

# Moscow deserted after shops close to stop coronavirus

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The streets of Moscow were eerily quiet Saturday with shops and restaurants shuttered after new measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus came into force.

Officials in the Russian capital this week stopped short of imposing a full lockdown, but ordered elderly residents on Thursday to stay and

home and closed all non-essential services for one week from Saturday.

President Vladimir Putin urged all Russians to stay at home to slow the spread of the virus in a rare televised address on Wednesday, saying next week would be a week off from work.

The order to close all restaurants, cafes, and non-essential services throughout the country comes against the backdrop of a steady increase in the rise of cases in Russia.

Health officials have reported 1,264 [coronavirus](#) cases and four deaths across Russia, with a majority of them—817—centralised in the capital.

On Saturday, Moscow's usually bustling shopping streets were nearly empty. Around half of the Muscovites talking a stroll in the capital's centre wore [surgical masks](#).

But not everyone was put off by the unusual calm.

"It's not scary to go out, it's even better when there are fewer people: we go for a leisurely stroll, no one bothers," said a 60-year-old pensioner, Vladimir Leonov.

He said the new measures, which are only expected to last one week, will be "extended and even hardened".

Anastasia, a 25-year-old resident of the capital, is not afraid of the pandemic but said the restrictions should be more stringent. "People do not completely understand what is going on," she told AFP.

"Many people think we are far away from what's happening in Spain or Italy," she said. "But it can happen to us too on the same scale.

The week off work should not be seen as a "vacation," said Simeon, a 29-year-old Muscovite out for some air. "It is a week of self-isolation."

Russians living in the capital received an email from the city's mayor Sergei Sobyenin on Saturday urging them to stay at home. He said that the non-working week "is not a party but a key measure in the fight against the coronavirus."

The message "Stay at home" has also been splashed across public transport in Moscow.

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