

# Travel Insights Report



At PacRim Marketing Group and PRTech the wellness of our customers, associates and the community is important to us and we are closely monitoring the effects of COVID-19.

## **UPDATES re COVID-19, Novel Coronavirus**

*As of January 4, 2021*

### **GLOBAL**

Global Coronavirus cases: 85,497,369 (1,849,054 global deaths)

### **USA**

Domestic Coronavirus cases (including Hawaii): 20,739,217

Hawaii cases: 22,303

### **CHINA**

China Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 96,213

### **JAPAN**

Japan Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 248,576

### **S. KOREA**

South Korea Coronavirus cases (Domestic): 64,264

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**

On December 16 Governor David Ige signed Hawaii's 17th supplementary emergency proclamation, which authorizes and clarifies guidelines and restrictions to address the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>1</sup>

- The state's mandatory self-quarantine period for travelers entering the state and traveling between counties was reduced from 14 to 10 days.
- The quarantine was extended through February 14, 2021.<sup>2</sup>
- Hawaii's alert level remains at yellow, "Act with Care."
- A statewide mask order is in effect. All individuals shall wear face coverings over their noses and mouths when in public settings.
- The State of Hawaii portal for COVID-19 information is <https://hawaiiicovid19.com>. It includes information on the "SafeTravels" program, which is designed to mitigate the

<sup>1</sup> [https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2011098-ATG\\_Sixteenth-Proclamation-Related-to-the-COVID-19-Emergency-distribution-signed.pdf](https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2011098-ATG_Sixteenth-Proclamation-Related-to-the-COVID-19-Emergency-distribution-signed.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gohawaii.com/special-alerts-information>

spread of COVID-19 from trans-Pacific visitors and resident passengers arriving at airports/ports across the islands.<sup>3</sup>

- Hawaii's pre-travel testing program launched on Oct. 15 for US travelers and Nov. 6 for travelers from Japan. A program for Canada began in mid-December.
- The screening process includes a mandatory travel declaration and temperature checks upon arrival.<sup>4</sup>
- All transpacific travelers are required to have a negative test result from a trusted travel partner before their departure for Hawaii, in order to bypass the mandatory 10-day quarantine. **Test results will not be accepted once a traveler arrives in Hawaii.**<sup>5</sup> **Tests are not available upon arrival at the airport.**
- Travelers who do not have a negative test result prior to departing for Hawaii must self-quarantine for 10 days, without exception.
- Tests must be uploaded to Safe Travels prior to departure or printed out prior to departure with a hard copy in hand upon arrival in Hawai'i.
  - The negative Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) test must be from a certified Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment (CLIA) lab and taken within 72 hours of departure in order to bypass the 10-day mandatory quarantine.
  - The State of Hawai'i will accept test results ONLY from trusted testing and travel partners.<sup>6</sup>
- Kauai Island has opted out of the state's Safe Travels program for all overseas travelers coming directly to Kauai. Kauai Island's program offers three options:<sup>7</sup>
  - Travelers with a negative pre-test can complete a 3-night stay at a Kauai "resort bubble" accommodation, followed by another test on the 4th day. If that test is negative, they will be released from quarantine.
  - Inter-island travelers, both visitors and residents who have been elsewhere in Hawaii for a minimum of 3 days, can provide proof of a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of inter-island travel to Lihue.
  - 10-day mandatory quarantine. No exceptions based on testing before travel.
- From Oct. 15 to Dec. 17, Hawaii Safe Travels screened 617,889 interisland and trans-Pacific travelers. Of that, 429,018 or approximately 69% were visitors.
- From Dec. 17 to Dec. 23, 89,050 trans-Pacific travelers were screened at airports across the state, the busiest week since the launch of the state's pre-travel testing program
  - That figure includes 16,995 passengers who arrived in Hawaii on Dec. 19 — the highest single-day total since Oct. 15. Before October 15, Hawaii was averaging just 300 to 400 visitors a day.
- 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.

