

CDC added three new destinations to its “high” risk list for Covid-19

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The CDC added three new destinations on Monday Aug. 15 to its “high” risk list for Covid-19, including an Asian island nation in the Pacific beloved by tourists for its stunning beaches.

The Philippines, a country of 7,000 tropical islands featuring stunning oceanic scenery, delicious food and people renowned for their hospitality, joins Russia and mountain-trekker favorite Nepal in the “high” risk group, also called Level 3.

Locations at Level 3 now account for almost 130 of the roughly 235 places monitored by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — more than half of all listings.

Level 3 became the top rung in terms of risk level in April after the CDC overhauled its ratings system for assessing Covid-19 risk for travelers.

The designation applies to places that have had more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days. Level 2 and Level 1 are considered “moderate” and “low” risk, respectively.

To recap, these three destinations were added to Level 3 on August 15:

- Nepal
- The Philippines
- Russia

Level 4, previously the highest risk category, is now reserved only for special circumstances, such as extremely high case counts, emergence of a new variant of concern or health care infrastructure collapse. Under the new system, no destinations have been placed at Level 4 so far.

More on Level 3

Much of Europe has been stubbornly lodged at Level 3 for months with the summer travel season now deep into a traditionally busy August. The following popular European destinations were among those remaining at Level 3 as of August 15:

- France

- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Italy
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Portugal
- Spain
- United Kingdom

Those aren't the only high-profile spots that find themselves at Level 3. Numerous other destinations around the world are among those in the "high" risk category, including the following:

- Brazil
- Canada
- Costa Rica
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- South Korea
- Thailand
- Turkey

The CDC advises that you get up to date with your Covid-19 vaccines before traveling to a Level 3 destination. Being "up to date" means you have had not only the full initial vaccinations but any boosters for which you're eligible.

Level 2

Destinations carrying the "Level 2: Covid-19 Moderate" designation reported 50 to 100 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days.

The CDC designated just one new Level 2 place on Monday: São Tomé and Príncipe, a beautiful little island group off the coast of West Africa and off most tourists' radars. It moved up from Level 1.

There are only 18 places listed at Level 2 this week. Some of the more-visited places in this category are India, Kenya and South Africa.

You can view the CDC's risk levels for any global destination on the agency's travel recommendations page.

In its broader travel guidance, the CDC recommends being up to date with your vaccines before traveling internationally.

Level 1

To be listed as “Level 1: Covid-19 Low,” a destination must have had 49 or fewer new cases per 100,000 residents over the past 28 days. No new places were added to the category on August 15.

Almost 25 places were in the “low” risk category this week. A few of the more popular places with world travelers in the “low” risk category this week included Cuba, Egypt and Tanzania.

Unknown

Finally, there are the destinations the CDC has deemed to be of “unknown” risk because of a lack of information. Usually, but not always, these are small, remote places or places with ongoing warfare or unrest.

Two new destinations were added this week:

- Comoros
- Guinea-Bissau

Both African nations had been at Level 1 previously.

The CDC advises against travel to these places precisely because the risks are unknown. Other destinations in this category that typically draw more tourist attention include Hungary and Vietnam.

There are more than 65 places listed as “unknown” this week, making up more than one-quarter of all the places monitored.

A medical expert weighs in on risk levels

Transmission rates are just “one guidepost” for travelers’ personal risk calculations, according to CNN Medical Analyst Dr. Leana Wen.

We’ve moved into “a phase in the pandemic where people need to make their own decisions based on their medical circumstances as well as their risk tolerance when it comes to contracting Covid-19,” said Wen, who is an emergency physician and professor of health policy and management at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.

There are other factors to weigh in addition to transmission rates, according to Wen.

“Another is what precautions are required and followed in the place that you’re going and then the third is what are you planning to do once you’re there,” she said.

“Are you planning to visit a lot of attractions and go to indoor bars? That’s very different from you’re going somewhere where you’re planning to lie on the beach all day and not interact with anyone else. That’s very different. Those are very different levels of risk.”

Vaccination is the most significant safety factor for travel, since unvaccinated travelers are more likely to

become ill and transmit Covid-19 to others, Wen said.

And it's also important to consider what you would do if you end up testing positive away from home.

While US-bound travelers no longer have to present a negative Covid-19 test to get home from international destinations, the CDC still advises testing before boarding flights back to the States and not traveling if you are sick.

"Of course, if people have symptoms or exposure while traveling, they need to get tested, and if they test positive, to follow CDC's isolation guidelines," Wen told CNN Travel recently.

If you're concerned about a travel-specific health situation not related to Covid-19, check here:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>. [cnn.com](#)

