

French Riviera cities under lockdown as new infections soar

February 26 2021, by Sylvie Corbet



In this Jan. 16, 2016 file photo people take rest on the Promenade des Anglais, in Nice, southeastern France. Residents of the French Riviera city of Nice won't be allowed to enjoy a walk on the beach on a sunny weekend after authorities have decided to implement a local, temporary lockdown to try to curb the spread of the virus. (AP Photo/Lionel Cironneau, File)

Residents of Nice in the French Riviera will be denied their strolls along the beach on a sunny weekend, under a temporary local lockdown imposed to curb soaring COVID-19 infections.

Starting on Friday evening, Nice and the surrounding [coastal area](#) will be under weekend lockdowns for at least two weeks, in addition to a national 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew. The northern port of Dunkirk is under similar restrictions.

In both places, numbers of infections have spiked and hospitals are overwhelmed, with some patients being transferred to other French regions.

Nice mayor Christian Estrosi announced on Friday a ban on the beaches and the famous Promenade des Anglais esplanade, where lots of people usually go for a seaside stroll, to ensure the restrictions are fully respected.

"We absolutely need to avoid too big gatherings, as the weekend is expected to be summer-like and extremely attractive ... Reason must prevail," he said in a video message posted on social media. Only essential shops will remain open, he added.

Nice reported this week a rate of almost 800 COVID-19 infections per 100,000 people, nearly four times the national average.

Estrosi has repeatedly attributed the worsening situation in his city to the presence of "too many tourists" during end-of-year holidays, listing the UK, Scandinavia, United Arab Emirates and Russia, which have direct flights to Nice airport.

"We are now paying a very high price," he said. Since then, France has banned almost all travelers from outside the European Union and applied

restrictions to those coming from inside the bloc.

The weekend lockdown also includes nearby coastal towns of Cannes, Antibes and nearby Mediterranean beauty spots.

Residents will be able to go out only for essential needs such as food shopping, medical appointments or urgent family business. Taking exercise outside will be allowed for a maximum of one hour per day and up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) from home.

The national 6 p.m. curfew will apply during the week.

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