

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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New Zealand Cook Islands travel bubble significant step in COVID-19 recovery

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown have today announced that, pending final confirmation by New Zealand's Director-General of Health and the Cook Islands Secretary of Health, two-way quarantine-free travel will commence between the two countries on 17 May (NZT).

"Two way quarantine-free travel is a significant step in both countries' COVID-19 recovery, and a direct result of both New Zealand and the Cook Islands' successful response to the pandemic," Jacinda Ardern said.

"It will mean families can reconnect, commercial arrangements can resume and Kiwis can take a much-welcomed winter break and support the Cook Islands' tourism sector and recovery.

"That we can take this step in our recovery so soon after opening the trans-Tasman bubble highlights the benefits of our COVID-19 management, and the opportunities it is now providing New Zealand and our neighbours.

"This is a world-leading arrangement and it's important to remember many other countries still have bans in place on travel for holiday purposes."

Jacinda Ardern said a huge amount of work had gone into ensuring the two-way bubble was safe and that the Cook Islands was set up and ready for it.

"The health and safety of the people of the Cook Islands has at all times been paramount.

"Vaccination, while not an answer on its own, will provide an added layer of protection once rolled out, and we continue to advance these plans alongside the Cook Islands," said Jacinda Ardern.

"The confirmation of 17 May for the commencement of two-way quarantine-free travel between the Cook Islands and New Zealand is the result of our uncompromising commitment to ensuring all necessary health and border measures are instituted to the highest standards of protection against COVID-19 prior to commencement," Mark Brown said.

"Since my visit to New Zealand at the end of March, and various engagements with Prime Minister Ardern and members of her Cabinet, we have jointly elevated effort towards bolstering readiness and response capabilities against COVID-19 in preparation for the safe resumption of two-way quarantine-free travel between our countries.

“The learnings from the trans-Tasman arrangement have informed further bolstering of response capabilities by both Governments in preparation for commencement of the Cook Islands - New Zealand quarantine-free travel arrangement.

“In close partnership with New Zealand, we are continuing to work through final details for the deployment of vaccines to the Cook Islands and expect to provide further details on the vaccine roll-out within the next week few weeks.

“I acknowledge with deepest gratitude our people’s continued trust in our leadership and whole of society endeavour to keep our people safe from the virus, and the incredible work of a steadfast team of committed officials working in close partnership with our community and industry and their New Zealand counterparts.

“Today we start our journey of recovery. Today we get back to business. Today with our joint confirmation of the 17 May, we give our people, and particularly our industry the certainty necessary to institute remaining preparatory steps to once more welcome visitors to our shores.”

Commencement of the bubble is subject to a final set of criteria being met, including airline and airport preparedness, all necessary protocols and frameworks being in place, and final sign off from the New Zealand Director-General of Health and the Cook Islands Secretary of Te Marae Ora – Ministry of Health.

Further information

Full information about quarantine-free travel, including eligibility, what travellers should expect, and updates to requirements, are on:

- the New Zealand Government COVID-19 website: www.covid19.govt.nz
- the Cook Islands Government COVID-19 website: www.covid19.gov.ck
- Quarantine-free travel applies to all travellers in New Zealand and the Cook Islands who meet the eligibility requirements to travel.
- Travellers will have to have been in either the Cook Islands or New Zealand for at least 14 days before travel. This means anyone wanting to travel between Australia and the Cook Islands would need to spend at least 14 days in New Zealand in the middle.
- No one should travel if they are unwell, if they are waiting on a COVID-19 test, or if they have been in contact with anyone suspected to have COVID-19.
- There will be no requirement for a pre-departure COVID-19 test, but travellers will have to complete a travel declaration, provide a health declaration and there will be random health checks at airports.
- Normal immigration rules for entry into each country will continue to apply. Travellers will need to check what that means for their individual situation.

- From 17 May travellers in both directions will not have to enter managed quarantine facilities.
- Flights will be operating as 'green', with measures in place through the traveller journey to keep travellers separate from 'red' flights in and out of New Zealand where passengers need to enter MIQ.