

Air France-KLM warns of worse to come after virus hits passenger numbers

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Air-France KLM warned Tuesday the coronavirus outbreak will hit its business harder in coming months after February passenger numbers fell 0.5 percent overall as flights to China were cut.

The slowdown in February "essentially reflects the cancellation of all our China flights and the initial impact of COVID-19 in Asia," the group said in a statement.

"The coming months will be much more seriously impacted by the spread of COVID-19 to other regions and wider cuts in capacity," it added.

Air France has so far suspended flights to Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei while reducing services to Seoul and Singapore, all key destinations.

Flights to Italy, which has become the second most affected country after China, have also been slashed while European services have been cut 25 percent.

Overall, passengers carried on Asian flights in February were down 24.5 percent but North America was up 13.7 percent, Latin America gained 6.0 percent, Africa/Middle East rose 8.7 percent and the Caribbean/Indian Ocean 1.8 percent.

Last month, Air France-KLM put the coronavirus cost to the airline at 150-200 million euros up to April.

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