### County News/Oahu Travel:

Hawaii's four counties have different and varying guidelines.<sup>8</sup> They are subject to change and available at the HTA site: <https://www.hawaiiourismauthority.org/covid-19-updates/state-and-county-orders/>

- Since Oct. 22 Oahu has been in Tier 2 of [Honolulu County's](#) four-tier economic recovery

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<sup>3</sup> <https://hawaiicovid19.com/travel/travel-overview/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hawaiiourismauthority.org/news/alerts/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hawaiiourismauthority.org/covid-19-updates/state-and-county-orders/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://hawaiicovid19.com/travel-partners/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://beatofhawaii.com/kauai-go-it-alone-resort-bubble-approved-next-proposal-announced>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gohawaii.com/special-alerts-information>

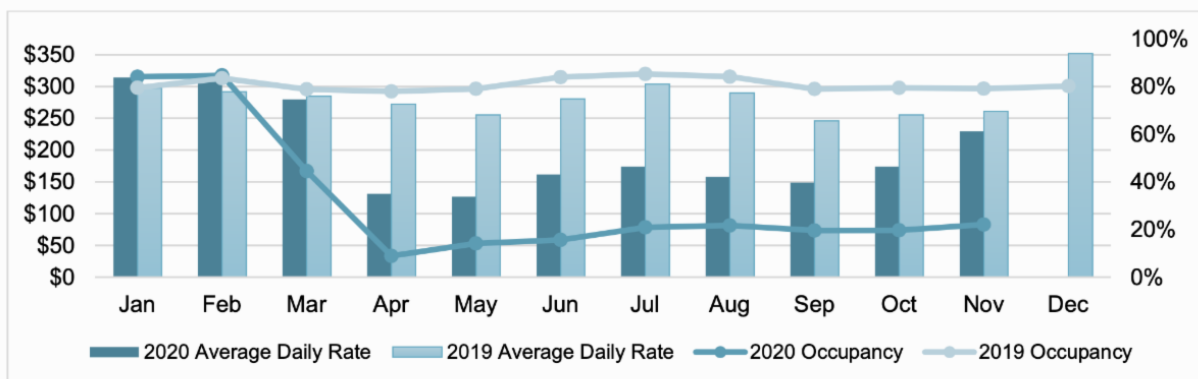
plan. To move to Tier 3, Oahu must maintain a seven-day average case count of 49 or fewer cases, and a seven-day average positivity rate of 2.49% or lower for 14 consecutive days.<sup>9</sup>

- On Dec. 30 Honolulu County’s seven-day average case count was 62 and the positivity rate was 2.9%.<sup>10</sup>
- Due to outbreaks at correctional facilities, beginning with the 12/24 weekly assessment, the inmate population was removed for the purpose of advancing or retreating between tiers. The 7-day average on Oahu is updated weekly on Thursdays.
- There is no inter-county quarantine in place for neighbor island travelers to Oahu.

### Visitor Industry Arrivals & Hotel Performance

- During November 2020, a total of 183,779 visitors traveled to Hawaii by air service, compared to 809,076 visitors who came by air service and cruise ships in November 2019 and 76,613 who arrived in October 2020.
  - Most visitors were from the U.S. West (137,452, -63.4% YOY) and U.S. East (40,205, -73.3%).
  - 524 visitors came from Japan (-99.6% YOY) and 802 came from Canada (-98.4%).
  - There were 4,795 visitors from all other international markets (-94.3%). Many were from Guam. A small number of visitors were from the Philippines, Other Asia, Europe, Latin America, Oceania, and the Pacific Islands.
- **Canada:** In November 2020, 802 visitors arrived from Canada compared to 50,598 in 2019. All 802 visitors came to Hawaii on domestic flights. Year-to-date through November, arrivals were down 66.9 percent to 157,367 visitors. U.S. land borders with Canada have been partially closed since March 2020. Canadians were allowed to travel to the U.S. by air, and returning Canadian residents must self-isolate for 14 days.
- In November 2020, Hawaii hotels statewide continued to report substantially lower revenue per available room (RevPAR), average daily rate (ADR), and occupancy compared to the previous October due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- According to the *Hawaii Hotel Performance Report* published by the Hawaii Tourism Authority’s Tourism Research Division, statewide RevPAR decreased to \$51 (-75.4%), ADR fell to \$230 (-12%), and occupancy declined to 22.1 percent (-57 percentage points) (Figure 1) in November.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 5: Monthly State of Hawai'i Hotel Performance, 2020 vs. 2019



Source: STR, Inc. © Copyright 2020 Hawai'i Tourism Authority.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oneoahu.org/reopening-tier2>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oneoahu.org/reopening-strategy>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/research/infrastructure-research/>

- This represents a slight improvement over October figures of \$34 RevPAR, \$174 ADR and 19.7 percent occupancy.

