

Cyprus resumes commercial flights after ending 11-week ban

June 9 2020, by Menelaos Hadjicostis



A man wearing mask sits on an airport bench a seat apart in line with social distancing rules at Cyprus' main airport in Larnaca, on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Cyprus re-opened its airports on Tuesday to a limited number of countries after nearly three months of commercial air traffic as a result of a strict lockdown aimed at staving off the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

An Israeli airliner with 22 passengers aboard became the first commercial flight to touch down in Cyprus after the east Mediterranean country reopened its airports following an 11-week ban aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19.

Nora Reich, a passenger aboard the Israir Airlines turboprop that arrived at Larnaca International Airport from Tel Aviv, said she had rushed to catch the first [flight](#) to Cyprus to see her newborn granddaughter.

"My daughter is with her family. They are diplomats here," Reich told The Associated Press. "And now she have a baby, she delivered a baby girl. I come with the first flight to see her. "

Israel is among a group of 19 countries with low [coronavirus](#) infection rates from which Cyprus is now permitting commercial flights.

Arriving passengers must secure health certificates declaring them coronavirus-free three days before departure.

The requirement is set to expire June 20 for people coming from 13 of those countries, including Greece, Finland, Norway and Germany.

Tourism-dependent Cyprus is keen to resume commercial flights in hopes of salvaging the summer tourist season.

Transport Minister Yiannis Karousos said the country is looking to capitalize on its comparatively mild COVID-19 outbreak to attract holidaymakers. Cyprus, which has a population of around 880,000, had a total of 970 confirmed cases and 18 virus-related deaths as of Tuesday.



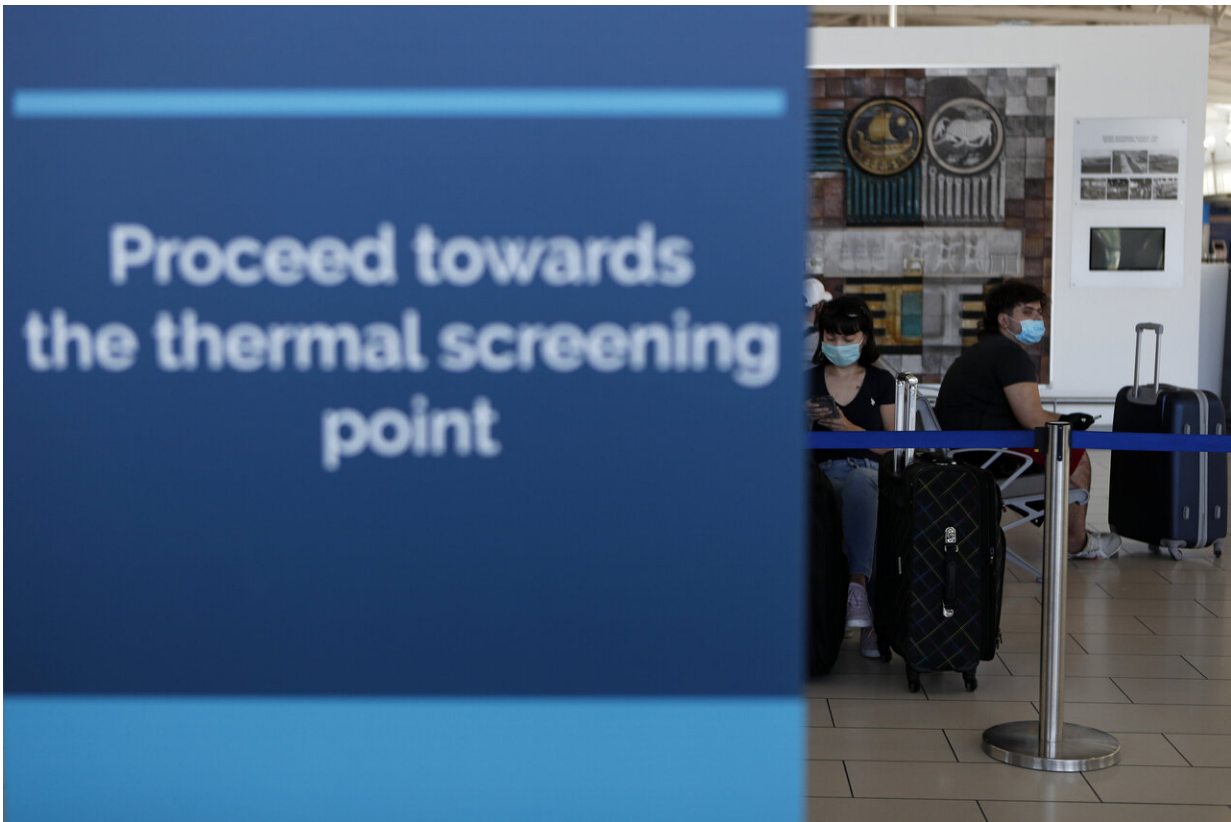
A female police officer adjust her mask as she guards at Cyprus' main airport in Larnaca, on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Cyprus re-opened its airports on Tuesday to a limited number of countries after nearly three months of commercial air traffic as a result of a strict lockdown aimed at staving off the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)



Two men wearing face masks are seated on an airport bench a seat apart in line with social distancing rules at Cyprus' main airport in Larnaca, on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Cyprus re-opened its airports on Tuesday to a limited number of countries after nearly three months of commercial air traffic as a result of a strict lockdown aimed at staving off the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)



A woman wearing mask walks at Cyprus' main airport at Larnaca on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Cyprus re-opened its airports on Tuesday to a limited number of countries after nearly three months of commercial air traffic as a result of a strict lockdown aimed at staving off the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)



Passengers wearing masks wait their flights at Cyprus' main airport in Larnaca, on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Cyprus re-opened its airports on Tuesday to a limited number of countries after nearly three months of commercial air traffic as a result of a strict lockdown aimed at staving off the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

"This is what Cyprus will sell this year, is the excellent results we have with regards to the coronavirus," Karousos told the Associated Press. "Cyprus would be a safe place to be."

Karousos said it's projected that the country will see about 35% of the nearly 4 million [passenger](#) arrivals it had for all of last year. Tourism directly accounts for 13% of Cyprus' gross domestic product.

The minister said it's expected that monthly arrivals will peak at 600,000 passengers during September and October from countries including Poland and Denmark.

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