

CWT Offers Tips for Dealing with Volcanic Ash Fallout

Staying well informed and flexible are important until travel is back to normal

PARIS, April 22, 2010 — With European airspace open, after several days of flight restrictions connected to the cloud of volcanic ash hovering over the region, Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), a global leader specializing in business travel management, is offering travel managers and travelers some important tips to help them effectively deal with the situation.

CWT cautions that it will be several days before flights are operating normally and that travel will be subject to flight availability. As a result, the company is working closely with airlines around the world to help ensure that stranded business travelers are repatriated as soon as possible.

Tips for travelers

To help travelers deal most effectively with what the company refers to as an “extraordinary event for the global travel industry,” CWT recommends the following:

- Stranded business travelers who are holding tickets should contact the CWT office where they booked their travel, as well as their airline’s local office to provide contact information so they can be informed of last-minute flight availability.
- Any changes in a traveler’s status and/or location should be communicated to the company’s travel manager, to CWT and the airline.
- Being ready to go to the airport with short notice is essential.
- Additional time for check-in should be expected.
- Travelers who do not have tickets are advised to contact their airline before going to the airport.
- Independent attempts to get to your destination may need to be pre-approved by your employer.
- Create a support network and alleviate stress by traveling with colleagues where possible.
- Travelers are encouraged to contact their country’s local embassy for assistance if they are traveling with a visa that will expire before they return home.
- Although rental car fleets may still be limited, CWT recommends going directly to the counter of a car rental agency to maximize the possibility of renting a vehicle.
- Travelers who are currently checked into a hotel room but do not yet have a flight or other means of traveling back from their current destination should not release their hotel room until they have a confirmed travel itinerary. This may require checking with CWT and local sources to understand the policy surrounding arranged check-out times as well as permission from your company.
- Travelers with non-urgent requests are kindly asked to wait until the end of the week before contacting CWT so the company’s travel counselors can effectively handle the most pressing travel needs first.
- Use your corporate online booking tool for upcoming travel.
- Put your welfare, safety and security first. Avoid exposing yourself to danger or risk.

Tips for travel managers

Travel managers play a key role in ensuring their company's travelers remain productive and safe while on the road. Even as the skies open up, they can help travelers better cope by taking the following measures:

- Stay in regular contact with stranded travelers by conducting conference calls at least once a day. In addition to receiving updated information, this enables them to ask questions in real time. Email and instant messaging are also recommended. Travelers should also be encouraged to stay well informed by visiting both their company's intranet and CWT's public page on Netvibes for aggregated, real-time information: <http://www.netvibes.com/carlsonwagonlit>.
- Increase travelers' credit limits and open up or adjust merchant codes so travelers have the additional resources they need for extended lodging, meals and other necessary purchases.
- Encourage travelers to use corporate online booking tools for upcoming, routine travel requests to keep CWT telephone lines open for stranded travelers with urgent needs.
- Temporarily waive pre-trip approval processes to expedite bookings.
- To alleviate frustration, let travelers know that booking new travel may be difficult over the next few days, as airlines reposition their aircraft and crews and planes fill up quickly.
- If an upcoming flight is canceled, travelers should be reminded to cancel their hotel room as well.
- Encourage the organization of virtual meetings to keep your company's business moving.

Operating in crisis mode

CWT, its Global Partners Network, client companies, and the business travelers it serves have been working not only overtime but in creative ways to deal with the impact of volcanic ash on the global travel industry.

Since Friday, April 16, CWT has stayed in frequent contact with Eurocontrol, the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation; the U.K. National Air Traffic Services; and other air traffic bodies to stay on top of what has been a constantly evolving situation. Furthermore, many CWT offices around the world have extended their business hours into the evening, while thousands of people worked over the April 17-18 weekend to re-accommodate stranded travelers unable to fly to and from Europe.

In Europe alone, CWT registered 90,000 incoming calls versus the 900 received over a typical weekend when the company's 24-hour Emergency Service Center in the United Kingdom operates singlehandedly in the region. Home-based travel counselors around the world also put in hundreds of overtime hours to help deal with the situation. With the work week underway on Monday, April 19, calls to CWT service centers throughout Europe, the region impacted most by airspace closures, topped 115,000, compared to 65,000 calls on an ordinary weekday.

Using its traveler tracking system, CWT was also able to proactively contact many of its clients—via email and instant messaging—to assist them as effectively as possible. Since the start of the crisis, travelers have been rerouted to bring them closer to their desired destination, buses chartered to and from several European cities, rail and ferry services used where possible, rental cars booked, and hotel reservations extended. CWT has also been communicating several times a day with clients worldwide to keep them informed of the latest developments and provide assistance.

Business travelers themselves have also shown their determination to make it to their destination. CWT learned that one business traveler stranded in New York bought his way onto a cargo ship to return to the U.K. Another traveler made it home from Paris to the Dominican Republic with the help of a resourceful member of the CWT Global Partners Network. The route, however, was anything but direct: he drove a rental car from Paris to the south of France. From there he flew to Madrid for a flight to the Dominican Republic.

Having spent several days in the CWT command center and some sleepless nights, Emmanuel Guirado, CWT vice president Travel & Transaction Services, EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa), acknowledges that the cloud of volcanic ash that closed Europe's airspace for several days had an unprecedented impact on CWT operations. He said: "This extraordinary event has had global repercussions and even now, several days later, the travel industry is still not operating as it normally would. Thousands of passengers remain stranded and airline capacity is limited. We don't anticipate operations as usual until early next week."

CWT will maintain extended business hours in many countries through Friday, April 23, or until the situation has stabilized. The company expects to be able to handle all bookings and requests as usual beginning Monday, April 26.

About Carlson Wagonlit Travel

Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) is a global leader specializing in business travel management. Present in more than 150 countries, CWT serves companies of all sizes, as well as government institutions and non-governmental organizations. By leveraging both the expertise of its people and leading-edge technology, CWT helps clients derive the greatest value from their travel program in terms of savings, service, security and sustainability. The company is also committed to providing best-in-class service and assistance to travelers. CWT services and solutions comprise four lines of business: Traveler & Transaction Services, Program Optimization, Safety & Security, and Meetings & Events. In 2009, sales volume for wholly owned operations and joint ventures totaled US\$21.4 billion. For more information, please visit our global Website at www.carlsonwagonlit.com.

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