

3rd Florida-based ship has outbreak, state cases hit record

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Employees of Nomi Health check in a long line of people for COVID-19 tests, Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021, in North Miami, Fla. The omicron variant has unleashed a fresh round of fear and uncertainty, for travelers, shoppers and party-goers around the U.S. Credit: AP Photo/Marta Lavandier

A COVID-19 outbreak took place on a South Florida-based cruise ship

for the third time this week, as the number of coronavirus cases in Florida hit its highest level since the start of the pandemic.

An undisclosed number of passengers and crew aboard the Carnival Freedom cruise caught the virus so the ship was denied entry to Bonaire and Aruba, Carnival said in a statement.

The ship has 2,497 passengers and 1,112 crew members and was scheduled to return to Miami on Sunday following an 8-day cruise. Passengers were required to be vaccinated and they were tested before leaving last Saturday, according to Carnival.

"Carnival Freedom is following all protocols and has a small number on board who are in isolation due to a positive COVID test," the statement said. "Our protocols anticipate this possibility and we implement them as necessary to protect the health and safety of our guests and crew."

Ashley Peterson, a passenger on the ship, [tweeted](#) a photo of a Dec. 22 letter from the ship's captain apologizing for being unable to make stops in Aruba and Bonaire. The letter said passengers would get \$100 per room in onboard credit, as well refunds for planned excursions.

It was the third outbreak this week affecting cruise ships operated by Carnival and Royal Caribbean departing Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

Meanwhile, Florida had 31,758 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, breaking a record for the most cases in a single day since the start of the pandemic in the U.S. in March 2020, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The new record was driven by the spread of the new omicron variant through the Sunshine State.

The previous single-day highest number of cases was in last August, during the height of the delta variant wave in Florida, when 27,802 cases were reported.

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