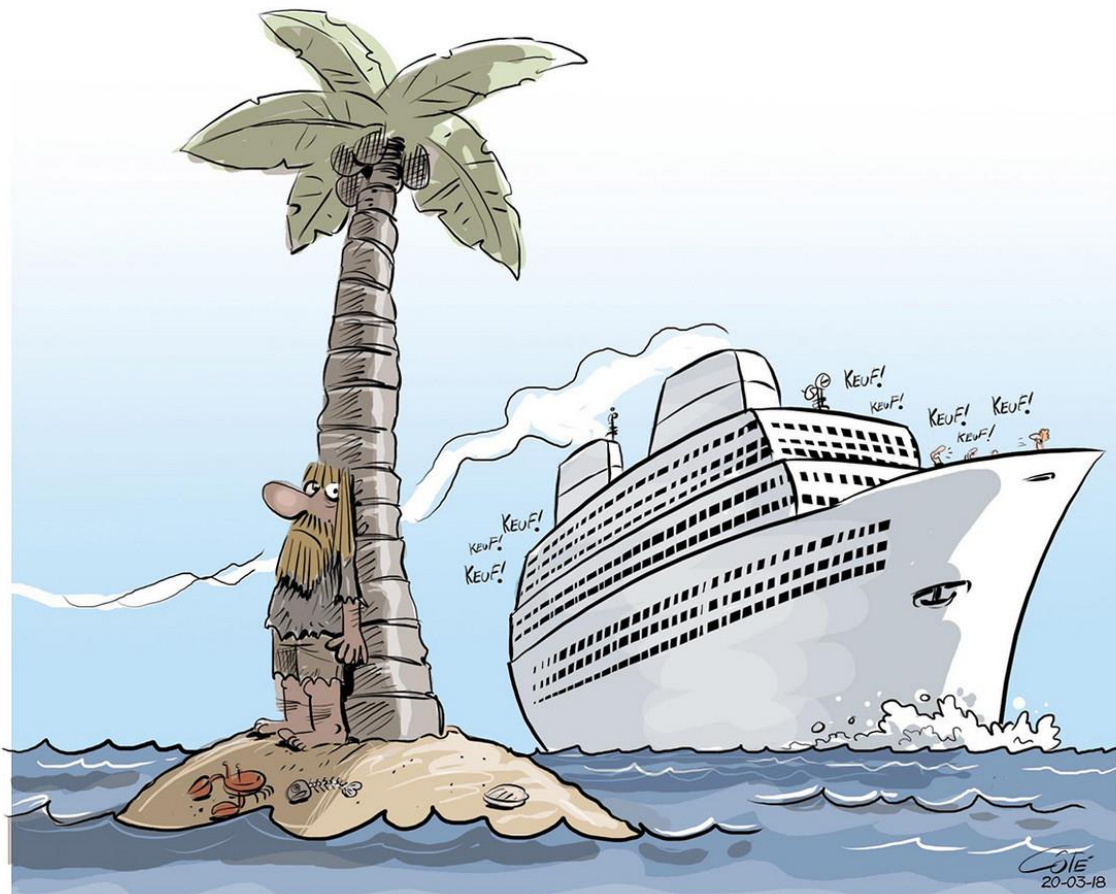


## Two-year timeline of COVID-19 pandemic impacting islands worldwide

Graeme Robertson  
Research Associate, Institute of Island Studies,  
University of Prince Edward Island



Cite as: Robertson, G. (2021). *Two year timeline of COVID-19 pandemic impacting islands worldwide*. Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island. <http://islandstudies.com/files/2021/02/Robertson-2021-Timeline-COVID-Impacting-Islands.pdf>

## Two-year timeline of COVID-19 pandemic impacting islands worldwide

It is the world's most pressing scientific puzzle, but experts warn there may never be conclusive answers over the source of the coronavirus. January 11, 2021 marked the anniversary of China confirming its first death from COVID-19, a 61-year-old man who was a regular at the now-notorious Wuhan wet market where wildlife was sold as food and the pathogen is believed to have originated, or carried, by an undetermined bat and/or pangolin species. But the trail ends there, clouded by a mishmash of subsequent clues that suggest its origins may predate Wuhan as well as theories – amplified by former US President Donald Trump – it leaked from a laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Lily Kuo, the Guardian's Beijing bureau chief, wrote an article on April 10, ‘Birth of a pandemic: Inside the first weeks of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan’<sup>1</sup> that is as good as any in describing events during this period.

China won early kudos for reporting the virus and releasing its gene sequence in a timely manner, compared with its cover-up of the 2002-03 SARS outbreak. But there has also been secrecy and shifting stories. Wuhan authorities initially tried to cover up the outbreak and later spent precious weeks denying human-to-human transmission. Early on, Chinese officials declared flatly that the outbreak began at the Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan. But Chinese data in January 2020 showed that several of the first cases had no known links to the now-shuttered market, suggesting a source elsewhere. After a rare rebuke from the head of the World Health Organization just after New Year, the delayed mission of ten international experts was finally given the green light by Beijing and flew into Wuhan on January 14 2021 to start their investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team concluded it was “extremely unlikely” Covid had leaked from a lab and said the virus may have jumped from animals to humans. However, the WHO scientists presented little in the way of proof to dismiss the first hypothesis or back the second one after the trip. And the conclusion did not convince those who have long cast doubt on the WHO’s credibility.

The pandemic has now claimed nearly 5.5 million lives (6 January 2022 John Hopkins University) in an unrelenting march across the world, leaving a pulverised global economy and recriminations flying between nations. Some experts, including those from the World Health Organization, believe the true toll may be two to three times higher than official figures suggest. From January 2020, the Global Islands Network (GIN) website<sup>2</sup> began to source and feature articles on how COVID-19 was having disparate consequences upon islands worldwide. Over the next two years 1100 articles were posted on the GIN News Desk covering some 150 different countries, territories or local jurisdictions. All these are individually named and listed, together with regions (i.e. Caribbean, Pacific, SIDS), on the contents page so that readers can quickly identify them and their associated articles. In addition, the main purpose of this report is merely to act as a resource enabling all those who are interested to undertake further research. As you would expect, the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 upon islands predominate throughout this series of press articles. Whilst the repercussions for island tourism are manifest there are ten additional thematic areas listing articles covering multiple other topics that are specific to islands.

## CONTENTS

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/10/birth-of-a-pandemic-inside-the-first-weeks-of-the-coronavirus-outbreak-in-wuhan>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalislands.net>

**COVID impacts on Atlantic (North & South) islands:**

Ascension: 198, 675,  
Azores: 174, 727,  
Bermuda: 40, 290, 318, 524, 703,  
Block Island: 26,  
Brazilian Islands: 296, 405, 473, 723, 887,  
Canary Islands: 3, 164, 203, 336, 583, 681, 926,  
Cape Verde: 574,  
Channel Islands: 52, 125, 308, 477, 542, 932,  
Danish Islands: 335, 504, 534, 668,  
Falkland Islands: 27, 45, 89, 147, 180, 373, 594, 640, 684, 851, 964,  
Farne Islands: 222, 543, 925,  
Faroe Islands: 60, 76, 170, 226, 368, 385, 719, 1049, 1093,  
Iceland: 78, 158, 209, 220, 312, 440, 531, 746, 912,  
Irish Islands: 19, 25, 61, 87, 141, 163, 185, 238, 267, 275, 321, 438, 628, 674, 829, 892,  
Isle of Man: 251, 308, 454, 567, 702, 932, 1033,  
Isle of Wight: 114, 134, 165, 411, 601, 943,  
Lundy Island: 366,  
Madeira: 609, 826, 1061,  
Magdalen Islands: 877, 1092,  
Maine Islands: 13, 16, 28, 192, 265, 304, 328, 451, 502, 510, 678, 712,  
Martha's Vineyard: 29, 654, 750, 799, 873, 1051,  
Nantucket: 571, 750, 799,  
New York Islands: 65, 94, 753, 1008,  
North Carolina Outer Banks: 16,  
Prince Edward Island: 120, 151, 877, 1027,  
Sao Tome & Principe: 341,  
Scilly Isles: 830;  
Scottish Islands: 22, 69, 82, 109, 118, 121, 132, 207, 213, 217, 218, 223, 236, 245, 270, 273, 284, 287, 301, 313, 319, 354, 389, 420, 443, 445, 449, 463, 471, 475, 492, 526, 554, 604, 631, 638, 680, 708, 749, 781, 790, 834, 911, 986,  
St. Helena: 100, 198, 1031,  
St. Pierre & Miquelon: 782,  
Tristan da Cunha: 198, 809,  
Welsh Islands: 33,

**COVID impacts on Baltic islands:**

Aland Islands: 276,  
Estonian Islands: 51, 73, 97, 108, 115,  
Gotland: 59, 228, 324,  
Swedish Islands: 513, 588, 652,

**COVID impacts on Caribbean region & individual islands:**

Regional: 12, 116, 224, 225, 231, 409, 447, 514, 519, 524, 605, 653, 767, 801, 837, 868, 870, 979, 1088,  
Anguilla: 167, 703,  
Antigua & Barbuda: 206, 227, 703, 731, 935,  
Aruba: 225, 703,  
Bahamas: 86, 347, 703, 971,  
Barbados: 337, 623, 698,

Belize Cayes: 127,  
British Virgin Islands: 870, 915,  
Cayman Islands: 31, 361, 579, 689, 908, 1049, 1074,  
Curacao: 703,  
Cuba: 40, 81, 146, 237, 347, 387, 529, 661, 663, 676, 759, 814, 824, 839, 913, 968,  
994, 1001, 1077, 1099,  
Dominica: 648, 737,  
Dominican Republic: 40, 329, 482,  
Grenada: 188, 703,  
Guadeloupe: 559, 637, 703, 960, 975, 1063,  
Haiti: 93, 329, 772, 940,  
Jamaica: 172, 556, 612, 673, 767, 794, 854, 973, 977, 996, 1067,  
Martinique: 637, 703, 939, 960, 975, 1068,  
Montserrat: 639, 837, 997,  
Puerto Rico: 295, 397, 407, 615, 725, 810, 1026, 1097,  
St Barts: 637, 703,  
St Kitts & Nevis: 167, 627, 752, 1042,  
St Lucia: 225, 603, 698, 703,  
St Maarten/St Martin: 64, 113, 637, 703,  
St Vincent & Grenadines: 954,  
San Andres: 429,  
Trinidad & Tobago: 329, 694, 1018,  
US Florida Keys: 90, 453, 561,  
US Virgin Islands: 397, 407, 742, 870, 962,

**COVID impacts on Indian Ocean islands:**

Andaman & Nicobar Islands: 139, 320, 398, 945, 1082,  
Bangladesh Islands: 593, 791,  
Christmas & Cocos Islands: 4, 5, 367, 419, 486, 586, 884,  
Indian River Islands: 176,  
Lakshadweep: 317, 849,  
Madagascar: 96, 111, 143, 199, 232, 246, 271, 326, 353, 432, 435, 493, 553, 1053,  
Maldives: 205, 459, 698, 779, 819, 1043,  
Mauritius: 166, 370, 444, 520, 688, 819,  
Reunion: 939, 1072,  
Rottneest Island: 23, 636,  
Seychelles: 92, 138, 215, 285, 297, 380, 582, 634, 664, 686, 697, 735, 819, 874, 885,  
1058,  
Socotra: 882,  
Sri Lanka: 68, 70, 84, 101, 110, 123, 136, 183, 200, 216, 255, 261, 286, 535, 568,  
589, 618, 647, 663, 701, 901, 1003, 1098,

**COVID impacts on Mediterranean islands:**

Balearic Islands: 122, 144, 186, 249, 259, 268, 293, 323, 336, 402, 733, 900, 947,  
Croatian Islands: 793,  
Cyprus: 211, 706, 793,  
Greek Islands: 21, 44, 50, 103, 157, 204, 210, 247, 351, 352, 374, 412, 430, 448, 630,  
710, 777, 847, 921, 936, 938,  
Italian Islands: 44, 137, 140, 310, 339, 414, 503, 529, 635, 687, 784, 793, 808, 825,  
1070, 1100,  
Malta: 44, 260, 343, 362, 591, 793, 812, 1052, 1094,  
Sardinia: 415, 696, 866, 899,

**COVID impacts on Pacific region & individual islands:**

Regional: 9, 34, 36, 42, 43, 74, 88, 107, 131, 145, 148, 155, 160, 175, 181, 193, 212, 229, 240, 244, 256, 258, 303, 333, 342, 346, 355, 359, 363, 376, 383, 392, 394, 439, 469, 470, 472, 497, 498, 509, 538, 540, 565, 570, 580, 585, 606, 607, 616, 622, 667, 671, 700, 704, 726, 736, 751, 768, 769, 813, 836, 872, 905, 909, 919, 928, 950, 974, 999, 1001, 1011, 1013, 1014, 1025, 1065,  
American Samoa: 149, 578, 711,  
Auckland Islands: 683,  
British Columbia Gulf & Vancouver Islands: 14, 545, 596, 597, 811,  
Chatham Islands: 49, 196, 294, 358, 507, 827, 904,  
Cook Islands: 10, 187, 302, 309, 378, 508, 573, 585, 614, 622, 754, 768, 846, 858, 933, 950, 965, 976, 985, 1038, 1075,  
Easter Island: 48, 487, 1032,  
Federated States of Micronesia: 578, 941, 950,  
Fiji: 30, 80, 159, 191, 194, 240, 278, 325, 363, 386, 399, 481, 538, 570, 585, 622, 660, 665, 666, 695, 699, 713, 768, 802, 813, 861, 874, 897, 909, 946, 982, 1024, 1085,  
French Polynesia: 11, 30, 379, 404, 416, 484, 521, 585, 637, 833, 929, 1006, 1007,  
Galapagos: 171, 233, 434, 476, 483, 729, 804, 1071,  
Guam: 30, 38, 67, 397, 404, 423, 578, 581, 862, 910, 950, 1012, 1095,  
Hawaiian Islands: 24, 62, 63, 99, 135, 202, 242, 248, 269, 274, 338, 348, 410, 421, 465, 466, 478, 485, 522, 525, 536, 562, 590, 624, 657, 709, 763, 780, 835, 855, 891, 959, 1019, 1030, 1089,  
Kangaroo Island: 277,  
King & Flinders Islands: 431,  
Kiribati: 585, 715, 850, 1087,  
Kodiak Island: 83,  
Lord Howe Island: 458, 987,  
Maria Island: 340,  
Marshall Islands: 1, 79, 194, 300, 315, 382, 474, 489, 578, 655, 1029,  
Nauru: 345, 585, 629, 831, 950,  
New Caledonia: 30, 416, 983, 1045, 1060,  
New Zealand: 241, 264, 384, 440, 557, 663, 670, 700, 771, 822, 961, 1005, 1020,  
Niue: 573, 585, 789, 857, 950, 985,  
Norfolk Island: 17, 424, 949,  
Northern Mariana Islands: 10, 560, 578, 948, 1064,  
Palau: 219, 307, 381, 395, 400, 578, 581, 585, 739, 795, 957,  
Papua New Guinea: 30, 66, 173, 334, 359, 365, 369, 391, 403, 404, 418, 468, 495, 585, 685, 707, 730, 798, 807, 813, 869, 886, 902, 914, 928, 963, 972, 1000, 1021, 1046, 1079,  
Pitcairn Island: 530, 585, 809, 955,  
Samoa: 2, 10, 154, 533, 632, 658, 732, 768, 833, 970, 1007,  
Solomon Islands: 150, 457, 532, 538, 585, 611, 629, 738, 789,  
Stewart Island: 577, 1040,  
Tiwi Islands: 682,  
Tokelau: 585, 931, 985,  
Tonga: 585, 610, 671, 693, 833, 958, 1036,  
Torres Strait Islands: 707, 730, 796, 828, 1090,  
Tuvalu: 56, 298, 509, 570, 585, 606, 1023,  
Vanuatu: 57, 98, 511, 622, 671, 690, 768, 813, 860, 1066, 1080,  
Vashon Island: 748,

Wallis & Fatuna: 416, 865, 924,

**COVID impacts on Polar (North & South) islands:**

Alaska: 455, 561, 951,

Aleutian Islands: 344,

Antarctic: 372, 496, 563, 651, 998, 1050, 1086,

Ellesmere Island: 523,

Greenland: 32, 401, 456, 544, 584, 714, 757, 934, 1016,

Pribilof Islands: 517, 765, 1004,

South Georgia & South Sandwich Island: 918, 1031

Svalbard: 104, 197, 253, 263, 764,

**COVID impacts on SE East Asian islands:**

Bali: 7, 357, 396, 436, 464, 550, 838, 948, 1022,

Hainan: 142, 548, 621,

Hong Kong: 234, 349, 427, 649, 774,

Indonesian Islands: 6, 8, 20, 37, 39, 46, 53, 55, 58, 75, 77, 105, 124, 126, 130, 133,

161, 162, 169, 177, 178, 190, 250, 257, 266, 282, 283, 289, 291, 305, 441, 452, 499,

537, 546, 550, 572, 625, 642, 659, 818, 848, 859, 894, 907, 917, 930, 937, 944, 952,

978, 1028, 1035, 1076, 1078,

Japanese Islands: 85, 306, 388, 393, 479, 547, 617, 817, 1009,

Jeju Island: 47, 102, 805,

Malaysian Islands: 883, 920, 992,

Philippines: 15, 54, 71, 106, 117, 128, 156, 168, 189, 201, 221, 230, 239, 248, 250,

262, 299, 350, 356, 364, 371, 390, 422, 428, 516, 592, 613, 691, 716, 745, 775, 792,

820, 895, 956, 966, 988, 1028, 1059, 1091,

Singapore: 663, 842, 843, 906, 1048, 1084,

Taiwan: 35, 113, 153, 184, 195, 280, 375, 490, 494, 566, 662, 663, 692, 739, 741,

778, 795, 840, 841, 843, 864, 889, 910, 969, 984, 1044,

Thai Islands: 95, 327, 461, 462, 500, 528, 552, 717, 773, 871, 890, 942, 1017, 1083,

Timor-Leste: 785,

Vietnamese Islands: 989,

**COVID impacts on SIDS:**

72, 112, 119, 179, 272, 279, 281, 292, 314, 425, 539, 587, 867, 878,

**COVID impacts on Biodiversity/Wildlife and Protected Areas:**

6, 18, 20, 84, 91, 95, 111, 117, 126, 128, 136, 138, 143, 152, 169, 182, 190, 199, 216,

222, 233, 243, 246, 254, 261, 266, 271, 282, 297, 310, 311, 330, 340, 341, 353, 366,

372, 380, 386, 390, 406, 418, 422, 427, 432, 452, 455, 467, 482, 483, 491, 493, 543,

553, 558, 572, 576, 592, 612, 643, 646, 652, 683, 705, 718, 724, 747, 783, 792, 816,

852, 856, 863, 874, 896, 925, 936, 951, 993, 1047, 1053, 1056, 1071, 1076,

**COVID impacts on Farming, Fishing, Forestry, Mining and Oil industries:**

8, 37, 41, 53, 54, 58, 71, 77, 110, 129, 130, 133, 151, 156, 161, 162, 168, 173, 177,

180, 189, 192, 201, 227, 230, 239, 240, 248, 250, 255, 256, 283, 296, 307, 328, 357,

358, 369, 383, 394, 441, 451, 462, 464, 469, 476, 528, 538, 570, 602, 616, 657, 659,

688, 721, 767, 769, 806, 848, 872, 933, 970, 976, 991, 1023, 1073, 1084, 1091,

**COVID impacts on Cruise Industry:** 12, 23, 31, 197, 221, 253, 257, 263, 360, 434,

448, 453, 455, 514, 561, 621, 689, 735, 757, 764, 870, 875, 951, 971, 998, 1006,

1042, 1050, 1058, 1074, 1088,

### **COVID impacts on Quarantine/Detention Centres, Migrant/Refugee Camps/Reception Facilities and Jails/Prisons:**

4, 5, 21, 23, 39, 44, 103, 124, 351, 367, 412, 414, 419, 486, 535, 586, 593, 636, 884, 926,

### **COVID Geopolitics & Vaccine Diplomacy:**

107, 148, 195, 314, 375, 404, 425, 426, 437, 446, 447, 450, 470, 505, 512, 515, 532, 539, 550, 557, 578, 580, 605, 606, 608, 611, 622, 626, 633, 644, 662, 669, 672, 686, 704, 740, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 766, 776, 778, 788, 816, 820, 821, 832, 841, 876, 889, 928, 980, 995, 999, 1002, 1010, 1013, 1015, 1035,

**COVID origins, spread & WHO investigations:** 152, 184, 288, 406, 460, 467, 491, 501, 504, 541, 595, 598, 599, 600, 619, 620, 641, 643, 645, 646, 650, 656, 677, 705, 718, 722, 728, 743, 745, 747, 755, 756, 760, 762, 770, 786, 787, 797, 800, 803, 812, 832, 836, 853, 863, 879, 880, 881, 893, 896, 898, 903, 916, 922, 923, 953, 967, 980, 981, 990, 1009, 1037, 1057, 1062, 1069, 1081, 1096,

### **COVID Digital Nomads and remote workers moving to islands:**

318, 337, 524, 609, 623, 624, 639, 737, 752, 826, 908, 997, 1052,

### **COVID Drone Technology:**

102, 108, 114, 207, 301, 680, 815, 830.

**COVID Green Recovery Plans:** 145, 208, 212, 214, 224, 229, 231, 235, 248, 250, 252, 254, 272, 281, 292, 307, 311, 314, 333, 348, 442, 506, 539, 671, 709, 720, 744, 1034, 1039,

### **COVID quirky news items:**

70, 76, 78, 96, 101, 120, 159, 183, 226, 232, 291, 312, 324, 325, 331, 354, 391, 428, 435, 463, 473, 479, 481, 494, 500, 530, 588, 613, 618, 627, 642, 649, 650, 673, 676, 682, 692, 752, 774, 817, 823, 838, 844, 845, 888, 927, 946, 1018, 1054, 1055,

1) *January 24.* The Pacific is stepping up defences against the coronavirus, with many countries introducing health screenings at airports and seaports. The **MARSHALL ISLANDS** was the first country in the world to impose a travel ban.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/408119/pacific-steps-up-defences-against-coronavirus>

2) *January 29.* While authorities and the WHO maintain the risk of an outbreak in the Pacific is low, little is being left to chance in countries like **SAMOA** that have battled some of the largest outbreaks of either measles, dengue fever, influenza or polio seen in generations.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/408402/pacific-countries-already-hard-hit-by-epidemics-take-extreme-coronavirus-measures>

3) *January 31*. The pandemic was confirmed as having spread to the **CANARY ISLANDS** when a German tourist was tested positive in La Gomera. The second confirmed case of the disease in the islands was found on 24 February, following the outbreak in Italy, when a medical doctor from Lombardy who was vacationing in Tenerife was tested positive.

[https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020/01/31/actualidad/1580509404\\_469734.html](https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020/01/31/actualidad/1580509404_469734.html)

4) *February 4*. Australia began evacuating its citizens trapped by the coronavirus outbreak in China to an immigration detention centre on **CHRISTMAS ISLAND**.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-51352145>

5) *February 6*. **CHRISTMAS ISLAND** is furious over Australia's coronavirus plans.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/06/hysterical-and-ruinous-christmas-island-faces-its-coronavirus-moment>

6) *February 12*. It was reported bats, rats and snakes were still being sold at the Tomohon meat market on the Indonesian island of **SULAWESI**, despite a government request to take them off the stalls over fears of a link to the deadly virus.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20200212-bat-for-sale-at-indonesia-s-wildlife-market-despite-virus-warning>

7) *February 20*. **BALI** tourism industry hit by the ripple effect of the coronavirus crisis, with hotel bookings plummeting and suggestions it “does not have the capacity” to treat patients if they become sick.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/feb/20/balis-been-through-a-lot-holiday-islands-tourism-industry-hit-by-coronavirus-fears>

8) *February 25*. Indonesian government temporarily restricted trade with China in the wake of virus. The move has hit the shrimp-fishing community in **SUMATRA** Jambi province, which is highly reliant on the Chinese market.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/02/coronavirus-covid-19-trawl-shrimp-fishing-indonesia-jambi/>

9) *February 28*. Is the **PACIFIC** ready for coronavirus? No cases yet but country plans and responses are being implemented to prevent the virus from being imported and to deliver a rapid response if it is.

<https://www.devex.com/news/is-the-pacific-ready-for-coronavirus-96658>

10) *March 6*. Coronavirus fears knock back Pacific tourism. The **NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS** tourism-dependent economy has crumbled. **COOK ISLANDS** prohibit cruise ships and **SAMOA** has strictest entry measures.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/411132/huge-crisis-coronavirus-fears-knock-back-pacific-tourism>

11) *March 12*. Pacific Islands hit by first coronavirus case after **FRENCH POLYNESIA** MP infected on Paris trip.



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/12/pacific-islands-hit-by-first-coronavirus-case-after-mp-met-infected-french-minister-french-polynesia>

12) *March 14.* The cruise industry pressured **CARIBBEAN ISLANDS** to allow tourists onto their shores despite coronavirus concerns.

<https://theintercept.com/2020/03/14/coronavirus-cruise-ships-caribbean/>

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/02/12/a-rash-of-travel-bans-as-the-caribbean-gets-serious-about-coronavirus/>

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/03/04/caribbean-tourism-threatened-by-the-regions-first-cases-of-covid-19/>

13) *March 15.* Life on Maine island (**CHEBEAGUE**) in the age of coronavirus.

<https://www.pressherald.com/2020/03/15/preparing-for-a-pandemic-a-maine-island-community-finds-strengths-and-vulnerabilities/>

14) *March 16.* Coronavirus concern finally washes ashore B.C.'s remote islands (**QUADRA & CORTES**).

<https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/03/16/news/coronavirus-concern-finally-washes-ashore-bcs-remote-islands>

15) *March 16.* President Rodrigo Duterte has put the entire Philippine island of **LUZON** under “enhanced community quarantine” until April 12 to stop the spread of coronavirus infections.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/3/16/coronavirus-philippines-quarantines-island-of-57-million-people>

16) *March 17.* Islands in the U.S. (**NORTH HAVEN**, Maine & North Carolina **OUTER BANKS**) are barring all outsiders to keep coronavirus at bay.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/us/north-carolina-and-maine-coronavirus.html>

17) *March 17.* Coronavirus fears on **NORFOLK ISLAND** prompt travel ban as state of emergency declared.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-17/norfolk-island-stops-tourists-to-stop-coronavirus-outbreak/12064666>

18) *March 18.* Is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19? As habitat and biodiversity loss increase globally, the coronavirus outbreak may be just the beginning of mass pandemics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/rapid-deforestation-of-brazilian-amazon-could-bring-next-pandemic-experts/>

<https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2020/04/24/deforestation-amazon-next-pandemic-covid-coronavirus/>

19) *March 19.* Ireland's offshore islands (three **ARAN ISLANDS** and **INISHBOFIN**) go into lockdown in bid to beat coronavirus.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30988869.html>

20) *March 20.* COVID-19 prompts temporary closure of dozens of national parks and conservation sites in **INDONESIA** in an effort to slow the spread of virus.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/03/indonesia-national-parks-covid19-environment-komodo-rinjani-way-kambas-leuser/>

21) *March 21.* Fears of catastrophe as Greece puts migrant camps on **LESBOS**, **LEROS**, **KOS**, **CHIOS** and **SAMOS** into lockdown as doctors say coronavirus outbreak could be disastrous amid ‘horrific’ conditions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/21/fears-catastrophe-greece-migrant-camps-lockdown-coronavirus>

22) *March 23.* First Minister has declared **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** a no-go area for visitors amid the coronavirus crisis, saying ferry companies have been told not to take “non-essential travellers”.

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/18326000.nicola-sturgeon-warns-scotlands-islands-no-go-area/>

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18324119.coronavirus-scotland-scottish-islands-rural-areas-urge-tourists-stay-away-covid-19-pandemic/>

23) *March 25.* Cruise ship passengers to be quarantined on **ROTTNEST ISLAND** in Western Australia.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/25/cruise-ship-passengers-to-be-quarantined-on-rotnest-island-in-western-australia>

24) *March 25.* Shutting Down **HAWAII**: A historical perspective on epidemics in the islands.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/shutting-down-hawaii-historical-perspective-epidemics-islands-180974506/>

25) *March 27.* **IRISH ISLANDS** aren't smiling as tourists threaten to bring coronavirus onshore.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/27/irish-islands-arent-smiling-as-tourists-threaten-to-bring-coronavirus-onshore>

26) *March 27.* **BLOCK ISLAND** (about 10 miles off the coast of US mainland Rhode Island) untouched by COVID-19 scrambles to keep it that way.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/tiny-east-coast-island-untouched-by-covid-19-scrambles-to-keep-it-that-way/ar-BB11NAWW>

27) *March 27.* Isolation helped the **FALKLAND ISLANDS** delay a COVID-19 outbreak. Now, being remote could be their biggest problem.

<https://time.com/5811309/coronavirus-falklands/>

28) *March 28.* **NORTH HAVEN**, Maine, tries to shut out the virus and that means barring the wealthy who vacation there.

<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/28/a-tiny-island-tries-to-shut-out-the-virus-152382>

29) *March 28.* Painting a picture of an island in crisis - **MARTHA'S VINEYARD** - Empty streets, shuttered stores, masked faces; locals find hope amid despair.

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2020/03/28/painting-picture-island-crisis/>

30) *March 28.* Coronavirus has been confirmed in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, **FIJI**, as well as in the French territories of **FRENCH POLYNESIA** and **NEW CALEDONIA**. The U.S. territory of **GUAM** has had one death from the disease and 51 confirmed cases of infection, believed to be the highest total of the small Pacific island jurisdictions.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/03/28/822048523/small-far-flung-pacific-islands-are-combating-covid-19-just-like-the-rest-of-us>

31) *March 29.* As coronavirus trickled its way into the Americas, **GRAND CAYMAN** began what has come to be recognized as one of the most proactive and decisive disease containment strategies in the hemisphere - a policy regime that has put its people first at the expense of everything else, including the highly influential cruise industry.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daphneewingchow/2020/03/29/how-a-little-island-in-the-caribbean-sea-is-standing-up-to-the-goliath-of-coronavirus/>

32) *March 29.* The sale of alcohol has been banned in the **GREENLAND** capital, Nuuk, in an attempt to reduce violence against children during the period of confinement caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/29/alcohol-sales-banned-in-greenland-capital-during-lockdown>

33) *March 30.* What self isolation is like when you live on **WELSH ISLANDS**.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/skokholm-skomer-ramsey-closed-coronavirus-18003186>

34) *March 30.* What will COVID-19 mean for the **PACIFIC**: a problem in four parts.

<https://devpolicy.org/what-will-covid-19-mean-for-the-pacific-a-problem-in-four-parts-20200330/>

35) *March 30.* **TAIWAN** is seen as one of the few places in the world which has successfully stemmed the spread of the coronavirus without resorting to draconian

measures. But despite its efforts, it is still effectively locked out of membership in the World Health Organization (WHO) due to its complex relationship with China.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52088167>

36) *March 31*. Scott Morrison calls the **PACIFIC** our 'family'. Covid-19 is Australia's chance to prove that.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/mar/31/scott-morrison-calls-the-pacific-our-family-the-covid-crisis-is-australias-chance-to-prove-that>

37) *March 31*. Mining activity in **INDONESIA** takes a hit from COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/03/covid19-mining-indonesia-pandemic-coal-nickel-tin-china/>

38) *April 1*. **GUAM** is to allow entry to sailors from Covid stricken aircraft carrier.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/413186/guam-to-allow-entry-to-sailors-from-covid-stricken-aircraft-carrier>

39) *April 1*. Indonesia will by next week open a new coronavirus emergency hospital on the uninhabited island of **GALANG**, where authorities have repurposed a former Vietnam war era refugee camp as part of efforts to rapidly augment healthcare capacities. Indonesia has recorded 1,677 cases of coronavirus as of April 1, and 157 deaths - the highest mortality rate in Southeast Asia.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-indonesia-hospital/indonesia-set-to-open-emergency-coronavirus-hospital-on-uninhabited-island-idUSKBN21J52B>

40) *April 1*. The Caribbean, as well as **BERMUDA**, is facing a new reality of social distancing and restrictions on movement as they battle their fears during the Covid-19 pandemic. The **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** has been hit the hardest of the 28 countries in the region with 1,109 cases, 1,053 active, and 51 deaths and **CUBA** has suffered 186 cases, with 172 active, and six deaths. Bermuda, in comparison, has 32 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and no deaths.

<https://www.royalgazette.com/other/news/article/20200401/caribbean-braces-for-more-covid-19-cases/>

41) *April 1*. Will the coronavirus kill the oil industry and help save the climate?

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/01/the-fossil-fuel-industry-is-broken-will-a-cleaner-climate-be-the-result>

42) *April 2*. **PACIFIC** economies will suffer a sharp fall as resource prices collapse and tourism numbers plummet to zero, but their remoteness could provide something of a buffer in what a World Bank economist called a 'double-edged sword' effect.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/413261/pacific-economies-hit-hard-unlike-anything-we-have-seen>

43) *April 3*. Where will be the last place to catch Covid-19? The 18 countries without include Comoros; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Micronesia; Nauru; Palau; Samoa; Sao Tome and Principe; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; & Vanuatu.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-52120439>

44) *April 4*. As the coronavirus crisis deepens, the plight of people crossing the Mediterranean to escape conflict has been all but forgotten. According to the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, almost 800 migrants departed from Libya in March. A total of 43 disembarked in Italy, in the Sicilian island of **LAMPEDUSA**, while about 155 have landed in **MALTA** and thousands are still stuck on the **GREEK ISLANDS**.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/04/migrants-never-disappeared-the-lone-rescue-ship-braving-a-pandemic-coronavirus>

45) *April 4*. A British serviceperson has become the first confirmed case of coronavirus in the **FALKLAND ISLANDS**.

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-british-serviceperson-is-falkland-islands-first-case-of-covid-19-11968338>

46) *April 4*. **INDONESIA** grapples with fear of a hidden virus surge.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52124193>

47) *April 4*. South Korea's **JEJU ISLAND** is suing two tourists who visited while having coronavirus symptoms.

[South Korea's Jeju Island suing two tourists who visited while having coronavirus symptoms | CNN Travel](#)

48) *April 4*. Inhabitants of **EASTER ISLAND** are leaning on a traditional form of ancestral discipline to overcome a coronavirus-imposed lockdown that threatens the Pacific island's vital tourism sector, and consequently their livelihoods.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20200403-easter-island-inhabitants-turn-to-tradition-to-tackle-virus-troubles>

49) *April 6*. With no Covid-19 cases and its economy desperate to restart, the **CHATHAM ISLANDS** are hoping for early release from lockdown.

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/chatham-islands-hoping-for-early-release-from-lockdown>

50) *April 6*. Mayors of 12 small **GREEK ISLANDS** are demanding a ban on all arrivals, especially over Easter, to prevent the spread of Covid-19 as they are not equipped with the necessary medical infrastructure to cope.

[https://www.thenationalherald.com/archive\\_coronavirus/arthro/fearing\\_coronavirus\\_1\\_2\\_greek\\_islands\\_don\\_t\\_want\\_easter\\_arrivals-266211/](https://www.thenationalherald.com/archive_coronavirus/arthro/fearing_coronavirus_1_2_greek_islands_don_t_want_easter_arrivals-266211/)

51) *April 6*. How **SAAREMAA** became the epicenter of Estonia's COVID-19 outbreak.

<https://news.err.ee/1073140/timeline-how-saaremaa-became-the-epicenter-of-estonia-s-covid-19-outbreak>

52) *April 6.* A **CHANNEL ISLANDS** freight shipping company collapses blaming "very difficult trading conditions" caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-jersey-52181908>

53) *April 6.* Lawmakers in **INDONESIA** plan to pass a deregulation bill by May and a mining bill by August, prompting criticism of their timing as the country deals with the COVID-19 pandemic. Activists say it appears parliament wants to use the cover of the outbreak, including physical distancing measures, to rush through the legislation with minimal public oversight or pushback.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/indonesia-parliament-dpr-omnibus-bill-mining-covid19/>

54) *April 6.* The ongoing lockdown in the **PHILIPPINES** due to the coronavirus pandemic has failed to defuse a standoff between a local community and OceanaGold Philippines Inc over a controversial gold and copper mine in the province of Nueva Vizcaya.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/standoff-over-philippines-didipio-mines-escalates-despite-covid-19-lockdown/>

55) *April 6.* The outbreak of coronavirus has prompted authorities in **INDONESIA PAPUA** region to shut down air and sea traffic and lockdown villages. There are fears that a COVID-19 outbreak here, particularly among the more than 300 indigenous tribes, could have a disastrous impact.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/indigenous-papuans-initiate-own-lockdowns-in-face-of-covid-19/>

56) *April 6.* How is **TUVALU** securing against COVID-19?

<https://devpolicy.org/how-is-tuvalu-securing-against-covid-19-20200406/>

<https://devpolicy.org/how-is-tuvalu-securing-against-covid-19-a-response-from-funafuti-20200422-3/>

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/covid-response-plan-tuvalu.pdf>

57) *April 7.* **VANUATU** is one of the few places that is coronavirus-free, but efforts to stop its arrival have been hampered by a category five cyclone.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/08/if-it-comes-it-will-be-a-disaster-life-in-vanuatu-one-of-the-only-countries-without-coronavirus>

58) *April 7.* Sinking feeling for fishermen of **INDONESIA** as COVID-19 hits seafood sales.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/sinking-feeling-for-indonesian-fishers-as-covid-19-hits-seafood-sales/>

59) *April 8.* How the coronavirus is affecting life on Sweden's tourism island **GOTLAND**.

<https://www.thelocal.se/20200408/how-the-coronavirus-is-affecting-life-on-swedens-tourism-island-gotland>

60) *April 8.* Veterinary scientist hailed for **FAROE ISLANDS** lack of COVID-19 deaths.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/08/vetinary-scientist-hailed-faroe-islands-lack-covid-19-deaths>

61) *April 8.* Life on Northern Ireland's only inhabited off-shore island, **RATHLIN**, during coronavirus lockdown.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52216177>

62) *April 8.* The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable our modern societies are, particularly in an isolated island state like **HAWAII**. A call for resiliency and sustainability plans for the Big Island, working with stakeholders every step of the way.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/04/a-call-for-resiliency-and-sustainability-on-the-big-island/>

63) *April 8.* A mayor in **HAWAII** has a choice word for the Florida man accused of trying to flout Hawaii's traveler quarantine: "covidiot."

<https://nypost.com/2020/04/08/hawaii-mayor-to-arrested-florida-man-youre-a-covidiot/>

64) *April 10.* The **ST. MAARTEN** Tourism Bureau together with the **ST. MARTIN** Tourism Office jointly launched a Digital Postcard Social Media campaign to bring positive awareness to the destination by showcasing inspiring photos of the island together with thoughtful messages, while encouraging persons to stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.thedailyherald.sx/islands/tourist-offices-launch-digital-postcards-showing-beauty-of-island>

65) *April 10.* New York City ramps up mass burials on **HART ISLAND** as the death toll from the coronavirus continues to rise.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52241221>

66) *April 10.* **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** broken health system braces for COVID-19. In a country where nurses are forced to use rice packets as gloves and laundry detergent as disinfectant, there is terror at the arrival of coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/11/we-have-nothing-papua-new-guineas-broken-health-system-braces-for-covid-19>



67) *April 11*. An outbreak of coronavirus aboard the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt has left local officials in **GUAM** to contend with the arrival of hundreds of infected sailors, while they also try to protect the island's population.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/magazine/guam-theodore-roosevelt-navy-coronavirus.html>

68) *April 12*. A year on from the Easter bombs that killed more than 250 people, **SRI LANKA** is now under pandemic lockdown and facing rising pressure.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/12/its-a-very-worrying-time-sri-lankas-recovery-interrupted-by-coronavirus>

69) *April 12*. As the rest of the UK resists the temptation to head outside during a hot Easter bank holiday, a music label on the tiny Hebridean **ISLE OF EIGG** is making a virtue of the lockdown by releasing songs recorded by artists in isolation and reinvigorating its remote community in the process.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/apr/12/indie-label-on-isle-of-eigg-turns-lockdown-into-source-of-inspiration>

70) *April 13*. As COVID-19 rages, **SRI LANKA** indigenous communities find solace in traditional practices and have relied on herbal remedies and rituals seeking blessings from deities to prevent illness.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/as-covid-19-rages-sri-lankans-find-solace-in-traditional-practices/>

71) *April 14*. The central government in the **PHILIPPINES** has overturned a decision by local authorities to ban a foreign ship from docking and taking on chromite ore on the island of Homonhon. Local community officials had imposed the block as part of efforts to lock down the province in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/philippine-government-flips-local-officials-entry-ban-for-mining-ship/>

72) *April 14*. The Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) and Hawaii Green Growth Local2030 Hub have launched a virtual platform to connect islands during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Shared Island Platform on COVID-19 Response enables island stakeholders to hear challenges, ideas, solutions from each other, beginning with a series of webinars on the economic and social effects of the crisis.

<https://www.islands2030.org/virtual-platform>

73) *April 14*. Life on Estonia's 'corona island', **SAAREMAA**.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-52282118>

74) *April 15*. After a deadly cyclone slammed through several countries in the **PACIFIC**, there is growing concern that the pandemic could disrupt efforts to help the survivors undo early work to protect vulnerable communities from infection.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52268119>



75) *April 15*. The **INDONESIA** government's plan to relocate the country's capital from Java to Borneo has hit a wall amid the COVID-19 pandemic, with a top official saying they would "evaluate it or something" after the crisis passes.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/indonesias-new-capital-in-the-bornean-jungle-on-hold-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

76) *April 15*. The **FAROE ISLANDS** launch a new tourism marketing campaign. This year should have seen tourism revenues double in these remote north Atlantic islands from a base of around £60m five years ago. Coronavirus has ended that ambition, but to combat at least some of those losses and keep the destination fresh in people's minds, mobile phone users from anywhere in the world can command a camera-wearing local to show them round their isles.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/apr/15/remote-control-person-guide-you-round-the-faroe-islands>

77) *April 15*. Companies embroiled in land disputes with rural communities in **INDONESIA** appear to be using the lull in oversight during the COVID-19 outbreak to strengthen their claims. Since the first confirmed cases of the disease were reported in the country on March 2, two local land defenders have been killed and four arrested in connection with land disputes in Sumatra and Borneo.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/land-conflicts-escalate-with-spread-of-covid-19-in-indonesia/>

78) *April 15*. The forestry service in **ICELAND** has come up with a novel way to overcome the sense of isolation many people suffer because of Covid-19 preventative measures – get out and hug a tree.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-52280134>

79) *April 15*. Keeping COVID-19 at bay in the **MARSHALL ISLANDS**.

<https://devpolicy.org/keeping-covid-19-at-bay-in-the-marshall-islands-20200416/>

80) *April 15*. **FIJI** colossal tourism sector devastated by coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/16/its-catastrophic-fijis-colossal-tourism-sector-devastated-by-coronavirus>

81) *April 15*. Coronavirus response: why **CUBA** is such an interesting case.

<https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-response-why-cuba-is-such-an-interesting-case-135749>

82) *April 16*. **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** (Orkney & Western Isles) communities should become "test beds" for the country's exit strategy in lifting lockdown restrictions.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18382158.coronavirus-scotland-islands-should-test-beds-exit-strategy/>

83) *April 16*. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services announced the first confirmed case of COVID-19 on **KODIAK ISLAND**.

<https://www.ktoo.org/2020/04/16/kodiak-island-has-its-first-confirmed-case-of-coronavirus/>

84) *April 16.* **SRI LANKA** COVID-19 lockdown sets wildlife free but raises poaching threat.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/sri-lankas-covid-19-lockdown-sets-wildlife-free-but-raises-poaching-threat/>

85) *April 16.* It was once seen as something of a success story - a region that worked to contain, trace and isolate the virus - leading to a huge drop in numbers. But **HOKKAIDO** is in the spotlight again as it struggles to deal with a second wave of infections.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52305055>

86) *April 17.* Coronavirus crisis underscores SIDS climate vulnerability. For example, **THE BAHAMAS** was devastated by Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, resulting in damages of over US\$3.4 billion and the displacement of thousands of people. Impacts were widespread, with the government anticipating that it would take at least five budget cycles to return to pre-Dorian levels of debt. This left the nation at a disadvantage when it came to addressing the pandemic as financial resources were already low and communities are still in early stages of recovery.

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/04/17/coronavirus-crisis-underscores-small-islands-climate-vulnerability/>

87) *April 17.* Irish Donegal islands (**TORY & ARRANMORE**) among few areas to remain coronavirus-free.

<https://www.irishnews.com/coronavirus/2020/04/17/news/donegal-islands-among-few-areas-to-remain-coronavirus-free-1905021/>

88) *April 17.* UN warns of deadly effect of Covid-19 misinformation in **PACIFIC**.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/17/un-warns-of-deadly-effect-of-covid-19-misinformation-in-pacific>

89) *April 18.* **FALKLAND ISLANDS** government announced a suite of new measures to assist businesses, private sector employees and households as they adjust to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2020/04/18/falklands-government-unveils-comprehensive-covid-19-support-package>

90) *April 18.* How America's richest ZIP code (**FISHER ISLAND**) off the coast of Miami got coronavirus antibody tests while the rest of the US struggles to obtain any tests at all.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-richest-zip-code-fisher-island-got-coronavirus-tests-2020-4>

91) *April 18*. COVID-19 – a blessing for pangolins? They **are one of the most heavily trafficked animals in the world, and as a result they are endangered. But in the past few weeks they have been linked to the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 disease in China. The evidence is inconclusive, but it has already prompted the Chinese government to take action. If more actions against the wildlife trade follow, the incident could prove to be a turning point for pangolin conservation.**

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/18/covid-19-a-blessing-for-pangolins>

92) *April 18*. **SEYCHELLES** Tourism Board has launched online campaign entitled: ‘Dream Now, Experience Seychelles Later’ to ensure that the country remains at the forefront of potential visitors’ mind during this difficult time while the pandemic continues to cause havoc globally.

<https://www.seychellestourismboard.travel/news-media/press-releases/418-seychelles-tourism-board-invites-tourism-trade-partners-to-join-in-online-campaign>

<https://voyagesafriq.com/2020/09/22/seychelles-tourism-board-rolls-out-our-home-your-sanctuary-digital-campaign/>

93) *April 19*. With barely 60 ventilators for 11 million people, **HAITI** is the most vulnerable nation in the Americas to the coronavirus. While many countries would struggle to cope with a serious spread of Covid-19, Haiti might never recover from one.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-52324225>

94) *April 19*. ‘Turn Around, Go Back’: **SUMMER ISLANDS** don’t want coronavirus, or you. With few medical resources to fight the virus, residents of the island havens east of New York City have fiercely protected their secluded hometowns.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/19/nyregion/coronavirus-nyc-islands-protection.html>

95) *April 20*. **THAILAND** has discovered the largest number of nests of rare leatherback sea turtles in two decades on beaches bereft of tourists because of the coronavirus pandemic, said the director of the Phuket Marine Biological Centre.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/20/coronavirus-lockdown-boosts-numbers-of-thailands-rare-sea-turtles>

96) *April 20*. **MADAGASCAR** president, Andry Rajoelina, unveiled an unproven cure for COVID-19 that is derived from a plant, *Artemisia annua*, or sweet wormwood, a green leafy plant that emits a striking odor. Dried leaves from the plant are considered to have medicinal properties in Madagascar. But there is no evidence from any clinical trials to back up the claims.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/madagascars-president-promotes-unproven-herbal-cure-for-covid-19/>

97) *April 20*. While the coronavirus emergency restrictions have led to a major shift in day-to-day living on the islands of **SAAREMAA** and **MUHU**, as well as the rest of the country, for residents of **OSMUSSAAR**, a small island off the northwest coast of Estonia, little has changed, as the time of year is generally very quiet and requires stocking up on stores for often months in advance.

<https://news.err.ee/1079479/emergency-situation-so-far-had-little-effect-on-small-island-of-osmussaar>

98) *April 20*. Women in the South Pacific island nation of **VANUATU** are dealing with six crises currently – COVID-19, drought, scarcity of potable water, and volcanic ash, acid rain and sulphur gas as there are several active volcanoes on the island.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/04/pacific-women-responding-climate-change-natural-disasters/>

99) *April 20*. Tensions peak as **HAWAII** locals urge tourists to stay out.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/20/hawaii-coronavirus-covid-19-tourists>

100) *April 20*. Nearly 1,000 coronavirus testing kits are being flown to the British overseas territory of **ST. HELENA**, which has so far avoided an outbreak of the disease.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/virus-testing-kits-flown-out-britons-remote-overseas-territory-2543750>

101) *April 21*. With **SRI LANKA** under lockdown to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, panic buying has resulted in an artificial shortage of several herbs, popular as home remedies.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/panic-buying-amid-pandemic-drives-scarcity-in-medicinal-herbs-in-sri-lanka/>

102) *April 22*. In South Korea Doosan Mobility Innovation distributed protective masks to residents on Gapa, Mara, and Biyang Islands with its hydrogen fuel cell drone. The event was executed in collaboration with **JEJU** Special Self-Governing Province. A total of 15,000 masks were sent to these local islands, a three-month supply for 490 residents, presuming two masks per week. The drone flew 8.8 kilometers from Jeju to reach ports on Mara Island.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200422005402/en/Doosan-Mobility-Innovation-Completed-Contactless-Drone-Delivery-to-Remote-Islands-Without-a-Proper-Mask-Supplier>

103) *April 22*. Greek **AEGEAN ISLAND** camps not prepared for COVID-19.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/22/greece-island-camps-not-prepared-covid-19>

104) *April 22*. Coronavirus and the Arctic: **SVALBARD**, Norway.

<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/irdr/2020/04/22/coronavirus-and-the-arctic-svalbard-norway/>

105) *April 23*. Forest fires have flared up in **INDONESIA**, marking the start of the dry season and threatening to aggravate respiratory ailments amid the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/forest-fires-in-indonesia-look-set-to-add-toxic-haze-to-covid-19-woes/>

106) *April 23*. Manila's lockdown, a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is easing the **PHILIPPINES** capital's notorious air pollution levels.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/manila-gets-its-skyline-back-as-air-quality-improves-amid-covid-19-lockdown/>

107) *April 23*. China's coronavirus aid to **PACIFIC** islands is part of geopolitical game.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/China-s-coronavirus-aid-to-Pacific-islands-is-part-of-geopolitical-game>

108) *April 23*. The North Estonia Medical Center (PERH) and the technology company Threed Systems made history when it comes to Estonian medicine by flying samples taken from patients in the hospital of **HIUMAA** from the island to the mainland using a drone.

<http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/Technology/?doc=155389>

109) *April 24*. How **OUTER HEBRIDES** were perfectly primed to tackle coronavirus. Residents of Western Isles, which have yet to record a Covid-19 death, have plenty experience of isolation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/24/how-outer-hebrides-scotland-perfectly-primed-tackle-coronavirus>

110) *April 24*. Soap and solace scarce as **SRI LANKA** tea pickers toil on amid lockdown. Workers in a sector with a history of exploitation face hazards including a lack of masks and overcrowded accommodation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/24/soap-and-solace-scarce-as-sri-lankas-tea-pickers-toil-on-amid-lockdown>

111) *April 24*. There is growing concern that the COVID-19 crisis will enfeeble conservation efforts across the globe, particularly in developing countries. The concern is acute for **MADAGASCAR**, one of the poorest nations in the world, which relies heavily on foreign funds to implement conservation programs. The disappearance of tourism revenue in the short term and the possible drying up of international funding and deepening impoverishment in the coming months and years could grievously endanger Madagascar's unique biodiversity.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/covid-19-will-hurt-madagascars-conservation-funding-qa-with-minister-vahinala-raharinirina/>

112) *April 24*. The impact of COVID-19 on tourism in **SIDS**.

<https://unctad.org/news/impact-covid-19-tourism-small-island-developing-states>

<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421916>

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_covid-19\\_tourism\\_august\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_tourism_august_2020.pdf)

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-64-the-covid-19-pandemic-puts-small-island-developing-economies-in-dire-straits/>

113) *April 25*. Are female leaders more successful at managing the coronavirus crisis? On 1 April, the prime minister of **SINT MAARTEN** addressed her nation's 41,500 people. Coronavirus cases were rising, and Silveria Jacobs knew the small island country, which welcomes 500,000 tourists a year, was at great risk: it had two ICU beds. Jacobs did not want to impose a strict lockdown, but she did want physical distancing observed. So she spelled it out: "Simply. Stop. Moving," she said. "If you don't have the bread you like in your house, eat crackers. Eat cereal. Eat oats. Eat ... sardines." **TAIWAN** president Tsai Ing-wen responded equally fast, activating the country's central epidemic command centre in early January and introducing travel restrictions and quarantine measures. Mass public hygiene measures were rolled out, including disinfecting public areas and buildings.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/why-do-female-leaders-seem-to-be-more-successful-at-managing-the-coronavirus-crisis>

114) *April 25*. Drones capable of carrying 220lb (100kg) loads more than 620 miles (1,000km) are to be used to ensure the **ISLE OF WIGHT** hospital can maintain essential medical supplies in the fight against Covid-19.

<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/drones-capable-of-carrying-220lb-loads-to-take-vital-supplies-to-island-hospital/>

115) *April 26*. A protest took place in **SAAREMAA** against the restrictions in place on the island to mitigate the spread of coronavirus. Islanders do not think it is fair to loosen restrictions on the mainland but not on the islands. As public gatherings are banned during the emergency situation people are sitting on their own in public or outside their houses to join in with the protest.

<https://news.err.ee/1082492/islanders-protest-emergency-situation-restrictions-in-saaremaa>

116) *April 26*. **CARIBBEAN** countries are in for a 'bloodbath' if a major hurricane hits during COVID-19 crisis.

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200426/perfect-storm-caribbean-countries-bloodbath-if-major-hurricane-hits>

117) *April 27*. In the Philippines **BORACAY** flying foxes are going, going, gone. Bats around the world have recently gotten a bad reputation as potential carriers of disease following the COVID-19 outbreak. But in Boracay, cave-dwelling bats are known to help reduce outbreaks by feasting on the mosquitos that spread dengue to

humans. They also help disperse fruit seeds across Boracay and nearby islands, helping keep the ecology of the province in balance.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/in-the-philippines-boracay-flying-foxes-are-going-going-gone/>

118) *April 27*. Call for **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** to test, trace, isolate in order to help "snuff out" coronavirus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-52441255>

119) *April 27*. COVID-19 shocks too big to handle for **SIDS**, UN warns.

<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/covid-19-shocks-too-big-handle-small-island-nations-un-warns>

120) *April 27*. No one has seen a wild bear on **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**, Canada's smallest province, since the 1930s. Now, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of islanders are hunting teddy bears from the safety of their cars. They're popping up by the hundreds on front porches, mailboxes, lawn chairs, and windowsills.

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/prince-edward-island-bear-hunt>

121) *April 28*. There is an 'eerie' atmosphere on **ISLE OF SKYE** without tourists due to coronavirus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-52415316>

122) *April 28*. On the tourism-dependent Spanish island of **MALLORCA**, a total shutdown of hotels due to the coronavirus outbreak has destroyed livelihoods across the sector, from reception staff to farmers who provide food for restaurants.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-spain-tourism-idUKKCN22A1DO>

123) *April 28*. The COVID-19 response in **SRI LANKA** should prioritize the introduction of special mechanisms to address the needs of marginalized communities, women and children, says a leading water management expert from the Indian Ocean island. Catchment conservation, prevention of river pollution and water conservation are key to fighting the pandemic as water is essential for improving sanitation and hygiene.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/fighting-covid-19-with-a-precious-resource-qa-with-kusum-athukorala-sri-lankas-woman-in-water/>

124) *April 29*. Fear and illness stalk packed jails in **INDONESIA** as riots break out. Political activists are among those waiting to find out if they will be included in government pardon scheme to stop the spread of Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/29/fear-and-illness-stalk-indonesias-packed-jails-as-prisoners-hope-for-early-release-coronavirus>



125) *April 29.* **JERSEY** should look to market itself as a ‘staycation’ destination for UK tourists who will be looking for open, safe and clean environments post-crisis, a spokesman for the tourism industry has said.

<https://jerseyeveningpost.com/news/2020/04/29/island-could-be-staycation-choice-after-the-pandemic/>

126) *April 30.* Scientists have called for all projects in the only known habitat of the Tapanuli orangutan in **SUMATRA** to be halted to prevent the possible transmission of COVID-19 to the great apes. The orangutans wouldn’t necessarily have to come into direct contact with humans to catch the virus; they could catch it indirectly via other primate species.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/tapanuli-orangutan-covid19-indonesia-sumatra-conservation-ape-dam/>

127) *April 30.* Residents on a remote island in **BELIZE** (Caye Caulker) will use solar-powered hydropanels to harvest drinking water from the air after coronavirus shutdowns delayed shipments of bottled water from the mainland.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/technology/residents-on-a-remote-island-in-belize-will-use-solar-powered-hydropanels-to-harvest-drinking-water-from-the-air-after-coronavirus-shutdowns-delayed-shipments-of-bottled-water-from-the-mainland/ar-BB13ryHJ>

128) *April 30.* Communities in the biodiversity haven of **PALAWAN** in the Philippines earn millions in tourism-related services annually, but the industry has been paralyzed due to a lockdown aimed at suppressing the spread of COVID-19. Despite this, these communities continue to look after their protected areas, making sure that illegal logging and fishing activities do not proliferate during the lockdown period.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/no-tourism-income-but-this-philippine-community-still-guards-its-environment/>

129) *May 1.* An “armada” of more than 100 fishing vessels is illegally plundering south Atlantic waters close to Argentina, environmental groups say raising concerns that the coronavirus lockdown has weakened already fragile marine protections.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/01/stealth-plunder-of-argentinian-waters-raises-fears-over-marine-monitoring>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08920753.2020.1766937>

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/covid-19-sea-impacts-blue-economy-ocean-health-and-ocean-security>

130) *May 1.* **INDONESIA** authorities say they’re remaining vigilant for illegal fishing practices as poachers and blast fishers anticipate a dip in enforcement activity amid COVID-19 restrictions.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/covid-19-no-excuse-for-dropping-guard-against-illegal-fishing-indonesia-says/>



131) *May 1.* Australia and New Zealand tentatively celebrate successes in their battles to bring Covid-19 under control, Winston Peters, New Zealand's deputy prime minister, has raised the possibility of the two nations opening up travel to one another. The mooted "trans-Tasman bubble" would allow travel between these two countries, which seem – for now – to have brought infection rates under control, while keeping their borders with the rest of the world closed or tightly managed. While this seems like an excellent idea, it is one that needs go further. Specifically this spirit of neighbourliness needs to be extended to the small island states of the **PACIFIC**. Aside from giving real substance to Canberra's talk of a "step-up" in the region, if managed carefully, medically there is little to lose and economically there is much to gain from this approach.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/may/01/if-australia-and-new-zealand-restart-travel-they-should-include-the-pacific-in-their-bubble>

132) *May 2.* **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** bristle at idea of being used as UK test site to end lockdown.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/02/islanders-bristle-at-idea-of-being-used-as-uk-test-site-to-end-lockdown>

133) *May 4.* The shark and ray fishery in **INDONESIA** has largely ground to a halt as a result of plummeting demand due to COVID-19-related export restrictions and a domestic lockdown that has hit the restaurant industry.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/as-covid-19-response-batters-sales-indonesias-shark-fishery-gets-a-respite/>

134) *May 4.* UK contact-tracing app is ready for **ISLE OF WIGHT** downloads.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52532435>

135) *May 4.* **HAWAII** has some of the lowest coronavirus infection and mortality rates in the U.S. As cases rose in March, the governor did something no other state can - effectively seal the borders. People who do come face a two-week quarantine. That's cut off the flow of tens of thousands of tourists a day. But it's walloped an economy that relies on tourism, and officials say travel restrictions will be among the last to end.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2020-05-04/isolated-by-oceans-hawaii-other-islands-tamp-down-virus>

136) *May 5.* **SRI LANKA** popular national parks have been closed since March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting tour guides, jeep drivers, guesthouse owners, and many others dependent on the tourism industry for their livelihood.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/wildlife-tourism-workers-in-limbo-as-sri-lankas-covid-19-shutdown-continues/>

137) *May 5.* As the Covid-19 death toll grows, Italy's organised crime gangs have been looking to make millions. Many Italians feel they have no option but to accept the lifeline the mob is offering. On the island of **SICILY**, the brother of a mafioso - a

member of a mafia group - has been distributing food to the poor in a neighbourhood of Palermo.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52537573>

138) *May 5.* From the vast plains of the Masai Mara in Kenya to the delicate corals of the Aldabra atoll in the **SEYCHELLES**, conservation work to protect some of the world's most important ecosystems is facing crisis following a collapse in ecotourism during the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/05/conservation-in-crisis-covid-19-coronavirus-ecotourism-collapse-threatens-communities-and-wildlife-aoe>

139) *May 5.* After 33 coronavirus cases were reported in India's **ANDAMAN** and **NICOBAR ISLANDS**, a remote crescent of 572 islands in the Bay of Bengal, experts began worrying about the indigenous people who live there. Three indigenous groups, the Great Andamanese, Jarawas and Onges, who live in the Andaman island chain are vulnerable to COVID-19 because of their contact with the outside world. The fourth group in the islands, the Sentinelese, who killed an intruding American missionary in 2018, is said to be safe because their land remains off-limits to most outsiders. The Andaman Islands are within easy range of poachers from neighboring Myanmar. This puts the indigenous population at risk of contracting the disease.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-threatens-first-residents-of-India-s-Andaman-Islands>

140) *May 5.* **SICILY** regional government is offering to subsidise holidays on the island for both domestic and international visitors in an effort to kickstart tourism after the coronavirus pandemic. News of the scheme came days before a statement from the Italian government that it expects borders to be open to tourists this summer.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/may/05/sicily-to-subsidise-post-covid-holidays-as-italy-considers-reopening-to-tourists>

141) *May 5.* Tourism tide goes out for **CLARE ISLAND** as well as other Irish islands.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/tourism-tide-goes-out-for-clare-island-1.4244858>

142) *May 5.* With the coronavirus outbreak steadily receding in China, the country's resort island **HAINAN**, hopes the development of sports tourism will become a new economic growth point as the island province opens its arms to tourists again.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/05/c\\_139032383.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/05/c_139032383.htm)

143) *May 5.* **MADAGASCAR** has lost half a billion dollars in much-needed tourism revenue since the start of 2020 because of the COVID-19 crisis, according to official estimates. Tourism contributes toward funding conservation efforts in Madagascar's network of protected areas; those protected areas that rely heavily on foreign visitors have been hit worst by the crisis.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/as-visitors-vanish-madagascars-protected-areas-suffer-a-devastating-blow/>

144) *May 6.* **IBIZA** welcomes more than three million visitors during the summer months, pumping billions into its economy. Close to 75% of the island's 147,000-plus population get their income from tourism, directly and indirectly – besides the fabled nightclub scene, there's the hotels, Airbnbs, restaurants, bars, shops, taxis, and other businesses that exist because of the pull of the clubs. But a huge question mark hangs over them all, with the clubs beginning to cancel their summer seasons due to coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/may/06/its-a-tough-island-to-live-on-why-coronavirus-spells-doom-for-ibiza>

145) *May 6.* Countries across the **ASIA-PACIFIC** region have announced plans to cautiously reopen for business as governments around the world race to reboot economies devastated by the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/06/global-report-several-asia-pacific-nations-pass-covid-19-peak-and-plot-return-to-work>

146) *May 6.* **CUBA** seeks to make its mark in Europe amid Covid-19 crisis by sending medical “brigades” to bolster struggling health services in countries like Italy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/06/doctor-diplomacy-cuba-seeks-to-make-its-mark-in-europe-amid-covid-19-crisis>

147) *May 6.* The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** government has looked at other countries to see the best way to ensure the safety of the community and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading around the islands. The best match to Falklands circumstances apparently is the approach being used in New Zealand. The main idea being used in NZ, – which FIG have adapted –, is the advice provided to help people get together as groups in what are being called “Bubbles.” “Bubbles” help people make decisions about who they meet with socially and how they mix.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2020/05/06/falklands-the-bubbles-system-socially-connected-physically-protected>

148) *May 6.* Geopolitics meets pandemic in the **PACIFIC**.

<https://insidestory.org.au/geopolitics-meets-pandemic-in-the-pacific/>

149) *May 6.* The coronavirus death toll in the United States is climbing past 70,000, with thousands of new cases every day. But there is still one part of the country without a single confirmed case, much less a fatality: **AMERICAN SAMOA**, a palm-fringed Polynesian archipelago that has sealed itself off for nearly two months from the outside world.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/us/coronavirus-american-samoa.html>

150) *May 7.* The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a US\$15 million Development Policy Operation for **SOLOMON ISLANDS** that will seek to strengthen public financial management while enabling the government to meet the

costs of COVID-19 preparedness. Solomon Islands are expected to be one of the most affected Pacific economies from COVID-19. Travel restrictions, and demand shocks, particularly to logging, are predicted to lead to considerable reductions in GDP growth and tax revenue for the country.

<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/business/1040115-world-bank-approves-us15m-development-policy-operation-for-solomon-islands>

151) *May 7.* **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND** potato farmers will likely be planting less of a crop this season because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of social distancing restrictions, islanders are eating more meals at home instead of dining out. This in turn is impacting not only the potato industry, but other industries like shellfish, and dairy as well.

[https://www.peicanada.com/uncertainty-surrounds-island-potato-season/article\\_7ac8745c-8f0c-11ea-a821-47ed9481987e.html](https://www.peicanada.com/uncertainty-surrounds-island-potato-season/article_7ac8745c-8f0c-11ea-a821-47ed9481987e.html)

152) *May 7.* Humanity's "promiscuous treatment of nature" needs to change or there will be more deadly pandemics such as Covid-19, warn scientists who have analysed the link between viruses, wildlife and habitat destruction.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/07/promiscuous-treatment-of-nature-will-lead-to-more-pandemics-scientists>

153) *May 7.* It was initially predicted **TAIWAN** would be one of the hardest-hit countries in the world by COVID-19. But aggressive measures seem to have paid off and it is providing aid to several Pacific countries.

