Mitigating Coronavirus: Guide of Recommendations and Action Plan for Puerto Rico’s Tourism Sector

Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association
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Introduction

Tourism, as we are well aware, has changed around the world. The global travel and tourism industry are currently experiencing an unprecedented critical situation.

Worldwide, estimated losses for this sector are concerning, pointing to a loss of $820 billion. According to estimates from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), around 50 million jobs will be lost once the emergency ends.

Recent U.S.-based studies point to a 30% reduction in hotel occupancy that will result in the loss of four million jobs, $180 billion in wages, and a $300-billion reduction in the United States’ Gross National Product. In the nation, one in 25 jobs is related to the tourism sector, representing a total of 8.4 million jobs, $97 billion in wages and an annual GNP contribution of $660 billion.

In Puerto Rico, tourism activity contributes almost $3.5 billion to our economy, which accounts for 6% to 7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Furthermore, it represents about 80,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs. Local estimates say that 29,600 tourism jobs are threatened due to the crisis unleashed by COVID-19. This represents 37 percent of the 80,000 jobs generated by this industry on the Island.

Puerto Rico’s situation is slightly more fragile, as the local tourism activity has been fending off crisis after crisis with the impact of Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, Zika in 2016 and the recent tremors that started in the southwestern region towards the end of 2019 and continued in early 2020.

Through it all, the PRHTA has been collaborating with its members and local industry decision-makers (including the government), leading initiatives to boost tourism activity, fostering employment generation and retention, and contributing to the island’s economic development. Now, more than ever, we will continue doing so. This time, we are counting on everyone in our industry to collaborate in standardizing disinfection and sanitation practices across the board, to guarantee healthy spaces for employees and visitors as well.

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Objective

At the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association (PRHTA), we have compiled materials from reliable sources and developed this **Guide of Recommendations and Action Plan** for the island’s tourism sector. It is undeniable that hotels, casinos or other tourism related business, no matter if they host leisure or business guest, are a center for gathering of small, medium and large groups of people. The nature of being a service-based industry requires substantial interaction between guest and employees. Lastly, because tourism operations are extremely integrated, employees interact with each other and other service providers.

This guide seeks to establish a reference framework for Puerto Rico’s tourism industry players, so we can all adopt and implement industry-wide recommendations to control the spread of COVID-19. The goal is sharing best practices that have been proven effective in other jurisdictions, to help prevent contagion of employees and visitors alike.

Prevention measures in this guide include recommendations at both individual and commercial levels. Individual prevention measures include regular and thorough hand hygiene, good respiratory hygiene, social distancing, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Prevention in public areas involve cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces to reduce the risk of infection.

This document is not copyrighted by the PRHTA, as it is a compilation of data from different official sources around the world.
General Recommendations

Source: CDC

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility- Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone is Sick, and Considerations for Employers.

How to clean and disinfect

Clean surfaces using soap and water. Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

High touch surfaces include:

Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

Disinfect

- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use disinfectant.
- **Recommend use of EPA-registered household disinfectant**
  Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
  Many products recommend:
  - Keeping surface wet for a period of time (see product label)
  - Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
- Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used.

Soft surfaces

For soft surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes

- **Clean the surface using soap and water** or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.
- **Launder items** (if possible) according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- **Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant.** These disinfectants meet EPA’s criteria for use against COVID-19.

Electronics
For electronics, such as **tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines**

- Consider putting a **wipeable cover** on electronics.
- **Follow manufacturer’s instruction** for cleaning and disinfecting.
  - If no guidance, **use alcohol-based wipes containing at least 70% alcohol**. Dry surface thoroughly.

**Laundry**

For clothing, towels, linens and other items

- Launder items according to the manufacturer’s instructions. **Use the warmest appropriate water setting** and dry items completely.
- **Wear disposable gloves** when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick **can be washed with other people’s items**.
- **Do not shake** dirty laundry.
- Clean and **disinfect clothes hampers** according to guidance above for surfaces.
- Remove gloves, and **wash hands right away**.

**Cleaning and disinfecting your building or facility if someone is sick**

- **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area. **Wait 24 hours** before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.

- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- If **more than 7 days** since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
  - Continue routing cleaning and disinfection.

