



The area for the transfer of arrivals to central quarantine has been done away with at Shanghai Pudong airport. Immigration officers no longer wear “dabai,” or hazmat protection suits. All entry procedures are back to normal.



I felt so excited that I saved all my annual leave for the reunion with my family. And the entry procedure was very convenient as no on-arrival PCR test was required.

Zhang Meng

A passenger from New Zealand

The measures aim to further optimize the international exchanges that had been impeded for nearly three years to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Nationwide, China Southern Airlines' Flight CZ312 from Toronto to Guangzhou became the first international flight to the mainland after the adjustment. The flight landed at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport at 12:16am on January 8.

It was followed by Shenzhen Airlines' Flight ZH9024 from Singapore which landed at the Shenzhen Baoan International Airport at 12:23am.

Shanghai's Pudong airport, which handles over half of the arriving international flights to the mainland, dismantled barriers overnight. They had been used to ensure the “closed-loop” transport of inbound travelers to centralized quarantine sites for the last three years.

The “closed-loop” management means they would have no contact with others until their central and home quarantines were finished.

The customs, immigration and airport staff have also taken off their white hazmat suits and facial visors for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The Shanghai Immigration

Administration was prepared for the larger passenger flow. “We conducted analysis and research on the growth of passenger volume at the port in advance,” said Qiu Bingling, an immigration officer. “We have further optimized the lineup of immigration officers on duty according to the changes in passenger flow.”

The change is both a relief and a new challenge for airport officials.

After receiving the last arriving travelers on Saturday night, Peng Chao, a police officer with the Minhang District Public Security Bureau, packed up and disinfected the computers and equipment at the passenger transfer site at the T2 terminal.

“It is finally over, we can officially get off work,” said Peng, who was in charge of the closed-loop transport of arriving passengers to Minhang for two and half years.

“I will say goodbye to my old friend, an electric heater that has accompanied me during the cold winters for the last two years,” Peng said. Air-conditioning was not allowed to avoid transmitting the virus.

The arrival and customs clearance procedure are expected to be fully restored to that of 2019 before the COVID-19 outbreak, the airport authority said.

Restaurants, stores and public transport will also be restored along with other services at the arrival section at Pudong airport.

But COVID-19 prevention measures and frequent disinfection will be conducted to prevent cross-infection.

The check-in hall, security checkpoints along with escalators and seats are being disinfected with high frequency. The trolleys will be disinfected by both ultraviolet machines and wiped with disinfectants manually.

The air-conditioning and ventilation have been turned to the high volume modes to bring in fresh air to the terminal buildings.

The removal of quarantine and testing for international travelers coincided with the Spring Festival travel rush that began on Saturday and will run until February 15.

The most difficult and demanding travel peak this year, known as the world's largest human migration, will see more than 2 billion travelers by bus, train, plane and car to reunite with their families for the traditional festival which falls on January 22 this year.

The figure had increased to 70.3 percent of the same period in 2019.

Pudong and Hongqiao international airports are expected to handle 6.5 million passengers with more than 66,000 flights during the peak period.

The flight and passenger volumes at both airports in January will increase by 42 and 46 percent, respectively on month, due to the relaxation of COVID-19 response.

About 1,000 daily flights will take off or land at Pudong airport every day during the travel peak, including many international flights, transporting some 84,000 travelers, officials said.



Li Mingyu (right) hugs her father for the first time in three years when they reunite at Shanghai Pudong International Airport.