

TAIWAN REOPENS ITS BORDERS TO INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS



Taiwan began welcoming international tourists after finally ending mandatory quarantines to control the spread of covid-19. The island had maintained some of its entry and quarantine rules, while much of the rest of Asia relaxed or lifted them completely, although in June it reduced the number of days required for isolated arrivals to three days instead of the previously stipulated seven.

While Taiwan has reported nearly seven million domestic cases since the beginning of the year, the government has continued its reopening, **saying life needs to return to normal, especially given the high vaccination rates.** The government has welcomed the first arrivals who have benefited from the end of the quarantine on a flight from Bangkok to Taiwan's main international airport in Taoyuan, outside Taipei. Excited tourists have put up for photographs amid a crowd of media and country officials.

Some Limitations Remain

Despite the reopening of the borders to international tourists, not all measures have been relaxed. For example, the arrival of tourists in the Asian country from abroad is limited to 150,000 people per week. These visitors, as announced by the Taiwanese authorities, will have to maintain the health alert. The Asian country has stressed the fact that some rules remain in place, such as the requirement for people to monitor their health for seven days after arrival and to undergo rapid tests.

For this first opening day, the country foresees a total of 270 flights, which will bring more than 12,300 travelers to the island - in addition to some 5,600 in stopover - and will take 6,300 to other destinations. "This is an opportunity to come back to life and rebuild cross-border tourism," remarked the director general of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau to reporters.

Obstacles between China and Taiwan

Many Taiwanese in China have complained that they are still unable to return home because airline tickets are hard to come by. In fact, for these first few days of reopening, there are only a few flights available across the Taiwan Strait. **Currently, the number of flights between Shanghai and Taiwan is still small, making it difficult to obtain a plane ticket.** Even if a seat is available, the fare is still high, which discourages many Taiwanese businessmen from returning home. In this situation, some Taiwanese workers have decided to wait to return home for the Lunar New Year vacation early next year, when cross-strait flights are expected to return to normal.

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