<https://devpolicy.org/taiwans-experience-with-covid-19-and-aid-to-the-pacific-20200507-1/>

154) *May 7.* A surge in poverty as tourism jobs in **SAMOA** disappear in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/416094/a-surge-in-poverty-as-tourism-jobs-in-samoa-disappear>

155) *May 7.* The **PACIFIC** region has seen the fewest cases of COVID-19 - at least 14 Pacific countries and territories report no single case of the coronavirus, despite 3.5 million cases confirmed globally. Excluding Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii, there have been fewer than 270 confirmed cases across the entire region. **AMERICAN SAMOA** is currently the only U.S. state or territory without a single positive case.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/many-pacific-islands-are-untouched-by-covid-19-its-arrival-could-be-disastrous>

156) *May 7.* Farmers in the Bicol region in the **PHILIPPINES** are experiencing the brunt of the lockdown, imposed since March 16 to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation is especially hard for rice farmers, most of them still reeling from the impacts of successive typhoons, drought, and cheap imported rice.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/for-philippine-farmers-reeling-from-disasters-lockdown-is-another-pain-point/>

157) *May 7.* With plexiglass barriers, Greece's **SANTORINI ISLAND** wants visitors to return.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-greece-santorini/with-plexiglass-barriers-greeces-santorini-island-wants-visitors-to-return-idUSKBN22J2YY>

158) *May 8.* **ICELAND** has all but eliminated the coronavirus outbreak as 97% of infected patients have recovered and only two new cases have been confirmed in the last week.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-iceland/iceland-close-to-full-recovery-from-coronavirus-govt-idUSKBN22I2S2>

159) *May 8.* **FIJI** returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy. Two piglets for a pre-loved kayak, a taxi fare in exchange for fresh produce, hot cross buns for online tutoring, an old carpet for a professional photography session, vegetable seedlings for homemade pies, and offers to have backyards cleaned for prayers. These are just a few examples of the hundreds of barter trades that are taking place across Fiji since a Facebook page “Barter for Better Fiji” was created a few weeks ago in response to sharp falls in employment due to coronavirus. The page now has more than 100,000 members, in a country of just under 900,000 people. The barter system is experiencing a resurgence across the Pacific with similar Facebook pages in Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/08/two-piglets-for-a-kayak-fiji-returns-to-barter-system-as-covid-19-hits-economy>

160) *May 8.* Virus-free **PACIFIC** islands weigh risks of re-opening to tourists.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1914836/virus-free-pacific-islands-weigh-risks-of-re-opening-to-tourists>

161) *May 8.* U.S.-based miner Freeport McMoRan is continuing operations at its Grasberg mine in the Indonesian province of **PAPUA**, despite 56 of its employees testing positive for COVID-19. Workers say that if they opt to leave the site over health concerns, they won't get paid and risk losing their job.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/get-sick-or-go-hungry-workers-face-dilemma-at-freeports-grasberg-mine/>

162) *May 8.* Activists in **INDONESIA** have filed a legal challenge to stop legislation rushed through during the pandemic that would dismantle environmental protections in favour of facilitating business.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/indonesia-deregulation-omnibus-environment/>

163) *May 8.* Visitors told to stay away from **IRISH ISLANDS** until at least August due to the current pandemic.

<https://www.thejournal.ie/offshore-islands-travel-covid-19-5094335-May2020/>

164) *May 8*. In a significant boost to the **CANARY ISLANDS** bid to present the archipelago as a safe holiday choice, the region will be the first destination for a coronavirus-free flight in a digital health passport pilot project, which has the backing of the World Health Organisation.

<https://www.euroweeklynews.com/2020/05/08/spains-canary-islands-first-destination-for-coronavirus-free-flight-in-digital-health-passport-pilot-project/>

165) *May 9*. The **ISLE OF WIGHT** is coming to terms with unexpected publicity from the NHS coronavirus contact-tracing app.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/09/coronavirus-app-has-changed-the-way-the-isle-of-wight-sees-itself>

166) *May 9*. The government of **MAURITIUS** responded early to the COVID-19 pandemic with stringent lockdown measures and saw a drastic reduction in new cases.

<https://voxeu.org/article/mauritian-response-covid-19>

167) *May 10*. In a major milestone for the wider Caribbean region, the island of **NEVIS** says it is “free” of the coronavirus. The announcement comes after the island, which has a population of around 12,000 people, launched a series of aggressive measures to prevent the spread of the virus. It’s another strong sign for the region, following a similar revelation by the island of **ANGUILLA** at the end of last month.

<https://www.caribjournal.com/2020/05/10/nevis-coronavirus-free/>

168) *May 10*. A landmark vote on dividing the biodiverse Philippine province of **PALAWAN** into three smaller provinces has been put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s given critics of the move a chance to press their case that splitting up the province could prove harmful to natural resources management and the welfare of indigenous groups.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/pandemic-lockdown-gives-philippine-province-time-to-rethink-planned-split-up/>

169) *May 11*. Bukit Lawang (North **SUMATRA**, Indonesia) is a prominent ecotourism town on the fringes of the Gunung Leuser National Park. The town is devoid of tourists amid the Covid-19 crisis and the high season is supposed to start soon. Many people are entirely reliant on tourists and you can sense the despair in the air as it is uncertain when planes will take off again and people will start traveling to distant places. However, market-based solutions cannot solely fund community-level conservation. Schemes like ecotourism and payment for ecosystem services should be paired with programs like sustainable local agriculture to prevent the re-emergence of poaching and illegal logging, and to ensure that conservation-oriented behaviours persist when markets fail.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/market-based-solutions-cannot-solely-fund-community-level-conservation-commentary/>



170) *May 11*. Football returns to Covid-19-free **FAROE ISLANDS** albeit with no more than 50 people allowed into the stadium including the 22 players on the field.

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/may/11/faroe-islands-welcome-football-back-to-europe-with-fans-staying-home>

171) *May 11*. Pandemic upends life on the **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**. For seven weeks now, not a single tourist has arrived. Before the coronavirus, sudden life-threatening ailments among tourists, fishermen and others on the Galapagos Islands were considered so rare that hospitals didn't have a single intensive care unit bed. Now, officials are racing to equip medical teams on the remote islands with breathing machines while also trying to stanch an economic crisis that has left many of the 30,000 residents jobless.

<https://apnews.com/article/2f8778a3b1e7fed210544e039a54cabd>

172) *May 11*. Some Caribbean nations appear to be handling the COVID-19 pandemic relatively efficiently, but despite lockdowns, curfews, and the closure of nonessential businesses, **JAMAICA** has not been faring as well.

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/05/11/covid-19-regulations-and-the-issue-of-overcrowding-in-jamaicas-markets/>

173) *May 12*. Late in April, in the middle of a global pandemic and slow-boiling domestic economic crisis, the government of **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** made the surprising announcement not to extend the mining lease on a goldmine that contributes roughly 10% of the country's total exports.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/12/politics-and-porgera-why-papua-new-guinea-cancelled-the-lease-on-one-of-its-biggest-mines>

174) *May 12*. The **AZORES** have been a beacon of light in the Atlantic during this crisis. The archipelago, about 800 nautical miles off the coast of Portugal, is of huge strategic importance for boats crossing west to east. Countries along the Atlantic's eastern shores – Morocco, Senegal, Spain, Portugal, France – have been turning away boats looking for shelter. Island nations such as Cape Verde, off the coast of Africa, lack infrastructure and healthcare to deal with Covid-19, so are more understandably off limits. But grateful sailors have been reporting that they could anchor in Horta, the Azores' port, with access to fuel and water. The islands have a long history of welcoming boats on transatlantic passages, and maritime institution Peter Cafe Sport has been taking food, medical supplies and marine parts to anchored boats.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/12/long-journey-home-the-stranded-sailboats-in-a-race-to-beat-the-hurricanes>

175) *May 12*. With the coronavirus pandemic continuing to spread and its impacts upon human health and the economy intensifying daily, **PACIFIC** governments are urged to treat waste management, including of medical, household and other hazardous waste, as an urgent and essential public service in order to minimise possible secondary impacts upon health and the environment.

<https://www.sprep.org/news/pacwasteplus-engages-with-countries-using-innovative-resources>

176) *May 13*. Boat clinics in **ASSAM** have become the primary access to healthcare for almost three million inhabitants of the 2500 saporis (river islands) where construction of permanent structures for healthcare is almost impossible due to recurring flooding events. The boat clinics have pitched in to deal with the novel coronavirus disease by carrying out door-to-door community surveillance in the river islands.

<https://india.mongabay.com/2020/05/assams-boat-clinics-scan-remote-islands-for-covid-19/>

177) *May 13*. To curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, countries around the world have constrained people's movements, which have taken a toll on marine fisheries. Supply chains fragmented, markets closed, fish imports declined, sales dwindled and fewer fishing vessels are reportedly out at sea. For fishing communities like those in **INDONESIA** and the industry as a whole, this is an exceptional crisis. But could the fishing slowdown give marine life a chance to recover?

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/will-fish-boom-amid-pandemic-driven-fishing-bust/>

178) *May 13*. In February, as the coronavirus victim count rose steadily in countries like Singapore, Japan, and South Korea, **INDONESIA** maintained that there was not a single case within its borders. As the government steadfastly refused to instate social distancing, cancel events, or start mass testing, local communities started to feel differently and local quarantines sprung up throughout the island nation, but the end of Ramadan posed a severe test.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/05/indonesia-government-slow-lock-down-people-took-charge/>

179) *May 13*. COVID-19 puts women working in **SIDS** tourism industry at risk.

<https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-puts-women-working-sids-tourism-industry-risk>

180) *May 14*. Premier Oil suspends **FALKLAND ISLANDS** Sea Lion oil project due to coronavirus uncertainty.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2020/05/14/premier-oil-suspends-falklands-sea-lion-project-navitas-remains-interested-in-farm-out-project>

181) *May 15*. There is no doubting the importance of tourism and labour mobility to the **PACIFIC**. With few and falling COVID-19 cases, no wonder the idea of including the Pacific in the proposed Australia-New Zealand travel 'bubble' has gained prominence.

<https://devpolicy.org/the-pacific-bubble-takes-shape-20200514-2/>

182) *May 15*. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is a global environmental agreement of great consequence: it regulates the global trade in some of the most threatened species on Earth. While many conservation groups jumped at the chance the COVID-19 pandemic offered to highlight the link between pandemics and wildlife exploitation, the CITES Secretariat appeared to distance itself from the crisis, drawing criticism and scrutiny.



<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/as-covid-19-pandemic-deepens-global-wildlife-treaty-faces-an-identity-crisis/>

183) *May 15*. On April 22, **SRI LANKA** eased its nationwide lockdown that was imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. That sparked a buying rush for essential goods, primarily food. But another type of commodity was also high on shoppers' lists: organic fertilizers, seeds, and clay pots. Demand was so strong that people lined up in queues with little regard for physical distancing guidelines as they sought out home gardening essentials.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/amid-lockdown-sri-lankans-nurture-their-own-oases-through-home-gardening/>

184) *May 16*. For the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began, health officials will come together (virtually) next week at the World Health Assembly to decide how the world should tackle the crisis. But one of the places seen as most successful at protecting its people from the disease will not be invited to this meeting of the decision-making body of the WHO. **TAIWAN** has been applauded internationally for quickly and effectively stemming the spread of the virus, and says it should have a platform to share its experiences with the world. But China - which says Taiwan is part of its territory - has blocked Taiwan's attendance since 2016.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52661181>

185) *May 17*. Like all our other **IRISH ISLANDS**, there's no Covid-19 on Inishbofin which is a great credit to the islanders including those who run businesses and which are sorely in need of customers.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/property/homeandoutdoors/arid-31000017.html>

186) *May 17*. Germans with holiday homes in **MALLORCA** are clamouring to return to the sun-soaked island as the coronavirus lockdowns ease, but Spanish authorities are pushing back.

<https://www.thelocal.com/20200517/tensions-rise-as-germans-eager-to-return-to-holiday-homes-in-spain>

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JTF-06-2020-0090/full/pdf?title=stay-at-which-home-second-homes-during-and-after-the-covid-19-pandemic>

187) *May 18*. With **COOK ISLANDS** tourism in tatters, small operators are struggling to service the loans that funded a pre-Covid-19 development boom. With fears many locals could lose their businesses to wealthy foreign investors, the government is looking at all the options - including a deal with NZ's Reserve Bank.

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2020/05/18/1177034/an-island-in-debt>

188) *May 18*. SIDS, such as the Caribbean island of **GRENADA**, faced a double exposure to external economic and environmental shocks. This has been made painfully clear by the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that has, among other things, crippled the tourism industry upon which many SIDS depends. Tourism accounts for almost 30% of SIDS' gross domestic product.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/small-island-developing-states-building-resilience-sustainable-trade-tourism>

189) *May 18*. Activists, clergy and politicians have demanded an investigation into the continued coal-mining activity on the **PHILIPPINES** island of Semirara while the region was supposed to be under strict quarantine.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/a-philippine-island-locked-down-but-its-mine-didnt-and-infections-mounted/>

190) *May 19*. Zoos have been shuttered and wildlife rehabilitation centers barred from releasing animals into the wild as a result of measures imposed in **INDONESIA** to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/for-indonesias-captive-wildlife-lockdown-measures-may-prove-deadly/>

191) *May 19*. In **FIJI**, pristine bungalows sit empty, sparkling resort pools have no one swimming in them and thousands of employees who would usually be on hand to greet tourists with wide smiles have been left without work. While COVID-19 has shut down the Pacific Island country's biggest industry, Fiji hopes it won't be for too much longer. The Government wants to see Australian and New Zealand tourists return "as soon as possible" and is pushing hard to become part of the "travel bubble" the two countries are planning.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-20/coronavirus-pacific-islands-tourism-plan-nz-fiji-travel-bubble/12259532>

192) *May 19*. Climate breakdown is causing the Gulf of Maine to heat up and that effect – in addition to the pandemic – is being felt across the lobster industry. Some veteran lobstermen on **MAINE ISLANDS** like Hewett are now applying their hard-earned expertise to kelp farming. Bob Baines is one of the 24 “partner farmers” working with Atlantic Sea Farms, which was founded in 2009 under the name Ocean Approved as the first commercial seaweed farm and nursery in North America.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/19/im-not-a-quitter-lobstermen-turn-to-kelp-farming-in-the-face-of-global-crises>

193) *May 19*. While the rest of the world has struggled to control the coronavirus outbreak, the isolated islands of the **PACIFIC** have managed to keep their populations safe - in part due to lessons learned from previous health crises.

<https://www.dw.com/en/zero-cases-how-pacific-islands-kept-coronavirus-at-bay/a-53495263>

194) *May 19*. As the Pacific Islands battle to keep Covid-19 out, and continues to reel from the aftermath of the Tropical Cyclone Harold, they are fighting another battle; Dengue Fever. More than 4,000 cases of dengue fever have been reported in both **FIJI** and the **MARSHALL ISLANDS**, but several more islands are at risk.

<https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/2020/05/19/dengue-fever-another-blow-pacific-islands/>

195) *May 20*. Following her re-election the **TAIWAN** president Tsai Ing-wen hits back at China after the self-governing island's successful fight against coronavirus and would not accept attempts by China to "downgrade" its status and pledged to stand up to pressure from Beijing.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/taiwan-president-hits-back-at-china-amid-covid-19-success>

196) *May 20*. The **CHATHAM ISLANDS** is the closest most New Zealanders can get to international travel without packing their passport. With the country's border heavily restricted due to the Covid-19 crisis, Chatham Islands tourism operators are hoping they'll see more Kiwis take a trip "overseas" to visit their archipelago.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/417083/chatham-islands-offers-overseas-holiday-during-covid-crisis>

197) *May 20*. The 2020 summer cruise season, from June to August, was supposed to be an all-time high for expedition cruising to Norway's **SVALBARD** archipelago, some of the busiest waters for high-end tourism in the circumpolar Arctic, but now all voyages have been cancelled until 2021.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/svalbard-entire-expedition-cruise-season-could-be-in-jeopardy/>

198) *May 20*. The remote island of **TRISTAN DA CUNHA** has reported no COVID-19 cases to date but all future cruise and cargo vessels have been banned from landing. At the moment, food security is not a concern. Both **ASCENSION** and **ST HELENA** have also no confirmed cases of COVID-19.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/travel/tristan-da-cunha.html>

<https://www.tristandc.com/coronavirusnews.php>

<https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/coronavirus-covid-19/>

199) *May 20*. **MADAGASCAR** tourism drought brought about by coronavirus could fuel another crisis.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/2020/05/madagascar-coronavirus-tourism-drought-could-fuel-another-crisis/>

200) *May 21*. Air pollution in **SRI LANKA** urban areas has decreased by up to 75% during the lockdown imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while plastic pollution and other forms of marine pollution have decreased by up to 40% along the island's coastline, authorities say. But the environmental respite is likely to be temporary, while the lockdown period threatens to see a surge in another type of waste - face masks - washing out to sea and on beaches if no proper waste management mechanisms are introduced.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/aided-by-weather-sri-lankas-lockdown-leads-to-decline-in-air-sea-pollution/>

201) *May 21*. The **PHILIPPINES** COVID-19 lockdown has exacerbated threats to activists fighting for their lands and their environment, with at least 10 land defenders swept up in a series of arrests by security forces during the two-month lockdown period. Another defender, who was providing relief aid, was shot and killed by unknown assailants.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/deaths-arrests-and-protests-as-philippines-re-emerges-from-lockdown/>

202) *May 23*. Thanks to its geographic isolation, a stay-at-home order and a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all arrivals, **HAWAII** has had some of the lowest rates of Covid-19 in the US. But the quarantine essentially halted tourism in Hawaii, which accounts for a quarter of the economy. As a result, nearly one-third of the state's working population has applied for unemployment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/23/hawaii-coronavirus-reopening-tourism>

203) *May 23*. **CANARY ISLANDS** gear up to reopen for tourists by early July. Since the start of this month, the region's tourism ministry has led a team of more than 200 people, including health and industry professionals, to hammer out protocols for everything from hotels to restaurants and museums. The aim is to rebrand the islands, which include Lanzarote and Tenerife, as tourist destinations that offer safety along with the usual sun, sand and sea. The new protocols embrace physical distancing: hotel common areas are set to be enlarged and sunbeds moved apart; buffet breakfasts will be served, making use of partitions to separate guests from the food and extra serving staff; and all-inclusive vacations will rely on either automated machines or extra staff to serve drinks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/23/canary-islands-reopen-to-tourists-offering-sun-sea-sand-and-safety>

204) *May 23*. The reopening of traveling to and from all **GREEK ISLANDS** is taking place on Monday, as citizens had so far only been able to travel to Crete, due to the coronavirus travel bans.

<https://www.ekathimerini.com/252996/article/ekathimerini/news/traveling-to-and-from-all-greek-islands-resumes-on-monday>

205) *May 25*. The **MALDIVES** authorities announced their strategy to revive the tourism sector after the coronavirus lockdown. However, this has little to do with sensible measures and much to do with taking advantage of the situation.

<https://www.tourism-review.com/maldives-criticized-of-government-enrichment-plans-news11555>

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2020/the-choices-we-make-will-determine-the-future-of-the-maldives.html>

<https://www.timesnownews.com/business-economy/economy/article/india-to-fund-500-million-6-7-km-bridge-project-in-maldives-starts-air-travel-bubble-with-island-nation/636490>

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/rapid-livelihood-assessment-impact-of-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-maldives.html>

[https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/MDV\\_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan\\_2020.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/MDV_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf)

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/maldives-economy-hit-hard-by-covid-19-pandemic/>

206) *May 25.* Caribbean tourism struggles as visitors stay home. The absence of holidaymakers due to the Covid-19 pandemic is keenly felt on **ANTIGUA** for which, like many of its counterparts, tourism has long been its breadbasket. Often dubbed the "most tourism-dependent region in the world", the Caribbean attracted more than 31 million visitors last year. For some islands, the sector accounts to a colossal two-thirds of gross domestic product.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-52723056>

207) *May 26.* Drone technology is to be used to deliver protective equipment to a hospital on a **SCOTTISH ISLAND**. Over the next two weeks, masks and a dummy cargo will be flown between Oban in mainland Argyll and the Isle of Mull. The 10-mile journey, normally involving a road trip and a 45-minute ferry sailing, should take only 15 minutes. The trial could pave the way for drones to be used in the transport of medical test samples and other supplies.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-52796907>

208) *May 26.* Doctors and medical professionals from around the globe have called on world leaders to ensure a green recovery from the coronavirus crisis that takes account of air pollution and climate breakdown. More than 200 organisations representing at least 40 million health workers – making up about half of the global medical workforce – have signed an open letter to the G20 leaders and their chief medical advisers, pointing to the 7 million premature deaths to which air pollution contributes each year around the world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/26/world-health-leaders-urge-green-recovery-from-coronavirus-crisis>

209) *May 26.* **ICELAND** eased its national alert against the coronavirus on Monday, allowing for public gatherings of up to 200 people and night clubs and gyms to reopen as the country nears complete recovery from the outbreak. The North Atlantic nation, which limited the virus spread through a meticulous test and trace strategy and a full lockdown, has confirmed 1,804 infections and 10 deaths. But there have been only five reported new cases in May, and more than 99% of infected persons have recovered.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-iceland/bars-gyms-reopen-as-iceland-exits-emergency-coronavirus-alert-idUSKBN2311EI>

210) *May 27.* Using dinghies, GPS and a portable refrigerator, doctors deployed by Greece's national public health agency have launched a coronavirus testing drive on the country's **AEGEAN SEA ISLANDS** ahead of the summer vacation season. Ferry service for visitors to the islands resumed Monday, and Greece plans to start

welcoming international travelers again on June 15. The government hopes the comparatively low number of confirmed coronavirus cases and deaths in Greece - just under 2,900 cases with 173 deaths – will attract foreign tourists and ease the effects of an expected recession.

<https://apnews.com/article/5f2fe3f51807aa6943009e465fd5727a>

211) *May 27.* **CYPRUS** has pledged to cover the holiday costs of anyone who tests positive for the virus after travelling there. In a letter made public on Wednesday, the government said it would pay for accommodation, medicine and food for patients and their families. Tourists "will only need to bear the cost of their airport transfer and repatriation flight". It is part of a package of measures aimed at drawing visitors back to the island, which has reported few cases. According to Johns Hopkins University data, the country has confirmed 939 infections and 17 deaths.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52818749>

212) *May 27.* Already among the most remote countries on earth, **PACIFIC** island states saw their vital economic links weakened in recent months with the evaporation of tourism, severe disruptions to international trade, and a reduction in remittances. For these countries, the COVID-19 pandemic may cut deeper than even some of the worst cyclones from years past. The International Monetary Fund provides detailed reports.

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/05/27/na-05272020-pacific-islands-threatened-by-covid-19>

[https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle\\_uuid=3FD4B555-7D65-4101-B30C-4DFA74E09BA1](https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle_uuid=3FD4B555-7D65-4101-B30C-4DFA74E09BA1)

[https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0036/1197189/Pacific-islands-tourism-during-COVID-19.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0036/1197189/Pacific-islands-tourism-during-COVID-19.pdf)

213) *May 28.* **SCOTTISH ISLANDS:** Guinea pigs for post-lockdown measures?

<https://www.dw.com/en/scottish-islands-guinea-pigs-for-post-lockdown-measures/a-53595580>

214) *May 28.* EU pledges coronavirus recovery plan will not harm climate goals. Following the unveiling of a €750bn (£671bn) recovery plan to pull EU economies out of the deep economic downturn caused by coronavirus, the European commission announced further details of green spending on Thursday. The commission argues it can raise €150bn in public and private money, up from a pre-crisis goal of €100bn, to help fund greener transport, cleaner industry and renovated homes. At the heart of the plan, the EU proposes to more than quadruple to €40bn a “just transition fund” aimed at moving coal-dependent regions away from fossil fuels.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/28/eu-pledges-coronavirus-recovery-plan-will-not-harm-climate-goals>

215) *May 28.* With commercial flights resuming operations on Monday next week, the **SEYCHELLES** government has set out guidelines and strict measures to



welcome back tourists and give a well-needed boost to the floundering tourism industry.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/4802/government-sets-out-guidelines-to-kick-start-tourism-recovery>

216) *May 30*. The killing of a young forest ranger by suspected poachers has underscored that illegal hunting in **SRI LANKA**, and the bushmeat trade it feeds, hasn't stopped during the lockdown imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/in-sri-lanka-bushmeat-poachers-havent-let-up-during-lockdown/>

217) *May 31*. Residents on **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** explain how they've kept coronavirus at bay, how lockdown has changed their communities, and why they're reluctant to ease restrictions too soon.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/life-under-lockdown-scotlands-remote-islands-2866992>

218) *May 31*. Early in the Covid-19 outbreak, the **SHETLAND ISLANDS** were one of the worst-hit areas of the UK by head of population. Now, no new cases have been detected there for six weeks. Some experts say it offers the rest of the country a route map out of lockdown - but for the first family on the islands to test positive, it hasn't been easy.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-52823510>

219) *June 1*. For 143 **PALAU** citizens trapped overseas by coronavirus travel restrictions, the journey home, always long, will be especially tortuous. To reach their Pacific island home they face six long weeks of quarantine – two in Guam, two in a hotel in Palau, and then another two weeks of self-isolation at home. They will also face at least five Covid-19 tests. But some Palauans fear that even these measures will not be enough. Palau, in the north Pacific, is one of a handful of countries globally with zero cases of coronavirus. Having closed its borders on 22 March, the country has grappled with how to bring home its citizens, trapped abroad, particularly in the US, without importing the virus. The topic has proven hugely divisive as the government has sought to balance the rights of citizens to return with the need to keep its small population safe.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/02/fear-will-always-be-there-covid-free-island-prepares-to-bring-home-stranded-citizens>

220) *June 1*. How **ICELAND** beat the coronavirus – a detailed article how the country didn't just manage to flatten the curve; it virtually eliminated it.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/08/how-iceland-beat-the-coronavirus>

221) *June 2*. Locked down afloat in the **PHILIPPINES** - why dozens of cruise ships have ended up stranded in Manila Bay. Before the pandemic, the vessels would have been welcomed for the dollars their passengers brought. These days, the ships only bring potential coronavirus carriers. Two of the most notorious ships, the Diamond Princess and Ruby Princess, are among the fleet in Manila Bay. They've been turned

away by other countries but the Philippines, which provide most of the world's maritime workers, allowed them to dock and disembark its citizens. But the scale overwhelmed the government, which was testing not just returning cruise ship crews but tens of thousands of other overseas workers who arrived in airports.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/02/locked-down-afloat-why-dozens-of-cruise-ships-ended-up-stranded-in-manila-bay>

222) *June 2.* Puffins breeding off the Northumberland coast on the **FARNE ISLANDS** may expand their usual nesting grounds as tourists stay away because of coronavirus, experts have predicted.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-52882553>

223) *June 2.* Fears for **SHETLAND** economy after multimillion pound Islands Growth Deal reportedly 'parked' due to Covid-19.

<https://www.shetlandtimes.co.uk/2020/06/02/fears-for-shetlands-economy-after-multimillion-pound-islands-deal-reportedly-parked-due-to-covid-19>

224) *June 3.* Is the **CARIBBEAN** winning the war against COVID-19? The first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the Caribbean on March 1, 2020, when an Italian tourist in the Dominican Republic fell ill. On March 19, that country, which shares a border with Haiti, declared a state of emergency and to date, still has the highest number of positive cases in the region. But how is the rest of the Caribbean faring? Are there signs of steady management of the virus? Is the Caribbean past the worst - or simply enjoying a quieter period before the much-feared second wave? What restrictions remain in place, and how are Caribbean nations working toward opening up, especially with regard to travel and tourism, both mainstays of regional economies? In this, the first of a two-part series, we will offer a quick overview of how various Caribbean nations have been dealing with COVID-19. In the second part, we will examine the need to reopen regional economies - the majority of which are tourism-dependent - and the threat that this may pose.

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/06/03/is-the-caribbean-winning-the-fight-against-covid-19/>

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/06/03/restarting-caribbean-economies-under-threat-of-covid-19/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590051X20300083>

225) *June 3.* The **CARIBBEAN** islands have laid out their plans for a "new normal" among locals as well as welcoming back visitors after being forced to take a pause as the coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe. In the interim, many islands - like **ARUBA** and **ST LUCIA** - took the virtual alternative and provided dreamy beach island vibes online, but we all know that nothing can replace the real thing. Below is each island's reopening plan along with the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus each has recorded since the beginning of the outbreak, according to Johns Hopkins University.

<https://people.com/travel/caribbean-islands-opening-travel-coronavirus/>



226) *June 4.* Following its launch in April, the **FAROE ISLANDS** Remote Tourism Tool has allowed 700,000 people from 197 countries to explore the island remotely. Of the 700,000, over 1,000 people have had the chance to explore the nation with a Faroese guide via a live video camera and a remote control. The virtual visitors were able to ‘control’ the exploration by transforming their PC, tablet or phone into a joystick, and requesting their guide to turn, walk, jump or run across the island within a 60-minute-long tour. The top five countries providing visitors to the Remote Tourism website are: the USA (54,983 visits); Russia (38,830 visits); Italy (19,360 visits); Ukraine (15,597 visits); and the UK (12,385 visits).

<https://www.c-mw.net/faroe-islands-welcome-700000-virtual-visitors/>

227) *June 4.* The particular problems island nations have in the Covid-19 crisis. **ANTIGUA & BARBUDA** imports at least 80 per cent of its food, according to estimates by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The government is now providing its citizens with seedlings to try to lower the country’s reliance on food imports and feed itself. It is also distributing food to tourism sector workers, as Covid-19 puts a halt to activity in this sector.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2020/06/trouble-paradise-particular-problems-island-nations-covid-19-crisis>

228) *June 4.* The Swedish island of **GOTLAND** is almost entirely dependent on summer tourism for its economy, so business-owners here are waiting even more eagerly than most for a delayed decision on domestic travel over summer. Earlier in the outbreak, there was especially strict advice to avoid non-essential travel to lesser populated areas like Gotland, due to fears that the healthcare system would not have capacity to handle any sharp rise in illness. In one Facebook video from Gotland shared widely ahead of Easter, healthcare workers stood outside a field hospital with signs reading: "We go to work for you. Please stay at home for us even if home is on the mainland". The video asked people not to travel there, saying that the region’s healthcare was designed to take care of numbers based on permanent residents. But as the outbreak drags on, struggling businesses are calling for a compromise that allows some travel and assistance to the affected companies. If tourists are not allowed to travel from mainland Sweden to the eastern island, it’s likely that bankruptcies and growing unemployment will follow.

<https://www.thelocal.se/20200604/swedens-summer-island-of-gotland-waits-anxiously-for-domestic-travel-decision>

229) *June 4.* As the **PACIFIC** islands assess ways to build back economies severely struck by the COVID-19 crisis, the environmental impacts faced worldwide highlight the opportunity we now have in our hands to build back a ‘Bluer Pacific’. Key to this is an environmental component in all post COVID-19 recovery plans across our Pacific islands region.

<https://www.sprep.org/news/aiming-for-a-bluer-pacific-in-post-covid-19-recovery-plans>

230) *June 5.* In the **PHILIPPINES**, May has long been a month of joy when farmers harvest their rice crop and celebrate the Pahiyas harvest festival. But this year, the mood was sombre. The food production and supply system also affected, thanks to the

coronavirus lockdown, and the economy frozen. As a result, millions of Filipinos, especially senior citizens, are now looking at an uncertain future.

[http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/06/philippines\\_senior\\_citizens\\_vulnerabilities\\_increase/](http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/06/philippines_senior_citizens_vulnerabilities_increase/)

231) *June 5.* Unleashing the potential of local community enterprises in the **CARIBBEAN** will help to ensure that COVID-19 economic recovery is fair, environmentally sustainable, low-carbon and resilient. This effort is supported by the release of *The Local Green-Blue Enterprise Radar: A tool for community enterprises* by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) in collaboration with the Green Economy Coalition (GEC).

<https://canari.org/uncategorized/canari-releases-the-lge-radar-toolkit/>

232) *June 5.* **MADAGASCAR** education minister has been fired over plans to order more than \$2m (£1.6m) worth of sweets for schoolchildren. Rijasoa Andriamanana said pupils would be given three lollipops each to mask the "bitter" aftertaste of an untested herbal remedy for coronavirus. The plan was called off after objections from Madagascar's president who is promoting the herbal tonic Covid-Organics as a coronavirus cure. Several African countries continue to import Covid-Organics believing it will help combat the virus, but the World Health Organization has warned that no proven cure exists.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52929925>

233) *June 5.* **GALAPAGOS** girds for life without tourism. As much of Ecuador went into lockdown against the coronavirus, scientists shipped out of the Galapagos, leaving important research activity frozen and the Pacific archipelago's tourism in deep crisis. Authorities are desperately hoping for a revival of the vital tourism industry - the main engine of the local economy - once visitors are allowed to fly in again from July 1. In the meantime, local officials say they have to take a leaf out of English naturalist Charles Darwin's book and "adapt to survive."

<https://www.france24.com/en/20200605-adapt-and-survive-as-galapagos-girds-for-life-without-tourism>

234) *June 6.* Surgical masks are washing up in growing quantities on the shores of **HONG KONG**, a city that has overwhelmingly embraced face coverings to fight the coronavirus.

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/06/06/anti-virus-face-masks-plague-hong-kongs-beaches/>

235) *June 6.* The failure of governments and central banks to set out a green recovery from the coronavirus crisis is threatening to derail vital UN climate talks aimed at staving off global catastrophe, campaigners have warned. The vast majority of the stimulus money so far announced by governments around the world is set to prop up the fossil fuel economy, according to analyst company Bloomberg New Energy Finance. More than half a trillion dollars worldwide – \$509bn (£395bn) – is to be poured into high-carbon industries, with no conditions to ensure they reduce their carbon output. Only about \$12.3bn is to go towards low-carbon industries, such as renewable energy, and a further \$18.5bn into high-carbon industries provided they achieve climate targets.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/06/covid-19-relief-for-fossil-fuel-industries-risks-green-recovery-plans>

236) *June 6.* Fears for future of **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** life amid online deliveries boom.

<https://www.scotsman.com/regions/inverness-highlands-and-islands/fears-future-scottish-island-life-amid-online-deliveries-boom-2876707>

237) *June 7.* **CUBA** sets example with successful programme to contain coronavirus. The World Health Organization has identified Latin America as the new centre for coronavirus pandemic, but over the last two months, cases in Cuba have fallen. Cubans are now 24 times less likely to catch the virus than Dominicans, 27 times less likely to catch it than Mexicans, and more than 70 times less likely to be infected than Brazilians. Desperate for tourist revenue, Cuba closed its border later than most other countries in the region. But ever since the communist-ruled island shut out the outside world in late March, it has thrown everything but the kitchen sink at the virus. The state has commanded tens of thousands of family doctors, nurses and medical students to “actively screen” all homes on the island for cases Covid-19 – every single day. That means that from Monday to Sunday, Dr Liz Caballero, and her medical students from El Vedado polyclinic in Havana must walk for miles, monitoring the 328 families on her beat.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/07/cuba-coronavirus-success-contact-tracing-isolation>

238) *June 7.* At the outset, Arranmore decided to shut down early as many of the **IRISH ISLANDS** did, worried about Covid-19 spreading like wildfire through a confined population. The islanders are now reaping the benefit of that policy now with no Covid infections, though there is still a way to go. Over 47% of Arranmore’s population is over 65 so if it did come in it would be a major threat to those with underlying health conditions.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/property/homeandoutdoors/arid-31003867.html>

239) *June 7.* Illegal fishing appeared to spike during the **PHILIPPINES** lockdown period as commercial fishers took advantage of reduced patrols to ply coastal waters that they’re prohibited from fishing in, satellite tracking data indicate.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/lockdown-allowed-illegal-fishing-to-spike-in-philippines-satellite-data-suggest/>

240) *June 8.* More than 16,000 **PACIFIC** people work in the maritime sector, many of whom remain stranded in foreign countries or on vessels as a result of COVID-19. Across the Pacific, local restrictions have severely curtailed access to supplies like fuel for local fishing boats, bringing to the fore the issue of food security and the need for longer term, sustainable solutions. In **FIJI**, traditional boatbuilding is making a resurgence as some communities are discovering the benefits of wind-powered canoes over outboard engines for inter-island transport over short distances. Due to COVID-19 the communities of Moturiki relied on wind-powered transport to provide food and to access the local health centre as they were unable to access fuel supplies during the lockdown period.

<https://www.globalissues.org/news/2020/06/08/26496>

241) *June 8.* **NEW ZEALAND** lifts almost all Covid restrictions, declaring the nation virus-free.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-52961539>

242) *June 8.* **KAUAI** is Hawaii's fourth largest island and is sometimes called the "Garden Island" thanks to the tropical rainforest covering much of its surface. This is the first installment of an eight-part series diving into the island's efforts for economic recovery. Broadband infrastructure, cleaning up the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and implementing a new model for visitor travel are among the ideas that can leverage Kauai's future post-coronavirus.

<https://www.thegardenisland.com/2020/06/08/hawaii-news/restarting-kauai/>

243) *June 8.* The COVID-19 pandemic has yielded unexpected environmental benefits, as wildlife explore urban streets and 2020 carbon emissions drop by the largest amount since World War II. But now researchers are wondering if a record hot and sunny start to the Arctic sea ice melt season could be linked to the coronavirus lockdown.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/climate-conundrum-could-covid-19-be-linked-to-early-arctic-ice-melt/>

244) *June 10.* **PACIFIC** island nations are urging Australia and New Zealand to include them in a planned travel "bubble", as flights across the region resume. The region has had very low numbers of Covid-19 infections – just 305 confirmed cases to date – due to its geographic isolation and the strict enforcement of border closures. Fiji and New Zealand this week declared themselves free of Covid-19, while other Pacific nations, including Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga, have successfully kept the virus from their shores altogether.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/11/pacific-countries-plead-for-inclusion-in-tasman-bubble-as-travel-restrictions-ease>

245) *June 10.* An organisation representing 900 west coast tourism businesses has told Scottish ministers that ferry services having to keep to two-metre social distancing rules "wipes out any tourism season for 2020" - warning that the "restrictions are completely unsustainable for **SCOTTISH ISLAND** life."

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18506580.coronavirus-social-distancing-ferry-restrictions-completely-unsustainable-island-life/>

246) *June 12.* With just over 1,200 cases and ten deaths, it may appear that **MADAGASCAR** has been spared the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic. But in the deep south of the country, the crisis is casting a shadow of despair over a drought-stricken land, pushing people deeper into destitution. The hunger crisis created by the drought and compounded by the pandemic could force people to lean even more heavily on nature; to impinge on forests and consume more wild meat to survive.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/one-two-punch-of-drought-pandemic-hits-madagascars-poor-and-its-wildlife/>

247) *June 13.* Island isolation over as Greece lets tourists back. The halt to global travel has proved devastating to a Mediterranean country such as Greece, where tourism makes up as much as 30% of economic output and commands up to one in five jobs. It welcomed a record 33 million visitors last year, and for many **GREEK ISLANDS** tourism is the main source of private sector employment. However, some island residents are now wondering if this could be an opportunity to move to a more sustainable tourism model.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53006794>

248) *June 14.* As coronavirus kicked mass tourism so many island destinations, including **HAWAII**, are looking at dozens of ideas for a green post-pandemic recovery. In some places, the shift away from mass tourism may be out of necessity rather than choice. On the **PHILIPPINES** island of Siargao, farmers quit the fields to become tour guides when visitor numbers surged about three years ago but since coronavirus hit, the government has encouraged people to return to farming, and many are doing so. The state has provided seeds and is buying up locally grown rice to distribute it back to the population.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-tourism-environment/as-pandemic-kicks-mass-tourism-islands-look-to-mend-ties-with-nature-idUSKBN23L01W>

249) *June 14.* Almost 11,000 German holidaymakers will begin arriving in the **BALEARIC ISLANDS** from Monday as part of a pilot scheme to help Spain reactivate its tourism sector, following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The “safe tourist corridors” initiative will serve as a trial run as Spain prepares to reopen its borders to EU countries and those in the Schengen area on 21 June. At the request of the Portuguese government, the land border with Spain will not open until 1 July.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/14/balearic-islands-prepare-to-welcome-11000-german-tourists>

250) *June 15.* The **INDONESIA** government has announced a list of 89 priority projects, tagged at \$100 billion, to jump-start the economy out of the current COVID-19-induced slump. To speed up the projects, the government has issued a new regulation on eminent domain that will make it easier to take over community lands, including those of indigenous groups, and degazette forests to allow them to be cleared, experts warn. The new regulation is the latest in a slate of deregulatory policies that conservationists, environmental activists and indigenous rights defenders say will harm the country’s biodiversity, its climate commitments, and most vulnerable communities. Among the projects are nickel smelters that are applying to dump their toxic waste into the sea; a high-speed railway line that’s part of the China-backed Belt and Road Initiative; and a rice estate spanning 900,000 hectares (2.2 million acres) on carbon-dense peatlands.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/indonesia-national-strategic-project-infrastructure-road-railway-dam-smelter-nickel-peatland/>

251) *June 15.* The **ISLE OF MAN** has become the first place in the British Isles to scrap social distancing and embrace what the chief minister called the “new normal”.

The island has seen no new cases of coronavirus since 20 May, leading the government to dispense with most of its lockdown restrictions.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-53049117>

252) *June 16*. The coronavirus pandemic is “just a fire drill” for what is likely to follow from the climate crisis and the protests over racial injustice around the world show the need to tie together social equality, environmental sustainability and health, the UN’s sustainable business chief has said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/15/covid-19-pandemic-is-fire-drill-for-effects-of-climate-crisis-says-un-official>

253) *June 16*. Arctic tourism, such as cruise ship voyages off **SVALBARD**, has been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. But officials in Russia are optimistic about the prospects of a post-pandemic jump in Arctic tourism.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/moscow-aims-for-a-massive-post-covid-boost-in-arctic-tourism/>

254) *June 17*. Pandemics such as coronavirus are the result of humanity’s destruction of nature, according to leaders at the UN, WHO and WWF International, and the world has been ignoring this stark reality for decades. The illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade as well as the devastation of forests, and other wild places were still the driving forces behind the increasing number of diseases leaping from wildlife to humans. The leaders are calling for a green and healthy recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular by reforming destructive farming and unsustainable diets.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/17/pandemics-destruction-nature-un-who-legislation-trade-green-recovery>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/17/coronavirus-warning-broken-relationship-nature>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/publications/covid19-urgent-call-to-protect-people-and-nature>

255) *June 17*. With the COVID-19 pandemic contained following a strict two-month lockdown, **SRI LANKA** relaxed restrictions in late May 2020. But now, several farming communities are facing a second crisis in the form of hungry grasshoppers destroying their crops.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/in-sri-lanka-crop-destroying-insects-follow-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

256) *June 17*. Farmers help save **PACIFIC** economies as Covid-19 brings tourism to halt. Pacific Islanders have been receiving seeds and encouraged to start their own backyard gardens to be food self-sufficient. A barter system was put in place in Fiji, so residents could keep eating a wide variety of foods. And, an unintended consequence of border closures, reliance on imported foods fell in favour of fresh, local foods, a welcome development in a region with some of the world's highest rates of Type 2 diabetes and heart diseases.



<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/419193/opinion-farmers-help-save-pacific-economies-as-covid-19-brings-tourism-to-halt>

[http://www.fao.org/uploads/pics/COVID-19 impacts on food systems in PICs CRFS .pdf](http://www.fao.org/uploads/pics/COVID-19%20impacts%20on%20food%20systems%20in%20PICs%20CRFS.pdf)

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/news/detail/en/c/1278570/>

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca8994en/CA8994EN.pdf>

257) *June 17*. Of all the calamities that befell tourists as the coronavirus took hold, those involving cruise ships stood apart. Contagion at sea inspired a special horror, as pleasure palaces turned into prison hulks, and rumours of infection on board spread between fetid cabins via WhatsApp. Trapped in close proximity to their fellow passengers, holidaymakers experienced the distress of being both victims and agents of infection, as a succession of ports refused them entry. Besides the cruise industry this detailed article also covered nature-based tourism with reference to **INDONESIA**.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/jun/18/end-of-tourism-coronavirus-pandemic-travel-industry>

258) *June 18*. The confirmation of new Covid-19 cases in New Zealand and the associated administrative bungles has dampened some enthusiasm for a travel bubble with the **PACIFIC**.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/419340/enthusiasm-for-nz-travel-bubble-into-pacific-dampens>

259) *June 19*. **MALLORCA** welcomes a more sedate breed of German tourist following a pilot programme to reactivate Spain's tourism sector.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/19/mallorca-welcomes-a-more-sedate-breed-of-german-tourist>

260) *June 19*. Women in **MALTA** seeking an abortion during the pandemic are being forced to procure their own miscarriage or keep an unwanted pregnancy, even when the child has a severe abnormality. It is estimated that between 300 and 400 women from Malta travel abroad for an abortion each year, with the UK often their country of choice. But with flights restricted and quarantine rules in place, women have been unable to leave the country and some have taken illegal abortion pills at home in lockdown.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/19/charities-report-rise-in-maltese-requests-for-abortion-pills-during-lockdown>

261) *June 19*. After a three-month-long closure in an effort to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, **SRI LANKA** opened its key national parks to the public on June 15 under strict health guidelines. Vehicle numbers entering parks have been restricted to prevent overcrowding of popular wilderness areas, and e-ticketing has been introduced to reduce physical contact. Experts have also called for urgent revision in visitation procedures to improve visitor behavior and limit numbers to minimize disturbances to park animals.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/sri-lanka-reopens-national-parks-post-lockdown-with-strict-guidelines/>

262) *June 19*. The air quality in the **PHILIPPINES** capital region is returning to its usual noxious levels as COVID-19 lockdown measures are loosened up. But this backslide into business-as-usual can be preempted if local governments adapt existing measures and transition to cleaner energy technologies, a new report says.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/as-lockdown-ends-manilas-dirty-air-is-back-it-doesnt-have-to-stay/>

263) *June 19*. Entire season in jeopardy for **SVALBARD** expedition cruising.

<https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/travel/2020/05/entire-season-jeopardy-svalbard-expedition-cruising>

264) *June 19*. It had been a triumphant story of national unity and political leadership combining to vanquish a virus that still plagues most nations on the planet. But just a week after **NEW ZEALAND** celebrated having rid the country of COVID-19 and the government lifted all restrictions on daily life except controls on entering the country, the one vulnerability in its defences – its borders – was dramatically laid bare. The failure to test returning travellers before they left quarantine, and reports of slipshod standards at the hotels where they are placed in government-managed isolation, threatened political fallout for Jacinda Ardern's government, which was heralded worldwide for having flattened the Covid-19 infection curve with a swift, early lockdown of the country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/19/from-celebration-to-dismay-the-week-covid-19-re-emerged-in-new-zealand>

265) *June 19*. Students and healthcare services on **MAINE ISLAND** communities stay connected. One of the elements of this adaptation has been through the use distance learning technology and telemedicine also depends on quality broadband connections.

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2020/06/19/students-and-healthcare-services-maines-island-communities-stay-connected>

266) *June 21*. The **INDONESIA** government has lifted a moratorium on the release of captive wild animals, imposed earlier this year as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus into wildlife populations. Orangutan rescue centers have welcomed the decision as they struggle with crowded facilities and rising operational costs but say they won't release any orangutans anytime soon, as the great apes are likely vulnerable to the coronavirus.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/indonesia-resumes-release-of-captive-wildlife-amid-covid-19/>

267) *June 23*. Cabinet to examine Covid-19 visitor restrictions to offshore **IRISH ISLANDS** but it is understood that while many businesses are happy with the early opening, there is resistance from residents who want to stay closed for a longer period.



<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/cabinet-to-examine-covid-19-visitor-restrictions-to-offshore-islands-1.4285684>

268) *June 24.* As Spain welcomes back tourists, the tiny Balearic island of **FORMENTERA**, sometimes called Ibiza's sister island, finds 'hearts divided' between hope and anxiety.

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/as-spain-welcomes-back-tourists-this-tiny-island-finds-hearts-divided-with-hope-and-anxiety-2020-06-24>

269) *June 24.* In April and May, Malama **KAUAI** helped deliver 6,000 bags of local produce to families in need. The money from those purchases went to local farmers. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, many nonprofits and organizations have centered their responses on helping the community.

<https://www.thegardenisland.com/2020/06/24/hawaii-news/malama-kauai-connecting-farmers-to-the-community/>

270) *June 25.* Tourists who test positive for coronavirus while on holiday on **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** will be expected to travel home, potentially using special isolation facilities on board ferries to stop the further spread of the virus.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/island-ferry-operators-asked-provide-isolation-facilities-positive-covid-19-tourists-2894859>

271) *June 25.* Though **MADAGASCAR** officially has just under 1,800 reported infections and 16 deaths from COVID-19, the pandemic's socioeconomic effects will be catastrophic for the country, the U.N. has warned. One tangible impact has been the fire season, which has started early and is likely to be fiercer this year as rural residents deprived of tourism revenue, employment opportunities and access to food markets turn to the forest to survive. The environment ministry registered 52,000 forest fire incidents from January until the start of June, with the western flank of the country, which hosts its unique dry forests, being the worst-affected.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/in-madagascars-dry-forests-covid-19-sparks-an-intense-early-fire-season/>

272) *June 25.* While the coronavirus continues its deadly progress in countries and cities around the world, some **SIDS** in the Commonwealth are cautiously lifting lockdowns and relaxing their preventive measures. In these uncertain times, it is more critical than ever for SIDS - more appropriately labeled as "big ocean states" due to their huge marine territories - to manage their greatest natural resource sustainably and strategically. As pointed by Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, this means reforming national development strategies to support robust blue and green economies that will deliver a lasting shift to sustainability and resilience in the long term. The post-coronavirus era is a time for big ocean states to "build back bluer" and put into action innovative and resilient solutions that utilize their vast resources in a way that will benefit generations to come.

<https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-now-is-the-time-for-big-ocean-states-to-build-back-bluer-97553>

[https://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/20\\_HLP\\_Report\\_COVID\\_Blue\\_Recovery.pdf](https://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/20_HLP_Report_COVID_Blue_Recovery.pdf)

<https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/THT%20163%20FINAL.pdf>

273) *June 25.* A cautious approach is required to reopening the **WESTERN ISLES** of Scotland to tourists as lockdown eases, some islanders have warned. The islands have seen just eight confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the outbreak began - the latest just this week. Health chiefs have credited lockdown restrictions and islanders' adherence to social distancing measures for there being so few cases. But with tourism due to resume in the coming weeks, and staycations expected to be popular, some in the isles are urging further caution in the days and weeks ahead.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-53177039>

274) *June 26.* **HAWAII** residents are facing economic devastation not seen since the Great Depression. Federal stimulus funds are helping to soften the blow but the \$1,200 payments to individuals, and the \$600 weekly increase in unemployment benefits are set to run dry by the end of July. What would a Green New Deal look like on the Big Island, led by local people and the county government? What would it mean to “think B.I.G.” (Big Island Green)?

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/06/think-b-i-g-think-big-island-green/>

275) *June 26.* Outgoing Gaeltacht minister Sean Kyne has expressed disappointment at the Government decision to approve early re-opening of offshore **IRISH ISLANDS** to visitors from Monday. Two Aran islands – Inis Oírr and Inis Mór – held surveys which overwhelmingly rejected an early reopening. A number of other islands have limited health facilities, lack of provision for public toilets, and limited scope for social distancing on piers during busy ferry berthing periods.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-31007740.html>

<https://www.rte.ie/news/connacht/2020/0708/1152161-aran-islands/>

276) *June 27.* The **ALAND ISLANDS** in northern Europe may come into its own in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Cruise-ferry companies -whose revenue models are heavily-reliant on shopping and restaurant sales - are looking to this archipelago in the Baltic Sea to refloat their duty-free business thanks of the islands' unique tax treatment within the European Union. Aland is a province of Finland lying to its west, with a population of less than 30,000. For historical reasons the official language is Swedish but, more importantly, it is autonomous.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinrozario/2020/06/27/how-a-tiny-baltic-archipelago-could-kick-start-a-retail-revival/?sh=4018ce257af6>

277) *June 27.* **KANGAROO ISLAND** struggles to recover amid bushfire grief and COVID-19. To date, \$14m in government money has been distributed to help those on Kangaroo Island rebuild farms and business or cover loss of income. Another \$2.29m in donations to the SA Bushfire Appeal has been distributed to 645 people. Meanwhile, what was left of the 119 homes and 106 other structures that burned have only just been pulled down and hauled away in recent weeks. The process was delayed when 106 sites were identified as containing asbestos – a problem on an

island where everything has to come in by boat. Now that is done the island has a clean slate, giving the community the chance to make plans for the future while coming to terms with grief, loss and survivor's guilt. Those in the tourism business are watching as interstate travel begins to open back up and authorities talk about setting up intra-regional flights to places like New Zealand.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/28/shell-shock-kangaroo-island-struggles-to-recover-amid-bushfire-grief-and-covid-19>

278) *June 28.* After months of strict Covid-19 lockdowns and resolutely closed borders, **FIJI** is open – for billionaires. The Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, has announced the country is looking to attract “VIPs” to help restore Fiji’s paralysed tourism-dependent economy. He also said the country would welcome travellers arriving by yacht who were prepared to spend 14 days at sea – or make up the balance in quarantine in Fiji.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/28/escape-the-pandemic-in-paradise-fiji-opens-its-borders-seeking-billionaires>

279) *June 29.* Without strong support, the sudden and unexpected fall in tourism could devastate the economies of **SIDS**, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has warned. Since tourism is a strong socio-economic pillar of many SIDS, the impact that COVID-19 is having on the sector places millions of jobs and businesses at risk, with women and informal workers the most vulnerable. In the second of its Briefing Note series on Tourism and COVID-19, UNWTO has highlighted the severe impact the pandemic could have on livelihoods in these destinations. According to the latest data from the United Nations specialized agency, tourism accounts for more than 30% of total exports in the majority of the 38 SIDS. In some countries, this proportion is as high as 90%, making them especially vulnerable to falling tourist numbers. Such a major shock translates into a massive loss of jobs and a sharp decline in foreign exchange and tax revenues, which curbs public spending capacity and the ability to deploy necessary measures to support livelihoods through the crisis, UNWTO further warns.

<https://www.unwto.org/news/small-island-destinations-in-critical-need-of-urgent-support-as-tourism-plunges>

280) *June 30.* The latest figures are a wake-up call: the global Covid-19 crisis isn't close to over. It took more than three months for the world to record 1 million cases of Covid-19. The latest 1 million cases were clocked up in a week, taking the total to more than 10 million. On Sunday 28 June, the world recorded more than 190,000 new cases in a single day, a new record. It is time to look again at the numbers and face the facts. South Korea and **TAIWAN** are no longer “emerging”. They have emerged. Indeed, they have overtaken much of the west in terms of affluence, technological sophistication and the basic public security they offer their fortunate citizens.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/30/covid-19-global-health-crisis-solutions-america-india-africa>

281) *June 30.* Despite the tourism and fisheries sectors’ susceptibility to shocks, ESCAP’s latest report, the Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report: Leveraging Ocean Resources for the Sustainable Development of **SIDS**, emphasizes fisheries and tourism will remain drivers of sustainable development.

They are among the most important sectors in their contribution to output and their importance for livelihoods. In the short term, addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic must take priority, but the long-term global context will usher in an era supportive of tourism development in Asia-Pacific SIDS. This is due to an increasing demand from the emerging middle class of developing Asia and the ageing society in the developed countries on the Pacific Rim.

<https://www.unescap.org/op-ed/sustainable-tourism-and-fisheries-key-growth-post-covid-pacific>

282) *July 1.* **INDONESIA** is reopening dozens of conservation areas to local and foreign tourists after months of closure, even as the number of COVID-19 infections in the country continues to climb. The authorities earlier this year closed all such areas in a bid to prevent coronavirus from spreading to wildlife. But the closure has had a devastating financial impact on local communities that depend on tourism business linked to the parks.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/07/indonesia-reopens-national-parks-to-tourists-as-covid-19-cases-rise/>

283) *July 1.* **INDONESIA** government is allocating \$195 million from the state budget to subsidize producers of palm oil biodiesel, justifying the move as necessary to boosting the economy out of a pandemic-induced slump. Campaigners have blasted the move, noting that the fund through which the money will be channeled is meant to empower small oil palm farmers and not subsidize the giant multinationals that produce biodiesel.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/07/indonesia-subsidy-palm-oil-biodiesel-producers-smallholders-b30/>

284) *July 2.* 'Civil war' breaks out over arrival of tourists to **SCOTTISH ISLANDS**.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18554927.civil-war-breaks-arrival-tourists-islands/>

285) *July 2.* **SEYCHELLES** promotes safe travel in effort to restart tourism.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/5240/seychelles-promotes-safe-travel-in-effort-to-restart-tourism>

286) *July 5.* **SRI LANKA** authorities are insisting on cremation for coronavirus victims - a practice forbidden by Islam. The nation's minority Muslim community argue it's the latest step in a pattern of discrimination by the majority Sinhalese population. A petition against the cremation rule has been accepted by the country's Supreme Court, which will begin hearing the case on 13 July. Many Muslims in Sri Lanka feel they have been demonised since April 2019, when Islamists linked to little-known local groups targeted high-end hotels and churches in Colombo and in the east of the country, killing more than 250 people in a spate of devastating attacks.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-53295551>

287) *July 5.* Calls for ferry clarity as **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** prepare to welcome visitors. There are islands and then there are double islands. The leader of Orkney

Islands Council has to figure out how to maintain lifeline services to what he calls “our double insular places, the ones that take two journeys to get to”. His concern is that the need for social distancing has reduced capacity on the ferries which dart between Orkney’s outer islands. And that means tourists who book could take the seats of locals who do not.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18562192.calls-ferry-clarity-islands-prepare-welcome-visitors/>

288) *July 6.* The world is treating the health and economic symptoms of the coronavirus pandemic but not the environmental cause, according to the authors of a UN report. As a result, a steady stream of diseases can be expected to jump from animals to humans in coming years, they say.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/06/coronavirus-world-treating-symptoms-not-cause-pandemics-un-report>

289) *July 6.* Milder weather is expected to bring about a less severe forest fire season across **INDONESIA** this year compared to 2019. But cutbacks to fire-prevention measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and deregulation could still see large amounts of haze generated, threatening an already precarious public health situation in the region.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/07/covid-19-indonesia-forest-fire-haze-dry-season/>

290) *July 6.* Like most countries around the world, **BERMUDA** has been struck by the catastrophic impact of Covid-19. Bermuda's only daily newspaper, The Royal Gazette, published a 22-point plan to economic recovery written by Cole Simons in his capacity as the Shadow Minister of Economic Development that he hopes the government will consider.

<https://www.royalgazette.com/other/article/20200706/a-22-point-plan-to-economic-recovery/>

291) *July 7.* **INDONESIA** agriculture minister has been condemned by health experts for claiming that a necklace made from eucalyptus can help prevent transmission of Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/07/indonesia-minister-in-row-over-eucalyptus-necklace-covid-19-claim>

292) *July 7.* Ambassador Lois M Young, who is Belize’s Permanent Representative at the United Nations and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), writes that ‘Innovative Financial Approaches Key to Unleash **SIDS** Economic Potential’.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/07/innovative-financial-approaches-key-unleash-sids-economic-potential/>

293) *July 8.* As Spain scrambles to save its vital tourism industry from the threat of a blank year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some sense an opportunity to change perceptions about Spanish holidays and start a move upmarket that has been long on the agenda. If tourism is vitally important to the Spanish economy, accounting for 12% of GDP, nowhere is it more crucial than in the **BALEARIC ISLANDS**, where it

represents 35% of the region's economic output. Not everyone is sighing in relief at the return of tourists to Majorca and the other islands. Local environmentalists criticise the over-dependence on a sector that has transformed the archipelago's landscape, while creating employment that is largely low-paid and seasonal in nature as property prices and even rents skyrocket beyond the means of most employees.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53248728>

294) *July 8.* **CHATHAM ISLANDS** tourism on the rise as Covid travel restrictions change Kiwis' plans.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/go-nz-chathams-islands-tourism-on-the-rise-as-covid-travel-restrictions-change-kiwis-plans/44T2VQVA3SY6FMY3DX4LHYTXGU/>

295) *July 8.* **PUERTO RICO**, still reeling from old disasters, is slammed by COVID-19. Gov. Wanda Vázquez was the first governor in the nation to order businesses to close and people to stay home. Experts say that her quick action helped stave off an even worse medical crisis on the island. But the pandemic has nonetheless plunged Puerto Rico into its fifth dire emergency in three years, one that the government has struggled to manage.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/us/coronavirus-puerto-rico-economy-unemployment.html>

296) *July 8.* With COVID-19 lockdowns, Brazil's capacity to monitor for illegal fishing has plummeted. Many on the ground say people have been quick to take advantage of the situation such as in the **ABROLHOS ARCHIPELAGO** Marine National Park, one of the most biodiverse zones in the South Atlantic.

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/in-covids-shadow-illegal-fishing-flourishes/>

297) *July 8.* The **SEYCHELLES** National Park Authority goes traditional as part of its covid response by allowing a local farmer on La Digue to harvest pig yam (a confirmed invasive species) for animal feed, so its removal is assisting SNPA with its restoration work of the reserve; and elsewhere to utilise timber that would otherwise go to waste for charcoal burning thus cutting down on importation of such products.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/5302/snpa-goes-traditional-as-part-of-its-covid-response>

298) *July 8.* Youth resilience to COVID-19: indigenous knowledge in **TUVALU**.

<https://devpolicy.org/youth-resilience-to-covid-19-indigenous-knowledge-in-tuvalu-20200708/>

<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/reducing-covid-19-risk-through-population-relocation-and-closed-borders-effects-pandemic>

299) *July 9.* How a single doctor fights to keep COVID-19 from reaching his rural town. Anthony Cortez protects the 56,000 residents of Bambang, **PHILIPPINES**, through contact tracing, quarantine -and gossip.



<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/07/how-single-doctor-fights-covid-19-reaching-his-rural-town-philippines/>

300) *July 9.* For many Marshallese, the pandemic poses a tragic irony. Thousands of them left the **MARSHALL ISLANDS** - a string of 1,156 islands and islets spread across 750,000 square miles of ocean - to seek better jobs and a healthier life in the United States, where they can work without visas. Now they find themselves facing a lethal crisis while their distant homeland so far remains free of COVID-19.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/coronavirus-clobbers-marshall-island-communities-120045272.html?>

301) *July 10.* A test project using powerful drones to fly urgent medical samples from isolated **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** is being expanded this winter after successful recent trials. The tests will involve flying blood and fluid samples from Hebridean islands such as Coll and Tiree to hospital labs on the mainland in a fraction of the time needed to take them by road and ferry.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/10/nhs-expands-drone-transport-of-samples-from-scottish-islands>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-55733908>

302) *July 10.* It's the typical wet, winter in New Zealand that should bring peak season for the **COOK ISLANDS**. Instead, Rarotonga resorts are on the brink of collapse and in danger of taking the islands' tourism-reliant economy with them. Travel restrictions from New Zealand - the Cooks Islands' only air link - are strangling the country's tourism sector. Operators and residents on the Covid-free islands say this is being done needlessly. An end to wage subsidies looms at the end of September, and the tourism sector is begging for an exception to New Zealand's overseas travel restrictions.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/to-deny-cook-islands-travel-bubble-is-criminal-tourism-operators/SOP5RQYODA2CB4SBEQ2G2E25AM/>

303) *July 10.* The Covid-19 pandemic is the “job-killer of the century”, Fiji’s prime minister has said, as economies across the **PACIFIC** face collapse from economic and travel shutdowns, exacerbating existing illnesses, and potentially driving people into hunger.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/11/job-killer-of-the-century-economies-of-pacific-islands-face-collapse-over-covid-19>

304) *July 12.* Swept in by the tide, heaps of plastic bottles, styrofoam and broken fishing gear accumulate on **MAINE ISLANDS** each year. To clean up this mess, the Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) usually organizes annual trips, filling boats with volunteers armed with trash bags. But this year, COVID-19 put a halt to that program, and MITA - like many nonprofit conservation organizations - has had to rethink how it operates. As a solution, the organization launched the new Call to Oars initiative this spring, inviting all recreational boaters to adopt Maine islands for the season and clean them up. So far, dozens of boaters have answered the call, logging more than 100 island cleanups.



<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/07/12/act-out/with-annual-clean-ups-canceled-island-group-recruited-boaters-to-keep-maine-islands-clean-this-summer/>

305) *July 12.* Attempts to control a growing coronavirus outbreak in **INDONESIA**, the worst-hit country in south-east Asia, are being hampered by a lack of testing, poor communication from the government and the promotion of bogus cures, health experts have warned. The country has so far recorded more than 74,000 cases and 3,535 deaths from the virus, though it is feared that this could be a vast underestimate. While testing rates have improved, they remain among the lowest in the world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/12/indonesia-is-failing-to-control-coronavirus-outbreak-warn-experts-testing-government-messages-bogus-cures>

306) *July 12.* The governor of **OKINAWA ISLAND** in Japan has demanded that a United States military commander take tougher prevention measures and have more transparency after officials were told more than 60 marines at two bases have been infected with the coronavirus over the past few days.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/12/okinawa-demands-answers-from-us-after-61-marines-contract-coronavirus>

307) *July 13.* Investing in the marine environment offers many coastal states the possibility of a “blue recovery” from the coronavirus crisis, according to a report setting out substantial economic benefits from ocean conservation. Ending over fishing and allowing stocks to recover while ensuring fish farms operate on a sustainable basis would generate benefits of about \$6.7tn (£5.3tn) over the next 30 years, according to an assessment of ocean economics by the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. The panel is made up of 14 serving world leaders, co-chaired by Norway and **PALAU**, and is supported by the UN.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/13/oceans-panel-presses-coastal-states-to-invest-in-blue-recovery>

308) *July 13.* While most of the UK grapples with the gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions while still tackling the coronavirus outbreak, the three Crown Dependencies, the **ISLE OF MAN**, and Bailiwicks of **JERSEY** and **GUERNSEY** are experiencing near to normal life. The three self-administering islands have been free to take their own approach to subduing the outbreak since the first cases hit in March, spelling out a different kind of lockdown for its residents – and frictions between some of the islands.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/coronavirus-jersey-guernsey-isle-of-man-air-bridge-quarantine-rules-519805>

309) *July 14.* New Zealand’s first travel bubble could be on its way after the **COOK ISLANDS** deputy prime minister said his country was ready to welcome tourist flights as early as next week.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/14/new-zealand-and-cook-islands-work-on-travel-bridge-to-beat-tourism-slump>

310) *July 14.* When Europeans retreated into their homes to observe strict stay-at-home rules to contain the coronavirus, dolphins and whales on the Mediterranean

coast basked and thrived in a hitherto unknown calm. But the return of tourists, noisy boats and heavy sea transport with the end of lockdowns in France and other Mediterranean littoral countries has signalled the return of danger and harm caused by human activity for underwater creatures. The lockdown brought maritime traffic to an almost complete standstill, giving dolphins and whales the opportunity to explore areas from which they are normally kept at bay by tourists. All scientific studies were put on hold in the Mediterranean during lockdown, but marine drone manufacturer Sea Proven got the necessary authorisation and funds from Prince Albert II of Monaco to continue observations in the **PELAGOS SANCTUARY**, a marine area protected by Italy, Monaco and France. The sanctuary covers an area of 87,500 sq. km and 2,022 km of coast. It extends across the waters of a number of islands, including Corsica and northern Sardinia as well as smaller islands such as the islands of Hyères, Liguria, the Tuscan Archipelago and the Strait of Bonifacio.