## Hawaii Travel & Tourism

- Honolulu Festival organizers canceled the March 2021 event for the second consecutive year.

## AIRLINE INDUSTRY:

- A total of 440,846 trans-Pacific air seats serviced the Hawaiian Islands in November, down 58.9 percent from a year ago. There were no scheduled seats from Canada and Oceania, and considerably fewer scheduled seats from U.S. East (-56.5%), U.S. West (-43.5%), Japan (-98.4%), and other countries (-50.5%) compared to a year ago.
- ZIPAIR Tokyo, the low-cost carrier and subsidiary of Japan Airlines, began flight operations from Tokyo in mid-December. This is its first service to the USA.
- ZIPAIR Tokyo flies Boeing 787-8 Dreamliners, departing from Tokyo Narita at 20:15 and arriving in Hawaii at 07:55. The aircraft is configured in two classes with a total of 290 seats. Business class is called ZIP Full-Flat, which features a lie-flat seat in a 1-2-1 configuration.
- The number of Hawaii incoming Japan flights increased from 10 in the month of November to 51 flights in December.
- November capacity saw 2,532 inbound seats from Tokyo to Hawaii. Estimated December inbound seats were 12,623.
- Taiwan's start-up airline, StarLux Airlines, has applied to the U.S. CAA for the rights to fly to 15 American hubs including LA, SF, NY, D.C., Houston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Boston, and Honolulu. Operations are expected to begin by 2022 to major gateways in the USA.<sup>12</sup>

## **Air Seats / Flights to Hawaii**

- January 2021: 67 Flights with a total of 17,561 seats
- ANA: Haneda (HND-HNL) 8 flights in December; 9 flights in January 2021
- Hawaiian Airlines: 22 flights in December; 44 flights in January
  - January HAL flights:
    - HND – HNL (Haneda): 14 flights
    - NRT – HNL (Narita): 17 flights
    - KIX (Kansai/Osaka) – HNL – 13 flights
    - FUK – HNL (Fukuoka): suspended
    - CTS (Sapporo) – HNL: suspended
    - HND – KONA: suspended
- Japan Airlines: 14 flights in December (7 HND, 7 NRT); 7 flights (HND) in January 2021
- ZIPAIR: 6 flights in December (Narita); 7 flights in January (NRT)
- Delta to/from Asia: suspended
- United to/from Asia: suspended
- **Hawaii – Korea**
  - Hawaiian Airlines (ICN – HNL): Suspended
  - Korean Air (ICN – HNL / ICN – NRT – HNL): Suspended
  - Asiana Airlines (ICN – HNL): Suspended

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4048578>

## **JAPAN**

### **Travel from Japan:**

- In November, 524 visitors arrived from Japan compared to 183 visitors in October 2020 and 131,536 in Nov. 2019. Of the 524 visitors, 428 arrived on international flights from Japan and 96 came on domestic flights.
- Year-to-date through November, Japan arrivals totaled 295,354 visitors.
- Beginning November 6, travelers from Japan can bypass Hawaii's mandatory 10-day quarantine by securing a negative test from an approved testing partner 72 hours prior to the final leg of their journey to Hawai'i.<sup>13</sup>
- Japanese nationals traveling abroad are still subject to a 14-day self quarantine upon return to their country and are requested to refrain from using public transportation from the airport.
  - Qualified business travelers who return from overseas trips lasting one week or less are exempt from quarantine in Japan if the business travelers have proof of a negative coronavirus test and they restrict themselves to commute only between work and home.
- Travel restrictions on U.S. U.K. and other international travel into Japan remain in place.
- At least 73 countries are tightening border control measures for travelers from Japan, where cases of the mutated virus have been detected.<sup>14</sup>

