

Ramadan bazaar at Geylang Serai to add 30 stalls

Ryan Goh

The Ramadan bazaar at Geylang Serai will be expanded to accommodate more stalls and patrons. Two new zones will be added, with the first located at the grass verge along the sheltered pathway next to the Tanjong Katong Complex open carpark, and the second at the open field next to the complex. The former will accommodate 10 retail stalls, while the latter will

house 10 food stalls and 10 retail stalls, said organiser Wisma Geylang Serai, which is under the People's Association. The 30 stalls will be in operation from April 14 to the end of the fasting month, until May 2. This will bring the total number of stalls in the bazaar this year to 70, which is still a far cry from the 600 in 2019. On the expansion, Minister of State for National Development Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim said in a Facebook post yesterday: "In view of the relaxed SMMs (safe management measures), there is

now an opportunity to optimise this space and improve the connectivity within the Geylang Serai precinct with more stalls to offer a greater variety of food as well as a wide choice of festive essentials." The bazaar, which began last Saturday, is currently sited only inside Wisma Geylang Serai itself and at a small area outside it that borders Geylang Road. When The Straits Times visited the popular bazaar on Sunday – the first day of the fasting month – there were so many visitors that the organisers had to temporarily

stop people from queueing to enter the food stalls zone. The new zones will have separate queues, entrances and exit points for better crowd management. On the popularity of the bazaar, Dr Faishal said: "It is indeed heartwarming to see so many people enjoying the lively atmosphere at the Geylang Serai precinct. "I hope this expansion will bring the community even more festive cheer during this special month of Ramadan." ryangoh@sph.com.sg

BREAK FAST TIMING
Day 4 **7:13 PM**

MORE STALLS, NEW ZONES

70
Total number of stalls in the bazaar this year.

2
Number of new zones added. They are located at:
 • the grass verge along the sheltered pathway next to the Tanjong Katong Complex open carpark
 • the open field next to the complex.

Itching to travel? Pick a 'safe' destination, take precautions



Professor Lim Poh Lian says that when overseas, masks should be worn in all enclosed spaces like malls and museums, as well as airplanes and tour buses. Outdoors, people can consider taking their masks off, although this is not advisable in crowded areas. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

You could choose one with high vaccination, booster rates, says expert on Covid-19 panel

Linette Lai
Health Correspondent

Those planning to travel soon and wanting to play it safe should pick a country with high vaccination and booster rates, suggests Associate Professor Lim Poh Lian. Another "green flag" is if the country still has sensible precautions in place – for example, mask-on rules indoors, added Prof Lim, who heads Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Traveller's Health and Vaccination Clinic. Healthcare systems in such places are less likely to be overwhelmed, she said in an exclusive interview with The Straits Times. "Even if you get sick, you will not be going to a place where the doctors and nurses are all frazzled, and emergency rooms are chock-full of people with Covid-19," said

Prof Lim, who is the director of the high-level isolation unit at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases. She is also a member of the expert committee on Covid-19 vaccination, which makes recommendations to the Government on Singapore's vaccination strategy. Since April 1, vaccinated travellers and children aged 12 and below have been allowed to enter Singapore without quarantine restrictions. The only requirement is that they have to take a pre-departure Covid-19 test before getting on the plane. People in Singapore have more travel options as well, as borders open around the world. They also no longer need to book designated vaccinated travel lane flights on their return. But what precautions should people take to keep themselves safe from the coronavirus when overseas?

Kitted out for safe travel

- Infectious diseases specialist Lim Poh Lian is currently in Greece on a two-week work trip. Here is what she packed to keep herself safe:
- 1 SURGICAL MASKS** These are sufficient for everyday use. They should be changed at least once a day, or when they get wet or dirty.
 - 2 N95 MASKS** These higher-grade masks will come in handy if you require medical care on your trip and have to visit a facility where you will be around other sick people.
 - 3 HAND SANITISER** It is important to keep your hands clean, especially before touching your face to remove your mask.
 - 4 ALCOHOL SWABS** These can be used to wipe down your airplane seat or other shared surfaces before using them.
 - 5 ANTIGEN RAPID TEST KITS** Certain countries may have shortages or sell kits that provide less accurate results, so it is a good idea to have your own supply.

