

Europe reopens many borders but not to Americans, Asians

June 14 2020, by Geir Moulson



In this Tuesday, June 9, 2020 photo, a visitor watches the sunset at a bar in an area known as Little Venice in the main town of the island of Mykonos, Greece. Business owners and locals officials on the Greek holiday island of Mykonos, a popular vacation spot for celebrities, club-goers, and high rollers, say they are keen to reopen for business despite the risks of COVID-19 posed by international travel. Greece will official launch its tourism season Monday, June 15, 2020 after keeping the country's infection rate low. (AP Photo/Derek Gatopoulos)

Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality as many countries open borders to fellow Europeans after three months of coronavirus lockdowns—but even though Europeans love their summer vacations, it's not clear how many are ready to travel again.

Tourists from the U.S., Asia, Latin America and the Middle East will just have to wait for now. Europe is expected to start opening up to some visitors from elsewhere next month, but details remain unclear.

The European Union home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson, told member nations last week that they "should open up as soon as possible" and suggested Monday was a good date.

Many countries are doing just that, allowing travel from the EU, Britain and the rest of Europe's usually passport-free Schengen travel area, which includes non-EU countries like Switzerland.

Europe's reopening won't be a repeat of the chaotic free-for-all in March when panicked, uncoordinated border closures caused traffic jams that stretched for miles. Still, it's a complicated, shifting patchwork of different rules. And although tourist regions are desperately counting on them, a lot of Europeans may decide to stay close to home this summer.

That's something tourism-dependent Mediterranean countries such as Greece are keen to avoid. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis acknowledged Saturday that "a lot will depend on whether people feel comfortable to travel and whether we can project Greece as a safe destination."



In this Tuesday, June 9, 2020 photo, visitors sit in bars in an area known as Little Venice on the Greek island of Mykonos. Business owners and locals officials on the Greek holiday island of Mykonos, a popular vacation spot for celebrities, club-goers, and high rollers, say they are keen to reopen for business despite the risks of COVID-19 posed by international travel. Greece will officially launch its tourism season Monday, June 15, 2020 after keeping the country's infection rate low. (AP Photo/Derek Gatopoulos)

Greece has emphasized its handling of its outbreak, which saw only 183 deaths. Overall, Europe has seen more than 182,000 virus-linked deaths this year, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that also shows Europe has had 2.04 million of the world's 7.8 million infections.

Hard-hit Spain, which on Sunday moved forward its opening to European travelers by 10 days to June 21, is allowing thousands of

Germans to fly to its Balearic Islands for a trial run starting Monday—waiving its 14-day quarantine for the group.

"This pilot program will help us learn a lot for what lies ahead in the coming months," Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said. "We want our country, which is already known as a world-class tourist destination, to be recognized as also a secure destination."

Border checks in some places have already wound down. Italy opened its borders on June 3 and towns on the German-Polish border celebrated early Saturday as Poland opened the gates. At midnight, the mayors of Goerlitz, Germany and Zgorzelec, Poland cut through chains on a makeshift fence that had divided the towns.



In this Friday, June 12, 2020 file photo, Lord Mayor of Gorlitz Octavian Ursu, center right, and Mayor of Zgorzelec, Poland, Rafal Gronicz, center left, together open the border fence on the Gorlitz Old Town Bridge in Gorlitz, Germany. Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality after the coronavirus outbreak as many countries open up their borders to fellow Europeans – but exceptions remain, and it remains to be seen how many will use their rediscovered freedom to travel. (Daniel Schafer/dpa via AP, file)

Germany, like France and others, is lifting remaining border checks on Monday and scrapping a requirement that arrivals must prove they have a good reason to enter. It also is easing a worldwide warning against nonessential travel to exempt European countries – except, probably, Finland, Norway and Spain, where [travel restrictions](#) remain, and Sweden, where the level of new [coronavirus](#) infections is deemed too high.

Many German regions have reimposed a quarantine requirement for arrivals from Sweden, whose virus strategy avoided a lockdown but produced a relatively high death rate.

Czech authorities will require arrivals from Sweden to show a negative COVID-19 test or to self-quarantine – along with travelers from Portugal and Poland's Silesia region.

Austria is opening up Tuesday to European neighbors except Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Britain—and keeping a travel warning for Italy's worst-hit region of Lombardy. France is asking people from Britain to self-quarantine for two weeks.



In this Tuesday, June 9, 2020 photo, Polish border guards stand on the Bridge of Friendship on the Polish border before Zgorzelec and check with a thermometer the body temperature of drivers coming from Goerlitz, Germany to Poland. Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality after the coronavirus outbreak as many countries open up their borders to fellow Europeans – but exceptions remain, and it remains to be seen how many will use their rediscovered freedom to travel. (Sebastian Kahnert/dpa via AP)

Britain recently introduced a 14-day quarantine requirement for most arrivals, to the horror of its tourism and aviation industries, which say the move will hit visits to Britain hard this summer.

Denmark is opening up only for tourists from Germany, Norway and Iceland—and only if they can prove that they're staying for at least six

nights. Norway also is keeping shut its long border with Sweden.

"I realize this is a big disappointment. But the restrictions are based on objective criteria that are the same for everyone," Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg said. "If we open too quickly, the infection can get out of control."

