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Ireland starts mandatory hotel travel quarantine

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Ireland began enforcing a mandatory hotel quarantine for travellers arriving in the state from 33 "high risk" countries on Friday in a bid to quash the spread of new coronavirus variants.

The government website said "all passengers arriving into Ireland from designated states... are now required to pre-book accommodation in a designated quarantine facility".

The quarantine—announced by the government two months ago—came into effect at 4:00 am (0400 GMT), the site confirmed.

Earlier this week, the department of health said "the aim of mandatory quarantine is to protect the population from challenges posed by new variants of concern".

Ireland has been hard-hit by a third wave of infections with leaders blaming the emergence of new, more infectious variants of the virus.

Leaders have designated 33 countries as "high risk"—17 African nations, 14 South American, as well as Austria and the United Arab Emirates.

Travellers from those states will be subject to a two-week quarantine.

It will also apply to travellers arriving from any nation without a negative coronavirus test, as currently required under government regulation.

After 10 days travellers can be released if they receive a negative test while isolated in the hotel facilities.

Failure to complete the quarantine is a legal offence carrying a fine of up to 2,500 euros ($2,900) and/or six months in prison.

According to latest official figures, 4,631 have died from coronavirus in Ireland.

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