

SINGAPORE LIFTING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND LAUNCHING TRAVEL BUBBLES



Singapore has been one of the countries that has been dealing very well with the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the economy of the city-state has been heavily affected. According to the country's Ministry of Trade and Industry, the economy of Singapore fell by 42.9% in the second quarter of the year. The travel restrictions have been finally lifted.

The tourism industry was one of the biggest casualties of the crisis. Tourist arrivals decreased by 99.4% in September compared to last year. In this context it is also necessary to point out the importance of Singapore as an airline hub in the region, with the Changi Airport being one of the busiest in the world.

Gradual Reopening

To try and recover from this difficult period and boost the economy, **the country is gradually lifting travel restrictions and reopening itself to tourists.** The idea is to allow entry to people from countries with lower infection numbers and do so under firm conditions.

Recently, Singapore has opened up to some countries from Asia-Pacific region. These include Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam and Brunei, with residents from these countries eligible to apply for the so-called Air Travel Pass (ATP).

Based on this ATP, travelers are allowed to visit Singapore for a short period of time. However, there are many conditions to be met, starting from downloading a local tracing app to taking a PCR test upon arrival in the country as well as staying in isolation until the results are available.

First Chinese Visitors

Chinese residents were also granted the possibility to apply for an ATP for trips from November 6 onwards and the first batch of tourists arrived in Singapore already on that day. As of now, only one flight a week operates between Shanghai and Singapore.

This is an important step for the Singapore tourism industry, considering the importance of China as a source market. In 2019, 3.63 million Chinese visitors arrived to Singapore. This is the highest number of foreigners from any country.

Travel Bubble with Hong Kong

Travel restrictions will also be lifted with regards to the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. Last week, it was announced that a bilateral and flexible Air Travel Bubble (ATB) will be launched on November 22 between Singapore and Hong Kong.

This bubble will make transport easier between the two destinations. Nevertheless, PCR tests will be still necessary, both upon arrival as well as 72 hours before departure.

Moreover, only designated flights will be available within the ATB. The number of flights can gradually rise depending on the situation, starting at one flight per day in the first 15 days (two per day afterwards). Under certain conditions, the ATB could be suspended and later resumed. This will once again depend on the situation related to the spread of the virus.

Malaysia with Unusual Marketing

In the meantime, there have been ideas to establish a similar bubble between Singapore and Malaysia. The situation in Singapore's neighbor country is, however, currently somewhat grim.

Up until now two travel agreements have been reached between the two states with regards to business and official trips, but leisure travel has not been addressed.

Nevertheless, in a very difficult context for tourism in both countries, Tourism Malaysia came up with a very unusual piece of marketing.

"We would never have imagined encouraging you to spend your holidays in Singapore, but our friends in the tourism industry could use your support at the moment," the tourism board wrote on their Facebook page, motivating tourists to "take a Singapoliday".

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