

Virus slows Dubai airport, world's busiest for global travel

June 10 2020, by Jon Gambrell



Gate staff wearing protective gear due to the coronavirus pandemic wait for boarding for an Emirates flight to Frankfurt, Germany, at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

Perhaps nowhere is the world's lack of flights due to the coronavirus pandemic more clearly felt than at Dubai International Airport, for years the world's busiest for international travel.

Its Terminal 3, which sees tens of millions pass through it each year, stood empty and quiet on Wednesday, the once-full departure board showing only seven flights for the sheikhdom's long-haul carrier Emirates.

Its cavernous walkways, typically chilled to near-Arctic levels—even with being on the Arabian Peninsula—felt warm and humid in parts as [air conditioners](#) worked at a slower pace. No water rushed down its fountains and some stores and restaurants stood closed.

It is [tough times](#) for Dubai, which through Emirates succeeded in building a major tourist and shopping destination in this one-time pearl-diving village. Emirates has been laying off staff, including in large groups this week. The carrier did not offer figures for how the layoffs affected its staffing.

"Given the significant impact that the pandemic has had on our business, we simply cannot sustain excess resources and have to right size our workforce in line with our reduced operations," Emirates said in a statement.

Paul Griffiths, the CEO of Dubai Airports, previously told The Associated Press in May that without a vaccine or a permanent solution to the virus, there could be "quite a low level of activity for quite some time" for the global aviation industry.



Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3, typically buzzing with passengers, stands largely empty in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



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Employees of the long-haul carrier Emirates wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic prepare to greet passengers at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



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A family says goodbye to each other while wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



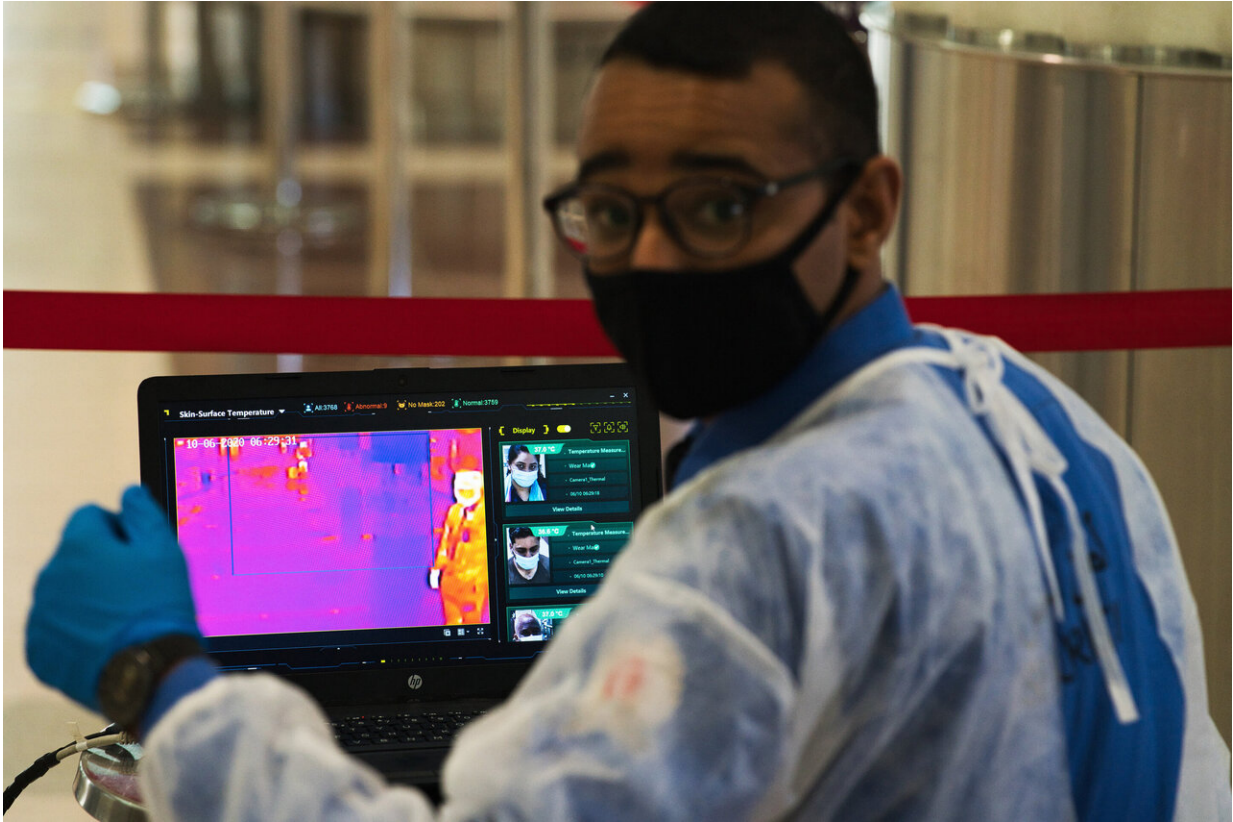
Employees of the long-haul carrier Emirates wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic prepare to greet passengers at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



Passengers wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic wait at ticketing for flights at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



A passenger wearing a mask due to the coronavirus pandemic passes through a temperature screening at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



An official wearing a mask due to the coronavirus pandemic operates a temperature screening point at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



Passengers wearing masks due to the coronavirus pandemic put on throwaway coveralls before their flight at Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, June 10, 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has hit global aviation hard, particularly at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, due to restrictions on global movement over the virus. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

On Wednesday, customers and staff alike wore masks and disposable gloves at the airport. Thermal heat scanners looked over passengers, counting them, warning if someone had a high temperatures or wasn't wearing a mask. Airline personnel and duty-free cashiers stood behind plexiglass barriers.

The International Air Transport Association estimated Tuesday that

airlines will lose \$84.3 billion this year due to the travel disruptions caused by the pandemic. While 2021 will see a rebound, the IATA predicts passenger numbers will likely only reach levels seen in 2014. Losses will drop to \$15.8 billion, the group estimated.

The association acknowledged the concerns travelers still have in returning to air travel will affect the recovery of global aviation.

"Airlines are going to need to try to stimulate demand through relatively low fares," said Brian Pearce, IATA's chief economist. "A critical thing for getting passenger confidence back is confidence in the biosecurity, that flying is safe."

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