

Travel Insights Report



A round-up of news from Hawaii and Asia with a focus on the continued effects of COVID-19. At PacRim Marketing Group and PRTech, the wellness of our clients, associates and the community is important.

More than one year into this crisis, the numbers continue to astonish and sadden us. While numbers in Hawaii are fortunately on the decline, this crisis is far from over.

In this expanded edition you will find: COVID-19 Statistics. Travel Sentiment, Hawaii Visitor Industry News, Japan News, Korea News and China News.

STATISTICS re COVID-19, Novel Coronavirus

As of April 29, 2021 (compared to our last report on Jan. 4)

GLOBAL

Global Coronavirus cases: 149,927,702 (3,156,003 global deaths)
(compared to 85.5 million cases as of Jan. 4)

USA

Domestic Coronavirus cases (including Hawaii): 32,272,447 (up from 20,739,217 on Jan. 4)
Hawaii cases: 33,537 (up from 22,303 on Jan. 4)

CHINA

China Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 102,461 (up from 96,213 on Jan. 4)

JAPAN

Japan Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 580,666 (up from 248,576 on Jan. 4)

S. KOREA

South Korea Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 121,351 (up from 64,264 on Jan. 4)

For updated figures on the disease toll in individual states, countries and worldwide, please visit:

<https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

HAWAII Data Dashboard (week of 4/26/21 <https://hiema-hub.hawaii.gov/>)

- Total Cases: 32,110
- New Cases (24 hr): 69
- Avg Daily Cases (7 days): 77.4
- Total Fatalities: 482
- Fatality Rate (cumulative): 1.5%
- Positivity rate (7 days): 1.49%

TRAVELER SENTIMENT

Traveler Sentiment – US Market

- Americans' confidence in their ability to travel safely reached a pandemic record in April, as did the perception of travel activities as safe. Now 72% say they are in a ready-to-travel mindset—up nearly 20 percentage points since the start of 2021.
- Three-quarters of American travelers did some travel planning and dreaming in the past week alone, with 16.4% actually making a reservation or booking. Of these bookers, over half made a hotel reservation, nearly a fifth reserved a vacation home/Airbnb and a third bought airline tickets.
- Over 75% of American travelers will take at least one trip in the next 3 months, and a record 88% have at least tentative travel plans for the future.
- Traveler sentiment is on a delightfully upward trajectory. While some travel avoidance continues, the overall directional movement is strongly positive.
- Nearly half of vaccinated travelers feel their mood has now changed—most commonly to feeling safer, happier and less stressed.
- Leisure travel continues to improve, with gains across planning, booking and trip-taking.
(All courtesy HVCB)

Traveler Sentiment – Japan Market

Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) surveyed more than 2,000 people in Japan who traveled overseas in the past 3 years. Among the key findings:

When overseas tourist travel is possible again, the place Japanese people want to visit the most is Hawaii.

- JTB Research asked travelers where they wanted to go. The top destinations were Hawaii (20.1%), Taiwan (11.8%), the U.S. mainland (7.5%), Australia/New Zealand (7.0%), and South Korea (7.0%).
- Hawaii was chosen because people “just like the country/region,” while Taiwan and Australia/New Zealand were chosen because “the number of COVID-10 infections is small.”

Of all the destinations, Hawaii is number one across ALL demographics.

- By gender and age, Hawaii was everyone's top choice of country/region to visit. A popular destination prior to the pandemic, the data indicates that Hawaii will continue to be a popular travel destination for the Japanese once overseas tourist travel resumes.

HTA expects visitor numbers from Japan to increase as more vaccinations are administered, and once Trans-Pacific travel restrictions are relaxed – that could happen in July.¹

HAWAII VISITOR INDUSTRY NEWS

2020-21 Statistics

Recapping the year, flight cancellations to the Hawaiian Islands began in February 2020, initially affecting the China market. On March 14, the CDC began enforcing the No Sail Order on cruise ships. On March 17, Hawaii Governor David Ige asked upcoming visitors to postpone their trips for at least the next 30 days. The counties began issuing stay-at-home orders. Effective March 26, all passengers arriving from out-of-state were required to abide by a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine. Exemptions included essential travel. By the end of March the majority of flights to Hawaii were cancelled, and the visitor industry was severely impacted.

