

TOURISM IN GREECE SUFFERS FROM CONTRADICTIONARY MEASURES



the Greek government are.

The current tourist season in Greece has been running for almost three weeks. International flights bring holidaymakers into the country. The land border with Bulgaria is open for tourists. However, the first couple of weeks brought rather bad news for tourism in Greece. In many places the tourists stayed away. At the same time, it becomes obvious how contradictory the measures of

Despite rising infection rates, and despite the fact that the recently permitted public festivals have once again been banned, tourists from the United Kingdom have been allowed to travel to Greece again. Flights from Sweden are also to follow. An opening of the airports for travelers from the United States for the end of July is "under consideration", according to an official announcement. **Starting in August, there are to cruise around Greece again.**

On the other hand, the Greek Basketball Federation EOK has determined for the coming 2020/21 season that in Greece's second professional league, the A2, only Greeks and no foreign players, nor EU nationals, will be allowed to play because of Covid19.

Only a few days ago, the obligation to wear masks in large shopping malls was canceled, but now, on the part of the epidemiologists, a general obligation to wear masks in all closed places is being discussed again.

The island of Crete, Greece's most important holiday destination with 25 million annual overnight stays so far had just 19 infections. Still, the tourists are not coming in great numbers. Some rental houses did not open for the season at all, others expect 50% revenue compared to last year. Strict measures at the airport and other rules in effect discourage tourists who usually flush the local attractions.

On the same day that the traditional Panigyroi, open-air dances with live music and food, were banned, the limit of six people per table in restaurants was lifted.

The Greek government has so far continued its policy of limited testing. As a result, many infections only become known when patients turn to the state health service EODY on their own initiative. This service continues to publish the test results daily. Before the opening of the country to tourism on July 1, infection rates were mostly in the single-digit range. Since tourists have been coming to the country, double-digit infection rates have become the norm.

Minister of Health Vasilis Kikilias rules out a renewed, nationwide lockdown. Local measures of this kind are, however, quite possible, he said. For the government, citizens and tourists are personally responsible for preventing the spread of the pandemic.

Since last week, travelers arriving in Greece by land have had to present a negative COVID 19 test certificate on entry. This test must have been carried out by a state or state-licensed laboratory. In addition, the test report, which must be in English, must include the passport number or ID number of the person tested. Furthermore, the tourists should all be tested again when they cross the border, said Health Minister Vasilis Kikilias in an interview.

Currently, considerably fewer travelers were registered at the Promachona border crossing point as a result of the new rule. Serbs are currently no longer allowed to enter Greece. The reason for this tightening is an increase in infections in Serbia. This has also become apparent among Serbian tourists in Greece. The strict regulations on the form of the test results became necessary because resourceful businessmen sold fake test results to interested parties at the border for a fee of up to 40 euros.

However, like so many of the measures taken by the Greek government against the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic, the regulation is not consistent. Residents of Serbia, or people passing through Serbia, can still enter the country if they are citizens of another country. In addition, Greek citizens and also persons with a Greek migration background can enter the country regardless of the measures.

It is also being considered, according to media reports, that seasonal workers from neighboring countries should also be tested. It is not clear from the news whether and how seasonal workers have been epidemiologically recorded so far.

The other border crossings of the country, which are closed to tourists, are still passable for Greeks. This leads to the paradox that there are no tourists at Greece's largest border crossing in terms of traffic at the village of Evzonoi (near the border crossing for train traffic Idomeni, which became known because of the wild camp for refugees there in 2015 and 2016).

The local press in the border towns ironically notes, like the Eidiseis from Kilgis, that **apparently only tourists are infectious and wonder if there is an immunity for Greeks who travel daily to northern Macedonia to gamble or shop at the casino.**

When asked by telephone, the editor-in-chief of Eidiseis confirmed that Greeks from Kilgis, Thessaloniki and neighboring cities would continue to travel to northern Macedonia for shopping and gambling. In absolute figures, however, border commuters are not comparable with the time before the pandemic. Nevertheless, citizens in Kilgis are concerned about the fact that the commuters are not being tested at all.

There are also no tests and no trace of the state health service on the officially closed border with Albania at the Kakavia border crossing. Between 1500 and 2000 people enter the country there every day. Closed borders mean that only tourists are turned away. Seasonal workers, business people and Albanians working regularly in Greece can still cross the border.

*** facebook video ***

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