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### Special Edition – Volcanic Ashes – Latest Updates

#### European Travel Crisis: Iceland's Volcanic Eruption

The volcanic explosion at Eyjafjallajökull, Iceland, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010, has brought chaos to European travel. Thousands of travelers have been stranded around the globe as airlines halted service to northwestern Europe. The crisis deepened as the large cloud of ash and molten rock spread across the centre of the continent, grounding almost all of Europe's air travel. These isolated passengers have placed additional pressures on local transit as well. Backlogs have developed on all international train routes in northern Europe. The channel tunnel between England and France has been swamped by the amount of people seeking to move across. Any travelers wishing to travel by road or rail in northern or central Europe should expect an increased ticket demand for the next week. If it is possible to avoid all international travel for the next week it wise to do so. At this point the eruption has cost the airline industry USD 200 million a day and the losses are expected to continue. In an effort to get marooned travelers home several countries have adopted different strategies. Spain has volunteered itself as a transit point for all European travelers, who would then use ground transportation to get home – explaining the need to avoid such travel if possible. Britain has considered using the Royal Navy to bring its nearly 15,000 stranded citizens home, although this scenario is highly unlikely.

As of April 20<sup>th</sup> less than half of the scheduled air traffic in Europe was in operation. However, a relaxation of flight restrictions is leading to the reopening of more airports across the continent and an expansion of local, international and intercontinental flights. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Spain hosted a conference of international transit ministers, many of whom had to attend by phone due to the flight restrictions. Ultimately, several major European air carriers, including British Airways, Lufthansa, and Air France, flew test flights through the ash to prove that the aggressive nature of the air sanctions was not warranted. In response, the European air regulatory body has announced a new system, comprising of three zones where volcanic ash is located. The rankings consist of "fly," "limited flight," and "no fly," designations and have allowed almost all countries to begin moving air passengers again to some capacity.

Airports in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland have reopened, while flight restrictions kept certain major airports closed in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom. In Germany, air space will remain restricted until April 21<sup>st</sup> and there are plans to gradually phase in additional air traffic in the coming days. The United Kingdom announced that all airports reopened at 2200 local time on 20 April to allow for a resumption of commercial passenger flights; the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority plans to introduce a phased reintroduction of flights following the reopening of the air space. Indeed, several long-haul flights have already landed London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Meanwhile, meteorologists are predicting that a low pressure system near Iceland could result in the dissipation of the ash cloud around the weekend of April 24-25<sup>th</sup>. However if this situation does not develop the cloud could still take weeks to fully disperse.

According to the ASI Group, air space in the following countries is at least partially open and airports are operational; it should be noted, however, that many flights to European destinations remain canceled or delayed: Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine. The following is a listing of country-specific information regarding the other European countries' air space closures:

### Airspace Restrictions & Updates:

**Belgium:** Air space reopened on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Denmark:** April 21<sup>st</sup>, (0200 and 0800 local time), Danish air space will be divided by a line between Mors and Randers; to the north air traffic will be restricted to transit over-flights, to the south will be open to all flights.

**Finland:** International over flights will be allowed above 9,500 m; restrictions expected to remain in place until 0900 local time on 22 April.

**France:** Air space and airports in areas of northern France being gradually reopened. Flights resumed at Paris-area airports on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Other French airports are open to limited traffic.

**Germany:** Air space expected to remain closed until April 21<sup>st</sup>. Approximately 800 low altitude Lufthansa flights will be allowed to operate under visual flight rules.

**Ireland:** Airports cleared to reopen at 2100 local time on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Initial focus will be on positioning aircraft and crews; commercial air services may take up to three days to recover.

**Italy:** Airspace has reopened. Airports in the northern part of the country have resumed operations, but services to the rest of Europe remain limited.

**Netherlands:** Air space is open. Dozens of flights operated to and from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport (EHAM/AMS) on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Restrictions on night flights have been lifted.