On April 1, the mandatory self-quarantine was extended to inter-island travel and the state's four

¹ <https://www.kitv.com/story/43778943/new-hawaii-tourism-authority-ad-campaign-aims-to-bring-back-visitors-from-japan-back-to-hawaii>

counties announced strict stay-at-home orders and curfews. Nearly all trans-Pacific flights to Hawaii were cancelled in April.

For all of 2020, total visitor arrivals declined 73.8 percent from the previous year to 2,716,195 visitors. There were significantly fewer arrivals by air service (-73.8% to 2,686,403). Arrivals by cruise ships (-79.2% to 29,792) decreased considerably, as cruise ships were operating only for the first few months of the year. Total visitor days fell 68.2 percent.

Please see attached [COVID-19 Timeline for Hawaii](#), which provides important dates and details.

Air Seats to Hawaii

- There were 3,266 (-23.4%) trans-Pacific flights that serviced the Hawaiian Islands in March.
- This represented a total of 665,209 air seats, down 29.5 percent from a year ago.
- There were no scheduled seats from Oceania, and considerably fewer scheduled seats from Canada (-97.5%), Japan (-94.0%) and Other Asia (-91.8%).
- Seats from U.S. East (-15.3%) and U.S. West (-9.7%) also declined.
- Seats from other countries (Guam and Manila) increased (+96.5%) compared to a year ago.

Hawai'i Tourism Industry Numbers for March 2021 (vs 2020)

- A total of **439,785 visitors** traveled to Hawaii by air service in March, compared to 434,856 visitors in March 2020, who came by air (430,691, +2.1%) and cruise ships (4,165 visitors).
- In terms of **average daily census**, there were 137,440 visitors present in Hawai'i on any given day in March 2021, compared to 90,776 in February 2021.
- In March 2021 (*comparison to 2020*), most visitors were from the U.S. West (296,117, +47.4%) and U.S. East (133,162, +10.8%).
- March had 1,051 visitors came from Japan (-97.7%)
- 326 visitors came from Canada (-98.8%).
- There were 9,129 visitors from All Other International Markets (-75.9%). Many were from Guam. A small number of visitors were from Other Asia, Europe, Latin America, Oceania, Philippines and Pacific Islands.
- Total visitor days, the aggregate number of days stayed by all visitors, increased 7.6 percent.

Spending

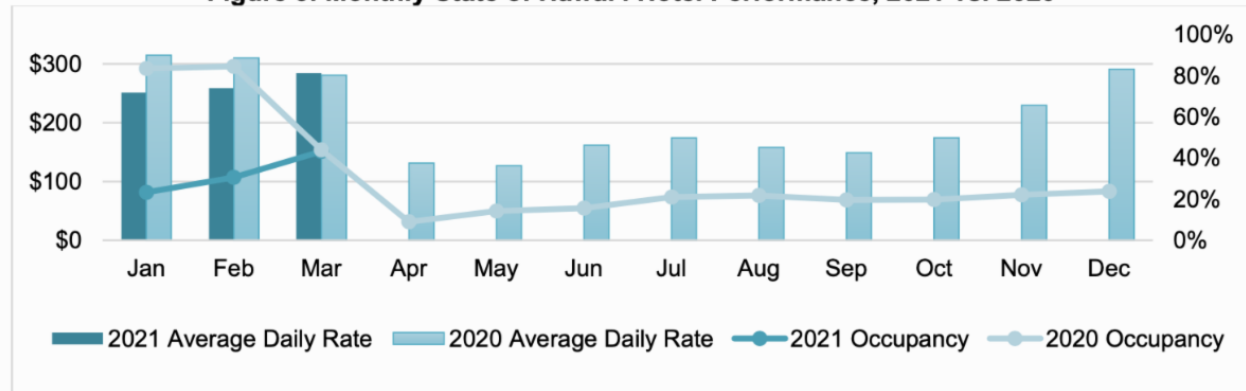
- Total **visitor spending** in February 2021 was \$385.3 million. Total **visitor spending in March 2021 nearly doubled - to \$745.9 million.**
- For the first quarter of 2021, total visitor spending was \$1.51 billion
- U.S. West visitors spent \$492.4 million (+55.4%), and their average daily spending was \$176 per person (-1.1% compared to 2020). U.S. East visitors spent \$249.8 million (+8.4%) and \$188 per person, per day (-6.5%). Visitors from Japan spent \$3.7 million (-94.5%), and their daily spending was \$213 per person, per day (-10.9%). Visitor spending data from other markets was not available.