<https://phys.org/news/2020-07-paradise-regained-lost-med-mammals.html>

311) *July 15*. Tackling the global nature crisis could create 400m jobs and \$10tn (£8tn) in business value each year by 2030, according to a report published by the World Economic Forum. The report warns that when the world recovers from the coronavirus pandemic there can be no business-as-usual, with today's destruction of the natural world threatening over half of global GDP.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/15/nature-led-coronavirus-recovery-could-create-10tn-a-year-says-wef>

312) *July 15*. "You've been through a lot this year and it looks like you need the perfect place to let your frustrations out. Somewhere big, vast, and untouched: It looks like you need Iceland." These are the words of a new advertising campaign from Promote **ICELAND** that invites people around the world to scream out their lockdown frustrations. The screams are recorded via the campaign's website and "released" into Iceland's landscapes via speakers set up across the country.

<https://www.icelandreview.com/travel/iceland-invites-you-to-scream-out-your-lockdown-frustrations/>

313) *July 16*. Businesses on the **SCOTTISH ISLAND** of Arran have warned about the impact on tourism if travel to and from the island remains difficult for visitors. The ferries, operated by CalMac, cannot carry as many passengers as normal due to rules on physical distancing.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-53430330>

314) *July 16*. The High Level Political Forum 2020 at the UN finishes up this week, and the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States has called on leaders to address "debt sustainability" to help us survive climate and covid shocks. Specifically, we are calling on the international financial institutions and community to work with us to:

- re-examine their eligibility criteria for **SIDS** access to concessional loans and grants.
- suspend debt service on public external debt – or extend temporary standstills on external public debt for at least a two-year period, for those that request it.

- allow private creditors to join in debt suspension initiatives to ease the strain on official sources of debt relief and provide a more holistic management of the crisis.
- negotiate in the medium term, a multilateral debt workout mechanism to reduce external debt to a sustainable level.
- address the pressing challenges of de-risking and maintaining critical correspondent banking relationships in SIDS. In our efforts to bolster future economic stability, it is imperative that SIDS can effectively engage in the global financial system.
- in the longer term, undertake a comprehensive SIDS vulnerability assessment.
- design a toolkit of alternative solutions which explores innovative financial instruments such as debt swap mechanisms, to contribute to long-term and comprehensive solutions towards debt sustainability.

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/07/16/small-islands-need-debt-shakeup-survive-climate-covid-shocks/>

315) *July 16*. As coronavirus cases climb in California and many U.S. states, some Pacific Island nations have safely ridden out the storm. The **MARSHALL ISLANDS** is still COVID-19 free. “We saw the threat and took action early,” said Jack Niedenthal, secretary of Health for the mid-Pacific island nation, describing the island nation’s March 3 travel ban, which prevented incoming travelers from across the globe. The Marshallese government had banned travelers from China several weeks earlier.

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-07-16/as-covid-19-cases-climb-in-the-u-s-there-are-still-none-in-the-marshall-islands>

316) *July 17*. The economic impact of coronavirus is a “tinderbox” that will drive civil unrest and instability in developing countries in the second half of 2020, according to new analysis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/17/protests-predicted-to-surge-globally-as-covid-19-drives-unrest>

317) *July 17*. The **LAKSHADWEEP** archipelago, with a total land area of 32 sq km and home to about 70,000 people, has not reported a single COVID-19 case so far though cases are rising in other parts of the country. Since the lockdown came into effect on March 23, no one had been allowed to reach the islands without a seven-day quarantine followed by a COVID-19 test, all at the expense of the island administration.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/an-island-that-has-kept-coronavirus-at-bay/article32116812.ece>

318) *July 17*. For anyone tired of dodging coronavirus, sick of arguments over masks or just fed up with the home office grind, **BERMUDA** has an offer: a year at the beach. The British Overseas Territory of 64,000, known for its pink sand shorelines and balmy climate, is offering one-year, renewable residency certificates for remote

workers and post-secondary students. It's pitching itself as a refuge as Covid-19 cases continue to climb in other countries and upend rules about where people can work.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-17/bermuda-pitches-island-life-as-escape-from-pandemic-madness>

319) *July 18*. Residents on the **ISLE OF EIGG** have asked visitors not to come to the island until September. Tourism has been opened up across the rest of Scotland, but islanders said they wanted to protect "elderly and vulnerable" residents. The ferry also has reduced capacity and the islanders say priority must be given to trades people and islanders wishing to visit loved ones.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-53458547>

320) *July 18*. As the world reels from the impact of COVID-19, evidence from the Amazon shows that the pandemic disproportionately affects remote indigenous people. Given this, a grave danger looms over the **ANDAMAN ISLANDS**, which are home to four historically isolated communities, and all of them belong to particularly vulnerable tribal groups.

<https://www.thehindu.com/society/as-covid-19-reaches-the-andaman-islands-the-story-of-the-great-andamanese-tribe-should-be-a-wake-up-call-for-administrators/article32122699.ece>

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/environment/covid-19-threatens-indigenous-peoples-of-andaman-and-nicobar-70633>

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/covid-19.html>

321) *July 19*. Social distancing during a pandemic is not so much of a problem if you have your own private island to escape to. The sale of an **IRISH ISLAND** attracted interest "from all corners of the globe," according to the agents who helped seal the deal. The buyer was not alone in shopping for a private island during the pandemic. The coronavirus outbreak appears to have sparked international interest in this very niche market, according to German businessman Farhad Vladi who has been in the trade for more than 50 years.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-53430666>

322) *July 19*. The number of new cases of coronavirus rose by almost 260,000 in 24 hours - the largest single-day increase since the pandemic began, the World Health Organization said on Saturday.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53454558>

323) *July 20*. Some 11.8 million visitors flooded **MALLORCA** in 2019, dwarfing the local population of under a million. The cost of living has skyrocketed, a trend aggravated by the conversion of family homes into vacation rentals. Environmental impacts have been grave. Tourism pushed water usage to the brink. Developments chewed into fragile hillsides, and planes plus vast fleets of rental cars generated air pollution that left some locals in masks long before the pandemic began. For now, Mallorca has largely escaped the worst of the virus, with under 2,300 confirmed cases as of July 17. And despite the terrible toll of the pandemic on both lives and

livelihoods globally, some residents are wondering if it might also present a chance to remake tourism on a smaller scale that favours meaningful encounters over the masses.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/photography/2020/07/mass-tourism-has-troubled-mallorca-for-decades-can-it-change-0>

324) *July 21*. Local authorities on the Swedish island of **GOTLAND** have recruited knights from regional medieval re-enactment group Torneamentum to help curb the risk of the coronavirus spreading. The so-called 'Covid Knights' are set to visit some of Gotland's most popular sites this summer, including beaches and the medieval town of Visby, carrying signs with messages such as "keep your distance", "stay at home if you have symptoms" and "wash your hands often".

<https://www.thelocal.se/20200721/swedish-island-recruits-medieval-knights-to-help-people-keep-a-distance>

325) *July 22*. On **FIJI** locals are adapting a communal kava drinking ceremony to prevent coronavirus transmission by hosting virtual events on Facebook Live. Participants traditionally sit in a circle, close to each other, and one after the other, they take turns to drink the beverage. Fijians scoop the kava from a large communal bowl, tanoa, into bowls made from coconut shells, called bilo. They may use their own individual bilo or pass one bilo around, rinsing it in a water bowl in between participants.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2020/07/22/how-pandemic-changed-kava-drink-sharing-among-fijians>

326) *July 22*. Hospitals in **MADAGASCAR** have warned they are overwhelmed after a spike in coronavirus cases in a country where the president has been promoting a herbal drink to treat the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53499803>

327) *July 23*. Deserted beaches, empty bars: Covid-19 devastates **THAILAND** tourist islands like Koh Samui. About 40 million tourists flocked to Thailand last year, drawn by its spectacular coastlines, ornate temples and famous cuisine. Yet in 2020, the country will struggle to attract even a quarter of that number, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/23/deserted-beaches-empty-bars-covid-19-devastates-thailands-tourist-islands>

328) *July 23*. A **MAINE ISLAND** lobsterwoman Julie Eaton fights for her livelihood. Today, in the spring of 2020, Maine's lobstermen – and women – face pronounced challenges: an ageing fleet, a bait shortage, regulations that restrict vertical fishing lines in order to protect endangered right whales, and a decrease in trade with China after Trump's trade war. "The pandemic is killing us," Eaton who lives on Deer Isle, and fishes Penobscot Bay tells me. "It's a terrible thing. We have no market, but lots of lobsters." Maine fishers confront other hurdles: working docks are disappearing, and the opioid crisis has reduced the reliability of crew. Climate change – the great accelerant – is warming the Gulf of Maine and shifting lobster populations north.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/23/maine-lobsterwoman-coronavirus-climate-change>

329) *July 23*. Most countries in the Caribbean have done a great job of containing the COVID-19 pandemic, with a few notable exceptions, namely, **HAITI** and the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**. A University of Oxford study highlighted **TRINIDAD** as being among the most successful. However, management of wildlife and illegal hunting in that country remains ineffective and might lead to an outbreak of another zoonotic disease.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/07/trinidad-skilfully-handles-covid-19-falls-short-wildlife/>

<https://www.looptt.com/content/deyalsingh-oxford-university-report-puts-tt-excellent-light>

330) *July 23*. The cost of preventing further pandemics over the next decade by protecting wildlife and forests would equate to just 2% of the estimated financial damage caused by Covid-19, according to a new analysis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/23/preventing-next-pandemic-fraction-cost-covid-19-economic-fallout>

331) *July 23*. The rumble generated by humanity took a big dive during the Covid lockdowns. Everything we do - from driving our cars to operating our factories - produces ground motions that can be detected by seismometers. An international team of researchers says this noise fell by up to half when coronavirus restrictions were enforced.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-53518751>

332) *July 23*. COVID-19 cases worldwide have surpassed 15 million, and nearly 620,000 deaths. On Thursday, the World Health Organization urged people everywhere to play a part in preventing further spread of the disease, warning that there will be no return to “the old normal”.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068941>

333) *July 24*. Eco-tourism is the way of the post-covid future for the ‘blue’ **PACIFIC**.

<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL2007/S00153/eco-tourism-is-the-way-of-the-post-covid-future-for-the-blue-pacific.htm>

334) *July 24*. **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** Covid-19 outbreak could overwhelm its health system within days, the country’s pandemic chief has warned, as masks have been made compulsory in the capital, and the government has called in the World Health Organization and the military for help.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/25/we-dont-have-enough-beds-png-hospitals-braces-for-covid-19-surge>

335) *July 24*. Free ferry scheme swamps **DANISH ISLANDS** with extra tourists. Islanders on Fanø, which is close to west coast city Esbjerg, say they are tired of the



spike in tourism this year, a result of the increase in Danes holidaying domestically as the coronavirus crisis curbs international travel.

<https://www.thelocal.dk/20200724/free-ferry-scheme-swamps-danish-islands-with-extra-tourists>

336) *July 25.* Spain is taking new measures to cut a spike in coronavirus cases, amid fears of a more widespread "second wave". The UK says all those returning from Spain must self-isolate for 14 days from Sunday. This includes the **CANARY ISLANDS** and **BALEARIC ISLANDS**, although those destinations are not included in the UK's new general warning to avoid all but essential travel to mainland Spain.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53539015>

337) *July 25.* The **BARBADOS** Welcome Stamp, which has just started taking applications, gives international visitors the opportunity to work remotely on the island for up to a year. Palm trees, sun, and blue skies sound like a dream to many, but even stunning locations have their pros and cons, especially during a pandemic. So what can remote workers expect if they take up the tempting offer?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-53385227>

<https://barbadoswelcomestamp.bb/>

338) *July 26.* **HAWAII** avoided a coronavirus spike – but its tourist economy is shattered. While other states in the US, such as Florida and Texas, saw huge spikes in Covid-19 cases as state governments worked to reopen economies, Hawaii instead rolled out a policy that deliberately stopped tourism to ensure the health of its residents. People who break quarantine are subject to arrest and a fine of up to \$5,000. Hawaii has been strict in enforcing the rules, arresting nearly 200 people, visitors and residents, since March.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/26/hawaii-coronavirus-tourism-economy-impact>

339) *July 26.* Luck? Genetics? The tiny Italian island of **GIGLIO** spared from covid outbreak.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/luck-genetics-italian-island-spared-from-covid-outbreak/2020/07/26/fa6ca25a-cf17-11ea-99b0-8426e26d203b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/luck-genetics-italian-island-spared-from-covid-outbreak/2020/07/26/fa6ca25a-cf17-11ea-99b0-8426e26d203b_story.html)

340) *July 26.* Pete Lingard is the senior ranger with Parks and Wildlife Service on the 115 square-kilometre **MARIA ISLAND**, which sits off the east coast of Tasmania. COVID-19 meant the island, popular with tourists and locals alike, was closed to visitors for several months, creating unique circumstances for the rangers left behind to caretake. Mr Lingard said as the island sat (mostly) uninhabited by humans, the wildlife changed its behaviour and became more "chill", and grass returned to places usually kept down by foot traffic.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-26/meet-maria-island-ranger-in-isolation-during-covid-19-pandemic/12483794>



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-24/maria-island-tourism-development-plans-open-for-comment/100158818>

341) *July 28*. In wake of the COVID-19, BirdLife is adapting its conservation programmes in **SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE** islands to address the economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic, seeking to herald a green future in this island state.

<https://www.birdlife.org/africa/news/anchoring-green-recovery-sao-tome-and-principe>

342) *July 28*. **PACIFIC** Small Island Developing States have health care systems with a limited capacity to deal with pandemics, making them especially vulnerable to the economic and social impacts of the coronavirus. This paper examines the introduction, transmission, and incidence of COVID-19 into Pacific SIDS.

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/15/5409>

343) *July 29*. In a parallel universe, festival season is in full swing, while flights to Mallorca and Ibiza are filled with Brits ready to hit the clubs. But most of those clubs are closed. And while the coronavirus pandemic has ruined many plans for the summer, one country has spotted an opportunity. Four music festivals are planned in **MALTA** over the next few months. Malta has a population of 450,000 and has had 701 coronavirus cases and nine deaths. The country relies heavily on tourism, with about half a million Brits visiting every year. It's now on the government's green light travel list. But unsurprisingly, there are concerns about what might happen if loads of people pile onto the island.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-53395609>

344) *July 29*. When the MV *Tustumena* departed the seaside community of Homer, Alaska, in early June, it carried hopes that the state's beleaguered ferry system might be returning to life. Like most Alaska ferries, the "Trusty Tusty" had been out of service for months, so when the ship eased from Homer's dock, goods and people were once again moving along the coast. But that optimism was fleeting. Four days later, when the MV *Tustumena* reached Dutch Harbor in the **ALEUTIAN ISLANDS**, a crew member tested positive for COVID-19. Most passengers were evacuated - others quarantined - and when the ship reached Homer, six more crew members tested positive. In response, Alaska's Department of Transportation decided to cancel MV *Tustumena* sailings indefinitely.

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/covid-19-is-taxing-alaskas-beleaguered-ferry-system/>

345) *July 30*. **NAURU** remains COVID-19 free by ensuring testing systems work well.

<https://www.loopnauru.com/coronavirus/nauru-remains-covid-19-free-ensures-testing-systems-work-well-93725>

346) *July 30*. **PACIFIC** islands: The cost to tomorrow of the crisis today. The brunt of the Covid-19 recession will be borne by developing nations, where youth populations are dominant.

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/pacific-islands-cost-tomorrow-crisis-today>

347) *July 30*. For many islands in the Caribbean, the coronavirus presents an impossible dilemma. Some islands have closed to visitors to protect their citizens but severed a key economic lifeline. Others have remained open to tourism and risked exposing a populace to a pandemic that has overwhelmed the capabilities of far richer countries. **CUBA**, the largest island in the Caribbean, is a good example of what the entire region faces. Some countries are already witnessing the peril of reopening too soon. The **BAHAMAS** reopened to tourism on July 1 after a two-month lockdown, confident the islands had the spread of coronavirus under control. Almost immediately, the number of cases in the Bahamas spiked. Many tourists came from Florida, which has had more than 430,000 coronavirus cases, a figure larger than the entire population of the Bahamas.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/caribbean-reopening-dilemma-pandemic/index.html>

348) *July 30*. Last month, a small collection of islands in **HAWAII** made history. Two of its four counties have committed to using a feminist recovery plan - entitled "Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs: A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Covid-19" - as a guide for their strategies. Both voted to do so unanimously, and have already started using it as a guide for where to allocate their share of federal recovery money. A third county is voting to do the same soon. The state is also working on a universal basic income bill, with a feminist framing, one of the key policies in the document.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/one-place-planning-feminist-economic-recovery-covid-19/>

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/4.13.20-Final-Cover-D2-Feminist-Economic-Recovery-D1.pdf>

349) *July 30*. Until recently, **HONG KONG** was considered a poster child in its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite sharing a border with mainland China, where the first cases were reported, Hong Kong kept its infection numbers down and was able to avoid the extreme lockdown measures introduced in parts of China, Europe and the US. But now, it's been hit by not even a second, but a third, wave of infections. The government has warned its hospital system could face collapse, and it's just had a record high number of new infections in a day. What went wrong, and what lessons are there for countries juggling both the pandemic, and the economic pain caused by lockdown?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-53596299>

350) *July 31*. A daily high of 3,954 cases was recorded in the **PHILIPPINES** on Thursday, bringing the total number of cases to 89,374. There have been just under 2,000 confirmed Covid-related deaths. Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte announced on Friday that restrictions in the capital Manila would remain until mid-August. Manila is currently under a general community quarantine - which limits the movement of the elderly and children, and imposes other restrictions. The president also promised that free vaccines would be given out - when one is eventually released - with lower-income Filipinos prioritised. Somewhat bizarrely, the president once

again told people to disinfect their face masks with petrol - insisting he was "not joking". He had made similar remarks last week - but officials were quick to correct him, and suggested it was a joke. Health officials also said cloths masks should be washed normally, and surgical masks replaced after use. But on Friday, the president doubled down - saying "what I've said was true... go to a gasoline station". There is no evidence that gasoline can disinfect masks; having prolonged contact with it can be harmful; and pouring flammable liquids can be a fire risk.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-53605108>

351) *July 31*. In a fresh blow to refugees and migrants experiencing dire conditions in Greece, frontline medical charity Médecins San Frontières on Thursday announced it has been forced to close its Covid-19 isolation centre on **LESBOS** after authorities imposed fines and potential charges.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/31/greece-refugee-healthcare-crisis-island-camps-lesbos-moria-coronavirus>

352) *July 31*. The **GREEK ISLANDS** in July and August are not for the faint-hearted - and not just because of the heat. On a typical high season day, the tiny winding streets and cafes of the must-see Greek islands such as Mykonos and Santorini will be so crowded with tourists that you'll get caught up in people jams. Not so this year, when the lack of flights up until mid-July and the almost complete absence of cruise ships has meant the islands have almost been transported back in time, to a place before mass tourism.

<https://www.cruisecritic.co.uk/news/5496/>

353) *July 31*. The possibility of lemurs contracting COVID-19 is worrying the **MADAGASCAR** scientific and conservation community. Members sounded the alarm in the days following the country's state of health emergency declaration in March, setting up an emergency unit designed to strengthen the protection of these animals, which are national emblems.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/07/endangered-and-endemic-madagascars-lemurs-susceptible-to-coronavirus-infection/>

354) *July 31*. NHS **WESTERN ISLES** joined forces with local folk rock band Peat and Diesel to relaunch the music video, 'My Island', with some key health messages on how to keep our islands safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://vimeo.com/443407921>

355) *July 31*. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a vulnerable landscape in the **PACIFIC** islands which transnational criminal organisations and local crime actors have been quick to capitalise on. As economies falter, criminal actors are seeking to take advantage of the vacuum with significant implications for human security.

<https://www.policyforum.net/profiteering-from-the-pandemic/>

356) *August 1*. Senior doctors in the **PHILIPPINES** have pleaded with the government to impose a strict lockdown in the capital Manila or risk losing the battle to contain the spread of coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/01/global-report-philippines-losing-battle-as-who-records-biggest-jump-in-covid-19-cases>

357) *August 1.* **BALI** is not only about tourism: Covid-19 prompts rethink for island's residents. With tourism devastated by the pandemic, many have returned to work the rice fields. Some believe they will never go back to the tourism industry and its reliance on foreign visitors.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/01/bali-is-not-only-about-tourism-covid-19-prompts-rethink-for-islands-residents>

358) *August 2.* The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the **CHATHAM ISLANDS**, first through the halting of crayfish and blue cod exports and then through the drying up of livestock and wool sales. Fishing and farming are the islands' main sources of economic revenue. This, coupled with a lack of tourism, has resulted in an estimated of \$20m in lost revenue to the island and unemployment of up to 30 per cent. The Government has agreed to provide \$36 million for an infrastructure project to lengthen and strengthen the runway at Tuuta Airport, on Chatham Island as well as additional funding to develop a shellfish aquaculture industry and to help establish a dedicated tourism manager for the Chathams to grow the tourism sector. Through the One Billion Trees Programme, the islands will also receive more than \$1 million for two projects. Manukau Land Trust will receive \$856,635 to help restore indigenous flora and fauna to a coastal area that has been cleared and grazed for more than 100 years. Chatham Islands Taiko Trust will receive up to \$163,505 to build and upgrade nine micro-nurseries, and training eight nursery owners that will help realise their goal of producing an additional 62,500 seedlings per year.

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/big-boost-chatham-islands%E2%80%99-economy>

359) *August 2.* "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Across the **PACIFIC**, leaders are holding fast to the old political maxim. Some, even, seem happy to have the Covid-19 crisis around. Even in countries where there is no actual public health emergency, governments are using the threat of the virus as cover for overriding or diluting basic democratic principles. Rather than pulling out all the stops to save their flailing economies, leaders are exploiting extraordinary emergency powers to secure themselves in positions of increasing impunity. In June this year, **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** government railroaded the National Pandemic Act 2020 through parliament. The provisions it contains make scant reference to actual public health issues. But it begins with a list of constitutional rights and freedoms it may constrain, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and protection from arbitrary search and seizure. It also removes checks and balances on government spending, raising concerns that funds given to the government will not receive necessary scrutiny. Police Minister Bryan Kramer recently received a report of an audit investigation relating to claims that 23m Kina (AU\$9.2m), allocated for the country's Covid-19 response, had been misspent on hire cars and media consultants.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2020/aug/03/we-cant-allow-pacific-leaders-to-use-coronavirus-as-a-cover-for-authoritarianism>

360) *August 3.* Covid-19 has been detected on at least two cruise ships – one in the Arctic and one in the Pacific – just weeks after cruising holidays restarted. Outbreaks

of Covid-19 recorded on MS Roald Amundsen in **NORWAY** and the Paul Gauguin in **TAHITI**.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/03/two-cruise-ships-hit-by-coronavirus-weeks-after-industry-restarts>

361) *August 3*. If necessity is the mother of invention, then COVID-19 has been the ultimate catalyst for a period of accelerated adoption of technology in the **CAYMAN ISLANDS**. For example, over the next few months, tourists will report their health status through a BioButton affixed to their chests, 'geo fencing' will be used to ensure COVID-positive patients comply with quarantine measures, and smartphone apps will likely play a role in tracking and tracing contacts if there is a second wave of the pandemic locally. The Cayman Compass series of articles exploring Cayman's post-COVID future written by James Whittaker over several weeks are probably the best from any island.

<https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/08/03/smart-island-tech-investment-could-drive-new-economy/>

<https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/07/06/cayman-2-0-rethinking-the-vision-for-our-islands-post-covid-19/>

362) *August 3*. Four festivals scheduled to take place in **MALTA** this month have been cancelled due to a rise in Covid-19 cases on the island. (*See article 343*).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53642430>

363) *August 4*. How has COVID-19 impacted **PACIFIC** women and girls? As some Pacific island nations reverse COVID-19 related restrictions, states are beginning to shift their focus on rejuvenating their economies. This focus will need to recognize the disproportionate way women and girls are experiencing this global crisis, including impacts such as the increased rates of domestic violence and job losses. A COVID-19 Response Gender Working group formed by **FIJI** Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation recently undertook a rapid gender analysis with multiple development stakeholders.

<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/08/surviving-in-the-market-space>

[http://www.fwrn.org.fj/images/Gender\\_and\\_COVID\\_Guidance\\_Note\\_-\\_Rapid\\_Gender\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.fwrn.org.fj/images/Gender_and_COVID_Guidance_Note_-_Rapid_Gender_Analysis.pdf)

364) *August 4*. Tens of millions of people in the **PHILIPPINES** are back in lockdown, after doctors warned a surge in new coronavirus cases could push the healthcare system to collapse. Stay-at-home orders are now in place in Manila and four surrounding provinces on the island of Luzon for two weeks. The country only just emerged from one of the strictest lockdowns in June.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-53646149>

365) *August 4*. An audacious drug smuggling attempt and a coronavirus outbreak put pressure on **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** police chief.

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/covid-and-crime-twin-tests-papua-new-guinea>

366) *August 4.* Lockdown puts wildlife conservation on Devon's **LUNDY ISLAND** at risk as coronavirus has kept away day trippers that it relies on for funds.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/04/lockdown-puts-wildlife-conservation-on-devon-lundy-island-at-risk-coronavirus>

367) *August 5.* The Australian government will reopen the detention facility on the remote territory of **CHRISTMAS ISLAND** to house people currently in immigration detention on the Australian mainland. The Australian Border Force confirmed on Tuesday evening that people currently in immigration detention would be “temporarily” transferred to the centre at North West Point on Christmas Island, where Australians returning from Wuhan were held in the first weeks of the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/04/australian-government-to-reopen-christmas-island-detention-centre-during-covid-19-crisis>

368) *August 5.* Hundreds of miles from its nearest neighbour, the remote **FAROE ISLANDS** are surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. Fishing has always been a way of life, and fish accounts for 90% of all exported goods. But coronavirus is hitting efforts to increase tourism. To protect its population and economy from coronavirus, the Faroe Islands has one of the highest testing rates worldwide, with a strong track and trace and quarantine strategy. And every person is tested on arrival in the country. This preparedness was partly thanks to its fisheries. A veterinary laboratory established years ago to monitor disease, was adapted early in January, ready to help test human samples. This has no doubt contributed to the fact that the territory has reported not a single death from Covid-19. And it has seen only 227 confirmed cases in total.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53593137>

369) *August 6.* Cases of Covid-19 in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** have spread to new provinces, forcing the closure of the massive Ok Tedi mine, and sparking warnings that a surge in infections, potentially in the thousands, could strike the country in the next few months. Ok Tedi mine – a hugely profitable gold and copper mine worth billions to the PNG government’s already-parlous finances – will be shut for “at least 14 days to limit further transmission and allow contact tracing, isolation and testing procedures to be implemented”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/06/papua-new-guineas-massive-ok-tedi-mine-closes-as-covid-cases-spread-to-new-areas>

370) *August 6.* **MAURITIUS** was the first African country to get the coronavirus under control. Now its challenge is how to let the tourists that are its economic lifeblood back in. The Indian Ocean island success in quelling the outbreak is unique in Africa and comes as the disease is spreading across the continent, with countries from Kenya to South Africa battling a surge in cases since movement restrictions were eased. Mauritius is one of the few places in the world that hasn’t had a locally transmitted infection in over three months. It recorded its last Covid-19 death on April 27 and has managed to keep the total number of confirmed cases to just 344. But in a



country that relies heavily on tourism, the government is under increasing pressure to reopen its airport and rescue an industry that employs almost a fifth of its workforce.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-06/the-african-island-that-stamped-out-the-virus-now-needs-tourists>

371) *August 7*. A case of coronavirus in a remote **PHILIPPINES** tribe has highlighted the threats that the pandemic poses to a group that already suffers poor access to health care. The Mangyans, a group of eight tribal communities on Mindoro, have a long history of being discriminated against and being forced off their land by business interests and security forces. During the pandemic and lockdown, they have also reportedly been denied government aid, prompting calls for all governments to ensure Indigenous rights are respected and adequate resources are allocated to Indigenous communities throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/08/for-the-philippines-mangyans-covid-19-extends-a-long-history-of-discrimination/>

372) *August 7*. The British **ANTARCTIC** Survey is scaling back its research in the polar south because of coronavirus. Only essential teams will head back to the continent as it emerges from winter and virtually all science in the deep field has been postponed for a year. BAS says it doesn't have the capacity to treat people if they get sick. And in consultation with international partners this past week, very strict procedures will now be put in place to keep the virus out of Antarctica.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-53699681>

373) *August 7*. The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** with 2,256 coronavirus tests processed, and no positive results for over 100 days, is leading among countries with small populations that have tested well over half of its population. The Falklands population in 2020 is estimated at 3,500, and has imposed very strict regulations regarding Visitor Policy. The Islands' health authorities together with the well equipped King Edward Memorial Hospital and the community collaboration have been crucial to keep the virus at bay.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2020/08/07/falkland-islands-has-coronavirus-test-processed-some-65-of-its-population>

374) *August 8*. Three months after easing nationwide restrictions to stem the spread of the coronavirus, the government in Athens has placed the tiny Greek island of **POROS** into fresh lockdown following a sudden flare-up of infections in scores of locals and tourists. The lockdown comes as the coronavirus pandemic spreads rapidly in Greece, tripling infections in the past 10 days alone and marring the country's image as a near virus-free summer retreat. With a population of about 3,000, Poros, a one-hour jaunt from the Greek capital, has been a favorite destination this summer, attracting record numbers of tourists seeking a safe summer hideout from the coronavirus. But on Friday, most of Poros visitors were seen scrambling onto ferries bound for Athens or other islands.

<https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/greek-island-locks-down-covid-19-infections-soar-across-country>



375) *August 10*. US health secretary praises **TAIWAN** Covid-19 response in the highest-level US visit in more than four decades, as China flew fighter jets into the Taiwan strait just before the meeting.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/10/us-health-secretary-praises-taiwans-covid-19-response-during-rare-high-level-visit>

376) *August 10*. Beyond the health and economic crises of Covid-19, the global pandemic has the potential to cause political instability and undermine state security across the **PACIFIC**, the region's chief diplomat has warned. Dame Meg Taylor, secretary general of the Pacific Islands Forum, said the region's economies were struggling with the virus-induced shocks, and a prolonged crisis could worsen existing problems of hunger, poor healthcare, and state fragility. Among the hardest-hit are tourism-reliant countries such as the **COOK ISLANDS**, **FIJI** and **VANUATU** because of border closures and lockdowns, described as "catastrophic".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/pacific-states-face-instability-hunger-and-slow-road-to-covid-recovery-dame-meg-taylor>

377) *August 11*. Nearly five months to the day since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, Covid-19 infections have passed 20 million cases. In acknowledging the milestone, the health body's chief warned against despair, saying if the virus could be suppressed effectively, "we can safely open up societies".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/global-report-coronavirus-cases-pass-20m-as-who-points-to-green-shoots-of-hope>

378) *August 11*. The pace of progress towards opening a travel bubble with coronavirus free Pacific countries has been frustrating for many, but with the pandemic still raging, there is reason for caution and several hurdles to clear. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern yesterday announced a travel bubble could be open with the **COOK ISLANDS** by the end of the year, with more assessments needed before any final decision could be made.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/423285/analysis-the-frustrating-pace-of-a-cooks-travel-bubble>

379) *August 11*. **FRENCH POLYNESIA** has recorded another 43 Covid-19 cases since Friday, in a fresh infection spike coinciding with last month's abolition of quarantine requirements. The latest cases were detected in Tahiti, Moorea, Bora Bora and Rangiroa.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/423280/french-polynesia-s-second-wave-of-covid-19-reaches-50-cases>

380) *August 11*. Employees from the tourism industry who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 are joining in an ambitious project to plant 500,000 trees in a bid to reforest **SEYCHELLES** second-most populated island. The project initiated by Seychelles Employee Transition Scheme will be implemented by the Terrestrial Restoration Action Society of Seychelles, a Praslin-based environmental group committed to the restoration of degraded terrestrial sites of the islands of Seychelles.

<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/13342/%2C+trees+to+be+planted+in+Seychelles+by+Xmas+with+help+from+jobless+tourism+workers>

381) *August 11*. The **PALAU** Bureau of Tourism, Sustainable Travel International, and Slow Food have launched a new project in Palau that aims to mitigate the tourism sector's carbon footprint and establish Palau as the world's first "Carbon Neutral Tourism Destination." The project is taking an innovative destination-level approach that includes promoting local food production within tourism and developing a carbon management program for tourists. In recent years, Palau has taken extensive measures to further environmental protection and responsible tourism. This includes establishing one of the world's largest marine sanctuaries; creating the world's first mandatory eco-pledge (Palau Pledge) that all visitors are required to sign upon entry; banning tour operators from utilizing single-use plastics and styrofoam; and protecting its marine environment through the adoption of the world's strictest national sunscreen standard. If the current COVID-19 crisis has taught us anything, it's that we must strengthen our nation's resilience to external threats – the greatest of which is climate change," said Kevin Mesebeluu, Director of the Palau Bureau of Tourism. Palau embraces sustainable tourism as the only path forward in the new era of travel, and we believe that our destination can and must be carbon neutral.

<https://sustainabletravel.org/project-to-make-palau-a-carbon-neutral-destination-launched/>

382) *August 12*. The Republic of the **MARSHALL ISLANDS** remains one of only 11 nations in the world to have zero confirmed cases of COVID-19. Hawaii holds a special place in the hearts of RMI citizens, for whom the Aloha State is a second home to the thousands of Marshallese living and working across all four of the state's counties, for our student scholars attending local universities, and for whom Hawaii is the portal between the RMI and all eastbound ports of call. In the wake of this global pandemic, the Consulate of the Marshall Islands and Marshallese community members and organizations throughout Hawaii went above and beyond the call to support county, state, and federal efforts aimed at flattening the state's COVID-19 curve.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/08/covid-free-marshall-islands-works-to-blunt-hawaiis-curve/>

383) *August 14*. As the pandemic dries up traditional revenue sources, some **PACIFIC** island governments are considering diving into the unknown waters of deep sea mining. Mining advocates say the world badly needs polymetallic nodules on the seabed for materials to make batteries that will drive the carbon-free societies of the future, but it's a gamble which Pacific countries are being warned is too risky. One of the key players claiming to have the technology and finance to do the work is a Canada-based seabed mining company which has explorations contracts with Nauru, Tonga and Kiribati.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/423537/warning-for-pacific-governments-gambling-on-deepsea-mining>

384) *August 16*. Island nations have an advantage when it comes to stopping travellers importing disease, be it Covid or other infections. Seas are usually harder to cross than land, and beaches are easier to police. There are no cross-border towns, and fewer ways to sneak over frontiers. These advantages, combined with strict quarantine

policies, have made island nations some of the most successful at containing Covid. But the ones that did best (like **NEW ZEALAND, TAIWAN, MAURITIUS, CUBA**) had shut themselves off from the world to varying degrees. And a fresh outbreak of cases in New Zealand last week suggests coronavirus can evade even tight controls.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/16/island-nations-have-the-edge-in-keeping-covid-away-or-most-do>

385) *August 16*. The **FAROE ISLANDS** has the highest frequency of COVID-19 in Europe. But why? The government reported its first confirmed case in March, after a man contracted the disease while on a visit to Paris, with other arrivals helping the virus to spread. After Denmark announced strict social measures to halt the disease's spread in early March, the Faroese followed suit. Despite having one of the highest frequency of cases in the world for a time in April, through mass testing and self-quarantine guidelines, the government were able to announce on 9 May that there were no longer any active cases on the islands. But after nearly four months of no new cases, COVID-19 returned to the islands in July. This is in part thanks to the country opening up its borders – first to Denmark, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, and Germany – and later to other EU and Schengen countries. Despite mandatory testing for visitors taking place from June onwards, the disease managed to spread through the islands. While there have been no deaths to date, and most incidences have been largely asymptomatic, the number of confirmed cases jumped from 191 on 18 July – with all but three recovered – to 365 on 13 August. Faroese police commissioner Michael Boolsen, who also heads the islands' epidemic commission, told CGTN Europe that the reason for the spike wasn't completely clear, but that it could have happened during the islands' biggest summer festival, St. Olaf's Day, on 29 July. The Faroe Islands' epidemic laws prevent major interventions seen in other European countries. The government has ordered the closure of restaurants and pubs from 11:00pm onwards, but commissioner Boolsen says, "that's the only thing that is actually possible at the moment within the legislation that we have." Instead, the government is relying on mass testing. According to the police chief, more than 2,000 people are being tested a day. "Considering that the population is 52,000 people, it's quite a lot," he says. The prime minister told CGTN Europe that while the Faroe Islands currently has a high percentage of coronavirus infections, by the end of next week, some 75,000 people would have been tested. That's around 150 percent of the Faroese population. "You could say that we have a huge world record for the number of tests," said Nielsen.

<https://newseu.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-16/Faroe-Islands-has-highest-frequency-of-COVID-19-in-Europe-But-why--SXxTgFmQX6/index.html>

386) *August 17*. As countries around the world recalibrate their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the **FIJI** Government is stepping up its strategies for a nature-based recovery. Among the financial allocations to various agencies towards environment-friendly and sustainable measures is a two million dollar budget for the Reforestation of Degraded Forests (RDF) programme which is coordinated by the Ministry of Forestry. "This money will enable the scaling up of efforts towards Fiji's tree-planting revolution which now has a target of 30 million trees in 15 years," says the Minister responsible for Forestry, Honourable Osea Naiqamu. He said that Fiji's tree-planting initiative which was launched by the President His Excellency Major-General (Retired) Jioji Konrote in January 2019 is gaining traction. "With the support

of communities, private sector, civil society organisations, sporting bodies and development partners, Fiji was able to plant a million trees and mangroves in just 10 months last year.” Minister Naiqamu said the new budget allocation will also enable the Ministry to continue the implementation of the ‘Cash for Tree Planting’ programme which provides the opportunity for Fijians who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 to earn some cash by planting trees in their communities. Additionally, the Ministry has helped establish more than 150 community nurseries. It intends to double the number of nurseries which are managed mainly by women and youth groups.

<https://www.forestry.gov.fj/pressdetail.php?id=26>

387) *August 18*. Dollar back in **CUBA** as pandemic and US sanctions hammer economy. The communist government has been forced to allow citizens to spend US currency at special shops, formalising a split between haves and have-nots.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/18/cuba-dollar-stores-coronavirus?>

388) *August 18*. When you live on an island and tourism is your economic lifeline, do you keep letting visitors come or do you play it safe and call a halt so as to protect residents from the scourge of the new coronavirus pandemic? That's the dilemma facing authorities in the far-flung **IZU** and **OGASAWARA** island chains south of Tokyo as local fears mount about COVID-19 infections. While island life allows for a measure of isolation from the frantic pace of Japanese cities, other factors come into play in such situations. For example, about 25,000 people reside on the 11 inhabited islands in the two chains, but there are only two beds at a hospital on one of the 11 islands in the entire region capable of caring for COVID-19 patients. While medical clinics operate in the other inhabited islands, anyone who becomes infected would have to be airlifted to Tokyo to receive proper medical treatment. The Hachijojima Tourism Association posted a message on its website calling on potential visitors to refrain from coming if they feel unwell.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13646197>

389) *August 18*. **WESTERN ISLES** council has appealed to tourists visiting by campervan, caravan or motorhome to pre-book at an official campsite before travelling. Earlier pleas to visitors had been ignored by some and communities have raised concerns about rubbish and human waste being left at roadsides. Not all campsites and facilities on the isles have opened after closing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-53819001>

390) *August 20*. Rangers tasked to protect the critically endangered **PHILIPPINE** tamaraw are facing a different kind of threat: hunger, as budget cuts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic bite into their already meager salaries. The tamaraw, also known as the dwarf buffalo, is a critically endangered species found only on the island of Mindoro, with an estimated population of just 480.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/08/rangers-protecting-philippine-tamaraws-go-hungry-as-pandemic-bites/>

391) *August 21*. A planeload of Chinese mine workers have been barred from entering **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, over concerns they had been subjected to an unapproved Covid-19 vaccination trial before they left. For many in PNG, Covid-19's "Niupela Pasin" – new normal – is a return to the old ways. As the country wrestles with a nascent but potentially crippling new outbreak of coronavirus infections, emanating out from the crowded capital, Port Moresby, to the highlands and the river valleys of the sprawling archipelago, many in PNG's villages are returning to traditional economies. When **EAST NEW BRITAIN** province faced lockdown in April, public transport came to a halt, people's access to services was restricted and basic goods began to run short. So too did hard currency. As barter and informal exchange was revived, the province also saw traditional shell money being traded outside of its customary uses. An existing currency among the Tolai people of East New Britain, tabu is made from the shell of a marine snail known locally as *palakanoara*. Traditionally it's used in mortuary ceremonies or bride price exchange, but can also be used to pay school fees, local fines and even local government taxes. Aunty Minia Tolik from Kerevat district says that during the lockdown period, more people were using their tabu collections to buy every day items because they simply had no money. "We couldn't travel to town to sell our produce at the markets or buy things from the shop, so we started to use our tabu more." Vanessa Mulas, a resident of Kuradui village, says those who were able to circumvent the cancellation of public buses brought back store goods and exchanged them with neighbours for tabu. Tabu is measured by arm length: one-and-a-half arm lengths equals a packet of rice. Mulas explains that 10 to 12 small shells used to equal about 10 toea (US\$0.03) but that with Covid, tabu has increased in value.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/21/papua-new-guinea-bans-chinese-mine-staff-given-experimental-covid-19-vaccine>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/22/the-return-of-shell-money-png-revives-old-ways-after-covids-blow-to-economy>

392) *August 21*. Last year, global remittances overtook foreign direct investment as the biggest inflow of money into developing countries. COVID-19 is expected to reduce the amount of global remittances in 2020 by 20 per cent. This sharp decrease will be a serious problem for countries like Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati, Fiji and Tuvalu, where remittances represent one of the main sources of hard currencies needed for international trade. In Tonga, remittances represent some 40 per cent of GDP – the highest proportion in the world. Many families rely on those remittances for basic living expenses such as housing, food, school fees and medical care. Reduced remittances also have a knock-on effect on local economies through decreased spending. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, economies throughout the **PACIFIC** are already suffering from the global slowdown or shutdown of industries, particularly tourism. This is why, in the past few weeks, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the governments of Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji joined a global call to action to policymakers, regulators and remittance service providers to improve migrants' access to sending and receiving remittances, and to reduce transfer costs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://weblog.iom.int/now-time-reduce-remittance-costs>

393) *August 21*. Shortly after July 4, a video emerged online showing crowds of revellers dancing at a party on one of **OKINAWA** beaches. The event to celebrate American Independence Day was hosted by a former US marine and not one person



in the video was wearing a face mask. To ordinary Japanese watching on social media - who had spent four months in self-restrained voluntary lockdown - it was a stunning snub to the nation's efforts to keep coronavirus under control. The virus outbreaks since, which have made Okinawa the hotspot of Japan's second wave of Covid-19, may not have been directly linked to the party - or the others like it held on the island that evening - but in the court of public opinion, it was the smoking gun. It has stoked anger within Okinawa, where the heavy presence of US military bases and the behaviour of the 20,000 marines and other military personnel stationed there have been a longstanding source of tension.

<https://www.ft.com/content/c04caf13-654c-441a-8ef9-d940339bde88>

394) *August 22.* A genetic scientist and tropical root and tuber crops expert says the Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity for **PACIFIC** countries to return to traditional food sources.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/424168/covid-19-is-an-opportunity-for-pacific-to-return-to-traditional-foods-scientist>

395) *August 23.* The **PALAU** Hotel opened in 1982, before mass tourism arrived here. But since then, this tiny nation, surrounded by the sky-blue Pacific Ocean, has enjoyed something of a boom. In 2019, 90,000 tourists came to Palau, five times the total population. In 2017, IMF figures showed, tourism made up 40% of the country's GDP. But that was pre-Covid. Palau's borders have been, in effect, closed since late March. It is one of the only 10 countries in the world (all Pacific islands) with no confirmed cases (counting only countries that are full UN members, and excluding North Korea and Turkmenistan). Yet, without infecting a single person, the virus has ravaged the country. The Palau Hotel has been closed since March, and it's not alone. The restaurants are empty, the souvenir shops are shut, and the only hotel guests are returning residents in quarantine.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-53831063>

396) *August 25.* The Indonesian island of **BALI** will not open to foreign tourists again this year, due to coronavirus concerns. Authorities of the popular holiday destination had earlier said foreign visitors would be allowed to return from next month. But the plan has been scrapped over concerns about Indonesia's mounting Covid-19 cases. The move has renewed worries about the impact on residents in an economy heavily dependent on tourism.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-53900565>

397) *August 25.* The **U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS** is halting tourism for a month, hoping against hope to keep out new cases of the coronavirus. **PUERTO RICO** Senate is closed after several high-ranking officials came down with Covid-19. Hawaii is facing a surge in new infections. **GUAM** enduring its most restrictive lockdown since the pandemic began. For months, United States islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific avoided much of the agony unleashed by the coronavirus across parts of the mainland, due in part to their early mitigation efforts and relative ease in sealing off borders. But now the state of Hawaii and these territories are emerging as some of the most alarming virus hot spots in the United States, revealing how the coronavirus can spike and then rapidly spread in places with relaxed restrictions, sluggish contact tracing and widespread pressure to end the economic pain that comes with lockdowns.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/us/coronavirus-guam-virgin-islands-hawaii-puerto-rico.html>

398) *August 26*. At least five members of the Great Andamanese tribe in India's **ANDAMAN ISLANDS** are reported to have tested positive for Covid-19. Two have been admitted to hospital. The Andaman Islands have had a total of almost 3000 confirmed Covid cases and 37 deaths, out of a population of approximately 400,000. The Great Andamanese are a small group of just over 50 survivors, down from more than 5000 when the British colonized the islands in the 1850s. They suffer from the long term impacts of diseases introduced by this brutal occupation. Tuberculosis and alcoholism are widespread, making them particularly vulnerable to Covid-19.

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/12447>

399) *August 26*. The sharp rise in domestic violence in **FIJI** has been linked by victims to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fiji has one of the highest statistics in the world on domestic violence. As a society 72% of all Fijian women have faced some form of violence in their lifetime, and 64% of women who have been in intimate relationships have experienced physical or sexual violence from their partner, including 61% who were physically attacked and 34% who were sexually abused.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/424522/fiji-s-domestic-violence-surge-tied-to-pandemic-minister>

400) *August 26*. Despite remaining Covid-19 free, Palau's tourism industry - its primary source of revenue - has come to a standstill. However, **PALAU** is now reportedly planning to open up for tourism next month, initially with just Taiwan.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/424502/palau-plans-to-open-up-to-taiwan-tourism-market>

401) *August 27*. To date, just 14 of **GREENLAND** 56,000 residents have been infected with the coronavirus, and none of those infected have required hospitalization, nor have any coronavirus-related deaths been recorded. That, in large part, is due to the fact that Greenland is an island and was able seal itself off from the rest of the world effectively. As the situation improved in many parts of the world, Greenland began opening its borders again, but the threat of an outbreak is likely to be with the country for the foreseeable future and it must find ways to prevent COVID-19 from spreading there without again closing its borders or re-imposing strict social-distancing measures. Most of Greenland's COVID-19 cases have been registered in Nuuk, where Greenland's national hospital is located. That allowed the health service to keep a close eye on the situation. Were the virus to crop up in one of Greenland's remote communities, health authorities would likely only be able to react too late.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/greenland-taking-long-term-approach-to-covid-19/>

402) *August 28*. Locals in **MAJORCA** rediscover streets and beaches in resorts absent of foreign tourists.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/28/europe-holiday-resorts-foreign-tourists-magaluf-staycationers>



403) *August 28.* **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** battle against a climbing rate of Covid-19 infections is being hampered by the most basic of shortages – access to clean water – public health experts have warned.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/29/pacifics-fight-against-covid-19-hamstrung-by-lack-of-clean-water>

404) *August 29.* Surging Covid-19 cases in **GUAM** are threatening to overwhelm the island's healthcare system, while rapidly spreading infections across **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** and new clusters in **FRENCH POLYNESIA** following the resumption of tourism have sparked fears of uncontrolled outbreaks in the Pacific. The Pacific region is still the least-infected in the world – several countries remain Covid-19 free – but there are troubling surges across countries with fragile health systems ill-equipped for large numbers of infections. Emerging too, is an early trend of 'vaccine diplomacy', with regional powers seeking to exert political influence through promises to help Pacific nations - otherwise likely at the back of the queue - secure access to a vaccine when one becomes available.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/30/we-are-in-dire-straits-pacific-stands-on-covid-brink-amid-surg-ing-infections>

405) *August 30.* One of Brazil's most celebrated tourist destinations, the archipelago of **FERNANDO DE NORONHA**, has announced it is reopening to outsiders – as long as they have had Covid-19. Tourists have been banned from the UNESCO World Heritage site, which Charles Darwin visited in 1832, since late March when the pandemic forced many parts of Brazil into partial shutdown. Since then more than 120,000 Brazilians have died, the world's second highest death toll, and President Jair Bolsonaro faces accusations of catastrophically mismanaging the crisis by undermining containment measures. But from Tuesday visitors will be allowed into Fernando de Noronha, 211 miles off Brazil's north-eastern coast, if they can prove they have been infected and recovered. The results of two types of test – PCR virus tests and IgG antibody tests – will be accepted if conducted at least 20 days before arrival.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/30/brazil-island-fernando-de-noronha-reopens-tourists-covid-19>

406) *August 30.* A UN summit on biodiversity, scheduled to be held in New York next month, will be told by conservationists and biologists there is now clear evidence of a strong link between environmental destruction and the increased emergence of deadly new diseases such as Covid-19. Rampant deforestation, uncontrolled expansion of farming and the building of mines in remote regions – as well as the exploitation of wild animals as sources of food, traditional medicines and exotic pets – are creating a "perfect storm" for the spillover of diseases from wildlife to people.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/30/rampant-destruction-of-forests-will-unleash-more-pandemics>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/08/communities-conservation-and-development-in-the-age-of-covid-time-for-rethinking-approaches-commentary/>

407) *August 31.* The COVID-19 pandemic has pitted economic interests against public health guidance across the United States. **PUERTO RICO** and the **U.S.**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS** feel this tension acutely, as both territories rely on tourism to generate revenue and provide jobs. Increasingly, locals have begun to wonder now whether welcoming visitors to these islands is worth the risk. Tourism represents more than half of the Virgin Islands gross domestic product. In Puerto Rico, the industry accounts for 80,000 jobs and about 6.5% of the island's total economy. But islanders are not vulnerable only to COVID-19's economic disruptions. Residents of both Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are diagnosed with chronic health conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular illness at higher rates than in most U.S. states, which puts them at higher risk for the virus' complications. In short, the very industry that represents an economic lifeline for islanders threatens their ability to protect their health.

<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2020/08/31/puerto-rico-travel-us-virgin-islands-travel-economy-covid-19/5638122002/>

408) *August 31*. The US has now surpassed six million cases of Covid-19 - almost a quarter of the world's total, according to data collated by Johns Hopkins University. It said the country added one million new infections in less than a month. More than 183,000 people have now died. The total number of confirmed cases globally has now surpassed 25 million, with more than 846,000 Covid-19 related deaths. The true number of cases is likely to be significantly higher, because many people who have had the infection but did not show symptoms have not been tested.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53976793>

409) *August 31*. **CARIBBEAN** countries heavily hit by the covid crisis. After a 3-month lockdown in most of the small Caribbean states, the region finally reopened at the beginning of July, and in a few weeks, the measure resulted in a disproportionate increase in coronavirus cases, which forced local authorities to go back to lockdowns.

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-caribbean-countries-count-the-losses-article2757>

410) *September 3*. The number of known, active COVID-19 cases being monitored by authorities in **HAWAII** on July 30 stood at just one, but that didn't last. Now, a rapid recent growth in the number of infections has many residents wondering exactly what is driving the surge. But while the state Department of Health says it is aware of a series of large gatherings in East Hawaii in late July and early August, so far investigators have been unable to link any coronavirus cases to the group events. The surge has been quite fast - and worrisome. By Aug. 15, the number of active cases on Hawaii island had climbed to 16, and by Aug. 30 there were 151 active cases, according to daily bulletins generated by the Hawaii County Civil Defense.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/09/doh-struggles-to-trace-surge-in-big-island-cases-to-large-gatherings/>

411) *September 4*. As part of the recovery plan for the **ISLE OF WIGHT** in wake of COVID-19, the council has released first draft edition of its 'A Better Island' strategy - including facing housing challenges and providing improvement schemes for businesses and residents. Some of the proposals include a new Island Card gift card scheme to encourage local shopping, while also creating co-working space for digital companies, the Wight Innovation Hub, alongside the plans for the Branstone Farm rural business hub.

<https://www.islandecho.co.uk/council-release-first-draft-of-islands-a-better-island-strategy/>

412) *September 4.* The first recorded coronavirus case in Moria refugee camp on **LESBOS**, where just under 13,000 people are living in a space designed for 3,000, has led to fears that the government will use the pandemic as a pretext to create closed camps.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/sep/04/refugee-covid-case-sparks-closed-camps-fears-on-lesbos>

413) *September 4.* As the world heads towards 2021 with COVID-19 still raging overhead, it might be easy to forget about the other global crises. But a new app, debuted today, aims to light the way to a brighter future, showing how we can stop global warming, halt extinctions and prevent pandemics – all in one fell swoop.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/09/how-do-we-avert-global-warming-extinctions-and-pandemics-new-app-has-answers/>

<https://www.globalsafetynet.app/>

414) *September 5.* With the help of a local fishing boat, hundreds of migrants were transferred on Saturday to a ferry from the Italian island of **LAMPEDUSA** to relieve severe overcrowding during the pandemic at a residence for asylum-seekers. After their transfer on Saturday, they must spend 14 days in precautionary quarantine on the ferry. The vessel was one of several chartered by the Italian government, after Lampedusa's mayor and Sicily's governor complained about the risk of spreading COVID-19. After so many migrants arrived this summer, some of them rescued at sea, others reaching the island's shores without help, Lampedusa's migrant center held 2,000 people despite a capacity of less than 200.

<https://apnews.com/article/12855e22624a8ba62ba00608ec26f31c>

415) *September 6.* The port of Civitavecchia, located about 50 miles from Rome, would ordinarily be bustling with cruise passengers. Today, the most salient feature is a Covid-19 drive-through centre, where people travelling by ferry to or from the island of **SARDINIA** and Spain can voluntarily be tested for the virus. The facility was quickly established after a surge in cases in the Lazio region, which have mostly been linked to young people who holidayed on Sardinia's Costa Smeralda, a stretch of coastline in the north-east of the island to where the wealthy gravitate. Now, amid a rise in cancelled trips to Sardinia, the regional governor, Christian Solinas, has pledged to take legal action against the media for its depiction of the island, which was relatively Covid-free at the end of July, as Italy's new epicentre.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/06/how-sardinia-went-from-safe-haven-to-covid-19-hotspot>

416) *September 6.* **FRENCH POLYNESIA** has registered another 26 Covid-19 cases, raising the tally in the latest outbreak to 658. The first outbreak between March and June affected 62 people and was brought under control with a lockdown and border closures. For the past week, the territory has recorded a double-digit number of new cases every day. Most active cases are now in urban areas of Tahiti, but there are also some in Bora Bora, Moorea and Raiatea. The other main French Pacific territory,

**NEW CALEDONIA**, which is largely sealed off, recorded 26 cases in managed isolation this year while **WALLIS & FATUNA** has been free of the coronavirus.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/425371/covid-19-case-total-in-french-polynesia-passes-650>

417) *September 9*. Climate change has not stopped for COVID-19. Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at record levels and continue to increase. Emissions are heading in the direction of pre-pandemic levels following a temporary decline caused by the lockdown and economic slowdown. The world is set to see its warmest five years on record – in a trend which is likely to continue - and is not on track to meet agreed targets to keep global temperature increase well below 2 °C or at 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. This is according to a new multi-agency report from leading science organizations, *United in Science 2020*. It highlights the increasing and irreversible impacts of climate change, which affects glaciers, oceans, nature, economies and human living conditions and is often felt through water-related hazards like drought or flooding. It also documents how COVID-19 has impeded our ability to monitor these changes through the global observing system.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/united-science-report-climate-change-has-not-stopped-covid19>

418) *September 11*. Coronavirus closures threaten future of **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** only animal rescue centre. The coronavirus lockdowns of PNG's capital have slashed visitor numbers by three-quarters, jeopardising the park's ability to continue running and keep the animals fed and safe. The park has been forced to retrench some staff and move others to live onsite in makeshift accommodation to help stop Covid spread and care for the animals.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/12/coronavirus-closures-threaten-future-of-papua-new-guineas-only-animal-rescue-centre>

419) *September 12*. **CHRISTMAS ISLAND** is most often thought of in connection to its detention centre, which became a quarantine location for evacuees from Wuhan earlier this year. But there's a lot more to the island. Australia has recorded more than 26,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in total, but none of them have been detected on Christmas Island. Some restrictions are still in place and the island's borders have been closed to all states and territories except Western Australia.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-13/covid-free-christmas-island-one-of-australias-most-diverse/12645476>

420) *September 13*. **SCOTTISH ISLAND** communities will benefit from a £2 million programme of locally-led green projects designed to help support their economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Islands Green Recovery Programme is split into four strands and managed by four partners, delivering investment in low carbon transport, food sustainability and zero waste projects. Part of the funding will be used to help independent food retailers and businesses introduce packaging-free shops and remove the need for disposable packaging. Sustainable travel initiatives, climate change projects and projects to improve local supply chains can also apply for funding. The initial 12 successful initiatives were announced in December 2020.

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/our-funds/islands-green-recovery-programme/>

421) *September 13.* With all **HAWAII** County beaches closed until Friday as part of statewide anti-COVID measures, an increasing number of revelers on Hawaii island have been camping on remote areas of the Ka'u coast, where the Hawaii County Police have no jurisdiction and enforcement is lax. Local residents are acting to keep their community safe from what they see as the dual threats of the ongoing pandemic and campfires during a time of extreme fire danger. As there are no designated camping areas nor amenities anywhere in the South Point area, residents note an increasing amount of waste that campers and visitors are leaving along the shoreline, including widespread evidence of many spots used as one-time toilets. In response, local families have set up an information station on South Point Road, which provides the only access to the area. They have been talking to everyone heading for South Point, trying to dissuade them from coming down, especially for camping, during the current state of emergency.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/09/these-big-island-residents-are-trying-to-keep-remote-beaches-safe-and-sanitary/>

422) *September 14.* Officials in the **PHILIPPINES** say the coronavirus pandemic is fuelling a new problem: a surge in plant poaching. The country's lockdown earlier this year, one of the strictest in the world, helped drive demand for greenery among Filipinos who were longing for nature. Though restrictions have eased, the craze for gardening has continued, and officials say sellers are digging up endangered species in the mountains and forests. Carnivorous pitcher plants and bantigue trees, used to cultivate bonsai, had become especially popular. Officials have vowed to crack down on poachers, promising to step up patrols of forests and warning that people could face hefty fines, and jail sentences of up to 12 years if they collect wild plants that are classified as critically endangered.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/14/coronavirus-pandemic-fuelling-plant-poaching-philippines>

423) *September 14.* A 10-year-old boy has become Covid-19's latest fatality on **GUAM**, as the island struggles to rein in an outbreak that threatens to overwhelm its public health system. The boy, who had underlying health conditions, died on Sunday night at the US Naval Hospital, 10 days after contracting the virus. He is the 26th person to die from Covid on Guam. More than 1,890 infections have been confirmed – 249 of them US military service members – on an island of just 166,000 people. Testing has found Guam's Covid-positive rate at 10%.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/14/guam-boy-10-dies-as-covid-outbreak-threatens-countrys-health-system>

424) *September 14.* **NORFOLK ISLAND** pitched as quarantine-free 'overseas' holiday destination for Queenslanders amid coronavirus. The island went into lockdown when a state of emergency was declared on March 16. It reopened on July 10. While Norfolk is yet to record any cases of COVID-19, measures to prevent the virus reaching the island have come at a cost. Tourism is a major economic driver on Norfolk Island, which 1,750 people call home.



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-14/norfolk-island-overseas-holidays-for-queenslanders-coronavirus/12660502>

425) *September 14*. Ahead of this month's U.N. General Assembly, the Alliance of Small Island States (**AOSIS**) has stepped up diplomatic pressure, calling on donor governments and development banks to provide debt relief, aid and climate finance for its members, which include 44 small island and low-lying coastal developing states. Lois Young, Belize's permanent representative to the United Nations and chairwoman of AOSIS, told journalists island nations were already weighed down by unsustainably high debt levels before the COVID-19 crisis, and now the situation was worse. "SIDS are sinking, and it's not due to just the sea level rise and climate change. We are actually sinking in debt," she said. "COVID and the collapse of the tourism sector - basically, they just pushed us over the edge." In a statement on debt, released in late June, AOSIS members said their economies - many of them reliant on tourism for up to 40% of GDP - were "in freefall". Some would see their gross domestic product contract by 8-15% or more in the second half of 2020, it predicted. The crunch would reverse development "by decades", and without action to relieve the financial pressure, SIDS risked "a protracted debt crisis", it warned. The document, which is the basis for ongoing diplomatic negotiations, noted that SIDS' external debt reached \$50.4 trillion in 2019, up from \$29.3 trillion in 2009. The island states' external debt rose from 51% of their combined GDP in 2009 to 61% a decade later, before the pandemic hit.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20200914163706-oqc36>

[https://www.aosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/AOSIS-Statement-on-Debt\\_verJune-29.pdf](https://www.aosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/AOSIS-Statement-on-Debt_verJune-29.pdf)

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12271.doc.htm>

426) *September 15*. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended a world embroiled in chaos, unleashing catastrophic health, social and economic consequences along with irreparable harm to humanity, according to an UN-backed report. *A World in Disorder*, issued by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), an independent monitoring and accountability body which prepares for global health crises, notes that the coronavirus has killed close to a million people, impacting health systems, food supplies, and economies. The new report provides a harsh assessment of the global COVID-19 response, calling it "a collective failure to take pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response seriously and prioritize it accordingly".

<https://www.developmentaid.org/#!/news-stream/post/74086/countries-must-get-their-hands-dirty-to-stem-covid-and-prevent-future-pandemics>

[https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2020/09/GPMB\\_AR\\_2020\\_EN.pdf](https://www.developmentaid.org/api/frontend/cms/file/2020/09/GPMB_AR_2020_EN.pdf)

427) *September 15*. Restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic mean there are hardly any boats and ferries around **HONG KONG**. The vulnerable Chinese white dolphin is making a comeback as a result, with sightings up about 30%.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-china-54157254>



428) *September 16*. Across the world, coronavirus lockdowns have transformed city streets into eerie ghost towns, empty of noise and disruption. But in the **PHILIPPINES** province of Cavite, an unbearable din has been echoing through some areas, as residents turn to karaoke to pass away the hours spent under curfew. The racket caused by karaoke, a favourite pastime in the country, has prompted the governor of the province to urge residents to report noisy neighbours through a special hotline.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/cut-out-karaoke-to-help-covid-fight-urges-philippines-governor>

429) *September 17*. The Colombian Caribbean island of **SAN ANDRES** is experiencing a spike in coronavirus, with total cases more than doubling from 115 to 293 between August 30 and September 15. Bodies are now stacked up in the morgue because the island's sole funeral home was forced to close when staff fell seriously ill.

<https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/world-news/coronavirus-bodies-piling-up-caribbean-22699477>

430) *September 17*. The Greek island of **CHIOS** has had about 30 confirmed coronavirus cases since the outbreak began, and no deaths. When someone tests positive in a small, close-knit community on a Greek island, privacy is the first thing to go. Even though the gossip and loss of privacy upset people on the island, its small size, and close social and familial ties, have made one vital part of curbing infections easier - contact tracing. While some countries have set up anonymous, remote call centers operated by hundreds of students and part-time workers to do the arduous task of contact tracing, on Chios, the job is done quickly by five police officers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/17/world/europe/greece-chios-coronavirus.html>

431) *September 17*. In Tasmania the first regular passenger flights between Hobart and **KING & FLINDERS ISLANDS** will start operating by the end of the month to help businesses struggling with COVID-19 border closures. The State Government has reached an agreement with the flight operator Sharp Airlines to underwrite flights at less than 70 per cent capacity.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-17/tasmania-island-flights-for-covid-19-affected-tourism-business/12674212>

432) *September 17*. Hobbled by the COVID-19 pandemic since March, **MADAGASCAR** tourism industry took its first step toward recovery. On Sept. 5, the quasi-governmental agency Madagascar National Parks reopened all 43 protected areas under its direct responsibility. The government authorized the reopening of all natural areas and cultural sites starting the following day.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/09/madagascar-reopens-national-parks-shuttered-by-covid-19/>

433) *September 18*. New fear grips Europe as cases top 30m worldwide. More than 940,000 have died with Covid-19 since the outbreak began in China late last year. The US, India and Brazil have the most confirmed cases, but there is a renewed spike in infections across Europe and many countries are now bracing for a second wave of

the pandemic as winter approaches. Outside Europe, Israel brings in a second nationwide lockdown later on Friday - the first nation to do so.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-54199825>

434) *September 18*. As the cruise and travel industry works to regain its footing while the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic continues its global march, limited cruises quietly restarted in the **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** in August. This remote, bucket-list destination could very well provide a framework for cruises to restart in other parts of the world. Located roughly 621 miles (1,000 kilometers) off the Pacific coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos is no stranger to cruise tourism. Roughly 70 ships ply these waters on a regular basis, serving as the easiest and most direct way to experience some of the 19 islands that make up the collective known as the Galapagos. These ships, though, are mostly small vessels carrying fewer than 50 passengers. Only a handful of ships are certified to carry 100 passengers, the maximum allowable under Galapagos regulations.

