

THAILAND CONSIDERS QUARANTINE EXEMPTION FOR VACCINATED TRAVELERS



Thailand is not the first destination to consider related benefits for the vaccinated travelers upon entry. Moldova was the first country in Europe to exempt Covid-19 vaccinated travelers from mandatory 14-day quarantine upon entry. Seychelles followed their lead and now Thailand is considering such a decree to boost tourism again after measures already taken had little effect.

Thailand is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world and a country that relies heavily on tourism revenue. The Corona crisis caused international arrivals to drop almost completely.

In addition, Thailand closed its borders to foreign tourists, although the entry for European tourists with appropriate visas has been possible since the end of last year. The Asian country also introduced a luxury quarantine for international (Gulf) tourists in order to generate more revenue from tourism again. Unlike the usual mandatory quarantine in a designated hotel, guests in one of the selected golf resorts can move freely from the first day of quarantine and use all hotel facilities. The only condition is that they are not allowed to leave the resort. But apparently, the easing did not bring much and the entry fee of only eight euros caused a lot of commotion.

New Tourism Concept

Thailand now plans to offer advantages for vaccinated travelers. The new concept is to come into force in the third quarter, sparing vaccinated tourists the 14-day quarantine. Under the proposed concept, appropriately named "Welcome Back to Thailand Again," the borders are to be fully reopened to all tourists, about a year after they were closed.

According to local media, the president of the Tourism Council of Thailand is said to have already discussed tourism marketing plans with neighboring China. According to the report, tourists will only need to present a proof of Covid-19 vaccination upon entry, as well as the usual visas required for Thailand. This will eliminate the 14-day quarantine. If the concept works out, Thailand could be the first tourist country to reopen completely.

Vaccinations Present Major Challenges

There is currently a lot of discussion about advantages for vaccinated travelers or about the waiving of quarantines. Already at the last EU-Corona summit, many member states demanded a uniform vaccination passport, which should make travel within the EU possible again without worries. Many countries in Europe remain sceptical on this issue, considering such a passport a future option, but currently, scepticism prevails over the uncertainty of possible long-term consequences or contagions. At present, many countries around the world give priority to vaccinating high-risk patients, the elderly, and people in systemically important medical professions.

A trip to Thailand without quarantine this summer is not feasible for many, given the current situation. In other countries, the situation does not look better. Some vaccine manufacturers, including BioNTech, are currently struggling with supply shortages and can't deliver the number of doses scheduled for the quarter. In addition, there are also uncertainties about the different

efficacies, for example with the Moderna vaccine. **Whether Thailand will authorize all vaccines or only a selection based on their efficacy is also unclear.** So, it remains to be seen what further details the planned concept will provide and, most importantly, whether it will attract more tourists to the country this time.

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