

# Sluggish start to tourism season in Greece

In the historic centre of Athens, only a handful of visitors wander around. The streets are normally flooded with tourists, but earlier expectations for a dynamic comeback of Greek tourism have not been met.

“Things change on a daily basis,” says Evgenios Vassilikos, the president of the Athens Hoteliers association.

“On the one hand, there is good news, for example, that Britain decided to scrap quarantine for amber countries.

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“On the other hand, we see cases rising in Greece and we fear another lockdown. This is not a good year. It will be hard for the hotels to reach last year’s numbers.”

A number of factors are keeping tourists away. The main one is the uncertainty of what might happen in the destination country.

## Restrictions return

The Greek government wanted to start the tourist season with as few restrictions as possible. But the spread of the Delta variant has changed those plans. To prevent a further spread of the pandemic the government has decided on new measures, mainly for entertainment venues. Cafes and bars only serve seated customers.

*No one can come indoors if they are not fully vaccinated.*

Christos Batsoulis  
Waiter

From July 15, all indoor spaces will accept vaccinated people only. The measures apply to restaurants, nightclubs, bars and cafes. Waiter Christos Batsoulis explains how it works.

“We have downloaded this app from the Ministry’s web page,” explains waiter Christos Batsoulis. “By clicking on the QR scanner option, you can take a picture of the QR code of the customer and check it out. If they are vaccinated, it goes green. It’s a measure for everyone, Greek or tourist. No one can come indoors if they are not fully vaccinated.”

## **Vaccination is the key to saving the season**

Tourism experts say vaccination is key for this season. Greece has made a good start, but numbers have stalled lately.

“We are doing everything within our power,” says Michalis Vlatakis, President of Travel Agents of Crete . “All the tourism industry here in Crete, we’ve followed training courses on how to deal with the pandemic organized by the Crete University Medical School. We are trying to help increase vaccination rates for all our co-citizens”

The Greek Ministry of Tourism dismisses claims that tourist arrivals have contributed to the past week’s steady rise of new coronavirus cases in Greece.