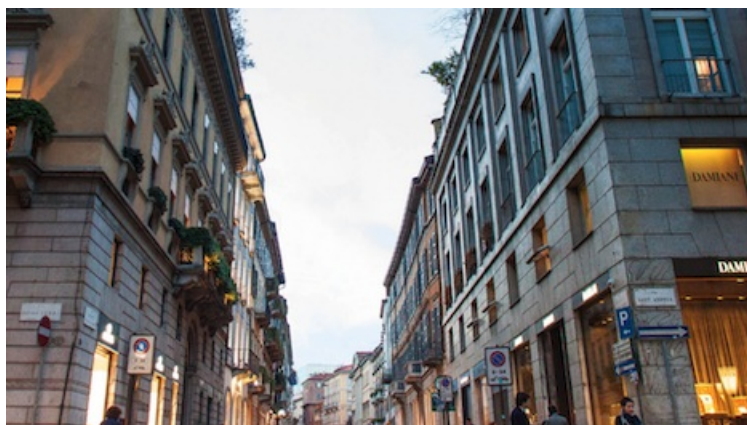


GOVERNMENT

Italy begins widespread lockdown, as COVID-19 cases climb across Europe

March 15, 2021



Museums and nonessential retail shops are closed in much of Italy, including Milan. Image credit: Yes Milano

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Italy is implementing another round of regional lockdowns as COVID-19 variants contribute to climbing case counts.

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Effective from March 15 through April 6, some of Italy's most populated cities and regions, including Rome and Milan, are under the country's most severe restrictions. The new Italian prime minister is also placing the entire country under lockdown for the Easter weekend, while pledging to accelerate the national vaccination effort.

Setbacks in Europe

Italy reported more than 150,000 new COVID-19 infections last week, a jump of almost 15 percent from the week prior. Hospitalizations have also increased.

In response to the rising case counts, most of the country has been classified as "orange" or "red" zones. Lazio and Lombardy are among those regions under red restrictions.

In orange zones, residents can travel within their towns, schools and nonessential shops remain open, and food delivery and takeaway are still permitted until a nightly curfew. In red zones, residents will only be permitted to leave their homes for work or health reasons, and schools and nonessential shops will be closed.

Case counts will be reviewed weekly, meaning more regions can be moved from orange to red restrictions. During Easter weekend, from April 3 to April 5, all of Italy will be under a modified red zone, allowing for limited gatherings with family or friends.

According to media reports, Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who was sworn in on Feb. 13, acknowledges that the new lockdown measures will be difficult for Italians' morale, but are essential to slow the spread of the coronavirus.



Much of Europe still has travel restrictions in place amid rising coronavirus cases. Image credit: Italy Ministry of Health

Mr. Draghi also plans to intensify Italy's vaccination campaign. According to data from Johns Hopkins University, less than 3.1 percent of eligible Italians have been fully vaccinated.

While the European Union's medicines regulator is reviewing the AstraZeneca vaccine the use of which has been suspended by several European countries, including Italy, Ireland and Germany it is expected to soon approve Johnson and Johnson's single-dose vaccine.

In the fall, the Italian government also imposed strict lockdown measures in an effort to avoid a national lockdown ([see story](#)).

COVID-19 cases are surging once again in much of Europe, including Germany and France. E.U. countries are being impacted by more infectious variants and a slow vaccine rollout compared to the United States and United Kingdom.

A U.K. variant of COVID-19 was first identified late last year. Several countries imposed travel restrictions to combat the mutation, which appears to be more infectious ([see story](#)).

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