

# ALCOHOL BAN ON PLANES IS THE 'NEW NORMAL'



To remove some of the items on board and ensure fewer interactions between passengers and crew members, many airlines have suspended the alcohol service.

As travel restrictions are relaxed, borders are opened and airlines resume flights, travelers begin to see the unexpected effects of the 'new normal'. **In the case of air travel, the victim is right in front of us: foodservice onboard and, particularly, alcoholic beverages.**

While beer and wine consumption spiked during the lockdown, airlines have opted for an alcohol prohibition as a security measure to reduce the number of items on board, and to avoid interactions between passengers and crew members. Many airlines even track travelers' bathroom visits.

The measure is becoming popular worldwide: from the US with Delta Air Lines and American Airlines to Australia with Qantas and Virgin, including Europe with KLM or Easyjet, Iberia has completely removed its food and beverage service for flights of less than four hours.

## Safety Is Crucial

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the airlines to rethink the process of taking a simple flight. The IAG group airline, which has adhered to the Aviation Industry Charter for COVID-19, promoted by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), has included measures that range from information to cleaning and disinfection, protective equipment and changes in procedures.

In addition to the mandatory face-covering policy, rearrangement of check-in or boarding lines, and HEPA filters "that eliminate 99.99% of viruses and bacteria from re-circulated air", crucial changes have also been made in onboard services, which have been simplified and reduced. No more magazines and catalogues, as well as buying on board (say goodbye to perfumes and sweets/snacks carts).

Air Europa, for example, which is set to resume domestic flights on June 22 and, a month later, international flights, is committed to reducing any unnecessary points of contact on board, so the airline is removing newspapers and magazines, and replacing food services with picnic-style meal bags and a bottle of water per passenger.

Buying onboard has been removed entirely in economy class for domestic and European flights, but remains on intercontinental flights, although with a very limited offer. In both cases, the service is only available in business class, although "reducing points of contact as much as possible". Additionally, "Air Europa is working to provide passengers with the option of purchasing products they want online and in advance," says the airline.

## Airlines in Europe

All European airlines resume activities with restricted on-board services. In the case of EasyJet,

which already flies between the United Kingdom and France, is only serving water on board, which must be requested from the crew. Passengers can bring their own food and non-alcoholic beverages as the company gradually reintroduces food services in the coming months.

KLM has also suspended the sale of hot drinks and alcoholic beverages, although it does sell water and soft drinks. Food services are only available on flights of more than nine hours.

For its part, British Airways has suspended alcoholic service for all short-haul flights, only offering water and soft drinks, but not meals.

Virgin Atlantic has also temporarily removed alcohol beverages and, like Air Europa, provides passengers with a basic kit including a mask, wipes, and a hand sanitizer.

As for Ryanair, which has also resumed a number of flights, the airline has removed hot drinks from its menu, but not alcohol or pre-packaged foods that must be reserved before flying.

### **The United States and Asia**

In the US, Delta Air Lines isn't serving alcohol on domestic flights, but it does offer beer, wine, and liquor in long-haul ones. American Airlines is also following the same procedure by limiting alcoholic beverages to long-haul and first-class flights.

### **In Asia, Cathay Pacific continues to offer in-flight drinks, but lounges remain closed.**

For its part, Virgin Australia serves complimentary water and soft drinks, but no additional food or beverages. Qantas also offers a simplified food and beverage service, although it hopes to begin easing its restrictions soon.

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