**When Cleaning**

- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns** for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
  - Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick.
  - Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- **Additional key times to wash hands** include:
  - After blowing one’s nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - After using the restroom.
  - Before eating or preparing food.
  - After contact with animals or pets.
  - Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child).

**Additional Considerations for Employers**

- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.
  - Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA’s Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/eryguide/chemicals.html)).
Accommodations:


Specifics of the tourism accommodation sector hotels and tourism accommodation establishments are no more susceptible to contagion than other public establishments visited by large numbers of people who interact among themselves and with employees. Nevertheless, they are places where guests stay temporarily in close cohabitation and where there is a high degree of interaction among guests and workers. It is these aspects—the lodging of guests in along with the services this entails (food and beverage, cleaning, activity organization, etc.)—and the interactions specific to these establishments (guest-guest, guest-staff, and staff-staff) that require specific attention. Every staff member must strictly comply with the basic protective measures against COVID-19 recommended by WHO, such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, practice respiratory hygiene and to heed the advice to stay home and seek medical attention if they have symptoms consistent with the disease.

1. Action plan:

The Management Team, in consultation with local health authority, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, and Tourism administration and industry associations should establish an action plan tailored to the situation and implement it in accordance with the recommendations of local and national public health authorities with the aim to prevent cases, effectively manage cases, and mitigate impact among clients and staff, including cleaning and disinfection of rooms occupied by ill persons. The plan, which may incorporate teleworking, should be updated when necessary as a consequence of new guidance, procedures, or regulations issued by the pertinent authorities.

2. Mobilization of resources

The Management Team should ascertain the amount of human resources needed and most of the economic costs necessary to ensure that the action plan can be implemented rapidly and effectively. The action plan should also include the provision of equipment and procedures, developed in collaboration with local health authorities, for the management of suspected case(s) and their possible contacts.

3. Supervision
The implementation of the action plan and the effectiveness of the measures undertaken should be evaluated frequently to verify compliance, identify and correct gaps, and adapt the plan to practical experience. A Crisis Team involving members of each relevant department can support Management in the implementation of the action plan and timely identification of required adjustments. It is necessary to be alert to any unusual rise in worker absenteeism, especially those due to acute respiratory infections, possibly caused by COVID-19.

### 4. Logbook of actions

It is advisable to keep a logbook of the important actions and measures carried out and to record them in enough detail (e.g. including date and time a disinfectant was used, by whom, where, etc.). This logbook can be used to improve the actions implemented. However, you must assure that once you elect to adopt such logbook you shall strictly comply with the obligations assumed to properly maintain the same.

### 5. Communication

Communication should be maintained between Management and staff, including through the managers in charge of the different departments, in order to predefine an information policy for guests as well as to rapidly provide and obtain information on incidents that may arise in the establishment and to know the status of the situation at all times. Providing guidelines to the staff on how they should communicate the action plan to guests and other stakeholders can ensure alignment consistency. Short documents or informative posters can amplify the key messages among guests and staff, including the promotion of hand-washing (at least 20 seconds, all parts of the hand), respiratory hygiene, and coughing etiquette. Official leaflets on basic hygiene practice and COVID-19, in different languages, could be useful information tools. It may be useful to have an up-to-date list of the contact information of the staff, including emergency telephone numbers.

### 6. Training and information

Management should inform all staffs of the measures to be adopted and the measures that could protect their health and that of others, including the recommendation to stay home and seek medical attention if they have respiratory symptoms, such as coughing or shortness of breath. Management should organize information briefings that should cover all the basic protective
measures against COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease. Training may be needed for specific procedures.

**Reception and concierge**

1. Information and communication Reception desk staff should be sufficiently informed about COVID-19 so that they can safely carry out their assigned tasks and prevent the possible spread of COVID-19 within the establishment. They should be capable of informing guests who inquire about the establishment’s policy in terms of the preventive measures established or other services that guests may require (for example, medical and pharmacy services available in the area or at the establishment itself). They should also be able to advise guests with respiratory symptoms to stay in their rooms until they are seen by a doctor—management should arrange it immediately—as well as to provide basic hygiene recommendations when asked.

