

THE PARTY IS OVER FOR DUBAI - CASES OF INFECTIONS ARE BOOMING



Dubai, its magnificent beaches, its ever-rising buildings and above all its bars and restaurants have attracted many tourists from all over the world during the Christmas vacations. The state was indeed one of the few possible destinations to escape the pandemic and health restrictions. A true luxury refuge. However, now the party is over.

Dubai has done everything possible to welcome the Christmas wave of tourists in safety by imposing health measures such as the mandatory wearing of masks but leaving its cultural and entertainment venues open. **This may help Dubai reach its target of 20 million tourists in 2020, set before the pandemic began.** In any case, 500,000 travelers passed through Dubai airport during the first week of January.

The destination even played the medical tourism card by allowing rich foreigners to be vaccinated on its soil. A British company (Knightsbridge, a sort of high-end club) offers such vaccination to its customers over 65 years old for 45,000 euros.

"We are the pioneers of this luxury vaccine tourism. You go away for a few weeks in a villa in the sun. Then you have your two injections, your certificate and you can leave," explained its founder Stuart McNeil.

"Dubai seems to be positioning itself as the destination of choice for those who want to escape the confines," observes Scott Livermore, chief economist at Oxford Economics Middle East, a British analysis center.

However, today, the city is beginning to regret this strategy. The cases of infection explode, they have tripled in the last three weeks, certainly fueled by the arrival of so many tourists. Now, the party is over and restrictive measures are increasing despite Dubai's strong dependence on tourism.

Tourists arriving at Dubai airport will have to present a negative Covid-19 test. Depending on the health situation in the country of origin, it will be necessary to do an additional one after arrival.

Private parties, weddings and other family gatherings will now be limited to 10 people, exclusively close family members. In addition, in cafes and restaurants, the distance between tables must be increased from two to three meters. And any "entertainment" in hotels is stopped. Finally, the authorities are calling for the denunciation of violations of these protocols through enforcement.

As for medical tourism, it is starting to slow down. **The Emirates were among the first countries in the world to launch an extensive vaccination campaign in December, using vaccines from China's Sinopharm and the US-German Pfizer-BioNTech alliance.**

More than three million doses were injected, for a population of 10 million people, according to official figures. The country ranks second behind Israel in terms of the percentage of the population vaccinated, according to local media. But inequalities are reported and while the country is experiencing an increase in infections, the country's Health Authority has just announced a slowdown in the administration of Pfizer vaccine due to delays in delivery. It is therefore not certain

that the rich Westerners will be able to continue to come and get vaccinated.

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