Hotel Performance

In March 2021, Hawaii hotels statewide reported similar revenue per available room (RevPAR), average daily rate (ADR), and occupancy compared to March 2020. This was the first time in a year where those performance indicators were not substantially down.

- According to the Hawaii Hotel Performance Report published by the Hawaii Tourism Authority Research Division, statewide RevPAR in March 2021 was nearly the same as last year at \$123 (-0.3%), ADR was slightly higher at \$285 (+1.4%), and occupancy was 43.1 percent (-0.7 percentage points) (Figure 1).
- For March, the survey included 150 properties representing 43,889 rooms, or 82.6 percent of all lodging properties and 86.9 percent of operating lodging properties with 20 rooms or more in the Hawaiian Islands, including full service, limited service, and condominium hotels. Vacation rental and timeshare properties were not included in the survey.

Figure 3: Monthly State of Hawai'i Hotel Performance, 2021 vs. 2020



Source: STR, Inc. © Copyright 2021 Hawai'i Tourism Authority.

HAWAII COVID-19 TESTING AND QUARANTINE

COVID-19 vaccinations are now available for all Hawai'i residents who are at least 16 years old.

As of April 27, 48% of eligible residents have initiated the vaccination and 37% have completed their vaccination program.²

As of May 11, 2021, people who have been fully vaccinated in Hawaii may upload proof of vaccination to the [Hawaii.SafeTravels.gov](https://www.safetravel.gov) website and resume inter-county travel without COVID-19 testing and quarantine. The exception applies only to people who have received vaccines in Hawaii, two weeks after their last recommended dose.

As vaccination efforts ramp up across the country and around the world, Hawaii officials are considering a quarantine exemption for vaccinated overseas travelers in the near future, but no official dates have been announced.

Hawaii remains under a strict quarantine for all overseas travelers arriving in the state. Visitors can bypass the 10-day quarantine by following the pre-travel testing protocols outlined on www.hawaiiicovid19.com/travel. The program requires that an account and trip be created on www.travel.hawaii.gov and all travelers ages 5 and older take a test only with a listed Trusted Testing and Travel Partner (www.hawaiiicovid19.com/travel-partners) within 72-hours of the departure time of the flight arriving to Hawai'i. Negative results must be uploaded to the Safe Travels trip prior to boarding.

- Breaking the 10-day quarantine by anyone – a resident or a visitor— is a criminal offense punishable by a \$5,000 fine and up to a year in prison.
- Persons who are subject to the 10-day quarantine order may not rent vehicles.

Hawaii's four counties have different and varying guidelines.³ They are subject to change and available at the HTA site: <https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/covid-19-updates/state-and-county-orders/>

Kaua'i Rejoins the State of Hawai'i's Safe Travels Pre-Travel Testing program.

- Kauai has opted back in to the state's Safe Travels program, which it had not been a part of since December. Starting April 5th, visitors to Kauai can avoid the state's 10-day quarantine by getting a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to their arrival.
- The County of Kaua'i is encouraging trans-pacific travelers to take a post test three days after arrival on Kaua'i. As a mahalo, visitors who participate will receive a Kaua'i Kōkua Card that entitles them to discounts/offers at participating restaurants, activities and shops. Visit

² <https://health.hawaii.gov/coronavirusdisease2019/what-you-should-know/current-situation-in-hawaii/#vaccine>

³ <https://www.gohawaii.com/special-alerts-information>

www.kokuakauaicard.com for a list of offers.

OPENINGS AND CANCELLATIONS

- Both Atlantis Adventures and Star of Honolulu reopened in late April after being closed for more than a year.
- The Outrigger Reef will reopen on May 1.
- Turtle Bay Resort will reopen on July 1.
- The City & County of Honolulu has eased restrictions on outdoor weddings following a plea from the industry. Weddings on Oahu that are held outside and supervised by event planning professionals can now have up to 100 guests.
- Honolulu Festival organizers canceled the March 2021 event for the second consecutive year.
- Pan-Pacific Festival, scheduled for June 2021 has been canceled for the second consecutive year.
- The Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, held annually each spring, has been moved to June with rigorous safety guidelines and a television broadcast plan that will allow for a virtual audience experience. The competition will be performed without spectators for the first time in its 56-year history.

