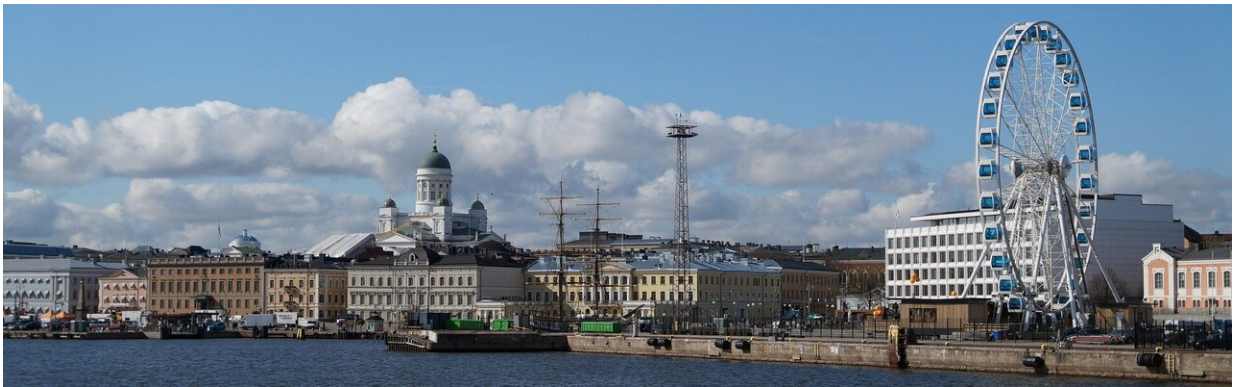


Finland imposes 'Europe's tightest' border restrictions

August 19 2020



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Finland has removed most EU countries from its "green travel list", with only arrivals from a handful of states now able to enter the country without coronavirus restrictions from Monday.

Norway also tightened up from Saturday, adding Greece, Britain, Ireland, Austria and parts of Sweden and Denmark to its list of nations where non-essential travel is discouraged.

Both countries have been successful in limiting the spread of the pandemic that has left more than 780,000 dead worldwide.

But they are facing a rise in infections and Helsinki's government on Wednesday said Norway too had been added to its red list.

Finland's tougher rules mean only travellers from Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania will now be allowed into the country without proof of a valid reason and self-isolating for two weeks.

Arrivals from a number of non-EU countries including Georgia, Rwanda and South Korea continue to be freely permitted under the measures.

"Finland's border policy is the tightest in the European Union, because we have wanted to preserve the relatively good virus situation," Interior Minister Maria Ohisalo told a press conference.

Since June, Helsinki has said it will allow arrivals from countries with fewer than eight new coronavirus cases per 100,000 population in the last two weeks, although ministers have now made exceptions for countries with under 10 cases.

Nonetheless Finland's cut-off point is considerably stricter than its Nordic neighbours, such as Norway which permits arrivals from countries with up to 20 new cases per 100,000 people.

Finland currently has one of Europe's lowest incidences of COVID-19, registering only 5.3 new cases per 100,000 in the past two weeks, although the number is increasing.

Ohisalo also announced that restrictions on Finland's land borders with Sweden and Norway will be loosened to allow residents living on either side to cross more easily for everyday purposes.

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