Over 80,000 tourists trapped in 'China's Hawaii' after COVID outbreak

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Over 80,000 tourists are stranded in a resort city popularly known as "China's Hawaii" after a COVID flare-up led authorities to impose strict travel restrictions.

Tourism hotspot Sanya is a city of more than a million people on the southern island of Hainan, where 483 COVID cases were reported Sunday.

All flights out of the city were cancelled over the weekend, with authorities also halting train ticket sales.

Tourists who want to leave must test negative in five PCR tests over seven days, health authorities said.

Hotels in the city have been asked to offer guests a 50 percent discount until the travel restrictions ease, an official said during a news briefing Saturday.

China is the only major economy still holding fast to a zero-COVID strategy with snap lockdowns and long quarantines, battering local tourism.

The country's borders have also remained largely closed since early 2020, halting international tourism.

The latest COVID outbreak comes during peak tourism season in Sanya, a popular surfing spot.

All entertainment venues including spas, karaoke bars and pubs have been closed since last week, but essential services such as supermarkets and pharmacies remain open.

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