

From temples to Disneyland, China shuts down to halt virus

January 25 2020

China has quarantined cities and shut major tourist attractions from Disneyland to the Forbidden City and a section of the Great Wall as it scrambles to stop a deadly SARS-like virus from spreading further.

The drastic moves come as hundreds of millions of people criss-crossed the country in recent days to celebrate the Lunar New Year holiday, which officially started Friday and is typically a joyous time of gatherings and public celebration.

Here is a rundown of the measures taken so far in an unprecedented quarantine effort:

Cities under lockdown

Public transport has been stopped in 18 cities in central Hubei province, with [train stations](#) shut, events cancelled and theatres, libraries and karaoke bars closed in some locations.

The epicentre of the outbreak is provincial capital Wuhan, the biggest [city](#) on lockdown, where the government has halted all travel out of the Yangtze River metropolis of 11 million.

Wuhan residents have been told to stay home and authorities are restricting car traffic in the city central. There are few flights available to the city, deepening the isolation.

Similar quarantine measures are being taken in the other, smaller cities. These include strict controls on weddings and funerals, temperature screening of people as they arrive and the suspension of online taxi services.

More than 56 million people in total are affected by the city shutdowns.

Beijing will suspend long-distance bus services entering and leaving the capital of 20 million people from Sunday due to "requirements of epidemic prevention and control," the official People's Daily newspaper reported.

Festivities cancelled

Wuhan and Beijing have cancelled public events that usually attract hundreds of thousands of people to temples during the New Year holiday.

Gao Fu, head of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has asked China's 1.4 billion citizens to forego New Year gatherings and confine themselves at home until all is clear.

To discourage nationwide travel, the government also said all tickets for rail, air, road, or water transport could be refunded.

On Saturday, China said it will suspend both domestic and overseas Chinese group tours, state media reported Saturday, as it ramps up efforts to contain the new SARS-like virus.

Underscoring fears that the virus could spread further, overseas Chinese tour groups will be suspended from Monday while domestic trips have already been halted.

Tourists from Hubei in Haikou, capital of the island province of Hainan, were told by the city government they had to spend 14 days in a hotel for centralised medical observation, and were forbidden to leave.

Attractions closed

The historic Forbidden City, a sprawling imperial palace in Beijing that is one of the country's most revered cultural sites, will temporarily close from Saturday.

Other famous landmarks including a section of the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs and Yinshan Pagoda are also not open to visitors.

Shanghai Disneyland said it would shut for an indefinite period "to ensure the health and safety of our guests and cast".

Women's Olympics football qualifiers scheduled for February 3-9 in Wuhan have been moved to the eastern city of Nanjing.

China's film box-office earnings for Lunar New Year's Eve on Friday were just one-tenth of last year as people shunned crowds.

US coffee chain Starbucks said it would shut all its stores in Hubei during the Lunar New Year festival for the "health safety" of staff and customers.

Temperature checks

Staff in full body protective suits were seen checking the temperatures of people entering a [subway station](#) in Beijing on Friday.

The country has ordered sterilisation and ventilation at airports and bus

stations, as well as inside planes and trains, while travellers are being screened for fever.

Temperature screening checkpoints have been set up in 387 Chinese railway stations, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Health authorities are urging people to wash their hands regularly, avoid crowded places, get plenty of fresh air and wear a mask if they have a cough.

In Wuhan, city authorities have made it mandatory to wear a mask in public places.

In response to skyrocketing demand for masks—starting to sell out at pharmacies and on some popular websites—China's industry and information technology ministry said it would "spare no effort in increasing supply".

Two new hospitals

In Wuhan, authorities are rushing to build two new hospitals in just weeks as a rising number of patients are infected by the new coronavirus.

The first facility is expected to be in use by February 3 and will have a capacity of 1,000 beds spread over 25,000 square metres, according to state media. The second one will have 1,300 beds.

Dozens of excavators and trucks were filmed working on the site by state broadcaster CCTV.

Xinhua said the two new hospitals in Wuhan would be similar in size to the temporary facility that was built to tackle SARS in Beijing in 2003,

when 650 people died from the disease in the mainland and Hong Kong.

Its construction began after reports surfaced of bed shortages in hospitals designated as dealing with the outbreak, which has now infected 830 people across China.

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