<https://www.cruisecritic.co.uk/news/5605/>

435) *September 20*. The World Health Organization (WHO) has agreed rules for the testing of African herbal remedies to fight Covid-19. Sound science would be the sole basis for safe and effective traditional therapies to be adopted, it said. Any traditional remedies that are judged effective could be fast-tracked for large-scale manufacturing. The president of **MADAGASCAR** has been promoting an untested product he says can cure the disease despite the WHO warning against using untested remedies. The WHO said the new rules were aimed at helping and empowering scientists in Africa to conduct proper clinical trials.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-54225118>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53484298>

436) *September 21*. From mass tourism to a deserted destination: the island paradise of **BALI** has to reinvent itself in the Corona crisis. Well known Kuta Beach is hardly recognizable. Where the sun worshippers from all over the world usually cavort, masseuses offer their services and vendor's trays sell sarongs and ice-cold Bintang beer, there has been a tough lull since March. More than half of Bali's economy depends on the tourism sector, most Balinese work here, directly or indirectly. No wonder, according to the local statistics office, more than six million international guests visited the "Island of Gods" last year, which is only about 5700 square kilometers in size - that is about one and a half times the size of Mallorca. The Vice-Governor, Cok Ace, already calculated in early summer that Bali would lose 9.7 trillion Indonesian Rupees every month due to the pandemic - more than 550 million euros. June, July and August are usually considered the high season for sun, culture and party lovers from Australia, China or Europe. In a direct comparison: While 600,000 foreign guests were counted in June 2019, this June the figure was 32. Plans to reopen Bali to foreign tourists after September 11th had to be rejected in August. Until at least the beginning of 2021, the border will remain sealed. Precaution is better than indulgence: "Bali must not fail in the revival of tourism, because this could damage Indonesia's image in the world," warned Bali Governor Wayan Koster.

At the same time, demands are growing louder that Bali must become more independent of tourism. This would also be a chance for a more sustainable new

beginning. Because the boom also had a flip side: Mass tourism and garbage, commerce and binge drinking. Apart from a few idyllic places off the tourist trail, Bali was no longer the tranquil hippie and surfer paradise of the 1970s. Many have turned to agriculture. Governor Koster also pointed out the great potential of Balinese agricultural products already in July - especially with regard to tropical fruits. "Salak (snakeskin fruit) is already in great demand, and we are also preparing a market for dragon fruit." In general, after so many setbacks, Koster wants to put Bali's economy on more pillars in the future than just tourism, including the innovation sector and the manufacturing industry.

<https://www.tourism-review.com/bali-is-not-a-mass-tourism-destination-anymore-news11684>

437) *September 21*. A coalition of 156 countries has agreed a "landmark" deal to enable the rapid and equitable global distribution of any new coronavirus vaccines to 3% of participating countries' populations, to protect vulnerable healthcare systems, frontline health workers and those in social care settings. The Covid-19 vaccine allocation plan – co-led by the World Health Organization and known as Covax – has been set up to ensure that the research, purchase and distribution of any new vaccine is shared equally between the world's richest countries and those in the developing world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/sep/21/landmark-moment-156-countries-agree-to-covid-vaccine-allocation-deal>

438) *September 22*. **RATHLIN ISLAND**, a small L-shaped bit of land off the coast of Northern Ireland, hasn't had any cases of coronavirus since going into lockdown in March.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-54229679>

439) *September 22*. Just a dozen countries have recorded no cases of COVID-19. Ten of them are **PACIFIC** island nations. How did they do it? One strategy has been central to their virus-free status: each country's government quickly closed borders to international travel at the start of the pandemic.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/oceania/only-12-countries-are-free-of-covid-10-of-them-in-the-pacific-20200919-p55x7u.html>

440) *September 23*. Despite being at opposite ends of the Earth, **ICELAND** and **NEW ZEALAND** have many similarities. Both are small island nations, heavily reliant on tourism and currently led by young female prime ministers. Both have also been commended for their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, characterised by science-informed policy and a high degree of public trust. At the moment, Iceland and New Zealand have some of the lowest COVID-19 deaths per capita among OECD countries (2.83 and 0.51 per 100,000 population, respectively, compared with an OECD average of 24.01 per 100,000). Both have been rated in the top 14 safest countries in the world for COVID-19. But since the first cases were identified in each country in late February 2020, the two nations have taken different pathways in their COVID-19 responses. What lessons can we learn from their journeys so far?

<https://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/73736>

441) *September 23*. With the coronavirus devastating jobs across **INDONESIA**, desperate workers in the restive Papua region are flocking to illegal gold mines as the soaring price of the precious metal overrides the risk to their lives and the environment.

<https://www.24matins.uk/topnews/int/pandemic-panners-indonesians-hunt-for-gold-in-desperate-times-245170>

442) *September 24*. Few countries are living up to their promises of a “green recovery” from the coronavirus crisis, with hundreds of billions of dollars likely to be spent on economic rescue packages that increase greenhouse gas emissions, research has found.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/23/few-countries-living-up-to-green-recovery-promises-analysis>

443) *September 24*. The **SHETLAND, ORKNEY** and **WESTERN ISLES** councils have teamed up to seek talks with the Scottish Government over the possibility of a more localised approach to coronavirus restrictions for the islands. There is a feeling that some of the new restrictions imposed in Scotland earlier this week in response to a rise in infections are unfair for areas of the country where there are fewer cases of Covid-19. This is particularly relevant for the ban on people visiting homes for social purposes. Generally people can now only socialise outside or in public indoor places like cafes, restaurants and pubs.

<https://www.shetnews.co.uk/2020/09/24/island-councils-want-local-approach-to-covid-restrictions/>

444) *September 24*. The subtropical island of **MAURITIUS**, with a multiethnic population of about 1.3 million people, also has one of the highest prevalences of diabetes worldwide, a condition linked to the severity of COVID-19. Despite the challenges in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic, Mauritius scored a very high mark on the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Stringency Index in the middle of April, 2020. In part, this success was due to a prompt and consistent governmental strategy.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(20\)30336-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(20)30336-3/fulltext)

445) *September 25*. Three new cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed in the **WESTERN ISLES**, the first positive test results since June. The islands have the lowest cumulative total of cases in Scotland, currently 10 once three false positive results are removed from the figures.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-54295032>

446) *September 25*. The global coronavirus death toll could hit two million before an effective vaccine is widely used, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned. Dr Mike Ryan, the WHO's emergencies head, said the figure could be higher without concerted international action. Almost one million people have died with Covid-19 worldwide since the disease first emerged in China late last year. Virus infections continue to rise, with 32 million cases confirmed globally. The start of a second surge of coronavirus infections has been seen in many countries in the northern hemisphere as winter approaches.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-54303628>

447) *September 26*. Leaders from the **CARIBBEAN**, in pre-recorded addresses to the UN General Assembly, stressed that their small economies are largely dependent on one or just a few industries, and called for strengthened global cooperation and financing mechanisms to overcome the health crisis sparked by the coronavirus pandemic and recover from its massive socio-economic fallout.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073932>

448) *September 28*. What was meant to be the first in a new post-lockdown era of cruises around the **GREEK ISLANDS** has fallen victim to the reality of travel in the coronavirus age after crew members tested positive for the virus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/crew-first-post-lockdown-greek-cruise-contract-coronavirus-maltese>

449) *September 29*. The full scale of the economic impact of Covid-19 on the **SCOTTISH ISLAND** of Arran has been revealed in a new independent report by the Fraser of Allander Institute, commissioned by North Ayrshire Council.

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/New-report-shows-Arran-requires-national-support-to-combat-%27long-term-scarring%27-of-Covid-19.aspx>

450) *September 29*. Ministers of Health from seven small **AFRICAN** island states today signed an agreement to jointly procure drugs and vaccines in a bid to improve quality and access to medicines and other health products.

<https://www.afro.who.int/news/african-island-states-launch-joint-medicines-procurement-initiative>

451) *September 30*. The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged **MAINE ISLANDS** fishermen and coastal communities in an unprecedented way. Diminished demand for seafood has left Maine's marine economy at risk. The Island Institute and Luke's Lobster have formed a strategic partnership and are leveraging more than \$2.5 million in funding and shared financial resources to build new markets for Maine's premium seafood that will drive economic activity in coastal communities.

<https://www.islandinstitute.org/2020/09/30/island-institute-and-lukes-lobster-partner-to-energize-maines-marine-economy/>

452) *September 30*. The socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is heavy and multi-sectoral, marked by an increase in inequality, with the brunt of the pandemic borne mostly by the poorest and most vulnerable. Under the most severe projection, coronavirus would increase Indonesia's poverty rate from 9.2% in September 2019 to 12.4% by the end of 2020, implying that 8.5 million more people will be pushed into poverty by the end of 2020. With the failure of ecotourism in the wake of Covid-19, safeguarding community well-being requires more focus on diversification of sustainable livelihoods, and a sound strategy for the prevention of human-wildlife conflict. Forest-edge communities in **NORTH SUMATRA** are on the front lines when it comes to nature conservation efforts, and require greater support and social protection from the government and NGOs.



<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/09/in-sumatra-forest-edge-communities-must-be-at-center-of-conservation-efforts-commentary/>

453) *October 1*. When Covid-19 hit, the **FLORIDA KEYS** national marine sanctuary was locked down for six months and not a single cruise ship has plowed its shallow and heavily used channel, leaving locals in relative peace and with clear waters many say they have not seen in decades. A group of local residents would like to keep it this way and formed the Key West Committee for Safer Cleaner Ships, with the goal of shrinking the footprint of cruise ship tourism in Key West. They wanted to limit the community's exposure to Covid-19 and, frankly, to what they saw as destructive tourism. They collected enough signatures to get three referendum questions on the November ballot. One limits the size of ships to much smaller vessels, another limits the number of passengers who can disembark in Key West, and a third prioritizes ships with good environmental records.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/01/florida-keys-cruise-ship-ban-covid-19>

454) *October 1*. Five welders visiting the **ISLE OF MAN** from England for work have been jailed after breaking the island's coronavirus quarantine rules. The men, from Doncaster in South Yorkshire, were permitted to visit the island to work on the Manx Electric Railway. Under quarantine rules, they were permitted to travel between their hotel accommodation and workplace only. But the group were reported to police for buying alcohol from a supermarket. The island's border remains closed to non-residents unless they have been given special permission.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-54360825>

455) *October 2*. For **ALASKA**, summertime means cruise ships. Lots of cruise ships. The 2020 season was expected to commence with a record-breaking deluge of 1.4 million tourists and glacier gazers that would effectively triple the state's scant population of 730,000. Once the pandemic hit, that number effectively dropped to zero. Yet although the economy is being decimated by the reduction in tourist vessels, the state's humpback whales are some of the few locals actually enjoying the silence. Dr Michelle Fournet, director of the Sound Science Research Collective and research fellow at Cornell University, has been listening in on whale conversations for 10 years, but never before has she seen a summer like this.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/02/humpback-whales-sing-alaska-covid-summer-researchers>

456) *October 2*. In **GREENLAND**, the tourism season - for what it was this year - is essentially over. That made this week's decision to re-implement a mandatory quarantine for people entering the country abroad less painful than it otherwise would have been. The new rules, which took effect on Wednesday, require anyone entering the country to quarantine for up to 14 days. They may end their isolation after as few as five days if they test negative for COVID-19. During quarantine, people may shop for food and other essentials provided they wear a face mask and observe social distancing measures. That will make the situation less of a bother for residents, but losing even five days is likely to be unacceptable for vacationers.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/greenland-reimposes-traveler-quarantines-in-a-bid-to-remain-coronavirus-free/>



457) *October 3.* **SOLOMON ISLANDS** have recorded their first case of Covid-19. The case was a student who had been repatriated from the Philippines earlier in the week.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/427539/solomon-islands-has-first-case-of-covid-19>

458) *October 4.* **LORD HOWE ISLAND**, 600 kilometres off the east coast of Australia, has been closed to tourists since March 21 to keep coronavirus out. And its 350 residents have been taking advantage of having the pristine waters and sub-tropical forest hiking trails all to themselves. With only one doctor on the island and limited medical facilities, the NSW Government made the public health order to protect elderly residents, the oldest of whom is 98. But with infections in NSW flatlining, the island paradise has opened up again, with the first visitors flying in on private plane on Friday. The curator of the Lord Howe Island Museum Ian Hutton said the long period of isolation had been good for the island - and for many residents.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-04/lord-howe-island-reopens-after-six-month-covid-closure/12723306>

459) *October 7.* Even as they gradually began tiptoeing out of months-long lockdowns earlier this year, many countries – fearing travellers might fuel new COVID-19 outbreaks – opted to keep border restrictions in place. However, the **MALDIVES** decided to take a different path and on July 15 threw open its borders to everyone. Visitors would not need negative results for entry, the tourism-dependent island nation declared, and would not be subject to quarantine measures of any kind – a policy some in the tourism sector called “courageous” and also “a little bit crazy”. To prepare for the new arrivals, the government built intensive care units and scaled up testing facilities in several regions. For their part, the resorts established unprecedented safety and hygiene measures. Some even conducted PCR tests for their guests on arrival, until the government – alarmed by minor outbreaks on a few resorts – made a U-turn in August and said that visitors would need to have a negative test taken within 72 hours before they would be allowed in. On September 15, the World Travel and Tourism Council certified the Maldives – a country of 450,000 people that has so far recorded more than 10,000 cases but only 34 deaths – a safe destination. Even so, some islands continued to conduct tests for their guests on arrival.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/7/the-maldives-opened-its-borders-to>

460) *October 8.* Researchers have found a surprising correlation in Brazil, the U.S. and Germany: areas with more pigs also have higher COVID-19 infection rates. The widespread theory that the SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, spread from a wet market in Wuhan, China, was challenged in research published in May. According to that study, the virus had been circulating in China before that, and the first animal-to-human transmission occurred before the outbreak linked to the Huanan market. Experts from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) also said the initial transmission of SARS-CoV-2 did not occur at the Huanan market, which served instead as the site where it was further disseminated. Scientists have also discounted the theory that the virus was genetically engineered in a lab and then somehow got out. What many experts do believe, though, is that there was likely an intermediary host between bats, where the virus is suspected to originate from, and humans. China is the world’s largest pork producer, and Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, is one of China’s five largest pork producers.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/10/research-links-industrial-pig-farming-and-virus-outbreaks/>

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.02.25.20027953v1.full.pdf>

461) *October 9*. Last year, more than nine million tourists visited **PHUKET**, Thailand's second-most popular destination after Bangkok. Today, nearly all the island's 3,000 hotels are closed and the main town of Patong has become a "ghost town", says local tycoon Preechawut Keesin, who owns five nightclubs and around 600 hotel rooms. Swimming pools are empty, chairs are stacked high in deserted restaurants and normally packed beaches are so quiet they are even seeing rare species of sea turtles arriving to nest. Thailand has so far remained relatively unscathed from the global outbreak with around 3,600 confirmed cases and just a few dozen deaths. But the kingdom's decision to concentrate on beating the virus has dealt a brutal blow to the economy, which is expected to contract 7-9% this year and leave millions unemployed.

<https://www.thephuketnews.com/ghost-island-phuket-hunkers-down-in-tourist-free-thailand-77597.php>

462) *October 9*. Many communities have been hit hard by the coronavirus crisis, but for some, such as the Chao Lay, the global slowdown in travel and tourism has also given them some breathing space. The positive side effects of the pandemic for such communities are, however, few and far between. The term Chao Lay is used to refer to three Indigenous groups (the Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi) who live on the popular Andaman Sea coast and islands of southern **THAILAND**. Unlike the other groups, the Moken, or 'sea gypsies', did not use to live in the coastal villages but on their boats, maintaining a semi-nomadic lifestyle for generations, sailing the seas during the dry season and returning to their settlements on the Surin Islands of Thailand during the monsoon season. But over the years, successive laws passed by the Thai authorities have increasingly encroached on their territories and restricted their ability to travel by sea, impacting both their way of life and their livelihoods, as they are no longer able to fish where they please.

<https://www.equaltimes.org/the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-put#.YA1xxWdCeUk>

463) *October 10*. Three **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** that produce whisky - Arran, Islay, and Jura - were completely sealed off during the British lockdown. The only ferries that arrived were delivering supplies and the only people allowed off-island were those with medical emergencies. As a result there were no cases of Covid-19 on the whisky islands, even though Glasgow and Cumbria on the mainland nearby were badly hit. That is not to say the islands didn't suffer. As non-essential industries, all distilleries in Scotland were obliged to close by March 29, 2020. This inevitably affected the local economy. Another post-lockdown problem is an actual shortage of whisky on some of these islands this autumn. Although all aspects of production are required by law to take place on the home island, the filled whisky barrels are always sent to bottling plants on the mainland. So islanders are finding themselves in the bizarre situation of having millions of litres of whisky sitting in casks in island warehouses and yet cannot buy a bottle in local supermarket.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/scotland-whisky-islands-covid/index.html>

464) *October 12*. A year ago, the **BALI** environmentalist community was cautiously celebrating the cancellation of a massive land reclamation project planned for Benoa Bay. The permit for the 30 trillion rupiah (\$2 billion) development plan to build 12 artificial islands - complete with a golf course, theme park, and even a Formula One race course - expired before the project could obtain government approval. On Oct. 10, 2019, the Bali governor designated Benoa Bay a conservation area for religious and cultural activities and artisanal fisheries, protected from reclamation of any kind. For a brief moment after five years of relentless protests, it appeared that Benoa Bay would remain untouched. Barely 11 months later, the Balinese legislature gathered discreetly during the COVID-19 pandemic and approved a zoning plan for the area that would permit sand mining and an expansion of the harbor and airport.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/10/in-bali-the-pandemic-unravels-a-hard-won-campaign-to-save-benoa-bay/>

465) *October 12*. A billionaire tech entrepreneur with a home on **HAWAII** island has coordinated a donation of 1 million face masks to slow the spread of the coronavirus there.

<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-san-francisco-hawaii-marc-benioff-california-52c0a5fb7abf1110a8b64cb60e713c3f>

466) *October 12*. With less than 72 hours to go before tourists start arriving in **HAWAII** under the new COVID-19 test protocol, the state's process of figuring out how to proceed seemed more like a demolition derby than an organized policy review.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/10/what-the-heck-is-going-on-with-neighbor-island-travel-rules/>

467) *October 12*. Bat experts have launched a campaign, Don't Blame Bats, to dispel unfounded fears and myths about bats, which are threatening conservation. They say bats are some of the most misunderstood and undervalued animals on the planet. Long the target of disdain, persecution and cultural prejudice, they have been blamed for a host of evils visited upon humans. And fears and myths about bats have only intensified in the time of Covid. The precise origin of the virus that has wreaked such havoc across the world has not been pinned down. But the vast majority of scientists agree that it crossed into humans from an animal species, most likely a bat. That doesn't mean bats are to blame; it's our increasing interference with these wild creatures that's at the root of the problem.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54246473>

468) *October 13*. **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** will fit all foreign workers coming into the country with an electronic ankle monitor for the duration of their Covid-19 quarantine. PNG has struggled to control outbreaks in the capital, Port Moresby, and western province, and charter flights carrying foreign workers run the risk of spreading the virus across the country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/13/papua-new-guinea-to-fit-ankle-monitors-to-arrivals-in-covid-quarantine>

469) *October 13*. Coastal fisheries in the **PACIFIC** islands have become a food and livelihood lifeline to many people who have lost jobs, especially in urban centres and

tourism, following COVID-19 lockdowns and border closures. Now governments and development organisations are trying to meet the crisis-driven survival needs of here and now, while also considering the long-term consequences on near shore marine resources and habitats.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/10/how-the-pacific-islands-are-balancing-covid-19-survival-demands-on-coastal-fisheries-with-sustainable-management/>

470) *October 13.* There have been many proposals made to deal with the fallout of the Covid-19 on the **PACIFIC** islands and for how ‘big brothers’ Australia and New Zealand could assist in the recovery. The suggestions include a stimulus package from Australia and New Zealand, an increase in the number of seasonal workers from the Pacific to these countries and supplies of the Covid-19 related medical resources such as testing kits and vaccines when they become available. These were part of renewed calls to strengthen regional cooperation to deal with the socio-economic effects of the pandemic and to minimise its immediate and future impacts.

<https://devpolicy.org/responding-to-covid-19-time-for-pacific-governments-and-donors-to-refocus-on-governance-20201013-2/>

471) *October 13.* Car-sharing has been a factor in the spread of Covid-19 during an outbreak in the **WESTERN ISLES**, the local health board has said. Cases on the islands have risen to more than 50 in recent weeks, with the majority linked to Uist.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-54522374>

472) *October 14.* In this new Covid-19 world, environmental and climate crisis defenders in the **PACIFIC** are developing new ways to cope and operate under the pandemic constraints.

<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL2010/S00069/how-pacific-environmental-defenders-are-coping-with-the-covid-pandemic.htm>

473) *October 14.* All the locals knew **FURTADA ISLAND** just west of Rio de Janeiro was teeming with cats. They left food and even brought tourists. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit, and human support dried up, resulting in a gruesome scene witnessed by fishermen: a group of cats devouring others’ corpses.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/on-brazils-tropical-island-of-cats-virus-led-to-starvation-island-virus-island-cats-cats-b1039609.html>

474) *October 15.* Island states like the **MARSHALL ISLANDS** are drowning in debt and banking on an international lifeline. Marshallese are resilient people and we have thrived for thousands of years on low-lying atolls, drawing strength from close-knit communities to face innumerable challenges – an exacting environment, colonialism, World War II, nuclear testing, and climate change. After months battling a climate-related dengue fever outbreak in 2019, we closed our borders early in the pandemic to protect our overstretched frontline workers and our most vulnerable. The global pandemic underscored a lesson my people learned long ago: we are only as strong as the most vulnerable in our society. Today, our borders remain closed and the country COVID-free, though at great cost. The projected impact on tax revenues, employment and job loss alongside a gutting of fisheries revenues leaves the Republic of the Marshall Islands facing a fiscal shock larger than any experienced before.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20201015145531-r1ot1/>

475) *October 18.* **SCOTTISH ISLAND** communities could be given special treatment from the mainland to allow isolated communities return to some form of normality – with locals pointing to testing on arrival as a potential solution.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18802742.coronavirus-scotland-orkney-plea-exempt-lockdown/>

476) *October 18.* Charles Darwin documented the rich biota of the **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** in the early 1800s. In more recent times, an unofficial network of local tour boats and fishing vessels has worked to protect it, by keeping an eye out for those who might harm the marine bounty. But the pandemic has grounded this surveillance fleet, creating an opening for outsiders. Earlier this summer, more than 300 Chinese fishing vessels - many designed to hold 1,000 tons of catch - waited at the marine preserve's border, ready to snatch up sea life as it migrated south toward the waters off Peru and Chile.

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2020-10-18/galapagos-islands-threats-illegal-fishing-pandemic>

477) *October 20.* The British Crown Dependency of **JERSEY**, which had banned all but essential travel to the island in late March due to the coronavirus pandemic, decided to reopen its borders by July 3 to accommodate airlines' schedules. Ongoing travel restrictions could have had potentially devastating effects on the island's economy, which relies heavily on financial services, agriculture and tourism, and created additional hardships for residents, many of whom had been separated from loved ones for months. To reopen safely, the island needed to find a way to test incoming travellers for COVID-19 and isolate those who tested positive, as well as anyone they were in direct contact with. Jersey government officials decided in early June that the island would have a booking and testing system in place by the beginning of July - less than a month away. Jersey had an existing system designed for booking patients for tests in a medical setting, but it wasn't geared for customers to input their own information or to handle large numbers of people quickly. So they designed a solution and turned to Microsoft for help to deliver it. They needed a mobile solution that was fast, easy to use, able to process large numbers of travellers quickly and adaptable to any testing scenario. Microsoft sprung into action, quickly mobilizing a team of about half a dozen people from across four continents, to provide the needed expertise and enable a round-the-clock work schedule to meet the tight deadline. Using Microsoft Teams to communicate and share work, the team put together a demo in four days, and within two weeks built an end-to-end solution for registering, booking, testing and tracking travellers coming into Jersey.

<https://news.microsoft.com/en-gb/2020/10/20/on-the-island-of-jersey-a-race-to-safely-reopen-the-border-and-protect-a-community/>

478) *October 20.* The **HAWAII** state Health Department reported four COVID-19 cases on Lanai, the first confirmed infections diagnosed on the island since the pandemic began. Last week, the governor approved Maui County mayor's request to allow unrestricted travel between Maui, Molokai and Lanai because the three islands are in the same county. Lanai residents say that was a huge mistake.



<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2020/10/20/coronavirus-cases-reported-lanai-first-confirmed-infections-island/>

479) *October 21*. Amid the recent spread of the new coronavirus on the Japanese island of **MIYAKOJIMA**, part of Okinawa Prefecture, the prefectural government called on residents to refrain from the *otori* practice, in which participants drink *awamori* distilled liquor, a specialty of the prefecture, in turn from the same glass at ceremonies and gatherings, saying that such a practice poses an infection risk. This traditional drinking custom is believed to date back to the age of the Ryukyu Kingdom, which ruled the region between the 15th and 19th centuries.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/10/21/national/okinawa-traditional-drinking-custom-coronavirus/>

480) *October 22*. **SPAIN** and **FRANCE** became the first European countries to record more than one million coronavirus cases, as the continent's outbreak continues to spiral. The new spikes have caused governments across the continent to reintroduce harsh restrictions on cities, regions, and entire countries.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/spain-france-first-european-countries-more-than-million-coronavirus-cases-2020-10?r=US&IR=T>

481) *October 22*. The questions are asked quietly, but urgently: “Kava, do you have any? Do you know where to get any? Have you heard what they are paying for it in Sydney?” When Pasifika meet in **AUSTRALIA**, it is often kava that dominates: now, it is the absence of it. The traditional brew, made from the kava plant and central to so many of the Pacific’s social interactions, is in vanishingly short supply, an unlikely, unhappy, corollary of Covid shutdowns. And the shortage is harming businesses across the region. In Pacific island nations with little Covid spread, but strict lockdowns and curfews, the traditional late-night sessions have been dramatically curtailed. In **FIJI**, where the drink is known as *yaqona*, there was even a temporary ban on sharing the *bilo*, the communal cup from which the kava is traditionally sipped.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/23/calls-for-a-covid-kava-bubble-as-supply-from-pacific-to-australia-dries-up>

482) *October 22*. Tourism is reduced, but turtle nesting success may be up, or down, on certain islands as a consequence of pandemic lockdowns. The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Sea Turtle program surveys 18 miles of beach between **SANIBEL ISLAND** and Redfish Pass. This year, staff documented record loggerhead nest counts, totaling 926. During the month of May, the false crawl rate was 23 percent lower than the same time last year. While the beaches they monitor weren’t closed, beach parking was prohibited from March 18 through June 1 and there were state-issued stay-at-home orders. In Costa Rica, where hundreds of thousands of nests appear annually along its beaches, the lack of tourism has had a big impact, says Jimena Gutiérrrez, a Sea Turtle Conservancy biologist living in Tortuguero National Park. “Because of COVID, one of the biggest observations that we have is the increasing levels of poaching on the beach,” she says. “[Normally] the turtles are conserved because we have people that come to see them. Maybe in the long run, we will see good numbers because there is less boat traffic in the ocean, but right now reduced tourism is a downside for the turtles here.” In the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**, Parque Nacional Jaragua and Isla Saona attract hundreds of nests every



year. Yolanda León, a biologist and research professor at Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, notes that spots like Isla Saona have doubled their nests in recent years thanks to beach patrollers who help deter poachers. But with fewer tourism dollars supporting local workers amid the pandemic, she worries for the conservationists as well as the turtles.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/2020/10/florida-could-see-a-sea-turtle-baby-boom-thanks-to-pandemic/>

483) *October 24.* The population of **GALAPAGOS** penguins and flightless cormorants, two species endemic to the islands, has seen a record increase, according to study carried out by the park and the Charles Darwin Foundation in September. The park said the presence of the La Nina climatic phenomenon, which helps to provide more food for the birds, has contributed to the increase in their populations. Another factor was the coronavirus pandemic, which has limited disturbances to nesting areas because of the drop in tourism.

<https://phys.org/news/2020-10-galapagos-penguins-flightless-cormorants.html>

484) *October 24.* **FRENCH POLYNESIA** has recorded almost 700 new Covid-19 cases in the past two days, raising the total to 5859. The authorities said 2154 cases were active as the pandemic showed no sign of slowing. 20 people died while 78 were in hospital, including 17 in intensive care. All but 62 cases were detected after the borders were reopened in July and mandatory quarantine requirements were abolished to boost tourism. A nine-hour curfew is being reintroduced on order from Paris, but it has been adjusted by the French High Commission to apply to only Tahiti and Moorea.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/429103/tahiti-closes-in-on-6000-covid-19-cases>

485) *October 24.* Is **HAWAII** ready for visitors? Since Oct. 15, when state officials eased quarantine restrictions to allow visitors with recent negative COVID-19 test results, new arrivals have found emptier beaches, tidier parks and easier traffic. They have also encountered an island population that pays close attention to pandemic restrictions - perhaps because their state's economy is at stake, perhaps because of painful history.

<https://www.latimes.com/travel/story/2020-10-24/heres-oahu-after-6-months-without-tourists>

486) *October 26.* Western Australia's hard border has prompted an unprecedented tourism bonanza for **CHRISTMAS** and **COCOS ISLANDS** and reignited the debate over their tourism potential. The duty-free tropical Indian Ocean destinations are a four hour flight from Perth but included in WA's travel zone, which means people don't have to quarantine when returning to the mainland. Christmas Island Tourism Association chairperson Lisa Preston said the demands on the island's accommodation and infrastructure are a challenge, but no one is complaining. But the surge in tourism has also rekindled debate about Christmas Island's once premier resort and casino, which is now crumbling on the edge of a cliff above the crystal-clear waters, which surround the 60 million-year-old extinct volcano. Shut in 1998, the resort's accommodation has only been used intermittently to house federal government workers dealing with asylum seekers arriving by boat.

<https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/christmas-and-cocos-islands-covid-driven-booms-reignite-casino-debate-20201026-p568u1.html>

487) October 26. By harnessing the ancient practice of tapu, the Rapa Nui people of **EASTER ISLAND** were able to ward off the coronavirus soon after it penetrated their territory. It was sometime in early March when a passenger with Covid-19 landed at the world's most remote commercial airport, disembarked into Easter Island's sticky air and subsequently infected members of the small volcanic outcrop's indigenous Rapa Nui community. This 164-sq-km speck in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean is a Chilean territory famed for its 887 monolithic human figures, known as moai. But with just three ventilators to serve a population of 7,750, Mayor Pedro Edmunds Paoa made the tough decision to cancel all incoming flights beginning 16 March, effectively terminating the 2020 tourism season. Cases on the island grew to a total of just five thereafter, and by the end of April, the virus had been completely eradicated. While Easter Island's isolation 3,500km west of the Chilean coast certainly helped, Edmunds Paoa credits the island's success to one key containment measure: tapu, an ancient Polynesian tradition that's been passed down through generations. "Tapu is a sacred order to protect our health, to protect our life and to protect our elders and their ancient wisdom," he explained. "It's a form of discipline rooted in Polynesian culture that has to do with restrictions, but also respect." The mayor says that when he shut Easter Island off from the outside world, residents were divided between those who trusted him and others who knew it would ruin the tourism-based economy. "I had to come up with a way to unite us because the only enemy was the virus and the only way to confront that was to bring up the ancient concept of tapu."

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20201026-the-origin-of-the-word-taboo>

488) *October 26.* **MACKINAC ISLAND** is located in Lake Huron in the U.S. state of Michigan. A popular destination, which draws more than a million visitors a year, it locked down its 2020 tourism season on Sunday under steely cold skies. After skirting large outbreaks through the heart of summer, COVID-19 cases climbed to 53 Friday among the island's 500 year-round residents and what's left of its seasonal workforce.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/mackinac-island-empties-winter-covid-arrives-stay>

489) *October 29.* One of the last coronavirus-free sanctuaries in the world has been breached, with the US military base on Kwajalein Atoll importing two cases of Covid-19 into the remote **MARSHALL ISLANDS**.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/29/remote-marshall-islands-records-its-first-coronavirus-cases>

490) *October 29.* **TAIWAN** has reached a record 200 days without any domestically transmitted cases of Covid-19, underlining its success in keeping the virus under control as cases rise across much of the world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/29/taiwan-domestic-covid-19-infection>

491) *October 29.* The world is in an "era of pandemics" and unless the destruction of the natural world is halted they will emerge more often, spread more rapidly, kill

more people and affect the global economy with more devastating impact than ever before, according to a report from some of the world's leading scientists. The emergence of diseases such as Covid-19, bird flu and HIV from animals was entirely driven by the razing of wild places for farming and the trade in wild species, which brought people into contact with the dangerous microbes, the experts said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/29/protecting-nature-vital-pandemics-report-outbreaks-wild>

<https://www.ipbes.net/pandemics>

492) *October 30*. The first major Covid-19 outbreak in the **WESTERN ISLES** has been declared over by the local health board. More than 50 people were infected, one person died and more than 280 contacts were asked to self-isolate in the outbreak that affected South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula and saw the temporary closure of schools.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-54747817?>

493) *October 30*. The DreamWorks version of **MADAGASCAR** is exactly that, a fantasy. The island nation is no unpeopled paradise teeming with dancing lemurs, as depicted in the animated *Madagascar* film. On the contrary, almost all of its lemur species are being driven to extinction by humans. This World Lemur's Day, it is worth pointing out that the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis has emerged as a moment of reckoning for conservation efforts, exposing the risks of relying heavily on foreign revenue and not focusing enough on communities at the frontline of safeguarding biodiversity.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/10/lemurs-might-never-recover-from-covid-19-commentary/>

494) *October 31*. At the entrance to Taipei's Pride march on Saturday, Pearl Jain and Lance Xie held up a sign offering free hugs. Similar placards were waved above the pulsating crowd of 100,000 sweaty and bedazzled party goers along the parade route as **TAIWAN** enjoys victory over coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/31/hugs-sequins-and-rainbows-as-taiwan-enjoys-victory-over-virus>

495) *November 1*. **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** has approved nearly \$US3m from its threadbare budget for an as-yet-unidentified Covid-19 treatment – allocating the money to an unknown biomedical company that was formed in August. The prime minister, James Marape, has insisted the national executive council had not completed its approval process to engage a PNG company to find a treatment, but leaked cabinet documents appear to show 10.2m Kina (US\$2.85m) being awarded to Niugini BioMed Ltd for research into discovering a new treatment for Covid-19 infections from existing drugs.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/01/png-government-to-give-3m-to-unknown-firm-for-covid-treatment>

496) *November 1*. **ANTARCTICA** is Earth's one virus-free continent. This week, 40 men and women will emerge from quarantine and board the Royal Research Ship James Clark Ross as it prepares to sail from Harwich in Essex to the South Atlantic.

Their mission is straightforward. They will attempt to salvage scientific operations in Antarctica while also keeping it Covid-free.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/01/next-stop-antarctica-british-team-covid-free-coronavirus>

497) *November 1.* Traditional skills help people on the tourism-deprived **PACIFIC** islands survive the pandemic. Tourism normally provides one in four jobs in Vanuatu and one in three jobs in Cook Islands. It contributes between 20% and 70% of the GDP of countries spanning from Samoa and Vanuatu to Fiji and Cook Islands. But our research shows how people are surviving - and in some cases, thriving - in the face of significant loss of income. This is due in part to their reliance on customary knowledge, systems and practices.

<https://theconversation.com/traditional-skills-help-people-on-the-tourism-deprived-pacific-islands-survive-the-pandemic-148987>

<https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/15742>

498) *November 4.* In the **PACIFIC** region, COVID-19 has placed a magnifying glass on pre-existing environmental and social challenges. It has highlighted flaws in government policy, partnerships, and delivery of development and humanitarian services - including those of international NGOs.

<https://www.devex.com/news/covid-19-is-just-part-of-the-story-for-ngos-in-the-pacific-98454>

499) *November 5.* **INDONESIA** has fallen into its first recession in 22 years as the coronavirus pandemic continues to take it toll. South East Asia's biggest economy saw growth fall 3.49% in the third quarter of the year, compared to the same period in 2019.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54819898>

500) *November 6.* Hermit crab numbers in southern **THAILAND** have boomed as foreign tourists have stayed away – so much so that the national park authority is appealing for the public to donate extra shells for them to live in. The population of the crustaceans, which protect themselves by wearing and living inside the discarded shells of other animals, has exploded on some islands in the Mu Koh Lanta national park, and marine biologists believe the lack of tourists could be a factor.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/06/call-shell-donations-thailand-hermit-crabs-housing-crisis>

501) *November 6.* Ten months have passed since health officials cited Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market as ground zero for the COVID-19 pandemic - and a global debate over how the pandemic began has existed for nearly as long. But the public may soon learn answers as the World Health Organisation embarks on the final stages of a search for the coronavirus's origins.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/science-and-technology/2020/11/the-who-is-hunting-for-the-coronaviruss-origins-here-are-the-new>

502) *November 6.* The **MAINE ISLAND** of North Haven, which has a year-round population of just 357 people, has reported 5 cases of COVID-19. The island made national headlines in March when town officials passed an unprecedented ban on visitors and seasonal residents in a bid to protect the community from the spread of the virus. The short-lived ban lasted less than a week, and was enacted as town officials heard people who were not full-time residents were traveling there to ride out the coronavirus outbreak.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/11/06/news/midcoast/5-cases-of-covid-19-detected-on-small-maine-island/>

503) *November 8.* When the mayor of Roccafiiorita on the island of **SICILY** received a phone call in October informing him that an employee in his office had tested positive for Covid-19, his heart sank. Set among the forests at the foot of Mount Kalfa, Roccafiiorita is the smallest village in southern Italy. The average age of its 187 inhabitants is over 60. If Covid were to spread among the population, the village could disappear. Last week, the Italian government introduced a semi-lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus, after an average of over 30,000 new cases a day. Most attention has been directed towards large cities like Milan and Naples, but across the country thousands of small villages are fighting to stay alive.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/08/italy-tiny-villages-covid-threat>

504) *November 9.* Mutations in coronavirus have triggered culls of millions of farmed mink in **DENMARK**. Part of the country has been put under lockdown after Danish authorities found genetic changes they say might undermine the effectiveness of future Covid-19 vaccines. More than 200 people have been infected with mink-related coronavirus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-54842643>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/fashions-to-die-for-the-fur-trades-role-in-spreading-zoonotic-disease/>

505) *November 9.* The first effective coronavirus vaccine can prevent more than 90% of people from getting Covid-19, a preliminary analysis shows. The developers - Pfizer and BioNTech - described it as a "great day for science and humanity". Their vaccine has been tested on 43,500 people in six countries and no safety concerns have been raised. The companies plan to apply for emergency approval to use the vaccine by the end of the month. No vaccine has gone from the drawing board to being proven highly effective in such a short period of time.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54873105>

506) *November 9.* The prospect of a global green recovery from the coronavirus pandemic is hanging in the balance, as countries pour money into the fossil fuel economy to stave off a devastating recession. Meanwhile, promises of a low-carbon boost are failing to materialise. Only a handful of major countries are pumping rescue funds into low-carbon efforts such as renewable power, electric vehicles and energy efficiency.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/nov/09/revealed-covid-recovery-plans-threaten-global-climate-hopes>

507) *November 9.* New Zealand's **CHATHAM ISLANDS** might be the only place in the world experiencing overtourism right now. In a typical year, the Chathams - whose two main populated islands are Chatham Island and Pitt Island - get about 2,000 tourists. That compares to about 700 full-time residents, most of who live on Chatham Island, the largest of the archipelago. As New Zealand's borders remain mostly closed and locals are advised to not travel overseas at this time, the Chathams - about 500 miles east of the country's South Island - have become 2020's hottest getaway for Kiwis. Demand, though, is far outstripping supply. The islands' tourism manager estimates that there are 150 beds on the islands in a mix of hotels, lodges, guesthouses and local residences that list themselves on sites like Airbnb. Most property is privately owned, and camping is forbidden.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/chatham-islands-new-zealand-overtourism-intl-hnk/index.html>

508) *November 9.* New Zealand is inching closer towards establishing its first travel bubble, with the prime minister announcing a reconnaissance team will be heading to the **COOK ISLANDS** on Saturday. The Cook Islands has been declared Covid-19 free, and has been pleading for a travel bubble for months, saying its economy is being decimated by the complete lack of tourism – the main driver of its small economy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/09/new-zealand-to-send-team-to-investigate-cook-islands-travel-bubble>

509) *November 9.* The UNDP says the introduction of a Temporary Basic Income (TBI) for the world's poorest people including those in the **PACIFIC** could help slow the current surge in Covid-19 cases in the region. **TUVALU** is Covid-free but it was among first to adopt TBI as an incentive through a monthly payment to help 11,000 of its people to stay home for the duration of the partial lockdown or containment of the pandemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/430222/pacific-s-poorest-targetted-by-un-covid-19-relief-plan>

510) *November 9.* For residents of the tiny **MAINE ISLAND** of North Haven, the increase in virus cases is a sudden wake-up call. The extent of the disease on the island and the speed with which it has spread from person to person has been frightening for many.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/11/11/news/midcoast/how-the-tiny-island-of-north-haven-is-grappling-with-growing-covid-19-numbers/>

511) *November 11.* The Pacific nation of **VANUATU** has recorded its first case of coronavirus, after a citizen who was repatriated from the United States tested positive while in quarantine. Vanuatu had been among the last handful of countries in the world to have avoided the virus. Authorities have introduced a lockdown in the main island of Efate, banning travel to and from the island while contact tracing is underway. Vanuatu has also extended its mandatory quarantine period for international travellers from 14 days to 28 days.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-11/covid-free-pacific-nation-vanuatu-first-case-coronavirus/12871860>



512) *November 11*. The world's publicly financed development banks have pledged to tie together their efforts to rescue the global economy from the Covid-19 crisis and the climate emergency, using their financial muscle to assist a green recovery for poor countries. But the banks stopped short of pledging an end to fossil fuel finance, and did not set out firm targets for how much funding they would devote to a green recovery in a declaration signed on Thursday by 450 development banks worldwide.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/11/banks-around-world-in-joint-pledge-on-green-recovery-after-covid>

513) *November 12*. New infections and hospital admissions have surged in **SWEDEN** as the country battles a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic that officials had hoped its light-touch, anti-lockdown approach would mitigate. Anders Tegnell, the country's chief epidemiologist, has always denied the aim was rapid herd immunity, but to slow the virus enough for health services to cope. He has also, however, repeatedly said he expected Sweden's second wave to involve relatively fewer cases than countries that locked down, because of an expected higher level of immunity. In fact, all studies carried out so far suggest immunity in and around Stockholm is significantly lower than the national health agency predicted. Twenty per cent of Covid-19 tests in the capital last week were positive, compared with 16% and 8.4% in previous weeks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/12/covid-infections-in-sweden-surge-dashing-hopes-of-herd-immunity>

514) *November 13*. One of the first cruise ships to ply through **CARIBBEAN** waters since the pandemic began ended its trip early after five passengers tested positive for Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/12/caribbean-cruise-ship-coronavirus-seadream>

515) *November 17*. News that the Moderna vaccine – which still has to receive formal approval – has nearly 95% efficacy sent global stock markets higher and, coming on top of the similar recent announcement from the German/US collaboration BioNTech/Pfizer, injected some much-needed optimism about the possibility of a return to normal life.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/16/covid-vaccine-who-is-behind-the-moderna-breakthrough>

516) *November 18*. In the **PHILIPPINES**, a majority Catholic country, festive preparations are well and truly under way already. The country has one of the longest Christmas periods in the world, with celebrations beginning at the start of September and, for some, lasting as late as Valentine's Day. This year festivities will inevitably be different. On top of a ban on gatherings, and restrictions on church attendance, the economic impact of the coronavirus has left millions without work. The country has also faced three strong typhoons over recent weeks, including Vamco, which has killed at least 67 people as well as causing devastating flooding. Some are torn over whether to put up their decor or "tone down" celebrations given the difficulties facing the country, according to Ambeth Ocampo, a historian and author.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/18/philippine-tradition-of-long-christmas-survives-covid-and-typhoons>

517) *November 18.* **ST. PAUL ISLAND** in the Pribilofs has no confirmed cases of COVID-19, but the community isn't letting down its guard. The school year started with roughly 25% of students doing home-based education even though the school was open to students. As the year has progressed, most of those students have returned. But as in many remote areas in Alaska, St. Paul remains on high alert because the effects of returning to distance-based education in the small community of just 397 people could be particularly devastating.

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/11/18/st-paul-island-has-no-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-but-the-community-isnt-letting-down-its-guard/>

518) *November 18.* The **UNITED STATES** has seen more than 250,000 deaths due to Covid-19 as a new swath of data was released that pushed the stricken country over the grim landmark on Wednesday. The news comes amid record infections across the US, with the Trump administration repeatedly failing to get a grip on the Covid-19 crisis. Most recently Trump has refused to concede he lost the presidential election to Joe Biden who this week said "more people may die" if he continues to hamper his transition.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/18/us-passes-250000-deaths-from-coronavirus>

519) *November 19.* **CARIBBEAN** experts assessed the coronavirus's impact on the region in a webinar hosted by the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas. Owing in part to its geographic terrain, the Caribbean has fared relatively well from a health standpoint in managing the COVID-19 virus, yet the region has suffered economic devastation due to its historic dependence on trade and tourism, according to experts from the University of the West Indies (UWI), one of 14 member colleges of the Hemispheric University Consortium.

<https://news.miami.edu/stories/2020/11/caribbean-nations-explore-new-ideas,-directions-to-recover-from-pandemic.html>

520) *November 19.* The welfare of **MAURITIUS** households during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from three rounds of high-frequency surveys undertaken by the country's national statistical agency.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/welfare-mauritian-households-during-covid-19-pandemic-evidence-three-rounds-high>

521) *November 20.* The sharply rising number of deaths from coronavirus in **FRENCH POLYNESIA** has triggered a corrosive war of words with a pro-independence party lawmaker, Éline Tevahitua, accusing President Édouard Fritch of mismanagement of the crisis. All the archipelagos of the Polynesian territory have now been hit by the out of control COVID-19 – even the most isolated, Mangareva – since the borders were opened four months ago. This takes the number of people carrying the virus to 12,587 since it was first detected on March 13.

<https://asiapacificreport.nz/2020/11/20/covid-19-politicians-row-over-out-of-control-pandemic-in-maohi-nui/>

522) *November 20.* Larry Ellison, the billionaire co-founder of Oracle, owns 98 percent of the Hawaiian island of **LANAI**. As Covid-19 swept across the U.S. mainland in the spring and summer, Lanai didn't have a single case. Its 3,000 residents avoided mass layoffs while tourism plunged but now the island is confronting a tough reality. Ellison's two Four Seasons resorts, which employ nearly a quarter of the island's residents, laid off or furloughed almost all workers in August. Some employees returned last month for a reopening to tourists - which was then followed by a wave of virus infections. More than 100 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the last two weeks of October. Four have been helicoptered off because Lanai's lone hospital isn't equipped with a critical care unit.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2020/11/20/shelter-island-larry-ellison-battles-covid-on-his-hawaiian-isle>

523) *November 20.* How Canada's northernmost community located on **ELLESMERE ISLAND** is handling COVID-19. In Grise Fiord, about 1,500 kilometers north of the nearest COVID-19 infection, the 150 or so residents in town are living under the same two-week lockdown as everyone else in Nunavut. The pandemic has brought some financial assistance to Grise Fiord to help residents with the high cost of food, which can be as much as a third or more priced than elsewhere in Nunavut. Pandemic subsidies from the federal government's Indigenous Community Support Fund and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association recently brought in \$1,000 per family - an expansion of a \$2-million emergency initiative that the QIA rolled out last April at the height of the pandemic's first wave. The money is to help with harvesting country food, buying groceries and cleaning products, and buying sewing supplies to make warm winter clothes.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/how-canadas-northernmost-community-is-handling-nunavuts-new-covid-19-lockdown/>

524) *November 21.* With traditional tourism hammered by the pandemic and many in Europe and North America working from home amid shorter days and dropping temperatures, islands in the **CARIBBEAN** and North Atlantic are trying to attract longer-term visitors. It's the sun-kissed version of the road-tripping and temporary-rental trend seen over the summer. Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Aruba, Puerto Rico and St. Kitts and Nevis are among those wooing homebound toilers from abroad. This is distinct from pandemic promotions by some islands to sell second passports at a discount. Attracting workers involves a delicate balancing act. Now, as the U.S. and Europe are seeing a second surge, islands are struggling with how to welcome back visitors without rolling out the red carpet for COVID-19. Travelers entering **BERMUDA** must present a negative coronavirus test upon boarding the airplane and are retested four more times over two weeks before they're allowed to move about freely. That makes it one of the most rigorous testing schemes in the world, a hassle for tourists but a perk for remote workers. Since launching its remote-worker visa program in July, Bermuda has received almost 600 applications. It's a drop in the economic bucket - but every drop counts.

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2020/nov/21/tourist-starved-caribbean-islands-woo-homebound-wo/>

525) *November 21.* In the 1800s, thousands of infectious disease patients were forced to isolate from the outside world in a newly formed settlement in Kalawao County,

**HAWAII.** Today, Kalawao is the last county in the United States without a single documented [coronavirus](#) case. Call it poetic justice.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-free-county-us-now/story?id=74315801>

526) *November 21.* Covid-19 effect is pricing out locals from Scotland's rugged **WESTERN ISLES**. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, a surge of buyers have bought up many of the available houses, far from Covid-19 hot spots on the British mainland such as Glasgow or London. Local leaders say new arrivals could be a lifeline for the fragile communities that have long struggled to reverse declining populations. But younger islanders worry the influx is pricing them out of the market - and, ultimately, the places where they grew up and their families still live.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-covid-effect-is-pricing-out-locals-from-scotlands-rugged-western-isles-11605970802>

527) *November 23.* The global response to the Covid-19 crisis has had little impact on the continued rise in atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>, says the World Meteorological Organization. This year carbon emissions have fallen dramatically due to lockdowns that have cut transport and industry severely. But this has only marginally slowed the overall rise in concentrations, the scientists say.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-55018581>

528) *November 23.* Pandemic offers respite for Thai 'sea gypsies' threatened by mass tourism. Since the pandemic began, life has been easier for Sanan Changnam and his people. There's an abundance of fish to eat, and real estate projects on their ancestral land in the tourist hotspot of **PHUKET** have come to a standstill. With Thailand closed to foreign visitors for the past eight months, tourist boats have been stuck at the quay and fishing has been easier for the Chao Lay, or "people of the sea". "We don't dive as deep as before, so it's less dangerous," says Sanan and the authorities are less strict when the Chao Lay sail in protected marine reserves or near islets usually reserved for tourists.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/23/asia-pacific/thailand-sea-gypsies-tourism-coronavirus/>

529) *November 25.* Authorities in **SICILY** have asked **CUBA** government to send about 60 healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses, to the region as hospitals in the Italian island struggle with a shortage of medical personnel during the second coronavirus wave. On 4 November, Rome designated Sicily as an "orange zone", at high risk, mainly because of the lack of health facilities and beds in intensive care units.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/25/sicily-asks-cuba-to-send-medics-as-italy-fights-second-covid-wave>

530) *November 25.* Tourism revenue is down but online sales of **PITCAIRN ISLAND** honey are helping to keep islanders financially afloat after the global pandemic stopped cruise ship visits. This year 21 ships were due to visit Pitcairn which was settled by Fletcher Christian, his fellow mutineers and their Polynesian wives in the late 18th century. Their descendants, who make up most of the 42-strong population, make money selling souvenirs and other local produce when the vessels

anchor offshore during tours of the Pacific. Homestay experiences were also part of the offering to the few tourists who venture to Pitcairn, a two week boat journey from New Zealand. Pitcairn Islander Meralda Warren said locals depended on the tourists and households were making between NZ\$12,000 and \$20,000 annually. She said there had only been three cruise ship visits this year and income from tourism was now "almost non-existent." Pitcairn Island is one of only a handful of places worldwide which are free of Covid-19. Since March the only ship allowed to visit is the supply vessel, the *Silver Supporter*, based in Tauranga, New Zealand. "We're very strict. No yachts, no ships are allowed to stop. We've had a few come by but they haven't been allowed to come ashore."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/431395/pandemic-affects-even-remote-pitcairn-island>

531) *November 25.* Kári Stefánsson is the founder and chief executive of deCODE genetics, a human-genomics company in Reykjavik. He became convinced that making sense of the epidemic, and protecting the people of **ICELAND** from it, would require a sweeping scientific response. Since March deCODE and Iceland's Directorate of Health, the government agency that oversees health-care services, have worked hand-in-hand, sharing ideas, data, laboratory space and staff. The high-powered partnership, coupled with Iceland's diminutive size, has put the country in the enviable position of knowing practically every move the virus has made. The teams have tracked the health of every person who has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, sequenced the genetic material of each viral isolate and screened more than half of the island's 368,000 residents for infection. Late nights analysing the resulting data trove led to some of the earliest insights about how the coronavirus spreads through a population. The data showed, for example, that almost half of infected people are asymptomatic, that children are much less likely to become sick than adults and that the most common symptoms of mild COVID-19 are muscle aches, headaches and a cough - not fever. Their achievements aren't merely academic. Iceland's science has been credited with preventing deaths - the country reports fewer than 7 per 100,000 people, compared with around 80 per 100,000 in the United States and the United Kingdom. It has also managed to prevent outbreaks while keeping its borders open, welcoming tourists from 45 countries since mid-June. The partnership again kicked into high gear in September, when a second large wave of infections threatened the nation.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-03284-3>

532) *November 26.* Is the Covid-19 pandemic about to tear **SOLOMON ISLANDS** apart? The sensible answer is, probably not. But the consequences of the pandemic, including jostling among China, Taiwan and even the US, certainly have the potential to destabilise the country.

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/could-covid-19-micro-nationalism-and-china-cause-solomon-islands-to-split/>

533) *November 27.* **SAMOA** has confirmed its first case of coronavirus – a case imported from Australia – after nearly 11 months keeping Covid from its shores. The positive case was detected in a 70-year-old Samoan citizen who travelled to Apia from Melbourne, landing in the capital on a repatriation flight on 13 November.



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/27/samoa-records-its-first-covid-19-case-imported-from-australia>

534) *November 27.* Escaped mink carrying the virus that causes Covid-19 could potentially infect **DENMARK** wild animals, is raising fears of a permanent Sars-CoV-2 reservoir from which new virus variants could be reintroduced to humans. Denmark, the world's largest exporter of mink fur, announced in early November that it would cull the country's farmed mink after discovering a mutated version of the virus that could have jeopardised the efficacy of future vaccines. Around 10 million mink have been killed to date. Fur industry sources expect the fur from the remaining 5 million to 7 million mink will be sold.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/nov/27/escaped-infected-danish-mink-could-spread-covid-in-wild>

535) *November 30.* At least eight inmates were killed and 71 others injured when guards opened fire to control a riot over coronavirus conditions at a prison on the outskirts of **SRI LANKA** capital. Two guards were critically injured. Pandemic-related unrest has been growing in Sri Lanka's overcrowded prisons. Inmates at several prisons have staged protests in recent weeks as the number of coronavirus cases surges inside the facilities.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/30/sri-lanka-prisoners-killed-in-riot-over-coronavirus-conditions>

536) *November 30.* The Hawaiian island of **KAUAI** is opting out of the state's travel testing program following an increase in both travel-related coronavirus cases and community spread. The statewide testing program, launched in October, allows visitors to skip the mandatory quarantine if they test negative for the virus before arriving. Starting Dec. 2, all visitors to Kauai - including those from other islands as well as the mainland - will have to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

<https://www.travelweekly.com/Hawaii-Travel/Kauai-makes-two-week-quarantine-mandatory>

537) *December 1.* In remote villages on **LOMBOK**, a rugged Indonesian island east of Bali, resilience to global warming meant figuring out how to maintain water and food supplies through longer droughts punctuated by extreme rainstorms, and adapting to warming and rising seas that affect crucial fisheries. The residents of the island are not relying on technology or engineering solutions in their preparations, at least for now. Instead, they have built a network of local leaders who know the environmental conditions and who can identify the strengths and weaknesses of their communities, down to the neighborhood level. And that grassroots approach has proved doubly useful. Since March it has enabled Lombok to meet the challenges of another crisis: the global coronavirus pandemic. Villages were able to quickly prepare and implement emergency measures that limited community spread of the virus, including the installation of hand washing stations and the distribution of masks. The emergency teams also quickly ramped up contact tracing to identify who might have traveled in a high-risk area, disinfectant spraying in public areas and routine visits with quarantined people to provide support during isolation. The emergency response teams also collected data on which households were most at risk of falling into poverty because of the pandemic and so would need assistance for basic food and non-food items. Lombok has been better prepared than other island communities in



the region, showing how climate resiliency can help society with a wider range of challenges.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/01122020/resilience-covid-climate-change-sea-level-rise-lombok-indonesia/>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342884390\\_COVID-19\\_tourism\\_and\\_small\\_islands\\_in\\_Indonesia\\_Protecting\\_fragile\\_communities\\_in\\_the\\_global\\_Coronavirus\\_pandemic](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342884390_COVID-19_tourism_and_small_islands_in_Indonesia_Protecting_fragile_communities_in_the_global_Coronavirus_pandemic)

538) *December 1.* For many Pacific Island countries, **FIJI** and the **SOLOMON ISLANDS** included, COVID-19 was an unexpected life-changing experience. The pandemic meant an urgent change in all things considered normal from grassroots level to national and international arena. The pandemic meant border lockdowns, restricted movements and curfews to curb the spread of the virus. Ultimately, these changes also brought on socio-economic changes that meant reduced household incomes, purchasing power and access to markets of rural and urban households in Fiji and Solomon Islands. A recent study titled, ‘Assessing nutrition and socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on rural and urban communities in Fiji/Solomon Islands’, by The University of the South Pacific’s (USP) Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD) delved into these socio-economic impacts.

<https://junctionjournalism.com/2020/12/01/cultivating-sustainable-food-practices-in-the-pacific/>

<https://www.innov4agpacific.net/resource/assessing-nutrition-and-socio-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-communities-in-pacific-island-countries-fiji-and-solomon-islands/>

539) *December 2.* The COVID-19 pandemic has turned **SIDS** economies and livelihoods on end. UNDP’s ‘Rising Up for SIDS’ is an integrated approach targeting island states’ systemic vulnerabilities to act as a vehicle for green recovery and beyond based on three pillars of action:

1. **Amplifying climate action for decarbonized and resilient societies**

UNDP is increasing investment in supporting SIDS through their energy transitions, developing and implementing climate adaptation strategies and leveraging nature-based solutions. To realize their goals, UNDP is helping close the climate finance gap by mobilizing investment to facilitate the energy transition through initiatives like the Climate Investment Platform.

2. **Propelling the blue economy for the wealth of island communities and health of oceans**

With international and local partnerships, UNDP is supporting both the preservation of marine and coastal biodiversity and the acceleration of the ocean economy sectors – centering on empowering and protecting livelihoods, especially vulnerable populations. Support is rooted in a commitment to the use of innovative blue financial instruments, including through the Global Fund for Coral Reefs.

### 3. **Catalyzing digital transformation for inclusive societies and competitive economies**

Through strong partnerships and innovation networks, including the SIDS Accelerator Labs, UNDP is helping in their efforts to adapt to the digital age, adopting digital solutions including data-based decision-making processes. Accelerated and just digital transformation will act as a catalyzer for stronger climate action. It will also help SIDS remain connected to the global economy, boosting their competitiveness while improving social and financial inclusion.

We are witnessing a moment of pivoting among SIDS. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented new and magnified existing hurdles. However, it also has inspired SIDS to reinvent, building forward stronger, greener, bluer in ways not previously imaginable. Now is the time to come together to rise up for SIDS.

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2020/small-island-developing-states-do-not-have-the-luxury-of-time-.html>

<https://www.tourism-review.com/small-islands-tourism-recovery-recipes-news11797>

540) *December 2.* The global Covid-19 pandemic could derail efforts to control and eradicate malaria across the **PACIFIC**, with the potential for thousands of new cases and deaths, health experts have warned.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/03/covid-could-derail-efforts-to-eradicate-malaria-in-pacific-health-experts-warn>

541) *December 2.* The devastation caused by Covid-19 presents an opportunity for countries to rebuild their economies in a way that is environmentally responsible, researchers say in the annual Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change report, which tracks the impacts of global heating on health. This report – compiled by experts from more than 35 institutions including the World Health Organization and the World Bank, and led by University College London (UCL) – teases out parallels between infectious diseases such as Covid-19 and climate change, highlighting that climate change and its fossil fuel-powered drivers such as urbanisation and intensive agriculture tend to encroach upon wildlife habitats, thereby encouraging pathogens to jump from animals into humans.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/02/covid-pandemic-offers-chance-to-act-on-climate-report-says>

542) *December 3.* Pubs, bars and restaurants in **JERSEY** are set to close from 00:01 GMT on Friday for up to a month in order to tackle a surge in Covid cases. The "hospitality circuit breaker" announced on Wednesday comes amid fears health services could be overwhelmed. When Jersey's politicians agreed in July to reopen the borders, there were no known active cases of the virus. And while the numbers increased in the following months, many felt the situation was under control - largely thanks to a system of rapid border testing. But within days, the mood has changed significantly. The number of cases has more than doubled since 25 November, with a series of parties and social events blamed.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-jersey-55161923>

543) *December 3.* The annual grey seal census on the **FARNE ISLANDS**, one of Britain's largest colonies, has had to be carried out by drone because of the coronavirus pandemic. Drone pilot Ritchie Southerton said initial images suggested it would be "an amazing year for the seal pups". Numbers have been rising in recent years and an early count suggests a record 3,000 pups could be born this season, up from 2,800 last year. The 2020 spring count of moulting grey seals in the Wadden Sea also shows an increase of numbers in comparison to the previous year. The experts estimate that this spring the seals could have benefited from a reduction of disturbances, especially at beaches, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in more seals resting on land.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-55177030>

<https://www.waddensea-secretariat.org/news/wadden-sea-grey-seal-report-fewer-disturbances-grey-seals>

544) *December 3.* Health officials in **GREENLAND** are urging people to forego Christmas travel plans, and even going so far as to halt all flights to and from the country in the days before the holiday in a bid to try to prevent an unmanageable outbreak of COVID-19 in the following weeks.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/seeking-to-prevent-covid-19-outbreak-greenland-grounds-christmas-flights/>

545) *December 6.* First Nation communities are in some of the most remote areas of **VANCOUVER ISLAND**. They're also some of the most at-risk for COVID-19. Confirmed cases are climbing across the Canadian province of British Columbia, but First Nation communities on the island are shouldering a disproportionate amount of cases, but thanks to the quick actions of a chief, one of those outbreaks looks under control.

<https://www.cheknews.ca/island-first-nation-communities-see-disproportionately-high-numbers-of-covid-19-722988/>

546) *December 6.* **INDONESIA** social affairs minister, Juliari Batubara, has been accused of taking bribes while arranging food aid for people affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Anti-corruption agents discovered more than 14.5 billion rupiah (\$1m; £760,000) stuffed into suitcases and other containers, and arrested four suspects during a raid on Saturday. Mr Juliari turned himself in on Sunday.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55204061>

547) *December 7.* The emergence of Japan's coldest city as a COVID-19 hotspot has raised fears among health experts that it could be a sign of what the rest of the nation may face as winter sets in and more people stay indoors, raising airborne transmission risks. The city of Asahikawa, about 140 km (87 miles) north of Sapporo on the northern island of **HOKKAIDO**, is reeling from infection clusters at two hospitals and a care home. By Sunday, the number of cases recorded on the island was more than 10,000, and Asahikawa had accounted for 16% of the 256 deaths. It prompted the government to announce a plan on Monday to send nurses from Self Defense Forces to the region and western metropolis of Osaka to help fight the outbreak.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20201207044118-4a2rq>

548) *December 7.* Millions of domestic tourists are descending on China's southernmost island province of **HAINAN**, presenting a surreal contrast with grim hospital scenes, shuttered restaurants and stifling home quarantine elsewhere in a virus-ravaged world. The island, known at home as the "Hawaii of China," has been free of the coronavirus for six months, drawing eager shoppers to duty-free malls, couples seeking a subtropical backdrop for wedding pictures and surfers just looking to "breathe freely." October arrivals of 9.6 million, according to official data, exceeded the year-earlier figure, before the pandemic struck, by 3.1%, although foreign visitors slumped 87%. That was a far cry from February, when arrivals had dropped almost 90%.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/07/business/china-hainan-coronavirus-tourist-destination/>

549) *December 8.* A UK grandmother has become the first person in the world to be given the Pfizer Covid-19 jab as part of a mass vaccination programme.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55227325>

550) *December 8.* **INDONESIA** has received its first shipment of coronavirus vaccine from China, as the Government plans a mass vaccination program aimed at reopening **BALI** next year. On Sunday, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said 1.2 million doses of a vaccine from Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac had arrived. It was also expecting another 1.8 million doses and raw materials - which could produce about 45 million doses - to come next year. The vaccine, known as CoronaVac, still needs approval from Indonesia's food and drug agency (BPOM) while the Government continues to prepare for distributing it to Indonesians. Bali residents could be among the first to receive the Chinese drug, in order to make the island "a green zone at the start of next year", according to China's state-owned Xinhua news agency. In the global race to develop COVID-19 vaccines, China has been among the frontrunners. It has late-stage trials underway in at least 16 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Though Beijing has a huge task to vaccinate its 1.4 billion citizens, Chinese President Xi Jinping has pledged to provide the vaccines as a "global public good". He has signed deals with Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Philippines and Turkey, before showing the world the result of final testings. So what do we know about China's "vaccine diplomacy", and will it lead to changes in China's geopolitical position?

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-08/indonesia-bali-coronavirus-covid-sinovac-china-vaccine-diplomacy/12958762>

551) *December 11.* The global response to the Covid-19 pandemic has driven the biggest annual fall in CO2 emissions since World War Two, say researchers. Their study indicates that emissions have declined by around 7% this year. France and the UK saw the greatest falls, mainly due to severe shutdowns in response to a second wave of infections. China, by contrast, has seen such a large rebound from coronavirus that overall emissions may grow this year.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-55261902>

552) *December 14.* In pre-COVID times, some half a million tourists would descend on the tiny Thai island of **KOH TAO**, one of Southeast Asia's most pristine diving destinations. But that all changed in April, when the country entered lockdown and closed its borders to foreign tourists for the next six months. A meager 1,200 foreign visitors arrived in Thailand when it reopened its doors in October, compared to over 3 million in October 2019 – a near total collapse for a tourism industry that had previously accounted for 20 percent of the country's GDP. And the situation is particularly dire on Koh Tao, which measures just 21 square kilometers and offers few other sources of income to its 10,000 inhabitants. In the absence of tourists, some 90% of the island's boat operators are out of work. With tourist numbers not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2024, the UNDP Biodiversity Finance (BIOFIN) initiative has launched a new crowd funding campaign that will place 200 of the island's laid-off boat operators into an alternate stream of work: cleaning up the island. Koh Tao has struggled to manage the estimated 30 tons of waste a day left by tourists in recent years, and this year's lull has provided its marine ecosystems with much-needed respite. Starting in December, the 200 boat operators are being paid a monthly sum of THB 3,000 (USD 100) – raised entirely through crowd funding – to clear waste and marine debris from the island's beaches and waters. They will also be provided with training in financial literacy, courtesy of Krung Thai Bank (KTB), one of the project's main sponsors.

