

THAI TOURISM SECTOR DREAMS OF 50,000 FOREIGNERS IN Q4



The Tourism Council of Thailand hopes to welcome 50,000 foreign tourists in the 4th quarter, which represents 0.5% of the 2019 figure. The organization would like to convince the government to open its doors to more visitors.

The expected revenue from foreign tourists is about 4.5 billion baht (US\$121 million) for the quarter, a 99 % year-on-year decline, said Chairat Trirattanajarasorn, the chairman of the Tourism Council of Thailand.

The Council expects 6.74 million foreign tourists this year, a drop of 83% compared to 2019, the best year ever achieved by the Thai tourism sector with 39.8 million visitors, he recalled.

The prospects for next year remain uncertain, Chairat Trirattanajarasorn admitted, although the official tourism agency puts forward the figure of 20 million foreign tourists in 2021.

"If there is no vaccine and we still have a 14-day quarantine, I don't expect more than a few hundred thousand tourists next year," he said.

Thailand was relatively spared by the Covid-19 outbreak compared to most countries and banned foreign tourists from entering the country in April. The kingdom peaked in the number of infections reported on March 22 with 188 cases reported on the same day.

In addition to a few dozen medical tourists allowed to enter since July, no foreign holidaymakers were admitted since April 4. But the kingdom is expected to start welcoming the first foreign visitors on long-stay visas. However, the authorities, who do not hide their desire to take advantage of the Covid-19 crisis to move from mass tourism to high-end tourism, **want to limit the number of entries to 1,200 per month, which seems derisory to really help a sector that supports several million people directly and indirectly and is literally devastated by global but especially local travel restrictions.**

Institutions of the sector will propose to the government to authorize a greater number of foreign tourists coming from very low-risk countries to return in December without quarantine of 14 days, said Vichit Prakobgosol, president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents.

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