### **Government / Health:**

- Japan's central government will likely declare a state of emergency in parts of the country this week, after data showed countermeasures had failed to stop the novel coronavirus from spreading further during the New Year's holidays.<sup>15</sup>
  - Tokyo and surrounding areas will call on residents to stay indoors after 8 p.m.
  - Bars and restaurants will close early, but schools will remain open
- [Japan confirmed 4,520 coronavirus cases](#) on Thursday 12/31, marking the highest daily tally. Tokyo and three neighboring prefectures continued to report record numbers of infections, as did Aichi, Gifu and Kyoto.<sup>16</sup>
- As COVID-19 cases surge toward 249,000, including more than 63,000 in Tokyo, many Tokyoites are [seeking out polymerase chain reaction \(PCR\) tests](#) before they head back to their hometowns for the New Year's break, and private institutions offering cheap tests in the capital are packed.
- Japan is hoping to conduct [an orderly rollout of COVID-19 vaccines](#) starting this year — probably in March — that will involve 10,500 freezers, a reservation system and the repurposing of nonmedical facilities as vaccination sites.
- While the rollout of vaccinations in Japan is still months away, the U.S. military began giving its first COVID-19 vaccinations at Tokyo's Yokota base on Monday. Japan's health ministry laid out its vaccination plan Friday, saying that people aged 65 or older will be the second group to get shots after medical and other front-line workers, with the third stage going to people with 14 types of underlying health conditions.
- Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga suspended the Go To Travel campaign — the government's domestic travel promotion program — after insisting it would go ahead. The government funded program has been paused from Dec. 28 though Jan. 11.
  - This is due to the record-breaking cases emerging nationwide since late October. The government has asked the public to make extra efforts to rein in the virus by

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.allhawaii.jp/covid19/>

<sup>14</sup> [Travelers from Japan barred from more countries amid new virus strain fears](#)

<sup>15</sup> <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Japan-to-declare-month-long-COVID-emergency-as-soon-as-Thursday>

<sup>16</sup> <https://covid19japan.com/>

limiting their movements during the year-end holidays.

- Often criticized for his government's handling of the coronavirus crisis, PM Suga is focusing on economic recovery. He recently elaborated on projects he is passionate about, such as going carbon neutral by 2050, facilitating digitalization and lowering cell phone bills.<sup>17</sup>
- A Japan labor ministry panel is urging corporate managers to change their ways of thinking and dramatically expand the scope of teleworking. The report on teleworking is the first of its kind at the ministry since the COVID-19 outbreak. Citing the existing gap in the country's telework rate between regular and nonregular employees, the report called for the elimination of unreasonable disparities in the workplace.<sup>18</sup>
  - As an example, giving different performance ratings based only on whether the employees work in the office or remotely is inappropriate.
  - The panel urged companies to establish rules on communications and other costs related to teleworking, reimburse employees for such costs, and take care to prevent long work hours.

### **Society/Lifestyle:**

- The annual Sapporo Snow Festival, one of the country's biggest winter events, will be canceled for the first time since its inception in 1950 amid a surge in novel coronavirus infections, its organizers say. 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).<sup>19</sup>
- Yahoo! Japan will use AI to delete hateful and defamatory comments from all of its online posting sites, enhancing its efforts to tackle cyberbullying. The move comes following the suicide in May of Hana Kimura, a cast member of the popular reality show "Terrace House."<sup>20</sup>
- "Demon Slayer has surpassed "spirited Away" as Japan's top-grossing film of all time."<sup>21</sup>
- The Japanese government continues to prepare for a 2021 Olympic Games. They plan to set up a system to exempt athletes competing at next year's Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games from entry restrictions currently placed on 159 countries and regions due to coronavirus.<sup>22</sup>
- Organizers will offer refunds for domestic ticket holders who can no longer attend the games because of the postponement.<sup>23</sup>
- Organizers received requests for refunds on about 810,000, or roughly 18 percent of the 4.45 million tickets sold domestically for the Olympics, which will now open on July 23.
- An estimated 21% of Tokyo Paralympic tickets will be refunded over postponement of the games.
- Shoppers have been washing their hands and sterilizing their phones in Tokyo using handwashing stations that a start-up hopes will revolutionize access to clean water and engender better hygiene. WOTA set up 20 WOSH machines in Ginza to help shoppers

