



Singapore, 02.06.2020

Update on the COVID-19 situation

Dear compatriots,

After eight weeks of mainly staying at home, I trust that all of us are looking forward to a certain degree of normality and personal freedom. I assume that many of you are thinking about the upcoming summer break. I hope this letter may be of assistance as you are planning your weeks ahead.

Last week, the Singapore government informed the public about its plans for the reopening of the economy and the resumption of social activities. These measures, published in detail on the government's [main web portal](#) and the [Ministry of Health](#), allow for a cautious and gradual opening in three phases. The first phase ("Safe Re-opening") started today with the reopening of schools, select workplaces, and allowing same-family visits. As it was just communicated by the government, if the community infection rate remains low and stable in phase 1, there is some hope that phase 2 could begin before the end of June. Our patience for a return to a "new normal", which the government foresees for the third phase, will continue to be tested in the coming weeks.

This applies in no small measure to traveling abroad. So far, the Singapore government has only announced its intention of a progressive easing in the form of "travel bubbles" or "green lanes" for essential business trips, independent from its three-phased internal opening. Such arrangements (as just announced for China) will not be covering leisure or holiday trips. As of today, unless you have Permanent Resident status, your re-entry into Singapore will therefore continue to be subject to approval by either the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) if you are an Employment Pass holder, or the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) if you are a Long-Term Visit Pass holder. Keep in mind that on top of that, anyone returning to Singapore must complete a health certificate online before starting the return journey and spend 14 days in a government-designated facility at their own expense.

I am fully aware that this may have serious consequences for all of us. Some of you remain unable to return to Singapore as the Singapore government is still rejecting re-entry requests of work pass holders. Others are dependent on receiving inbound new staff to run their normal operations. Many among us are hoping to go on holidays to Switzerland or elsewhere during the summer.

At this moment, however, a timely return to Singapore remains unfortunately without guarantee. As the MOM does not accept applications for re-entry until about ten days before the desired re-entry date, uncertainty remains as to whether and how quickly such an application will be processed and accepted. This creates a problem when holidays have to be planned, without it being clear whether the return at the end of the holiday will be approved.

Together with the European Union, its member States and Norway, I am in constant contact with the Singapore authorities on all these issues. I spare no effort to share our concerns regarding the re-entry of Swiss citizens and their families and urge for more flexibility. However, at this juncture, it is not possible for me to predict when and how the Singapore government will start easing up its re-entry requirements.

As the situation is evolving rapidly, please check regularly our embassy [website](#) for updates, including on available flight options from Singapore to Europe. Swiss will resume its flights to Zurich two times a week (Monday and Wednesday) starting 8 June 2020. Currently, KLM flies daily from

Singapore to Amsterdam, Qatar Airways flies via Doha to Zurich and Singapore Airlines flies to Zurich, London and Frankfurt.

In Switzerland, the situation continues to improve. On 27 May, the Federal Council has decided to downgrade the situation status under the terms of the Epidemics Act from 'extraordinary' to 'special' with effect from 19 June. While the entry of Swiss citizens or foreigners with a residence permit was never restricted, you may be interested to learn that the borders between Switzerland, Germany, France and Austria will re-open on 15 June 2020. Furthermore, the Federal Council plans to re-establish the free movement of persons across the Schengen area no later than 6 July 2020. Entry restrictions for third country nationals will be lifted at a later date and in consultation with the Schengen member states. Therefore, please note that external Schengen borders continue to be closed for foreigners, unless they already have a right of stay in Switzerland. This means that presently spouses of Swiss citizens with a foreign passport cannot enter Switzerland, unless they intend to take up residence in Switzerland, or if there are pressing humanitarian grounds for a return to Switzerland. Please also note that there is no quarantine requirement for travellers entering Switzerland who are free of symptoms of illness. You can find more information on the website of the [Federal Office of Public Health](#) regarding the easing of the remaining restrictions in Switzerland as of 6 June, the precautionary measures in place, as well as the observance of hygiene and social distancing when returning to Switzerland.

Once again, I wish you and your family good health, and a lot of strength in these difficult times.

With my very best regards,



Fabrice Filliez
Ambassador