

# Philippines to re-open to vaccinated foreign tourists

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The Philippines is known for its beaches and dive spots among other attractions.

The Philippines will re-open to fully vaccinated tourists from most countries on February 10 and lift quarantine requirements, officials said Friday, nearly two years after closing its borders to contain the

coronavirus.

Tourism operators across the archipelago nation famed for its beaches and dive spots have been devastated by a plunge in international visitors and restrictions on domestic travel.

Their misery was worsened by a super typhoon that smashed into the country in December, wiping out resorts, restaurants and bars in popular tourist destinations.

"The [tourism industry](#) can now recover and it can contribute big to jobs, livelihoods and the country's economic growth," presidential spokesman Karlo Nograles told a briefing.

A previous plan to welcome back tourists from December 1 was suspended after the emergence of the hyper-contagious Omicron variant that has since ripped through the Philippines.

Friday's announcement allows for the resumption of visa-free travel for short visits by nationals from the 157 countries who already enjoyed permit-free entry to the Philippines before the pandemic began.

Fully vaccinated tourists from countries on the list will need to test negative for Covid-19 shortly before flying to the Philippines and will not have to quarantine on arrival.

The list excludes China, the Philippines' fastest-growing tourist market, as well as Taiwan and India.

But it includes Manila's remaining top-10 tourism sources, such as the United States, South Korea, Japan, Australia, Canada, and Britain.

Health Undersecretary Rosario Vergeire said it made no sense to restrict

international travellers when Covid-19 transmission rates in the Philippines were so high, "maybe even higher" than in some countries.

"Based on those premises we recommended to ease restrictions," she said.

Unvaccinated foreigners will be banned from entry from February 16, Nograles said.

Tourism is a major driver of the Southeast Asian country's economy, accounting for nearly 13 percent of gross domestic product in 2019, when more than eight million people visited, official data shows.

That slumped to 5.4 percent in 2020 as tourist arrivals plummeted 82 percent to 1.48 million.

The government tightened restrictions across the national capital region and other provinces in recent weeks as Omicron fuelled a record surge in infections.

Around half of the country's 110 million people are fully vaccinated.

The Philippines has recorded more than 3.4 million infections since the start of the pandemic, including over 53,000 deaths.

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