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/05/national/politics-diplomacy/suga-looks-beyond-coronavirus-pandemic-focuses-economic-recovery/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/23/national/japan-labor-panel-expansion-teleworking/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/14/national/sapporo-snow-festival-canceled>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/23/national/yahoo-japan-ai-cyberbullying/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2020/12/14/entertainment-news/demon-slayer-set-to-become-top-grossing-film>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.newsonjapan.com/html/newsdesk/article/128478.php>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/23/national/tokyo-paralympic-tickets-refunded-over-postponement/>

do their bit to prevent spread of the virus. The WOSHes don't need a connection to running water and don't use fresh or wastewater tanks.

- Karaoke operators have seen sales fall by as much as 40% amid the pandemic, but they've also been able to tap into new demand. At karaoke rooms operated by Nagoya-based Xing, customers can use the rooms to watch movies and music performance videos with top-quality audio, or play musical instruments as loud as they like. Customers can even telework from the rooms, with the bonus of knowing they can launch into some solo Sinatra if they feel the need to blow off some steam.
- Global beer consumption in 2019 rose for the second straight year backed by strong demand in Asia and Africa, according to Japanese beverage company Kirin Holdings Co.<sup>24</sup>
  - The continent of Asia was the largest consumer of beer for the 12th consecutive year, according to Kirin.
  - By country, China ranked top for the 17th straight year with consumption of 39.22 million kiloliters, down 0.4 percent. The United States came in second with 23.92 million kiloliters, down 0.5 percent.
  - Japan placed seventh for the 13th year in a row with 4.87 million kiloliters, down 1.4 percent, affected by low temperatures in July and a massive typhoon in October.
- Both domestically and abroad, restaurant closures and restrictions on dining due to the pandemic have curbed demand for sake. As Japan struggles to combat a new spike in infections, the widespread cancelation of corporate *bōnenkai* (end-of-year parties) has put a damper on usually robust holiday sales.
- Looking to support the industry during these tough times, sake educator Simone Maynard [created a weekly online event](#) to connect breweries and consumers around the world. The Taste with the Toji events are scheduled to last roughly two hours, but many revelers stay on for the virtual *nijikai* (after-party). One boozy event even lasted five hours.
- In addition to the US election news, Hawaii is getting much attention in Japan. the recent TV news programs on Asahi TV and NHK as well as countless digital features and webcasts often highlight what Hawaii looks like now and portray Hawaii as a safe, accessible destination for Japanese travelers. Several programs focus on the relationship and long history between Hawaii and Japan. Japan's Veltra site even broadcast the sunrise live from Haleakala, Maui beginning at 1 p.m., JST on New Year's Day 2021.

## **KOREA**

### **Health / Economy:**

- South Korea reported 1,020 cases on Jan 4, up from 657 a day ago, bringing the country total to 64,264 with 981 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.<sup>25</sup>
- KATUSA troops to be first Koreans to get vaccinated.<sup>26</sup>
  - Soldiers who are part of the Korea Augmentation to the U.S. army (KATUSA) stationed will be among the first Koreans to receive vaccinations against the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The first shipment of Moderna vaccines was distributed to three treatment facilities across the USFK (United States Forces Korea).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/23/business/global-beer-consumption-rises-second-year-2019-kirin>

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

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/205\\_301687.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/205_301687.html)

- Moderna has agreed to provide 20 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the country.
- South Korea will ban gatherings of more than five people in and around Seoul, the capital, in an attempt to suppress what the authorities have called an “explosive” infection surge.<sup>27</sup>
- Nursing homes report increasing COVID-19 deaths and a shortage of beds.<sup>28</sup>
  - A considerable number of patients have died while waiting to be transferred to hospitals treating COVID-19 patients as ICU bed shortages have worsened.