The assignment of personnel occupying positions requiring frequent or periodic interaction with guests, such as reception desk staff, shall take into account the risks factors identified by Health Governmental agencies. Reception desk staff must take all necessary precautions, including physical distancing. Official, up-to-date information should be available about travel to and from countries or areas where COVID-19 is spreading. Reception Desk staff should be familiar with the room occupancy policy for accompanying persons in the event of a suspected case of COVID-19. The latest definition of suspected case of COVID-19 can be found on WHO website. The reception desk should have immediately available the telephone numbers of the health authorities, medical centers, public and private hospitals, and assistance centers for use whenever there is the possibility that a guest may be ill.

2. Necessary equipment and medical kit at the reception desk that includes the following items:
   - Germicidal disinfectant/wipes for surface cleaning Tissues.
   - Face/eye masks (separate or combined, face shield, goggles).
   - Gloves (disposable)
   - Protective apron (disposable)
   - Full-length long-sleeved gown
   - Biohazard disposable waste bag- (review brand handling protocol if apply).

3. Social distancing measures, hand cleaning, and respiratory hygiene Social distancing measures, together with frequent hand hygiene and
respiratory etiquette, are the main measures to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Although it is probable that guests are already familiar with these measures, they should be reminded as a form of hospitality.

- Social distancing includes refraining from hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with guests as well as among staff. It involves maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet and avoiding anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Hand hygiene means regularly and thoroughly cleaning hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water. Also avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Hand disinfection is indicated after exchanging objects (money, credit cards) with guests.
- Respiratory etiquette means covering mouth and nose with bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. The used tissue should be disposed of immediately in a bin with a lid.

4. Monitoring of guests who are possibly ill While observing regulations in relation to the protection of personal data and the right to privacy, it is advisable to monitor potentially ill guests in the establishment. Reception staff should note all relevant incidents that come to their knowledge, such as requests for doctor’s visits. This information will aid guests through appropriate advice, facilitating early detection, and rapid management of suspected cases with local health authorities.

Reception staff must treat all this information with discretion, leaving it up to the management and to medical services to evaluate the situation and make appropriate decisions.

4. Limit exchange of cash and credit cards. Consider payment options via online or mobile platforms. This measure should also apply to any bar or restaurant service.

**Technical and maintenance services**

1. Water disinfection It is necessary to maintain the concentration of disinfectant in water for consumption and in pools or spas within the limits recommended according to international norms and standards, preferably at the upper limits of the range.

2. Dishwashing and laundry equipment
The proper functioning of the dishwashing and laundry equipment should be checked, particularly the operating temperatures, as well as the correct dosage of cleaning and disinfecting chemicals.

3. Air-conditioning Although COVID-19 is not transmitted by air but from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs or exhales, attention should be given, as in normal circumstances, to monitoring the condition of filters and maintaining the proper replacement rate of indoor air. The proper functioning of ventilation, air exchange, and dehumidification equipment of covered pools should be checked.

4. Dispensers - Regular checks should be carried out to ensure the proper functioning of soap and disinfectant solution dispensers, hand dryers, disposable tissue dispensers, and other similar devices. Defective units should be rapidly repaired or replaced. The hotel action plan should include installing units to dispense disinfectant gel in the different areas of the hotel, including the public restrooms used by guests and by staff, and other areas of interest (e.g. entrance to the dining hall, restaurants, and bars).

Restaurants, breakfast and dining rooms and bars

1. Information and communication Restaurants, breakfast, and dining room and bar staff should perform personal hygiene (frequent regular handwashing, cough hygiene) as strictly as possible. Guests should be reminded when entering and leaving the restaurant, breakfast, or dining room to disinfect their hands with disinfectant gel, preferably located at the entrance to those facilities.

2. Buffets and drinks machines At the buffets, guests should avoid handling food. When necessary, change tongs and ladles more frequently, always leaving these items in separate containers. Clean and disinfect the buffet surfaces after each service. The coffee machines, soda machines, and others, in particular the parts more in contact with the hands of users, should be cleaned and disinfected at least after each service and more often if necessary.

