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Moscow Hotel Bookings Surpass European Cities Facing Virus Restrictions

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Unlike other European cities, the Russian capital has remained relatively open with only limited restrictions imposed. **Artyom Geodakyan / TASS**

Moscow hotels have the highest occupancy rates in Europe, the Vedomosti business daily reported Wednesday, citing data from consulting company Cushman & Wakefield.

Unlike other European cities, the Russian capital has remained relatively open with only limited restrictions imposed when new coronavirus infections began to soar in the fall. Since late January, most restrictions have been lifted on museums, theaters and other cultural institutions, while bars and nightclubs have been allowed to operate as normal.

Moscow took the lead from Istanbul with 43.6% of its hotel capacity filled in January, Vedomosti reported. It was followed by Azerbaijan's capital of Baku in second place and Istanbul and Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg sharing third place.

The latest rankings are a far cry from the pre-pandemic days of January 2020, when London led in first place followed by Paris, Istanbul, Manchester and Madrid, with Moscow trailing behind in 15th place.

The news comes amid reports of tourism operators planning to organize "vaccine tours" for foreigners wishing to receive Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine. Russian health officials this week said that the prospect of vaccine tourism remains unlikely.

Currently, Russia's borders are open to citizens of 21 countries that have reciprocal flight agreements including Turkey, Tanzania, Switzerland, UAE, Maldives, Egypt, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, South Korea, Serbia, Cuba, Japan, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Vietnam, India, Qatar, Finland, Greece and Singapore. Flights with Britain have been suspended since December over the emergence of a new coronavirus variant there.

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