

## Greece reopens primary schools, hotels, announces rules for restart of tourism

Written by Administrator

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ATHENS, June 2 (Net) -- Greece took another step to normalcy on Monday with the reopening of primary schools and kindergartens, open-air cinemas, hotels and swimming pools among other businesses which had closed since March as part of measures to control the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The lockdown which lasted from March 23 to May 4 helped to flatten the curve and in the past few weeks, economic and social life is gradually returning to normal.

As the summer tourism season is about to start in the coming weeks, the government gave more information on the the conditions under which Greece will welcome tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism announced on Friday the first list of 29 countries, including China, which can send tourists to Greece as of June 15 to the airports of Athens and Thessaloniki.

The list was drafted based on epidemiological data and European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) announcements, following recommendations from Greek scientists.

These travelers will be subject only to sample testing for COVID-19 upon arrival.

In addition, the country also opens to visitors from other countries as of mid-June. But at least until June 30, all the tourists originating from an airport on the EASA list of affected areas with high risk of transmission of COVID-19, are obliged to be tested upon arrival and will have to spend one night at a designated hotel, Tourism Minister Harry Theocharis told Greek national news agency AMNA on Monday.

If the test is negative then the passenger has to self quarantine for 7 days, while if the test is positive, the passenger is quarantined under supervision for 14 days, he explained.

Greek authorities will focus on the departure airports and not the nationality of the travelers, the minister stressed, referring to a Foreign Affairs Ministry announcement for more clarifications.

Land border arrivals from Albania, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria will be allowed as of June 15, and visitors will be subject to random tests upon arrival, according to the Foreign Ministry press statement.

As of July 1, international flights are allowed into all airports in Greece and visitors are subject to random tests upon arrival, while additional restrictions regarding certain countries will be announced at a later date, the ministry stressed.

Furthermore, arrivals by sea will be allowed as of July 1, and visitors will be also subject to random tests upon arrival, the announcement continued.

Greece retains the right to modify any of the above rules in light of changing circumstances, the ministry added.

The safety of Greek citizens and foreign visitors is the top priority for Greek authorities in the post-lockdown period, officials noted.

"Solidarity is the big message. We should say no to fear, no to panic, no to stigma. We are all in this together. We will prevail," Sotirios Tsiodras, spokesperson for the Health Ministry on COVID-19, said on Monday during an online discussion organized by the Greek Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

The main theme of the six-month presidency which started on May 15 is protecting human life and public health in the context of a pandemic.

During the same online discussion, Tsiodras, a professor of medicine and infectious diseases, also expressed optimism about the development of a COVID-19 vaccine.

"I saw encouraging results from China on trials of a vaccine yesterday We want to be fast (in developing a vaccine), but assure safety," he said regarding the race of scientists against time

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to develop effective and safe vaccines.

According to the latest update on the spread of COVID-19 in Greece released by the National Public Health Organization (EODY) on Monday, a total of 2,918 confirmed cases have been registered nationwide since Feb. 26, when the first infection was diagnosed. The death toll stands at 179, while a total of 180,518 tests have been conducted. Two new cases and four deaths were registered since Sunday.