
- Limit the number of Guests in the area based on maximum allowed
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the Guest has moved out with surface disinfectant.

Meetings

- In case Guests require a meeting area, keep enough space between tables & chairs as per government mandate.
- Limit the number of Guests in the area based on maximum allowed
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the Guest has moved out with surface disinfectant

Laundry

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- Linen should not be shaken as this might contaminate the surrounding area
 - If linen and towels require laundering, they should be collected in a laundry bag
 - Linen should be emptied directly from the laundry bag into the washing machine without handling and laundered on a normal hot cycle then air or tumble dried
 - Do not use compressed air and/or water under pressure for cleaning, or any other methods that can cause splashing. Vacuum cleaners should be used only after proper disinfection of other surfaces has taken place.
 - Linens may become contaminated with the virus, so it is important to add disinfectant when washing laundry or at least maintaining a 65-degree heat when washing linen.
 - Linen can also be washed as per WHO Guidelines
 - Laundry, room service instructions should be available in the room for the new SOPs being implemented individually by each hotel, depending on their mode of operation.

Room Cleaning and Housekeeping

- Disposable gloves should always be worn while cleaning the room, toilets and other common areas, and when handling cleaning and disinfecting solutions. Dispose of gloves if they become damaged or soiled or when cleaning is completed, as described in Step 5 below; never wash or reuse the gloves.
- Wearing a simple surgical face mask is recommended if close contact (within 1.5 metres) with the contact person is unavoidable when the cleaning is conducted.
- Eye protection, such as goggles, and a surgical mask may be required if splashing cannot be avoided.
- Avoid touching the face with gloved or unwashed hands.
- Train Housekeeping staff to use the disinfectants safely and correctly.
- Special cleaning procedures for upholstery, carpets and storage areas are not necessary unless obviously soiled.

Routine Cleaning

- The use of disposable equipment, especially disposable cloths, is strongly recommended, with a fresh cloth used for each room. If other cloths are used, they should be laundered in hot water wash before re-use.
- Clean surfaces as usual with a neutral detergent and water.
- In addition, the following surfaces in the room which are commonly touched should be disinfected
 - door handles and light switches
 - tables and counters
 - armrests of chairs (if not fabric)
 - TV buttons and remote controls, telephones, air conditioner (A/C) buttons and remote controls.
 - Kettle handles, fridge door handles, bathroom including door handle.
 - door lock, toilet seat and buttons, taps, wash-basins, counters, shower and/or bath

Body fluids

- Cleaning staff should wear an impervious disposable gown or apron, gloves and eye protection when there are body fluids to clean up, including any steam cleaning.

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- Any body fluids should first be removed from visibly contaminated surfaces by using an absorbent material, which should then be disposed of as described in a sturdy, leak-proof plastic bag, as described below in Step 5.
 - Hard, non-porous surfaces must then be cleaned and disinfected as described in Step 2. Large areas contaminated with body fluids (e.g. covering most of a table) should be cleaned up with an absorbent material, then cleaned with detergent and water and then disinfected.
 - Since disinfectants are not registered for use on some porous surfaces, contaminated material such as carpets and upholstery should be carefully steam cleaned or laundered in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Restaurants

- Arrival instructions should explain to Guests that they should come down to the restaurants only when a table is available to avoid crowding. Recommend pre-booking of table.
- Have a notice board outside the restaurant which is updated with number of free tables
- Reduce number of tables to maintain Social Distancing norms
- Stop community dining and encourage in-room dining
- Space out the tables at least 6 ft. apart to maintain Social Distancing norms
- Encourage Guests from different groups to sit separately unless travelling together.
- Avoid buffets for crowding initially and include either TDH or 'a la carte'
- It is preferable to procure locally and serve freshly prepared items
- Staff must be trained for minimal contact/communication during service (This document should be communicated to all the staff from bottom to top and the concept of social distancing has to be made clear to them).
- Ensure Associates are wearing masks & gloves are used during food delivery and clearance.