3. Washing dishes, silverware, and table linen The usual procedures should be used. All dishes, silverware, and glassware should be washed and disinfected in a dishwashing machine, including items that have not been used, as they might have been in contact with the hands of guests or staff. If for any reason manual
washing is required, the usual steps should be followed (wash, disinfect, rinse),
taking the maximum level of precautions. Drying should be carried out using
disposable paper towels. Likewise, tablecloths and napkins should be washed in
the usual manner.

4. Table setting Whenever possible, it is recommended to have a maximum of 4
persons for 10 square meters. Tables shall be arranged such that the distance
from the back of one chair to the back of another chair shall be more than 6
feet or m apart and that guests face each other from a distance of at least 6 feet.

5. Serving of food at bar areas will be prohibited until further notice.

Recreational areas for children

Although the current evidence indicates that most children appear to develop
less serious respiratory symptoms of COVID-19, there are reports of children
infected with COVID-19 who have developed severe or critical disease, and
some children have died. The persons responsible for children should be vigilant
for any signs of respiratory disease and should immediately inform the child’s
parents and the management of such circumstance. Depending on the local
context, including the number of children and instruction from national health
authorities, consideration should be given to closing the recreational areas for
children. In any case, special cleaning and disinfection protocols should be
applied to these facilities.

Cleaning and housekeeping

1. Cleaning and disinfection Even in the absence of COVID-19 cases in the
establishment, it is recommended that hygiene services be enhanced. Special
consideration should be given to the application of cleaning and disinfection
measures in common areas (restrooms, halls, corridors, lifts, etc.) as a general
preventive measure during the entire COVID-19 epidemic. Special attention
should be given to objects that are frequently touched such as handles,
elevator buttons, handrails, switches, doorknobs, etc. Cleaning staff should be
instructed accordingly. As part of the tourism accommodation establishment
action plan for COVID-19, there should be a special cleaning and disinfection
plan for situations in which there are sick guests or employees staying at the
establishment or identified with COVID-19 within a few days after leaving the
establishment. Written recommendations for enhanced cleaning and
disinfection should describe the enhanced operating procedures for cleaning,
managing solid waste, and for wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).
The following should be implemented for rooms or specific areas exposed to COVID-19 cases:

- Any surfaces that become soiled with respiratory secretions or other body fluids of the ill person(s), e.g. toilet, handwashing basins, and baths should be cleaned and disinfect. See CDC recommendations on cleaning and disinfection https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

- Service staff may require additional training in the preparation, handling, application, and storage of these products.

  - Whenever possible, use only disposable cleaning materials. Discard any cleaning equipment made of cloths and absorbent materials, e.g. mophead and wiping cloths. When pertinent, disinfect properly non-porous cleaning materials with 0.5% sodium hypochlorite solution or according to manufacturer’s instructions before using for other rooms.

  - Textiles, linens, and clothes should be put in special, marked laundry bags and handled carefully to prevent raising dust, with consequent potential contamination of surrounding surfaces or people. Instructions should be given for washing them in hot cycles (70ºC or more) with the usual detergents. All used items must be handled appropriately to mitigate the risk of potential transmission. Disposable items (hand towels, gloves, masks, tissues) should be placed in a container with a lid and disposed of according to the hotel action plan and national regulations for waste management.

  - In general, public areas where a case has passed through or has spent minimal time in (corridors) do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected. Cleaning crews shall follow appropriate protocols regarding removal, disposal, cleaning and disinfection of PPE and personal hygiene. All rooms and common areas should be ventilated daily.

2. Monitoring of sick guests Housekeeping and cleaning staff should inform the management or the reception desk of any pertinent incidents, including possibly sick guests in their rooms. They must treat all this information with discretion.

3. Availability of materials Cleaning staff should be trained on the use of and provided with personal protection equipment as listed below: - Gloves - Disposable gowns - Closed shoes - If doing procedures that generate splashes (e.g. while washing surfaces), add facial protection with a face
shield and impermeable aprons. They should also have access to sufficient disinfectant solutions and other supplies.

4. Optional housekeeping programs

All programs where guests can voluntarily forego housekeeping services should be suspended in the service of maximizing health and safety of hotel staff and guests alike.

Casino Recommendations.

