

French government shuts down Caribbean, Polynesian islands

By Christina Jelski   By Gay Nagle Myers   | Feb 02, 2021

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Tahitian sunset from the Tahiti Pearl Beach resort. Photo Credit: Jeri Clausing

The French government, fearing the spread of deadlier and more contagious variants of the Covid-19 coronavirus, has closed the borders of its overseas territories indefinitely, including those in the Caribbean and French Polynesia.

Caribbean destinations that fall into that category are St. Barts, St. Martin, Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The French government took this action “independently of the will of our local authorities [desire] to keep St. Barts open,” said Nils DuFau, president of the St. Barts Tourism Board. The island was among the first in the Caribbean to reopen to visitors back in late June.

DeFau said St. Barts has had "some" Covid cases, "but we have managed to keep it at bay and the situation is well managed and under control.

"We are right now negotiating to ease the entry restriction and find an alternative solution. Our aim is to reopen the island's borders as soon as possible."

Visitors currently on the island will be able to leave within a few days.

French Polynesia, which includes the islands of Tahiti, Bora Bora and Moorea, has also temporarily halted inbound tourism, citing "the resurgence of **Covid-19** cases around the world."

In a statement, French Polynesia's official tourism website, **Tahiti Tourisme**, announced that the travel suspension would go into effect on Feb. 3, with the duration of the measure to "be specified in the coming days."

Travelers currently in French Polynesia with a return scheduled for this week will be able to complete their trips as planned, though those with departures beyond that point are being advised to contact their airlines to confirm their flight schedule.

According to a government update posted online, there will be **exceptions to the travel freeze**, with those traveling due to a serious personal or family-related matter, an emergency health situation or an urgent professional reason permitted entry to the destination. Travelers will only be allowed to board a flight to French Polynesia once they provide documentation proving that their reason for travel falls under one of those three categories.

All passengers 11 years and older entering the destination will also continue to be required to show proof of a negative PCR test taken less than three days prior to travel.

French Polynesia had previously reopened to international tourism on July 15.