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Italy to launch first Europe-US 'virus-free' flights

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Italy is to offer Europe's first coronavirus-free corridor with the United States for passengers who have tested negative for COVID-19, scrapping the obligation for new arrivals to quarantine.

Rome's Fiumicino airport said Thursday it had sealed a deal with Italian

airline Alitalia and Delta Air Lines of the United States for the special flights between selected North American cities and the Italian capital from next month.

Similar corridors will also be trialed between Rome and the German cities of Munich and Frankfurt, it said.

The move follows the launch in September of virus-free domestic flights between Rome and financial capital Milan.

"The new travel protocols, planned on an experimental basis on flights from the United States to Fiumicino... will be progressively offered to passengers as early as December," Fiumicino said in a statement.

"The experimental phase will aim to evaluate the effectiveness and functionality of the new travel mode, with the aim of making it more widely available in view of the summer 2021 season," it added.

The airport said travellers arriving from New York's JFK airport and those of Newark and Atlanta in the US would be able to skip quarantine by doing a test 48 hours before departure and one on landing in Rome.

Fiumicino offers rapid antigen tests for arriving passengers which detect the presence of proteins found in the virus and take 30 minutes to produce a result, it said.

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