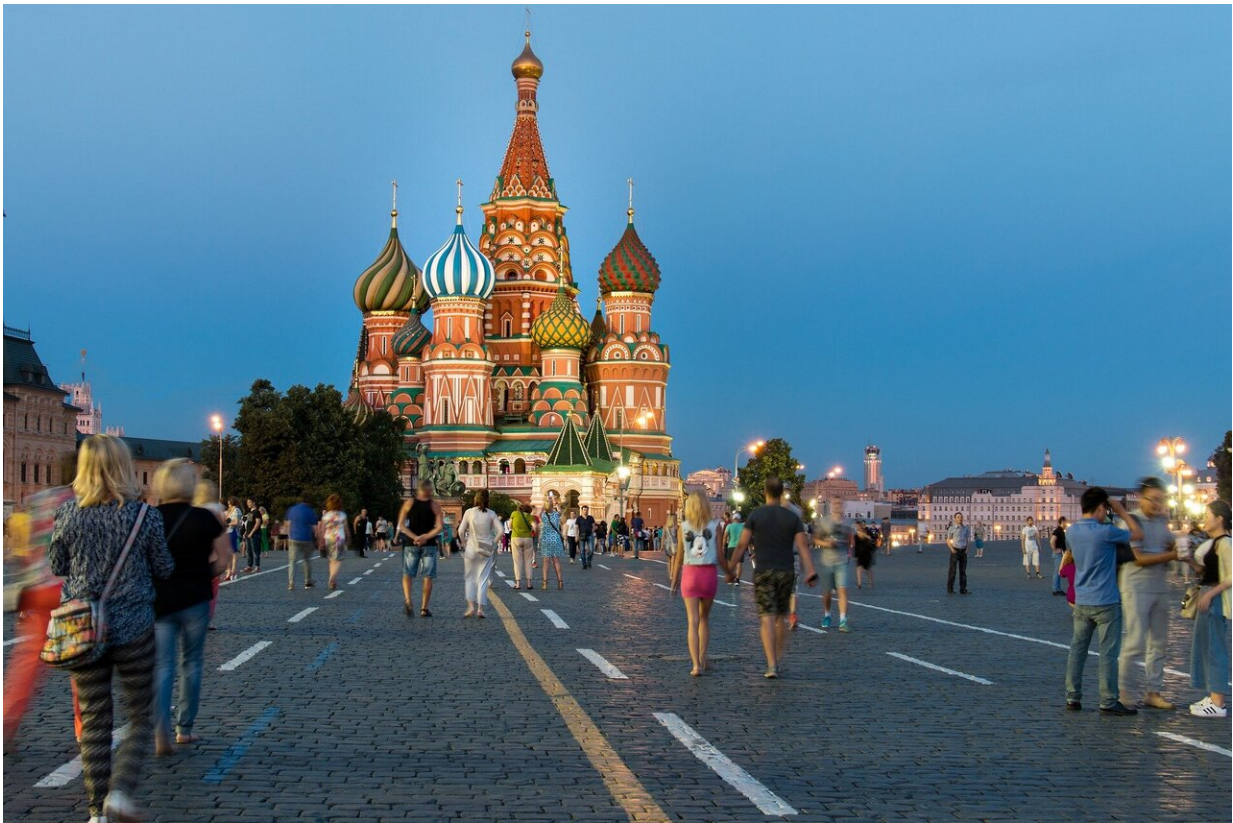


Moscow eases coronavirus restrictions as cases fall

January 27 2021



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Russia's capital Moscow on Wednesday announced a further easing of COVID restrictions citing the improving health situation, even as many countries tighten anti-virus measures.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin announced the changes as European nations looked to tighten their borders, with Britain struggling to counter a brutal third wave and the Netherlands facing riots over a coronavirus curfew.

"The pandemic is on the wane, and in these conditions it's our duty to create conditions for the economy to recover as soon as possible," Sobyenin wrote on his blog.

From Wednesday, bars, restaurants and nightclubs—which previously were required to close by 11:00 pm—will be able to remain open through the night, though they will still have to enforce social distancing and sanitary guidelines.

Employers will no longer be obliged to ensure that at least 30 percent of their staff are working from home, with the implementation of work-from-home rules now at the discretion of companies and organisations.

Sobyenin's announcement made no mention of public gatherings, with a ban on mass rallies apparently remaining in place.

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's allies have called for new rallies this weekend, after tens of thousands demonstrated in support of him across the country on Saturday.

As the [second wave](#) of the pandemic swept across Europe in the autumn, Russia opted against re-introducing strict lockdown measures like at the start of the pandemic in the spring and instead pinned its hopes on the quick distribution of a vaccine to end its outbreak.

Sobyenin said Wednesday that over the past week the city of more than 12 million people was registering an average of 2,000-3,000 new infections a day—a steep decline from the some 7,000 infections it saw

at the peak of its second wave.

The Moscow mayor added that 50 percent of beds in coronavirus hospitals were now free for the first time since mid-June.

However, he advised the elderly and people suffering from chronic illnesses to stay at home.

Sobyanin said the lifting of remaining restrictions will be announced separately.

Russia launched a mass inoculation campaign this month, making its first homegrown vaccine, Sputnik V, available to all citizens 18 and older.

As of Tuesday, Russia had registered more than 3.7 million [coronavirus](#) cases—including some 900,000 cases in Moscow—and more than 70,000 fatalities.

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