Prof Lim said masks should be worn in all enclosed spaces. These include malls and museums, as well as airplanes and tour buses. Outdoors, they can consider taking their masks off, although this is

not advisable in crowded areas. People should also be extra careful when it comes to cruises, as high infection rates have previously been reported on board cruise ships, she said. "You're with

a lot of people and in an indoor setting for a very prolonged period. If you love cruises, go ahead – but be aware of the higher risk and do what you can to stay safe." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which offers tips on its website, suggests travellers purchase comprehensive travel insurance that includes medical evacuation in case of emergencies. The World Health Organisation said travellers should open windows in their accommodation to increase ventilation. Prof Lim suggested that people with weakened immune systems should take extra precautions when they travel, while unvaccinated people of any age should think twice about travelling. The bottom line? "If you're fully vaccinated and boosted and you don't have major medical issues, then part of the transition is learning to live with Covid-19," Prof Lim said. "You accept that there's some risk, but you try to minimise the risk."

What measures to take against Covid-19 when you go overseas

Linette Lai
Health Correspondent

Going on vacation during the Covid-19 pandemic means special precautions must be taken. The Straits Times answers your questions on how to keep yourself safe during your next big trip.

Q How often should I change my mask when I am overseas?
A Surgical and N95 masks are generally safe to use for as long as they are not wet or dirty. However, repeatedly crumpling your mask up to stow it in a pocket could affect its integrity, said Associate Profes-

sor Lim Poh Lian, head of Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Travellers' Health and Vaccination Clinic. "It's probably reasonable to change your mask at least once a day, or more often if you're sweating a lot," she added. Remember to clean your hands before touching your face to remove your mask, or you could put yourself at higher risk of infection.

Q Should I get a booster shot before travelling, even if my destination country doesn't require one?
A Yes, you should if you are already eligible for the shot. Singapore's Expert Committee on Covid-19 Vaccination recommends people get booster shots five



If you have a question, e-mail us at askst@sph.com.sg

months after completing the primary series. They have nine months to do so before their vaccination status lapses. In that period, your immunity is already falling, said Prof Lim, who is on the committee. She suggested getting a booster

shot at least three days before travel. This allows time for potential side effects like fever to subside.

Q How often should I test myself for Covid-19 when I am overseas?
A You should take an antigen rapid test if you have been exposed to someone with Covid-19, or if you develop symptoms on the trip, Prof Lim said. This is similar to what you would do in Singapore. Bring your own test kits in case you cannot purchase a reliable version at your destination.

Q I tested positive for Covid-19 before boarding my flight to Singapore. Must I test negative before I am allowed to return?

If you test positive in the pre-departure test, you will not be able to leave for Singapore. But you will be exempted from taking the test under specific circumstances. First, you must have tested positive for Covid-19 between seven and 90 days ago. You must then show a valid medical discharge memo or the positive result of a Covid-19 test administered by a professional. Travellers should defer their trips to Singapore if they have any Covid-19 symptoms in the seven days leading up to their departure.

Additional reporting by Toh Ting Wei

Travellers to S'pore from any country can tap virtually supervised ART option

Toh Ting Wei
Transport Correspondent

All travellers, except short-term visitors, flying into Singapore from any country can now fulfil their pre-departure Covid-19 test requirements through a virtually supervised antigen rapid test (ART). These travellers will have to take the tests through service providers listed on the Ministry of Health's (MOH) website. Previously, only travellers from selected countries or places were able to tap the virtually supervised ART option. The shift in policy thus opens up the option to those departing from countries such as Thailand which were not on the list of eligible countries initially. But short-term visitors such as tourists will still have to present Covid-19 test results from an overseas testing centre. The ministry updated the policy change on its website yesterday. A total of 93 service providers offered virtually supervised ARTs as at 6pm yesterday. This is more than a three-fold increase from the 27 approved service providers as at March 22. The testing fees start from around \$12, which is significantly cheaper than physically supervised ART options in some countries such as South Korea. MOH said that travellers looking to tap the virtually supervised Covid-19 test option should use only ART kits that are approved for distribution or use in Singapore or the relevant countries or regions. It reminded travellers that the test must be taken within two days before departure for Singapore. MOH also asked travellers to book their appointments early and have their own ART kits ready. The move to expand the virtually supervised ART to eligible travellers arriving from all countries will make return trips more convenient and less costly. These travellers will no longer have to find a physical location to take their Covid-19 tests, regardless of their country of departure. They will also have access to round-the-clock options from MOH's list of service providers. Healthcare providers have told ST they expect demand for such virtually supervised tests to rise rapidly. Travellers should, however, note that MOH said last month that it will consider removing the pre-departure test requirement in the coming weeks.

linettel@sph.com.sg

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