

# TRAVEL TO ASIA: WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?



to Asia.

Asia has been totally closed for the whole pandemic period. However, some countries are already open for travel, and others are expected to open in the near future. Vaccination is the central element in each case. The countries want to return slowly but surely to the tourist offer. Tourists nevertheless need to get familiar with the latest situation and regulations in effect for travel

The fact that **Thailand** plans to open up to tourists again soon - with conditions far less drastic than before - is creating a mood of optimism in the travel industry. Phuket will be ready to open its doors as early as July. In this way, the most important Asian travel destination is sending out an important signal.

But what about the other Asian countries? There are significant differences here - some states are already open, some are on the verge of opening, while for others it continues to look very dark.

## **Bali, Indonesia**

One of the other important destinations for travel to Asia is the Indonesian island of Bali. In March 2020, visa-free entry was stopped for people from 160 countries. However, until the end of 2020, it was still possible to enter with a "business visa" or "social visa", for which the help of agents had to be enlisted. In January 2021, this was also banned. Entry is only possible for foreigners with the explicit permission of the Indonesian authorities - not for conventional tourists.

But now, things are getting underway. Basically, Bali wants to open up again for travelers from July 2021. This is to happen, similarly as in Thailand, first in clearly defined "tourist zones". For Bali, these would be the most common tourist locations, such as Nusa Dua, but not the island in general. For this to be possible at all, Bali receives preferential treatment in the all-Indonesian vaccination program. Understandably, tourism accounts for the bulk of Bali's income - and since Bali suffered a 75% drop in tourism in 2020, many are pushing for a reopening there as well.

In principle, Indonesia wants to open under "Travel Bubbles." As a prerequisite, again analogous to Phuket, a nonstop flight connection from the country of origin to the island is being examined. Travelers from Australia, South Korea, China, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia are therefore primarily eligible. They would also have to present a covid vaccination and a negative PCR test upon entry.

## **China and Hong Kong**

China is currently closed for tourists. Chinese citizens or residents, there must go into 14-day quarantine upon entry. Nevertheless, the Chinese government announced that it was working on a gradual opening for tourists. This is, of course, against the backdrop of the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing in February 2022, where efforts are being made to avoid having to go the way of Tokyo, where the Summer Games will be held this year without foreign visitors.

Transit via Hong Kong is possible for tourists. The stay must not exceed 24 hours and the destination

must be in the same booking as the flight to Hong Kong (boarding pass must already be available), also the luggage must be checked through.

## **Japan**

Currently, citizens of most countries in the world are not allowed to enter Japan. The visa exemption has also been lifted. A negative PCR test and a completed "Quarantine Questionnaire" are required for entry, as quarantine is mandatory. As is known, the Summer Olympics in Tokyo will be held this year without foreign spectators. An opening is probably not realistic until autumn at the earliest.

## **Singapore**

Singapore is closed to conventional tourists, but open to business or official travelers and travelers with special permission (e.g., holders of a "Long Term Visit Pass" or a "Work Pass"). Transits are also possible under certain conditions - those flying with Singapore Airlines can transit without any problems. Whether the holding of the World Economic Forum 2021 in Singapore (instead of Davos) in August 2021 will contribute to further opening is currently unknown.

## **Sri Lanka**

The spice island south of the Indian subcontinent is currently one of the few bright spots in Asia. The country is fully open for tourists, of course under some conditions. First, one must have already received the second Covid vaccine dose at least two weeks before entering the country. The original certificate must be present, with a certified English translation if necessary. After that, a PCR test must be done upon arrival and on day 7 of the trip, during which time you will be in a quarantined hotel. If both tests are negative, one can move freely and stay in other hotels.

## **Malaysia**

Malaysia is currently reopening its borders, but only within "travel bubbles" - one already exists with Indonesia and is being developed with another nine Asian countries.

The Malaysian government has started a comprehensive vaccination program and hopes to achieve "herd immunity" by vaccinating 80 percent of the population between December 2021 and February 2022. It is likely that the country will not be open to tourists from other countries until that time.

## **Vietnam**

Vietnam's borders remain closed and foreigners are only allowed to cross them with special permits (diplomats, investors, etc.). The coronavirus outbreak was effectively contained in January and in the meantime, the vaccination program has started. Vietnam is said to be considering a gradual opening to vaccinated travelers, though no date has yet been set for this.

\*\*\* facebook video \*\*\*

## **Cambodia**

Entry is still prohibited for conventional tourists. Those allowed to enter must present a negative PCR test and comprehensive proof of insurance. Nevertheless, all Cambodian residents can be vaccinated free of charge. After health workers and government officials, people involved in tourism are third on the priority list. This at least gives hope for an opening in the near future.

## **Laos**

Laos is still completely closed to tourists and those authorized to enter the country are subject to a strict regime regarding testing requirements. But here, too, the opening path via vaccinations is emerging: More than 40,000 people from the health sector as well as from risk groups have already been vaccinated.

## **Philippines**

Currently, entry for conventional tourists is still prohibited. At least the Philippines are reopening some of their popular tourist destinations such as Boracay, El Nido, Coron or Siargao for domestic tourism. When the opening will also take place for foreign tourists is still in the stars.

## **Bhutan**

Bhutan is currently closed to tourists. However, mass vaccination is rolling out in June 2021 and the authorities have already worked out rules by means of which the opening in August 2021 can be considered. This would not include a quarantine requirement, provided one can prove covid vaccination. Entry would also be possible only with a maximum 72-hour PCR test, but this would entail a quarantine of still undetermined duration.

## **Myanmar**

The former shooting star among the Asian destinations is currently struggling with completely different problems than Corona - namely with a military coup and the brutal, bloody repression of its own population. The borders to Myanmar are currently completely closed, although the country is hardly likely to be considered as a vacation destination at present anyway. The situation there is completely unclear and also depends on international diplomacy.

Date: 2021-04-05

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-to-asia-regulations-and-requirements-news11960>