

Micronesia loses Covid-free status after outbreak confirmed

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The tiny Pacific state of Micronesia has lost its status as one of the few Covid-free countries, after confirming community cases on two islands.

Apart from a few isolated border cases in managed quarantine, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) had remained free of the coronavirus due to its location around 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) north of Papua New Guinea.

That was until two students tested positive after arriving on the island of Kosrae from Pohnpei, the Micronesian capital island, earlier this week.

Local health officials then confirmed 10 more positive results among 11 [family members](#) of the two initial cases.

A statement from the office of President David Panuelo on Tuesday said Micronesia faces "a rapidly evolving situation" while confirming dozens of extra cases on both Kosrae and Pohnpei.

The local health authority has discouraged public gatherings and advised the use of face masks at all times, but said "all public services will remain open".

Subsequent testing has also shown that 25 of 28 patients with flu-like symptoms at a hospital on Kosrae tested positive for Covid.

As a result, the Micronesian island of Yap, about 1,400 miles west of

Pohnpei, announced Tuesday that the passengers and crew of a local ship had been isolated immediately after arriving.

The spread of the coronavirus across Micronesia means the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu are believed to be the last two Pacific nations that are currently Covid-free.

Micronesia plans to lift border restrictions from August 1, but visitors will need to show proof of full vaccination and a negative Covid-19 test to enter.

In making that announcement last May, President Panuelo said he hoped opening up would encourage the country's 100,000 residents, spread across more than 600 [islands](#), to maximise their vaccination coverage.

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