JAPAN

HAWAII UPDATE

There were 1,051 Japanese visitors to Hawaii in March 2021 (compared to 695 in Feb. 2021). 950 visitors arrived on international flights from Japan and 101 came on domestic flights. Nearly all (98.6%) visitors made their own travel arrangements. In terms of lodging, 52.3 percent stayed in hotels, 26.9 percent stayed in condominiums, 14.5 percent stayed with friends and relatives, 6.8 percent stayed in rental homes and 2.5 percent stayed in timeshares.

Through the first quarter of 2021, there were 2,910 visitors from Japan (-99.0%). Year-to-date per person per day visitor spending declined to \$206 (-14.4%). Lodging expenses increased while food and beverage, shopping, entertainment and recreation, and transportation expenses declined.

In March, the Japan government required proof of a negative PCR test for all entry into Japan. In addition, all travelers, including returning Japanese nationals, were required to quarantine for 14 days.

IN-COUNTRY NEWS

Japan plans to issue a digital vaccine passport.⁴ No details on quarantine or return testing yet.

- Japan plans to introduce 'vaccine passports' to make it easier for people who have been inoculated against COVID-19 to travel internationally and boost business travel, government sources said Wednesday.
- The passports are expected to be in the form of a smartphone app, with travelers scanning a QR code at the airport before boarding a flight or when re-entering the country.
- The app will link with Japan's Vaccination Record System, a government database of people who have received shots.
- Roughly 2.3 million people in Japan have received at least one dose of the vaccine as of April 27, which is less than 2% of the population.

Japan to aid local tourism promotion initiatives⁵

- The government will give financial aid to tourism promotion initiatives aimed at local residents traveling in-country, to prefectures with few coronavirus infections.
- Under the new aid program, the government will give up to 7,000 yen per person per night for

⁴ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/28/national/science-health/covid-19-vaccine-japan-passports/>

⁵ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/26/national/local-tourism-initiatives/>

[?utm_source=pianoT5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=295&pnespid=ZIY6gI3tLiYAqmlvB6HQROYL7sA1rYcSIhQq?ut](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/26/national/local-tourism-initiatives/?utm_source=pianoT5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=295&pnespid=ZIY6gI3tLiYAqmlvB6HQROYL7sA1rYcSIhQq?ut)

trips under the prefectural initiatives.

- The Go To Travel domestic subsidy campaign is on hold until June or later.

Japan will maintain entry ban on nonresident foreign nationals⁶

- The government announced it would extend its blanket travel ban on all new entries for foreign nationals, reflecting concerns about the spread of new and more contagious coronavirus variants.
- The government is planning to allow entry up to around 2,000 people per day, coordinating with airlines to ensure flights are not oversubscribed.
- At present, only Japanese and foreign nationals with a valid residency status are allowed to re-enter the country, while nonresident foreign nationals with “special exceptional circumstances” can be granted permission.

State of the Lockdown/COVID-19

- Third COVID-19 emergency begins in Tokyo and Osaka area amid virus surge.⁷
 - Under the new restrictions, operators of restaurants serving alcohol and movie theaters are required to temporarily close and sports events will be held without spectators.
 - The emergency declaration will be effective for 17 days through May 11 in a bid to curb infections during the upcoming Golden Week holidays from late April to early May.
 - Authorities are also asking operators of karaoke establishments as well as tourism spots such as Tokyo Sky Tree and Universal Studios Japan in Osaka to close.
- Japan’s latest coronavirus state of emergency draws mixed reactions⁸
 - People think it’s too short while others say it’s meaningless unless people’s mindsets change.
- Japan’s COVID-19 death toll tops 10,000 as country battles surging virus.⁹
 - The country’s virus-linked death toll came around three months after it reached 5,000 compared with the roughly 11 months it took to hit the 5,000 threshold after the first death was confirmed in February 2020.
- Fears over fourth COVID-19 wave grow in Japan as new cases creep back up.¹⁰
 - New cases including those involving variants are growing in many parts of the country.
 - Days after lifting its second COVID-19 emergency on March 28, the government will soon start talks to impose pre-emergency restrictions.
 - Surge in COVID-19 cases are being seen in Miyagi prefecture and in the Kansai region.
 - Miyagi infections have hit a daily record of 171 on March 24.
 - The Tohoku region had been posting under 50 daily cases for nearly two months until the spike began.
 - In Kansai, Osaka reported 386 new cases and Hyogo had 164 new cases on Saturday, March 27, both the highest since the government lifted a COVID-19 state emergency there at the end of February.
- Only 1.35% in Tokyo have coronavirus antibodies.¹¹
 - The antibody test, the second of its kind, was carried out between December 14 and 26 last year, covering consenting residents in five of the country’s 47 prefectures.
 - The rate in Tokyo was 13.5 times the level seen in the first survey conducted in June 2020.
 - The ministry recommended that basic infection prevention measures are continued.

