

EUROPEAN TOURISTS MAY VISIT AUSTRALIA SOON



Australia has had its borders closed for international tourism. Now, the first signs of change came to light. According to Australian media reports, Melbourne plans to resume international air traffic on December 7.

The state of Victoria was hit by the corona pandemic the hardest. The capital Melbourne was in lockdown for almost four months - **there was hardly any other place in the world with such long restrictions.**

International flights were suspended from the beginning of July after violations of the hotel quarantine program led to rising numbers of infections. But now when the situation has been brought under control to a large extent, the city wants to relax the restrictions and allow international flights from December 7, including European tourists.

However, entry into the country will only be possible under strict conditions. Those who come to Australia must first go to a hotel quarantine for 14 days - often for a fee. In addition, arrivals of international passengers are limited to 160 passengers per day. This raises the weekly upper limit for Australia to almost 8,000 passengers. The relaxed entry regulation is therefore mainly intended for travel returnees who are stranded overseas. Tourist arrivals from most countries are currently still prohibited - this also continues to apply to German travelers. A vacation in Australia will probably only be possible again for European tourists when the infection situation in Europe improves significantly.

Whoever has always dreamed of a trip to Australia will probably have to be patient for some time. The corona pandemic has led to a ban on entry for all foreign travelers. Especially tourist trips are no longer allowed. And this will probably remain so for some time. The Australian tourism industry fears that the rules for vacationers could only be relaxed again in the middle of 2021.

Corona case numbers in Australia are negligible. The Department of Health counts about 100 active cases, and there are hardly any new infections just few cases daily reported. In order to keep it that way, the current entry regulations will probably not change any time soon.

At the first "Australia Marketplace Online", an online trade fair of Australian tour operators, local providers showed little hope that vacationers from Europe would soon be able to return.

The earliest date under discussion is currently the second half of 2021.

Georg Vollmer, Managing Director of AAT Kings - the largest provider of coach tours in Australia - assumes that the borders will not be opened before then. All tours for the international market have therefore been cancelled until the end of June. Only a vaccine could make the entry of tourists from abroad possible earlier.

Until foreign travelers and European tourists are permitted again, Australian providers are trying to

keep their heads above water with local travelers. The Australians are very fond of traveling and are also not allowed to leave the country. In addition, there is state aid, but for the time being it is only available until March.

For the kangaroo airline Qantas, times are currently not rosy either: all intercontinental flights are cancelled until March, and Qantas boss Alan Joyce does not expect increased travel before July. The only hope is therefore direct flight corridors between two countries with low corona infection rates - for example to New Zealand or Japan.

The airline manager does not believe that flight tickets to Australia could become more expensive due to the corona pandemic. Here, the managers of Singapore Airlines and Emirates agreed - the airfares would remain "very interesting". After all, the business would first have to pick up again after the crisis and air travel would have to remain attractive for travelers.

Date: 2020-11-29

Article link:

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