

Update on further resumption of business activities for Backpackers' Hostels

1. The Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) announced on 24 March 2021 that Singapore will resume more activities under Phase Three, and that as a larger proportion of our population becomes vaccinated, we can look forward to further reopening.
2. Since Phase One, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) have been supporting the gradual and careful resumption of tourism-related businesses. Businesses that operate in settings with lower risk of COVID-19 transmission in the community have been allowed to resume operations first, while those associated with higher risks, including backpackers' hostels, will gradually be allowed to resume more operations, subject to the prevailing COVID-19 developments. This arrangement ensures that we re-open safely and sustainably, safeguard the health and safety of our people and mitigate the risk of new clusters from resurging.
3. We wish to thank the hostel businesses for their understanding and cooperation in our fight against the pandemic by adhering to the health and safety protocols, and seek your continued support as we review the measures in place.

Applications to Provide Leisure Bookings in Private Ensuite Rooms

4. In our latest review of measures for backpackers' hostels, MTI and STB have worked with other Government agencies to support the resumption of leisure stays for backpackers' hostels with private ensuite rooms (i.e. rooms which have at least one private bathroom). Such hostels may resume accepting guests for leisure purposes, such as staycations, from 1 April 2021 onwards. The leisure guests will only allowed to be accommodated in the private ensuite rooms. Backpackers' hostels that have private ensuite rooms and wish to resume accepting leisure bookings must abide by the following:
 - a. Comply with the Sector Specific Requirements for leisure bookings, which can be found within **Annex A**, and any additional safe management measures (SMMs) proposed by the hostel in its application, over and above compliance with the Control Order and all other applicable SMMs and the Sector Specific Requirements applicable to hostel facilities.
 - b. Submit the application found at **Annex B** to STB via go.gov.sg/localbookingapplication. STB and MTI will take up to 14 working days to assess each application.
 - c. Undergo an inspection scheduled and conducted by STB as part of the assessment process.
 - d. Resume the accommodation of guests for leisure purposes only after receiving approval from MTI. Backpackers' hostels whose applications have

been rejected by MTI will not be allowed to resume leisure stays at its premise.

5. In addition, we would like to highlight the following arrangement which approved applicants are to follow (more details can be found in the annexes):
 - a. Each private ensuite room can only permit one booking, and can accommodate no more than 8 individuals unless they are from the same household (i.e. same address on NRIC), capped at the room's maximum capacity as per the approved plans by URA and/or SCDF. For example, if a hostel private ensuite room only has 4 beds, the maximum number of guests who can be checked into the room will be 4 persons, notwithstanding the prevailing group capacity limit of 8 persons. All hostel guests must be pre-registered prior to being allocated a room.
 - b. Visitors who are not staying in the hostels are not allowed to enter the hostel premises. Hostels should also ensure that they have the means to detect entry of every individual into a guest room, such as through CCTV monitoring or having staff stationed at lift lobbies.
 - c. The bedding requirements of single beds placed 1 metre apart and bunk beds arranged in a top-down alternating fashion **will not** apply for private ensuite rooms booked for leisure stays. For avoidance of doubt, if the hostel is not selling the private ensuite room for leisure, and the room is booked by a company for their workers, the current set of bedding requirements shall continue to apply.
 - d. Guests staying for non-leisure purposes should not be allocated the same room as guests staying for leisure purposes.
 - e. All other recreational facilities within the hostel premises shall remain closed until further notice, for example, TV/Games room. The pantry area may continue to be used by hostel guests, however, each guest should be seated 1 metre apart from all other guests at all times in the pantry and at common areas such as corridors/ lobbies. There should be no gatherings or intermingling within the hostel premises at all times.
 - f. The hostel must implement staggered check-in for leisure guests.
6. Hostel operators must also explain how they will address key outcomes in their application to STB, to reduce potential transmission risks and support contact tracing efforts. Risk factors for hostels to consider include proximity between guests, propensity for crowds to form, level of activity and number of high-touch surfaces. Each application must show how the hostel will achieve all the following key outcomes:

Outcomes

Ability to meet density requirements

Limit occupancy to no more than 1 person per 8sqm guest-accessible public space per person (excluding hostel staff) at any point in time, where practicable.

Implement more stringent SMMs at areas where guests and staff spend more time, as opposed to areas which see more transient traffic.

Reduce face-to-face mingling among guests, between employees and between staff and guests

Stagger timings for guests to be at hostel lobby and guest facilities, and employees at back of house work environment

Ability to disperse crowds and prevent bunching

Mandatory implementation of SafeEntry and encourage use of Trace Together

Implement rigorous cleaning and disinfecting regimes, particularly for high touch elements

7. The application must also detail plans addressing operational areas such as SMMs for workplaces, response plans (to handle unwell guests, suspected/confirmed cases), and marketing and communications plan for re-opening. Hostels whose applications have been approved must submit the following information:
 - a. A set of required data every Friday before 10am via go.gov.sg/covid19-hotelupdates. This information will be used only as internal reference for COVID-19 related policy planning and will not be shared with the public.
 - b. The number of staff working on-site within 2 weeks of the date of resumption of on-site operations for leisure bookings following approval from MTI via <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg>.
 - c. Inform STB immediately whenever there is a known positive COVID-19 case or person under quarantine at the hostel Includes guests and visitors that have patronised or visited the hostel, and hostel staff. via STB_Hotels@stb.gov.sg, providing such particulars of the case as may be requested by STB.

¹Includes guests that have patronised or visited the hotel, and hotel staff.

Enforcement of Safe Management Measures

8. STB will conduct enforcement checks to ensure compliance with SMMs, including SMMs proposed in the hostel's application. Enforcement action will be taken against offenders who operate without MTI's approval to provide leisure accommodation and/or fail to comply with SMMs.
9. Under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act passed in Parliament on 7 April 2020, first-time offenders may be fined up to \$10,000, imprisoned up to six months,

or both. Repeat offenders may be fined up to \$20,000, imprisoned up to twelve months, or both. Also under the Act, businesses that are not compliant may be ordered to cease business activities or close altogether. Businesses that do are not compliant may also be ineligible for government grants, loans, tax rebates and other assistance.

10. COVID-19 remains a serious threat. We strongly urge all hostels to do your part to ensure that all SMMs are properly implemented. We encourage you to remain vigilant to avoid the resurgence of cases seen in many other countries, which would lead to further tightening of measures and adversely impact the industry. We will continue to monitor the situation and review the SMMs and resumption of greater business activities for hostels gradually.

Eligibility as a SingapoRediscovered Vouchers merchant

11. Backpacker's hostels with private ensuite rooms which have received MTI's approval to accept leisure bookings will be eligible to participate in the SingapoRediscovered Vouchers scheme if the hostel is licensed under the Hotels Act and SG-Clean certified. To be whitelisted as a merchant, you will need to abide by the Merchant Terms and Conditions. Please reach out to STB_Hotels@stb.gov.sg if you meet the eligibility criteria and would like to be whitelisted.

Thank you.