<https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/48880/crowdfunding-for-conservation-on-a-deserted-tourist-island/>

553) *December 14.* **MADAGASCAR** endangered lemurs are being killed during pandemic lockdowns. Early data paints a troubling picture for these animals and their habitat. Illegal forest burning for agricultural expansion, felling trees to burn and convert the wood into charcoal, hunting and consumption of lemurs on the increase and severe drop in tourism income are all cited.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2020/12/pandemic-lockdown-endangered-lemurs/>

554) *December 14.* Some **SCOTTISH ISLAND** communities cannot currently get the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine. The vaccine has to be stored at -75C and is being distributed from 23 freezers located around Scotland. People in Lewis in the Western Isles and mainland Orkney have been vaccinated, but transporting it to other areas presents a challenge. Islanders may have to wait for approval of a second vaccine, which is expected soon.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-55308636>

555) *December 14.* A new variant of coronavirus which can grow faster has been found in **ENGLAND**. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said at least 60 different local authorities had recorded Covid infections caused by the new variant. He said the World Health Organization had been notified and UK scientists were doing detailed studies.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55308211>

556) *December 16.* When the first case of Covid hit **JAMAICA** in early March, the government closed primary and secondary schools and over 500,000 children transitioned to remote learning. The majority of schools have yet to resume face-to-

face classes since the March 13 closure. Across the world, 1.6 billion children do not have access to school as a result of the pandemic, according to Unicef. It is this mass absence that experts are flagging as one of main explanations for an increase in instances of physical, psychological and sexual abuse of minors. And even if children are not directly endangered by their caretakers or people in their community, they are suffering the effects of the pandemic. “What we have heard from our partners is that although there is no hard data at the moment, social workers and community workers are seeing an increase in incidents of abuse, incidents of violence, and what is even more troubling is some of the kids who are experiencing these things, they are unable to access the persons who under normal circumstances, they would have gone to make a complaint or a report to assist them in a situation,” says Janet Cupidon Quallo, child protection specialist with UNICEF Jamaica.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/12/pandemic-puts-jamaican-children-heightened-risk-abuse/>

557) *December 17.* **NEW ZEALAND** has advance purchased two new coronavirus vaccines from pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Novavax, giving the small island country the ability to vaccinate its 5 million residents. Government officials also announced they will go a step further and provide free doses to its population as well as neighbouring nations Tokelau, Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu, should they want them.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/12/17/947403839/new-zealand-will-give-free-coronavirus-vaccines-to-residents-neighboring-nations?>

558) *December 17.* Funding for conservation has been decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic, from sharp dips in ecotourism to decreases in charitable donations. Rather than pursuing new sources of biodiversity funding, countries should consider eliminating taxpayer-funded subsidies for agriculture, forestry and fishing, which are the top industries driving species extinctions. In 2019, subsidies for these economic activities exceeded the global total spend on biodiversity conservation by a factor of at least two.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/12/to-fund-biodiversity-conservation-redirect-subsidies-from-these-three-industries-commentary/>

559) *December 18.* In the French overseas department of **GUADELOUPE**, fighting the Covid-19 pandemic is more difficult than in mainland France. Hospitals on the Caribbean archipelago lack sufficient medical staff and equipment. Meanwhile, hand washing, an important way of preventing transmission of the coronavirus, is often impossible due to regular water shortages in some regions.

<https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/reporters/20201218-on-french-islands-of-guadeloupe-an-unequal-fight-against-covid-19>

560) *December 19.* Covid-19 vaccinations begin in the **NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS** this weekend, but it's not yet clear when other Pacific countries will have access to a vaccine. The Northern Marianas, which is a US territory, was expecting 5,000 doses of The Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine to arrive during the week, and vaccinations to start today. The vaccine has already been approved in the USA and UK. It must be stored at around -70C, and transported in special boxes, packed in dry ice. Once delivered, it can be kept for up to five days in a fridge. A couple of weeks



ago the CNMI government purchased and received 10 ultra cold freezers. The freezers ordered came from South Korea, and two were sent to Tinian and Rota and the rest will be used in Saipan.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine-roll-out-starts-in-parts-of-the-pacific/ZXJHWRLSAGG2QVO5VW4ILDHEVM/>

561) *December 20*. The pandemic gives locals chance to take ports back from tourists. From **KEY WEST** to **ALASKA**, anti-cruise-ship activists have celebrated a silver lining to Covid as it halted travel. Key West and Juneau each see more than 1 million cruise ship passengers each year. Haskell and Hart said the intense tourism had diminished quality of life for year-round residents, degraded the environment and over time replaced vibrant local businesses with monotonous “trinket” shops catering to cruise passengers. In Key West, organizers collected signatures for three ballot measures for this year’s 3 November elections that would restrict cruise ships to the smallest and most environmentally friendly. And they won – by a landslide – even as the pandemic shredded the local economy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/dec/20/coronavirus-cruise-ships-lines-key-west-juneau>

562) *December 21*. **HAWAII** County’s economy hasn’t been hit as hard as neighboring islands, data shows, but that’s little solace for businesses on the Big Island fighting through the worst economic landscape in memory. And while the Oct. 15 reopening of tourism injected financial life into the state, those same businesses are wary of what could be ahead. They know that increased COVID-19 cases on the mainland bring tighter travel restrictions to Hawaii, which means tourism could be strangled to another standstill this winter - typically peak visitor season just when it looked like it was starting to recover.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/12/big-island-economy-is-getting-by-as-the-pandemic-persists/>

563) *December 22*. **ANTARCTICA**, once the only continent not to be affected by the coronavirus pandemic, has reportedly recorded its first cases. The 36 new infections are among people stationed at a Chilean research base and include 26 members of the Chilean army and 10 maintenance workers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/22/covid-cases-recorded-in-antarctica-for-first-time>

564) *December 22*. In the eyes of the world’s media, **Britain – a “Plague Island”** led by a man who thinks “optimism is a substitute for hard truths and proper management” – is currently getting a good lesson in “what ‘reclaiming sovereignty’ means”. If never quite explicit, the schadenfreude is palpable as dozens of countries, days before the end of the [Brexit](#) transition period and with no trade deal yet agreed, suspend travel from the UK in response to the new, more contagious coronavirus variant.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/22/worlds-media-ask-how-it-went-so-wrong-for-plague-island-britain-covid>

565) *December 22.* With COVID-19 vaccine distribution now in its early stages, early steps toward the resumption of labour migration in the **PACIFIC** region underway, and hopes for an international travel ‘bubble’ between Australia and New Zealand, questions are now arising as to what additional measures will be needed before international tourism returns to the Pacific region. In this context, World Bank report - *How Could the Pacific Restore International Travel?* - has recommended that Pacific Island countries and Papua New Guinea take a phased approach to resuming international travel to the region in order to safeguard against COVID-19 outbreaks and ensure a steady economic recovery.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/22/vaccine-only-part-of-the-cure-for-resumption-of-pacific-travel-world-bank-report>

<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/303971611070755211/pdf/How-Could-the-Pacific-Restore-International-Travel.pdf>

566) *December 23.* **TAIWAN** imposes new regulations after first Covid case since April. The change in Taipei was subtle but apparent. Within hours of authorities announcing Taiwan’s first community transmission of Covid-19 since April, more people were wearing masks in more places, and hand sanitiser dispensers appeared in doorways, positioned so people would have to step around them to avoid the hint. Until Tuesday Taiwan had gone 253 days without a local case of the virus. The circumstances around the new case have sparked fear and anger. Health authorities said they had diagnosed a woman in her 30s, a friend of a New Zealand-born resident and pilot in his 60s, who had flown between the US and Taiwan and moved about Taipei while infectious without disclosing his symptoms or movements to authorities. The department of public health in Taoyuan, where the man lives, said he violated the Communicable Disease Control Act by failing to provide detailed and accurate information, and would be fined the maximum penalty of 300,000 Taiwan dollars (£8,000). His employer, EVA Air, is investigating and considering firing the pilot, who flew with two co-pilots while coughing and not wearing a mask.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/23/taiwan-imposes-new-regulations-after-first-covid-case-since-april>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/02/world/asia/taiwan-coronavirus-health-minister.html>

567) *December 25.* More than 500 people packed a church for a zero-distanced carol service on the **ISLE OF MAN** - thought to be one of the largest in the British Isles. Residents have been living without restrictions since 15 June as there is no spread of Covid-19 on the island. There have been a total of 374 cases of the virus on the island since March, including 25 deaths. However, strict border controls and isolation rules have allowed nearly all restrictions to be lifted for six months and life has almost returned to normal. The only three active cases on the island are self-isolating and the spread is not classed as uncontrolled community transmission.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-55432576>

568) *December 26.* The forced cremation of a 20-day-old Muslim baby in **SRI LANKA** has highlighted the government's controversial order to burn the bodies of all those who died of Covid. Critics say the decision is not based in science and only intended to target the minority community.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55359285>

569) *December 27.* Scientists call for **UK** lockdown after rapid spread of Covid-19 variant. Cases of the new variant were confirmed in several European countries on Saturday, including Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. All were linked to people who had arrived from the UK. Meanwhile, Japan has announced it is banning all new entries of foreign nationals from Monday following the discovery of the variant in travellers from the UK.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/27/scientists-call-for-nationwide-lockdown-after-rapid-spread-of-covid-19-variant>

570) *December 28.* Coronavirus infections have barely touched many of the remote islands of the **PACIFIC** but the pandemic's fallout has been enormous, disrupting the supply chain that brings crucial food imports and sending prices soaring as tourism wanes. With a food crisis looming, many governments have begun community initiatives to help alleviate shortages: extending fishing seasons, expanding indigenous food gathering lessons and bolstering seed distribution programs that allow residents greater self-reliance. In **TUVALU**, the government held workshops teaching youth indigenous food production methods such as taro planting and sap collection from coconut trees. In **FIJI**, the government extended fishing season of coral trout and grouper that could be sold for income or used as food. Another project provides residents with vegetable seeds, saplings and basic farming equipment to help them grow their own home gardens. "We initially started with 5,000 seeds and thought we would finish them in nine months' time. But there was a very big response, and we finished distributing the seeds in one week," said Vinesh Kumar, head of operation for Fiji's Agriculture Ministry.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/amid-pandemic-pacific-islands-work-to-offset-food-shortages-supply-chain-pacific-residents-pandemic-islands-b1779403.html>

571) *December 28.* One of America's richest islands got pummeled by COVID. Then the warring started. Over the past several weeks hundreds of people on the small Massachusetts island of **NANTUCKET** have tested positive for the virus, kickstarting a local game of whodunnit. Residents have begun accusing others of contributing to the spread of the disease. For every individual charged with disregarding public-health guidelines, there seemed to be another calling their neighbors out for their reckless behavior either on social media or privately on calls with the board of health. For a community on such an edge, the arrival of a vaccine was highly anticipated. And when the high-speed ferry docked in the island's port, the passengers seeing a nurse in scrubs sign off for the package finally caught on. Hospitals throughout Massachusetts had received their deliveries earlier in the week on Dec. 15. But Nantucket's didn't show up until two days later. Hospital administrators on the island were unsure if it would make it to the island that week at all given the impending storm. The doses, as luck would have it, arrived just hours before the snowfall. For nearly four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, more than 70 people a day had showed up at the Nantucket Cottage Community Hospital for testing. And each day, island officials reported dozens of new positive cases. For an island with a current year-round population of around 18,000, those slight upticks had the potential to overwhelm the hospital and its staff. During the week of Dec. 14, Nantucket reached a test positivity rate of 13.1 percent - one of the highest in the country. At points over the last few weeks, doctors at the hospital, fearing their COVID-19 patients may take a turn for the worse, transferred several

individuals to Boston hospitals via helicopter. It wasn't just the rising infection rate that had health-care workers and officials on the island on edge. Nantucket is a small community known as an escape for the wealthy during the summer months. But many of those who own summer homes chose to stay on the island throughout the pandemic, joining the 11,000 people who live there year-round. And some who had little to no previous connection to Nantucket moved into rentals and apartments there to flee the East Coast cities where COVID-19 was spreading rapidly. That uptick in residents meant more people shopping at the supermarket and more people showing up at bars, coffee shops, and churches. The influx alarmed portions of the island population, primarily older individuals who were anxious about catching the virus in a community with limited medical resources. Instead of unifying the community, however, some residents of Nantucket seemed to turn on one another.

<https://uk.style.yahoo.com/one-americas-richest-islands-got-095926632.html>

572) *December 28.* How the pandemic impacted rainforests in 2020: a year in review. It was supposed to be a make-or-break year for tropical forests. It was the year when global leaders were scheduled to come together to assess the past decade's progress and set the climate and biodiversity agendas for the next decade. These included emissions reductions targets, government procurement policies and corporate zero-deforestation commitments, and goals to set aside protected areas and restore degraded lands. COVID-19 upended everything: Nowhere, not even tropical rainforests escaped the effects of the global pandemic. Conservation was particularly hard in tropical countries. 2019's worst trends for forests mostly continued through the pandemic including widespread forest fires, rising commodity prices, increasing repression and violence against environmental defenders, and new laws and policies in Brazil and **INDONESIA** that undermine forest conservation.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/12/how-the-pandemic-impacted-rainforests-in-2020/>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/12/indonesias-five-most-consequential-environmental-stories-of-2020/>

573) *December 29.* Officials in the **COOK ISLANDS** have indicated that a travel bubble with New Zealand may start as early as next month. People from **NIUE** might also be able to travel to New Zealand without quarantine as soon as mid-January.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/cook-islands-niue-travel-bubble-could-start-to-open-as-early-as-january-according-to-local-officials/3LZ2BXFNQUTYBJBQBDUU3QW2SA/>

574) *December 29.* Progress made towards sustainable development by the Atlantic Ocean nation, **CAPE VERDE**, is under serious threat due to the COVID-19 pandemic according to the United Nations' most senior official in the country. Public revenues are expected to decrease by 25 per cent and unemployment will double. Recession is hitting the most vulnerable, jeopardizing decades of development gains. With the pandemic crisis striking a hard blow to the country's economy, the UN Country Team in Cape Verde rapidly shifted to emergency development mode, advising the government and reprogramming more than half of its annual joint work plan of \$17 million and mobilizing an additional \$6 million for immediate response, to save lives and sustain the economy.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080752>

<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-restrictions-cripple-cape-verdian-tourism/a-55732875>

575) *December 30.* The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved for use in the **UK**, with the first doses due to be given on Monday. There will be 530,000 doses available from next week, and vaccination centres will now start inviting patients to come and get the jab. Priority groups for immunisation have already been identified, starting with care home residents, the over-80s, and health and care workers. It comes as millions more in England are placed in tier four restrictions. The UK has ordered 100 million doses of the new vaccine - enough to vaccinate 50 million people.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55280671>

576) *December 30.* 'A critical time': how Covid-19 piled the pressure on conservation efforts. Ecotourism revenues plummeted around the world as some areas saw poaching and land grabs increase in 2020 Conservation International warned: "There is a misperception that nature is 'getting a break' from humans during the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, many rural areas in the tropics are facing increased pressure from land grabbing, deforestation, illegal mining and wildlife poaching." NGOs and scientists say the big picture is still unclear as many population surveys and monitoring programmes could not go ahead due to the pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/30/a-critical-time-how-covid-19-put-the-natural-world-under-pressure-in-2020-aoe>

577) *December 30.* A tourism operator believes **STEWART ISLAND** in New Zealand is having its best summer in 30 years. Rakiura Adventure owner Manfred Herzhoff has been overwhelmed with the number of domestic visitors to the island and said it was one of few businesses benefiting from border closures. This month, visitor numbers increased by 150 per cent compared with the past six months, and 200% compared with the past two months. Herzhoff believed the tourism sector had previously dismissed the importance of the domestic market. "It is awesome but not without some reservation. We need to manage the island resources and find a strategy and a balance of lifestyle, income, activities, visitors and residents."

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/stewart-island-proving-a-hit-with-domestic-travellers/ZTEPAHHSZNHQKJ4BEVGGWQPMDNA/>

578) *December 30.* The **MARSHALL ISLANDS** became the first independent nation in the Pacific region to begin Covid-19 vaccinations on Tuesday as a group of high-ranking Marshall Islands leaders joined with Ministry of Health doctors and nurses to be the first to receive the United States government-provided vaccine. The US Centers for Disease Control delivered to Majuro an initial batch of 1,200 vaccines and the Ministry of Health wasted little time, rolling out the vaccine launch the same afternoon. The US government also delivered a similar number of vaccines to the **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA** and **PALAU**. Both countries will launch their Covid vaccine drives in January. All three nations that share a free association relationship with Washington chose the Moderna brand vaccine over Pfizer because it is logistically easier for these remote islands to handle. The only other islands in the region to begin administering Covid vaccines are the US-affiliated



islands of **GUAM**, the **NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**, and **AMERICA SAMOA**, which started their Covid immunization programs in mid-December.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/433812/marshalls-first-independent-pacific-nation-to-launch-covid-vaccines>

579) *December 30*. Year in review: COVID-19 in the **CAYMAN ISLANDS** with a detailed timeline of how it unfolded. Two people who had the virus have died – one a cruise ship tourist and the other a resident returning from overseas. Anyone arriving on island is tested at the airport and then required to spend 14 days in quarantine before being tested again. While a handful of quarantine breaches have caused concern among the public, there have been no reports of community transmission on island since October. People in Cayman, and worldwide, are pinning their hopes of border re-openings and life returning to some form of normalcy on new vaccines. The first batch of vaccines is expected to arrive in the Cayman Islands on 5 Jan.

<https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/12/31/year-in-review-covid-19-in-the-cayman-islands/>

580) *January 3*. Australia is moving to boost ties with small island nations off its eastern coastline, pushing back against China's growing influence in the **PACIFIC** as the virus outbreak hinders travel. Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government has promised to supply its neighbours with Covid-19 vaccines in 2021 as part of a A\$500 million package aimed at achieving "full immunization coverage" in the region. It also recently signed a "landmark" deal with Fiji, one of the region's most populous nations, to allow military deployments and exercises in each other's jurisdiction.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-03/australia-makes-gains-in-pacific-islands-as-covid-hinders-china>

581) *January 4*. **PALAU** could become one of the first countries to be vaccinated against the coronavirus. With a population of around 18,000, the country is about the same size of some suburbs in Sydney and Melbourne. It's this size that has put the country in prime position to be among the first to be inoculated against COVID-19, after it received its first shipment of the Moderna vaccine on Saturday and commenced vaccinations on Sunday. Palau was initially due to receive doses of the Pfizer vaccine in December, but didn't have the facilities to keep the doses at the required minus 70 degrees Celsius. It gave its allocation of Pfizer vaccines to **GUAM**, which had been much harder-hit by the virus, recording more than 7,300 cases and 122 deaths.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-05/palau-may-become-first-majority-vaccinated-covid-19-coronavirus/13030012>

582) *January 5*. **SEYCHELLES** recorded its first coronavirus related death as it experiences its biggest surge of Covid-19 cases since the pandemic started.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/7456/seychelles-records-first-covid-19-death>

583) *January 5*. **CANARY ISLANDS** beaches deserted as COVID-19 decimates Spanish tourism. International tourist arrivals in Spain fell 90% year-on-year in November, official data showed on Tuesday, after authorities imposed new travel restrictions to curb an increase in coronavirus infections. Over the first 11 months of



the year, some 19 million foreign tourists visited Spain, around 78% fewer than in the same period of 2019, the National Statistics Institute (INE) said. Tourists spent 91% less in November than in the same month a year ago, INE said. The situation is worst in the Canary Islands, where mild temperatures attract tourists all through the European winter. Travel restrictions in the region have left beaches and hotels almost empty, bringing local businesses to the brink of collapse.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-tourists/canary-islands-beaches-deserted-as-covid-decimates-spanish-tourism-idUSKBN29A1XD>

584) *January 5.* The prospect of 1,000 people returning to **GREENLAND** in the span of five days after spending the holidays in Denmark has led that country's health authorities to suspend all flights to the country until January 12. The measure, which took effect on January 2, is being imposed at the same time as the Greenland begins to administer the vaccine against the virus and comes amid high rates of infection in Denmark.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/greenland-suspends-inbound-flights-to-halt-covid-19-spread-from-denmark/>

585) *January 6.* A handful of countries – most of them islands, most of them remote – remain coronavirus-free, but life has not remained wholly unchanged. The **PACIFIC** is home to the world's largest cluster of Covid-free nations. In the distant archipelago of the **COOK ISLANDS** coronavirus has been a spectre that never emerged from the shadows. In the early months of the outbreak, schools were closed on Rarotonga - the most populous island - and social distancing encouraged in public places. Relaxed after a handful of weeks, the measures were the closest the Cooks would get to experiencing living with the virus. But in a country of only 22 doctors and two ventilators for a population of 17,500, many have lived in fear of an unchecked outbreak. Across the Pacific, keeping the virus out has required, essentially, keeping borders resolutely shut. **TONGA** has stopped almost all movement in and out of the kingdom, and has avoided the virus, as has **KIRIBATI**, **NIUE**, **NAURU** and **TUVALU**. Enforced isolation helps. Two of the only places on earth not connected by aviation - the airstrip-less islands of **TOKELAU** (a New Zealand dependency) and **PITCAIRN ISLAND** (a British territory) - are also Covid-free. But the counter-narrative has been all too starkly apparent. **FRENCH POLYNESIA** re-opened its borders and abandoned quarantine in July, in order to reignite a stalled tourism-dependent economy. At that stage, the French territory had just 62 confirmed cases: it now has more than 15,000, and 91 deaths. But staying shut has come at its own price. Covid-19 shutdowns have devastated already fragile economies across the Pacific, especially those dependent on tourism. **FIJI** economy cratered more than 20% in 2020, and thousands there have abandoned tourism sector jobs to return to farming on ancestral lands. In some parts of **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, people have returned to using shell money and bartering as the formal economy ground to halt. Across PNG, more than half (52%) of families have pulled children out of school because they could not afford to keep them enrolled and attending, according to a World Bank survey. And in neighbouring **SOLOMON ISLANDS**, where there have been just 17 cases, 57% of all families surveyed are eating less because of reduced incomes. In Koror, the largest city in the western Pacific archipelago of **PALAU**, remaining Covid-free after a year is regarded as a combination of luck, fortified by the early decision to close borders. The country has even received 2800 doses of the Moderna

vaccine, courtesy of the United States, and has ambitions to effectively vaccinate its entire population by mid-year.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/06/life-without-covid-the-nations-that-have-sidestepped-the-pandemic-so-far>

586) *January 6.* Detainees at the **CHRISTMAS ISLAND** detention centre have set buildings on fire and rioted as part of a protest over conditions at the centre. In August, the federal government announced it was reopening the detention centre on Christmas Island, saying its ability to remove unlawful non-citizens from Australia had been curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic. Some 225 people, mostly migrants who have had their visas cancelled due to criminal activity, were detained in the centre at the end of November, government figures show.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/06/christmas-island-detainees-riot-and-set-fire-to-buildings-in-protest-against-conditions>

587) *January 7.* For heavily indebted **SIDS**, resilience-building is the best antidote. A recent UNCTAD study on debt vulnerability finds that SIDS have chronic debt not only because of their vulnerability to disasters but also due to many other structural issues. There is also a looming debt crisis in SIDS in the aftermath of COVID-19 as their tourism-dependent fragile economies are pummelled by travel restrictions. The International Monetary Fund projects a 9% fall in real GDP for SIDS in 2020.

<https://unctad.org/news/heavily-indebted-small-islands-resilience-building-best-antidote>

[https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ser-rp-2020d14\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ser-rp-2020d14_en.pdf)

588) *January 7.* Taking social distancing to a whole new level, Sweden's Goteborg Film Festival is inviting one cinema fan to spend seven days on an isolated lighthouse island, with only movies and the sea for company. Like many recent film festivals, Goteborg festival is going digital in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, but organizers decided to offer one festival goer a totally different experience, dubbed 'The Isolated Cinema'. The chosen fan will be transported by boat to the Swedish island of **PATER NOSTER**. Once there, they'll be set up in the former lighthouse keeper's house and spend a week from January 30 to February 6 watching Goteborg's offerings. They won't be allowed a cellphone, a laptop, a book or any other distractions.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/goteborg-film-festival-isolated-island/index.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55875256>

589) *January 7.* If Covid-19 is primarily a 'First World' virus, why is the Global South in lockdown? An interesting opinion piece by Dr. Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake who is a Social and Medical Anthropologist, at the International Center for Ethnic Studies, based in Colombo, **SRI LANKA**. The Covid Pandemic: Broadening the Discourse is another opinion piece by Dr Asoka Bandarage, a scholar and practitioner who has taught at Yale, Brandeis, Mount Holyoke (where she received tenure), Georgetown, American and other universities and colleges in the U.S. and abroad.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/01/covid-19-primarily-first-world-virus-global-south-lockdown/>

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/11/covid-pandemic-broadening-discourse/>

590) *January 7.* Community spread of COVID-19 on **MAUI**, Big Island raises alarm. The Neighbor Islands are grappling with a growing number of COVID-19 infections and say community spread is fueling the case count. On Thursday, the state reported 56 new cases on Maui County, 18 in Hawaii County, and one on Kauai. Before community spread was so severe, officials with Maui Memorial Medical Center said they were dealing with two or three COVID-19 positive patients a day. Currently, they have a dozen. “We’re coming to the conclusion it’s the community, it’s not the visitors,” said Maui Memorial Medical Center CEO Michael Rembis.

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2021/01/07/community-spread-covid-maui-big-island-raises-alarm/>

591) *January 8.* Catholic **MALTA** has the strictest ban on abortion in the EU, but during the pandemic more Maltese women have been ordering abortion pills from abroad, unable to travel because of the lockdown.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55579339>

592) *January 8.* The pandemic lockdown in the **PHILIPPINES**, amongst the longest and strictest in the world, curtailed field expeditions in the southern Mindanao region thus impacting upon the protection of the critically endangered Philippine eagles. Despite the limitations, Philippine eagle conservationists and their partner agencies rescued seven eagles and sighted two new eagle families. While 2020 was a productive year, the pandemic crippled the steady stream of revenue coming from tourists visiting the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/01/a-good-year-for-the-philippine-eagle-in-2020-but-not-for-its-supporters/>

593) *January 8.* More than one million Muslim minority Rohingya’s fled Myanmar in 2017 due to ethnic cleansing, which has been condemned internationally as genocide. They now live in refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, **BANGLADESH**. Many are uneducated as the Myanmar government never allowed them to study in their country and currently many in the refugee camps still do not have access to education. It is a life of uncertainty. And the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed them to the edge. At the world’s largest refugee camp, many Rohingya refugees aren’t wearing masks. This is despite the fact that many non-profit organisations as well as the Bangladesh government are providing basic protective kits and conducting awareness programmes educating those living here on how to protect themselves from COVID-19. Though the number of COVID-19 cases is low as per the data from healthcare centres in the camps, many refugees are asymptomatic. In addition, many refugees experiencing flu-like symptoms are said to be hiding in their make-shift homes and hoping to recover without medical intervention. In early December, Bangladesh began moving Rohingya families from the port of Chittagong to the remote island of **BHASAN CHAR** in the Bay of Bengal, despite concerns about its safety and a lack of consent from the refugees,

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/01/tales-21st-century-rohingyas-without-home/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/03/bangladesh-begins-moving-rohingya-families-to-remote-island>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/28/bangladesh-moves-more-rohingyas-to-remote-island-despite-rights-concerns>

594) *January 9.* The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** government has established a vaccination planning group, although there is not a delivery date for the Covid-19 doses to be sent from the United Kingdom.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/01/09/falklands-has-established-a-vaccination-plan-group-gibraltar-first-to-receive-the-pfizer-vaccine>

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/01/18/falklands-has-a-plan-of-attack-to-inoculate-islanders-with-oxford-astrazeneca-vaccine>

595) *January 10.* Coronavirus: Virus provides leaps in scientific understanding. In January 2020, two scientists published the entire genetic code of a coronavirus that was soon to wreak havoc around the world. It marked the start of a year of intense and rapid scientific endeavour, to work out how we might fight the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-55565284>

596) *January 10.* The pandemic to most of us has meant sequestered days at home and weekly trips to the grocery store, but for a couple on **PENDER ISLAND**, located in the Gulf of Georgia, British Columbia, Canada, stores are out of the question. Instead, the couple are on an epic one-year quest to only eat what they catch, grow, harvest and raise. That means no processed or packaged food. No takeout. No alcohol, coffee, tea or soft drinks.

<https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/pender-island-couple-only-eating-what-they-can-grow-and-catch-1.24265193>

597) *January 10.* First Nations across Canada have begun to receive doses of COVID-19 vaccines as provincial immunization programs get underway and Indigenous leaders encourage people to roll up their sleeves. Six of 14 Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations on **VANCOUVER ISLAND** were priority recipients of doses of Moderna's vaccine last week, said Mariah Charleson, vice-president of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council that serves about 10,000 members. The council employs nurses who are among those administering vaccinations so people see a familiar face they know and trust, she said.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-arrives-in-remote-first-nations-across-canada-1.5260824>

598) *January 11.* One year ago, China announced the first death from a new virus in Wuhan - 12 months later, Covid-19 has claimed 1.9 million lives in an unrelenting march across the world. But in the central Chinese city of 11 million where the first known outbreak started, the virus has been extinguished. On Monday morning, the anniversary slipped by unmarked in Wuhan - commuters moved freely to work while parks and riverside promenades buzzed with walkers in a city determined to banish its tag as the coronavirus ground zero. In a sparse report on Jan 11, 2020, China

confirmed its first death from an unknown virus - a 61-year-old man who was a regular at the now-notorious Wuhan wet market linked to many of the early cases.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2049023/year-on-from-first-covid-19-death-wuhan-basks-in-recovery>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug2m2qsrZMg>

599) *January 11*. The World Health Organization insisted today that the international investigation into the COVID-19 pandemic's origins, set to start this week in China, was not looking for "somebody to blame". WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said the delayed mission - finally given the green light by Beijing - was about science, not politics. Ten international experts will visit China from Thursday to probe the origins of the new coronavirus, more than a year after the pandemic began and amid accusations that Beijing has tried to thwart the investigation.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/who-says-china-covid-19-mission-not-playing-blame-game-13940622>

600) *January 11*. Scientists at the World Health Organization warned that mass vaccinations would not bring about herd immunity to the coronavirus this year, even as one leading producer boosted its production forecast. Infections numbers are surging around the world, especially in Europe where nations have been forced to ramp up virus restrictions even as vaccines are rolled out. The WHO's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan warned Monday that it would take time to produce and give enough shots to halt the spread of the virus, which has infected more than 90 million people worldwide with deaths approaching two million.

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/vaccination-efforts-boosted-probe-covid-162958435.html>

<http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/vaccination-efforts-boosted-who-to-probe-covid-origins-in-china/article/583702>

601) *January 12*. Military helicopters could be used within days to airlift coronavirus patients from the **ISLE OF WIGHT**, the island's medical director has said, after an "astronomical" rise in infections fuelled by mixing and visitors over Christmas. A 71-fold increase in cases means the Isle of Wight has the 13th highest infection rate in the UK this week, from having one of the lowest in early December. The county of 141,606 people recorded 1,871 new cases in the first 10 days of January – 43% of its total since the pandemic began. Hospital admissions and deaths are rising sharply.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/12/army-helicopters-may-be-sent-to-evacuate-covid-patients-from-isle-of-wight-amid-surge>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/16/isle-of-wight-covid-catastrophe-island-hospital-tier>

602) *January 13*. The COVID-19 pandemic that has gripped the world for much of the past year has disrupted many industries, and fisheries are no exception. An early analysis estimates that in the **UNITED STATES**, the pandemic has caused fresh seafood catches to decline by 40 percent relative to 2019, while imports fell by 37 percent and exports by 43 percent. The decline in demand for fresh seafood was driven in large part by the closure of restaurants and fish markets during lockdown. In



the United States, restaurants account for two-thirds of spending on seafood, and demand dropped by more than 70 percent in the early days of the pandemic. A sharp increase in delivery and takeout services - of 270 percent - only partially offset this decline.

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/us-fisheries-hit-hard-by-covid-19/>

603) *January 13*. A case study about the impact of COVID-19 on **ST. LUCIA** by Zoe Martial, who is a Geography student at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. Her paternal grandparents were born in Saint Lucia.

<https://www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com/impact-of-covid-19-on-island-nations-st-lucia-a-case-study/>

604) *January 16*. With 160,000 positive cases and nearly 8,000 deaths linked to Covid-19, there's no doubt that after 10 months the virus has stretched its tendrils into every corner of Scotland. But for some **SCOTTISH ISLAND** communities, like the Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, this has so far been more in theory than in practice, with restrictions in place and very real concern about the pandemic, but no major outbreaks reported. This changed on January 13, when three cases were announced. This grew to 10 on Thursday, and the situation is now "rapidly developing", according to NHS Western Isles, with just under 90 people told to self-isolate, not far below 10 per cent of the island's population.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/weve-been-waiting-it-was-always-going-come-isle-barra-pulls-together-covid-19-arrives-3102745>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/20/outer-hebrides-islands-put-into-lockdown-as-covid-takes-hold>

605) *January 18*. Even as the WHO appeals to Global North countries to stop hoarding COVID-19 vaccines, potentially making acquisition costs even further out of reach for smaller nations, the **CARIBBEAN** Community (CARICOM) has called for a global summit to address more equitable distribution.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/01/18/caribbean-calls-for-global-summit-to-address-fair-covid-19-vaccine-roll-out/>

606) *January 18*. Covid-19 has only catalysed the growing geopolitical interest in the **PACIFIC** islands. Donors have been tripping over each other to prepare for an outbreak of the virus. But, at the same time, this has only exacerbated fundamental cleavages in the delivery of aid to the region. The Pacific has always had a messy web of donor footprints. Australia and New Zealand have been a constant presence. Alongside this, there is a split between the islands that recognise China versus those that recognise Taiwan. On top of this, colonial relationships and ongoing Compacts of Free Association agreements mean that the support of some big powers looms large in parts of the region, while being entirely absent in others. And more recently, new players such as the European Union have also stepped into the ring. If current trends continue, the Pacific is on track for a collision between its fundamental development needs and the rapidly evolving state of its geopolitical relationships. In just the past few years alone, China has overtaken the United States to become the third-largest donor in the region. The great risk in all this is that whatever the Pacific needs, it is unlikely to actually receive. Purely donor-driven approaches rarely deliver what a



recipient needs, especially when it is geopolitics – not development – driving the agenda. This new-found interest in the region has also created a myriad of different bilateral aid processes for recipient countries to navigate. As a result, public servants are forced to spend their days writing proposal after proposal, rather than actually getting on with delivering them. Take **TUVALU**, where the support of 58 different donor countries makes up more than half of its gross domestic product, but where there are only eight people responsible for managing this aid.

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3113760/australia-china-and-other-aid-donors-must-realise-theres-better-way>

607) *January 18*. While the **PACIFIC** and Papua New Guinea have avoided some of the worst health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of international travel and lockdowns to curb the spread of COVID-19 have had serious impacts on employment, international labour mobility, and livelihoods across the region. A new World Bank report, *Pacific Island Countries in the era of COVID 19: Macroeconomic impacts and job prospects* details the potential extent of job losses and labour market impacts in the region, while also suggesting how the Pacific may benefit from changing employment trends and other opportunities.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/01/18/reskilling-and-labour-migration-vital-to-the-pacifics-economic-recovery>

608) *January 19*. Tackling the existential risk posed by the climate crisis will be made harder by the growing gap between rich and poor triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Economic Forum has said. The body that organises the annual gathering of the global elite in the Swiss town of Davos said warning signs of the threat posed by infectious disease had been ignored for the past 15 years, with disastrous results. Despite the loss of almost 2 million lives to Covid-19, the WEF's global risks report said the Covid-19 pandemic had widened longstanding health, economic and digital disparities, making it harder to secure the international cooperation needed to combat challenges such as environmental degradation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/19/climate-crisis-covid-19-inequality-wef>

609) *January 19*. When legions of office employees were sent to work from home last year, a new generation of digital nomads was born. Countries around the world began competing for their attention by launching long-stay visa programs designed specifically for remote workers, but now, Portugal is taking things to the next level. The Portuguese archipelago of **MADEIRA** is creating a "digital nomad village." Digital Nomads Madeira is a project that will host up to 100 remote workers at a time in the town of Ponta do Sol, home to just 8,200 inhabitants. Phase one will start on Feb. 1 and last through June 30, 2021. Participants will be provided with a free working space featuring a desk and chair, access to a Slack community, and free internet from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily at the John dos Passos Cultural Centre in the village. The experience will also include fun activities for the digital nomads, as well as other events that will facilitate connections between participants and the local community.

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/jobs/madeira-portugal-new-digital-nomad-village-remote-workers>

610) *January 19.* **TONGA** has extended a State of Emergency for another month, until 15 February, due to ongoing concerns around the global spread of Covid-19. The State of Emergency was first declared 12 March and has been renewed regularly since. The extension, announced on Monday evening, means that a curfew will remain from midnight to 5am. Restrictions on gatherings to a maximum of 50 people indoors and 100 outdoors with the exception of church and schools also remain. Funerals also come under the restrictions and the government will continue to promote social distancing measures. Tonga has had no cases of Covid-19 and flights into the kingdom have been heavily restricted.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/434769/tonga-extends-covid-state-of-emergency>

611) *January 20.* **SOLOMON ISLANDS** has avoided the worst of the COVID-19 crisis, but new research shows it could take it and other Pacific countries years to vaccinate the majority of their populations. With only 17 coronavirus cases detected from returning nationals at quarantine centres, and no community transmission in Solomon Islands, the focus in the capital Honiara is on life after the pandemic and re-opening the country to the rest of the world. In the Pacific, thousands of vaccines have already been deployed to US territories and associated countries like Palau and Marshall Islands under the US Government's Operation Warp Speed. But others, like Solomon Islands, are having to wait. They're largely relying on the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility commonly known as COVAX, which aims to supply 2 billion doses to developing countries by the end of the year. As the Pacific waits, there are worries low-income countries, which are relying on COVAX, could be sidelined in the rush by wealthier nations wanting to access the limited vaccine supplies. That has prompted World Health Organization Director General Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus to issue these blunt comments on Monday. "COVAX was designed to avoid with hoarding, a chaotic market, an uncoordinated response and continued social and economic disruption," he said. The UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit forecast that Pacific countries like Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands may not vaccinate the majority of their populations - more than 60 per cent - until at least 2025. However, Dr Paula Vivili, the Director of Health at the Pacific Community organisation, said the wait might only be a few months.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-21/pacific-islands-covid-rolling-out-vaccines-until-2025/13073054>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-55795297>

612) *January 21.* A global assessment commissioned by the UN Forum on Forests concluded that COVID-19 has affected forests across the globe – hurting ecotourism, impeding conservation efforts and in some parts, crippling forest management budgets. But the authors are optimistic that the role of forests in post-pandemic recovery has never been clearer. **JAMAICA** Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site was one of the sites which closed temporarily, early in the pandemic. “The national park has places that we encourage people to visit. We initially had shut down our sites, but later on, as there was greater understanding of how the disease spreads and realising that protocols could be put in place, we followed the UN and the Health and Tourism Ministries’ guidelines,” said Dr. Susan Otuokon, Executive Director of Jamaica’s Conservation and Development Trust. Like conservation bodies the world over, the Trust, which manages the site, has been trying to fulfil its mandate amid challenges that include reduced funding and

the need for distancing when many projects demand physical meet-ups. “Some of the work that we do in terms of training for sustainable livelihoods with communities and having community meetings, it is challenging so we have had to revisit some of our outreach methods,” said Otuokon, adding that, “we’ve been lucky that some of our funding has not been affected, but some, particularly from government, has been reduced and that has impacted us, particularly our admin and support side.” While forests are not immune to the shocks of COVID-19, a recurring theme in the global assessment is the acknowledgement by respondents that those ecosystems are critical to any plan to ‘build back better’ and respond to COVID-19. Recommendations on the way forward point to forests as pillars for sustainable job creation, food production, fuel sources and ecotourism services. Some of the assessment’s regional reports also acknowledge those who, despite the limitations, continue to strive for sustainable forest management over the pandemic period. It is something the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust Director has seen among her staff. “We have national park rangers who decided they were still going out in the field, they were still working, they put on their masks and went out because they really believe that their work is very important, in terms of protecting the forests, trying to reduce clearing by farmers, both large and small scale, at a time like this when our water supply is even more critical and we need to maintain our forests,” said Otuokon.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/01/measuring-impact-covid-19-worlds-forests/>

613) *January 22*. House lawmakers in the **PHILIPPINES** have passed a bill to legislate a new, Covid-safe form of greeting in an effort to reduce contact during the pandemic. According to the bill approved by the House of Representatives, the new gesture will involve “gracefully laying the palm of the right hand over the centre of one’s chest while simultaneously lowering the head, with eyes either closed or cast down”. The traditional handshake, while well meaning, was a risk to public health, said Representative Bayani Fernando, who proposed the bill. He called the new greeting “Bating Filipino”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/22/bating-filipino-covid-safe-greeting-mps-philippines-bill>

614) *January 22*. A one-way travel bubble between the **COOK ISLANDS** and New Zealand began on Thursday. On Auckland-bound flights, Cook Islanders will now be able to skip quarantine requirements and head straight out to lunch in Auckland.

<https://simpleflying.com/air-new-zealand-cook-islands/>

615) *January 22*. **PUERTO RICO** new governor, Pedro Pierluisi, was on a mission on his trip to Washington, D.C. - to ensure that the U.S. territory of 3 million people is top of mind for Congress and the new administration. Pierluisi's immediate priority is to manage the health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed at least 1,447 people in Puerto Rico and infected over 82,5000 others. The island's coronavirus vaccine distribution process was off to a bumpy start at the end of last year, but Pierluisi said Puerto Rico is now "distinguishing itself by being one of the jurisdictions that most quickly administers the vaccines we're receiving. Of the 270,000 vaccine doses the island has received, at least 220,000 have already been given and the rest are in the process of distribution or administration."

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/puerto-rico-gov-pierluisi-seeks-equality-funding-tackle-covid-reconstruction-n1255197>

616) *January 22*. Seasonal workers from the **PACIFIC** islands will be allowed into Victoria under special quarantine arrangements after a deal was struck between the state and Tasmania. Under the deal, announced after Friday's National Cabinet meeting, Tasmania will quarantine the 1,500 workers for two weeks before they are allowed onto Victorian farms. Workers from Pacific nations, which are considered a lower COVID-19 risk than other countries, do regular farm work in Australia under the Pacific Labour Mobility scheme and Seasonal Worker program. In a normal year, about 3,000 Pacific Islanders would be a part of Victoria's seasonal harvest.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-22/seasonal-worker-deal-struck-coronavirus-shortage/13082424>

617) *January 22*. New coronavirus cases in Japan's capital city held steady at just over 1,000 for a tenth consecutive day as U.S. military bases in the country reported 64 new infections as of 6:30 p.m. Friday. On **OKINAWA**, Marine Corps bases reported no new cases but curtailed most off-base activities indefinitely due to a record-breaking number of new infections on the island. All off-base activity will be limited to physical fitness and essential services only. The Marines also ordered their people on Okinawa to wear masks at all times when indoors on and off base while in the presence of someone who is not a family member or a roommate.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/okinawa-marines-ban-most-off-base-activities-as-island-s-coronavirus-case-numbers-climb-1.659458>

618) *January 23*. **SRI LANKA** health minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, who endorsed herbal syrup to prevent Covid, has tested positive for the virus. She had promoted the syrup, manufactured by a shaman who claimed it worked as a life-long inoculation against the virus. Sri Lanka recorded 56,076 cases and 276 deaths since the pandemic began, with cases surging in recent months. Ms Wanniarachchi is the fourth minister to test positive. A junior minister, who also took the potion, tested positive earlier this week. The shaman who invented the syrup, which contains honey and nutmeg, said the recipe was given to him in a visionary dream. Doctors in the country have quashed claims the herbal syrup works, but AFP news agency reports thousands have travelled to a village to obtain it.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55780425>

619) *January 23*. A year ago, on 23 January 2020, the world saw its first coronavirus lockdown come into force in Wuhan, the Chinese city where the pandemic is believed to have started. At the time, the wider world was shocked by the harsh restrictions and rigid enforcement. From late January until June, the city was effectively sealed off from the rest of the country. But even though it came at a significant cost, it proved to be a highly successful method of tackling the virus. One year on, China is often held up as one of the virus success stories - not least by Beijing itself. So how exactly did China get from lockdown to here - and how has Beijing controlled its own story?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-55628488>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-54987675>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-55212787>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-55756452>

620) *January 23*. Wuhan has long since recovered from the world's first outbreak of Covid-19. It is now being remembered not as a disaster but as a victory, and with an insistence that the virus came from somewhere - anywhere - but here. From the moment a new, pandemic coronavirus emerged in the same city as a laboratory dedicated to the study of new coronaviruses with pandemic potential, Prof Shi Zhengli has found herself the focus of one of the biggest scientific controversies of our time. For much of the past year she has met the suggestion that Sars-Cov-2 might have escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology with angry denial. Now though, she has offered her own thoughts on how the initial outbreak may have begun in the city. In an article in this month's edition of Science Magazine she referred to a number of studies that, she said, suggest the virus existed outside of China before Wuhan's first known case in December 2019. "Given the finding of Sars-Cov-2 on the surface of imported food packages, contact with contaminated uncooked food could be an important source of Sars-Cov-2 transmission," she wrote. From one of the world's leading experts on coronaviruses, even the discussion of such a possibility seems unusual. Could a spiralling outbreak of infection that almost destroyed Wuhan's health system, sparked the world's first Covid lockdown and spawned a global catastrophe really have arrived on imported food without any signs of similarly devastating outbreaks elsewhere? But with the virus vanquished, the idea that it is a foreign import is repeated with almost unanimity across this city of 11 million people. "It came here from other countries," one woman running a hotpot stall in a busy street tells me. "China is a victim." "Where did it come from?" the next-door fishmonger repeats my question aloud, and then answers: "It came from America."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-55765875>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-55364445>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/feb/01/loose-rule-breaking-culture-covid-deaths-societies-pandemic>

621) *January 25*. After an 11-month suspension due to the pandemic, China's cruise ships have set sail again. And, with the Covid-19 outbreak largely under control, the first cruises to resume operations in the country are going to one of the world's most hotly disputed areas. Two Chinese cruise ships have been back in service since December 9, running from Sanya, a port city in southern **HAINAN** province, to the **PARACEL ISLANDS** - which the Chinese call Xisha - an archipelago in the disputed South China Sea that Beijing has laid territorial claim to. Six other governments in the region, including Vietnam and the Philippines, also lay claim to at least parts of this vast swath of water, which contains the world's busiest shipping lanes and holds rich natural resources. In recent years, the Chinese government has built a number of artificial islands in the area, equipping them with sophisticated military installations, despite opposition from other claimants as well as the United States.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/south-china-sea-paracel-islands-cruise-tourism-intl-hnk/index.html>

622) *January 25*. **PACIFIC** island nations are turning to China-led agencies to plug funding gaps in their pandemic-ravaged budgets after exhausting financing options from traditional western partners, stoking fears the region is becoming more dependent on Beijing. The **COOK ISLANDS**, a tiny country of around 20,000 people in the South Pacific, turned to the Beijing-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment



Bank (AIIB) late last year after loans from the U.S. and Japanese-led Asian Development Bank (ADB) and grant from close ally New Zealand fell short. The US\$20 million AIIB loan to the Cook Islands was the second to a strained Pacific economy in the last few months, after **FIJI** secured a US\$50 million facility, signalling the arrival of a development bank closely linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative to the Pacific. **VANUATU**, with a population of 300,000, also announced last week that it had accepted a US\$12 million grant from the Chinese government.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-pacific-cookislands-idUSKBN29U00A>

623) *January 26.* An Edinburgh couple have managed to escape Scotland's long Covid winter - by answering a call from a Caribbean island. They accepted the invitation of the **BARBADOS** government to live and work on the island for a year on a new visa. The Welcome Stamp Visa allows nationals from other countries to live and work there for a year, while doing their jobs for employers in other countries. The Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the island's tourist income, but the Welcome Stamp, launched last summer, is designed to bring people to the location and let them live like a local. So far, more than 3,000 so-called "stampers" have taken up the offer.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-55798027>

[https://www.visitbarbados.org/barbados-welcome-stamp?utm\\_source=sendinblue&utm\\_campaign=II89](https://www.visitbarbados.org/barbados-welcome-stamp?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=II89)

624) *January 26.* The newfound freedoms of remote working have prompted a wave of people to flee the US mainland for the **HAWAIIAN ISLANDS**. While the total number of relocatees is unknown, signs point towards a major influx. Real estate agents say demand has reached a fever pitch. A scheme backed by local business owners to sponsor remote-workers' flights to Honolulu, in exchange for community service, received more than 50,000 applications for just 50 slots. Some newcomers are making good on a long-held dream, while others are moving rather spontaneously, without knowing how long they will stay. They are coming for the climate, the scenery, the abundance of year-round outdoor activities. Many are fleeing virus hotspots; Hawaii has maintained some of the lowest rates of Covid infections in the nation throughout the pandemic. Among them are tech workers from Silicon Valley, couples forced by the pandemic into early retirement and parents seizing the opportunity to enroll their children in private schools offering in-person classes. There are also a number of prominent new Hawaii denizens. Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook CEO, is riding out the pandemic on Kauai, where he owns a 700-acre estate. Larry Ellison, the founder of the software giant Oracle who owns 98% of Hawaii's smallest inhabited island of Lanai, announced that he now lives in Hawaii full-time. And while the influx has been a boon for some, it has also increased tensions – exacerbating a housing market that is already unaffordable for many locals. And, for some, it has brought back painful historical memories of outsiders exploiting the Hawaii lifestyle with little regard for the consequences. The brisk depopulation of the Native Hawaiian people in the early 1800s was in part due to western diseases introduced by white businessmen who forced Hawaiians off their lands to build sprawling pineapple and sugarcane plantations. The decline of Hawaii's native population during this era – and the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom by the US government – remains a source of intergenerational trauma and anger toward outsiders. As a result, the idea of incentivising Hawaiian escapism during a public health crisis hasn't gone down well with everyone. Although Hawaii is in the enviable



position of having the nation's lowest Covid-19 death rate, the virus has decimated the tourism industry that buoys the state economy, driving the unemployment rate from the nation's lowest to its highest. With fewer airplanes coming in, hotels sit empty. An unprecedented number of residents are struggling with food insecurity as they face almost a year of joblessness. So when it comes to moneyed newcomers, some locals are in short supply of the aloha spirit that Hawaii is famous for.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/26/hawaii-remote-workers-relocating-covid-19>

625) *January 26.* Health experts in **INDONESIA** have warned that hospitals in some areas are on the brink of collapse as the nation passed one million confirmed cases of coronavirus. In one case, a man died after he was turned away from 10 hospitals, including three in Jakarta, with doctors under greater strain than any time in the pandemic. Irma Hidayana, a public health expert and co-founder of Lapor Covid-19, a volunteer group that aims to improve data collection during the pandemic, said that over recent weeks her team had been in touch with dozens of patients unable to find a hospital bed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/covid-patients-turned-away-as-hospitals-in-indonesia-face-collapse>

626) *January 26.* The United Nations has warned that the devastating socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come unless smart investments in economic, societal and climate resilience ensure a robust and sustainable recovery of the global economy. The report underscores that sustained recovery from the pandemic will depend not only on the size of the stimulus measures, and the quick rollout of vaccines, but also on the quality and efficacy of these measures to build resilience against future shocks.

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2021/01/global-economic-recovery-remains-precarious-post-covid-19-years/>

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/communication-resources/un-research-roadmap-covid-19-recovery>

627) *January 28.* UK production and sales firm MSR Media is planning to shoot comedy feature *One Year Off* on the relatively Covid-free Caribbean island of **NEVIS**. Stringent Covid-19 guidelines, as well as its location, have helped Nevis avoid many of the ravages of the virus. To date, Nevis and neighbouring island Saint Kitts have only recorded 37 Covid cases and no deaths. Mark Brantley, Premier of Nevis, said: "Nevis is uniquely placed to develop a world class film industry. My government is agile, responsive and aggressively seeking to partner with filmmakers to develop this industry on Nevis."

<https://nevisisland.com/blog/news/uk-comedy-one-year-off-to-shoot-in-nevis-as-caribbean-island-looks-to-grow-film-business>

628) *January 28.* **CLARE ISLAND** off the coast of Co Mayo is experiencing a Covid-19 outbreak that has infected about one in every eight of its 160 residents. About 20 people have tested positive for the disease, making the mountainous island at the entrance to Clew Bay one of the most infected communities in Ireland.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/mayo-s-clare-island-one-of-state-s-most-infected-communities-1.4469244>

629) *January 28.* As both COVID-19 and climate change make rural living more difficult in many parts of the Pacific region, British High Commissioner to the **SOLOMON ISLANDS** and **NAURU** Brian Jones said it poses further dangers to the country's environment. Satellite technology could, however, provide some support. According to the World Bank, the Pacific nation's rural population sits at over 75%. And the top industries include tuna fishing, mining, and timber. But when people are desperate for income - perhaps as a result of COVID-19's impacts on the country's tourism and associated livelihoods - they're more likely to sell their rights to the environment to "unscrupulous extractive industries" at a lower rate, Jones said. If not done with due consideration, this could speed up the effects of climate change on those communities by enhancing soil erosion, enhancing the turbidity of water around those islands, and damaging coral reefs and fish, he added. But satellite technology in its ability to provide data on more hard-to-reach, rural locations, could allow policymakers to take action to better protect the environment and the livelihoods of those who depend on it.

<https://www.devex.com/news/q-a-satellites-to-the-rescue-in-the-solomon-islands-98429>

630) *January 29.* Inhabitants of remote **GREEK ISLANDS** received the COVID-19 vaccine this week as the government rolled out its inoculation campaign to include tiny villages, some with no more than a couple of dozens inhabitants. Many of the islands have been shielded by distance and life has continued relatively undisturbed by the pandemic. The vaccinations are aimed at ensuring that continues before the summer months bring in a hoped-for influx of tourists.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-greece-islands/greece-rolls-out-vaccinations-to-island-outposts-ahead-of-summer-idUSKBN29Y1Q9>

631) *January 29.* The whole of the **WESTERN ISLES** has moved up to level four lockdown restrictions as part of efforts to suppress the spread of Covid-19. Health Secretary Jeane Freeman said "quick and decisive" action was needed following new cases on the islands.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-55857072>

632) *January 29.* **SAMOA** will receive its first shipment of Pfizer vaccine by the end of March with the Ministry of Health looking at legal options for people who would not want to be immunised.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/pacific/435426/samoa-expects-pfizer-vaccine-by-end-of-march>

633) *January 30.* The WHO has criticised the EU's announcement of export controls on vaccines produced within the bloc, saying such measures risked prolonging the pandemic. The EU introduced the measure amid a row with vaccine manufacturers over delivery shortfalls. The so-called transparency mechanism gives EU countries powers to deny authorisation for vaccine exports if the company making them has not honoured existing contracts with the EU. The controls will affect some 100 countries worldwide - including the UK, the US, Canada and Australia - but many others,

including poorer nations, are exempt. However, the EU has been forced to backtrack on plans to impose restrictions on the export of vaccines across the border on the island of Ireland after outcry from Dublin and London. The EU insists its controls are a temporary scheme, not an export ban.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55860540>

634) *January 30*. The **SEYCHELLES** government is aiming to vaccinate 70% of the population and achieve herd immunity by mid-March 2021. This decision will allow their economy to slowly get back on its feet. As of January 28, 2021, a total of 28,779 people in Seychelles had received the first dose of the Sinopharm and Covishield vaccines against the coronavirus.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/7726/covid-19-vaccination-programme-28779-people-receive-first-dose>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/protecting-seychelles-outer-islands/index.html>

635) *January 31*. **PROCIDA**, the smallest and least known island in the Bay of Naples, has been thrust into the limelight after recently winning the coveted accolade of Italy's Capital of Culture for 2022, fending off competition from nine other candidates. It is the first time that the title has ever been granted to an island. The prize was a moment of celebration among the island's 10,000 inhabitants and gave a glimmer of hope for the future amid Italy's ongoing struggles with the coronavirus pandemic. Giuseppe Conte, the country's caretaker prime minister, said: "Let's get ready to visit Procida," while culture minister Dario Franceschini said the island "would accompany us in the year of rebirth". But some residents, wary of the pre-Covid mass tourism that has blighted so many other cultural treasures in Italy, say a balance must be struck between developing the island and maintaining its cherished characteristics.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/31/the-little-island-of-procida-prepares-to-shine-as-italys-capital-of-culture>

636) *January 31*. Confusion reigns as **ROTTNEST ISLAND** empties in single afternoon. Hotel Rottnest standing deserted on a summer weekend afternoon was only one of the strange sights and sounds on the island on Sunday as authorities moved to evacuate 2000 people after the announcement WA was going into a five-day lockdown.

<https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/confusion-reigns-as-rotnest-island-empties-in-single-afternoon-20210201-p56yhe.html>

637) *February 1*. The French government, fearing the spread of deadlier and more contagious variants of the coronavirus, has closed the borders of its overseas territories indefinitely. Caribbean destinations that fall into that category are **ST. BARTS**, **ST. MARTIN**, **MARTINIQUE** and **GUADELOUPE**. French Polynesia, which includes the islands of **TAHITI**, **BORA BORA** and **MOOREA**, has also temporarily halted inbound tourism.

<https://www.travelweekly.com/Asia-Travel/French-government-shuts-down-Caribbean-Polynesian-islands>

<https://www.thelocal.fr/20210209/french-caribbean-islands-in-dire-straits-as-new-covid-rules-hit>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2021-01-28/pandemic-wiped-out-tourism-pacific-island-nations-can-they-stay-afloat>

638) *February 2.* Pupils in some rural parts of the Highlands and **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** like Canna, Eigg, Rum and Muck face challenges to learning at home due to poor or "non-existent" broadband or mobile phone coverage. Some families were said to be paying for satellite contracts to overcome connection issues.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-55903350>

639) *February 3.* The Caribbean island of **MONTSERRAT** launches year-long visa program for remote workers.

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/travel-news/montserrat-year-long-work-remote-program>

<https://montserratremoteworker.com/>

640) *February 4.* The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** government announces Covid-19 vaccination program beginning 8 February and for everybody over 50.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/02/04/falklands-announces-covid-19-vaccination-program-beginning-8-february-and-for-everybody-over-50>

641) *February 5.* The UK's physical isolation sets it apart from its continental neighbours, but could its island status have protected it from the full horror of Covid-19, had it closed borders in early 2020, as New Zealand and Taiwan did? Both have been applauded for their efficient handling of the pandemic, with just 33 Covid-19 deaths between them. Other island nations such as Tonga, in the South Pacific Ocean, have reported no infections. "To be an island in 2020 or 2021 is probably the greatest geographical gift you could have," said Prof Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/05/covid-could-britain-have-been-more-like-new-zealand>

642) *February 5.* Men, women and children in **INDONESIA** are risking their health wearing metallic paint to earn money as the economic impact of coronavirus worsens. Alfan, who has two young children, is one of many cash-strapped Indonesians who have taken up the street art of *manusia silver*, or silvermen, to make ends meet during the pandemic. His work as a public minivan driver dried up when people were forced to stay at home when coronavirus hit last year. He shares a bottle of silver paint, which consists of cooking oil and glitter ink usually used for screen printing, with another hard-up driver. Before the pandemic Alfan said he could earn 100,000-150,000 rupiah from his van, or *angkot*. But now it is difficult to find passengers and he can only get about Rp 30,000 a day. The head of central Jakarta's social affairs agency, Ngapuli Peranginangin, said the appearance of the "silver humans" was one of the most noticeable features of the pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/05/i-have-to-do-this-to-survive-a-night-with-jakartas-silvermen>

643) *February 8*. A study published in the journal *Science of the Total Environment* provides the first evidence of a mechanism by which climate change could have played a direct role in the emergence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that caused the current Covid-19 pandemic. The number of coronaviruses in an area is closely linked to the number of different bat species present. Thanks to their immune systems, bats have a notorious ability to live with viruses, acting both as a reservoir for new mutations and asymptomatic carrier for viruses. The world's bat population carries around 3,000 different types of coronavirus, with each bat species harboring an average of 2.7 coronaviruses. An increase in the number of bat species in a particular region, driven by climate change, may increase the likelihood that a coronavirus harmful to humans is present, transmitted, or evolves there. Most coronaviruses carried by bats cannot jump into humans. But several coronaviruses known to infect humans are very likely to have originated in bats, including three that can cause human fatalities: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) CoV, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) CoV-1 and CoV-2.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidbressan/2021/02/08/climate-change-could-have-played-a-role-in-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721004812?via%3Dihub>

644) *February 8*. Western nations and pharma companies have, for long, allegedly appropriated and taken thousands of pathogen specimens and data without permission from developing countries. Just over a year ago, Chinese scientists shared on a public database the first genetic sequence data (GSD) of the virus which causes the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The data was released on GenBank, a partnership of the US, Europe and Japan. Two days later, that's on January 12, China officially shared the GSD with the World Health Organization. This allowed its large network of influenza laboratories known as the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) to access this vital data. There was much praise for China for sharing the whole genome and associated data for the severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 or SARS-CoV-2 less than two weeks after the first cluster was reported. This was critical in fighting the pandemic. The public availability of the high-quality data enabled scientists in laboratories around the world to quickly develop diagnostic test kits and kickstart the laborious work on antiviral medications and vaccines.

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/science-technology/sharing-pathogens-but-not-the-benefits-during-pandemics-75304>

645) *February 9*. International experts investigating the origins of Covid-19 have all but dismissed a theory that the virus came from a laboratory in China. Peter Ben Embarek, the head of the WHO mission, said it was "extremely unlikely" that the virus leaked from a lab in the city of Wuhan. Dr Embarek said work to identify the origins of Covid-19 pointed to a "natural reservoir" in bats, but it was unlikely that this happened in Wuhan. The team also called for further investigation into the possibility of "cold chain" transmission, referring to the transport and trade of frozen food.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/09/wuhan-laboratory-leak-covid-origin-theory-unlikely-says-who-team>

646) *February 9.* Scientists say coronaviruses related to Sars-CoV-2 may be circulating in bats across many parts of Asia. They have discovered a virus that is a close match to the virus that causes Covid-19 in bats at a wildlife sanctuary in eastern Thailand. And they predict that similar coronaviruses may be present in bats across many Asian nations and regions. The discovery extends the area in which related viruses have been found to a distance of 4,800km (2,983 miles).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-55998157>

647) *February 9.* A group of Muslim families are launching a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee about the **SRI LANKA** policy of enforced cremation for all those confirmed, or suspected to have died with Covid, saying it breaches their religious rights and is causing “untold misery”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/09/muslim-families-complain-to-un-over-sri-lankan-covid-cremations>

648) *February 10.* The Prime Minister of **DOMINICA**, Roosevelt Skerit, showered praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India for New Delhi’s swift response to his request for 35,000 Covid-19 vaccines that can shield nearly half his country’s 72,000-strong population from the deadly virus. PM Skerit, who sought the vaccines on January 19, said he hadn’t really hoped to get the vaccines so soon.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/prayers-answered-says-dominican-pm-as-india-s-vaccine-lands-in-caribbean-island-101612944040100.html>

649) *February 10.* Whilst many hope that the Year of the Ox will herald times of plenty, a herd of wild cows in **HONG KONG** is going hungry after visitors to their habitat surged during the coronavirus pandemic. The animals have made their home for generations alongside a few dozen fishing families on Grass Island, one of Hong Kong’s far-flung islets. Named for its verdant meadows, the island is closer to mainland China than Hong Kong’s skyscraper-studded harbour front and is reached by a long bus and ferry ride. Until the coronavirus struck last year, a largely manageable number of hikers and campers made their way to the island. But with overseas travel no longer possible for most Hong Kongers, a huge influx of visitors has arrived as residents look for ways to escape the confines of social distancing in one of the world’s most densely populated cities. The once grassy pastures have transformed into barren dirt, wiping out the primary food source for the island’s herd of feral cows.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/hong-kong-grass-island-cows-starving-hikers-surge-14160138>

650) *February 10.* All the coronavirus in the world could fit inside a Coke can, with plenty of room to spare. When Christian Yates, Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Biology, University of Bath, was asked to calculate the total volume of SARS-CoV-2 in the world for a BBC radio show, he freely admitted he had no idea what the answer would be. His wife suggested it would be the size of an Olympic swimming pool. “Either that or a teaspoon,” she said. “It’s usually one or the other with these sorts of questions.”



<https://theconversation.com/all-the-coronavirus-in-the-world-could-fit-inside-a-coke-can-with-plenty-of-room-to-spare-1542>

651) *February 10*. In December, **ANTARCTICA** lost its status as the last continent free of COVID-19 when 36 people at the Chilean Bernardo O'Higgins research station tested positive. The station's isolation from other bases and fewer researchers in the continent means the outbreak is now likely contained. However, we know all too well how unpredictable - and pervasive - the virus can be. And while there's currently less risk for humans in Antarctica, the potential for the COVID-19 virus to jump to Antarctica's unique and already vulnerable wildlife has scientists extremely concerned.

<https://theconversation.com/covid-has-reached-antarctica-scientists-are-extremely-concerned-for-its-wildlife-154481>

652) *February 10*. When tourists come to **STORA KARLSO**, a limestone-ledged nature reserve off the coast of Sweden, they keep a respectful distance from the many seabirds that call the island home. In a paper published last month, researchers detail how the sudden absence of tourists on Stora Karlsö during the pandemic set off a surprising chain reaction that wreaked havoc on the island's colony of common murrelets, diminishing its population of newborn birds. When the researchers visited the island in late April, they noticed that the murrelets "were flying off all the time," with individuals sometimes disappearing for days. That was a change in behavior and a sign that something was making the birds more nervous than usual. The island's white-tailed eagles also changed their behavior. Normally, seven or eight eagles will spend the winter there, and then head out as visiting season picks up in the spring. But without the influx of tourists, they stuck around, and more eagles joined them - sometimes dozens at a time. Further observation clarified the new dynamics: The eagles, freed from the bothersome presence of humans, were themselves bothering the murrelets. Researchers across the world have taken advantage of pandemic-related travel restrictions to study the effects of sudden human absence on the natural world, an event some have called the "anthropause."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/22/science/seabirds-covid-tourism.html>

653) *February 10*. The sharp decline in international tourism is having a significant macroeconomic and social impact in the **EASTERN CARIBBEAN**. The industry is a major source of both formal and informal employment across the region, with estimations of up to 90% of the region's GDP being derived directly or indirectly from tourism. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), it is predicted that international tourism could fall as much as 80% in 2021, a rate much greater than the global average. Against this background, there is a need to reimagine existing practices and systems. With this in mind, a new project aims to support the efforts of 10 governments within the Eastern Caribbean region by targeting some of the defined national priorities with a specific focus on supporting MSMEs, youth entrepreneurship and the female-focused workforce within the tourism sector. The "FUT-Tourism: Rethinking Tourism and MSMEs in times of COVID-19" project aims to technically and financially support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that are directly or indirectly linked to the tourism sector or have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will consider how it can contribute to policy solutions to address the informality of the

MSME sector; promote alliances with the private sector in order to provide re-skilling programmes that can guarantee access to job markets and consider how UNDP will maximise opportunities to work with partners to successfully implement the project and achieve desired results.

