

Virus rebels from France to Florida flout lockdown practices

March 22 2020, by Elaine Ganley



Cece Guida, 19, top, of New York City, pushes on Sam Reddick, 20, of Evansville, Ind., as spring break revelers look on during a game of chicken fight on the beach, Tuesday, March 17, 2020, in Pompano Beach, Fla. As a response to the coronavirus pandemic, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered all bars be shut down for 30 days beginning at 5 p.m. and many Florida beaches are turning away spring break crowds urging them to engage in social distancing. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

Young German adults hold "corona parties" and cough toward older people. A Spanish man leashes a goat to go for a walk to skirt confinement orders. From France to Florida to Australia, kitesurfers, college students and others crowd the beaches.

Their defiance of lockdown mandates and scientific advice to fight the coronavirus pandemic has prompted crackdowns by authorities on people trying to escape cabin fever brought on by virus restrictions. In some cases, the virus rebels resist—threatening police as officials express outrage over public gatherings that could spread the virus.

"Some consider they're little heroes when they break the rules," French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said. "Well, no. You're an imbecile, and especially a threat to yourself."

After days of noncompliance by people refusing to stay home and venture out only for essential tasks, France on Friday sent security forces into train stations to prevent people from traveling to their vacation homes, potentially carrying the virus to the countryside or beaches where medical facilities are less robust. The popular Paris walkway along the Seine River was closed and a nightly curfew was imposed in the French Mediterranean city of Nice by Mayor Christian Estrosi, who is infected with the virus.



Despite warnings from government officials take caution and self distance because of coronavirus, beach goers enjoy the Isle of Palms beach, Friday, March 20, 2020, in Isle of Palms, S.C. City authorities are restricting access to the popular beach from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily starting Saturday to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Mic Smith)

Florida officials closed some of the state's most popular beaches after images of rowdy spring break college crowds appeared on TV for days amid the rising global death toll, which surpassed 13,000 on Sunday. Australia closed Sydney's famous Bondi Beach after police were outraged at pictures of the crowds.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Saturday that people from 18-to-49 account for more than half of the state's coronavirus cases,

warning them "you're not Superman, and you're not Superwoman."

Many people were not complying with social distancing recommendations to stay away from each other in New York City's vast city park network ahead of a ban on congregating in groups that goes into effect Sunday night, Cuomo said.

"You can wind up hurting someone who you love, or hurting someone wholly inadvertently. Social distancing works, and you need social distancing everywhere," Cuomo warned.



People walk in the open air market of Belleville, in Paris, Friday, March 20, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron said that for 15 days starting at noon on Tuesday, people will be allowed to leave the place they live only for necessary activities such as shopping for food, going to work or taking a walk. For most

people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

As new coronavirus cases in China dropped to zero several days in a row, the chief medical officer for the International Clinic of Wuhan was alarmed at those elsewhere refusing to follow rules to contain the virus. Dr. Philippe Klein said people should look to China's confinement of tens of millions as an example to emulate "with courage, with patience, with solidarity."

"I exhort you, the French, to apply the rules in our way," said Klein, who is French.

Worldwide, over 307,000 people have been infected. For most, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. But it can cause more severe illness in others, especially older adults and people with existing health conditions. Some 92,000 people have recovered, mostly in China, where the virus first struck late last year.

The virus rebels tend to range from restless teens to wealthy adults who can travel to their getaway homes. Even in Italy, where the virus death toll soared beyond China's last week, authorities are still trying to rein in people from going outside for fresh air, sun and visits with friends to escape walled-in lives.



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French farmers' markets where people congregate to shop for food have posed a special challenge for police trying to keep people apart from each other at the recommended 2 meters (6 feet), along with neglected urban housing projects where distrust and disobedience of authorities runs deep.

In Clichy-Sous-Bois, a Paris suburb where nationwide riots triggered by police harassment allegations erupted in 2005, a person bit a police

officer trying to enforce confinement rules, said Linda Kebbab, a police union spokesperson. And a large crowd threatened to spit on officers who had planned to disperse them in the southeastern city of Lyon but left instead, she said.

In the southern German state of Bavaria, Gov. Markus Soeder lamented that "there are still corona parties, there are young people who cough at older people and shout corona for fun and, above all, there are an incredible number of groups being formed."



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National police in Spain, which has the second-highest number of [coronavirus](#) infections in Europe after Italy, are using helicopters to spot groups of people meeting up outdoors. Then agents are sent in to break up the gatherings.

Spanish police have also taken to highlighting examples on social media of what people should not do in public during the country's state of emergency. In the southeastern Murcia region, they posted video of police stopping a person waddling outside in a full-body dinosaur costume and tweeted that pets can be taken for brief walks by owners but that "having a Tyrannosaurus Rex complex is not" allowed.

And in Spain's northeastern region of Catalonia, police posted a picture of a man walking a goat on a leash, apparently trying to take advantage of the pet walking exception.



Young people gather in the Volkspark am Friedrichshain in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. The Berlin government has banned all events with more than about 50 people because of the coronavirus outbreak but the parks of the city are still used by a high number of people. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

France now has 100,000 security personnel on the streets who are issuing fines amid a new national "Stay Home" mantra and warnings by officials that the country's two-week lockdown could be extended if the country's infection rate keeps rising. More than 1.7 million checks were carried out in the last five days and more than 22,500 people fined, the Interior Ministry said. By Sunday, France counted more than 16,000 confirmed

infections and 674 deaths.

In Greece, the prime minister tried to convince people to stay home, warning citizens that future virus prevention measures depend "on our behavior."

But after Florida's officials shut down some of the state's famed beaches, some businesses were still trying to draw in tourists, including Clearwater Mega Bite Shark Boat, a 40-foot (12-meter) vessel with a bow shaped like a shark's snout that cruises the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's western coast.



French police patrol a beach in Marseille, southern France, Thursday, March 19, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron said that for 15 days people will be allowed to leave the place they live only for necessary activities such as shopping

for food, going to work or taking a walk. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)



Parisians enjoy the sun along the Seine Bank, in Paris, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron said that for 15 days people will be allowed to leave the place they live only for necessary activities such as shopping for food, going to work or taking a walk. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)



Police officers check people at the entrance of the open air market of Belleville, in Paris, Friday, March 20, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron said that for 15 days starting at noon on Tuesday, people will be allowed to leave the place they live only for necessary activities such as shopping for food, going to work or taking a walk. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



A man reads his book in Prospect Park in the Brooklyn borough of New York on Sunday, March 15, 2020. President Donald Trump on Sunday called on Americans to cease hoarding groceries and other supplies, while one of the nation's most senior public health officials called on the nation to act with more urgency to safeguard their health as the coronavirus outbreak continued to spread across the United States. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E)



Police officers patrol along the Seine river bank in Paris, Friday, March 20, 2020. Paris police imposed a ban for the next days on the Seine River banks to fight the spread of the coronavirus. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)



French policemen walk along the Seine river during a control in Paris, Friday, March 20, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron said that for 15 days people will be allowed to leave the place they live only for necessary activities such as shopping for food, going to work or taking a walk. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

The boat can carry 50 passengers but the owner was limiting trips to 10 to comply with federal advice. Only four people signed up for a Saturday trip, said an employee named Chase who answered the phone but declined to give his last name.

"Normally we'd be packed this weekend," he said.

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