Food Trays, Dishes and Cutlery

- Gloves should be worn when handling used dishes and utensils. Wash reusable dishes and cutlery in a dishwasher with detergent and hot water as usual
- Gloves should be sanitized after each clearance or disposed off
- Use disposable napkins which are pre-packed or individually packed serviette.
- Keep sanitizers for Guests to use at each table and/or at the Restaurant entrance.
- Keep sanitizers which Guests can use with sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards

Taking guests on trips

- Brief guests on the places to be visited, expected crowds. Offer advice as below but **emphasize that guests must take personal responsibility for their own safety** – the tour escort cannot enforce guest behaviour
- Avoid markets, temples, churches and similar crowded places till government mandates are in place.
- All instructions for Guest transport to be followed (as mentioned in an earlier section. See Guest Transport)
- Guest should carry personal hand sanitizers and masks
- Guests must maintain social distancing norms at sightseeing places. Don't crowd. Avoid touching handrails, display cases etc.
- It is recommended that guests take a shower as soon as they return to their room

Adventure Activities

- Most Outdoor activities promote social distancing because of their very nature, so they should be encouraged. Guest should be encouraged to go for outdoor activities such as Hiking, Climbing, High Ropes, Mountain biking, Cycling, Rope activities, Nature Walks, Wildlife Safaris
- Take guests in small groups. Avoid large groups
- Visitor numbers should be tightly controlled in activities where there is physical proximity such as a wildlife safari in a vehicle or rafting, so as to maintain adequate distancing between guests.
- Ensure that any PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), such as helmets or harnesses are sanitized after each use. They can be wiped down with surface disinfectant.
- Ensure queue markers with sufficient distancing at public attractions, such as zip lines

Wildlife Safari

For the Park

- Reduce touch points
- Promote use of E-Tickets/ QR Code system for entering the park
- Reduce wait time at the entry gate of the park
- Reduce crowding at the entry gate by allowing time slots for vehicles to enter
- Allow only the same group/family in one vehicle

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- Stop Canter and sharing safari vehicles
 - Inform all gypsy owners to sanitise vehicle after each safari

For the Guide

- Wear a mask
- Do Namaste (no shaking hands or body contact with others)
- To be seated in the front seat to not have body contact with guests.
- To be briefed on social distancing and sanitisation

For the private vehicle provider (such as Gypsy)

- Sanitise vehicle seats and handlebars before and after each safari.
- Do Namaste (no shaking hands or body contact with others)
- Inform guests that they should use the toilets at the resort before leaving for the park.
- Inform guests that they will not be allowed to get down inside the park.
- Inform guests that they have to eat their breakfast in the vehicle and will not be allowed to alight.

Appendix A: Product Recommendations

Coronaviruses are killed by a number of chemical disinfectants readily available from consumer and commercial sources, and likely to be used already by hotels. Examples of appropriate disinfectant solutions are listed in the table below.

Disinfectants	Product name	Recommended use	Precautions
Sodium hypochlorite (bleach) 1000 parts per million of available chlorine, usually achieved by a 1 in 50 dilution of 5% liquid bleach		Disinfection of material potentially contaminated with blood and body fluids (Recommended contact time with surfaces is 10 minutes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be used in well-ventilated areas • Protective clothing required while handling and using undiluted bleach • Do not mix with strong acids to avoid release of chlorine gas • Corrosive to metals
Granular chlorine e.g. Det-Sol 5000 or Diversol, to be diluted as per manufacturer's instructions		May be used in place of liquid bleach if this is unavailable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be used in well-ventilated areas • Protective clothing required while handling and using undiluted bleach • Do not mix with strong acids to avoid release of chlorine gas • Corrosive to metals
Alcohol e.g. Isopropyl 70%, ethyl alcohol 70-80%		Smooth metal surfaces, tabletops and other surfaces on which bleach cannot be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flammable, toxic, to be used in well-ventilated area, avoid inhalation • Keep away from heat

			sources, electrical equipment, flames, hot surfaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow to dry completely
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Product	Brand	Where Available
Gloves	Disposable Nitrile Gloves (Reusable after sanitising)	Medical Store; Amazon
Masks	3 Ply Mask	Medical Store; Amazon
Surface Disinfectant Cleaner for Flooring	Waxpol Surface Disinfectant Cleaner	Amazon or contact company
Surface Disinfectant Cleaner for Metal	Waxpol Surface Disinfectant Cleaner	Amazon or contact company
Surface Disinfectant Cleaner for Bags	Waxpol Surface Disinfectant Cleaner	Amazon or contact company
Hand Sanitizer Alcohol Based		

Appendix B: MASKS

Respiratory viruses that includes Corona viruses target mainly the upper and lower respiratory tracts. Hence protecting the airway from the particulate matter generated by droplets / aerosols prevents human infection. Contamination of mucous membranes of the mouth and nose by infective droplets or through a contaminated hand also allows the virus to enter the host. Hence the droplet precautions/ airborne precautions using masks are crucial while dealing with a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19/performing aerosol generating procedures.

