



Government of the Cook Islands
Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Thursday 9 April, 15:00

Opening of New Zealand transit window allows stranded visitors to return home

Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) is calling on foreign visitors still in the Cook Islands with confirmed bookings on the Air New Zealand Rarotonga-Auckland flight's on Friday 10th April and Friday 17th April to make themselves known to MFAI urgently.



New Zealand recently announced the opening of a transit window that will allow foreign nationals in the Cook Islands to transit New Zealand, as long as the connecting onward flight is within 10 hours of the flight from Rarotonga landing in New Zealand and travelers remain airside. This transit window will remain in place until at least the end of April, however given the significant reduction in flight frequency from the Cook Islands (to one flight per week, departing Friday's at 3.25pm and arriving in New Zealand Saturday's at 6.00pm) and the limited onwards connection options this presents, it is important those holding bookings are able to ensure their connecting flights meet the transit requirements and they are able to provide evidence that all sectors of their travel are confirmed and cleared through to final destination.

"MFAI welcome this most recent announcement by New Zealand to provide an opening for foreign visitors stranded in the Cook Islands to return home, however the 10 hour transit window will require elevated levels of coordination between the traveler, Air New Zealand and connecting airline carriers to ensure travelers are able to satisfy the narrow transit window requirements for Auckland," said Foreign Secretary Tapaeru Herrmann. "MFAI have prioritized recent efforts on registering foreign visitors still in country, to better support exit plans from the Cook Islands including co-ordination across the different airline carriers and border restrictions of various states as travelers make their way home."

New Zealand's transit window requires that transiting passengers:

- must remain airside with a maximum transit of 10 hours
- cannot enter New Zealand
- must have no COVID-19 symptoms, no contact with a suspected or confirmed case and not be awaiting test results
- must have confirmation that they're permitted to board for their entire journey and that their destination country will permit arrival
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For almost three weeks, MFAI have worked closely with foreign visitors and multiple domestic and international partners including airlines, agencies and foreign governments to support return travel to home destination of just under 200 foreign visitors whose return travel plans have been upended by widespread international border closures, including for transit only purposes. Most of those stranded still in the Cook Islands are from Europe and the Americas. "To ensure the check-in process at Rarotonga Airport goes as smoothly as possible, we strongly encourage our visitors to contact their travel agents and/or Air New Zealand directly to seek initial advice on what connections may be available and to make themselves known to MFAI so we can track the progress of their exit plans and support where able," said Secretary Herrmann.

Queries regarding this media release can be directed to MFAI Director International and Trade Division Karo Ngatoko at Karopaerangi.ngatoko@cookislands.gov.ck