VACCINE ROLLOUT

Japan has given enough doses to cover just 1.1% of its population, the lowest among the 37 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. That compares to 36% in the U.S.

⁶ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/19/national/entry-ban-extended/>

⁷ https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/25/national/third-coronavirus-emergency-japan-starts/?utm_source=pianoT5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=295&pnespid=PsYvikq5cT4AFodG_YeUEAVp39TrSQED

⁸ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/24/national/japan-coronavirus-emergency-reaction/>

⁹ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/26/national/japan-coronavirus-cases-2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/28/national/fourth-covid-19-wave/>

¹¹ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/30/national/tokyo-antibody-rate/>

and nearly 35% in the U.K.¹²

- Japan launched its vaccination program in mid-February initially for health care workers and then for those aged 65 or older, with less than 1% of the country's population of 126 million being inoculated as of April 9.
- Japan is planning 10,000 shot-a-day vaccination venues in a bid to speed up rollout.¹³ Centers will be in Tokyo and Okasa, separate from vaccination facilities operated by local governments. The central government also is considering utilizing medically certified Self-Defense Forces personnel to help administer shots.
- Dentists also were tapped to speed up Japan's slow vaccine rollout.¹⁴ The health ministry decided April 23 to allow dentists to administer the shots under some circumstances.
- Japan rigidly controls who can administer coronavirus vaccines.

TOKYO OLYMPICS 2020

- Torch relay begins amid COVID-19 fears¹⁵. Organizers insist the Olympics will proceed, although overseas spectators will not be allowed into the country for the games.
 - The torch relay for the Tokyo Olympics started on March 25 in Fukushima Prefecture.
 - Members of the Nadeshiko Japan soccer team that won the 2011 Women's World Cup were the first runners of the relay.
 - The opening ceremony of the nationwide relay was attended by a limited number of people as a precaution against the spread of the coronavirus.
 - About 10,000 torchbearers will run through 859 municipalities across all 47 prefectures for 121 days.
 - In an Olympic first, the torches will burn hydrogen, an element that emits no carbon dioxide as fuel in some relay segments to show the Japanese organizers' commitment to environmental sustainability.
- Vaccination not required for Tokyo Olympics.¹⁶
 - IOC President Thomas Bach said that vaccination for the coronavirus will not be a requirement for athletes competing at the Tokyo Games following concerns about the slow pace of the vaccine rollout in Japan.
 - With delays securing vaccine doses, there is a possibility some Japanese athletes may not be vaccinated in time for the start of the games on July 23.
- Tokyo Olympics organizers won't decide how many spectators — if any — can attend the games until June, as coronavirus variants raise fresh uncertainty.
- Athletes will have daily coronavirus tests, instead of every four days, as they firm up virus rules ahead of the games.
- With overseas spectators already banned, municipalities around Japan are also abandoning plans to host foreign Olympians and Paralympians for training — scrapping rare opportunities for locals to interact with athletes from around the world.

SOCIETY/LIFESTYLE

For Golden Week, there is no holiday mood as Japan's emergency hits tourism and shopping hard.¹⁷

- For the second year in a row, parts of Japan are heading into the Golden Week holiday season under the cloud of a coronavirus state of emergency.
- A recent survey by travel agency JTB Corp. has shown that consumers are simply not in a traveling mood.
- Local media have reported that hotels and ryokan inns nationwide have seen cancellations of reservations for Golden Week.

