

TOURISM SECTOR IN ASIA EXPECTED TO STRUGGLE UNTIL 2024



The Covid-19 pandemic has led the tourism industry all over the world into an unprecedented crisis. While some regions are awakening from their travel hibernation, others will, unfortunately, struggle a bit longer.

The Asian continent in particular looks set to feel the effects of the pandemic for a longer period compared to western countries, which have been rapidly reopening to the world in the last couple of weeks.

From China to Japan

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in its Travel-ready index for the year, the tourism sector in Asia and **in particular the Northeastern part will return to pre-pandemic tourism levels in 2024 at the earliest.**

The main reason for this is China's very strict entry and departure policies, seeing as the country is a key source market for most destinations in the region.

Some of the countries "least ready" for the tourism recovery include Taiwan, Japan, Laos and Brunei, as well as the already-mentioned China, which is set to continue with its drastic Covid-19 policy at least during the ongoing year. This will, obviously, also affect the territories of Macau and Hong Kong.

Then there is Japan, which seems to be in no hurry to welcome tourists from abroad, despite the improving health situation in the country. While it is true that the government has allowed 10,000 travelers per day since April, this does not apply to leisure tourists.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida recently emphasized this personally. "An exact timetable has not yet been decided," he said. In all seriousness, it sounded as if he wanted to reassure his compatriots that foreigners will not be coming back anytime soon.

An Unrushed Reopening

The contrast of reopening between countries in the west and those in Asia is quite striking. While countries in Europe and North America have been going back and forth between closures and openings in the last two years, Asian countries are much more cautious.

Experts note that the tourism sector in Asia is essentially forced to start from zero due to this situation. **The most difficult part will be negotiating with airlines, which are currently very careful with regard to planning future routes due to the overall volatility of the environment.**

In this context, one cannot forget the rising prices of oil, inflation as well as the general insecurity connected to the war in Ukraine. All in all, clearly a tough situation, which will take time to resolve. Apparently at least until 2024.

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