

Thai bay made famous in 'The Beach' to be shut until 2021

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Tourists pose in Maya Bay before a row of boats in April 2018, shortly before the beach was ruled off-limits in a bid to protect the environment

The closure of the glittering Thai bay made famous by the movie "The Beach" has been extended for another two years to allow a full recovery

of its corals and wildlife, an official said Thursday, drawing a sharp rebuke from the tourism industry.

Maya Bay, ringed by cliffs on Ko Phi Phi Ley island and surrounded by azure waters, was made famous when it featured in the 2000 film starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

It was shut last June by Thai authorities due to worries the white-sand paradise was suffering from the pressure of thousands of day-trippers arriving by boat.

Authorities had initially said the beach—a massive draw for Thailand's more than 38 million tourists—was going to be closed for four months, but the re-opening was repeatedly postponed.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat, advisor to the Department of National Parks, told AFP on Thursday the ban on visitors will be extended until mid-2021.

"The resolution of the Department of Parks yesterday is to extend the closure of Maya Bay for another two years to allow its ecology to fully recover," he said.

After it is re-opened, measures such as limiting the number of daily visitors and banning boats from parking within the bay's waters will be enacted, Thon said.

Before Maya Bay's closure, up to 5,000 tourists visited daily, causing trees and smaller vegetation to be uprooted, creeping soil erosion, and severe damage to the corals in the bay.

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