Source: Wynn Las Vegas Health & Sanitation Program


1. General Recommendations

****All Guests and all Casino Employees will be required to wear a mask and gloves. (Scarves, other type of ineffective informal face cover will not be accepted.)

- If Guests does not have a mask or gloves entrance will be denied.

- All guests wishing to gamble will be requested to briefly lower their masks for age and identification purposes.

****All Guests and Casino Employees will be subject to temperature check before entering casino and employee shifts.

****Casino shall implement limits on guest capacity based on availability of gaming positions and space.

- The number of Guest allowed in Casino will be determined by the sum of the available games and chairs operations as mentioned above.

- Guest will not be allowed to linger and/or lounge in casino.

- Casinos will establish internal controls to manage counting for capacity purposes.

****Food and beverage services shall be provided in disposable supplies and grab-and-go station or employee delivery.

****Casinos shall implement a program to control waiting area to casino, creating a waiting list and a waiting area that complies with social distancing.
2. Casino Cage Areas

Cleaning & Sanitizing Protocol

a) Guest facing counters to be sanitized periodically.

b) Employee working areas to be sanitized periodically.

Physical Distancing Protocol

a) Guests to maintain six feet of separation while waiting in line with the spacing to be clearly marked on the floor.

Guest Considerations

(a) Hand sanitizer stations are strategically located for guests and employees.

3. Slot Operations

Cleaning & Sanitizing Protocol

(a) Workstations to be sanitized periodically.

(b) Casino Designated Employees to offer to sanitize slots for guests sitting down at a machine.

(c) If Guests request cleaning from Casino Designated Employee will sanitize slot immediately.

(d) Casino Designated Employee to complete a log in each section to track each machine’s sanitization schedule.

Physical Distancing Protocol

(a) Every other Slot machine will be turned off or reconfigured with the chairs removed to allow for separation between guests.

Guest Considerations

(a) Hand sanitizer dispensers to be placed throughout the slot floor.

(b) Signage will be placed throughout the slot floor to remind guests to sanitize slot machines before use.

4. Table Games Operations
****All table games were guest has interaction (touches) with cards will not be initially operated.

Cleaning & Sanitizing Protocol

(a) Casino Designated Employee to sanitize table, chair, and all game equipment every time a guest leaves and arrives at table.

(b) Casino Designated Employee to sanitize each working area for tables and subsidiary areas periodically.

(c) Points (a) & (b) are applicable to other Casino Designate Employee and any other employee in the general area or that has working space near tables.

Physical Distancing Protocol

(a) Every other chair or position open to allow for distancing.

Guest Considerations

(a) Guests will be reminded to use hand sanitizer prior to the start of play and reminded of proper mask usage.

(b) Casino Designated Employee will remain available and serve beverage upon request in disposable supplies.

****All Casino Employees will receive copy of this protocol and will receive the required orientation on application.

Transportation:

Source: The Washington State Department of Health

COVID-19 Outbreak: Guidance for Rideshare and Taxi

Keep yourself and your passengers protected.

To ensure you keep and passengers protected, you can take the following steps:

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Ask passengers to sit in the back to create physical distance.
- Avoid handling money, if possible. Consider wearing disposable gloves if you must collect money from customers. Use one pair of gloves per customer and throw them away after.
- Have tissues and hand sanitizer available for your passengers.
- Print and post information for passengers in your back seat.

**Disinfect your car regularly.**

- Plan to clean and disinfect your car as often as possible—especially after you drop off passengers who appear to be sick and after every medical passenger. Pay close attention to surfaces that are touched often by passengers.
- Use a disinfectant that is pre-approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use against novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and only use them once. Special precautions for drivers transporting patients to health care facilities.
- It is recommended that you wear personal protective equipment, such as disposable gloves and a face mask. It is important to replace your disposable gloves and face mask after every medical customer.
- If you are transporting a patient that is known to or is suspected to have COVID-19, OSHA recommends that you wear a respirator. You may also want to wear a gown and a face shield or goggles if you help customers in and out of the car.
- After helping a medical passenger out of the car, you should remove all protective equipment and wash your hands or use high alcohol content hand sanitizer before getting back into your car.
Additional Resources:


CHTA - http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/covid-19/

CDC - https://www.cdc.gov/


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