[https://www.bb.undp.org/content/barbados/en/home/library/undp\\_publications/fut-tourism--rethinking-tourism-and-msmes-in-times-of-covid-19.html](https://www.bb.undp.org/content/barbados/en/home/library/undp_publications/fut-tourism--rethinking-tourism-and-msmes-in-times-of-covid-19.html)

654) *February 10*. The hospital on Massachusetts island of **MARTHA'S VINEYARD** expects to vaccinate 70 percent of the island's 75-and-older population by the end of this week.

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2021/02/10/70-percent-islands-75-plus-vaccinated-end-week/>

655) *February 13*. The **MARSHALL ISLANDS** has pulled out of a Pacific regional Covid vaccine program because a steady stream of vaccines from the United States government is meeting the needs of the Republic. After initially registering to participate in a vaccine program known as COVAX sponsored by the World Health Organization and managed in the region by the Pacific Community (SPC), the Marshall Islands said this week the US Centers for Disease Control is supplying an adequate supply of vaccines. With over 13,000 Moderna brand vaccines delivered to the Marshall Islands since the end of December, the ministry is now vaccinating any adult aged 18 and above. This follows priority vaccination of health workers and other "front line" workers at air and seaports starting at the end of December.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/436366/marshalls-drops-pacific-regional-covid-vaccine-program>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/436910/marshalls-leads-pacific-s-covid-19-vax-charge>

656) *February 14*. There is growing controversy over a WHO investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic after one of its members said China had refused to hand over key data, and the US national security adviser said he had "deep concerns" about the initial findings.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/14/who-investigator-claims-china-refused-to-hand-over-key-covid-information>

657) *February 14*. **HAWAII** has a lot of agricultural land but very little of it is used for growing food. Federal data shows that in 2017 - when the most recent agricultural census was conducted - only 8% of the state's agricultural lands were used for growing crops. Another 18.5% was used for grazing animals, 8% was woodlands and another 8% was categorized as "other," which includes farmsteads, homes, buildings and livestock facilities. Although access to land is one of the biggest challenges for would-be farmers in Hawaii, an analysis of state and federal data shows no shortage of agricultural land. Part of the decrease in agricultural land use is because of modernizations in farming, which increased efficiency and productivity. Part of it has to do with the end of large-scale plantation farming and the decline of agriculture as an industry in general. Competing land uses - including from solar and residential development, also hinder more agricultural land from being fully utilized, local

experts say. In the distant past, Hawaii's agricultural footprint looked dramatically different, said Kamuela Enos, director of the Office of Indigenous Innovation at the University of Hawaii. Food production was everyone's kuleana and a "practical consideration." Since then, the islands' agricultural systems have undergone several transformations - from the indigenous system to the plantations and monocropping, and now to smaller-scale farms and diversified crops. In contemporary society, agriculture has become much more commodity-based, with increased ability for crops to be imported and exported, he said. But lately, with COVID-19 impacting Hawaii's food supply chain and an increased awareness for food sustainability, Enos said the community is primed to embrace local farming, and further, Native Hawaiian practices that prospered on these lands many years ago. The emerging understanding of farming's value is coming back, he said.

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/02/hawaii-grown-maps/>

658) *February 14.* People in **SAMOA** are turning to the ocean to sustain their livelihoods as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to force more and more people out of jobs. Satuimalufilufi village resident, 35-year-old Kitonia Malaesaili is one of those who turned to the ocean for food and income, in order to support his family in these difficult times. Three to four times a week, he wakes up early in the morning to go out diving for the trochus shell (aliao). "For me, after fishing, I will travel to the market in town to sell it and most of my frequent customers are some Chinese people, they seem to love it. The price of a 550ml bottle full of flesh from the trochus is worth \$10 and we get close to \$300 a week." The trochus is a top-shaped sea snail that has a pearly inside to their shells; a layer that makes them highly valued on the commercial market. It can be found at all but one of 14 sites around Upolu and at more than half of the 14 sites around Savai'i. They are considered to be superabundant in Samoan waters with approximately more than 1000 per hectare in Sataua and Salelologa. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has hosted training programmes in 2020 that taught villagers to use machines to polish the inner pearly nacre of the trochus shell and shape it artistically. Besides being valued for its meat, the trochus shell is also used to make buttons, jewelry and handicrafts. Some countries export the shells to markets in Italy, Korea and Japan.

<https://www.samoobserver.ws/category/samoa/79169>

659) *February 15.* Conflicts over land flared up across **INDONESIA** in 2020, as Indigenous and rural communities tried to hold off pulpwood, palm oil and logging companies ramping up their expansion during the COVID-19 pandemic. The flurry of activity came despite the economic slowdown wrought by the government's response to the pandemic, and suggests the companies were taking advantage of the situation to lay claim to disputed territory, according to the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), an NGO that advocates for rural land rights.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/02/palm-oil-pulpwood-firms-behind-indonesia-land-grab-agrarian-conflict-spike-report/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/18/indigenous-peoples-face-rise-in-rights-abuses-during-covid-pandemic-report-aoe>

660) *February 15.* **FIJI** is exploring the development of a 'vaccination passport' that would provide proof that the holder had been vaccinated against Covid-19 and would

also assure visitors that Fiji was safe and open for business. The vaccination passport could be an app on a mobile device, a QR code or barcode printed on a vaccination certificate or an authenticated way of verifying the individual vaccine passports through information systems.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/436429/fiji-targets-vaccine-passport-for-economic-recovery>

661) *February 16*. Optimism as **CUBA** set to test its own Covid vaccine. Some of the equipment at the Finlay Institute of Vaccines in Havana might be considered outdated elsewhere in the world but the science taking place behind its white-washed walls is cutting edge. Researchers are working long shifts on Cuba's best shot to solve its coronavirus crisis: Soberana 2, the island's domestically-produced Covid-19 vaccine. Soberana (Spanish for "sovereign") 2 is a conjugate vaccine - meaning an antigen is fused to a carrier molecule to bolster the vaccine's stability and effectiveness. Within weeks, it will be tested on tens of thousands of volunteers.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-56069577>

662) *February 17*. A deal for **TAIWAN** to buy 5m doses of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by Germany's BioNTech is on hold, the island's health minister said, citing potential pressure from China for the delay. Taiwan's health minister, Chen Shih-chung, said officials were on the verge of announcing the deal in December when BioNTech pulled the plug. While he did not directly say China was to blame, Chen implied there was a political dimension to the decision and that he had been worried about "outside forces intervening", hence his caution in discussing the planned deal publicly. China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, has repeatedly sparred with the island over the coronavirus pandemic. Taiwan has been angered by China's assertion only it can speak for the island on the international stage about the subject, while Taiwan has accused China of a lack of transparency. In a later statement, BioNTech said discussions to supply Taiwan with doses were still ongoing. It said "BioNTech is committed to help bringing an end to the pandemic for people across the world and we intend to supply Taiwan with our vaccine as part of this global commitment," but it did not address Chen's comments or explain why the December deal did not materialise. BioNTech has struck a deal with the Shanghai-based Fosun Pharmaceutical Group to bring the vaccine to China, including Taiwan.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/17/taiwan-china-pressure-covid-vaccine-deal-biontech>

[https://www.terradaily.com/reports/BioNTech\\_says\\_committed\\_to\\_supplying\\_Taiwan\\_with\\_vaccine\\_999.html](https://www.terradaily.com/reports/BioNTech_says_committed_to_supplying_Taiwan_with_vaccine_999.html)

663) *February 17*. "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent," poet John Donne famously wrote. But oh, how many of us would wish to live on an island detached from any continent today - especially if that island is **SINGAPORE**, **TAIWAN**, or one of the many making up **NEW ZEALAND**? These three island nations have effectively defeated COVID-19 despite their urban population density, proximity to China, and robust international connectivity. Luck was clearly not on their side - but paranoia was. Robust contact tracing, strict lockdowns, enforced quarantines, isolation of vulnerable populations, and other measures were crucial to suppressing the virus in all three places. The varying

locations of these three island nations show that it is not a particular geography that has succeeded but rather a particular geology: the fact of being an island. Beyond this, it's essential to be hypercautious - as Ireland has been for the most part - rather than flippant - like the larger island next door - or just ill-prepared for the virus's pugnacious surges, like in **CUBA** and **SRI LANKA** where COVID-19 has returned with a vengeance. Even as the coronavirus's destructive march continues, there is one clear conclusion policymakers can draw: Paranoid islands have been, and will continue to be, the safest places on Earth well into the future.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/17/taiwan-new-zealand-singapore-covid-islands-of-immunity/>

664) *February 17.* **SEYCHELLES** will soon receive a first batch of Russian made Sputnik V vaccine against the coronavirus from the Russian Federation including USD500,000 from its (Russian) business community.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/7910/russia-to-donate-home-made-sputnik-v-vaccine-to-seychelles>

665) *February 17.* To continue to support **FIJI** efforts in agricultural modernization and pursuing agricultural sustainable development and resilience in response to climate change as well as the impact of COVID-19, Taiwan is setting up a new \$3 million Center for Agricultural Technology Transfer in Nausori.

[https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fj\\_en/post/1228.html](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/fj_en/post/1228.html)

666) *February 17.* The UNDP Pacific Accelerator Lab together with UN-Habitat is testing the adoption and uptake of hydroponic kits as farming methods in **FIJI** to increase food security in informal settlements as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and climate resiliency.

[https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/presscenter/blog/Food\\_and\\_Income\\_Security\\_Solutions\\_Exploration\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_Information\\_Settlements\\_in\\_Fiji\\_0.html](https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/presscenter/blog/Food_and_Income_Security_Solutions_Exploration_The_Case_of_Information_Settlements_in_Fiji_0.html)

667) *February 18.* The world is on the brink of a nutrition crisis and **PACIFIC** children living on the frontlines of the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate change crisis are most at risk. A report released by Save the Children showed the impacts of both crises had led to an increase in poverty, a loss of livelihoods, and reduced access to health and nutrition services, pushing up rates of hunger and malnutrition.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/436674/pacific-children-on-frontline-of-global-nutrition-crisis>

668) *February 18.* All mink farms are at risk of becoming infected with Covid-19 and spreading the virus, and staff and animals should be regularly tested said EU disease and food safety experts. Mink are highly susceptible to coronavirus, which spreads rapidly in intensive farms that often breed thousands of animals in open housing caged systems (outdoor wire cages covered with a roof). Humans are the most likely initial source of infection. **DENMARK**, the world's largest exporter of mink fur, announced that it would cull up to 15 million mink in November, after discovering a



mutated variant of the virus that scientists feared might have jeopardised the effectiveness of future vaccines.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/18/mink-farms-a-continuing-covid-risk-to-humans-and-wildlife-warn-eu-experts>

669) *February 18.* The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has sharply criticised the “wildly uneven and unfair” distribution of Covid vaccines, saying 10 countries have administered 75% of all vaccinations and demanding a global effort to get all people in every country vaccinated as soon as possible. The UN chief told a high-level meeting of the UN Security Council on Wednesday that 130 countries had not yet received a single dose of vaccine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/18/wildly-unfair-un-says-130-countries-have-not-received-a-single-covid-vaccine-dose>

670) *February 18.* Could Covid give **NEW ZEALAND** struggling tourism sector a chance to go green? A new report suggests the pandemic could present an opportunity to make the sector less environmentally harmful, but some operators are not so sure.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/18/could-covid-give-new-zealands-struggling-tourism-sector-a-chance-to-go-green>

671) *February 18.* While **PACIFIC** island countries have, so far, been spared a catastrophic spread of COVID-19, their economies have been devastated by the effects of border closures, internal lockdowns and the demise of international tourism and trade. With the global pandemic far from over, Pacific Islanders are looking to their local and regional economies to drive resilience and recovery. Some local entrepreneurs are already manoeuvring to gain new skills and adapt their enterprises for a local, rather than international market. In the Polynesian Kingdom of **TONGA**, a local business, South Pacific Mozuku (SPM), specialised in a luxury range of cosmetics and skincare products incorporating seaweed, known as ‘Mozuku’, which grows in the waters around Tonga. It was a perfect fit for the international tourist market. Before the pandemic, Tonga received up to 5,000 cruise ship visitors per day. The business also exported raw seaweed to international buyers, mostly in Japan. But then the pandemic hit, tourist visitors evaporated and the export market declined. After a strategic rethink, the business switched to making fresh food products, still using ‘Mozuku’ seaweed, which possesses nutritious and anti-oxidising properties, as an ingredient. They are now sold through local supermarkets and distributors. SPM, which employs 25 local Tongans, is delivering further benefits to local communities. Its partnership with the Tonga Youth Employment Entrepreneurship (TYEE) scheme has led to local youths being involved in promoting public awareness of ‘Mozuku’ seaweed as a health food and organising tasting events in shops and restaurants in the capital, Nuku’alofa. And ‘Mozuku’ is now on the menu for patients, doctors and nurses at the Vaiola Hospital, also situated in the capital. Further west in **VANUATU**, youths, women and islanders with disabilities are being mobilized in a new income generating initiative by making recycled and reusable coconut bags. In Port Vila, about 30 young people are being employed to collect discarded waste plastic, which is then crafted and sewn by local women and disabled people into large reusable carry bags. Each bag, which is designed to hold six heavy coconuts, features an inner lining of recycled plastic and an outer layer of aesthetically woven pandanus leaves. It is envisaged that, following production, the bags, which are being promoted as



waterproof, reversible and fashionable, will be on sale in March in local fresh produce markets, retail shops and online.

<https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2021/02/pacific-islanders-turn-to-local-economies-to-drive-post-pandemic-recovery>

672) *February 19*. Vaccine diplomacy: west falling behind in race for influence. “Today it is easier to get a nuclear weapon than to get a vaccine,” the Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić, declared in January. He was bragging. The Balkans country had just received its first shipment of almost 1m Covid-19 vaccine doses from Sinopharm, a state-owned Chinese pharmaceutical company. Since then, Serbia has augmented its stockpile with tens of thousands of shots of Russia’s Sputnik V, signed an agreement to build a bottling plant for the Russian vaccine and now boasts the fastest vaccination rate in continental Europe. Belgrade is flush enough that it has started practising its own vaccine diplomacy, giving thousands of doses to neighbouring North Macedonia, with others in its orbit such Montenegro and Republika Srpska expecting to receive donations soon. As the race to administer Covid-19 inoculations has ramped up this year, so have efforts to use the vaccines as instruments of influence. India entered the fray in February by giving away millions of doses to its neighbours in south Asia, where it has been competing for diplomatic sway with China. Beijing has announced a flurry of free doses over recent weeks to 13 countries, and says it plans to provide vaccines to 38 more. Moscow has capitalised on delays in the EU’s programme to sell its own vaccine to Hungary - even though the Russian formulation still awaits the bloc’s regulatory approval. In a market of extreme scarcity, with vaccination yet to begin in 130 countries, states such as Serbia are emerging as early leaders in the vaccination race, leveraging geopolitical competition – along with a willingness to smooth out regulatory hurdles – to access millions of doses fast. Conspicuously missing so far from the fray of overseas deals and donations have been western governments, which are consumed with vaccinating their own populations first and have preferred to channel vaccine aid into multilateral schemes such as Covax, the sharing mechanism that will start by supplying about 3% of the most vulnerable people in middle- and lower-income countries over the next six months. By then, countries such as the UK, US and Canada expect to be on their way to herd immunity, along with a clutch of other wealthy countries that have bought up most of the supply of western vaccines that will be produced in 2021. The divide is a diplomatic opportunity, and some foreign capitals are taking it.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/19/coronavirus-vaccine-diplomacy-west-falling-behind-russia-china-race-influence>

673) *February 19*. On March 10, 2020, **JAMAICA** confirmed its first case of COVID-19. Since that day, Jamaica’s economy, in common with the rest of the world, has been reeling. The creative sector, which had begun to show many “green shoots” prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, has been particularly hard hit, but it is forging ahead thanks to novel ideas, financial support and the brave spirit of entrepreneurship. After the initial “shock” of the country’s first lockdown, Andrea Dempster-Chung, executive director of the non-profit Kingston Creative, decided to proceed with its Artisan Collective Store and its Creative Hub. Both opened in June 2020 and these two new creative spaces in downtown Kingston offer everything from retail and co-working locations to digital/podcasting studios. In the latest phase of its “Paint the City” project, Kingston Creative contracted 10 Jamaican artists for a series of murals in the Water Lane area of the city. These murals have brought greater

energy and vibrancy to downtown Kingston during the challenging times of the pandemic, and point the way to a brighter future.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/02/19/downtown-kingstons-new-murals-brighten-jamaicas-covid-19-gloom/>

674) *February 20.* The Irish Air Corps has delivered the first batch of Covid-19 vaccines to both the **ARAN ISLANDS** in Galway and **ARRANMORE ISLAND** in Donegal. The delivery was made following a request by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Three shipments of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine were flown by helicopter, from Casement Aerodrome in Baldonnel, to the Inishmore and Inisheer islands, as well as Arranmore Island. Local GP's have since received the shipment, and the vaccines will be administered to local residents of the three islands. The Defence Forces have said that it marks a significant milestone in the vaccine rollout, and that it will continue to support the HSE in any way it can.

<https://www.thejournal.ie/covid19-vaccines-islands-5360487-Feb2021/>

675) *February 20.* **ASCENSION ISLAND** in the South Atlantic Ocean could “become the first island to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19,” the British Military said today. The island – a UK overseas territory – has a population of just over 800 inhabitants. At least 1,950 doses of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine arrived at Ascension earlier this week on a special support flight by the Royal Air Force. Staff at the island's Georgetown Hospital administer the vaccine and given the number of inhabitants expect first doses will be given to all those offered it within a week.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/02/17/exclusive-rafs-daring-race-against-time-vaccinate-ascension/>

676) *February 21.* As Covid pushed **CUBA** economy to the brink of collapse, musicians and film-makers found another way to be creative – cooking, baking and selling food.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/21/how-cubas-artists-took-to-the-kitchen-to-earn-their-crust-in-lockdown>

677) *February 22.* The UN secretary general António Guterres said the Covid-19 pandemic had rolled back years of progress on human rights, and that abuses had “thrived because poverty, discrimination, the destruction of our natural environment and other human rights failures have created enormous fragilities in our societies”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/22/human-rights-in-the-time-of-covid-a-pandemic-of-abuses-says-un-head>

678) *February 22.* Vaccinations are coming to the **MAINE ISLANDS**. Maine Seacoast Mission is providing island COVID-19 vaccination clinics starting this week with medical and support staff arriving on the organization's 74-foot boat, Sunbeam, equipped with health facilities including a medical grade refrigerator.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-maine-23da155055014013401187eb8a7f1e3d>

<https://www.pressherald.com/2021/02/25/maine-seacoast-missions-boat-the-sunbeam-will-take-covid-vaccines-to-outer-islands/>

679) *February 23*. President Joe Biden has addressed the nation as the US passed the figure of 500,000 Covid-related deaths, the highest number of any country. Confirmed US infections now stand at 28.1 million, also a global record.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56159756>

680) *February 23*. Drones are being used to carry Covid-19 samples and test kits in some **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** - in what has been described as a UK first. Following a trial last year, the project has been expanded, with medical cargo now being carried up to 40 miles (64km). Flights from Mull, Clachan-Seil and Lochgilphead to Lorn and the Islands Hospital in Oban have been authorised. Both a scheduled service and an on-demand service will be run, with orders able to be placed by NHS staff through an online system developed by digital consultants Deloitte. The drones can carry a payload of up to 3kg (6.6lbs) and cover distances faster than they can be by road. Some of the road journeys also involve a ferry crossing. Drone operator Skyports has been given permission by the Civil Aviation Authority for the flights.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-56154503>

681) *February 23*. For years, migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa have followed a well-worn path north, boarding traffickers' boats in Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria to take them across the Mediterranean to Spain and Italy. But as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus, many of the traditional migrant routes through Africa have been disrupted, making the **CANARY ISLANDS** the new gateway for many trying to make a fresh start in Europe. Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs says around 23,000 migrants arrived in the Canary Islands from Africa in 2020 - more than seven times the number of arrivals in 2019. And almost 2,600 of them were unaccompanied minors - more than three times 2019's numbers. The pandemic has complicated authorities' handling of new arrivals, according to Gemma Martinez Soliño, the islands' deputy minister for human rights. "The migrant crisis quickly became not only a humanitarian problem but a health one too," she said. "We had to come up with a system so that we could test all those who were arriving and create spaces where we would quarantine people with the virus."

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/23/europe/child-migrants-canary-islands-spain-intl/index.html>

682) *February 23*. The annual day when the outside world spills into Australia's remote **TIWI ISLANDS** for a local football grand final and art sale will return in 2021 - a year on from when the coronavirus outbreak triggered a snap shutdown of the Tiwis. A ring fence was put up around the islands last year when, due to coronavirus precautions, Tiwi leadership restricted outside access to the famous cultural event that typically attracts thousands of tourists from around Australia. But with the current suppression of coronavirus across Australia, Tiwi Land Council chief executive Andrew Tipungwuti said tourists would be welcome on the islands for the Sunday, March 21 showcase. The island's predominantly Aboriginal population of about 2,500 people is considered by health experts to be at high risk if coronavirus were to reach local communities.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-24/tiwi-island-footy-grand-final-and-art-sale-2021-to-go-ahead-nt/13183350>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-23/tiwi-islands-football-grand-final-and-art-sale-2021/100021992>

683) *February 24.* They are known as the “Forgotten Islands”, uninhabited because of their remote, hostile landscape and harsh climate. Now conservationists are worried the **AUCKLAND ISLANDS ARCHIPELAGO** will fall into neglect once again, after Covid-19 forced the abandonment of what was to be the world's most ambitious predator control programme. The Maukahuka Pest Free Auckland Island project was to rid the 46,000ha Auckland Island of feral pigs, cats and mice that have inflicted severe ecological damage over the past two centuries. It is the last island in the New Zealand subantarctic region where mammalian pests remain, and the programme would have allowed the recovery of 38 native bird species, more than 280 species of native insects, and almost 200 types of native flora. But the estimated cost was between \$60-100 million over 10 years. And with the country's borders closed to fend off the coronavirus pandemic, Department of Conservation boss Lou Sanson says he decided to put the programme on hold as revenue from international tourism dried up.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/124298784/the-forgotten-islands-pest-control-plan-halted-by-covid19>

684) *February 24.* The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** Government has received its second batch of Covid-19 vaccines, supplied by the UK government. These 2,200 doses arrived today via the South Atlantic Airbridge and are of the same Oxford/AstraZeneca type as the first batch received at the beginning of the month. Since 8 February, a nationwide vaccination program has been in operation, delivered by the staff of the Falkland Islands' only hospital, the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/02/24/the-falkland-islands-receives-second-batch-of-covid-19-vaccines>

685) *February 24.* **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** health authorities are struggling to gauge the extent of the country's Covid-19 outbreak. Over a hundred new confirmed cases of the virus have been reported in the past several days, taking the total number to 1,111. The National Pandemic Controller's office reported 34 new cases overnight. But concern is rising over the limitations of PNG's testing - with only around 50,000 thousand people having been tested so far in a country of eight million.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437063/png-struggles-to-gauge-extent-of-covid-19-in-country>

686) *February 24.* Covax has delivered its first Covid-19 vaccine doses in a milestone for the ambitious programme that seeks to offset “vaccine nationalism” by wealthy countries and ensure poor ones do not wait years to start inoculating people. Covax aims to distribute enough vaccines over the next six months to inoculate 3% of the population of 145 countries – enough to cover health workers and some of the most vulnerable – and plans to deliver tens of millions more by the end of the year. Though the programme is low profile and complex in its administration – run by four separate organisations including the vaccine alliances Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic

Preparedness Innovations (Cepi) – Covax is quietly radical in its aims, trying to build a mechanism for the equitable distribution of vaccines in the teeth of the worst pandemic in more than a century. Its 192 members include wealthy countries, whose advance purchases through Covax were used to subsidise vaccine research as well as to secure doses for poorer countries. It is seen as the only viable alternative to the kind of vaccine free-for-all that prevailed during the swine flu pandemic in 2009 and in the years after Aids treatments were first created. In both cases, poorer countries went without effective pharmaceuticals during the acute phases of the pandemics and received supplies only after they had become plentiful in the wealthy countries. But in practice, alongside signing up for Covax, wealthy countries have engaged in a frenzy of private deals with manufacturers of western-developed vaccines, locking up much of the global supply for 2021. Many countries, including the UK and Australia, have opted not to take vaccines from Covax, effectively using it as a way to channel their Covid-19 aid. Separately several African countries that include Morocco, Egypt, Senegal and **SEYCHELLES** are using the Chinese vaccine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/24/first-covax-coronavirus-vaccines-delivered-to-ghanaian-capital>

687) *February 24*. Very few places across the globe have managed to escape the Covid-19 pandemic; even Antarctica has reported cases. However, a handful of **ITALIAN ISLANDS** - Linosa, Tremiti, Vulcano, Filicudi & Alicudi - are among the spots that have kept Covid at bay for now. An Italian proverb popular with sailors declares "the sea can be treacherous but it can also be your greatest ally." This seems particularly fitting now, as the water acts as a natural barrier protecting many of those living on Italy's most isolated and idyllic islands.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/italys-covid-free-islands/index.html>

688) *February 24*. Life was going well for 39-year-old **MAURITIUS** fisherman Bimsen Beeharry when COVID-19 hit in early 2020, prompting authorities to impose a lockdown and suspend fishing. The COVID-19 restrictions were lifted at the beginning of June, but Mr. Beeharry's hopes were again dashed on 25 July 2020 when a Japanese bulk carrier, MV Wakashio, ran aground on a coral reef near Pointe d'Esny, off the coast of Mauritius. The suspension of fishing in the affected region has effectively cut off Mr. Beeharry's financial lifeline. To mitigate the economic impact of the oil spill, the government provides each registered fisher, such as Mr. Beeharry and his wife, MUR 5,100 (about \$128) monthly. Also, they are paid a similar amount to cushion the effects of COVID-19.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/march-2021/mauritius-fisherman%E2%80%99s-life-amid-covid-19-and-oil-polluted-ocean>

689) *February 25*. Officials in the **CAYMAN ISLANDS** are poised to reduce the number of cruise vessels visiting the destination while also slashing the millions of shipboard visitors the nation hosts annually. Traditionally among the most-visited Caribbean cruise ports, the Cayman Islands will not abandon cruise tourism but will "cap the numbers so that our current system can accommodate them in a better way and the experience for those who do visit can be better," said Alden McLaughlin, the Cayman Islands premier. The government banned cruise ship calls in March following the COVID-19 outbreak and postponed a referendum that would have decided the fate of a government-backed, \$150 million cruise berthing facility



proposed for George Town. McLaughlin said the cruise port proposal, which the government has explored over the past several years, is “effectively dead.” The outcome makes it unlikely the Cayman Islands will host cruise mega-ships and the millions of shipboard visitors they accommodate in future years.

<https://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/cayman-islands-will-likely-cap-cruise-calls-post-covid-19-pandemic.html>

690) *February 25*. Despite a tourism-dependent economy devastated by coronavirus shutdowns, **VANUATU** Covid-19 vaccination programme will not inoculate most of its population until the end of 2023. According to the ministry of health’s national deployment and vaccination plan, the first shots will be administered in April this year, but only the most vulnerable 20% of the population will get a jab in the first phase.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/26/vanuatu-coronavirus-vaccine-rollout-to-take-until-end-of-2023>

691) *February 25*. Soldiers in the **PHILIPPINES** will be required to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, the military said Thursday, as the country prepares to receive its first doses and begin inoculations. Pressure is mounting on President Rodrigo Duterte's government to kickstart the delayed vaccine rollout amid accusations its officials have bungled the procurement and delivery of jabs. Beijing's donation of 600,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine will arrive Sunday, the Chinese embassy in Manila said Thursday. The military is supposed to receive 100,000 of those doses. The announcement comes days after the Philippine drug regulator gave emergency approval to CoronaVac despite widespread misgivings over its safety and effectiveness. It is still not clear who will receive the first injections - or even when. Duterte has said he wants soldiers to be among the first to be inoculated, but health authorities said Thursday the allocation and rollout were still being "evaluated". What is certain is members of the military will be vaccinated eventually - whether they want it or not. Vaccines will be free but if soldiers want to choose a brand not in the military's stockpile then they will have to pay for it. Those who refused to be inoculated could be disciplined. Soldiers most at risk of exposure to the virus will be prioritised and will have to take the vaccine available at the time, even if that is CoronaVac. The order comes after Pentagon officials said roughly one-third of US soldiers declined a coronavirus vaccine, as the government taps troops to help nationwide-inoculation. CoronaVac is the third vaccine approved for emergency use in the Philippines. But the Food and Drug Administration said it was not recommended for health care workers due to its comparatively low efficacy. Although trials in Turkey found CoronaVac to be 91.25 percent effective, other, more robust trials in Brazil only demonstrated an efficacy rate of around 50 percent. The government is in talks with seven vaccine makers, including Sinovac, in the hope of securing enough doses to inoculate 70 million people - about 60 percent of the population - this year. But the bulk of the supply is not expected to start arriving until the second half.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2021/02/25/philippine-soldiers-ordered-to-get-virus-vaccine-.html>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-philippines-vaccin-idUSKBN2AP0JR>



692) February 26. The fuse was lit. Dozens of helmeted worshippers and adrenaline seekers stood stoic if they could, or ran from the flaming projectiles and paper shrapnel, the thousands of explosions ringing ears a block away. In the final days of the lunar new year celebrations and as part of the lantern festival, this notorious **TAIWAN** folk event was much scaled down but no less dramatic, and in the current global climate, newly significant. The Yanshui beehive fireworks festival was almost cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. But then it was revived, for the same reason. On the one hand, Taiwan recently had a Covid scare, and the thought of allowing people to crush together in the streets of Yanshui seemed inconceivable. But on the other hand, this century-and-a-half-old tradition was about warding off plagues. And so, “in order to show respect to the gods”, Tainan city council and Yanshui Wu Miao temple decided to keep it going, scaled down.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/26/gods-fireworks-plague-taiwan-folk-festival-takes-aim-covid-yanshui-beehive>

693) February 26. The Ministry of Health in **TONGA** says it plans to vaccinate up to 70 percent of the population by the end of the year. The COVAX facility, an initiative set up to provide equitable access to vaccines, has put Tonga on the tentative list to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine, which was recently approved by the World Health Organisation. Chief Executive Officer, Dr Siale 'Akau'ola, said Tonga initially tried to obtain the Pfizer vaccine when it was approved, but it had decided to prioritise countries where people were sick with Covid-19. Tonga had yet to record a case of the coronavirus. 'Akau'ola said Tonga would receive the AstraZeneca vaccine as it was easier to store and use. Tonga does not have ultra-cold storage for the Pfizer vaccine.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437258/tonga-aims-to-get-70-percent-of-people-vaccinated-by-year-end>

694) February 26. In an effort to deal with the COVID-19 epidemic, **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO** closed its borders to everyone but its nationals at midnight on March 17, 2020. By March 23, citizens abroad were also being barred from re-entering the country. An exemption application system, which now pertains to both arrivals and departures, was subsequently put in place but it is a process deemed a failure by many nationals stuck abroad, many of whom have unsuccessfully applied to come home - especially since those who applied under the initial process are now being asked to reapply under an updated system.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/02/26/trinidad-tobagos-covid-19-travel-exemption-process-is-demoralising-its-citizens-abroad/>

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/02/26/could-trinidad-tobagos-covid-19-travel-exemption-process-be-compromising-citizens-rights/>

695) February 27. Authorities in **FIJI** are concerned the latest cases of Covid-19 in New Zealand and Australia will impact Fiji's Blue Lanes initiative amid the pandemic. With no tourists coming in by air, the Blue Lanes initiative has been a tourism lifeline. It was launched last July opening the way for yachts and pleasure craft to be accepted into Port Denarau in Nadi, once they met criteria including 14-day quarantine at sea. Since then, about 100 yachts - including eight superyachts -

have come through Fiji bringing with them more than 400 passengers and crew. Cynthia Rasch of the Port Denarau Marina in Nadi said most of the yachts had arrived via New Zealand and Tahiti. But she warned that with New Zealand and Australia battling Covid-19 outbreaks, and Tahiti's border still shut, Fiji's maritime tourism sector is under threat.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437293/fiji-concerned-boating-season-will-be-affected-by-aus-nz-covid-19-surges>

696) *February 28*. As the number of coronavirus cases continues rising in Italy (18,916 new cases per day as of yesterday and 280 deaths), with the government moving towards the implementation of new restrictions, one region in the country wakes up to be almost free from Covid. It's the island of **SARDINIA**, known for its beautiful beaches and clear waters, a beloved summer destination for Italians and foreign tourists alike. Here, the number of cases has decreased so much in the past weeks that there is basically no need for any more restrictions: starting March 1st, shops and restaurants can be open at all times, a shorter curfew (between h.11.30 pm and 5 am) is imposed and schools and other facilities can work at 100% of their capacity. The concept of a "white zone" (which entails that only 50 coronavirus cases are registered every 100,000 inhabitants for three subsequent weeks), was introduced only recently: never before, since the beginning of the pandemic, a region has been doing so well with contagion rates. This is especially meaningful for a country like Italy, which was hit the hardest in Europe from the early stages of the pandemic.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/irenedominioni/2021/02/28/sardinia-the-lucky-island-almost-free-from-covid-19/>

697) *March 1*. The **SEYCHELLES** immunisation campaign against Covid-19, which officially kick-started on Sunday January 10 as an additional measure against the rapid spread of the virus, is still in progress and well on track, according to programme manager for vaccination Florida Bijoux. The campaign, which has been ongoing with Sinopharm and later Covishield vaccines directed at different target populations, is set to continue this week after 18 to 30 year olds were last week called to the various distribution centres to be administered with the immunisation jabs. The Seychelles hopes to open up to international tourism from March 25, 2021 and will require visitors to present a negative PCR test taken 72 hours prior to departure, but will have no quarantine requirements in place or restrictions on movement. Minimum stay in establishments upon arrival will no longer be applicable, but visitors will still be required to adhere to public health measures such as wearing of face masks, social distancing and regular sanitisation or washing of hands.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/8028/covid-19-vaccination-campaign-on-track>

<https://travelweekly.co.uk/news/air/the-seychelles-to-open-to-tourists-from-march-25>

698) *March 1*. Today **ST. LUCIA** received 25,000 doses of Indian made Covishield vaccines. The shipment was received by the country's Prime Minister Allen Chastanet, who offered his gratitude to New Delhi for donating the lifesaving vaccine shots. Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII) is the localized name of the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford. India has dispatched over 36 million doses of domestically produced vaccines to over 25 countries, under its 'Vaccine Maitri' programme. **BARBADOS** has just announced

it is in the process of a mass COVID-19 vaccination program, following the donation of 100,000 doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine from India. It adds, with over 25,000 people - approximately 12.5 percent of the adult population - already receiving their first shots within just two weeks, the island leads the way as the most vaccinated country in the Caribbean. The interesting part is this: To ensure widespread protection, the Government of Barbados has signaled its intent to obtain more doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for persons on island, whether they are citizens or not, by the end of April or early May 2021. This means that travelers to the island who have not been vaccinated would be able to receive one or more doses. The **MALDIVES** that started their mass inoculation campaign on February 1, has now immunized at least 19 percent of its total 557,426 population with Covishield dispatched under India's 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative.

<https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/st-lucia-in-the-caribbean-islands-receives-25000-doses-of-indian-made-covishield-vaccine.html>

<https://www.travelagentcentral.com/caribbean/barbados-could-begin-vaccinating-visitors-by-end-april>

699) *March 1*. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), together with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), handed over more than 22,000 Cepheid GeneXpert test kits to the **FIJI** Ministry of Health and Medical Services today as part of the Government of Fiji's efforts to strengthen coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prevention activities and the safe continuation of essential basic services. The government said the testing kits come ahead of the arrival of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine in Fiji this weekend.

<https://www.adb.org/news/adb-unicef-support-health-care-workers-fiji-22000-covid-19-testing-kits>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437671/fiji-gets-mass-shipment-of-testing-kits>

700) *March 1*. New Zealand's **PACIFIC** community has been living and working on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic, since the coronavirus arrived a year ago. On the 28th February 2020, New Zealand announced their first confirmed Covid-19 case reported to the Ministry of Health.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437409/covid-one-year-on-for-pasifika-leaders-at-the-frontline>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437802/pandemic-in-paradise-a-year-of-covid-19-in-the-pacific>

<https://www.policyforum.net/looking-back-on-one-year-of-covid-19-in-the-pacific/>

701) *March 2*. A remote island, Iranathivu, in the Gulf of Mannar has been chosen by **SRI LANKA** government for the burial of Covid-19 victims from the minority Muslim and Christian communities. Islam prohibits cremation. The government previously forced minorities to cremate their dead in line with the practice of the majority Buddhists. It claimed burials would contaminate ground water. But the government backed down last week in the face of vehement criticism from rights

groups. Iranathivu lies some 300km away from the capital, Colombo, and was chosen, the government says, because it is thinly populated.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56249805>

702) *March 3.* A 21-day "circuit-breaker" lockdown has been announced to limit the spread of Covid-19 on the **ISLE OF MAN**. The island has seen a rise in cases in recent days, with some stemming from an infected ferry crew member.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-56245100>

703) *March 3.* **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA** and **CURACAO** have been placed on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Level 4: COVID-19 Very High" designation risk list of countries Americans should avoid traveling to, joining other islands like **ARUBA** and **ST. LUCIA** the agency warns against visiting. However, not all Caribbean island destinations received the CDC's highest warning. The **BAHAMAS** and **BERMUDA** were classified as "Level 3: COVID-19 High," **GRENADA** was considered "Level 2: COVID-19 Moderate," and **ANGUILLA** was "Level 1: COVID-19 Low." While many Caribbean islands have welcomed Americans (with hotels setting up on-site COVID-19 testing to make it easier for people traveling home), some islands have closed their borders amid the emergence of new coronavirus variants. For example, the French Caribbean islands – **ST. BARTS**, **ST. MARTIN**, **MARTINIQUE** and **GUADELOUPE** – have been shut to most nonessential travelers.

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/travel-news/antigua-barbuda-curacao-cdc-do-not-travel-list>

704) *March 4.* The UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit had forecast that some **PACIFIC** countries may not get to vaccinate majority of their populations until at least 2025. The group said this involved more than 60 percent of people in some countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. But the Director of Health at the Pacific Community organisation, Dr Paula Vivili, said the wait may only be a few months rather than years as initially thought. The COVAX facility had announced it is looking at an April rollout for the Pacific. Vivili said the vaccine production technology is changing rapidly and it was highly likely that Pacific countries would be able to roll out their Covid-19 vaccination programmes faster.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437625/spc-optimistic-about-rapid-regional-vaccination-timelines>

705) *March 4.* The COVID-19 pandemic thrust into the global spotlight how infectious diseases originating in animals can have devastating effects on humans, something researchers have long known. On the front lines of that research was PREDICT, an epidemiological research program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Founded in 2009 in the wake of H5N1 avian influenza, PREDICT focused on identifying and combating zoonotic diseases caused by pathogens that jump from animals to humans. The program, which former U.S. President Donald Trump's administration shuttered, identified more than 1,000 viruses and trained staff in over 60 foreign laboratories, including the lab in Wuhan, China, that identified SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Its work

highlighted the importance of early warning programs that engage epidemiologists and veterinarians to examine the kinds of interactions between humans and animals that researchers believe led to the pandemic. Those interactions are only increasing as humans degrade natural systems at rates that affect every dimension of human health. Human activity is driving people and wildlife to closer proximity than ever: Forty percent of land surface is now used for croplands and pasture, half of all tropical and temperate forests have been cleared, and livestock make 60% of the total biomass of all mammals. It's all driving a surge in zoonotic diseases. And research shows those trends may drive the majority of global health threats in the years to come. Among policymakers, funders, and practitioners, there is a growing recognition that it is impossible to safeguard human health without protecting natural systems. Many are calling for greater adoption of a collaborative approach called planetary health.

<https://www.devex.com/news/how-the-pandemic-is-connecting-environmental-conservation-and-public-health-99127>

706) *March 5.* **CYPRUS** and Portugal say they hope to welcome vaccinated British tourists from May - the month when travel restrictions may be lifted in the UK. The Cypriot government said those who had two Covid jabs could travel, while Portugal said those who tested negative or were "immune" could also visit. It is not known how vaccine status would be proved.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56289054>

707) *March 5.* **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** is battling to control a surge in coronavirus cases across the archipelago, just as hospitals are shutting their doors because they have run out of money. The country's crowded capital, Port Moresby, is the epicentre of the latest outbreak. The city recorded just five cases for all of January, and 124 for February. But 108 cases have been confirmed in the first four days of March as community transmission accelerates. PNG has reported only 1,492 confirmed cases for the entire pandemic, but the actual caseload is believed to be many times higher. Fewer than 48,000 tests have been conducted across the country of nearly 9 million people since the beginning of the pandemic, and, in many remote parts of the country, there is no testing capacity at all. PNG has not yet begun a vaccination program. Health authorities are also concerned about a spike in cases in PNG's huge western province, which links the country to Indonesia, and has a sea border with Australia. Travel between PNG and **AUSTRALIAN ISLANDS** in the Torres Strait is usually unrestricted but has been suspended for the pandemic. But at least six cases of Covid-19 detected in hotel quarantine in Queensland are in workers who have flown in from the Ok Tedi mine in PNG's western province. Queensland's chief health officer, Jeannette Young, said the AstraZeneca vaccine rollout would be fast-tracked across Australian islands in the Torres Strait. "I'll be going through and doing the whole community on Boigu, Saibai and Badu, they're the three islands that are closest to Papua New Guinea," Young said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/05/papua-new-guinea-hospitals-run-out-of-funding-as-covid-cases-surge>

708) *March 5.* On the face of it, Scotland's **ORKNEY ISLANDS** have been a safe haven from the horrors of the coronavirus pandemic. In the 13 months since the UK's first two Covid-19 infections were identified, Orkney has had just 70 cases. Its infection rate – 314.3 per 100,000 people – is by far the lowest in the UK. For a place



where so few have caught the virus and people still have a degree of freedom, however, islanders say life has been much less “normal” than you would perhaps expect. Orkney is one of four island areas which have not been under Scotland’s national lockdown, which will remain in place until 26 April.

<https://www.aol.co.uk/news/everyones-frightened-life-remote-uk-114814138.html>

709) *March 5.* **HAWAII** county officials and private experts weighed in Thursday about how the county can improve the island’s ecological future during a two-day Sustainability Summit hosted by the Office of the Mayor. The event covered a range of topics from climate change to waste management to food security and more. Ross Birch, executive director of the Island of Hawaii Visitors Bureau, said the bureau and Hawaii Tourism Authority have worked extensively, particularly during the lull in tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to change marketing messaging for the island to encourage a more conscientious class of visitor. “Eventually, we want visitors to come here with intentionality,” Birch said, explaining that visitors should be aware of the environmental impacts of their visit from the beginning of their trip. Cynthia Punihaole Kennedy, director of the Kahalu‘u Bay Education Center, said the absence of tourists has led to a resurgence in natural vibrancy around Kahalu‘u Bay - fish have returned, corals are thriving and limu are bountiful. Kennedy added that the center has considered some pilot programs during the pandemic that could serve as models to reduce visitor impacts on the environment, including implementing “rest days” at popular snorkeling sites to mitigate the impact to corals and local water-life, or a “snorkel trail” that takes snorkelers on a guided tour through a reef without damaging the site. Meanwhile, Sanjiv Hulugelle, general manager of the Mauna Lani resort, said several hotels and resorts have started policies such as eliminating disposable plastics or switching to LED lights.

<https://www.westhawaii.com/2021/03/05/hawaii-news/sustainability-summit-explores-ecological-issues-on-big-island/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/07/travel/hawaii-covid-tourism.html>

710) *March 5.* The little-known Greek island of **KASTELLORIZO** is being hailed a success for its vaccine rollout, becoming the first in Europe to be totally COVID-free. Tucked away in a remote part of the Aegean Sea a few kilometres from the Turkish coast, it's successfully inoculated all of its 520 residents against COVID-19, with first and second doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Since last March only one COVID-19 case has been detected on Kastellorizo. The Greek government is trying to protect small islands that do not have large hospitals by vaccinating their whole populations. Greece's strategy is, therefore, to make all small and remote areas COVID-19-free ahead of the summer. They will promote this strategy internationally, with the hope of giving a new impetus to tourism. There are not one or two, but 18 **GREEK ISLANDS** which are COVID-19 free and can already be considered as ideal travel destinations for the summer.

<https://www.euronews.com/travel/2021/03/05/this-little-known-greek-island-has-become-europe-s-first-covid-free-destination>

<https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/03/06/18-covid-19-free-greek-islands/>



<https://www.politico.eu/article/greece-tourism-summer-economy-recovery-coronavirus-vaccines-islands/>

711) *March 6*. In **AMERICAN SAMOA**, close to 24,000 Covid-19 vaccination shots have been administered to date in the territory. This is about 42 percent of the eligible population according to the Department of Health's Aifili Dr John Tufa.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437798/close-to-24-000-covid-19-vaccines-rolled-out-in-american-samoa>

712) *March 7*. This small **MAINE ISLAND** community rallied together to keep the coronavirus at bay. In different times, a taxi met visitors at Cliff Island wharf to take them to any destination on this H-shaped island's dirt roads. Few visitors come now. But the taxi is still parked up the road with its back window emblazoned with a simple message in bold yellow lettering: "Sorry! No Taxi Service Due to COVID-19." It is one of the most immediately visible ways that life has changed on the island in Casco Bay that is part of Maine's largest city, but is a remote last stop on the ferry from the mainland. Cliff Island has yet to see a confirmed case of the coronavirus in nearly a year since the pandemic arrived in Maine, infecting more than 45,000 statewide and more than 3,700 in Portland. That is a distinction few others can boast and the Cliff Island's roughly 45 year-round residents want to keep. North Haven, which briefly attempted to ban outside visitors when the pandemic began, saw 15 cases in a week last fall. Swans Island, the lobstering village off the Blue Hill Peninsula with a population of about 320, saw its first confirmed case just a few weeks ago.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2021/03/07/news/portland/this-small-maine-island-community-rallied-together-to-keep-the-coronavirus-at-bay/>

713) *March 8*. The first batch of COVAX Covid-19 vaccines in the Pacific has arrived in **FIJI**. About 12,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were sent to Fiji by the UN Children's Fund as part of the World Health Organisation's COVAX initiative. The Fiji government said while the vaccine cost them \$US30 million, AstraZeneca was ideal for the country's storage capability. At least 600,000 Fijians need to be vaccinated against Covid-19 to ensure the country is protected against infection, the government said. It said about 6,000 front-line and essential workers would be the first to receive the jabs.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437844/fiji-first-pacific-country-to-benefit-from-covax-covid-19-vaccines>

714) *March 8*. Denmark's military has started delivering Covid vaccines to remote settlements along **GREENLAND** west coast, part of efforts to vaccinate isolated communities in the vast territory where logistics are complicated by extreme cold weather. A naval patrol ship set out in mid-February to visit two settlements, fitted with a specialised refrigerator to store doses of the vaccine and transporting civilian medical staff to administer them at the request of Greenland's health authorities. The autonomous Danish territory's 56,000 inhabitants are spread over some two million square kilometres, with a limited road network and the Arctic weather throwing up hurdles to air travel. Greenland's health authorities have barred entry to the territory until April 18th, with 31 cases of the infection and no deaths reported since the beginning of the pandemic. Vaccinations started on January 4 and Greenland's authorities asked the Danish military's Joint Arctic command in the capital Nuuk to

help with settlements unreachable by air or due to the weather. Six percent of the territory's population has been vaccinated so far.

<https://www.thelocal.dk/20210308/danish-navy-transport-covid-vaccines-to-remote-greenland-areas/>

715) *March 8.* The **KIRIBATI** sailors stranded 8,000 miles from home. One hundred and thirty men who are living in a German youth hostel haven't been able to see their families on the other side of the world for nearly two years say they're now desperate to return. Their government sealed off borders at the start of the pandemic to stop the virus getting onto the island, which has still recorded no positive cases. Authorities there have told them they're doing all they can to get them home.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-56308350>

716) *March 9.* Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is washing up on coral reefs close to the **PHILIPPINES** capital, Manila. According to an estimate by the Asian Development Bank, during the peak of the Covid-19 outbreak, the city could have been generating up to 280 tonnes of extra medical waste per day. Environmental groups are warning that the plastic inside face masks is breaking down and being consumed by marine wildlife. They're urging the Philippine government to improve its handling of medical waste, to prevent further pollution of the seas.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-56322369>

717) *March 9.* Visitors to Thailand can now spend their mandatory two-week coronavirus quarantine on a yacht. The government is hoping that the new initiative will bring 1.8 billion baht (£42m, \$58m) in yacht tourism revenue. The move is aimed at reviving the country's struggling tourism industry, which was hit hard by the pandemic. Announced on Monday, the yacht quarantine programme will allow visitors with a negative coronavirus test to spend their time on board a yacht or small cruise ship in **PHUKET**. The programme has already begun accepting yachters for a trial run, and around 100 yachts are expected to take part once it gets off the ground. Travellers are required to wear a smart wristband that monitors vital signs including temperature and blood pressure, as well as tracking the wearer's location via GPS. The device can transmit information even at sea, within a 10 km radius, the government said. The southern resort island of **KOH SAMUI** plans to fully reopen to foreign visitors who are vaccinated, and will allow them to skip quarantine from October 1.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56329806>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/travel/thai-resort-island-plans-to-open-to-vaccinated-tourists-in-october-101615623829794.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/20/thailands-empty-beach-resorts-hope-vaccines-will-put-them-back-in-the-sun>

718) *March 9.* Governments must fill a major gap in post-Covid recovery plans with action on the root cause of pandemics – the destruction of nature – a new coalition of health and environment groups has warned. Crucial investments and actions are missing, the Preventing Pandemics at the Source coalition said, leaving the world playing an “ill-fated game of Russian roulette with pathogens”. Many trillions of

dollars are justifiably being spent to strengthen human healthcare and boost the global economy, said the coalition, but far less expensive measures to halt deforestation and end the illegal wildlife trade are vital. The call is the latest in a series of high-level warnings that worse and more frequent pandemics will strike without action, but to date these have been largely unheeded. The coronavirus that causes Covid-19 is thought to have jumped from wild bats to humans and about two-thirds of diseases that infect humans start in other species, including the influenza, HIV, Zika, West Nile and Ebola viruses. The increasing destruction of nature by farming, logging and the wild animal trade has brought people and their livestock into closer contact with wildlife and led to a great increase in diseases crossing from animals to people in recent decades.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/09/inaction-leaves-world-playing-russian-roulette-pandemics-experts>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/03/the-covid-19-question-how-do-we-prevent-future-pandemics/>

719) *March 10.* We got rid of Covid-19 in the **FAROE ISLANDS** through competence and luck said their prime minister. On 26 February, the Faroe Islands became officially free of Covid-19. Since July 2020, our archipelago has experienced three waves of the virus, and each time the number of cases has declined quickly. In the beginning this looked like luck. Now, it seems more like the result of a successful strategy. How did we manage it? In some ways, our response to Covid-19 followed the same map as other countries: testing, contact tracing, lockdowns, public health campaigns and a reorganisation of our health sector. But, in other respects, our approach was unique. Unlike most other governments, we decided early on that we wanted to influence the behaviour of our citizens by issuing recommendations - not by making laws.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/10/got-rid-covid-19-faroe-islands-competence-luck>

720) *March 10.* Governments around the world are failing to match their green rhetoric with action in rescuing their economies from the Covid-19 pandemic, the UN has warned, with prospects for a “green recovery” in danger unless swift action is taken. Countries are spending an unprecedented \$14.6tn (£10.5tn) on trying to prevent economic collapse, seeking to protect jobs and save businesses on the brink of ruin. However, a UN-backed analysis of 50 leading economies has found only \$368bn, or about 18%, of the rescue spending so far can be regarded as green. Investing in projects that cut greenhouse gas emissions, restore the natural world or repair environmental damage can lead to strong economic growth and create jobs, in the short and longer term, according to research from the University of Oxford, which led the UNEP analysis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/10/governments-failing-fulfil-talk-green-covid-recovery-un-warns>

721) *March 10.* The UK suffered the largest contraction among top fishing nations during the coronavirus pandemic, according to tracking data analysed by the conservation group Global Fishing Watch. In a year of unprecedented decline, the UK and China saw the most “dramatic declines” in fishing activity undertaken within their

territories. In Britain, whose fishing industry was badly hit by storms in the months before the pandemic, there was a drop of 368,000 fishing hours in 2020, or 16.5% compared with 2019, while in China there was a fall of 2m fishing hours, down 13.5%. Fishing activity also decreased in Italy, Spain, France and Norway, mostly in the first months of 2020. Early on in the pandemic, boats were tied up and many workers in the Scottish fishing industry were forced to use food banks as export demand fell, restaurants were closed and lockdown restrictions were introduced all over the UK.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/10/fishing-industry-in-uk-shrank-dramatically-during-pandemic>

722) *March 10*. An outbreak of a deadly pig disease may have set the stage for Covid-19 to take hold in humans, a new analysis has suggested. African swine fever (ASF), which first swept through China in 2018, disrupted pork supplies increasing the potential for human-virus contact as people sought out alternative meats. Pork is the main meat source in the Chinese diet, and the country produces half of the world's pigs, which generate roughly 55m tonnes of pork annually, forming an industry worth more than \$128bn (£98bn). The ASF outbreak had spread across most of China by the fourth quarter of 2019. The disease is untreatable and incurable. Once it takes hold, the only solution is to kill infected animals. The dramatic drop in pork supply, after restrictions on movement of pigs and culling led to price rises, escalated demand for alternative sources of meat to be transported nationwide. These sources included wild animals, thus greatly increasing opportunities for human-coronavirus contact, a team of researchers from China and the UK have suggested in a yet to be peer-reviewed analysis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/10/deadly-pig-disease-could-have-led-to-covid-spillover-to-humans-analysis-suggests>

723) *March 11*. **BRAZIL** has exceeded 2,000 Covid-related deaths in a single day for the first time, as infection rates soar. The country has the second highest death toll in the world, behind the US. Experts warn the transmission rate is made worse by more contagious variants.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-56355861>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/13/brazil-covid-coronavirus-deaths-cases-bolsonaro-lula>

724) *March 11*. Covid-19 is taking a "severe toll" on conservation efforts, with multiple environmental protections being rolled back, according to research. Conservation efforts have been reduced in more than half of Africa's protected areas and a quarter of those in Asia, said the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). And 22 countries are rolling back protection of natural areas. Protected areas encompass some of the world's most precious ecosystems. They include pristine forests, wilderness areas and natural habitat that support endangered species. The research is published in a special edition of an IUCN journal dedicated to areas of the globe protected for nature.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/11/budget-cuts-and-collapse-in-tourism-revenue-pose-severe-threat-to-nature>

<https://www.iucn.org/news/world-commission-protected-areas/202103/covid-19-fallout-undermining-nature-conservation-efforts-iucn-publication>

725) *March 12.* **PUERTO RICO** sees a surge in tourism and a rise in aggressive tourist behavior. Low-cost flights have enticed many travelers to choose the island as a vacation spot during the pandemic, but relaxed restrictions have led to large gatherings, fights and Covid rule-breaking.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/12/puerto-rico-tourists-aggressive-behavior-coronavirus>

726) *March 12.* Sea of resilience: how the **PACIFIC** fought against Covid. The Pacific's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been one of self-reliance and resistance: to turn to its communities and churches, its lands and seas. The region has escaped - so far - the very worst of the health ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic. A handful of islands remain defiantly coronavirus-free, though that number dwindles almost weekly now. But even without high rates of infections from the virus, the impact of the pandemic has been widespread, and profound. The enforced border closures have isolated communities, threatened food supplies, crippled businesses and devastated economies, particularly across a part of the world so dependent on tourism and exports. And the global pandemic has come on top of other disasters to hit the Pacific. At one stage in April 2020, Vanuatu was simultaneously grappling with the triple crisis of Covid-19, a category-five cyclone in its northern islands and an erupting volcano in its south. A documentary from the Australian National University's Australia Pacific Security College, told through the eyes of four Pacific video diarists, charts daily life on islands isolated by Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/13/sea-of-resilience-how-the-pacific-fought-against-covid>

727) *March 13.* The small, lush green Portuguese island of Corvo, home to around 400 people, has vaccinated most of its population against COVID-19 and will soon reach herd immunity, according to its only doctor. Authorities in Corvo, the smallest island of the **AZORES** archipelago, on Friday finished vaccinating 322 people with a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. That is about 85% of the island's population and 95% of those eligible to receive shots. Herd immunity happens when enough people in a population have immunity to an infection to be able to effectively stop that disease from spreading. Experts say it could kick in when between 50% and 70% gains immunity through vaccination.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-portugal-azores-idUSKBN2B50M8>

<https://www.euronews.com/travel/2021/03/16/the-azores-smallest-island-has-vaccinated-its-population-and-escaped-pandemic-almost-unscathed>

728) *March 14.* A third wave of the Covid pandemic is now advancing swiftly across much of **EUROPE**. As a result, many nations - bogged down by sluggish vaccination campaigns - are witnessing sharp rises in infection rates and numbers of cases. The infection rate in the EU is now at its highest level since the beginning of February, with the spread of new variants of the Covid-19 virus being blamed for much of the



recent increase. Several countries are now set to impose strict new lockdown measures in the next few days – in contrast to the UK, which is beginning to emerge slowly from its current bout of shop and school closures and sports bans.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/14/third-covid-wave-sweeps-across-eu-and-forces-new-restrictions>

729) *March 15.* The **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** just celebrated its 486th anniversary amid great challenges of preservation and economic revival as it transitions into a post-pandemic scenario. The government of Ecuador reported that this week the islands will receive 5,000 doses of vaccines and will be the first province to complete phase one of vaccination. The current goal is for Galapagos to be able to finish mass vaccination campaigns before May 15. The estimated population of the islands is 33,042 inhabitants. In recent weeks, international visitors are returning to the streets of cities like Santa Cruz, which is seen as a good sign for tourism, the industry on which more than 80% of the economy of the Galapagos depends. As of now, in terms of visits, the industry is performing at 20% of its level before the pandemic.

<https://www.tourism-review.com/galapagos-launching-the-post-pandemic-scenario-news11927>

730) *March 15.* Labor wants the Morrison government to provide emergency medical assistance to **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, including providing Covid vaccine doses for health workers, as concerns escalate about the growing number of cases in the Pacific nation. The calls came as the Queensland premier announced that their state facilities had been conducting Covid tests for PNG, with one batch of 500 samples returning a staggering 250 positive results. The number of cases in PNG has been relatively low throughout the pandemic, with 2,083 confirmed cases and 21 deaths in the country, according to the country's National Department of Health. But the number of cases has jumped dramatically in the last fortnight and there are fears that the true number of cases has been masked by low testing rates, with just 55,000 tests having been conducted across the country of nearly 9 million people. Fears about the spread of Covid have led to the fast-tracking of the rollout of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the **TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS** this week, including on the island of Saibai which is only a short dinghy ride south of PNG's Western province, with plans to start vaccinating people on Boigu and Dauan islands next week.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/15/labor-says-australia-must-provide-png-with-covid-vaccines-amid-alarming-outbreak>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/16/covid-vaccine-fast-tracked-in-torres-strait-as-fears-of-papua-new-guinea-outbreak-grow>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/17/covid-has-reached-my-hospital-in-papua-new-guinea-people-could-soon-be-dying-in-the-parking-lot>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/17/png-could-already-have-vaccines-if-australia-had-not-blocked-waiver-says-msf>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/20/this-is-what-we-feared-how-a-country-that-avoided-the-worst-of-covid-finally-got-hit-papua-new-guinea>



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/22/covid-cases-in-papua-new-guinea-triple-in-a-month-as-doctors-warn-of-danger-days-ahead-png>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/26/inside-the-covid-unit-crisis-threatens-to-overwhelm-pngs-biggest-hospital>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/30/png-prime-minister-first-to-be-vaccinated-with-australian-supplied-doses-to-show-its-safe>

731) *March 15.* With its tourism-reliant economy bowed by debt, and facing climate shocks and now the COVID-19 crisis, the tiny Caribbean nation of **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA** will require more international funding to transition to green energy, its prime minister said. Gaston Browne, a former banker and businessman who came to power in 2014, said his island country of less than 100,000 people had decided to slow down an earlier drive to switch to renewable energy, to avoid tipping itself further into debt. With pandemic restrictions preventing international tourist travel, the nation's economy was likely to shrink by about 30% in 2020-21, pushing up its debt-to-GDP ratio from just under 70% to 95%.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-change-caribbean-energy-idUSKBN2B726H>

732) *March 16.* With **SAMOA** Covid-19 vaccine roll-out slated to start in April, some in the tourism sector aren't sure they'll be in business when borders eventually re-open. While the tragedy of the measles epidemic of 2019 prepared the country to act fast and avert another health crisis, it couldn't prepare them for an economic one. A year into the pandemic and Samoa is one of a handful of countries to remain free of community transmission of the coronavirus. It was also one of the first countries to close its borders which helped prevent Covid-19's entry according to the country's Director General of Health, Leausa Dr Take Naseri, who said, with grief from the measles epidemic still fresh, the whole country rallied.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/438422/from-pandemic-to-economic-crisis-samoa-s-covid-journey-one-year-on>

733) *March 16.* German tourists hoping to visit **MALLORCA** are being warned that coronavirus restrictions apply to everyone after the Spanish island was taken off Berlin's high-risk list, leading to a surge of interest from holidaymakers. Officials in Mallorca are now bracing for an influx of German tourists, as they queue up by the thousands to book Easter getaways in the Mediterranean, escaping a country that seems to be entering a third wave of Covid-19 and whose vaccination programme is off to a stuttering start. The surge in interest comes days after Germany's foreign ministry announced that Mallorca, a destination jokingly referred to among some Germans as the country's 17th state, was no longer considered a high risk area along with other parts of Spain, Portugal and Denmark.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/16/germans-hope-to-travel-to-mallorca-as-island-comes-off-high-risk-list>

734) *March 17.* **ICELAND** will this week open its borders to all visitors who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 without mandatory testing or quarantine, as it seeks to attract more tourists to help revive its coronavirus-hit economy. The North

Atlantic country, which will become one of the first to open its borders since the beginning of the pandemic, saw tourist numbers plummet by 75% last year to just under half a million, causing its economy to contract by 6.6%.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-iceland-border-idUSKBN2B91BE>

735) *March 17.* Now **SEYCHELLES** borders will open up to visitors on 25 March, Port Victoria will in August this year see the docking of a first cruise ship after a moratorium imposed by cabinet on this activity as a result of the pandemic.

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/8247/port-victoria-gears-up-to-welcome-back-cruise-ships-by-patrick-joubert>

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/8354/tourism-minister-addresses-partners-as-seychelles-re-opens-borders-to-visitors-worldwide>

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/8409/new-contact-tracing-app-against-the-spread-of-covid-19>

736) *March 17.* The Asia Foundation's new report *The Future of Work for Women in the Pacific Islands* looks at the challenges and opportunities facing **PACIFIC** women in the context of the pandemic, climate change, and technology-led change. Across the Pacific there are pronounced gender disparities in labor market participation, the work men and women perform, and the wages they earn. There are also significant gender gaps in unpaid work. Pacific women are overwhelmingly employed in the informal economy, and the combination of Covid-19 and climate-related events has laid bare the vulnerability of these workers, many of whom have lost jobs and income due to mobility restrictions, the decimation of the travel industry, and a dramatic drop in demand.

<https://asiafoundation.org/2021/03/17/the-future-of-work-for-women-in-the-pacific-islands/>

737) *March 18.* The Commonwealth of Dominica's 'Safe in Nature' certification programme has successfully allowed tourism to resume on the island in a managed way that prioritises the safety of both visitors and citizens. Launched in October, the programme enables visitors to come to **DOMINICA** and experience the island with little risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus while still partaking in all the nation has to offer. With tourism being a primary driver of Dominica's economy, the 'Safe in Nature' programme also enables the island to support its stakeholders who the pandemic has hit. Later in the month, Dominica invited digital nomads and remote workers to stay on the island for an extended period under a new visa offering. The newly launched Work in Nature (WIN) Visa allows tourists to relocate to Dominica for a period of up to 18 months to work remotely and live amongst the natural beauty of the island. With much of the world still facing some form of travel restriction, tourism-driven nations, particularly in the Caribbean, are creating new ways of attracting visitors while those under the stress of having to work from home are increasingly seeking out alternative ways to live.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dominicas-safe-in-nature-certification-programme-brings-tourism-back-to-the-nation-301250307.html>

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dominica-invites-remote-workers-to-stay-in-nature-island-with-launch-of-work-in-nature-visa-301252818.html>

<https://discoverdominica.com/travel-advisory-for-dominica>

738) *March 19*. Health authorities in **SOLOMON ISLANDS** are aiming to vaccinate the country's entire adult population against Covid-19. On Friday the first 24,000 doses of the Astra Zeneca vaccine arrived in the capital Honiara sourced through the Global Covax facility. The country had been approved for enough doses to vaccinate 20 percent of its population of under 700,000 people.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/438771/solomon-islands-govt-aiming-to-vaccinate-entire-adult-population>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/438899/solomons-vaccine-rollout-to-begin-wednesday>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/439683/solomons-prioritising-border-community-vaccinations>

739) *March 20*. **TAIWAN** will open its first travel bubble with **PALAU** starting on April 1. The arrangement, which had been anticipated for months, will allow tourists from Taiwan to visit Palau for up to eight days, and vice versa, with fewer entry and quarantine restrictions. Palau is one of Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies and has confirmed no cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Taiwan has been remarkably successful in containing the spread of COVID-19, recording just 998 total cases as of March 19 - most of them imported.