¹² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-27/with-1-1-of-people-vaccinated-japan-lags-the-developed-world>

¹³ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/25/national/10000-shots-vaccinations-japan/>

¹⁴ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/26/national/japan-dentists-vaccinations/>

¹⁵ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/25/national/tokyo-olympics-torch-relay/>

¹⁶ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2021/03/13/olympics/summer-olympics/thomas-bach-vaccinations-tokyo-olympics/>

¹⁷ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/04/24/business/no-holiday-mood-japan-virus-emergency-set-hit-tourism-shopping-hard/>

- Large shopping facilities such as department stores are being asked to close this year in an attempt to more thoroughly restrict people's movements.
- Isetan Mitsukoshi Holdings announced that it will continue to open its food and cosmetics sections and some other services as its four department stores in Tokyo but will close all other sections. Tokyu Department Store Co. also said it will work to keep its food and cosmetics sections as well as part of its restaurant area open but close all others at its major Tokyo stores.

Cherry Blossom party restrictions stay in place.¹⁸

- The country's coronavirus state of emergency was fully lifted on Monday, March 22 (three prefectures are under a new state of emergency), however local governments in Japan are continuing to ask residents not to hold cherry blossom viewing parties.
- Ueno Park in Tokyo asked visitors not to hold parties with picnic sheets for the second year in a row.
 - Prior to the pandemic, the popular cherry blossom destination saw roughly 3 million visitors during the season each year.
 - The rows of Sakura trees have been opened up for one-way traffic after the park decided to allow blossom-viewing while walking (it was closed off to the public last year).
- Photos: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/27/national/media-national/theres-hanami-cherry-blossoms/>

The pandemic is harming the mental health of women and youth in Japan.¹⁹

- 6,976 women in Japan took their own lives last year.
 - 15% more than in 2019, marking the end of what had been a 10-year decline in the number of women who died by suicide.
 - Multilingual crisis hotline and mental health service, TELL, is a platform that is advocating for both women's equality and suicide awareness.
 - TELL is looking to make sure that the awareness of the issues faced by women and youth in Japan extends past March as Japan's low ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report (121 out of 153 countries) and recent sexist comments made by former Tokyo Olympics chief, Yoshiro Mori, show there is much room for improvement in gender equality.
- A Sapporo court ruled March 17 that the government's failure to recognize same-sex marriage is unconstitutional in the country's first judicial ruling on marriage equality.²⁰
 - The ruling set a new precedent in the only Group of Seven nation not to fully recognize same-sex partnerships, though it rejected demands for damages to be paid.
 - The Sapporo District Court threw out the demand for damages by the six plaintiffs (two male couples and one female couple) who had asked that the government pay 1 million yen each due to the pain they suffered for not being able to legally marry.
- The number of crimes recorded in Japan dropped to the lowest level in the postwar era for the sixth straight year in 2020, with a sharp decline in street crime as people stayed home to shelter from the pandemic, police data shows. At the same time, the consultations on domestic violence and cybercrime reached record highs.
- COVID-19 cuts jobs and boosts stocks.²¹
Economic fallout from the pandemic may have widened the gap between the nation's rich and poor. Job losses especially in the dining and travel industries have devastated many, while stock and other asset markets are booming on the back of global monetary easing.

¹⁸ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/22/national/tokyo-cherry-blossoms-sakura-coronavirus/>

¹⁹ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2021/03/18/issues/pandemic-harming-mental-health-women-youth-japan-tell-wants-help/>

²⁰ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/17/national/crime-legal/same-sex-marriage-landmark-ruling/>

²¹ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/27/business/job-losses-wealthy-pandemic/>

- Tokyo Disneyland and Disney Sea theme parks have extend hours and are open daily as of April 1.²² The two parks were operating with shorter hours to prevent the spread of coronavirus.
- Demon Slayer sets U.S. record for best foreign language film opening weekend after already setting a box office record in Japan.²³
- The annual Sapporo Snow Festival, one of the country's biggest winter events, was canceled for the first time since its inception in 1950 amid a surge in novel coronavirus infections. The festival in February usually features large snow and ice statues in the city center. The celebrated event, which normally sees around 2 million domestic and overseas visitors every year, generates approximately ¥65 billion (\$625 million).²⁴