### **Business / Lifestyle:**

- A cold wave has hit Korea with temperatures dipping into the double digits below zero in northern and central parts of the country.<sup>29</sup>
  - Morning lows ranged from minus 10 C to minus 15 C
- Lotte to close fashion mall in Dongdaemun.<sup>30</sup>
  - Lotte FITIN will close as of December 31 due to the effects of the fashion business slump in the town and the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The mall has been operating for seven years and was one of the most popular spots for foreign tourists with over 50% of its sales coming from foreigners (Chinese in particular accounted for 80% of the foreign visitors).
- KT and LG in talks with Disney.<sup>31</sup>
  - Disney will partner with a telecom firm to offer its content in Korea, with Disney Plus set to launch in the country in the latter half of 2021.
  - Disney Plus could partner with more than one firm like Netflix who has partnered with both LG Uplus and KT.
- LG Group riding on electric vehicle (EV) momentum.<sup>32</sup>
  - The conglomerate is now transforming itself into a core partner in the global EV supply chain.
  - Its core affiliate LG Chem’s EV battery business has become the global top EV battery supplier this year.
  - LG Chem decided to spin off the battery unit, officially launching its wholly owned subsidiary, LG Energy Solution, on December 1.
  - LG electronics announced to set up a joint venture with Canada-based vehicle parts maker Magna International for producing EV components.
- Year-end award shows are under fire for inadequate preventive measures against COVID-19.<sup>33</sup>
  - Organizers announced earlier that the events would be held in accordance with the government-imposed preventive measures by having no live audience, installing glass shields and establishing social distancing among participants.
  - However, SBS Entertainment Awards faced backlash as there was no social distancing among the mask-wearing participants at the tables..
    - Award presenters and winners wore no masks on stage while sharing several microphones.

<sup>27</sup> <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/South-Korea-bans-year-end-parties-music-lessons-as-virus-spikes-again>

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/119\\_301693.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/119_301693.html)

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/281\\_301668.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/12/281_301668.html)

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/694\\_301652.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/694_301652.html)

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/133\\_301654.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/133_301654.html)

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/133\\_301670.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2020/12/133_301670.html)

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2020/12/688\\_301630.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2020/12/688_301630.html)



## **GREATER CHINA (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan)**

- Taiwan, which held the world's best record in fighting against COVID-19 by reaching the landmark of no locally transmitted cases in over 8 months, ended its streak, when a local citizen was confirmed to have caught the coronavirus after coming into repeated contact with an infected pilot from New Zealand.
- Taiwan has managed to keep its total number of cases to 766, with just seven deaths, through a combination of closing borders early, tightly regulating travel, rigorous contact tracing, technology-enforced quarantine and widespread mask-wearing.<sup>34</sup>
- China has given conditional approval to a coronavirus vaccine developed by state-owned Sinopharm. The vaccine is the first one approved for general use in China.
  - The vaccine is an inactivated, two-dose vaccine from the Beijing Institute of Biological Products, a subsidiary of state-owned conglomerate Sinopharm. The company announced Dec. 30 that preliminary data from last-stage trials had shown it to be 79.3% effective.<sup>35</sup>
- China has been in the race to develop a [coronavirus vaccine](#) since the beginning and has already inoculated 1 million of its citizens under emergency use guidelines. But not everyone in China will need to be [vaccinated](#), the head of China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said.
- Even in the relatively contained area of [Hong Kong](#), the government's plan to offer free vaccinations to all of the city's 7.5 million residents will take until the end of 2021 to implement, officials say.
- China has joined the United Nation's [Covax initiative](#) to fairly distribute vaccines globally, part of Beijing's "[vaccine diplomacy](#)" effort.

