

Lockdowns ease in Florida, Europe with new tourism rules

June 1 2020, by Nicole Winfield and Curt Anderson



Visitors admire the Gallery of Maps as the Vatican Museum reopened, in Rome, Monday, June 1, 2020. The Vatican Museums reopened Monday to visitors after three months of shutdown following COVID-19 containment measures.

The first day of June saw coronavirus restrictions ease from Asia to Europe to the United States on Monday, even as U.S. protests against

police brutality sparked fears of new outbreaks.

The Florida Keys welcomed visitors for the first time in two months, the Colosseum opened its ancient doors in Rome, ferries restarted in Bangladesh, golfers played in Greece and students returned to classes in Britain.

But even as the tourist-dependent Keys took down barriers to allow visitors, Miami-Dade County kept its beaches closed because of protests in South Florida and across the country over the May 25 death of George Floyd, a black man pinned at the neck by a white police officer in Minneapolis.

Meanwhile, a California biotech company said its experimental drug remdesivir improved symptoms when given for five days to moderately ill, hospitalized patients with COVID-19. Gilead Sciences gave few details but said full results would soon be published in a medical journal. Remdesivir is the only treatment that's been shown in a rigorous experiment to help fight the coronavirus.

Roadblocks were taken down shortly after midnight near Key Largo, the northernmost island in the Florida chain, where almost half of all workers are employed by hotels, bars and other hospitality industries, and many of the rest are involved in commercial and sport fishing.



An employee removes a plastic cover from goods at the shop window after reopening in Moscow, Russia, on Monday, June 1, 2020. Monday's reopening of retail stores along with dry cleaners and repair shops comes as the pace of contagion has stabilized in the Russian capital that has accounted for about half of the nation's infections. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko Jr)

Richard Stanczyk, owner of Bud N' Mary's marina in Islamorada, said the 40 captains who operate fishing boats out of the 76-year-old business have had virtually no customers for weeks and welcomed the reopening of the area to visitors.

"There has been a real uptick in phone calls. There have been more charter bookings," Stanczyk said. "We are encouraged. It's going to come back."

Yet the carefree, party atmosphere that surrounds the Keys and was popularized by singer Jimmy Buffet in songs like "Margaritaville" may not return for some time. The Monroe County Tourist Development Council made clear on its website that visitors must adhere to health guidelines.

"Bring facial coverings, gloves, hand sanitizer, reef-safe sunscreen and personal essential medicines. If you're feeling unwell, please stay home," it said.



People ride a bus during the first day of a more relaxed lockdown that was placed to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus in Manila, Philippines on Monday, June 1, 2020. Traffic jams and crowds of commuters are back in the Philippine capital, which shifted to a more relaxed quarantine with limited public transport in a high-stakes gamble to slowly reopen the economy while

fighting the coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

The Keys have been relatively unscathed by the coronavirus. As of Sunday, the island chain had 100 confirmed cases, three deaths and 12 hospitalizations. The total population is just under 80,000.

Countries around the Mediterranean Sea also tentatively kicked off a summer season where tourists could bask in their famously sunny beaches while still being protected by social distancing measures from the virus marching relentlessly around the world.

"We are reopening a symbol. A symbol of Rome, a symbol for Italy," said Alfonsina Russo, director of the Colosseum's archaeological park. "(We are) restarting in a positive way, with a different pace, with a more sustainable tourism."

Greece lifted lockdown measures for hotels, campsites, open-air cinemas, golf courses and public swimming pools, while beaches and museums reopened in Turkey and bars, restaurants, cinemas and museums came back to life in the Netherlands.



Customers seated in small glasshouses enjoy lunch at the Mediamatic restaurant in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Monday, June 1, 2020. The government took a major step to relax the coronavirus lockdown, with bars, restaurants, cinemas and museums reopening under strict conditions, abiding by government guidelines and respecting social distancing to help curb the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

"Today, we opened two rooms and tomorrow three. It's like building an anthill," Athens hotel owner Panos Betis said as employees wearing face masks tidied a rooftop restaurant and cleaned a window facing the ancient Acropolis. "We can't compare the season to last year. We were at 95% capacity. Our aim now is to hang in there until 2021."

A long line of masked visitors snaked outside the Vatican Museums,

which include the Sistine Chapel, as they reopened for the first time in three months. Italy is eager to reboot its tourism industry, which accounts for 13% of its economy.

The Vatican Museums' famous keyholder—the "clavigero" who holds the keys to all the galleries on a big ring on his wrist—opened the gate in a sign both symbolic and literal that the Museums were back in business.

Still, strict crowd control measures were in place: Visitors needed reservations to visit, their temperatures were taken before entering and masks were mandatory.



Visitors admire the Sistine Chapel as the Vatican Museum reopened, in Rome, Monday, June 1, 2020. The Vatican Museums reopened Monday to visitors after three months of shutdown following COVID-19 containment measures. (AP

Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

"Having the opportunity to see the museums by making a booking and not having to wait in line for three hours is an opportunity," said visitor Stefano Dicozzi.

