

TRAVEL IN ASIA: SOME COUNTRIES WELCOME TOURISTS AGAIN



Similar to European destinations, many Asian countries canceled restrictions to enter their country. Still, however, holidaymakers need to keep themselves updated on the requirement for travel in Asia.

As the first Asian destination to welcome - in a gradual way - tourists, **Thailand completely lifted the restrictions on October 1**. After a gradual reopening, Thailand entered the phase of complete reopening on July 1, 2022, with the abolition of the Thailand Pass registration system and the only obligation for travelers to present proof of vaccination or a negative test result within 72 hours prior to travel. This obligation has been lifted since October 1, 2022. However, we must watch out for the implementation of a tax applied to tourists, even if the date of application of this measure, has already been postponed several times, it is still very uncertain.

Indonesia has long been constrained by a quarantine system that discourages travelers from visiting the country, but tourists are now welcome to visit again, provided that they are vaccinated. Beware, however, that to travel in Indonesia by air, sea and land, it is necessary to have received three doses of vaccine. Travelers who have only had two or one dose should be tested according to certain procedures.

As of March 14, 2022, pre-departure testing is no longer required for travelers entering **Mongolia**, whether vaccinated or not. A few days earlier, Mongolia also activated its online visa issuance system. Passengers must fill out a medical form upon arrival at the border control post, and only arrival through the airport Chinghis Khaan (UBN) is possible for travelers.

At the end of March, **Singapore** lightened its sanitary protocol, putting an end to the Vaccinated Travel Line. As the rules on arrivals, departures and transits in Singapore are very evolving, travelers and residents of Singapore are invited to consult the official Safetravel website.

Malaysia has also seen its visitor numbers pick up since its reopening in April. The country expects to welcome 9.2 million visitors worth 5.9 billion euros by the end of the year. A year that will be marked by a major event for the destination: the 6th World Tourism Conference (WTC) to be held in Sabah from 28 to 30 November 2022.

In May, **Vietnam** stopped the test on arrival, after lifting the vaccination requirements and quarantine arrangements. The visa exemption for many nationals is again valid for stays of less than 15 days. But beware, this exemption is not extendable or renewable on-site.

Burma also resumed issuing tourist visas in May, after a two-year closure. But activists immediately called on travelers to boycott the country to avoid funding the junta.

Since May, travel restrictions have also been eased in **Laos**. The country has dropped its border restrictions for fully vaccinated tourists. Unvaccinated visitors must present a rapid antigen test issued within 48 hours of departure from their home country.

Cambodia, in turn, removed the quarantine for non-vaccinated travelers last July. However, these travelers must perform a rapid antigen test upon arrival in the country. The cost of the test is US\$5 per person and, if the result is negative, travelers can immediately continue their stay.

It is also possible to travel to the **Philippines**, provided that certain formalities are respected. Anyone arriving in the Philippines must register on the One Health Pass website at least 24 hours before boarding. The presentation of the QR code generated by this application is required upon boarding by airlines and upon arrival in the Philippines. The conditions of access to the Philippine territory are different depending on the traveler's vaccination status.

In early September, **South Korea** canceled the pre-departure PCR test, while maintaining an arrival test. This test must be completed by midnight on the day following the arrival date. Travelers are exempt from short-stay visas in South Korea but must obtain a K-ETA electronic travel authorization to enter the country.

India welcomes back travelers and changed its protocol on September 2. A screening test is still required for travelers who must be vaccinated.

Bhutan reopened its borders at the end of September. The country, which relies on high-end tourism, is now imposing a tax of 200 euros on travelers.

Hong Kong lifted the mandatory hotel quarantine for people arriving from abroad on September 26, ending more than two and a half years of international isolation of the financial center. However, travelers will have to undergo a PCR test upon arrival and will not be allowed to visit bars and restaurants for the first three days. Also beware: tourists still run the risk of being isolated in a hotel room, or in the worst case scenario, sent to a quarantine camp, if they test positive for coronavirus upon arrival in Hong Kong.

It was long-awaited news: **Japan** also cancels the very restrictive measures that were applied to travelers. From October 11, the archipelago will welcome individual tourists again, without a visa. The ceiling on daily arrivals will also be lifted.

Finally, **the door to China is still not open and the easing of restrictions that has taken place so far has been very limited.** Experts emphasize that it remains very difficult for any traveler outside of China to visit China due to the closure of the borders, except in specific cases. Currently, only business travel and letters of invitation from a Chinese university can justify a visa application. According to Reuters, the Chinese government has issued draft rules to make it easier for certain tourists to enter China for visits along its border. When will this happen? Impossible to say for the moment, it will depend on the evolution of the health situation, according to the Chinese authorities.

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