## **Government / Travel**

- Beijing joins a number of countries suspending arrivals from Britain as London and southeast England go into lockdown.
- China and Japan have resumed business travel. The 2 countries began reciprocal business travel on November 30 through a "business track" program, which allows visitors to engage in limited activities during their 14-day quarantine periods. With aims to expedite the recovery of the economies, Japan has also launched similar arrangements with Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam.<sup>36</sup>
  - The bubble between Hong Kong and Singapore, initially set to launch on Nov. 29, has been postponed until 2021, due to Hong Kong's alarming surge in new infections. A launch date for the scheme, which will allow up to 200 passengers to travel in each direction daily without quarantine, will be announced this month.<sup>37</sup>
  - The travel arrangement eliminates quarantine requirements for residents of both cities, requires travelers to prove they have tested negative for coronavirus.
- Hong Kong's political atmosphere has changed under the new national security law. As the city marks a full year since the violent stand-offs at university campuses in 2019, the mass protests have disappeared, even though many remain resentful about unresolved grievances that drove them into the streets at this time 12 months ago.
- Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong residents are expected to emigrate as Beijing

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-29/this-place-hasn-t-had-a-local-coronavirus-case-in-200-days>

<sup>35</sup> <https://time.com/5925600/china-approval-sinopharm-vaccine/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3111220/china-japan-resume-two-way-business-travel-months-end>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3110799/coronavirus-hong-kong-party-rooms-close-live>

tightens its grip on the city.<sup>38</sup> The Hong Kong government estimates that about 503,800 people left between 1987 and 1996, the decade leading up to the handover. In 2020, the United Kingdom issued more than 200,000 British National Overseas (BNO) passports, according to a British government official. The passports are a legacy document of the colonial era that provides a path to citizenship.

Britain estimates that 5.4 million Hong Kongers are eligible for BNOs and that as many as 322,000 will move to the country between 2021 and 2025. Beginning in January 2021, BNO holders will be eligible to stay in Britain for five years, at which point they can apply for settlement if requirements are met and, eventually, citizenship. Hong Kongers' other preferred destinations are Canada and Australia.

### Society / Lifestyle:

- The pandemic has forced China to [confront mental health](#), a taboo subject there. At the height of its outbreak, more than a third of people experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety, insomnia or acute stress, according to a nationwide survey.
- The government has deployed extensive resources to address the spike in depression and anxiety. But social stigmas and long-term challenges remain.<sup>39</sup>
- With most international borders having been closed for the best part of 2020, mainland Chinese tourists are discovering their own country in RVs as avoiding crowds becomes the norm. RV travel has become so popular in China that it can be very difficult to rent one in cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai.
- A network of RV parks has sprung up around the nation, while hotel openings put on hold due to Covid-19 are now going ahead, helping to satisfy an eager market, with many Chinese tourists avoiding popular domestic scenic spots and large crowds, RVs are becoming more popular as a way of visiting places off the beaten track.<sup>40</sup>
- Far from the administrative glare of Beijing, the cosmopolitan city of Chengdu, dubbed "Gaydu" by Chinese millennials, has long cherished its reputation as a safe haven for a community that faces stigma and harassment elsewhere in the country. Activists now say the city's permissive streak is under threat, as the central Communist Party leadership puts the squeeze on sexual freedom across the country.<sup>41</sup>

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<https://pacrimmarketing.com/Special-Pages/COVID-19-Updates.htm>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/hongkong-security-emigration/>

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/world/asia/china-covid-mental-health.html?campaign\\_id=9&campaign\\_id=154&emc=edit\\_nn\\_20201221&emc=edit\\_cb\\_20201221&instance\\_id=25259&instance\\_id=25282&nl=the-morning&nl=coronavirus-briefing&regi\\_id=86729284&regi\\_id=108126445&segment\\_id=47474&segment\\_id=47531&te=1&te=1&user\\_id=9463760a2cad805095b789fb32171815&user\\_id=ff8d4843ce9587f354279ddc21092bd4](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/world/asia/china-covid-mental-health.html?campaign_id=9&campaign_id=154&emc=edit_nn_20201221&emc=edit_cb_20201221&instance_id=25259&instance_id=25282&nl=the-morning&nl=coronavirus-briefing&regi_id=86729284&regi_id=108126445&segment_id=47474&segment_id=47531&te=1&te=1&user_id=9463760a2cad805095b789fb32171815&user_id=ff8d4843ce9587f354279ddc21092bd4)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/travel-leisure/article/3112591/chinese-tourists-are-discovering-their-own-country-rvs>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/01/03/asia-pacific/chengdu-chinas-permissive-gay-capital-refusing-fold/>