KOREA

Health / Economy:

- South Korea reported 775 cases on April 27, down from the country's December peak, where cases exceeded 1,000 per day. The country total is 121,351 with 1,825 deaths. The government extended social distancing restrictions in greater Seoul for two more weeks until Jan. 17, as the capital struggles to contain a third coronavirus wave.²⁵
- On April 27 Korea announced it will provide India with oxygen concentrators, COVID-19 diagnostic kits and other aid items to help the South Asian nation with the world's worst surge in coronavirus infections.
- Overall , the Korean economy is forecast to grow 3.2% in 2021: 3.2% (source: Bank of Korea)
- Currency exchange: KRW1,273 per USD as of Mar 24 (increased by KRW142.5 vs. 2020 ave.)

Travel News

South Korean health authorities said April 28 that fully vaccinated people will be exempt from the country's mandatory 14-day self-quarantine beginning May 5, as the country is struggling to speed up its vaccination campaign.

- Health authorities said that, under the country's anti-infection measures, those who have been fully inoculated in Korea will no longer be required to self-isolate after coming in close contact with COVID-19 patients or entering the country from overseas if they test negative for the virus.
- South Korea currently requires those who come into close contact with virus patients to self-isolate for 14 days.

The new rules will be applied to those who have been fully vaccinated in South Korea, regardless of their nationality, two weeks after receiving their final shot. South Korea currently administers vaccines from Pfizer and AstraZeneca, which require two doses.²⁶

- Outbound stats in 2020: 4,276,006 pax (-85.1% YOY) (source: Korea Tourism Organization)
- Hawaiian Airlines is the only air carrier flying direct flights between Hawaii and Korea. During Q1 there was one flight a week (HA460).
- For the quarter April through June 2 flights a week are planned. Flight forecasts call for 3 flights a week by Hawaiian Airlines beginning in Q3, with Korean Air resuming service and adding 3 flights a week during Q4. With the vaccine passport news, flights could be added, depending on demand.

²² <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/22/business/corporate-business/disney-opening-hours/>

²³ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2021/04/26/entertainment-news/demon-slayer-us-record/>

²⁴ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/14/national/sapporo-snow-festival-canceled>

²⁵ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-Free-to-read/Coronavirus-latest-UK-variant-found-in-New-York-with-no-travel-link>

²⁶ https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/04/119_307956.html

GREATER CHINA (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan)

Hawaii agreed to waive 10 days quarantine for travelers from **Taiwan** with proof of negative PCR test from an approved testing partner. Test results must be shown upon arrival at Honolulu airport.²⁷ The Taiwan government still requires the travelers to stay home for 14 days upon returning to Taiwan from abroad.

China's top legislative body has finalized a controversial plan for a drastic overhaul of **Hong Kong's** electoral system.

- Several of the key elements in the shakeup were expected, but there were some surprises, as well.
- Briefly, the number of directly elected seats will be slashed to ensure more pro-Beijing representation in the legislature, a powerful new post will be created to head a far more influential Election Committee, and a vetting body will be established to screen out candidates deemed to be unpatriotic.
- The fallout has gone global, which is to be expected as the US and its Western allies ramp up their wider campaign against China, while both the Beijing and local governments are doubling down in defiance, insisting this is an internal matter and the tough steps being taken now are long overdue after the protest chaos of 2019.
- In a related development locally, opposition district councilors face the prospect of being disqualified if they do not take a new oath of office to meet Beijing's bottom line that only "patriots" can run Hong Kong. Some of them would rather quit than comply.

TikTok, the short video-sharing app owned by Chinese company ByteDance, does not pose a national security threat to the US, a new study by the University of Toronto-affiliated research group Citizen Lab concluded, as the Biden administration continues to review the potential risks posed by Chinese apps to determine whether they should be banned.

- The Citizen Lab said it found no "overt data transmission" by TikTok to the Chinese government since the app did not contact any servers located in China during its testing. However, researchers did not rule out the possibility that user data gathered outside of China could be sent to the country later. Read more

The arts community was recently involved in a national security controversy over whether the M+ museum should display Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's work, the bone of contention being an irreverent photograph depicting a middle finger directed at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Tiananmen Square.

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