

Bali island begins to reopen after 3-month virus lockdown

July 9 2020, by Firdia Lisnawati



Tourists wearing face masks carry their surfboard at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September.(AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

Indonesia's resort island of Bali partially reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before overseas arrivals resume in September.

Normally bustling beaches and streets on the idyllic Southeast Asian island emptied in early April except for special patrols to ensure health protocols were observed. Authorities restricted public activities, closed the airport and shuttered all shops, bars, sit-down restaurants, public swimming pools and many other places on the island that's home to more than 4 million people.

The local government began lifting the limits Thursday, but tourists will face stringent rules in hotels, restaurants and on beaches, Bali Gov. I Wayan Koster said.

Koster told a news conference that the island will gradually reopen shuttered places to locals and stranded foreigners. Bali will open to Indonesians from other parts of the country on July 31 and new foreign arrivals on Sept. 11.

The government established guidelines for reopening [tourist](#) spots and may close certain areas again if infections spike, he said.

"The pandemic has hit tourism sector so badly while there is no certainty when it will end," Koster said. "We have to revive [economic activity](#) to prevent Bali from new social problems due to increasing economic pressures."



Foreign tourists carry their surf boards at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

Tourism is the main source of income for the island that is mainly Hindu in the mostly Muslim archipelago nation.

The famed white-sand beaches and popular shopping areas on the "island of the gods" were deserted almost two decades ago when visitors were scared off by terrorism. The dark cloud of the suicide bombings that killed 202 mostly foreign tourists in 2002 lingered for years, but the island has worked to overcome that image.

More than 5 million foreigners arrived in Bali each year prior to the pandemic, which caused the numbers to dive.

Bali's immigration office data showed the local government has granted automatic visa extensions to more than 7,000 stranded tourists in Bali. Nearly 16,000 others hold temporary residence permits and about 1,300 live as permanent residents.

The data show the occupancy rate at Bali's starred hotels plunged to 2.07% in May from 62.5% in December.



Balinese Hindu gather during a ritual at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September.(AP

Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Security guards wearing face masks lineup during a briefing at the opening of Kuta beach in Bali, Indonesia, Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Balinese men pray during a ritual at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



A man rides his motorcycle pass a banner of adapting to coronavirus protection measures at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia, Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



People wearing face masks line up during an opening of Kuta beach in Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



A man wears a t-shirt with 'thoughtful Indonesia' during an opening of Kuta beach in Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



A man carries his surfboard at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Tourists are seen at Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia on Thursday, July 9, 2020. Indonesia's resort island of Bali reopened after a three-month virus lockdown Thursday, allowing local people and stranded foreign tourists to resume public activities before foreign arrivals resume in September. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

Businessman Gede Wirata, who runs hotels, restaurants, clubs and a [cruise ship](#) with about 4,000 employees, said he managed to save his staff from layoffs despite having suffered a loss of 500 billion rupiah (\$35 million) because of travel restrictions.

"This outbreak has hammered the local economy," he said. "We have to move on but be safe by observing health protocols to protect Bali from the second wave of [coronavirus](#) spread."

Bali has recorded more than 1,900 cases of COVID-19, including 25 deaths. Indonesia has confirmed more than 68,000 cases and 3,359 fatalities, the most in Southeast Asia.

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