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/taiwan-palau-say-they-will-open-travel-bubble-next-month/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/438613/palau-to-open-travel-bubble-with-taiwan-from-next-month>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/439352/palau-receives-johnson-and-johnson-vaccines-from-the-united-states>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/31/palau-to-welcome-first-tourists-in-a-year-with-presidential-escort>

740) *March 21*. While Western Europe's "vaccine war" has been a struggle to prevent doses from being exported, in another part of the world, the battle is to give vaccines away. Over the past decade, China has ramped up its relationship with Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh and other states traditionally considered to be in India's sphere of influence. The rivalry between Delhi and Beijing has occasionally taken the form of high-altitude standoffs between their armies, but over past months, it has involved a scramble to send Covid-19 vaccine doses across the wider world. India, with its formidable vaccine manufacturing capacity, and a licensing deal to produce AstraZeneca's formulation, has donated nearly 60m doses; the crates arrive in foreign capitals bearing the message: "Gift from the people and government of India". China says it plans to send its own manufacturers' vaccines as aid to 69 countries, and is

selling them to another 28 as part of agreements that could provide a commercial foothold for its pharmaceutical industries in regions normally dominated by US drug makers, including the Middle East and Latin America. Analysts in Delhi say India's donations are both strategically savvy and realistic. Like most countries, India has never embarked on a vaccination drive as large as that against Covid-19. It needed weeks to scale up the vaccine infrastructure, usually geared at children and pregnant women, so that it would serve a population of more than 1.3 billion. In the meantime, manufacturers, including the Serum Institute of India, were pumping out about 2.5m doses of Covid vaccines every day, giving Delhi some room for largesse. With China firmly in their sights, an emerging partnership of Japan, Australia, the US and India - who label their grouping the Quad - last weekend announced a plan to expand India's manufacturing capacity even further, with a view to distributing vaccines in south-east Asia, another site of geopolitical contest. The Indian programme of "vaccine *maitri*" (vaccine friendship) has been cheered all the way by local media, but as both India and China seek to begin inoculating greater swathes of their own populations, pressure to keep more supply at home may grow. On Thursday, the UK confirmed its vaccination programme foresaw a major shortage over the coming weeks due to the later than expected arrival of doses from the Serum Institute.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/mar/21/china-india-coronavirus-covid-vaccine-diplomacy-is-reaching-its-limit>

741) *March 21.* **TAIWAN** Premier Su Tseng-chang received the AstraZeneca COVID-19 shot on Monday, having volunteered to be first in line to underscore government confidence in the vaccine's safety as the island began its inoculation campaign. More than a dozen European countries suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine last week amid concerns about its safety after reports of a small number of blood disorders. The World Health Organization's European director said on Thursday the benefits of the shot far outweigh any risks, and its widespread use resumed on Friday. Taiwan's first vaccines - 117,000 doses of the AstraZeneca shot - arrived on the island earlier this month from a South Korean factory. Around 60,000 people are in line to get the first vaccinations and Taiwan is prioritising health workers. In December, Taiwan said it had agreed to buy almost 20 million vaccine doses, including 10 million from AstraZeneca. Taiwan's government has played down concerns about the late start to the vaccination programme, saying that with such a low case rate there is not the urgency that exists in other countries where the pandemic remains rampant. Only 33 people remain in hospital being treated for COVID-19 in Taiwan. The island has kept the pandemic well under control thanks to early and effective prevention, including largely closing its borders.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-03-21/taiwan-premier-gets-astrazeneca-shot-as-island-starts-vaccine-campaign>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/24/how-taiwan-triumphed-over-covid-as-uk-faltered>

742) *March 22.* The **U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS** is crediting smart, sensible public health policies and tourism management efforts for the admirable performance of the Territory's bread-and-butter industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. The USVI recently announced that it will allow all residents ages 16 or older to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, making it the first United States jurisdiction to offer the vaccine to such a large majority of residents. With at least 20,000 people in the Territory

having received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, the USVI is on pace to meet Governor Bryan's goal of having half the population, or 50,000 people vaccinated by July 1, 2021.

<https://www.traveldailynews.com/post/us-virgin-islands-reports-strong-tourism-preformance-during-pandemic>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/24/health/vaccine-tourism-virgin-islands.html>

743) *March 22.* Covid-19 has shaken the world, with more than 2.5 million deaths and 115 million cases confirmed. BBC Panorama's Jane Corbin has scoured the globe to find the best examples of strategies for combating the virus i.e. countries that nailed it, and what we can learn from them.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56455030>

744) *March 22.* Today the Biden administration launched the “**Small and Less Populous Island Economies (SALPIE) Initiative**,” an economic cooperation framework designed to strengthen U.S. collaboration with island countries and territories in the Caribbean, North Atlantic, and Pacific regions. The SALPIE Initiative signals the U.S. government’s prioritization of cooperation with these economies to counter COVID-19 economic challenges, promote economic recovery, respond to the climate crisis, and advance longer-term shared interests. Pandemic-related economic disruptions have caused an unprecedented global crisis, and import and tourism-dependent island economies have not been spared. These same island communities are also among the most vulnerable to climate change; their economic resilience is increasingly threatened by more frequent and severe storms, rising sea levels, and warming ocean temperatures. SALPIE partners are geographically diverse island economies that face similar challenges. Most have populations under 1 million, have been heavily impacted by COVID-related economic disruptions, and are especially susceptible to the effects of climate change. Many do not qualify for concessional foreign assistance programs due to their higher income levels per capita. Re-focusing our economic relationships with these partners will advance shared interests and promote economic recovery and resilience. The Initiative builds on programming designed to elevate our economic cooperation to provide a framework for the United States to enhance bilateral, regional, and multilateral collaboration in SALPIE regions. Beyond addressing more immediate economic and humanitarian consequences of the pandemic and climate change, the U.S. government welcomes the opportunity to partner with these economies to advance important long-term objectives, including strengthening bilateral and regional economic ties, countering predatory investment practices by malign actors, and enhancing collaboration within international organizations. The United States values the strong trade and investment ties we have with SALPIE and views this as an opportune time to reaffirm and reinvest in the importance of those relationships as we work together on economic recovery efforts. While not an all-inclusive inventory of U.S. cooperation with this set of economies, the SALPIE Initiative brings 29 U.S. departments and agencies together to coordinate ongoing and future engagements in the following areas:

- Economic Growth: Programs that support generating rapid, meaningful, sustained, inclusive, and broad-based economic growth.

- Climate/Sustainable Energy/Environment: Programs that support climate initiatives, sustainable energy development, natural disaster response and resilience, and other critical environmental and sustainability issues.
- Development Finance: Programs in partnership with the private sector that leverage loans and/or other credit guarantees to finance projects.
- Humanitarian/Social: Programs that directly support or promote capacity building to improve humanitarian and social conditions.
- Diplomatic/Educational/Cultural: Programs with an economic focus that foster relationship building and enhance bilateral cooperation.
- Political/Security: Programs aimed at establishing the conditions and capacity necessary for sustainable economic growth by promoting peace, security, stability, and sound democratic institutions and processes.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/22/fact-sheet-small-and-less-populous-island-economies-salpie-initiative/>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/22/statement-by-nsc-spokesperson-emily-horne-on-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-and-national-economic-council-director-brian-deeses-small-and-less-populous-island-economies-salpie-init/>

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/us-opens-initiative-to-focus-on-small-and-less-populous-island-economies/>

745) *March 22*. Researchers wearing headlamps and protective suits race to untangle the claws and wings of bats caught up in a big net after dark in the **PHILIPPINES** province of Laguna. The tiny animals are carefully placed in cloth bags to be taken away, measured and swabbed, with details logged and saliva and faecal matter collected for analysis before they are returned to the wild. The researchers call themselves the “virus hunters”, tasked with catching thousands of bats to develop a simulation model they hope will help the world avoid a pandemic similar to COVID-19, which has killed nearly 2.8 million people. The Japanese-funded model will be developed over the next three years by the University of the Philippines Los Banos, which hopes the bats will help in predicting the dynamics of a coronavirus by analysing factors such as climate, temperature and ease of spread, to humans included.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-philippines-bats-w/by-catching-bats-these-virus-hunters-hope-to-stop-the-next-pandemic-idUSKBN2BE356>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2021/apr/06/bat-catchers-fight-the-next-pandemic-in-pictures>

746) *March 23*. How **ICELAND** clamped down to conquer coronavirus. Yes, Iceland is a remote island in the North Atlantic, with just one international airport. And yes, it is home to fewer than half a million people. So it would be fair to assume that it has luck to thank for becoming the first country in Europe to virtually rid itself of Covid.



But say that to Icelanders, and you won't make many friends. Because when you peel back the geography and look at the detail, there is more to it, and these islanders are pretty proud of their success.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56412790>

747) *March 24*. Outbreaks of infectious diseases are more likely in areas of deforestation and monoculture plantations, according to a study that suggests epidemics are likely to increase as biodiversity declines. Land use change is a significant factor in the emergence of zoonotic viruses such as Covid-19 and vector-borne ailments such as malaria. Even tree-planting can increase health risks to local human populations if it focuses too narrowly on a small number of species, as is often the case in commercial forests, the research found. The authors said this was because diseases are filtered and blocked by a range of predators and habitats in a healthy, biodiverse forest. When this is replaced by a palm oil plantation, soy fields or blocks of eucalyptus, the specialist species die off, leaving generalists such as rats and mosquitoes to thrive and spread pathogens across human and non-human habitats. The net result is a loss of natural disease regulation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/24/disease-outbreaks-more-likely-in-deforestation-areas-study-finds>

748) *March 24*. For years, **VASHON ISLAND**, USA, has made local, national and international news for being a bastion of vaccine hesitancy, a place where parents have, in big percentages, opted out of giving their kids the state's required vaccines. Which is why it may seem surprising that, when King County began publishing data earlier this year on the proportion of seniors around the county who had received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine, Vashon was in the lead - sometimes by a whopping amount. Medical professionals, vaccination volunteers, residents, and public health officials reconcile this seemingly conflicted picture a number of ways. They point to a vaccination rate that had already been rising on Vashon during the past six years; possible differences in how vaccines are viewed by young parents versus the older generation currently making up the majority of those who have received the COVID-19 vaccine; and a situation in which outbreaks of contagious diseases - especially one as disruptive as the coronavirus - tend to prompt high immunization rates in response. Others have pointed out that Vashon is a small, isolated, increasingly wealthy, mostly white community, where people could get the vaccine without facing some of the health equity hurdles that have been present elsewhere in King County.

<https://crosscut.com/news/2021/03/vashon-island-isnt-avoiding-vaccines-time-around>

749) *March 24*. How has the pandemic affected **SCOTTISH ISLANDS**? Covid has caused a collapse in tourism and threatened islanders' health and wellbeing, but there have also been signs of a strong community spirit.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-56510231>

750) *March 24*. Summer rentals have gone wild on Cape Cod, **MARTHA'S VINEYARD** and **NANTUCKET**, with most weeks already booked with demand so high people are "panic calling" daily, real estate agents say. The combination of families being able to room together - from grandparents on down due to the

coronavirus vaccines - and fear of traveling abroad has renters turning to the islands. More people can work remotely and because the Cape is within driving distance for 15 million people from Boston to New York City, supply just can't keep up with demand.

<https://www.bostonherald.com/2021/03/24/rentals-gone-wild-on-cape-cod-and-the-islands-with-summer-booked/>

751) *March 24*. UNICEF welcomes a US\$9 million contribution from the Government and the people of Japan that will strengthen the vaccine cold chain, and the logistics capacity, to address the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic in ten countries in the **PACIFIC** region.

<https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/press-releases/unicef-welcomes-us9m-contribution-japan-support-pacific-island-countries-during>

752) *March 25*. The stringent COVID-19 guidelines for **ST KITTS AND NEVIS** under Prime Minister Timothy Harris' leadership have helped the islands become a COVID-19 safe zone. "One Year Off," a comedy feature film, will be shot on Nevis, since the production company felt it was a safe haven for filming during the coronavirus pandemic. The star-studded British cast and crew of about 50 people have already arrived in Nevis under strict protective measures. Prime Minister Harris announced that the filming would create more opportunities and jobs for people in St Kitts and Nevis. The production company is projected to contribute about \$1 million to the nation's economy every four months. Sales firm MSR Media also revealed the creation of an education programme to train local people in various on-set roles to boost the island's production infrastructure. A plan to create an acting academy on the island is also underway. As waves of the pandemic carve out harsher borders between nations and prolong working from home practices, many business people have resorted to investing in second citizenship to escape cold weather and lockdowns. As the pioneer of the concept of *Citizenship by Investment*, St Kitts and Nevis, under its extended limited time offer, allows families of up to four who contribute \$150,000 citizenship for life, enabling them to work from paradise for as long as they need. St Kitts and Nevis citizenship also allows visa-free and visa-on-arrival travel to over 156 different destinations globally. These mobility benefits save investors time, stress and money as they can go about business without worrying about travel restrictions. Additionally, the programme does not require one to visit the country during the application process or live in the country for any number of days to keep citizenship.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/hollywood-producers-find-caribbean-island-of-nevis-safe-haven-for-filming-during-pandemic-301255244.html>

<https://www.ciu.gov.kn/the-sustainable-growth-fund/>

753) *March 24*. More people were buried on **HART ISLAND** in 2020 than any year during the AIDS epidemic - and New York is on pace to inter one in 10 of its COVID-19 victims in the potter's field. An exclusive analysis of city data, public records and interviews with dozens of local officials indicates at least 2,334 adults were buried on Hart Island in 2020 - 2 ½ times the figure recorded in 2019 and about 1,000 more than in 1988, the peak year for AIDS burials. The analysis also shows how COVID-19 ravaged New York's poorest neighborhoods and struck the sick and elderly in communities of color hardest. Meanwhile, the city's Office of Chief

Medical Examiner is storing more than 780 bodies in refrigerated trucks. These COVID-19 victims will be brought to Hart Island unless claimed by family members.

<https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/up-to-10-of-nycs-covid-victims-could-end-up-buried-in-hart-islands-mass-graves/2963867/>

754) *March 25.* The **COOK ISLANDS** takes one step closer to a safe travel bubble with New Zealand, as it launches its own Covid-19 tracing app CookSafe+. Developed by Rush - which created the NZ Covid Tracer app with New Zealand's Ministry of Health - it will be available to Cook Islands residents and New Zealanders, visiting the islands. The Islands anticipate the new app and the opening of a PCR lab will allow them to effectively trace and test air passengers arriving on Rarotonga. Previous tests had to be sent off-island for processing.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/cook-islands-launch-covid-tracer-app-ahead-of-new-zealand-bubble/WBY5YCBWYEIHMVDR435KIZOXZA/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/439234/nz-plans-cook-islands-vaccination-campaign>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/439499/cook-islands-shifts-focus-to-future>

755) *March 25.* China's exotic farms may be a missing link behind the pandemic's leap to people. Before the pandemic, such farms kept China's wildlife markets stocked with live animals - civets, bamboo rats, crocodiles, porcupines, and snakes, among others - primarily for sale to restaurants. The small farms, promoted by government officials as a way to reduce poverty in rural areas with few other job opportunities, numbered in the thousands and employed millions of people. But by the end of 2020, the government said it had shuttered all these farms as part of its response to the novel coronavirus. Now, a WHO team is considering if wildlife farms may be a missing link that helped the coronavirus jump from its probable host animals - bats - to humans at Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, a site connected to a cluster of the earliest human infections. (The team is also investigating possible links to another market in Wuhan that was tied to an early patient with no connection to Huanan.) Yunnan, the southern Chinese province where many of the now-shuttered wildlife farms are located, is also where virologists found a bat virus almost identical to the coronavirus circulating in humans. Some wildlife farms sold animals that can be infected with other coronaviruses, including civets, so scientists suspect that these species may also be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/chinas-exotic-wildlife-farms-may-be-a-possible-missing-link-behind-the-pandemics-leap-to-people>

756) *March 29.* A team commissioned by the WHO to investigate the source of the coronavirus in Wuhan in January concluded that it was "extremely unlikely" that the pathogen originated in a top-security lab in the ground-zero Chinese city. And a WHO report - seen on Monday by AFP before its official release - found that COVID-19 was most probably first passed to humans from a bat through an intermediary animal, with investigators all but ruling out the laboratory leak theory.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-wuhan-lab-heart-extremely-leak.html>

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-covid-theories.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-56581246>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56602681>

757) *March 29.* **GREENLAND** tourism industry should prepare for a summer without any cruise ships and a reopening of its borders to airline passengers no earlier than July, effectively eliminating a third of the high season, warned the national tourism promotion board, Visit Greenland. That bleak assessment came in a forecast of various scenarios public health authorities could choose as they wind down COVID-19 restrictions. The loss of much of the coming season would follow a disastrous year last year in which the number of people visiting Greenland fell by 70 percent.

[https://www.arctictoday.com/prepare-for-the-worst-greenland-tourism-industry-warned/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=prepare-for-the-worst-greenland-tourism-industry-warned](https://www.arctictoday.com/prepare-for-the-worst-greenland-tourism-industry-warned/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=prepare-for-the-worst-greenland-tourism-industry-warned)

<https://www.arctictoday.com/a-stringent-isolation-strategy-has-kept-greenland-mostly-safe-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

758) *March 29.* The inability of developing nations to spend on post COVID-19 recovery and resilience has placed the world on the “the verge of a debt crisis”. “We face the spectre of a divided world and a lost decade for development,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said today during a high-level meeting on financing development post COVID-19. He said that developing nations needed access to liquidity to allow them to sufficiently respond to the pandemic and invest in recovery and urged the global community to provide this necessary support. Guterres highlighted the over 2.7 million COVID-19-related deaths and the over 128 million people who fell into extreme poverty over the last year. He noted that while the world’s rich nations have benefited from an unprecedented \$18 trillion of emergency support measures, setting the stage for economic recovery post COVID-19, many developing nations could not invest in recovery and resilience. In fact many have spent 580 times less per capita on their COVID-19 response, in comparison to richer nations, because they do not have the money to do so. One third of emerging market economies were at high risk for fiscal crisis while six countries had already defaulted on loan payments. Guterres said the situation was even worse for least-developed and low-income countries.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/03/developing-countries-covid-19-debt-crisis-could-put-sdgs-climate-agreement-completely-out-of-reach/>

759) *March 29.* Cuban leader Fidel Castro vowed to build a biotech juggernaut in the Caribbean, advancing the idea in the early 1980s with six researchers in a tiny Havana lab. Forty years later, the communist island nation of **CUBA** could be on the cusp of a singular breakthrough: Becoming the world’s smallest country to develop not just one, but multiple coronavirus vaccines. Five vaccine candidates are in development, two in late-stage trials with the goal of a broader rollout by May. Should they prove successful, the vaccines would be an against-the-odds feat of medical prowess - as well as a public relations coup - for an isolated country of 11 million that was added

back to the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism in the final days of the Trump administration. Cuban officials say they're developing cheap and easy-to-store serums. They are able to last at room temperature for weeks and in long-term storage as high as 46.4 degrees, potentially making them a viable option for low-income, tropical countries that have been pushed aside by bigger, wealthier nations in the international scrum for coronavirus vaccines. They could also make Cuba the pharmacist for nations lumped by Washington into the "Axis of Evil" and "Troika of Tyranny." Iran and Venezuela have inked vaccine deals with Havana. Iran has agreed to host a Phase 3 trial of one of Cuba's most promising candidates - Soberana 2 - as part of a technology transfer agreement that could see millions of doses manufactured in Iran. If Phase 3 trials are positive, Cuban authorities said this week, they would move to a vast "intervention study" that would inoculate almost all the residents of Havana, or 1.7 million people, by May. By August, they would aim to reach 60 percent of the national population, with the rest getting doses by year's end.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/03/29/cuba-coronavirus-vaccine-iran-venezuela/>

760) *March 30*. A group of world leaders have joined the head of the WHO in calling for an international treaty to improve pandemic preparedness and response in the wake of COVID-19, for the sake of future generations. In a joint article published today across leading news platforms, the signatories said that the coronavirus pandemic had been a "stark and painful reminder that nobody is safe until everyone is safe" and that "there will be other pandemics and other major health emergencies". "The question is not if, but when. Together, we must be better prepared to predict, prevent, detect, assess and effectively respond to pandemics in a highly coordinated fashion", they said. The main goal of the treaty, which would be rooted in the WHO Constitution, would be to foster a comprehensive approach to strengthen national, regional and global capacities and resilience to future pandemics, the leaders added.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088652>

761) *March 31*. Activists are calling for changes to intellectual property laws in hopes of beginning to boost Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing globally, and addressing the gaping disparity between rich and poor nations' access to coronavirus vaccines. The US and a handful of other wealthy vaccine-producing nations are on track to deliver vaccines to all adults who want them in the coming months, while dozens of the world's poorest countries have not inoculated a single person. Activists have dubbed the disparity "vaccine apartheid" and called for the world's largest pharmaceutical companies to share technical know-how in an effort to speed the global vaccination project. The pressure to get more vaccines to poor nations has also weighed on the Joe Biden administration, which is now considering whether to repurpose or internationally distribute 70m vaccine doses. After outcry, the US has shared 4m AstraZeneca vaccine doses with Canada and Mexico. As it stands, 30 countries have not received a single vaccine dose. Roughly 90m vaccine doses expected to be distributed through Covax, the global alliance to distribute vaccines to poor countries, have been delayed through March and April by a Covid-19 outbreak in India. In Europe, rising Covid-19 cases and a slow vaccination campaign have also prompted vaccine export controls.



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/30/coronavirus-vaccine-distribution-global-disparity>

762) *April 1.* The WHO has criticised the rollout of coronavirus vaccines in **EUROPE** as being "unacceptably slow". It also says the situation in the region is more worrying than it has been for several months. Vaccination campaigns in much of Europe have been hit by delays and the number of infections is rising. The EU has been criticised for the pace of its vaccination programme - only 16% of its population has received the jab, compared with 52% in the UK. But the EU says the UK has had an unfair advantage in contracts it signed with vaccine manufacturers, some of whom are based within the EU.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56600660>

763) *April 1.* Officials in **HAWAII** are looking into vaccine passports, especially for inter-island travel. Hawaii Lt. Gov. Josh Green said the state hopes to work with a local company to create an app that would verify that a traveler has been vaccinated. Starting next Monday, Maui will join Hawaii and Kauai counties in expanding eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination to all residents ages 16 and older, the final group in the state's four-phase immunization program.

<https://apnews.com/article/travel-hawaii-0ed34867de794d2789860ceff0a4f495>

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2021/04/04/hawaii-news/hawaii-sees-4-new-coronavirus-related-deaths-and-112-new-infections-as-statewide-tally-tops-30k/>

764) *April 1.* The cruise ship company Hurtigruten has over many years significantly grown its presence in Norway's far northern archipelago of **SVALBARD** and today owns several hotels, office buildings, apartments and shops in local town Longyearbyen. The real estate development has gone hand-in-hand with an explosive growth in Arctic tourism. In 2019, there were 166,000 overnight stays in local hotels, an increase of almost 40,000 in four years. The number of expedition cruise tourists that same year amounted to almost 20,000 and conventional cruise tourists – almost 50,000. A significant number of the visitors were served by Hurtigruten's ships, hotel staff and adventure tourism personnel. However, since 2019, the local tourism industry has collapsed following the coronavirus pandemic and Hurtigruten has lost billions in revenues. The company is now reported to have accumulated multi-billion kroner debts. The cruise and adventure company is owned by British private equity firm TDR Capital. This week, Hurtigruten announced that it is selling all its properties in the archipelago to Store Norske, the state company that operates the last remaining coal mine in the area.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/crisis-ridden-hurtigruten-sells-properties-in-svalbard/>

765) *April 2.* St. Paul in Alaska's **PRIBILOF ISLANDS** goes into hunker down after confirming first COVID-19 case. An essential worker who initially tested negative before traveling to St. Paul later tested positive on the island. School will be remote for the next two weeks, with packets getting dropped off by teachers because the internet isn't great in St. Paul. Despite the fact that it's orthodox Lent, church services are postponed. Only one person is allowed into the store at a time, said St. Paul City Manager Phillip Zavadil. It's the first confirmed case of the illness in St. Paul, more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. Zavadil credited prompt action in the



community for keeping out the virus for so long. The community tried to use its geographic isolation to its advantage, Zavadil said. St. Paul implemented a travel ban early in the pandemic, eliminated nonessential travel and required specific workforce plans be submitted to the city for any essential work. They've also had a face mask requirement in public places like the store and post office. St. Paul has 370 full-time residents and has a little less than 300 nonresident essential workers on the island, between processor workers and others. According to officials, 177 St. Paul residents are fully vaccinated while 20 residents and 154 nonresidents have one dose of the vaccine.

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/rural-alaska/2021/04/02/st-paul-in-alaskas-pribilof-islands-goes-into-hunker-down-after-confirming-first-covid-19-case/>

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/rural-alaska/2021/02/27/unscathed-these-alaska-villages-are-reaching-herd-immunity-without-a-single-case-of-covid-19/>

766) *April 2.* As richer western nations continue hoarding COVID-19 vaccines to the detriment of poorer nations, there is some light on the horizon. On April 15, 2021, the U.S. will join the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and co-host the launch of the Investment Opportunity for COVAX Advance Market Commitment. The aim of the event is to raise more funds to ensure at least 1.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines are available to 92 low-income nations. The U.S. recently donated \$4 billion to COVAX and this new leadership role is highly commendable. However, even if all the commitments are met from the launch, only 20% of people in poorer nations would be vaccinated. Furthermore, it could take until late 2022 for that population to be vaccinated. Continued inequity in COVID-19 vaccination means virus mutations occur and newer variants emerge that may be resistant to currently available vaccines. Therefore, it is in the interest of every nation (both rich and poor) that everyone everywhere has a fair chance of being vaccinated simultaneously.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/three-ways-us-can-promote-equity-ending-covid-19-pandemic-globally/>

767) *April 2.* Pandemic accentuates need for **CARIBBEAN** countries to improve food and nutrition security. An October 2020 study of eight Caribbean countries found that 40% of people surveyed experienced some form of hunger, with 42% of those saying it was moderate to severe. The survey by the College of Health Sciences at the University of Technology included 2,257 households in eight countries across the region (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Belize, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda.) Another recent study from the Caribbean Research and Policy Institute and Unicef also found that in a survey of 500 Jamaican households, 44% reported that they were experiencing food shortages, while 78% said their savings could last them four weeks or less. Food and nutrition insecurity are just one frightening outcome of the pandemic, which has ravaged one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world. In **JAMAICA** alone, a minimum of 50,000 people have been laid off from the tourism industry, a number that is likely even higher when taking into account indirect employment. An estimated 135,000 people have lost their jobs in total. The country's real GDP for fiscal 2020/21 is expected to contract by up to 12%, according to the Bank of Jamaica, and the unemployment for Oct. 2020 was 10.7%. According to the World Bank, the percentage of people living below the poverty line was 19.3% in 2017, and while this figure had been improving, it is unlikely to continue this trajectory. With this hardship

in mind, the government has introduced a series of financial stimulus measures to reach the most vulnerable, but these are not sustainable. In addition to financial measures, the government has also focused on increasing food security, an effort that existed prior to the pandemic, but has since been ramped up. In terms of boosting food security and assisting the farming industry, Jamaica's Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Floyd Green says that the government is investing JMD\$1 billion this year. Decreased market demand, in large part from the hotel and restaurant industry, has harmed the farming industry. So while at times there is an excess of supply, a lack of demand has impacted farmers and their production systems, which in turn erodes food security. "The challenge with COVID is clearly the downturn in the market, which discourages the farmers from producing," says Green, adding that they worry their supply will not be absorbed. With this in mind, the government created a "buy-back" program, which found new clients for farmers, which has helped. "We saw an initial decline in production with COVID when it came in, but we went back into a growth position overall and now year-over-year seeing growth." Ultimately, Green says COVID has forced people to examine their self-sufficiency. "Covid has brought back into sharp focus in the minds of people the need to be more self-sufficient when it comes to feeding ourselves." The need for self-sufficiency exists on a large scale as well, especially on an island that imports over US\$1 billion of goods annually. And while some of that cannot be avoided as it is inefficient or impossible to produce everything needed by Jamaicans, Green says there are some efforts to increase the nation's self-sufficiency, as well as to ramp up exports, which can help to balance the import bill. To this end, the government is looking to encourage production of ginger, turmeric, cocoa, coffee, castor oil, and mangoes, which are all in demand because of their superior quality, he says. "We are looking to further encourage incentive some of our farmers to go into some of these crops. What you will see now over the next three years is a determined push towards export stimulation." In terms of local food supply, Green says it is sufficient. The issue, however, is with a lack of purchasing power, especially of late as a result of the economic downturn. "Our challenge is to restart the economy to make sure people can get back purchasing power." Green mentions a backyard gardening program in which 2,500 families across the country, with a majority focus on urban areas, received a kit containing all the necessary tools to start a garden and become more self-sufficient.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/pandemic-accentuates-need-caribbean-countries-improve-food-nutrition-security/>

768) *April 2.* Of the handful of countries in the world that managed to stay completely Covid-free, almost all were islands in the **PACIFIC**. Most Pacific countries, protected by their remoteness and their governments' decisions to close their borders have kept their case numbers very low with some notable exceptions including French Polynesia, which restarted international travel early and suffered a devastating outbreak in the second half of 2020 and Papua New Guinea, which is now facing a very serious flare-up. But, in these tourism-dependent economies, the closed borders that have kept them safe have also spelt financial disaster. Before the pandemic, tourism contributed nearly 40% to **FIJI** gross domestic product - about FJ\$2 billion (AU\$1.4bn) - and directly or indirectly employed over 150,000 people. But as visitor arrivals fell by 87%, the economy plummeted by 19% in 2020. **VANUATU** tax revenues tumbled by about 19% from 2019 to 2020, with huge personal cost for residents. The Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce recently rolled out a social media campaign highlighting the impact of the economic slump on Ni Vanuatu business owners, deploying the hashtags #WeAreNotAllFine and #LaefIHadNaoia – life is

hard now. For the tiny country of the **COOK ISLANDS** in the eastern Pacific, which, pre-pandemic, saw up to 17,000 tourists a month, even the creation of a travel bubble with New Zealand has not helped, with visitor arrivals yet to crack 200 people monthly. **SAMOA**, with a more diversified economy, has fared better, but there's little doubt the nation's finances will be a hot topic in the coming general election. Many have returned to farming, turned to family overseas, diversified businesses and relied on survival skills more commonly needed in the aftermath of a cyclone. Here is how three Pacific island countries have survived a year after their borders closed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/03/covid-coronavirus-deserted-islands-pacific-resorts-struggle-to-survive-a-year-without-tourists>

769) *April 2.* The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of healthy coastal fisheries for the cultural, social, and economic wellbeing of **PACIFIC** islanders. Protecting coastal fisheries is critical for the security of people's food, sources of income and livelihoods, and sustaining the natural environment of Pacific SIDS. Following through on this responsibility depends on political commitment, human capability, and data. Our oceans face a number of challenges. Climate change is affecting the interactions between the ocean, land, and atmosphere, whilst also influencing the health and productivity of the biosphere, society, and the economy. Increasing ocean acidity and rising sea levels are damaging marine ecosystems that sustain healthy marine environments and coastal fisheries. Ocean health is tied to food security in the region. Increasing populations, increase demands on oceans, strained ecosystems and the rising need for income to purchase food, especially in urban areas, are all adding to ocean health pressures. Fresh fish is consumed on average three times a week in the Pacific, and 95 per cent of fisherwomen's households consume fresh fish daily. But Pacific Islanders today sell their best food products for cash and are taking up paid employment in urban areas. These workers struggle to afford healthy and nutritious food, which they previously sourced from their gardens and the sea. In addition, fisheries development initiatives are heightening the demand for reef fish, leading to overfishing that accelerates reef erosion and reduces biodiversity. With the increased demands of commercialisation, there is concern that fishers may be harvesting under-sized and juvenile fish and compromising the sustainability of some of the common fisheries. Larger populations, modernisation, and global trade have amplified pressures on coastal fisheries, and increased the demand for food. Moreover, the increased and unregulated use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, coupled with changes in land use and infrastructure development, is leading to greater sediment and nutrient runoff into coastal waters. This has degraded coral reefs and the fisheries in the region, including in Pohnpei (Federated States of Micronesia), Fanga'uta Lagoon (Tonga), and the Coral Coast and Suva Lagoon (Fiji), where sewage contamination has been reported. Collapsed fisheries across the Pacific highlight the need to align fisheries development to the capacities of the fish stocks. Unfortunately, fisheries with multiple species make management complicated as fishers have the luxury to move to a new commodity after the depletion in preferred stocks.

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=2019673860666096890827a336ec32>

770) *April 3.* **EUROPE** battles a third wave of the pandemic and delays in its vaccine rollout. France has entered its third national lockdown with a surge in cases of Covid-19 that threatens to overwhelm the country's hospitals. All schools and non-essential

shops will shut for four weeks, and a curfew will be in place from 19:00 to 06:00. Eastern Europe largely escaped the worst of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, but the picture has changed dramatically with several countries experiencing record infections and deaths.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56622471>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-56526265>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56588509>

771) *April 3*. Like many of the vast majority of people unlucky enough to receive a positive Covid test result, the precise moment of infection remains a mystery. **NEW ZEALAND** is one of the few places in the world where that's not the case. The country eliminated Covid 19 in the community by shutting its border in mid-March 2020, introducing compulsory quarantine for all returnees, and instituting a series of lockdowns to stamp out existing clusters. Every so often, a case slips through the border, causing a small outbreak. But without community transmission in the background, New Zealand can drill down into individual cases with forensic detail. Using a mixture of genomic sequencing and epidemiology, the country works to identify precisely who gave the virus to whom and - often enough - the environment in which it happened. That knowledge has proven critical for New Zealand's pandemic response, allowing it to avoid longer lockdowns by more precisely mapping the spread. But it's also yielded scientific insights to the rest of the world into exactly how and where Covid spreads. With conditions controlled to a degree that's simply not possible elsewhere, the country behaves like a laboratory for the world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2021/apr/04/how-new-zealands-covid-success-made-it-a-laboratory-for-the-world>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-56645990>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/06/new-zealand-coronavirus-breaches-jailed-convictions>

772) *April 5*. **HAITI** does not have a single vaccine to offer its more than 11 million people over a year after the pandemic began, raising concerns among health experts that the wellbeing of Haitians is being pushed aside as violence and political instability across the country deepen. So far, Haiti is slated to receive only 756,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through a United Nations program aimed at ensuring the neediest countries get Covid-19 shots. The free doses were scheduled to arrive in May at the latest, but delays are expected because Haiti missed a deadline and the key Indian manufacturer is now prioritizing an increase in domestic demand.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/05/haiti-no-covid-vaccine-doses>

773) *April 5*. In Thailand, it's the all-important tourism sector that has jumped to the head of the COVID-19 vaccination line, with the country's most popular resort island embarking on a mass inoculation programme two months ahead of the rest of the country. The island of **PHUKET** aims to deliver shots to at least 460,000 people - most of its population - as it gears up for July 1, when vaccinated overseas visitors will no longer be required to quarantine. Phuket also has its own international airport

and tourists would be able to roam the island freely without posing any coronavirus risk to the rest of Thailand's population.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-thailand-tourism-idUSKBN2BS02F>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/phuket-thailand-reopening-vaccines-cmd/index.html>

774) *April 5*. A group of bar, karaoke and mahjong parlour owners have gone on a symbolic hunger strike in **HONG KONG** over anti-coronavirus measures that have kept them shuttered for most of the last year. Hong Kong's bars - a major early source of infections - have been hit particularly hard by social distancing measures that have been tightened and relaxed depending on infection rates. Over the last year, they have been fully closed for 230 days, opened with restrictions for 101 days, and allowed to run normally for only 24 days. The latest closures have been in place since November, meaning bar owners missed out on the usually peak Christmas, New Year and Easter holiday seasons. Densely populated Hong Kong was one of the first places to be hit by the coronavirus, but strict social distancing and universal mask wearing has helped keep infections to just over 11,000 with 205 deaths. Those measures have caused economic devastation, however, and prompted accusations that authorities are more willing to relax curbs for politically connected industries. Restaurants have remained open in recent weeks - with a cap on four people per table - while Hong Kong's malls and theme parks have been packed. Gyms have also been allowed to reopen despite being at the centre of a major recent cluster. The protesting owners said their industries were willing to adopt stringent measures including capacity restrictions and even requiring customers to drink with a straw. But so far they have not won any government approval to reopen.

[https://www.terraily.com/reports/Hong\\_Kong\\_bar\\_owners\\_in\\_hunger\\_strike\\_over\\_virus\\_closures\\_999.html](https://www.terraily.com/reports/Hong_Kong_bar_owners_in_hunger_strike_over_virus_closures_999.html)

775) *April 6*. A 28-year-old **PHILIPPINES** man has died after allegedly being forced by village guards to perform an exercise 300 times as a punishment for violating coronavirus quarantine, his family has said. Darren Manaog Peñaredondo was caught buying drinking water after 6pm, allegedly in violation of the Covid curfew in the city of General Trias, in Cavite province

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/06/philippines-man-dies-after-doing-300-squats-for-breaching-covid-curfew>

776) *April 6*. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take an unprecedented human and economic toll, wiping away years of modest and uneven progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Developing countries now need much more support as progress towards the SDGs was not on track even before the pandemic. By end-2022, average incomes are expected to be 18% below pre-crisis levels in low-income countries (LICs) and 22% less in emerging and developing countries excluding China - compared to 13% lower for developed economies. These lower incomes will push hundreds of millions into extreme poverty and hunger, surviving on incomes under US\$1.90/day. The World Bank estimates the poor increased by 119–124 million in 2020 and by 143–163 million more this year. As the UN Secretary-General has noted, “richer countries have benefited from an unprecedented



\$16 trillion of emergency support measures... the least developed countries have spent 580 times less in per capita terms on their COVID-19 response"! Last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and UNCTAD estimated that developing countries need about US\$2.5 trillion for relief to affected families and businesses, and to expedite economic recovery. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva later acknowledged that developing countries need much more. The IMF now estimates that only achieving access to basic services by 2030 in 121 developing countries would require US\$3tn, up to half in LICs.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/imf-world-bank-must-support-developing-countries-recovery/>

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/covid-19-teaches-us-better-manage-global-systemic-risks/>

777) *April 6.* Isles scattered across the **AEGEAN ARCHIPELAGO** are to become the first "Covid-free" areas of Greece as vaccination efforts intensify in tourist destinations hoping for an influx of summer visitors. In one of the biggest operational challenges of modern times, authorities have vowed at least 69 islands will be fully vaccinated by the end of April. "We have so many smaller isles," said Marios Themistocleous, the health ministry official overseeing the programme. "Precisely because they're so difficult to get supplies to, we decided to vaccinate entire populations in one go with the aim that when they begin receiving tourists, permanent residents are fully vaccinated and protected." Under the scheme, conceived with the help of the armed forces, delivery of thousands of vaccines to far-flung isles will be stepped up in the coming weeks. Themistocleous described the operation as complex and logistically fraught. Planes, helicopters and coastguard boats had been seconded with soldiers, civil protection officials and the police all involved at different stages. As urban centres across Greece struggle to suppress the third wave of coronavirus infections now spreading across Europe, the country's vast array of islands has remained remarkably untouched by the crisis. On Lipsi, part of the southern Aegean's Dodecanese chain, Fotis Mangos, the island's mayor, proudly proclaims there has been "only one case" since the outbreak of the pandemic. "And that was of a soldier who returning from leave was found to be positive," he said. "We look at Athens, and other cities, and realise how lightly it's touched us. We've been in lockdown, our shops and schools are shut, but I put our success to throwing all our weight at people coming in. They're tested twice and we're very strict about it." With the island, like the Greek economy at large hugely dependent on tourism, Mangos said the vaccination programme – codenamed Freedom – had elicited overwhelming support. Almost the entire adult population of the 800 people permanently living on Lipsi had been vaccinated. "Forty-five percent are under the age of 18 but nearly everyone who is eligible has had both shots and 86 people are getting their second jab this weekend. I hear tourist bookings are up. We're very, very satisfied." On the adjacent island of Patmos, popular with celebrities, religious pilgrims and the well-heeled cosmopolitan elite, the prospect of being "Covid-free" within weeks has been met with elation. "In the winter we have around 3,100 people living here and most over the age of 60 have been vaccinated," said Eleftherios Pentes, its mayor. "The list closes this Friday and almost everyone between the ages of 18 and 59 is signing up for the shot. Last November we had 25 Covid cases here and I think it was a lesson for all of us." The scheme, which is echoed on the other side of the world as Thailand puts the island resort of **PHUKET** to the front of its vaccine queue, is not without critics. This week the Greek tourism minister, Haris Theoharis, insisted that with the nation setting a



target date of 14 May to reopen to tourists, the focus was not only on islands but “all of Greece” being a safe destination. On outposts that can often feel cut off from the rest of the world out of season, the vaccination drive has also boosted morale. For those working in the tourist sector it had been very positively welcomed after last year’s terrible showings, said Dimitris Grillis, who runs a small hotel on Patmos. “Just the idea that we are going to be Covid-free removes a whole layer of uncertainty,” he enthused. “You have to be happy to work and practically and psychologically this will help motivate staff. Last year we had the sort of losses you see in war.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/06/aegean-islands-to-become-first-covid-free-areas-of-greece>

778) *April 7.* **TAIWAN** has accused Beijing of 'vaccine diplomacy' by offering Chinese-made Covid vaccines to pressure Paraguay to sever ties with the island. Foreign Minister Joseph Wu claimed China had promised millions of doses for Paraguay which has been hit hard by the pandemic. Paraguay is only one of a handful of countries that recognise the self-governing territory of Taiwan as a sovereign nation.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56661303>

779) *April 7.* Indians are jetting off to the **MALDIVES** in ever greater numbers to escape the coronavirus pandemic. Visitors from the South Asian nation to the sandy paradise known for its clear water and white beaches jumped 50% to just over 44,000 in the first two months of the year versus 2020, figures from the island nation’s ministry of tourism show. Arrivals from China, Japan and South Korea were down around 98%. Tourists from India also made up 23.3% of the total in the two months, the most from any single country. India reached a grim milestone on April 5 when the government reported over 100,000 new cases on a single day for the first time. The second wave has shuttered businesses once again and sent some cities back into lockdown, triggering a desire to holiday in far-flung destinations. Local airlines are sensing opportunity, too. Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines Ltd., started non-stop Mumbai to Male flights under a travel bubble agreement between India and Maldives last month, becoming the only airline to offer premium economy class on the route. The ease of entry is also a big sell. The Maldives has exempted all tourists from mandatory quarantine if passengers test negative for Covid 96 hours before their departure. That’s in contrast to other countries such as the U.K. where overseas trips are effectively banned and any incoming travelers must take multiple Covid tests and undergo quarantine.

<https://theprint.in/india/maldives-is-the-new-go-a-as-indians-flock-islands-to-holiday-escape-pandemic/635469/>

780) *April 7.* The beaches on **HAWAII** are back to being shared between locals and tourists but, steering the tourism comeback while balancing the needs of the community is a challenge. “The tourists are back and in greater numbers than we’ve seen in a very long time,” said State Sen. Chris Lee of Windward Oahu. Lee says he was sent an image, a week ago, of a tour van dropping off visitors in an undesignated drop-off area in a Kailua neighborhood. He hopes his bill to increase penalties from \$1,000 to \$5,000 dollars for tour companies that repeatedly violate the law will continue to move forward in legislature. “We want to make sure that those fines are meaningful. That those companies do right by the community,” Lee said. Hawaii’s

tourism levels are no where near pre-pandemic levels, but the amount of visitors arriving to the state is rising. Hawaii Tourism Authority says the average daily census showed that there were 90,776 in February compared to 250,052 in February 2020. Only 513 travelers flew into Hawaii at the beginning of the pandemic exactly one year ago. On Wednesday, the Hawaii Tourism Authority reports nearly 20,000 travelers. The group, Aloha Aina Economic Futures, is advocating for an economic reboot that cares for the community and the environment. The group is not saying no outright to tourism but calling for regenerative pono tourism and tourism that's going to benefit local people.

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2021/04/08/state-community-leaders-hope-pono-tourism/>

<https://www.ponopledge.com/>

<https://www.sustainabletourismhawaii.org/ponotraveler/>

781) *April 8*. Some tourism businesses on **SCOTTISH ISLANDS** have said continuing restrictions on travel from the mainland would be hugely damaging. Scotland could see a significant easing of Covid-19 rules on 26 April, including an end to limits on non-essential travel within the mainland. But travel from the mainland to the islands could remain off limits to prevent the virus being brought in.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-56661833>

782) *April 8*. There are less than two weeks to go until the Atlantic Bubble is expected to be back and residents can again travel between provincial borders without needing to self-isolate. A request to join the Atlantic bubble has come from the president of **ST. PIERRE AND MIQUELON** - islands just off of the coast of Newfoundland that still belong to France. But, it's a decision, Newfoundland says, that comes down to the federal government. The Atlantic Bubble is a special travel-restricted area created on July 3, 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. The area was suspended on November 26, 2020 due to a second wave of COVID-19 cases across Canada. The Council of Atlantic Premiers confirmed the bubble will resume April 19, 2021. The area is an agreement between four Atlantic Canadian provinces including New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland & Labrador which allows unrestricted travel among provincial residents and restricts travel from Canadians who are residents of outside provinces. Residents wishing to travel to the Atlantic Bubble are subjected to screening and are required to quarantine for 14 days before moving freely amongst the bubble. Individual provinces have specific rules toward travellers from outside of Atlantic Canada. The provinces in the bubble have seen the lowest numbers of COVID-19 compared to others throughout the pandemic. In late November, three of the member-provinces temporarily suspended their involvement due to increasing COVID-19 cases numbers and PEI joined them on 17 March 2021.

<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/french-islands-off-coast-of-newfoundland-ask-to-join-atlantic-bubble-1.5380505>

783) *April 9*. Ocean scientists around the world are studying the "unique moment" of quiet created by the pandemic. "Lockdown slowed global shipping on a scale that would otherwise be impossible," explained Prof Peter Tyack from the University of St

Andrews. The scientists plan to listen to the ocean soundscape before, during and after lockdown. They have identified 200 ocean hydrophones - underwater microphones that are already in place around the global ocean. "So the idea is to use those to measure the changes in noise and how they affect marine life - like calling whales or fish choruses," Prof Tyack said. "Just like people and cities may have noticed that, with much less traffic noise and human activity, you hear more birdsong or maybe see more wildlife in your own environment, we need ways to monitor that in the ocean." The aim is not only to measure how the pandemic briefly changed the ocean soundscape, but to take the opportunity to find out how decades of increasing ocean noise has affected marine life. Combined with other methods such as animal tagging, researchers hope this will reveal the extent to which noise in "the Anthropocene seas" affects life in the deep.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56676820>

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/studying-marine-lifes-brief-break-human-noise/>

784) *April 9.* The small islands of **ITALY** are emerging as a safe destination for this summer as they emulate Greece's example of vaccinating entire populations. Islands such as Ischia, Procida and Capri are pushing to have all their inhabitants vaccinated so they can welcome foreign visitors. The Aeolian archipelago, north of Sicily and Elba off the coast of Tuscany are also hoping to sign up to the campaign. Sardinia and Sicily are trying to get in on the act, although their much larger populations - Sardinia has around 1.6 million inhabitants while Sicily has five million - make mass vaccination a far greater challenge. There is no national plan to vaccinate Italy's islands - for now, the initiative is being taken by regions such as Campania, which counts Capri, Procida and Ischia among its island gems. Campania has set aside 20,000 vaccines for the islands, with the push due to start next week.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/09/italys-islands-hope-vaccinate-entire-populations-make-tourism/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/irenedominioni/2021/04/10/italy-on-the-lookout-to-save-summer-tourism-by-launching-covid-free-islands/>

785) *April 10.* Already facing the threat of a new coronavirus outbreak, the tiny nation of **TIMOR-LESTE** has been hit by devastating flooding and landslides. Timor-Leste, formerly East Timor, is a Southeast Asian nation with a population of 1.3 million people. The capital, Dili, with a population of 220,000 was ordered into lockdown along with Baucau and Viqueque cities last month following an increase in community transmission of the coronavirus. Timor-Leste now has 765 Covid cases with 472 active cases isolated in hospitals. On Wednesday, the country launched its vaccination program following the arrival of 24,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through the COVAX initiative.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/440182/timor-leste-faces-new-challenge-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/14/xanana-gusmao-slaps-mourners-and-sleeps-in-street-outside-timor-leste-hospital-in-covid-19-protest>

786) *April 11*. Three countries stand out for the effectiveness of their Covid-19 vaccination programmes: Israel, Chile and the UK. All have managed to inoculate an impressively high percentage of their people but each has fared very differently in controlling the disease. Israel has done so well it is resuming university lectures, concerts and other mass gatherings and has opened up its restaurants and bars. By contrast, Chile is experiencing soaring levels of Covid cases and faces new lockdown restrictions. In Britain, deaths and hospital admissions have plummeted but it remains to be seen what will happen when lockdown restrictions are eased in England from Monday. (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own timetables for easing.) Will the UK follow the grim example of Chile or the happier precedent of Israel? It is Chile that supplies the sharpest warning for the UK. Its health workers have delivered first jabs to 37% of the population but daily cases are still rising sharply. Several reasons have been put forward for this unexpected jump: the spread of more virulent coronavirus strains from Brazil; increased numbers of Chileans travelling around the country; and reduced adherence to social distancing after the vaccination programme gave people a false sense of security.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/11/is-vaccinating-against-covid-enough-what-we-can-learn-from-other-countries>

787) *April 11*. Imagine if China had refused to share Covid-19's genetic sequences with other countries. Vaccine development would have been delayed indefinitely. Monitoring the virus would have been next to impossible. Thankfully, that didn't happen. Chinese scientists shared the full SARS-CoV-2 sequence on Jan. 10, 2020, thus kickstarting the development of multiple vaccines created in record time. But such a nightmarish alternative scenario is not farfetched. China could have referred to an international agreement known as the Nagoya Protocol to indefinitely withhold this vital data, even as the death toll soared around the globe. Preventing nations from abusing the Nagoya Protocol will require another binding international agreement - one that specifically obliges countries to share pathogens in a timely manner, which would undoubtedly benefit society as a whole. Any commonsense approach to the Nagoya Protocol would exempt pathogens like SARS-CoV-2. Thankfully, the member states of the World Health Organization have a chance to enact such reforms through the International Health Regulations, a legally binding international instrument currently under revision, or through the recently proposed international treaty on pandemics.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/international-agreement-could-lead-pandemics-worse-covid-19-3178648>

788) *April 11*. Geopolitics meets pandemic in the **PACIFIC**. As Pacific island nations reel from Cyclone Harold and the coronavirus, US-China tensions are complicating the path to recovery.

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=158813556560738645dd26db2b4b20>

789) *April 12*. The **SOLOMON ISLANDS** has received a batch of Chinese-made Covid-19 vaccines developed by Sinopharm, the first among Pacific island countries. On the other hand, the **NIUE** government has announced the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine will be used to inoculate their population against Covid-19 as it is the only vaccine currently approved by Medsafe in New Zealand. Niue has so far remained

covid free. Pacific island countries using the AstraZeneca vaccine should continue with their rollouts, the World Health Organisation says. That is despite several European countries and Australia limiting its use because of safety concerns.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/12/c\\_139874701.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/12/c_139874701.htm)

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/440539/pfizer-biontech-vaccine-to-be-used-in-niue>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/440497/pacific-countries-press-ahead-with-astrazeneca-rollout>

790) *April 14*. It may be one of the UK's most remote communities but tiny **FAIR ISLE** - with a population of just 48 people - can now claim to be one of the safest. The Scottish island - located between Orkney and Shetland - is famed for its knitwear and migratory birds. This week, vials of AstraZeneca vaccine were flown in on a small plane, meaning every adult on the island was able to have their second dose.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-56691073>

791) *April 14*. In April last year, 17-year-old Rani Khatun, a resident of **SAGAR ISLAND** in the Sundarbans, would spend most of her day in school, preparing for the upcoming board exams. She wanted to be a teacher one day. Less than a year later, Khatun is a school dropout and a victim of domestic violence after a forced underage marriage. Sundarbans, the world's biggest delta, is a 10,000 sq km (6,213 sq miles) dense forest of tidal mangroves, straddling India's eastern coastline and western Bangladesh, opening into the Bay of Bengal. Crisscrossed by rivers, it is home to nearly 4.5 million people on the Indian side, with a large part of its population being subsistence farmers, dependent on fishing, paddy and betel leaf cultivation, and honey collection. Sagar Island, spread over 282 sq km (175 sq miles), is home to more than 200,000 people. The deltaic region saw large-scale migration of people to cities for work in 2009 after Cyclone Aila devastated the region, killing more than 300 people. But many had to return after they lost their jobs due to the coronavirus lockdown imposed in March last year. As they returned, another super cyclone, Amphan, ravaged Sundarbans in May 2020, killing more than 100 people. Khatun's father, Sheikh Mustafa, who ran a tailoring shop, saw his income dip to near zero after the lockdown was imposed last year. Even as COVID-19 restrictions were eased in June, the 46-year-old could not re-establish his tailoring business due to rampant poverty in the region, pushing the family into acute financial distress. Then came a marriage proposal for Khatun, with the groom's family demanding little dowry. Though outlawed, the practice of dowry continues in the Indian subcontinent, in which money and expensive gifts are given to the groom's family for marriage. Though Khatun was a minor who could not be married according to Indian laws, her family married her off. However, Khatun was allegedly assaulted by her husband and in-laws and she came back within a month to her parents, who have ended up with a bigger liability – a debt of 80,000 Indian rupees (\$1,104), which they had taken for their daughter's marriage. Like Khatun, other young girls in the Sundarbans are also being forced into marriage due to poverty, worsened by climate change as recurrent storms and rising sea level lead to land loss and fall in farm productivity due to saline water intrusion. The COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in job losses and more poverty, has only aggravated the crisis.



<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/14/india-covid-climate-change-pushing-sundarbans-women-to-distress>

792) *April 14*. Antique province in the central **PHILIPPINES** is looking to boost local revenues through ecotourism, after the COVID-19 pandemic put the brakes on a thriving tourism industry. The province is home to a rich biodiversity, including the critically endangered writhed-billed hornbill, giant rafflesia “corpse flower,” and rare bowl corals. Taking a leaf from the experience of nearby Boracay, the resort island where a tourism boom led to severe environmental damage, local officials face the challenge of balancing tourism-driven development and environmental protection. A prominent lawmaker is pushing for seascapes and coastal zones in the province to be given national protection.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/04/philippine-province-builds-on-lessons-learned-to-grow-ecotourism-industry/>

793) *April 14*. Throughout the pandemic, destinations have been getting creative with ways to lure travelers – from **SICILY**, which announced plans to subsidize trips with discounted travel, to **CYPRUS** which was offering a free vacation if you got diagnosed with Covid-19 while you were there. Now the latest place to start enticing travelers with cash is **MALTA**, which will pay you to visit this summer - if you can get there, that is. Here’s how it works: The Malta Tourism Authority will pay money to each traveler for booking a three-night stay at select hotels. And the plan is tiered: You’ll get €100 (about \$119) per person for booking a five-star hotel, €75 (about \$89) for a four-star property and €50 (about \$60) for a three-star. That’s not all – the payments will be matched by the hotels, meaning the amounts will actually be double. So you could earn up to €200 (about \$238) for a three-night stay at a five-star hotel. And it keeps getting better: Travelers who go to Malta’s smaller island of Gozo will get an additional 10% on top of the payout. Meanwhile, **CROATIA** tourism ministry has launched the “Croatian islands – COVID-free zones” campaign in order to give tourists information when visiting the islands, which have lower COVID-19 case numbers than seen on the mainland. “Croatia’s epidemiological map currently shows islands as part of their counties even though the coronavirus incidence on islands is much lower than in other parts of the counties where they are located,” the ministry said in a statement. Tourism and Sports Minister Nikolina Brnjac said islands are exceptionally important for Croatia’s tourism industry because they account for a quarter of all overnight stays. “Also, one-third of accommodation capacity is located on islands, and that is another reason why it is important that we have exact information on the epidemiological situation on islands, many of which are green zones,” she added.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurabegleybloom/2021/04/14/this-european-island-wants-to-pay-you-to-visit/>

[https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/tourism-ministry-launches-croatian-islands-covid-free-zones-campaign/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/tourism-ministry-launches-croatian-islands-covid-free-zones-campaign/)

794) *April 14*. On April 13, the prime minister of **JAMAICA**, Andrew Holness, was pleased to announce in parliament that the shipment of 75,000 shots of the AstraZeneca vaccine received a few days earlier had been swiftly delivered into citizens’ arms. This island-wide vaccination effort, referred to as a blitz, was done in an effort “to use as many of the doses as possible.” The vaccines, a gift from the



government of South Africa that was supplied through the Africa Medical Supplies Platform, arrived on April 8, just two days before the blitz began, but with an expiry date of April 13, they had to be used up quickly. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor-McKenzie insisted that despite the expiry date, the vaccines were safe. Despite the concerns raised by the opposition, the planned rollout went ahead. The shipment from South Africa is the third batch of vaccines that Jamaica has received thus far. Take-up appeared slow at first, especially among the priority senior age group, prompting the health ministry to expand the categories of eligible citizens the day after the vaccines arrived. For the first time, younger age groups, those with co-morbidities, and certain categories of workers - including 30,000 of the estimated 170,000 in the tourism sector - could now get inoculated. Teachers were also included, since - with Jamaica's schools still closed for face-to-face classes - students have been suffering. It is hoped that schools may be reopened more quickly once teachers are vaccinated. Although the journey towards herd immunity in Jamaica has only just begun, the vaccination blitz has injected a sense of buoyancy that the government will seek to capitalise on. Meanwhile, after three consecutive weekends of lockdowns, including on the Easter holiday weekend, new curfew hours and COVID-related restrictions were announced on April 13. These come in the context of Jamaica's persistently high numbers of new COVID-19 cases and high positivity rates, although there may be signs that these are easing. It remains to be seen whether blitzes and lockdowns will have a long-term impact on Jamaica's still concerning infection rates, but at least Jamaicans now have a good reason to cheer up a little.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/04/14/jamaicas-covid-19-vaccination-blitz-administers-75000-doses-just-before-expiry-date/>

795) *April 15.* It launched with a presidential escort and the promise of rare international travel to a postcard-perfect tropical island, but the **TAIWAN-PALAU** travel bubble has deflated after just a couple weeks, with Taiwanese bookings dwindling to single figures. Travel agents, consumers and health authorities have blamed the high cost of the tours and the Taiwanese government's strict rules for returning travellers. The "sterile corridor" of bilateral tourism guaranteed travel between the two archipelagos, which are both otherwise closed to all tourists, on strictly managed, twice-weekly package tours. The inaugural flight, packed with nearly 100 passengers including Palauan president Surangel Whipps Jr, boded well, but this week China Airlines announced it had cancelled an upcoming flight from Taipei after just two people booked tickets.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/15/palau-taiwan-travel-bubble-high-prices-strict-rules>

796) *April 16.* **TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS** are paying the price for Australia's poor Covid-19 vaccination planning, experts say, and now faces significant risk from the outbreak in nearby Papua New Guinea. The rollout of the AstraZeneca vaccine to vulnerable populations in the Torres Strait was complicated significantly when the federal government on 8 April shifted its advice to warn against the shot for people who are under 50. More than 80% of the Torres Strait population is under the age of 50, according to the 2016 census, and the local health service says the AstraZeneca rollout is now paused. About 800 locals are thought to have been vaccinated prior to the pause, according to the Torres shire council. The risk from PNG, meanwhile, is ever-present. The Torres Strait island of Saibai, which has received some vaccinations, is only a short dinghy ride from PNG. On Friday, the Queensland

government announced five new cases in the state. All involved returned travellers from PNG. There were 12 active cases in Queensland hospitals involving those from PNG. The total number of cases in Queensland that can be traced back to PNG was 97.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/17/torres-strait-faces-significant-covid-risk-from-nearby-png-as-astrazeneca-vaccine-rollout-paused>

797) *April 17*. The global coronavirus death toll has topped 3 million as the race for immunisation continues and countries such as India grapple with rising infections and new lockdowns. The figures come as a new wave of the pandemic in India pushed the number of cases in the country to almost 14.5m, second only to the United States which has reported more than 32m.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/17/new-delhi-placed-under-weekend-lockdown-as-covid-wave-worsens>

798) *April 21*. The prime minister of **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, James Marape, has adjourned parliament for four months, avoiding a vote of no confidence that would have likely removed him from office. The adjournment was announced late on Wednesday, with the government citing the Covid-19 outbreak in the country as the reason. On Tuesday, the government announced that 36 parliamentary staffers and one MP had tested positive for Covid-19 in the last week. The political crisis comes as Papua New Guinea is in the grip of a health crisis, with the South Pacific nation passing the milestone of 10,000 Covid-19 cases yesterday, with 91 known deaths. The true number of cases is suspected to be far higher. PNG is also grappling with terrible tribal violence in Eastern Highlands Province that has claimed 38 lives and left 5,000 people homeless.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/22/chaos-in-png-politics-as-prime-minister-adjourns-parliament-avoiding-no-confidence-vote>

799) *April 23*. Leaders in **MARTHA'S VINEYARD** and **NANTUCKET** are worried the islands don't have enough vaccine for residents, especially with the population expected to swell this summer. Cape Cod officials are encouraged by the region's progress toward vaccinating its most vulnerable populations, but with eligibility now open to all adults, they worry that the islands will fall behind. Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket are more reliant on the stream of doses the Baker administration allocates with neither island home to a retail pharmacy in the federal vaccination program and every mass vaccination site a ferry ride and a drive away.

<https://www.wbur.org/commonhealth/2021/04/23/nantucket-marthas-vineyard-covid-vaccine-supply>

800) *April 23*. After an international mission to China turned up more questions than answers about the pandemic origins, the WHO is evaluating how to move forward through a diplomatic quagmire to solve the mystery. Determining how the virus that causes Covid-19 first began spreading among humans is seen as vital to preventing future outbreaks. But a long-delayed report, drafted by the team of international experts sent to Wuhan at the start of the year and their Chinese counterparts, drew no firm conclusions and called for more investigation. The World Health Organization's emergency committee this week urged the "rapid implementation" of the report

recommendations for phase two probes. But while the WHO and countries worldwide agree further investigation is needed, a fight is brewing over what the next phase of inquiry should entail and where it should take place. It took more than a year after Covid-19 first surfaced in Wuhan in December 2019 to get the international expert team to China, and Beijing appears intent on seeing the next phase focus elsewhere. "We hope that other relevant countries will cooperate closely with WHO experts in a scientific, open, transparent and responsible manner, as China has done," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters on March 31. But critics question the transparency around the first mission, called for in a resolution passed last May by WHO member countries, and insist far more investigation in China is needed. "At a very basic level, there is unanimity in terms of that the phase two should take place in China," a senior Western diplomat in Geneva said, requesting anonymity. Beijing was the only party voicing "the view that somehow the next phase should be in any other region," the diplomat added. "The idea that the next phase should not focus primarily on China is absurd," US geopolitical expert Jamie Metzl said. Metzl, one of 24 scientists from the US, Europe, Australia and Japan who published an open letter earlier this month demanding a more comprehensive investigation, described the first mission and resulting report as "deeply flawed". Critics charge the mission was heavily orchestrated by Beijing and that the report focused disproportionately on theories favoured by China. While the international and Chinese experts provided no clear answers on the origins of the pandemic, they ranked a number of hypotheses according to how likely they believed they were. The report said the virus jumping from bats to humans via an intermediate animal was the most probable scenario, while it dismissed a theory involving the virus leaking from a laboratory as "extremely unlikely". For basically every area investigated it said more study was needed except one: the lab-leak theory - a US favourite under former president Donald Trump that has always been flatly rejected by China. After the report was released, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus however insisted all theories remained on the table. In particular, he said the probe into Wuhan's virology labs was not "extensive enough" and that he was prepared to launch a fresh investigation. The scientists behind the open letter also called for proper investigation of the lab-leak theory, emphasising that just 440 words of the report were dedicated to discussing and dismissing it. They highlighted that the very terms of reference for the mission, negotiated with Beijing, stated the task was to "identify the zoonotic source of the virus". "The Chinese did a fantastic job of making clear very subtly that this study mission was about looking at the zoonotic origins," Metzl said. While this was "one very credible hypothesis, what we should have been looking at is the origins of the pandemic," he said. "When you start with the frame of the zoonotic origins of the virus, you start with a conclusion." Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian slammed Metzl and the other letter signatories, saying their aim was "obviously to mount pressure on the WHO and the joint mission". He maintained it was the US and other countries, not Beijing, that had politicised the mission to "discredit China". "By blatantly questioning the independence and research conclusions of real scientists, they will not only cripple international cooperation on origin tracing, but also undercut global anti-epidemic efforts," he warned. Even as all sides stress the urgency of solving the origins mystery, there seems to be little progress towards the next steps. A WHO team is currently reviewing the report recommendations and "will prepare a proposal for the next studies that will need to be carried out," a spokesman said. But he did not say when the proposal would be presented to Tedros or a new mission could be expected. In their letter, the scientists urged countries to pass a fresh resolution during next month's World Health Assembly demanding a truly

"unrestricted" and full international investigation. "Any process that doesn't fully examine the possibility of a lab incident is not credible," Metzl said.

[https://www.terradaily.com/reports/WHO\\_seeks\\_next\\_steps\\_in\\_Covid\\_origins\\_probe\\_999.html](https://www.terradaily.com/reports/WHO_seeks_next_steps_in_Covid_origins_probe_999.html)

801) *April 26*. The pandemic and global trade disruptions have highlighted the growing vulnerability of **CARIBBEAN** states when it comes to importing food items. Annually, Caribbean states import food items valued at nearly US\$5 billion for food security. International border closures to curb the spread of COVID-19 meant restricted access to these imported food items which make up more than 80 per cent of the regions' food system. A household survey commissioned by Caribbean governments in April 2020 to explore the impact of the pandemic on regional food security revealed that global border closures increased barriers to food security by augmenting food prices and decreasing income and employment levels. The survey data also revealed that more than half of all respondents experienced income or job loss. Tourism supports a large percentage of economic activity in the Caribbean. International border closures, which prompted the near-total shutdown of air and cruise travel to curb the spread of COVID-19, dealt a catastrophic blow to the Caribbean's tourism industry. The decline in tourism led to decreased spending by tourists, hotel and associated tourism service closures and job losses for community members. Such outcomes translated to higher levels of indebtedness, unemployment and psychological stress, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations throughout the Caribbean. All of these factors made many residents anxious about their ability to ensure food security in the coming months, because without money they cannot afford to buy food.

