

Cathay Pacific cutting 90% of April flights due to virus

March 17 2020

Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways says it will cut its flight schedule by 90% in April after passenger traffic in February fell by more than half from a year ago amid travel curbs to fight the coronavirus.

Like many carriers, Cathay is suffering as travel halts in many areas. But Hong Kong's [airlines](#) were already in pain thanks to prolonged [political protests](#) last year that led many tourists to steer clear of the city.

The airline lost 2 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$260 million) in February, according to a statement by Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Ronald Lam.

The airline canceled 90% of its flights to China after the mainland government told the public to avoid travel in an effort to contain the virus that emerged in the central city of Wuhan in December.

February's total [passenger traffic](#) fell 54.1% from a year earlier, the airline said.

"Given the expected further drop in travel demand, we are planning to only operate a bare skeleton passenger flight schedule for April, which represents up to 90% capacity reduction," Lam said.

Lam said the cuts would extend into May if global [travel](#) curbs stay in place.

Cathay said earlier it faces a "substantial loss" in the first half of this year.

Its 2019 profit fell 27.9% from the previous year after tourist arrivals in Hong Kong plunged amid the protests that began in June over a proposed extradition law and expanded to include other grievances.

The airline has asked its 27,000 employees to take three weeks of unpaid leave between March 1 and June 30.

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