

# HONG KONG REOPENS TO CHINESE TOURISTS



The former British colony, a popular destination for the wealthy of mainland China, reopens its borders with package tours, including mRNA vaccines.

Chinese tourists can finally go to Hong Kong with a special passport to spend their money without restraint in luxury shops, invest in the stock market, make aesthetic adjustments and, in any case, breathe an air very different from that of mainland China, sheltered from the stern eye of Beijing. **A bet at the casinos in Macau and run away, coming back home.**

The turning point from cosmetics to health is the result of the events of recent years, tourism restarts after years of restraints due to protests and then the Coronavirus. Now in the travel package there is also the anti-coronavirus vaccine not available in China but used to restart tourism, essential for the economy of Hong Kong.

## The Border Reopens

There was a time when arrivals equaled the population of the Hong Kong, which was just over eight million inhabitants. Then, the decline in tourism connected to street protests - in mid-2019 the flow was around 5.14 million, already 770 thousand less than the previous month - with the coup de grace of the harsh Covid-19 season.

The new chief executive John Lee, former interior minister, in the saddle from July 1st, 2022 has ensured that he would open all 14 accesses to Hong Kong from China.

During these festive days - the Lunar New Year which will last 40 days and began last Saturday - Hong Kong is experiencing a new season for which it has carefully prepared during the pandemic by completing the restructuring of the Kowloon area with the attraction of the new art museum. Upon arrival in Hong Kong as early as 29th December, 2022 - as specified by the consulate general led by Carmelo Ficarra - Chinese tourists arriving in Hong Kong are no longer subject to restrictions in the days following disembarkation.

The local authorities' suggestion? Perform one rapid antigen swab daily until day five after entering Hong Kong. And, in case of positivity, follow the indications of the local health authorities.

## New Flows of Tourists

With Beijing's turnaround in relation to Covid-19, the borders between Hong Kong and China are now physically falling. Opening a new era in tourism, a health tourism intercepted with great timing by the pharmaceutical giant Fosun, the Chinese distributor of BioNTech's Covid vaccines, which has begun to receive bookings from Chinese who want to get vaccinated in Hong Kong, paying 44 US dollars.

Same thing is happening in Macau. Too bad, however, that the same maneuver is prohibited in

Fosun in Mainland China, with the government hostile to Western vaccines.

Between the Lunar New Year and the growing infections in China, a boom in travelers is to be expected, in contrast with what happened in mid-2019: with “only” 5.14 million, 770 thousand less than the previous month, the volume of business was down to HK\$35.2 billion, 6.7 percent lower year-on-year and a hotel occupancy rate of 87 percent, three percentage points lower than in 2018.

### **Packages and Vaccines**

The Chinese priority, now that things have calmed down and travel is back, is to find a vaccine that works.

With a formula that could be replicated elsewhere Citic, the Chinese state-owned mega bank offers Hong Kong an injection of an mRNA vaccine in exchange for a deposit of HK \$ 4 million (equivalent to 512,000 US dollars) with the aim of providing cross-border clients “a full range of wealth management services”.

Not only. For the same amount, in addition to a BioNTech/Pfizer shot, there is a vaccine for hepatitis B, which is endemic in China, a free Bentley test drive and discounts at the Four Seasons Hotel.

**Hong Kong is teaming with similar offers, private clinics and some private hospitals are also offering vaccines for \$359 per dose.**

Groups such as Easson Holdings, which sells full-service vaccine trips to Hong Kong, hotel and airline reservations and all-inclusive chauffeured trips, are also moving fast.

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