

USA PLANS OPENING UP TO TOURISTS IN MAY



The U.S. Travel Association is lobbying hard in Washington D.C. and the first reports of an opening to tourists as early as May are making the rounds. Experts are still sceptical - but assume that the USA will also closely link the opening with the vaccination situation.

The U.S. news portal CNBC reports, with reference to Washington insiders, that an opening "from mid-May" is being considered. Specifically, the idea is to open the land borders with Mexico and Canada, but also to readmit entrants from Europe (EU, EFTA, Great Britain). **For now, the borders will definitely remain closed until at least April 21.**

There is still no official government memo on the opening to tourists. What has leaked out so far is that the vaccination status - both within the USA and in the travelers' country of origin - will play a key role. According to the memo, one of the opening conditions would be virtually complete vaccination coverage of the U.S. population, i.e., free access to vaccines by mid-May. That is optimistic, to say the least. Furthermore, it means that several "government agencies" would have to be involved in working out any entry requirements in the event of a reopening. Why the time frame of fewer than two months mentioned by CNBC - and in view of the fact that Corona numbers are rising again in various countries and that the USA is currently struggling with spring breakers who neglect covid measures and thus possibly fuel new superspreader events, an opening before summer is hardly to be expected. In short, the matter is being addressed, but so far still without concrete details.

Meanwhile, lobbying in favor of the domestic travel industry is in full swing. Not only the major U.S. carriers are demanding the end of lockdown, but also the thousands of companies that are massively affected by the absence of foreign guests. As the U.S. Travel Association (USTA) calculated last week with the help of the research institute "Tourism Economics", **tourism revenues in the U.S. have fallen from 2.6 trillion dollars to 1.5 trillion dollars within one year, a decline of 42 percent** - and this despite relatively solid domestic tourism.

Overall, a steep 5.6 million jobs were lost in the U.S. USTA was able to address the problems directly with representatives from Washington last week. For USTA President/CEO Roger Dow, the key message was, "The travel industry is suffering a disproportionate share of the overall loss because of the pandemic. Now it's even more important that policymakers understand that the recovery of the economy nationally is very closely tied to the recovery of travel and the travel industry as a whole."

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