

Hong Kong cuts COVID hotel quarantine to 3 days for arrivals

August 8 2022, by ZEN SOO



People wearing face masks walk along a side street in Mongkok, a shopping district of Hong Kong, Monday, Aug. 8, 2022. Hong Kong will reduce the mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas arrivals to three days from a week, the city's leader said Monday. Credit: AP Photo/Kin Cheung

Hong Kong will reduce the mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas

arrivals to three days from a week, the city's leader said Monday.

The southern Chinese city remains one of the few places in the world, together with mainland China, to require a quarantine to guard against travelers spreading COVID-19 to the local population. The policy taking effect Friday will be Hong Kong's shortest quarantine for arrivals since the pandemic began.

Hong Kong leader John Lee said arriving travelers must quarantine three days in a designated hotel, then undergo four days of medical surveillance during which their movements will be restricted via the use of a health code system.

Lee said the new policy of just three days in quarantine was made after [scientific evidence](#) and data had been analyzed to control the [risk factors](#).

"We also have to balance the risks against the [economic activities](#) and the social lives of (people in) Hong Kong," Lee said.

"(The data) gives us the indication that the risk factor of people who have finished three days' quarantine in a designated hotel ... is actually no more than the risk level of transmission in society," he said.

The changes to COVID-19 policies come in spite of an increase in daily infections, which city health officials warn could double to 8,000 in the coming weeks.

During their week of quarantine and surveillance, travelers will also have to test regularly for COVID-19 and those who are infected must stay in isolation.

Those who test negative can use [public transit](#) and enter malls and

markets, but they can't enter bars and [amusement parks](#) or visit elderly homes, schools and certain [medical facilities](#).

For most of the pandemic, Hong Kong has imposed some of the world's strictest COVID-19 entry restrictions. At one point, Hong Kong required up to 21 days of compulsory hotel quarantine for travelers and a "circuit breaker" mechanism that would ban flights from certain airlines into the city if they imported too many COVID-19 cases.

These measures have devastated the city's [tourism industry](#) and disrupted business travel in a city known for being an international financial center and a business hub.

Sally Wong, CEO of the Hong Kong Investment Funds Association, welcomed the reduction in quarantine, describing it as a "major step forward."

She said quarantine in Hong Kong would have to be removed altogether for the city to regain its competitiveness.

"But what can move the dial is ... how we can go from three days to zero," Wong said. "Many conferences, meetings, etc. are planned months ahead and if the government can (shed) light on the next step, it would be extremely helpful."

Since the pandemic began, hundreds of thousands of residents have left Hong Kong. Many companies have also relocated to countries like Singapore where quarantine-free travel has resumed.

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