

# Spain to reopen to tourists as South America named virus hotspot

May 23 2020

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Spain said on Saturday it would let in foreign tourists and restart top league football in the coming weeks, accelerating Europe's exit from strict virus lockdown, as South America was labelled "a new epicentre" by the World Health Organization.

Brazil led the surge across South America, its [death toll](#) passing 21,000 on Friday from 330,000 infections, the third biggest caseload of any country in a pandemic that has infected 5.25 million globally and killed more than 338,000.

In Europe, which has now registered more than two million infections, the figures were stabilising in many countries, prompting governments to move away from economically ruinous lockdowns towards lighter social distancing measures.

In Spain, which has enforced one of the world's strictest lockdowns since mid-March, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced the resumption of tourism and football.

"From the month of July, entry for foreign tourists into Spain will resume in secure conditions," he said, adding that La Liga football could return on June 8.

The United States, meanwhile, still faces the world's worst outbreak, but President Donald Trump is determined to reopen the economy despite the risk of further infections and deaths.

His latest demand was that local officials should reopen religious buildings for full services, saying: "In America, we need more prayer, not less."

The US economy has shed almost 40 million jobs since the start of the pandemic and many companies have gone to the wall—car-rental giant Hertz the latest to hit trouble, filing for bankruptcy for its North American operations late on Friday.

But city mayors and state governors say it is too early to lift the measures.

## Brighter outlook for tourists

"In a sense, South America has become a new epicentre for the disease," WHO emergencies director Mike Ryan said on Friday, singling out Brazil.

Unlike in Europe and the US, where the elderly were hardest-hit, a significant number of deaths in Brazil have been among [younger people](#), who are often driven by poverty to work despite the threat of infection.

Neighbouring Peru was also struggling with an outbreak—the country of 32 million registering more than 110,000 cases and 3,100 deaths.

The figures from South America, though disastrous, are dwarfed by the 96,000 deaths suffered so far in the United States, which has registered 1.6 million infections.

By contrast, China, where the virus was first identified late last year, passed a milestone on Saturday when it was able to report no new infections for the first time since it began publishing daily data in January.

The outlook was also brightening elsewhere in Europe, particularly in the tourist hubs that have been hit hard by travel bans and lockdowns.

Italy is due to reopen its borders to foreign tourists from June 3 and this week began to welcome visitors to [archaeological sites](#).

A temple complex near the city of Naples, known as Paestum, reopened earlier this week but now allows fewer visitors and supplies them with an app that alerts them if too many people are gathered in one spot.

"We must focus on another type of tourism, another relationship with

visitors, more intense, more 'one to one'," said site director Gabriel Zuchtriegel, adding that it could become a model for post-lockdown travel.

While beaches also reopened in Cyprus, the faithful in France were once again able to attend masses as churches opened their doors once again.

## **British scandal**

In the Middle East, Iran said its museums and historical sites would reopen to the public on Sunday, with holy shrines following on Monday.

And Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre will reopen on Sunday, the Christian authorities there said, but with tight restrictions on visitors.

However, the virus is still a cause for concern in the region—tightly packed Gaza registering its first death on Saturday.

Illustrating the political difficulties of managing virus restrictions, Britain faced another political scandal on Saturday over allegations that a top government adviser broke lockdown rules.

Dominic Cummings was seen visiting his parents 250 miles (400 kilometres) away from his London home during the lockdown, despite suffering from virus symptoms.

He denies any wrongdoing but faces calls to quit.

## **'It's like 20 years ago'**

Experts have warned that restrictions will be needed in some form until a vaccine or treatment is developed.

Hopes that existing drugs could be repurposed to treat the COVID-19 disease were dealt a blow on Friday when a study of hydroxychloroquine, a treatment often touted by Trump, showed it gave no benefit to patients and increased their risk of death.

With no end in sight for the restrictions, sporadic anti-lockdown protests have been taking place across the world.

Thousands gathered in Madrid on Saturday to demand an end to the rules and call on PM Sanchez to quit, in a protest led by the far-right party Vox.

People were scrambling to get around the rules in the world's most populous Muslim country, Indonesia, so they could reunite with their families for the Eid al-Fitr festival.

One man told AFP he had managed to get a fake certificate for his daughter to travel home from university in the capital, Jakarta, saying "we miss her so much".

"We want to celebrate Eid al-Fitr together like in past years," he said.

Some Europeans, however, were finding solace in their new mode of life, reclaiming their cities and towns from the tourist hordes.

"All my childhood, I played in this park," said Laia Torra, in Barcelona's UNESCO-listed Park Guell, adding that it has been too crowded in recent years to bring her children.

"It's wonderful, it's like going back 20 years," she said as her children played.

Citation: Spain to reopen to tourists as South America named virus hotspot (2020, May 23)  
retrieved 1 March 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-spain-reopen-tourists-south-america.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.