With flights only gradually picking up, nervousness about new outbreaks abroad, uncertainty about social distancing at tourist venues and many people facing unemployment or pay cuts, this may be a good summer for domestic tourism.



In this photo provided by the Prime Minister's Office, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announces the opening of the tourist season during a news conference, on the Greek island of Santorini, Saturday, June 13, 2020. (Dimitris

Papamitsos/Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this Saturday, June 13, 2020 photo, a sign with the opening hours of the border checkpoint between Harrisee in Germany and Padborg in Denmark is displayed in front the border crossing in Harrisee, Germany. Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality as many countries open up their borders to fellow Europeans after three months – but exceptions remain, and it remains to be seen how many will use their rediscovered freedom to travel. (Frank Molter/dpa via AP)



In this on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 file photo, a member of the medical staff measures the temperature of a traveller at a autobahn park place near Gries am Brenner, Austria near the border crossing with Italy. Europe is taking a big step toward a new normality after the coronavirus outbreak as many countries open up their borders to fellow Europeans – but exceptions remain, and it remains to be seen how many will use their rediscovered freedom to travel. (AP Photo/Kerstin Joensson, file)



In this handout photo provided by the Greek Prime Minister's Office , ancient jars are seen inside the 16th century BC archaeological site of Akrotiri at the Greek island of Santorini . Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited Saturday Santorini to announce the opening of the tourist season. (Dimitris Papamitsos/ Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this handout photo provided by the Prime Minister's Office, Greek Culture Minister Lina Mendoni, left, walks next to Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during their visit in the archaeological site of Akrotiri at the Greek island of Santorini, Saturday, June 13, 2020. Mitsotakis visited Santorini Saturday to announce the opening of the tourist season. (Dimitris Papamitsos/Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this handout photo provided by the Prime Minister's Office , Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, second left, his wife Mareva Grabowski-Mitsotakis, second right, and Greek Culture Minister Lina Mendoni, right, looking at a scale model of the site during their visit in the archaeological site of Akrotiri at the Greek island of Santorini. Mitsotakis visited Santorini Saturday to announce the opening of the tourist season.(Dimitris Papamitsos/ Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this photo provided by the Prime Minister's Office, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announces the opening of the tourist season during a news conference, on the Greek island of Santorini, Saturday, June 13, 2020. (Dimitris Papamitsos/Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this photo provided by the Prime Minister's Office, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announces the opening of the tourist season during a news conference, on the Greek island of Santorini, Saturday, June 13, 2020. (Dimitris Papamitsos/Greek Prime Minister's Office via AP)



In this Tuesday, June 9, 2020, photo, a fishing boat is anchored in front of the main walkway on the Greek island of Mykonos, Greece. Business owners and locals officials on the Greek holiday island of Mykonos, a popular vacation spot for celebrities, club-goers, and high rollers, say they are keen to reopen for business despite the risks of COVID-19 posed by international travel. Greece will officially launch its tourism season Monday, June 15, 2020 after keeping the country's infection rate low. (AP Photo/Derek Gatopoulos)



In this May 25, 2020 photo, people visit the beach in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Spain's Balearic Islands will allow for thousands of German tourists to fly in from June 15 for a two-week trial of tourism under new regulations against the spread of the new coronavirus. (Isaac Buj/Europa Press via AP)



In this May 25, 2020 photo, people sit on the beach in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Spain's Balearic Islands will allow for thousands of German tourists to fly in from June 15 for a two-week trial of tourism under new regulations against the spread of the new coronavirus. (Isaac Buj/Europa Press via AP)



A view of the Unknown Soldier monument in Rome, Tuesday, June 9, 2020. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, also known as Vittoriano and Altare della Patria (Altar of the Fatherland), reopened to the public Tuesday after three months of closure due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures. (Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP)



In this May 25, 2020 photo, people visit the beach in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Spain's Balearic Islands will allow for thousands of German tourists to fly in from June 15 for a two-week trial of tourism under new regulations against the spread of the new coronavirus. (Isaac Buj/Europa Press via AP)



Tourists guides stage a protest in front of Rome's Pantheon, Tuesday, June 9, 2020, asking for government aid after more than three months of travel restriction due to coronavirus have canceled tourism throughout the country. (Cecilia Fabiano/LaPresse via AP)



In this Friday, March 21, 2014 file photo, the Cap des Moro near Cala Llobards on the Spanish Balearic island of Mallorca. Spain's Balearic Islands will allow thousands of German tourists to fly in from beginning June 15, 2020, for a two-week trial testing out how new tourism rules work in the coronavirus era. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader, File)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz are both planning to vacation in their homelands this year.

"The recommendation is still, if you want to be really safe, a vacation in Austria," Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told ORF television, recalling the scramble in March to bring home thousands of tourists as borders slammed shut. "In Austria, you know that you don't have to cross a border if you want to get home, and you know the infrastructure and the health system well."

The German government, which helped fly 240,000 people home as the pandemic grew exponentially, also has no desire to repeat that experience.

"My appeal to all those who travel: Enjoy your summer vacation—but enjoy it with caution and responsibility," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said. "In the summer holidays, we want to make it as difficult as possible for the virus to spread again in Europe."

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