Virgin Atlantic to launch IATA Travel Pass trials on Heathrow-Barbados services

- Leading International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass smartphone app to be trialled on Virgin Atlantic UK-Barbados services from 16 April
- Secure digital health technology supports a smooth and streamlined experience, navigating global travel requirements from the palm of customers' hands
- Rapid, affordable testing and effective digital proof of Covid-19 credentials, including vaccinations, must be part of HMG's Global Travel Taskforce's risk-based approach to reopen skies.

Virgin Atlantic has taken a major step forward towards the introduction of digital health passes by partnering with IATA Travel Pass to launch a new trial.

From 16 April the airline will commence a one-month trial of the IATA Travel Pass on its popular London Heathrow-Barbados services, in close collaboration with the Government of Barbados, which will accept the Pass at its border. Customers travelling for permitted reasons on flights VS131 from London Heathrow to Barbados will be invited to participate in the trial by downloading the IATA Travel Pass on their smartphone. Using the app they can create a digital ID comprising their profile photo and passport information and upload their Covid-19 credentials, selecting relevant flight information.

The IATA Travel Pass is at the forefront of digital health pass solutions being developed, allowing customers to verify that they meet the health criteria needed to travel between certain countries, with evidence of a negative Covid-19 test. Future versions of the app will also incorporate vaccine records. The free app is currently being considered by governments around the world to support the restart of international travel at scale and Virgin Atlantic will seek approval from the UK Government to expand the trial, to accommodate customers arriving at the UK border on Barbados-Heathrow flights.

Corneel Koster, Chief Customer & Operating Officer, Virgin Atlantic, said:

"In parallel to the UK's successful vaccination programme and accompanied by a risk-based, phased easing of restrictions, we can see a flightpath to soon allow the safe restart of international travel at scale, in time for summer. When the skies reopen; rapid, affordable testing combined with digital health integration will be vital to streamline and simplify the customer experience, make border health checks manageable and build consumer confidence. Governments, industry and technology companies need to work together to lead the adoption of digital solutions with global common standards that are accepted at borders."

"Our Barbados trial with IATA Travel Pass is an exciting step towards a 'digital health pass' as we actively explore secure solutions to integrate testing, vaccination, health documents and locator forms into our customer journeys."

The Hon. Senator Lisa Cummins, Barbados' Minister of Tourism and International Transport, said:

"Safe travel is integral to Barbados' full return to tourism, and we welcome this progressive step which complements our already implemented public health protocols and programmes. Barbados travel protocols have included a negative Covid-19 test since last year, and we are currently leading the Caribbean in an aggressive inoculation programme which has seen nearly 30% of our adult population vaccinated to date.

"The IATA Travel Pass lends an extra element of safety to both our visitors and Barbadians, giving them the confidence that we are engaging in and promoting travel that protects us all. As we look ahead to the next few months, our intention is to create a new-look tourism industry that holistically reflects the new public health imperatives."

IATA Travel Pass is a global interoperable solution based on open-source standards, which means it can be used as a stand-alone solution or integrated into airlines' own apps to provide passengers with a seamless travel experience.

Interoperable, connected mobile solutions that enable digital proof of test status and vaccine status and completed health or passenger locator forms will be essential to globally meet dynamically changing, route-specific travel restrictions.

Nick Careen, IATA's Senior Vice President Airport, Passenger, Cargo, Security said:

"Our priority is getting international flights back in the air, to support the thousands of people that work in aviation and its related industries, such as tourism. Health passes are the key to doing this safely. We are proud to partner with Virgin Atlantic and the Government of Barbados to trial IATA Travel Pass and demonstrate that this technology can securely, conveniently and efficiently help manage passenger travel health credentials.

"This trial comes at a critical time for the UK Government as it looks to map out a pathway to restart international aviation at scale though it's Global Travel Task Force. We look forward to working with Virgin Atlantic and the UK Government to pilot acceptance of Travel Pass at the UK Border and for the UK to be a global pioneer of this type of technology."

Recognising the importance to consumers that their personal health data is protected, the IATA Travel Pass gives users full control over how their personal information is shared, as the data is stored locally on their phone and not in any central database.

With Covid-19 pre-departure testing requirements for international travel set to remain in place for now, in parallel to global vaccine distribution, the digital health technology gives clarity to customers and removes the guesswork to travel.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The UK Government's Global Travel Taskforce will report on 12 April with recommendations to facilitate a return to international travel by 17 May at the earliest, using a risk-based approach. The government has confirmed that digital health solutions are being considered and Virgin Atlantic urges their inclusion in the restart framework, with a clear path to implementation and acceptance at the UK border.
- Virgin Atlantic currently operates a twice-weekly Barbados service for essential trips, including repatriating citizens and Barbadian nationals returning home. The Caribbean country currently requires all arrivals from the UK to present a negative PCR test taken within 3 days of departure followed by a second PCR test following 5 days of quarantine in approved accommodation.

About Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic was founded by entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson 36 years ago with innovation and customer service at its core. In 2021, Virgin Atlantic was voted Britain's only Global Five Star Airline by APEX for the fifth year running in the Official Airline Ratings as well as receiving Diamond status, the highest possible standard by APEX and Simpliflying for delivering the highest standards of cleanliness and demonstrating an unwavering commitment to keeping our customers and teams safe.

Headquartered in London, Virgin Atlantic and its holiday business, Virgin Atlantic Holidays, employs over 5,700 people worldwide, serving 27 destinations across four continents. Sustainability remains central to the airline and in September 2019, Virgin Atlantic took delivery of its first Airbus A350-1000 aircraft - helping to transform the fleet into one of the quietest and most fuel efficient in the sky. By 2022, the airline will operate a streamlined fleet of 37 twin engine aircraft following the retirement of its 747s and A332s, and its simplified fleet will be 10% more efficient than before the Covid-19 crisis.

Alongside shareholder and Joint Venture partner Delta Air Lines, Virgin Atlantic operates a leading transatlantic network between the UK and US with onward connections to over 200 US and international cities. On 3 February 2020, Air France-KLM, Delta Air Lines and Virgin Atlantic received approval from the US DOT to launch an expanded trans-Atlantic joint venture, offering a comprehensive route network, convenient flight schedules, competitive fares and reciprocal frequent flyer benefits, including the ability to earn and redeem miles across all carriers.

For more information visit www.virginatlantic.com or www.virginholidays.co.uk or via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @virginatlantic @virginholidays

About IATA Travel Pass

- IATA (International Air Transport Association) represents some 290 airlines comprising 82% of global air traffic.
- You can follow us at com/iata for announcements, policy positions, and other useful industry information.
- COVID-19 media kit.
- Travel Pass news and media kit.
- For more information, email: corpcomms@iata.org / Tel: +41 22 770 2967