



**MARKET: Germany, Austria,  
Switzerland**

# CHALLENGES

## Operational challenges

- All tour operators report on short time work for all or most colleagues. **Insecurity** about when business starts again is high, **some shift their business to new products in domestic travel or to close-by-countries that open up borders earlier** (mid June).
- A lot small and medium size tourism companies **face bankruptcy** and existential threats without bookings and income from summer business. About 97% of German travel businesses have less than 20 employees and a **fitting governmental support is missing**. Travel industry waits for rescue package and demonstrates on streets. A voucher system that is covered by the state is supposed to be on its way and might ease the situation a bit.

## Booking & cancellation challenges

- Many tour operators (TO) were frustrated by the Friday press update from Norway concerning border openings. This means for all TO that **summer season to Norway is lost**. Should the borders really open on 20.7. this should be communicated in long term. The biggest challenge is actually the **lack of predictability**, since locks are extended in the long term and openings are only theoretically promised. This particularly **unsettles the guests**. **Even if border openings are indicated, there is no information about the associated conditions**
- Daily work is on : **Cancelling and or rebooking trips up to 15.6.** until the day when Germany is supposed to relax travel restrictions across borders again. **Trips to Norway are cancelled up to 20.7.** Some TO (bigger ones) try to be very flexible in bookings and cancellation conditions to serve the customers best and keep them as customer. Other cannot offer as much flexibility in cancellations deadlines. Airlines still do not pay back pre-payments, neither do some other big carriers.
- Bus tour operators do not only face border closures but also **face restrictions for bus travel**. They desperately wait for conditions to change and also demonstrate for rescue package.

# BOOKING SITUATION

- Some TOs report to work on **products for autumn, winter** (x-mas, new year eve and more) and 2021 and **hope for bookings to start after reopening of borders**. Some TO re-structure their existing products to fit customers wishes even better.
- **Bookings for winter and 2021 are starting**, but very slowly significantly below the previous year's level. This will change only when freedom of travel and specific names for possible conditions have been restored. **TO expect bookings for summer 2021 from September**.
- Some TO report on no booking right now but hope this to change after end of travel restrictions.
- Most TO report on **most rebookings for 2021 (not within 2020)**.
- One TO sees a big chance for Norway **to increase and support autumn/shoulderseason tourism in 2020, if Norway would prepare accordingly and would have tourist attractions/infrastructure open and not closed as normal in autumn**. This might be a new product/possibility for TO as well to send groups.
- Some **TO expect good chances for tourism to Norway in the future (after corona)**, since people will not dare to travel far. **Norway offers big space (little populated) and great nature, appears safe, has a strong government and is easy to reach from Germany/home**.
- One TO also sees difficulties for Norway in the future, when opening up later than other countries, as other destination will open up earlier and even former Norway fans might test out other destinations and then might be lost for Norway in the future.

## BORDERS & TRAVEL ADVICE

- **German federal state has opened borders to some neighbouring countries.** Since 16.5. the border to Luxemburg, Austria and France has been opened up. **From 15.6. more openings are expected.** German federal states have differing opening rules. Most have restaurants open and some have opened hotels. Schleswig Holstein opened for tourism on 18.5., but restrictions concerning number of beach visitors are expected - especially on holidays such as "Himmelfahrt" and pentecost weekend. Not all entrances to the beaches are open. NRW opened up earlier. Niedersachsen allows hotels to open at 24.5. etc. All Corona rules in federal states can be found here: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/corona-bundeslaender-1745198>
- **Hygiene rules** and concepts are mandatory everywhere.
- Germans **are not allowed to travel abroad until June 15th.** But they are allowed to travel domestically.
- There are bilateral agreements: Germany opened borders to Austria, France, Luxemburg on 15<sup>th</sup> May. Openings to other EU countries are in process.

# OTHER

If opening up borders the touristical **products should be ready to offer a good customer experience**, so that holiday is really what one expects from it. Quarantine must be removed also when opening borders.

The message of the Norwegian government to go for a Nordic countries solution on opening borders are bewildering, since Iceland and Finland open up earlier for German tourists, even for groups and prepare accordingly. **The opening date for German tourist is not clearly communicated.** A TO offers to test out “social distancing and hygienical correct” trips, if wanted and needed.

A group tour operator states that Germans are willingly to travel - even when facing restrictions. **But safety and closeness to Germany will be important.**

One TO reports an **increase in prices after Corona but sees this as wrong signal** when wanting to restart business.

TOs want to rely on existing partners and **hope for flexible and cost-free re-booking possibilities** if needed.



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