Masks are of different types. The type of mask to be used is related to particular risk profile of the category of personnel and his/her work. There are two types of masks which are recommended for various categories of personnel working in hotels or community settings, depending upon the work environment:

TRIPLE LAYER MEDICAL MASK

A triple layer medical mask is a disposable mask, fluid-resistant, provide protection to the wearer from droplets of infectious material emitted during coughing/sneezing/talking. 4.

N-95 RESPIRATOR MASK

An N-95 respirator mask is a respiratory protective device with high filtration efficiency to airborne particles. To provide the requisite air seal to the wearer, such masks are designed to achieve a very close facial fit.

Such mask should have high fluid resistance, good breathability (preferably with an expiratory valve), clearly identifiable internal and external faces, duckbill/cup-shaped structured design that does not collapse against the mouth

If correctly worn, the filtration capacity of these masks exceeds those of triple layer medical masks. Since these provide a much tighter air seal than triple layer medical masks, they are designed to protect the wearer from inhaling airborne particles.

Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

USAGE GUIDELINES OF MASKS:

- Unfold the pleats of the mask; make sure that they are facing down
- Place the mask over your nose, mouth and chin. Ensure there are no gaps on either side of the mask. Adjust to fit using nose clip if provided.

- Avoid touching the mask while using it.
- Do not leave the mask hanging from the neck.
- Change the mask every six hours or as soon as they become wet.
- Never reuse disposable mask and disposed the used ones into closed bins after disinfecting them.
- Do not touch the potentially contaminated outer surface of the mask while removing it.
- After removing the mask, clean your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-ha

Appendix C: Templates

These are suggested formats for communications with guests

Template 1: Pre-arrival Information to be sent to guest

Dear Patron,

Thank you for booking your next holiday with us. We are looking forward to your visit, and wish to update you on our concern for your safety, while you are with us.

We are taking precautions for hygiene and cleanliness at all touch points of your visit, and beyond. To help us ensure your stay is seamless and enjoyable, we request you to please prepare yourself with the following for the new-normal way of holidaying:

1. Please carry your personal masks and a bottle of alcohol based hand sanitizer. We can also provide you these, if you wish, at additional cost.
2. Please carry your refillable water bottles
3. Please share your travel history of you have visited any Covid-19 hotspots
4. Please do not travel if you have a cough and/or fever. If you have one on arrival, we will have to send you to the closest medical facility as per government directives
5. Please adhere to the measures in place and follow guidelines to keep your stay sanitized
6. Practise social distancing norms and Covid-19 precautions during your stay with us
7. Your activities are being planned carefully, please follow instructions to help us make these enjoyable
8. We request you to take personal responsibility for yourself, your family, friends to ensure you are armed with the latest updates for Covid 19, and help us ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for you.

Template 2: Pre-Dining Information for guest

Dear Patron,

Please note that the following safeguards have been put in place for your safety and that of our employees. We request your patience and kind cooperation, and regret any inconvenience that may be caused. Please do feel free to let us know of any suggestions you may have for improving the process – we are continually trying to improve our procedures for your safety and comfort.

- Please do not enter the restaurant unless directed to do so by a member of the restaurant staff
- We will take your temperature checks before you enter the dining facility and may deny entry to the restaurant if we feel there is cause for concern
- Tables have been re-arranged so as to maintain 6 feet distance from each other
- Maximum of four people are allowed per table.
- All chefs are required to wash and sanitize their hands frequently (at least every hour).
- Chefs are required to wear surgical masks with goggles at all times and wear gloves when handling food items.
- All buffet or semi-buffet food are served in smaller portions and are replaced or replenished approx. by every 30 minutes to avoid contamination.
- All tableware including salt & pepper shakers, toothpick holders, sugar container, tent card holders, menus and bill folders are cleaned and sanitized on a daily basis.
- All crockery and utensils used at the buffet counters, including tongs, spoons and under liner are changed and sanitized every 30 minutes.
- Disinfecting wet wipes are given out to replace normal wet wipes at all restaurants and function areas.
- Dining tables and chairs are sanitized with designated disinfectant before serving new guests, so guests can find a pleasant and safe dining experience at all restaurants.
- Request you to reserve a table before coming down for your meal

Reference

The information in this document has been collated from various publicly available sources. A partial listing is provided below

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