

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Mainland China reopens borders and Hong Kong drops most COVID rules

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Chinese citizens are rushing to book travel as the country reopens its borders and quits quarantine. Image credit: Shutterstock

By [Jing Zhang](#)

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After almost three long years, the mainland is reopening its borders and dropping quarantine for inbound travelers, [starting on Jan. 8.](#)

After dropping its Dynamic Zero COVID policy mid-December, China is now in the midst of a COVID wave across the country.

Although it is not issuing tourist visas yet, the latest big change will mean that Chinese residents will be able to travel to the rest of the world and return fairly easily and without quarantine just a negative PCR test is required 48 hours before entering China.

Chinese travel sites reported a boost in searches upon the announcement.

Hong Kong has also canceled its strict COVID rules, with PCR tests for arrivals and vaccine passes dropped across the city, although the public mask mandate remains. Chief Executive John Lee said that there are preparations for opening the borders with the mainland on the Jan. 15.

**The Jing Take:** This latest news provides hope for the global economy.

Tourism, hospitality, retail and luxury industries all around the world will be particularly delighted to hear of the potential lift resulting in the return of the Chinese tourist. Fashion and luxury brands no doubt have new cause for celebration.

French officials have already issued an official statement welcoming Chinese tourism back.

However, countries such as [Japan, Italy and Malaysia](#) have announced the implementation of testing measures for [incoming flights from China](#) due to the high rates of COVID sweeping across the country, [whilst U.S. officials](#) have also indicated similar concerns as well as lack of transparency on numbers.

Japan and Hong Kong both top Chinese traveler sentiment wish lists, as reported by a recent [Dragon Trail Research's report](#), and 38 percent of respondents plan to travel within six months.

2023 is likely to be characterized by revenge spending and revenge travel by the Chinese, whose collective cabin fever over the past three years has reached boiling point.

Data from Chinese online travel companies show several trends: Qunar.com showed a five-fold increase in outbound ticket bookings within an hour of the news, with most departures between mid-January and early February. Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok and Hong Kong were among the most popular destinations.

Trip.com Group indicated that outbound ticket orders rose 254 percent from the same period on Monday morning, Dec. 26. LY.com saw an 850 percent increase in international ticket searches, while visa searches jumped tenfold, with Japan, South Korea and Thailand being the top three destinations.

Most of those searching for outbound travel are from Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou.

The desire for new experiences, new countries and new environments is sky high, but Chinese travelers have also emerged out of the last three years with a newfound consciousness for **sustainable travel, health and safety**, as well as more meaningful consumption.

While Asian destinations seem to be most popular right now, brands and retailers in favored luxury destinations such as Paris, Milan and London must also be prepared for a busy year of rebound and spending.

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