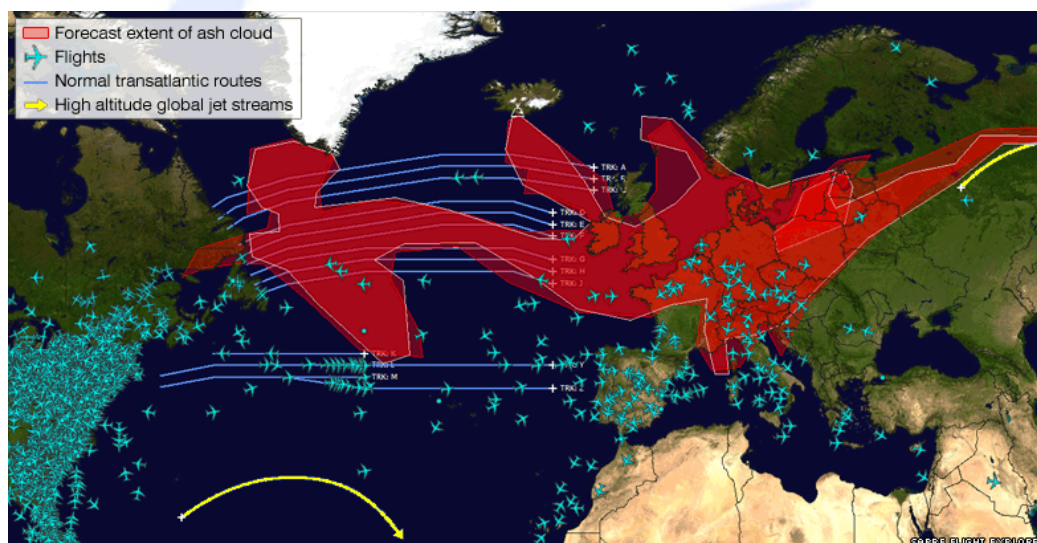
**Norway:** Air space is open and no restrictions are in place.

**Poland:** Air space is expected to reopen beginning at 0700 local time (0500 UTC) April 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Sweden:** Air space is partially open. Stockholm-Arlanda Airport (ESSA/ARN) closed to traffic at 2100 local time and is expected to remain closed through April 21<sup>st</sup>. Other airports in southern Sweden (including in Malmo and Gothenburg) are also closed.

**United Kingdom:** Airports in the United Kingdom reopened at 2200 local time on April 20<sup>th</sup> following a reassessment of the threat posed by volcanic ash to commercial aircraft. The resumption of all air traffic is to occur on a phased basis. Flights will likely be limited due to high demand as airlines work to position aircraft and crews.

### Extent of Volcanic Cloud (Image provided by BBC World News)



### Analysis:

Travelers are advised that airspace restrictions and airport closures are subject to change with little or no notice. The ash cloud, which is drifting in a south-easterly direction, could take several days to disperse completely and the potential for prolonged disruption to air travel remains high. Additionally, the formation of a new ash cloud may lead to the re-imposition of airspace restrictions in some countries, depending on how the new cloud develops. Continued airspace closures in many parts of northern, western, central and Eastern Europe mean that flights across the region are being delayed or cancelled. Furthermore, the closures are having significant implications for flights into and out of Europe from destinations worldwide. Associated delays and increased congestion should also be expected at airports not directly affected by the ash in the coming days. In addition, travelers should expect an increased demand for alternative means of transport, as well as hotel accommodation, in the vicinity of airports.

### Recommendations:

Travelers should liaise closely with their airline for up-to-date information on the status of their flight and ensure that all bookings are reconfirmed.

Travellers should proceed on the assumption that disruption to air travel to and from Europe will continue in the coming days and weeks; travellers may wish to consider alternative modes of transport. Transport and accommodation options are oversubscribed; travellers should not attempt onward travel without a prior booking. Travelers should ensure that their company is kept informed of all changes to travel arrangements, location and contact details.

Travelers stranded abroad should check the validity of important documentation, including (not exhaustive) visas, work permits and internal travel authorisation. Personnel should contact the relevant local authorities well ahead of time in the event that documentation is likely to expire prior to their departure.

Stranded travellers should contact their company to confirm what support is available to them, and where relevant their dependants. Travelers should plan ahead and ensure that they have sufficient funds, means of communication, secure accommodation, and essential supplies including prescription medicines.

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