

Thailand to cut hotel quarantine times

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Thailand will slash mandatory hotel quarantine times for most travellers starting in April, the health minister announced Monday, with most vaccinated people facing just a week in isolation.

The kingdom's economy last year recorded its worst performance since

the 1997 Asian financial crisis, thanks largely to a pandemic-battered tourism sector.

Some 40 million tourists had been expected to arrive in 2020, but as international travel ground to a trickle, their absence hammered the country's services sector, bruising entertainment, retail, hotels and restaurants.

Health Minister Anuthin Charnvirakul announced Monday that authorities had agreed to reduce the quarantine period for three groups of travellers to Thailand.

"For non-Thais who are vaccinated... the quarantine time reduces from 14 days to seven days," he told reporters.

Travellers must have received a full course of a coronavirus vaccine at least two weeks before touching down and the inoculation must not be older than three months.

He said Thai citizens who are vaccinated abroad would also only spend a week in [hotel](#) quarantine.

Non-vaccinated people will have to spend 10 days in quarantine, down from 14.

However, anyone travelling from Africa must complete a full two weeks of quarantine, Anuthin said, because of concerns about whether vaccines offer protection against the South African variant of coronavirus.

The [health minister](#) flagged that the government would consider scrapping hotel quarantine requirements altogether in October, once there was a high level of herd immunity in Thailand.

The kingdom started its vaccination rollout late last month and Anuthin was the first citizen to receive a Chinese Sinovac jab.

Thailand has registered more than 26,400 [coronavirus](#) cases, with a jump of about 22,000 infections since late last year, after a [second wave](#) that stemmed from the country's largest seafood market.

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