

CHINA TO BOOST TOURISM BY SLIGHTLY EASING THEIR HEALTH RESTRICTIONS



In China, the Ministry of Tourism has announced measures to facilitate inter-regional travel. The aim is to boost tourism - to revive the sector that has been badly affected by the "zero Covid" strategy.

The health restrictions are expected to be relaxed. The notice, published last week by the Chinese Ministry of Tourism following that of the State Council, is once again an update on travel restrictions in the country, but **in no way signals the end of the zero-Covid stance.**

There is no question of "lying down in front of the epidemic" - the expression in Mandarin for "living with the virus" -, the authorities have hammered home. It is a question of facing the pandemic in a more "scientific" way, according to the terms of the propaganda.

Specifically, to travel to China it will now be necessary to present a negative Covid test less than 48 hours old before taking the train or plane, but any passage through the so-called Covid risk zones will no longer be taken into account.

Then there is the reality of the local authorities who sometimes drag their feet in the face of measures decreed by Beijing. It is indeed difficult to relax the valves, when for three years provincial officials have been sanctioned in case of infectious outbreaks deemed poorly controlled.

An effort in this direction had already been made last summer. In order to facilitate inter-regional travel and boost tourism the central government removed the asterisks on health passes that indicated that you were passing through these risk areas and prevented you from travelling. These asterisks were immediately replaced by long lists of neighborhoods, districts, and places in your city of departure, which the health agents would unpack in front of your face upon arrival at the train stations and airports, asking you to sign a document committing you to responsibility and certifying that you had not gone for a walk in the red zones.

Some 130,000 people have left the tourism industry during the last two years due to repeated confinements and travel constraints. A tour guide in China's Inner Mongolia province recently confided that for the past year, due to a lack of customers, he had taken to selling smartphones online to earn a living.

We'll see how these partial measures work out, knowing that the sale of group travel is still suspended. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture published on May 10, despite the fact that Chinese people no longer travel abroad and spend their vacations in China, the activity of travel agencies remains 17.38% below its pre-pandemic level.

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