

Dutch to shut museums, cinemas, sex clubs as lockdown tightens

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The Netherlands will tighten its partial coronavirus lockdown with museums, cinemas, sex clubs and other public places to close for two weeks, Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Tuesday.

The closure will affect some of the world's most popular attractions including Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum, home to masterpieces from Dutch masters like Rembrandt.

Despite falling cases in recent days, the Dutch government is also advising against all foreign travel until mid-January and reduced the number of visitors a household may host to two.

"It is not going badly but it is not going well. The number of cases must go down faster," Rutte told a press conference.

"That is a difficult message... but there is no other way."

Rutte said the country may also impose curfews in areas where infections are still rising, such as the port city of Rotterdam.

The Netherlands for months opted for a far more relaxed policy than its European neighbours, but ended up with one of the continent's highest infection rates in the second wave of the disease.

It began a partial lockdown on October 14 with all restaurants, bars and cannabis-serving "coffeeshops" closing, and mask-wearing made compulsory.

The measures seemed to finally have an effect in recent days with infections falling week-on-week for the first time in two months and cases dropping to 7,776 a day on Tuesday.

But Rutte said there had not been enough progress yet.

"In order to reduce the number of movements and contact, all publicly accessible buildings and through-flow locations both in and outdoors will be closed for two weeks," he said.

"This includes theatres and cinemas, community centres, museums, zoos and amusement parks."

The government later announced that sex clubs would also be among the places to close.

Prostitution is legal in the Netherlands, which has a tolerant policy on issues such as sex and soft drugs.

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