



AS IT IS

## Bali Restarts Direct International Flights from All Countries

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Direct international flights to Indonesia's popular vacation island of Bali have restarted after a break of nearly two years.

All arriving travelers who are fully vaccinated will be required to **quarantine** for five days in hotels or on boats offshore.

Officials announced in October that Bali would welcome foreign travelers from 19 nations. But there had been no direct international flights to the island until last Thursday. The first plane to arrive was a Garuda Indonesia flight from Tokyo.

Singapore Airlines said last week it would resume flights to Bali from Singapore starting on February 16.

Indonesia reported 27,197 new COVID-19 infections and 38 deaths Thursday in the latest 24-hour period. The country has seen more than 4.4 million total cases since the pandemic began.

The latest rise in virus cases, driven by the fast-spreading Omicron version, has mostly been centered in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. But infections recently "increased **significantly**" in Java and Bali, said Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the government minister leading COVID-19 efforts in those areas.

The island was closed to international flights after COVID-19 hit the world's fourth most populous country in 2020.

Bali drew 6.2 million foreign visitors in 2019. Last year, the whole country recorded just 1.6 million foreign visitors, down 62 percent from 2020.

**Tourism** is the main source of income in Bali, which is home to more than 4 million people. Bali's tourist areas were mostly empty 20 years ago after deadly terror attacks that targeted foreigners. But the island has worked to overcome that image.

Local officials say the reopening of Bali to travelers from all countries is a start to help repair the island's economy.

Indonesia's Tourism and Economy Minister, Sandiaga Uno, said the reopening will also serve as a "trial" as the government prepares to host G-20 events in Bali later this year. The G-20 is a grouping of the world's largest 20 economies.

A G-20 meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors planned for mid-February was supposed to be held in Bali. But the meeting has been moved to Jakarta because of the latest rise in COVID-19 cases.

I'm Jonathan Evans.

*The Associated Press and Reuters reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**quarantine** – *n.* the period of time during which a person or animal that has a disease or that might have a disease is kept away from others to prevent the disease from spreading

**significant** – *adj.* important or noticeable

**tourism** – *n.* the activity of traveling to a place for pleasure

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