The Dutch relaxation of coronavirus rules took place on a major holiday with the sun blazing, raising fears of overcrowding in popular beach resorts. The new rules let bars and restaurants serve up to 30 people inside if they keep social distancing, but there's no standing at bars and reservations are necessary.

Britain, which with over 38,500 dead has the world's second-worst death toll behind the United States, eased restrictions despite warnings from health officials that the risk of spreading COVID-19 was still too great. Some elementary classes reopened in England and people could now have limited contact with family and friends, but only outdoors and with social distancing.



Waiters wearing face masks to protect against coronavirus, serves clients at a teahouse, in Ankara, Turkey, Monday, June 1, 2020. Restaurants and cafes welcomed sit-in customers, beaches and museums reopened as Turkey's broadest easing of coronavirus restrictions came into effect.(AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

Around 6.19 million infections have been reported worldwide, with over 372,000 people dying, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The true death toll is believed to be significantly higher, since many died without ever being tested.

In the U.S., the often-violent protests over Floyd's death have raised fears of new outbreaks in a country that has more confirmed infections and deaths than any other. The U.S. has seen nearly 1.8 million infections and over 104,000 deaths in the pandemic, which has

disproportionately affected racial minorities.

Protests over Floyd's death have shaken the U.S. from New York to Los Angeles. Demonstrators are packed cheek by jowl, many without masks, many shouting or singing. The virus is spread by microscopic droplets in the air when people cough, sneeze, talk or sing.



Mounted policemen, right, and Carabinieri in high uniform, left, patrol outside the Colosseum in Rome, Monday, June 1, 2020, during the reopening to the public of one of Italy's most visited monument, after more of two months of lockdown for the coronavirus pandemics. The Colosseum, Palatine, Roman Forum and Domus Aurea reopens to the public on 1 June with some access restrictions for visitors. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)



Visitors line up to enter the Vatican Museums on their reopening date, in Rome, Monday, June 1, 2020. The Vatican Museums reopened Monday to visitors after three months of shutdown following COVID-19 containment measures. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Museum employees, wearing masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus, walk down a staircase designed by Giuseppe Momo in 1932, inspired by the original Bramante staircase designed by Renaissance architect Donato Bramante, as the Vatican Museum reopened, in Rome, Monday, June 1, 2020. The Vatican Museums reopened Monday to visitors after three months of shutdown following COVID-19 containment measures. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)



Police hold off protesters during a solidarity rally for George Floyd, Sunday, May 31, 2020, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. Protests were held throughout the city over the death of Floyd, a black man in police custody in Minneapolis who died after being restrained by police officers on Memorial Day. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E)



Hotel worker Mailinda Kaci cleans the windows in a restaurant area at the Acropolian Spirit Hotel in central Athens as the ancient Acropolis is seen in the background, on Monday June 1, 2020. Lockdown restrictions were lifted on non-seasonal hotels Monday as the country prepares to start its tourism season on June 15. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)



Customers queue to purchase alcoholic beverages outside the Sam Liquor Store in Thokoza township, near Johannesburg, South Africa, Monday, June 1, 2020. Liquor stores have reopened Monday after being closed for over two months under lockdown restrictions in a bid to prevent the spread of coronavirus. (AP Photo/Themba Hadebe)



Passengers wait outside Hyderabad Railway Station to catch a train to return to their home states in Hyderabad, India, Monday, June 1, 2020. More states opened up and crowds of commuters trickled onto the roads in many of India's cities on Monday as a three-phase plan to lift the nationwide coronavirus lockdown started despite an upward trend in new infections. (AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A.)



A shopper at a market stall along Portobello Road in London, Monday, June 1, 2020. The British government has lifted some lockdown restrictions to restart social life and activate the economy while still endeavouring to limit the spread of the highly contagious COVID-19 coronavirus.(AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth)



Passengers stand in a queue outside Hyderabad Railway Station to catch a train to return to their home states in Hyderabad, India, Monday, June 1, 2020. More states opened up and crowds of commuters trickled onto the roads in many of India's cities on Monday as a three-phase plan to lift the nationwide coronavirus lockdown started despite an upward trend in new infections. (AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A.)



Waiters prepare the terrace of a restaurant in Paris, Monday, June 1, 2020, as France gradually lifts its Covid-19 lockdown. France is reopening tomorrow its restaurants, bars and cafes as the country eases most restrictions amid the coronavirus crisis. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo expressed concern Monday the protests in New York City could imperil the long, hard fight to contain the pandemic in a worldwide hot spot.

"You turn on the TV and you see these mass gatherings that could potentially be infecting hundreds and hundreds of people after everything that we have done," Cuomo said. "We have to take a minute and ask ourselves: 'What are we doing here?'"

Some efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus are being upended by the protests. In contact tracing, newly infected people list everyone they've interacted with over several days in order to alert them that they may have been exposed—a daunting task if someone has been to a mass gathering.

Central and South America are currently witnessing the most intense transmission of the coronavirus worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. In the last 24 hours, the WHO's Dr. Michael Ryan said five of the 10 countries reporting the highest number of cases are in the Americas: the U.S., Brazil, Peru, Chile and Mexico.

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