

Oman launches COVID-19 vaccination campaign

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Oman started coronavirus vaccinations on Sunday, two days ahead of plans to resume all flights and open borders that temporarily closed amid concerns over a new strain of the disease.

The sultanate—which has recorded the second highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the Gulf after Saudi Arabia—is the last of the Gulf

Cooperation Countries (GCC) to begin inoculating people.

Like most of its neighbours it has opted for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Health Minister Ahmed Al-Saidi, one of the first citizens to get a jab at a Muscat clinic, said priority would be given to front line health workers and people who are considered to be vulnerable.

Oman has so far recorded more than 128,000 cases of the novel coronavirus, including 1,495 deaths—the highest after Saudi Arabia which has recorded over 6,000 deaths.

Along with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the Gulf sultanate suspended commercial travel and banned entry and exit via their land and sea borders last week after a new strain of the virus appeared in Britain.

Saudi Arabia has yet to announce whether it will lift the suspension this week, while Kuwait has said it plans to re-open on January 1.

Oman is hoping to quickly start receiving tourists, especially from its wealthy neighbouring countries, to boost its economy that has been hit hard by slumping [oil prices](#) and the pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund has estimated Oman's economy to contract by 10 percent this year.

Travellers must present a negative PCR test done within 72 hours of arrival, the official Oman News Agency reported on Sunday.

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