

Thailand to introduce “area quarantine” for international visitors from April



From next month, foreign visitors to the Kingdom will be able to experience the delights of “area quarantine”, after the government confirmed the scheme for 5 provinces.

Following a meeting with the Public Health Ministry, the Tourism Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn confirmed that Phuket, Krabi, Chiang Mai, Chon Buri (Pattaya), and Surat Thani (Koh Samui and Koh Pha-ngan) have been chosen to pilot the scheme.

Foreign tourists opting for area quarantine will be required to remain in their hotel rooms for the first 3 days of their stay. They will be tested for Covid-19 and, if negative after 3 days, will be allowed to leave their room and roam freely around the resort for the remainder of their 14-day quarantine. At the end of the 14-day period, they will once again be tested for the virus and, if negative, allowed to travel around the quarantine area.

In order to avail of the scheme, tourists will still need to fulfil the other requirements for travel, including obtaining a Certificate of Entry, a negative Covid-19 test 72 hours prior to travel, and adequate health insurance. Nation Thailand reports that the area quarantine plan will be run by 29 travel agencies, under TAT supervision.

The area quarantine scheme comes as the TAT hails the success of the first “golf quarantine” scheme, which operates in a similar manner. Travelers from countries considered “low-risk” for Covid-19 can come to Thailand for a golf holiday at approved golf resorts in the Kingdom. Conditions are similar to those attached to area quarantine, with the golfers having to spend the first 3 days in their room, test negative for the virus, and then enjoy free rein of the resort, with a few rounds of golf thrown in.

Thailand's economy has been decimated by the fallout from the pandemic, in particular the loss of international tourism. The current mandatory 14-day quarantine period is seen as the biggest hurdle to overcome in order to re-ignite the sector. In 2019, international tourism contributed 2 trillion baht out of a total 3.01 trillion baht tourism trade. In the same year, tourism made up 17% of Thailand's GDP.

SOURCE: Nation Thailand