

Teens in Majorca mega-outbreak sail home on 'bubble boat'

July 1 2021



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A "bubble boat" carrying 118 students linked to a COVID mega-outbreak on Majorca arrived back Thursday on the Spanish mainland, ending their confinement in a quarantine hotel on the Mediterranean

island.

Spain has been grappling with the growing fallout from the end-of-term trip in mid-June which has seen almost 2,000 people infected and nearly 6,000 others placed in quarantine.

The story broke last week when hundreds of youngsters across Spain tested positive after going to Majorca, prompting the authorities to quarantine some 250 students at a hotel in the capital Palma and a backlash from youngsters and their parents.

But a judge on Wednesday ordered that those students who tested negative could be released from quarantine in the four-star Palma Bellver, which has been dubbed "Hotel COVID", with a ferry laid on Thursday to bring them home.

It was dubbed the "bubble boat" because the students are in an isolated section so they can't mix with any other passengers.

The boat, which sailed from Palma, arrived in Valencia on Thursday evening, according to an AFP correspondent.

From there the students were to be picked up by health officials from their home regions who will decide whether to run a second test.

Such trips are organised as a traditional way for teenagers to celebrate the end of exams, drawing in youngsters from across the country.

Balcony protests

Health ministry figures show at least 1,824 people have been infected and 5,978 placed in quarantine, indicating the outbreak involves the Alpha strain of the virus first detected in the United Kingdom.

A young man from Valencia is currently being treated in intensive care, Spanish media reported.

On Tuesday, the local government said "Hotel COVID" was hosting at least 232 youngsters who had "a direct or indirect link to the trip" and a quarter of them had tested positive.

The court ruling on Wednesday was issued after an appeal by the families of those who had tested negative.

In recent days, TV footage has shown angry students shouting "We're negative!" from the balconies or hanging out towels scrawled with the same message.

Local police told AFP there have been complaints of students blasting loud music, throwing things into the street or hoisting alcohol up to their balconies using sheets.

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