<https://theconversation.com/caribbean-food-security-during-covid-19-can-only-be-ensured-through-debt-relief-158759>

802) *April 28*. Health officials in **FIJI** are bracing for a "tsunami" of Covid-19 cases, after the Indian variant was detected in the Pacific nation this week, with lockdowns announced in an attempt to stem the outbreak. The Pacific country had largely managed to avoid community transmission over the course of the pandemic, before a cluster emerged this month linked to a quarantine facility, and exacerbated after a woman with the virus attended a funeral with 500 people. The permanent secretary for health and medical services, James Fong, said six new cases had emerged in quarantine facilities on Tuesday and events in India showed the threat posed by the strain could not be underestimated. As of Tuesday, Fiji had recorded 109 cases and just two deaths in a population of 930,000 since the pandemic began. There are currently 42 active cases, 18 of them detected at the border and 24 locally transmitted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/28/fears-of-covid-tsunami-in-fiji-after-outbreak-found-to-be-indian-variant>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/441619/full-lockdown-imminent-as-covid-19-cases-climb-in-fiji>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/06/fiji-seals-off-major-hospital-and-quarantines-hundreds-after-covid-death>

803) *April 28.* **SPAIN** has said it hopes to open up to overseas travellers from June, as plans for an EU-wide digital certificate go before the European Parliament. In a debate ahead of Wednesday's vote in the EU Parliament, EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders warned of the possibility of "fragmentation across Europe" if an agreement on a joint pass could not be reached. Key to the EU's digital certificate is a QR code - a machine-readable graphic code made up of black and white squares - that contains personal data and the EU's Commission says it will be safe and secure. It is working with the World Health Organization to ensure the certificate is recognised beyond Europe. The 27 member states also want to include non-EU countries such as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, with officials saying earlier this week that vaccinated travellers from the US may also be able to visit Europe this summer. A number of countries have already begun unveiling their own passport systems. In Denmark, the Coronapas app is being used to allow customers who have been vaccinated or recovered from an infection to enter bars, restaurants and museums. A similar scheme in Israel, which has one of the highest levels of vaccinations in the world, does permit users to access hotels, gyms and theatres. The "Green pass" has also created travel opportunities for Israeli citizens, following deals with Greece and Cyprus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56912667>

804) *April 28.* When the coronavirus pandemic reached South America human activity on the **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** ground almost to a halt leaving giant tortoises, iguanas and other endemic species to themselves. A four-month lockdown starting in February 2020 after Covid-19 was first detected in the region resulted in a total halt of tourism and near complete shutdown of scientific research. "The impact of Covid was very tough the shutdown was immediate, from one day to the next," complained Juan Carlos Moncayo, 50, who runs a scuba diving center and had to make his six employees redundant. Since July, the archipelago of 234 islands has partially reopened to tourism - but that has been limited to just 6,000 visitors a month, compared to an average 23,000 before the pandemic. Moncayo's business hasn't recovered. Sometimes his boat sets out to sea with just two customers - each paying a minimum \$160 - when he needs five to make a profit. Other scuba diving businesses didn't have enough funds to renew their licences. "Out of 12, there are just six left in business," said Moncayo.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/travel/2106967/covid-19-brings-tourism-science-to-a-halt-on-galapagos-islands>

805) *April 28.* In 2018, overtourism was an Asia-wide affliction, with destinations from Boracay in the Philippines to Thailand's Maya Bay engaging in damage control after too many visitors had descended. Heck, the term even made it onto the Oxford English Dictionary's "word of the year" shortlist. The South Korean island of **JEJU** also suffered from "too many tourists" that year, according to *The Korea Times*. Speaking to the English-language daily in 2018, Jeju resident Kang Won-bo lamented: "Jeju residents have to deal with the stress from many people and noise [...] Many miss how it used to be." Fast forward to 2020 and along came Covid-19 interrupting international travel and transforming once-bustling hotspots into ghost towns haunted by their past popularity - or in the case of Jeju, returning it to those halcyon days of "how it used to be", right? Wrong. Located on one end of what is still the world's busiest domestic flight route, which connects the island to the South Korean capital Seoul, Jeju has seen a surge in home-grown tourists that has



compensated for a lack of international arrivals. According to South Korean news agency Yonhap, the island recorded 880,000 visitors in March, which represented 85 per cent of the pre-Covid-19 level of 1.03 million, in March 2019. However, neither the locals nor the out-of-towners seem too happy about it, if Korea Bizwire is to be believed. “The provincial government of Jeju Island, South Korea’s most popular vacation destination is facing a dilemma as tourists and residents both are showing higher negative perceptions towards Jeju’s tourism boom,” the news site reported on April 9. “Tourists are increasingly dissatisfied with the island’s expensive prices while Jeju residents are unhappy with the inconvenience caused by the influx of tourists despite the spread of coronavirus.” Citing a recent study conducted by the Jeju Tourism Organization, Korea Bizwire reports that 54.9 per cent of the island’s visitors “showed dissatisfaction towards prices”, an increase from 29.1 per cent in 2019. Compared with other domestic destinations, such as Busan and Gangwon province, “Jeju was the only place where tourists’ actual expenditure exceeded their budget estimates”. A pandemic that, according to the Bank of Korea, shrunk South Korea’s economy in 2020 for the first time in 22 years, sent the unemployment rate soaring to a 21-year high and reduced consumer spending, is probably not the best time in which to forge a reputation for being more expensive than anticipated. And when it comes to the island’s full-time inhabitants, sentiments weren’t much sunnier. “Another report released in February jointly by the government of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province and the Jeju Tourism Organization showed that Jeju residents are increasingly holding negative opinions towards tourists due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” reported Korea Bizwire. Survey respondents said they felt more inconvenienced by tourism, that the industry disrupted “public order” and that it infringed more on private lives than it had in 2018. Then there is the very real risk of arrivals importing Covid-19. “Coronavirus cases are rising among visitors as spring tourism becomes more active in April,” a provincial government official told Yonhap. Of 12 confirmed infections on the island in the first seven days of the month, 11 “were from visitors from the mainland or Jeju residents who contracted the virus from tourists”, the agency reported. “To the dismay of Jeju residents, some infected tourists were found to have come to Jeju despite having suspected symptoms of Covid-19 or learning of infections of fellow workers before entering the island.” In spite of all this, the island insists on tip-toeing the tourism tightrope because, as a senior official at the Jeju Tourism Organization said to Yonhap, “residents are concerned about Covid-19 transmissions from tourists, but they also know well that the island’s economy itself will be hit hard if the tourism industry is stagnant.” Like many places popular with visitors, Jeju seems damned if they do come, and damned if they don’t.

<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/travel/article/3131281/south-koreas-jeju-island-damned-if-tourists-do-come>

806) *April 28*. A new global report on forests says that while the COVID-19 pandemic is the latest threat to achieving ambitious forest protection goals, it has brought the importance of forests to global well-being into sharp focus, and that this recognition must now be met with collection action.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/04/why-experts-are-saying-its-a-make-or-break-moment-for-forests/>

807) *April 29*. Doctors in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** say the coronavirus crisis is only getting worse as some hospitals shut their doors to patients and others struggle without supplies as basic as gloves. Officials have described a health system teetering



on the brink of collapse and a country that has no real grasp of just how widespread the virus really is.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/441445/we-don-t-have-any-grasp-covid-19-crisis-pushes-png-hospitals-to-the-brink>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56926131>

808) *April 29.* Residents of the small Italian island of **ISCHIA** are hoping that the 19-mile stretch of seawater that divides them from the mainland will help save their economy from another disastrous tourism season this summer. They're eagerly awaiting a boatload of vaccines, promised by a decree signed late last week, will create herd-immunity among the island's 70,000 inhabitants. Once everyone has had the shot, they can declare the island a Covid-free zone, helping to ensure an influx of wealthy visitors from across northern Europe and the U.S.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-04-29/covid-travel-news-italy-island-ischia-set-to-win-from-europe-tourism>

809) *April 29.* When UK government ministers pledged to inoculate all British adults by the autumn, they may not have been thinking about people living in some of the world's most remote places. And yet, since early January, by plane, ship and - in one case - supermarket freezer truck, that's exactly what's been happening. Officials say 250,000 vaccine doses have already been administered to adults in 11 of the 14 British Overseas Territories. Some of those places, like Gibraltar, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands, are easy to reach. Others require epic journeys. A mission to supply the 200 citizens of the gloriously named Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, on the volcanic island of **TRISTAN DA CUNHA**, was a case in point. The island, in the middle of the South Atlantic, is described as the most remote permanent settlement on earth. Perhaps not surprisingly, it has yet to record a single case of Covid-19, but with rudimentary facilities and its nearest neighbour more than 1,500 miles away, an outbreak on the island could have proved disastrous. The Ministry of Defence says a six-day operation this month has successfully delivered enough Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for the outcrop's adult population. To get it there, an RAF Voyager aircraft flew 8,000 miles from Brize Norton in Oxfordshire to the Falkland Islands, before handing off its precious cargo to HMS Forth, which then sailed 2,000 miles more to reach Tristan da Cunha. It is the first time the Royal Navy has transported vaccines, with crew members tasked to keep a regular check on the specialised fridges used to store them. An even longer journey was to supply vaccines to the 47 residents of the **PITCARN ISLANDS**, on the other side of the world. This time, the doses are being flown from Heathrow to Auckland, New Zealand. After a three-hour road trip to the port of Tauranga, the cargo will be transferred to the supply vessel Silver Supporter for a two-week journey to the archipelago, deep in the Southern Pacific.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56923016>

810) *May 2.* **PUERTO RICO** seemed to be sprinting toward herd immunity this spring before people began letting their guard down against COVID-19 and new variants started spreading across the U.S. territory. Now, a spike in cases and hospitalizations has put medical experts at odds with the government, which is struggling to protect people's health while also trying to prevent an economic implosion on an island battered by hurricanes, earthquakes and a prolonged financial

crisis. It's a delicate balance for an island that imposed a lockdown and mask mandates ahead of any U.S. state and has some of the strictest entry requirements of any American jurisdiction - measures that helped contain infections before the latest surge. Overall, the land of 3.3 million people has reported more than 115,000 confirmed coronavirus cases, over 115,000 suspected ones and more than 2,000 deaths, with transmission rates inching up the last week of April to 28 cases per 100,000 people a day, compared with 17 per 100,000 on the U.S. mainland. The pandemic has unleashed the second-biggest economic drop Puerto Rico has seen since recordkeeping began in 1980, according to José Caraballo, a Puerto Rico economist. The biggest was caused by Hurricane Maria, which inflicted more than \$100 billion in damage in 2017, with nearly 3,000 people dying in its sweltering aftermath. More than 30,000 jobs have been lost because of the COVID-19 outbreak, and at least 1,400 businesses have closed, Caraballo said - this on an island that saw nearly 12% of its population flee in the past decade and whose government is struggling with crushing debt that led it to file for the biggest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history in 2017.

<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/business/article251109074.html>

811) *May 2.* Most Canadians can only dream of a day when they will feel confident that most of the people they encounter are vaccinated for COVID-19. But whether it's a neighbour over the fence or a stranger in the local general store, people on **DENMAN ISLAND**, B.C., will know what that's like as soon as their doses kick in. The island, which has a population of 1,200, is one of 28 communities on or near Vancouver Island where all adults have been offered a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The campaign's goal was to vaccinate every adult they can in the community over three days and create herd immunity for the island. This first dose won't guarantee immunity, but it is a step in that direction.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vaccine-covid-denman-bc-1.6009513>

812) *May 3.* The Netherlands reopened alfresco hospitality last Wednesday and Belgians, ignoring official advice, had driven a short distance across the border in huge numbers to enjoy their neighbour's freedom over the long Labour Day weekend. Despite concerns within the Dutch government over the country's infection rate, the rapid speed of the country's vaccination rollout in recent weeks and the jab's clear impact on transmission has been the key to emboldening the prime minister, Mark Rutte, to drive forward reopening the economy. According to the latest official data, a jab is being administered in the Netherlands, population 17.2 million, every half a second, a huge boon compared with the very early months when a lack of organisation in administering the jabs appeared to be behind a glacial start. The Belgian government, while a little more cautious given some of the particularly dark months the country has faced during the pandemic, has said it also plans to reopen outdoor hospitality on 8 May, again fortified by its own vaccine take-off. Like the Netherlands, although for different reasons, Belgium's rollout was not quick in the early months of this year. Faced with some of the worst death statistics in Europe, the government focused on getting jabs to its most vulnerable: 86.8% of over 80s are fully vaccinated and 84.18% of 65- to 84-year-olds. But it is now firing through the younger, more easily accessed age groups, reducing the time between delivery of doses and administration from 18 days in March to around four in the last week. This evolution is being witnessed elsewhere in the **EU**. Apart from the stragglers of Bulgaria, Latvia, Croatia and Romania, solidly over 20% of the population in each of

the other EU member states has now received a vaccine jab, with the tiny island state of **MALTA** leading the way with 52.43%, and as the difficult-to-get-to priority groups are being ticked off the pace of jabs is increasing. Among the 23 EU member states who have reported to the European centre for disease control and prevention, the median uptake among the over-80s is 73.1%. With that accomplished, Germany celebrated the milestone of administering 1m doses in a day last Thursday and France broke its record at the end of last week of giving 545,000 shots on Thursday and 549,000 on Friday. “We really see that within the EU the vaccination is increasing dramatically,” said a European Commission official as plans were announced on Monday to reopen the borders to non-EU holidaymakers potentially including from the UK by June.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/03/covid-vaccine-rollout-rapidly-gathering-pace-across-europe>

813) *May 3*. For most of the past year, the **PACIFIC ISLANDS** have been remarkably isolated from the devastating effects of the COVID crisis. By walling themselves off early from the outside world, most Pacific nations remain completely COVID free. Historians will look back on this as a remarkable achievement by Pacific nations, and a great credit to the swift actions taken by their leaders. While isolation has proven itself to be an effective preventative strategy, it is not a perfect one. Border closures have taken a severe toll on these nations’ fledgling economies. And even the most robust border and quarantine control systems can break down. In the Pacific, the cracks are now starting to show. The most obvious case is in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, where caseloads started surging exponentially two months ago. With a porous land border with Indonesia and weak quarantine controls, it’s remarkable the virus did not get out of control sooner. However, it is now running unchecked in the capital, Port Moresby, and has spread to every province in the country. The health system came very close to complete breakdown in March, and despite hopeful signs of case numbers stabilizing in the capital (now at a much higher level), the country remains in dire need of further assistance. **FIJI** was the most successful nation in the region in containing community transmission a year ago. It, too, is now showing cracks in the armor. In a familiar story, a soldier working at a quarantine facility caught the virus from a traveler who had recently returned from India. Now identified as the new and extremely infectious Indian strain, it has quickly spread. Much of the country’s main island of Viti Levu is in lockdown as contact tracing is conducted. While Fiji is the most capable country in the region to handle an outbreak, it also comes at a terrible time for the tourism-dependent nation, which is desperate to reopen to the Australian and New Zealand markets. Over in **VANUATU**, the dead body of a Filipino sailor from a visiting cargo vessel that washed ashore on April 11 tested positive for the virus. The vessel is now in Australian waters, with all but one of the 12 sailors on board testing positive for COVID-19. The solution to the Pacific’s imperfect isolation strategy is the same as Australia’s - vaccines. Given the enormous global demand for vaccines, and the small size and limited bargaining power of Pacific Island nations, there has been a very real threat they would be left at the back of the queue in the vaccine scramble. However, assertive work by donor nations like Australia and New Zealand, combined with access to the World Health Organization-led global COVAX facility, has so far meant Pacific nations are not being left out in the cold. The North Pacific nations of Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau are well on their way to being fully vaccinated courtesy of the United States’ Operation Warp Speed program. Initial batches of between 4,800-132,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines have also been delivered to Fiji, Nauru, PNG,

Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu via the COVAX initiative. Australia sent an emergency batch of 8,000 vaccine doses to PNG in March and is now sending 10,000 locally produced AstraZeneca doses to the region each week. This number is likely to climb as production ramps up and the appetite for AstraZeneca wanes at home. China is also poised to do its part, offering 200,000 Sinopharm vaccines to PNG and 50,000 to Solomon Islands. Both PNG and the Solomon Islands are adamant that they will not roll out the vaccine until it receives approval by the WHO, but the presence of Chinese vaccines ups the stakes for the vaccine diplomacy battle now underway in the Pacific. Just two months ago, the worry for most Pacific nations was getting hold of vaccines. For many, the challenge has now quickly morphed to a larger, and much more challenging, question - how to roll them out. There are enormous challenges involved with an effective rollout campaign in many countries, especially those with many islands like Kiribati or Solomon Islands or with large populations in remote communities spread across mountains and islands, like PNG. Pacific leaders and health professionals also face widespread misinformation about vaccines, cultural stigma (many Pacific nations have never run an adult vaccination campaign), and logistical challenges related to cold chain storage and their already-stretched health systems. Illustrating this point, of the 8,000 doses Australia provided to PNG more than a month ago, only 2,900 have been administered. While some nations, like Fiji, have quickly run through their allotted COVAX vaccines, others, such as PNG, run the risk of vaccines expiring before they get into people's arms. It will take a much more significant and coordinated effort from Pacific nations, and all of their donor counterparts, to effectively vaccinate the region. A massive logistics campaign tailored to the needs of each nation must now get underway. Nongovernmental organizations, churches, and the private sector should all be expected to do their part. Alongside this, the Pacific nations need smart and widespread information campaigns to promote the efficacy and importance of the vaccines and help overcome misinformation and stigma. If more concerted effort is not applied to getting needles into Pacific Islanders' arms, then at best these countries will be left behind as other economies open up to one another, and at worst quarantine systems will fail and the virus itself will overwhelm their vulnerable systems. The Pacific region has done extremely well in combating the COVID crisis to date. Let's not stop now.

<https://slate.com/technology/2021/05/pacific-island-nations-papua-new-guinea-fiji-covid-vaccines.html>

814) *May 4*. Hit by the double whammy of US sanctions and a pandemic, **CUBA** is going through its gravest economic crisis since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Pharmacy shelves are barren. People queue for hours to buy chicken. It's hard to find bread. And yet this island under siege could become the smallest country in the world to develop its own coronavirus vaccines. Of the 27 coronavirus vaccines in final stage testing around the world, two are Cuban. "To have our sovereignty we need our own vaccines," said Dr Vicente Várez, director of the Finlay Institute, which has developed Sovereign 2, the most advanced of the country's five vaccine candidates. "In nine months we have gone from an idea to a vaccine in phase three clinical trials." 44,000 volunteers in Havana are currently participating in phase three trials for Sovereign 2. A similar number in the eastern city of Santiago are volunteering for phase three for Abdala, a vaccine named after a poem by José Martí, the island's official "national hero". Running alongside the clinical studies is an "interventional study" in which 150,000 health workers in Havana are now being vaccinated. Cuba's "Biological Front" was established in 1981 – just five years after the incorporation of

the world's first biotech company, Genentech. At the heart of today's drive for a vaccine are the island's top scientists, many of whom were trained in the former Soviet Union. These internationally mobile polyglots have every opportunity to emigrate (and many do); those who chose to work on the island are almost invariably old school believers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/04/cuba-covid-vaccines>

815) *May 4.* As the bottles of medication are carefully loaded into the body of the drone, a small crowd gathers to watch on the other side of the yellow tape marking out the grassy landing strip. With a gentle buzz the drone rises, a little uncertainly, into the sky, on its 1.5-metre wings. The precious cargo leaving Bufumira health centre III, in Uganda's Kalangala district, is critical drugs for people living in some of the most far-flung communities in the region. Kalangala is made up of 84 islands in Lake Victoria, the world's largest tropical lake, which Uganda shares with Tanzania and Kenya. The drone taking off last week was a pilot for a new project which will now see 20 scheduled flights a month, carrying mostly HIV medicines out to 78 community groups and health facilities across the widely scattered **SSESE ISLANDS**, which have the highest HIV prevalence in Uganda. Located about 60 miles from the capital, Kampala, and home to more than 67,000 people, Kalangala district has an HIV prevalence rate of 18%, far higher than the national rate of 5.6%. The government's HIV strategy estimates prevalence of the virus to be up to 40% in some fishing communities. The delivery of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and healthcare is difficult, weather-dependent and risky for healthcare workers, as travel into the region is possible only by boat. The drones, it's hoped, which cost about £4,000 each, carry loads of up to 1kg and fly for 150km, will "close that last mile", said Andrew Kambugu, executive director at Makerere University Infectious Disease Institute.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/04/gamechanger-uganda-launches-drone-delivering-hiv-drugs-to-remote-islands>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-59763425>

816) *May 4.* UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, together with two dozen other leaders from around the world, have called for a new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response. This proposal will be considered by global leaders at the World Health Assembly in less than a month. Their emphasis on preparing our health systems to respond to the next disease outbreak faster and better is extremely important. But these measures will not stop the emergence of new disease. Leading public health experts agree. We have seen how even the best equipped countries, including the United States, Germany, and the UK, struggled and failed in their efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19. It's only when we prevent new diseases *before they start* - at the source, where humans and animals come into close contact - that we will become less vulnerable to pathogens that consistently defeat our best efforts to contain them. This argument is not new. Biologists and public health experts warned that our increased and careless encounters with wildlife were making a pandemic like COVID-19 inevitable, but politicians ignored the warnings. COVID-19, as well as other new diseases like HIV/AIDS, H1N1, SARS and MERS, all had one thing in common. They are viruses that jumped from other species into humans, a process known as "spillover." This phenomenon is more likely to occur when humans or our domestic animals have more contact with



the wildlife that is home to countless thousands of undescribed virus varieties. Studies have shown that agriculture, urbanization, and other human activities that degrade forests and other ecosystems have ushered in a new era of spillovers. Legal and illegal wildlife trade – which often come together in wet markets – and the handling of animals for livestock production contribute to even more disease spread. Despite clear evidence that we are risking our lives by destroying nature, the devastation continues. The latest Global Forest Watch analysis found that primary tropical forest loss increased 12 percent from 2019 to 2020. A stunning 64% of the world's tropical forests have been cleared or degraded. With increased contact arising from displacement of wildlife from their regular habitats, these viruses can more easily make the leap to humans. They may also mutate along the way as they spread from human to human, causing isolated local outbreaks, regional epidemics, or full-blown global pandemics. But there is good news. We can protect forests, clean up and reduce wildlife trade, improve farming practices and expand surveillance to detect spillovers as they are occurring for about \$10 billion per year. Compared with the massive human and economic cost of another pandemic, this price tag is tiny. Minimal investments and carefully planned programs with local communities can go a long way to reduce risky behavior that creates spillover opportunities - all while improving public health and protecting rainforests. For example, one project in a forested area of Borneo with high rates of forest loss, poverty and unmet health needs, found that cash-strapped local villagers turned to illegal logging to pay for medical fees. Improved access to cheaper and better healthcare led to less deforestation. There are many such examples that can be scaled. Creating a new global treaty typically takes many years of painfully slow negotiations. We do not have the luxury of time. So, in parallel, we urge the United Kingdom, United States and Germany to lead the way at the G7 Summit this summer and announce shared support, with other members, for a new Global Fund for Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness. The new Fund should combine health system strengthening with actions to reduce spillover risk in regions such as the Amazon, Central and West Africa, South and Southeast Asia where there is the greatest danger of future spillovers. As we look forward to overcoming COVID-19, let's not forget the source of this pandemic - and the source of likely future ones.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/05/we-can-prevent-the-next-pandemic-commentary/>

817) *May 4.* A seaside town in **JAPAN** has raised eyebrows after it used funding from an emergency Covid-19 relief grant to build a giant statue of a squid. The 13m-long (43ft) sea creature lies in the port of Noto, where flying squid is the town's delicacy. It reportedly used 25m yen (\$228,500; £164,700) of the emergency funding to build the statue. Noto officials have told local media it is part of a long term plan to lure tourists back after the pandemic. Japan is battling another surge in coronavirus cases, and Tokyo is currently under a state of emergency - the third for the country since the pandemic began. The fishing town of Noto - which is located in Ishikawa prefecture on Japan's central-west coast - has had a very low number of cases, but it has been impacted by the significant drop in tourists.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56978075>

818) *May 5.* Several employees of a pharmaceutical company have been arrested in **INDONESIA** for allegedly washing and reselling used Covid nasal swab test kits. Up to 9,000 passengers at an airport in Medan may have been tested with the reused swab



sticks, say police. State-owned company Kimia Farma is now reportedly facing a potential lawsuit launched on behalf of the travellers. Covid nasal swab testing has become routine in many countries hit by the global pandemic. Police said they believed the scam had been happening since last December at Kualanamu airport in Medan, North Sumatra. Passengers are required to have a negative test if they want to fly, and the airport offers the option of getting the swabs done on site. Airport authorities had used antigen rapid test kits supplied by Kimia Farma. Following complaints from passengers that they had received false positive test results, police sent an undercover officer to pose as a passenger last week, reported local news outlet Detik. When he was swabbed and received a positive test result, other officers swooped in and raided the test site, where they found a used test kit that had been recycled.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56990253>

819) *May 5*. The **SEYCHELLES**, which has fully vaccinated over 60% of its population against Covid-19, is bringing back restrictions amid a rise in cases. The archipelago of nearly 100,000 people recorded close to 500 new cases in the three days to 1 May and has about 1,000 active cases. A third of the active cases involved people who had had two vaccine doses, the country's news agency said. The rest had either had a single dose or were unvaccinated. Schools have been closed and sports activities cancelled for two weeks. Bars, restaurants and shops are to close early and some gatherings have been banned. "Despite all the exceptional efforts we are making, the Covid-19 situation in our country is critical right now with many daily cases reported last week," Health Minister Peggy Vidot told a press conference on Tuesday. More than four-fifths of the active cases were among Seychellois people, with the remainder made up of foreigners. The Seychelles, which relies on tourism for much of its income, began vaccinating its population in January using Chinese-made Sinopharm vaccine doses donated by the United Arab Emirates. By mid-April about 60% of the vaccine doses administered in the country were Sinopharm, with the rest Indian-made AstraZeneca vaccine doses. Trials in China and the United Arab Emirates have put Sinopharm vaccine efficacy at 79% and 86% respectively. The World Health Organization is expected to approve the Sinopharm vaccine and other Chinese-made vaccines for use later this week. In April, China's top disease control official said the efficacy of the country's Covid vaccines was low, although he later insisted his comments had been misinterpreted. Researchers in Brazil have put the efficacy of another Chinese-made vaccine, the Sinovac vaccine, at 50.4%. Meanwhile on **MAURITIUS**, the question has been asked whether their COVID-19 vaccine rollout is based on a human rights approach whilst the UN Resident Coordinator for the **MALDIVES** believes the roll-out of vaccinations to prevent COVID-19 infections rising in the Maldives is a good example of "vaccine equity in action".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-56992121>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/06/seychelles-vaccines-covid-cases/>

<https://www.nation.sc/articles/8892/travel-to-seychelles-uninterrupted-despite-strict-health-measures>

<https://www.nation.sc/articles/8894/seychelles-still-safe-amid-covid-19-test-complaints>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/57148348>

<https://theconversation.com/covid-is-surg-ing-in-the-worlds-most-vaccinated-country-why-160869>

<https://www.nation.sc/articles/9126/president-wavel-ramkalawan-speaks-about-the-covid-19-situation-to-cnns-julia-chatterley-in-first-move-the-covid-19-vaccines-have-saved-seychelles-by-marie-anne-lepathy>

<https://opiniojuris.org/2021/04/22/is-the-mauritian-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-based-on-a-human-rights-approach/>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1091092>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343760535\\_Early\\_measures\\_for\\_prevention\\_and\\_containment\\_of\\_COVID-19\\_in\\_the\\_Maldives\\_A\\_descriptive\\_analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343760535_Early_measures_for_prevention_and_containment_of_COVID-19_in_the_Maldives_A_descriptive_analysis)

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-24/maldives-tightens-restrictions-as-virus-cases-deaths-climb>

820) *May 6. PHILIPPINES* President Rodrigo Duterte has asked the Chinese Embassy to take back 1,000 donated Sinopharm vaccines, after he was criticised for taking an unapproved vaccine. In response, Mr Duterte said China should in future only send Sinovac vaccines - a separate Chinese vaccine which is in use in the Philippines. Sinopharm has not yet been approved in the Philippines. Both Sinopharm and Sinovac are expected to receive WHO approval this week. Mr Duterte said he only got the Sinopharm shot under a compassionate use clause, and that his doctors had advised him to get vaccinated. Both Chinese shots are inactivated vaccines, which work by using killed viral particles to expose the body's immune system to the virus without risking a serious disease response. By comparison the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines being developed in the West are mRNA vaccines. This means part of the coronavirus' genetic code is injected into the body, triggering the body to begin making viral proteins, but not the whole virus, which is enough to train the immune system to attack. Currently, the only approved vaccines available in the country are AstraZeneca and Sinovac and both are being administered to frontline workers and vulnerable groups. The Philippines is one the worst-hit countries in South East Asia with more than 1m cases and almost 18,000 deaths linked to Covid-19. According to studies cited in local media, more than half of Filipinos are unwilling to get vaccinated against Covid over fears the shots are not safe. The vaccine hesitation is largely attributed to a scandal around a dengue vaccine administered to children in 2016. Duterte's administration already last year was under fire when the president's security personnel were inoculated with Chinese vaccines long before any jabs had officially arrived in the country.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57004924>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-57004926>

821) *May 6.* For those advocating for greater access to vaccines, it is a case of two cheers for Joe Biden. His administration's decision to support a push at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive patents on Covid-19 vaccines may be a huge step towards ending vaccine inequity, campaigners say, but on its own it will not have

a decisive effect on the health crisis. Last October, fearing correctly that Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing would be dominated by wealthy countries, India and South Africa made a proposal at the World Trade Organization to waive patents on Covid-19 vaccines and other technology. It gained the support of more than 100 emerging countries, but has been opposed by a club of wealthier nations including the UK, Canada, Australia, EU and, until now, the US. The Biden administration has announced that it is changing its position, and will support waiving patents on Covid-19 vaccines – but not on treatments or other technology used to fight the disease. If the waiver is adopted by the WTO, it would allow companies around the world that are developing Covid-19 vaccines to do so without fear that they might be sued by another entity that already holds the patent on the product.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/06/covid-vaccines-what-is-patent-waiving-and-will-it-solve-the-global-shortage>

822) *May 6.* The days of allowing tourist hordes to some of **NEW ZEALAND** best-known natural attractions are over, the government has signalled, as it unveiled new plans to protect the environment and reconsider the role of tourism in its economy. The tourism minister, Stuart Nash, outlined on Tuesday plans to “reset” tourism for a post-Covid world – planning for fewer international visitors and attempting to diversify the economies of tourism-dependent towns. Some of the country’s best-known natural attractions, such as UNESCO world heritage site Milford Sound-Piopiotahi, will be transformed to take far fewer visitors. The dramatic slopes, still waters, and frolicking fur seals of Milford Sound-Piopiotahi have attracted millions of visitors. But the site “cannot return to its pre-Covid state”, Nash said. Previously, it had been under “significant pressure” from 870,000 annual visitors – a deluge of people that Nash said undermined the infrastructure and cultural and environmental values of the place. Tourism is a major part of New Zealand’s economy. According to Tourism Industry Aotearoa, it is the country’s biggest export industry, making up about 20% of total exports. Tourism spend makes up a large chunk of the country’s overall economy, accounting for more than 5% of GDP, and directly or indirectly employing 13.6% of the national workforce. Before the trans-Tasman bubble allowed for quarantine-free travel with Australia in March, New Zealand had been shut to all international tourists for the better part of a year. During that time, Nash has repeatedly said the government would attempt to transform the country’s tourism offering – focusing on attracting a smaller number of “high-value” visitors and trying to ease the environmental and social burden that crowds of international tourists placed on small towns. Nash outlined more concrete plans for the government’s new vision, including a \$200m package, more than half of which will go to struggling South Island towns hit hard by the border closure. As well as supporting some businesses to reopen when visitors return, large chunks of the funding would be devoted to helping businesses and communities to break their dependency on international tourists. Twenty million dollars would go to the popular Queenstown Wanaka region, “to help develop alternative industries”. Another \$15m would go to the “transformation [which] is needed to protect Milford Sound-Piopiotahi”. To ease the environmental damage inflicted by tourism, the parliamentary commissioner for the environment, Simon Upton, has recommended a departure tax for all international flights. The money raised – an anticipated \$400m annually – would go to researching lower-emissions aviation, and mitigating the effects of the climate crisis across the Pacific.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/06/new-zealand-tourism-changes-environment-milford-sound>

823) *May 6.* Users of Reddit have the weirdest ideas on the net. After messing with GameStop stocks on Wall Street and taking Dogecoin through the roof, they now want to found their own nation. Between jokes, several 'redditors' are planning to buy an island or more to create '**MEMELANDIA**', a territory with its own flag, currency, language, anthem and laws. The best thing is that this project could have the support of Elon Musk himself.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/371318>

824) *May 7.* **CUBA** during the pandemic - photographer Leysis Quesada Vera describes life in Havana's Los Sitios neighbourhood. Los Sitios lies to the south of Centro, the careworn barrio that gives Havana its coarse voice and whose northern limit is the Malecon, the famous cornice set against the Florida Straits. The photographer describes her neighbourhood as home to "people who work with tourists but not in the hotels. They sell cigars, probably illegally, clean the houses where tourists stay, sell souvenirs." The pandemic has pauperised these people. "What they're doing now is queueing to buy things from the store to resell them on the black market." For much of 2020, Cuba's extensive health system kept the virus all but beyond the island's borders, but at the cost of tourism. The economy contracted by 11%, imports fell by 40%. Still, even the few reported cases spooked residents. There was an outbreak in Los Sitios and the authorities blocked the roads in and out.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/07/cuba-during-the-pandemic-photo-essay>

825) *May 7.* **ITALY** begins a mass vaccination campaign on the resident populations of its smaller islands as part of a plan to make them 'covid-free' ahead of the summer season. The vaccination programme, which focuses on smaller islands with minimal healthcare facilities, begins on 7 May with Capraia, off Tuscany, then by the Aeolian Islands, off Sicily, beginning with Salina, followed a few days later by Stromboli, Vulcano, Alicudi and Filicudi, then Panarea and Lipari. However one island - Procida - has already declared itself 'covid-free' this week, with the help of the Campania regional authorities. This tiny island, recently declared Italy's Capital of Culture 2022, announced that it had vaccinated more than 90 per cent of its adult population, stating that it is "ready to restart and welcome tourists." Next week the vaccination campaign will extend to the Egadi Islands - off Sicily - from Favignana to Levanzo and Marettimo, followed by Ustica, Lampedusa and Linosa, as well as Giglio in Tuscany and isles of San Pietro and La Maddalena in Sardinia. A mass vaccination plan is also currently underway on Ischia, whose population of around 20,000 is being vaccinated at a rate of between 1,600 and 1,800 a day. The island vaccination campaign comes as Italy prepares to reopen to vaccinated, recovered or covid-negative tourists, with a covid travel pass set to be introduced from mid-May.

<https://www.wantedinrome.com/news/italys-small-islands-to-become-covid-free-in-mass-vaccination-plan.html>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/capri-covid-free-vaccination/index.html>

826) *May 7.* I've been a "digital nomad" who's lived all over Europe for three years, but not once had I considered living on an island, let alone in a small village. Now, I'm living in Europe's first village for digital nomads on the Portuguese island of **MADEIRA**, thanks to an initiative set up by the regional government and Startup Madeira to lure tech and creative talent to the island. The experience has been so good that my partner and I are taking a step back from the nomadic life to set up a company here. I became a nomad in 2018, fed up with London's astronomically high cost of living and predictably bad weather. Nomads embrace a location-independent lifestyle and tend to work in industries that make their money online. I've been a self-employed writer since 2017. That makes me fairly typical: A recent study estimated that 83% of the world's 35 million digital nomads worked for themselves, and 51% were marketers, developers, designers, writers, or in e-commerce. I spent between four to eight weeks in places such as Brussels, Budapest, and Porto as a trial run for a longer stay, before settling in Lisbon in 2019 and gaining Portuguese residency. But COVID-19 made me realize that I no longer wanted to live in a city. I craved more space and a smaller community. Lisbon closed down again in January. The next month, the digital-nomad village on the tropical Portuguese island of Madeira opened. Inside, 22 places are available on a first-come, first-served basis, with free screens, computer stands, and plugs. Disinfectant stations and a temperature monitor are also installed. The WiFi offers 500 Mbps download and 300 Mbps upload speeds.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/digital-nomads-madeira-island-paradise-village-why-i-moved-2021-5?r=US&IR=T>

<https://digitalnomads.startupmadeira.eu/>

827) *May 8.* Residents of the **CHATHAM ISLANDS**, part of New Zealand, are set to get their Covid-19 vaccines and everyone will receive their jab in one go to avoid wastage.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-coronavirus-chatham-islands-population-to-be-vaccinated-in-one-go/BLMXNZTTQLOW5XHIUZSLCR6B6E/>

828) *May 8.* Why the Covid vaccination program in the **TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS** depends on trust. A perceived lack of cultural awareness has raised concerns about how the rollout will be received, but islanders are working to overcome the barriers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/09/why-the-covid-vaccination-program-in-the-torres-strait-islands-depends-on-trust>

829) *May 9.* A small island community off the coast of Donegal, delighted that almost half of its residents have been vaccinated against Covid-19, is now doing its best to ensure other less fortunate communities get the chance to receive the jab - and they are encouraging others to do likewise. The people of **ARAINN MHOR** have come together to support the UNICEF appeal to "Get a Vaccine, Give a Vaccine" which aims to deliver 2 billion Covid-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable families, health workers and high-risk people in the world.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/ulster/2021/0509/1217878-island-community-in-campaign-to-vaccinate-vulnerable/>



830) *May 10*. Royal Mail is to trial using a drone to send PPE, Covid-19 test kits and other items of mail from the UK mainland to the **SCILLY ISLES**. The company said it would be the first parcel carrier in the country to deliver mail to a UK island using an autonomous flight, which would fly out of sight of any operator during the 70-mile journey. A smaller drone, which is able to take off and land vertically, will fly parcels between the islands off the coast of Cornwall for delivery to their final recipients. The month-long trial of scheduled flights from the mainland to remote communities on the islands is being funded by the government and involves a consortium including the University of Southampton and several drone companies. A large, twin-engine uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV), manufactured in the UK by the Windracers Limited, will carry packages from the mainland to the islands' airport in St Mary's. The UAV was designed to deliver supplies to people in remote locations and is able to fly in poor weather conditions, including fog. It can carry 100kg of mail of all shapes and sizes, which is equivalent to a typical delivery round.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/10/royal-mail-to-deliver-to-scilly-isles-by-drone-in-first-uk-trial-of-its-kind>

831) *May 11*. The Covid-19 vaccination campaign in **NAURU** has exceeded the government's expectations. A government release says 7,392 people, or 108 percent of the adult population have received the first dose. This exceeds population estimates of 6,812 adults living in Nauru based on figures in a 2019 census, as stated by the Bureau of Statistics. However, the government is confident it has vaccinated all of its adult population aged 18 years and over for this first part of a two-shot vaccination. With a comparatively young population, this represents 63 per cent of the estimated total population on Nauru having received the vaccine. The four-week rollout of the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine to adults in Nauru ended last Friday. Nauru is one of the few countries in the world remaining free of Covid-19.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/442351/nauru-vaccinates-entire-adult-population>

832) *May 12*. There were serious failures by both the World Health Organization (WHO) and individual governments in the world's response to the coronavirus pandemic, an independent review has found. The panel established by the WHO called the response a "toxic cocktail". Without urgent change the world will be at the mercy of another disease outbreak, it said. The WHO should have declared the outbreak in China an international emergency earlier, the report said. The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response argued that the WHO Emergency Committee should have acted to do so at its first meeting on 22 January last year instead of waiting until 30 January. The month following the WHO's declaration was "lost" as countries failed to take appropriate measures to halt the spread of the virus. The report was compiled in an effort to find answers as to how the coronavirus has killed more than 3.4 million people. The report says the WHO was hindered by its own regulations that travel restrictions should be a last resort, with Europe and America wasting the entire month of February, acting only when their hospitals began to fill up. When countries should have been preparing their healthcare systems for an influx of Covid patients, much of the world descended into a "winner takes all" scramble for protective equipment and medicines, the report said. To prevent another catastrophic pandemic, the report suggests key reforms:



- The WHO should have a global health threats council with the power to hold member states accountable
- There should be a disease surveillance system to publish information without the approval of countries concerned
- Vaccines must be classed as public goods and there should be a pandemic financing facility

The most eye-catching line of this report is that the pandemic was the 21st Century's "Chernobyl moment" and its assertion that the world wasted time in February 2020 while the virus took hold. The panel calls for better processes and structures to spot the next highly infectious pathogen. As well as better funding for the World Health Organization to make it stronger and give it more teeth. After the worst shock to the global economy since World War Two, all countries will agree that it's a case of "never again". But will meaningful reform be possible when so much of the current response is still about putting national interests first? The panel has called for rich countries to share one billion doses of vaccine by September, for example. Yet still many nations with large stockpiles remain reluctant to declare their hand. There are some issues the panel didn't have time to consider in depth. The most fundamental one remains our relationship with the animal world to stop viruses jumping to humans in the first place.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-57085505>

[https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic\\_final.pdf](https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic_final.pdf)

833) *May 12.* **FRENCH POLYNESIA** has gone 24 hours without recording any new cases of Covid-19. It's the first time this has happened since July 2020. After the territory's government re-opened to tourists last July, French Polynesia was struck by one of the Pacific's worst outbreaks of the coronavirus. 18,000 people were infected, Tahiti's hospital was pushed to the limit, and 141 people died. But since January, the numbers have been steadily declining. The territory hasn't recorded a coronavirus death since 6 March. Today, only one person is in hospital and more than 50,000 people have had at least one dose of the vaccine. Last week, the territory again reopened its borders for quarantine-free travel from some countries. However, both **TONGA** and **SAMOA** governments have each renewed their country's Covid-19 state of emergency for another month. For Tonga, the status means a midnight to 5am curfew will remain in force, and restrictions on mass gatherings will still apply. Tonga's border also remains closed. Samoa remains free of the virus, but the government is not taking any chances, and the order will stay in place until 6 June. It restricts sea traffic, flights into and out of the country, operating hours for shops, and liquor sales, among other things. Public gatherings are permitted, but people are required to follow Covid-19 safety rules. It's the 45th time the state of emergency has been extended for Samoa. Both countries first declared a state of emergency due to Covid-19 on March 20 last year.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/442423/first-24-hrs-with-no-new-covid-19-in-french-polynesia-since-july>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/442420/covid-19-state-of-emergency-extended-for-tonga-and-samoa>

834) *May 12*. Everyone eligible for the Covid vaccine in the **WESTERN ISLES** has now been offered an appointment to receive their first dose, its health board has said. Already 86.7% of the eligible adult population in the isles have had a first jab and almost 50% have had both. There are fewer than 20,000 people on the islands eligible for the vaccine but they are spread over a large and sparsely population area. It is a similar situation in **SHETLAND** where 86.4% of eligible people have had their first jab, 48% have had both doses, and **ORKNEY** where the figures are 79.1% and 36.6%. From 17 May, all three island groups are to move to level one due to their record for low Covid rates.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-57090162>

835) *May 12*. Starting this week, fully vaccinated **HAWAII** residents can skip COVID-19 testing and quarantine requirements when flying between the islands. According to the new rules, which Gov. David Ige announced last month, Hawaii residents who were vaccinated in the state are exempt from testing and quarantine on the 15th day after their final vaccine shot. To participate in the inter-county travel program, island residents will need to provide their Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccination record card, as well as register with Hawaii's "Safe Travels" program and affirm they are fully vaccinated, to get a digital record card. Travelers under the age of 5 can bypass the requirements, as long as they are on the same travel itinerary as a fully vaccinated parent or guardian. The new rules went into effect Monday. For now, only state residents are eligible for the program, and visitors will still have to either test negative for COVID-19 before flying or quarantine for 10 days when traveling between islands. Ige said the state is hoping to troubleshoot the process before rolling it out to out-of-state Americans as early as this summer and international visitors later this year. As of Tuesday, 41% of the population in Hawaii was fully vaccinated and 59% had received at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hawaii is the second state after New York to issue a vaccination verification certification for state residents. By the end of the week a number of COVID-19 clusters had popped up on different islands revealing many workers in high-risk environments remain unvaccinated and are spreading it to other unvaccinated co-workers and students.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/hawaii-vaccine-pass-vaccinated-residents-travel-islands/story?id=77642930>

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2021/05/15/hawaii-news/covid-19-clusters-are-emerging-on-several-islands-in-hawaii/>

836) *May 12*. How conspiracy theories led to Covid vaccine hesitancy in the **PACIFIC**. A report by ABC International Development and the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme has uncovered worrying trends which show 62% of Facebook posts about Covid-19 vaccines in the region make unsubstantiated claims about vaccines, with popular falsehoods including that vaccines have been manufactured to track personal data, are counter to the foundations of the Christian faith, and impact fertility, circulated widely across the region.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/13/how-conspiracy-theories-led-to-covid-vaccine-hesitancy-in-the-pacific>

837) *May 13*. On May 5, the governor and premier of **MONTserrat** - a British overseas territory with about 5,000 people - jointly delivered an “urgent appeal” on COVID-19 inoculation, saying 900 vaccine doses are set to expire by the end of the month. “It would be a travesty, it would be a stain on our island’s reputation, I think, for us to have to throw away these vaccines at a time when people around the world are suffering the ravages of COVID and vaccines are in desperately short supply,” the governor, Andrew Pearce, said during a press conference. As with Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands, vaccines for Montserrat were procured and delivered by the U.K. government as part of the pandemic support to its territories. While Gibraltar, which has 34,000 people, has completed its vaccination campaign and the Falkland Islands reported that 74% of the population has received at least one dose, the United Kingdom’s **CARIBBEAN** territories are posting lower figures. The rate of people who have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose is 59% in the Cayman Islands, 39% in Anguilla, 31% in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and 26% in the British Virgin Islands. This figure is 24% in Montserrat. Officials received 3,000 vaccine doses in February. But with almost a third of that number on the verge of being discarded, the government’s goal of inoculating up to 80% of its people is shifting. As COVID-19 swept across the globe, it ravaged tourism in the Caribbean and sharply impacted regional economies. The International Monetary Fund says tourism revenue, which accounts for almost 40% of gross domestic product in the eight-member Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, “dried up.” The union’s economy is estimated to have contracted by 16% in 2020, with a further 0.5% decline expected in 2021. “People in the tourism sector are suffering. And the only way we can alleviate their suffering is for us to be able to vaccinate our population, and encourage and invite persons to start coming in,” Premier Joseph E. Farrell said at the press conference. Vaccine hesitancy will hinder recovery, Farrell said. He advocated for pushing back against conspiracy theories and against people calling in to radio programs to speak out against vaccines. “Vaccine hesitation is real,” said Eugenia Corrales-Aguilar, a microbiologist at the Research Center for Tropical Diseases at the University of Costa Rica. She warned that it is important to separate people who advocate against all vaccines from those who are hesitant about the COVID-19 shot and need accurate and practical information. Corrales-Aguilar studies Zika, dengue, and chikungunya. She has worked with bat coronaviruses since 2013, but her work shifted to COVID-19 in early 2020. “People think the vaccines were developed really fast. That doesn’t mean they were developed sloppily. The process was done as it was supposed to be, but with lots of money, investment, and production,” she said. “Social media has been detrimental to good information and education. I’ve heard everything, from mutations and becoming zombies to infertility. Even [with] the AstraZeneca vaccine, people think this is new technology, but there are some approved vaccines for Ebola, for example, that use this technology. The ‘wait and see’ fear can cost people their lives.” Vaccination rates across the 26 members of the Caribbean Public Health Agency, or CARPHA, range from 4% receiving at least one dose in Trinidad and Tobago to 67% on the tiny island of Saba. With the United Kingdom responsible for vaccinating its territories in the region, the other members have relied on a mix of alliances to source their shots. In February, India donated 100,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Barbados and 70,000 to Dominica. Both nations shared their supplies with hard-hit neighboring islands. With support from CARPHA and the Pan American Health Organization, countries are also tapping into the COVAX global vaccine sharing initiative. CARPHA has used European Union funding to help 12 member states with COVAX payments, according to Dr. Joy St. John, the agency’s executive director. “CARPHA is very concerned about equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

by our Member States. The current pace will take us a while to reach the herd immunity required to return our economies to productive levels, or minimize the emergence of variants,” she wrote to Devex. “However, we understand that our Member States are doing their utmost to access quality, safe, efficacious vaccines.” As vaccines pave the way for jump-starting the tourism sector, regional health authorities and leaders say the Caribbean cannot afford to be eclipsed by other tourism hot spots. In 2019, the region recorded 31.5 million stay-over arrivals - its all-time best performance. Buoyed by those figures, officials were preparing for another stellar year - but COVID-19 upended business for one of the world’s most tourism-dependent regions. And while some countries are launching attractive work and vacation campaigns for visitors, the United Nations has warned that the modest economic growth expected globally this year will “barely offset the losses of 2020.” “Vaccine hesitancy is a real concern to us, and CARPHA supports efforts to issue information based on scientific evidence,” said St. John, a former assistant director-general at the World Health Organization who is also a member of the Caribbean’s COVID-19 Tourism Task Force - a multiagency body hoping to steer countries to a safe reopening. CARPHA is three months into a vaccine acceptance survey among social media users across member states. The agency hopes it will identify messaging gaps and barriers to vaccine uptake. The health authority says the risk of further cases in the Caribbean remains very high, and it is urging countries to focus on reducing transmission and mortality. For scientists like Corrales-Aguilar, the way to do this is through widespread vaccination. “There’s something funny with COVID. You’ve seen what’s happening. You see people dying. You see how hospitals and health clinics are burdened. With so much COVID transmission, I would be scared of COVID and not the vaccine,” she said. In Montserrat, the Cabinet’s next move might show the unvaccinated what they are missing, with incentives for those who have taken the jab. “As far as I’m concerned, it’s not fair to treat people who are vaccinated the same way that we treat people who are not,” said Farrell.

<https://www.devex.com/news/in-race-to-recovery-the-caribbean-wants-less-hesitancy-more-vaccines-99872>

838) *May 14*. Badly behaved foreign influencers threaten the economic recovery of **BALI** by ignoring Covid protocols. A Russian Instagrammer who launched his motorbike off a dock, crashing into the sea. Two YouTube pranksters who fooled a supermarket guard with drawn-on face masks, violating the island’s health rules, and one couple allegedly filming porn on a sacred mountain, Bali has hosted a range of badly behaved influencers during the pandemic. And now it’s had enough. While some countries sent foreign travellers home as Covid began to spread, Indonesia allowed visitors to remain. Yet, one year on since the start of the pandemic, police say many foreign tourists still show flagrant disregard for the local health protocols. “Yes, the foreigner brings income for us. But their action will risk the local who works to serve them as well. Can they have a little empathy?” said Balinese politician and designer Niluh Djelantik, who fears their behaviour is jeopardising Bali’s chances of restarting its tourism industry. Social media influencers – who are drawn to the island’s photo-perfect, emerald-green paddy fields, its scenic temples and beaches – have proved a particular problem. “The key for Bali recovery (from the pandemic) is the low number of (Covid-19) cases. But the foreigner who has (online) followers creates content about violating the health protocol, leaving an impression that Bali is not safe,” Niluh said. Over the past few months, reports of disrespectful, brash stunts, careless partying and even insulting behaviour by social media influencers have angered the public. So far this year, about 346 foreign tourists violated the health

protocols, while 60 were deported from the island according to local media. Foreigners are charged Rp 1,000,000 (\$70 USD) for not obeying health guidelines, 10 times more than locals, because officials say they are more likely to misbehave and a tougher deterrent is needed. Police have even made foreigners do push ups as punishment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/14/have-a-little-empathy-bali-tires-of-badly-behaved-foreign-influencers>

839) *May 14.* Hundreds of thousands in **CUBA** have begun receiving new, locally produced vaccines against COVID-19 in the past few days as the socialist government has ramped up an inoculation campaign - even before releasing formal Phase III data on the vaccines' effectiveness and safety. The campaign is being closely watched by many across Latin America and the world who see Cuba's vaccines as a possible way to ease global shortages.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/cuba-rolls-out-mass-vaccines-while-awaiting-study-results-cuba-havana-facebook-portal-iran-b1847908.html>

840) *May 15.* **TAIWAN** has reported 180 new cases of Covid-19 as it rushes to contain the worst outbreak the island has seen since the pandemic began. Authorities have raised the alert level in Taipei and the neighbouring county of New Taipei, limiting family gatherings, and ordering numerous industries to close. Taiwan has been one of the world's pandemic success stories, and its case numbers remain low relative to outbreaks around the world. But Saturday's cases, which bring its total number so far to about 1,470 among a population of 24 million, mark the highest rates of community transmission since the pandemic began. Until now almost all of Taiwan's cases were detected in new arrivals held in hotel quarantine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/15/taiwan-records-180-new-cases-in-islands-worst-covid-outbreak-of-pandemic>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57135647>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/21/not-a-lot-of-trust-taiwan-wrestles-with-home-working-in-wake-of-covid-surge>

841) *May 18.* **TAIWAN** disallows outlying **KINMEN ISLAND** from obtaining COVID vaccines from China. Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) denied Kinmen County Commissioner Yang Cheng-wu's request for permission to purchase internationally sanctioned COVID-19 vaccines from China. Yang said that Kinmen County has so far only received 800 COVID-19 vaccine doses from the central government, which is way too low given that the county has a population of 140,000. However, the CECC said that per the Regulations Governing Permission of Trade between Taiwan Area and Mainland Area, as well as items forbidden to import from China listed by the Bureau of Foreign Trade, Taiwan cannot legally open the import of serum and blood products from China.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4205875>

842) *May 19.* The island nation of **SINGAPORE** has said there is "no truth" to an assertion by Delhi's chief minister that a new variant of the coronavirus has been

detected in the city state. Delhi's chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had called for a halt to flights, saying a new "Singapore strain" was "extremely dangerous for children". He added that it could result in a third wave of the infection in India. Singapore's ministry of health has reacted strongly to the claims. "The strain that is prevalent in many of the Covid-19 cases in recent weeks is the B.1.617.2 variant, which originated in India. There is no 'Singapore variant'."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57167542>

843) *May 20*. They've been hailed as virus success stories - places that have seen virtually zero or single-digit Covid cases since the start of the year. But this month, **SINGAPORE** and **TAIWAN** have both seen a sudden and aggressive rise in cases - with Singapore logging 248 new cases just last week, and Taiwan 1,200 local infections. Both places have gone into a heightened state of restrictions, limiting the size of social gatherings and closing schools. By global standards, these numbers may seem small - but for these places, these figures would have been unthinkable just months ago. So what exactly went wrong?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57153195>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/22/taiwan-accuses-china-of-spreading-fake-news-about-covid-outbreak>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/27/taiwan-president-accuses-china-interfering-covid-vaccine-deals>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57246914>

[https://www.terradaily.com/reports/Japan\\_donates\\_more\\_than\\_1\\_million\\_Covid-19\\_jabs\\_to\\_Taiwan\\_999.html](https://www.terradaily.com/reports/Japan_donates_more_than_1_million_Covid-19_jabs_to_Taiwan_999.html)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/06/us-taiwan-covid-vaccine-doses-senators-visit-tsai-ing-wen>

844) *May 20*. Dogs are better at detecting Covid-19 in humans than many fast lateral flow tests (LFTs), according to a French study which could see canines more widely deployed for mass virus screening in crowded places including airports. The trial, conducted in March and April by France's national veterinary school and the clinical research unit of Paris's Necker-Cochin hospital, showed dogs were able to detect the presence of the virus with 97% accuracy. The dogs were also 91% correct in identifying negative samples, the study showed. A recent review of 64 studies found LFTs correctly identify on average 72% of people infected with the virus who have symptoms, and 58% who do not. In the French study, researchers collected samples – cotton pads pressed for two minutes under participants' armpits – from 335 people aged between six and 76 who presented themselves for a PCR test at testing centres in Paris. The pads were then sealed in jars and given to at least two of the nine dogs used in the trial – none of whom came into contact with the volunteers – to be sniffed. The dogs' handlers did not know in advance which samples were positive.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/20/dogs-can-better-detect-covid-in-humans-than-lateral-flow-tests-finds-study>



845) *May 20*. Researchers in Australia want to transform single-use Covid masks into road material. In the United States, the protective gear is recycled into benches. And in France, they are reborn as floor carpets for cars. Used to curb the spread of Covid-19, masks are exacerbating another pandemic: plastic pollution. Around 129 billion disposable masks are used every month around the world, according to the American Chemical Society. Made out of polypropylene plastic material, elastic and metal, used masks are usually thrown out in garbage bins, destined for landfills, or incinerated. They are also littering streets, rivers and oceans, harming wildlife. But researchers and companies are looking for ways to put masks to good use, though it is not a very profitable venture at the moment.

[https://www.terraily.com/reports/Pandemic\\_mask\\_mountain\\_sets\\_new\\_recycling\\_challenge\\_999.html](https://www.terraily.com/reports/Pandemic_mask_mountain_sets_new_recycling_challenge_999.html)

846) *May 22*. After a year of zero visitors, the **COOK ISLANDS** is now pondering just how many tourists it actually wants to return. Until Covid-19 shut the borders in March, the country was seeing record numbers each year. For many locals, it had reached a point where they felt the country was struggling to cope. Muri lagoon's health has been declining. Noxious algal blooms have become increasingly common, largely put down to pollution. Kelvin Passfield, from the environmental organisation Te Ipukarea Society, said that pressure is even being seen at sacred sites. With the opening of quarantine-free travel with New Zealand this week, the government and tourism businesses are excited, as are many who are now back at work. But even people in the tourism sector, including the Minister of Tourism minister Patrick Arioka, said perhaps things shouldn't be as they were.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/443141/cook-islanders-considering-how-much-tourism-is-too-much>

847) *May 22*. The 19 **GREEK ISLANDS** participating in the Blue Freedom inoculation program with the single-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine, for permanent residents and seasonal workers over 18, are reportedly moving at different speeds. The government attaches great significance to the program, both in terms of its scope and the time scale of its completion, as it will determine the volume of tourism the islands will have this summer and the health security of residents and visitors.

<https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1161598/discrepancies-in-island-inoculation-speeds/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/greece-holiday-island-test-green-list-b1846154.html>

848) *May 24*. Illegal logging on Indonesia's **SULAWESI ISLAND** has intensified by more than two-thirds during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a local NGO. It attributes this increase to monitoring by law enforcers having to be scaled back as part of wider mobility restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic. At the same time, the legal logging industry has taken a hit due to sluggish demand and being undercut by the illegal trade.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/05/illegal-loggers-use-pandemic-as-cover-to-ramp-up-activity-in-sulawesi/>

849) *May 25.* Many are blaming the spike in COVID-19 cases at **LAKSHADWEEP** – which recorded its first COVID-19 case in January of this year, having remained a haven untouched by the pandemic the whole of 2020 – on relaxing the quarantine measures under Patel’s administration. After Patel took charge as the Administrator, the earlier quarantine and testing rules – which some experts have credited for keeping Lakshadweep COVID-19 free for 2020 – were also relaxed.

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/assault-culture-and-nature-why-lakshadweep-against-administrator-patel-149467>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/lakshadweep-admin-justifies-reform-push-says-it-wants-to-develop-islands-like-maldives-7333189/>

[Residents of India’s Lakshadweep islands resent gov’t’s new moves | Indigenous Rights News | Al Jazeera](#)

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/04/trouble-in-paradise-indian-islands-face-brazen-new-laws-and-covid-crisis>

<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2021/0609/As-tourism-ramps-up-Indian-island-residents-say-what-about-us>

<https://india.mongabay.com/2021/06/the-development-plan-that-could-end-up-sinking-lakshadweep-islands/>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/lakshadweep-administrator-to-visit-islands-amid-protest-by-opposition-parties-7357486/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-57497446>

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-06-30/india-lakshadweep>

850) *May 25.* **KIRIBATI** has received its first 12,000 doses of the Astrazeneca Covid-19 vaccine via the global covax facility. The rollout of vaccines is to start in the densely populated South Tarawa districts of Betio and the Teinainano Urban Council which stretches from Bairiki to Tanaea. The country has no community cases of Covid-19 but last week two cases of Covid-19 were identified aboard a Taiwanese fishing carrier anchored in the Tarawa lagoon. One of the people who tested positive is a Kiribati fisherman who was returning home after a year at sea. The other is a foreigner whose nationality has not been confirmed. Both men have been told to quarantine aboard the vessel for 14 days. Earlier this week, the Kiribati government suspended its repatriation programme to deal with the cases.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/443374/kiribati-to-start-covid-19-vaccination-rollout>

851) *May 25.* The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** government is nearing completion of the rollout of its nationwide Covid-19 vaccination programme. 95% of those aged over 18 in the community has now received two doses of the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine,

providing an additional layer of protection against the coronavirus for the vast majority of the population.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/05/25/falkland-islands-nearing-completion-of-nationwide-covid-19-vaccination-programme>

852) *May 26.* The global lockdown to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic health risks has altered human interactions with nature. Here, we report immediate impacts of changes in human activities on wildlife and environmental threats during the early lockdown months of 2020, based on 877 qualitative reports and 332 quantitative assessments from 89 different studies. Hundreds of reports of unusual species observations from around the world suggest that animals quickly responded to the reductions in human presence. However, negative effects of lockdown on conservation also emerged, as confinement resulted in some park officials being unable to perform conservation, restoration and enforcement tasks, resulting in local increases in illegal activities such as hunting. Overall, there is a complex mixture of positive and negative effects of the pandemic lockdown on nature, all of which have the potential to lead to cascading responses which in turn impact wildlife and nature conservation. While the net effect of the lockdown will need to be assessed over years as data becomes available and persistent effects emerge, immediate responses were detected across the world. Thus initial qualitative and quantitative data arising from this serendipitous global quasi-experimental perturbation highlights the dual role that humans play in threatening and protecting species and ecosystems. Pathways to favorably tilt this delicate balance include reducing impacts and increasing conservation effectiveness.

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/are-covid-19-lockdowns-really-causing-nature-to-heal/>

853) *May 26.* US President Joe Biden has ordered intelligence agencies to investigate the emergence of Covid-19, amid growing controversy about the virus's origins. In a statement, Mr Biden asked US intelligence groups to "redouble their efforts" and report to him within 90 days. Covid-19 was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. More than 168 million cases have since been confirmed worldwide and at least 3.5 million deaths reported. Authorities linked early Covid cases to a seafood market in Wuhan, and scientists believed the virus first passed to humans from animals. But questions have persisted and recent reports attributed to US intelligence sources say three members of the Wuhan Institute of Virology were admitted to hospital in November 2019, several weeks before China acknowledged the first case of the new disease in the community. Mr Biden's statement comes the day after Xavier Becerra, US secretary for health and human services, urged the WHO to ensure a "transparent" investigation into the virus's origins. "The Covid-19 pandemic not only stole a year from our lives, it stole millions of lives," Mr Becerra said in an address to the World Health Assembly, a conference organised by the WHO. "Phase 2 of the Covid origins study must be launched with terms of reference that are transparent, science-based and give international experts the independence to fully assess the source of the virus and the early days of the outbreak."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57260009>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-57267729>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/we-still-dont-know-the-origins-of-the-coronavirus-here-are-four-scenarios>

854) *May 29*. Having seemingly emerged from its second wave of COVID-19, the **JAMAICA** government is making significant efforts to minimise the number of new cases and keep infection rates low. After warnings from health officials that the island would not be able to cope with a third wave, Prime Minister Andrew Holness recently announced more stringent protocols, including tighter curfews and limitations on gatherings. Yet, at least one in a week-long series of widely advertised, tourist-targeted parties was allowed to proceed, in blatant disregard of COVID-19 protocols. When video of a Mocha Fest Jamaica event held at Rick's Café - an establishment famed for its lively atmosphere and stunning clifftop sunset views - emerged on social media, the images of hundreds of maskless revelers partying in close quarters prompted a wave of anger across the local blogosphere. Since the first case of COVID-19 arrived in March 2020, Jamaica has been suffering. Tourism is down, and the island's normally vibrant entertainment sector has had to severely cut back. Major international music festivals like Reggae Sumfest have been curtailed by tight curfew hours, and Monday, May 24, the national Labour Day holiday, was designated a "no movement" day, with a curfew imposed from 2:00 p.m. on Sunday until 5:00 a.m. on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Mocha Fest was advertising an event comprising eight parties over five days, all taking place at different locations over the period May 24-31. The party at Rick's took place on May 27, prompting strong reactions. While citizens wait for promised investigations into how Mocha Fest managed to take place, the overwhelming sense among Jamaican netizens is that there are, indeed, two Jamaicas, in the time of COVID-19, the "haves" are the tourists, and ordinary Jamaicans are the "have nots".

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/05/29/as-tourists-party-citizens-under-covid-lockdown-ask-are-there-two-jamaicas/>

855) *June 1*. Homeless people here on **HAWAII'S** northern island got an unusual invitation last year: Come set up camp at a spectacular beach, with showers, toilets and electricity, and meals delivered by the local food bank. The offer was part of an aggressive plan by Kauai's leaders to contain the coronavirus. The public campgrounds were all but deserted because tourism had collapsed under the weight of the pandemic and strict quarantine rules. Letting a few hundred people stay in five designated parks reduced the chance that they would wander the island, catch the virus and become vectors. The plan worked. On Kauai, population 72,000, COVID-19 has claimed a total of two lives, a death rate 60 times lower than that of the nation. There have been just 320 infections and the homeless population has stayed safe. With half of its population fully vaccinated, Kauai is well ahead of the rest of Hawaii and the nation, which has a rate of 41%. But now the island faces a new challenge: how to rebuild the economy. Tourism-dependent Hawaii has the highest unemployment rate in the nation, and the situation is especially difficult on Kauai. Food banks are working overtime. Homelessness appears to be increasing. The highway that rings much of the island winds past boarded-up stores and restaurants. As a string of islands, Hawaii had a built-in advantage over other U.S. states when it came to fighting the pandemic: strict control over its borders. Early on, the state imposed a 14-day quarantine period for anyone arriving on the islands and arrested and jailed violators. Later, officials backed off, letting travellers avoid quarantine by providing negative results from approved coronavirus tests taken within three days of departure for Hawaii. Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami pushed the state to let him

impose additional requirements. Kauai is the least developed of Hawaii's four main islands, and he argued that if the virus took off, its three hospitals would be overwhelmed - they had just 20 ICU beds. Last December, after Hawaii Gov. David Ige declined his requests, the mayor opted out of the state system, reverting to mandatory quarantines. The decision extended Kauai's longstanding reputation for an independent spirit. Two centuries ago, the island was the last to submit to rule by Hawaii's king, and in 2007, protesters on surfboards thwarted plans for a car ferry from Oahu. Kawakami said he felt acutely responsible to constituents whom he knew from working his way up in the family grocery chain. The tight rules made Kauai a public health success story, but alienated many in the business community. The unemployment rate, which had hovered around 20% all last summer, had finally begun to drop, and the restrictions appeared to stall the economic recovery. In the first three months of this year, the number of visitors fell 93% compared with the same period in 2020 - a much larger drop than on Maui or the Big Island. In a compromise in January, Kawakami instituted a unique system to make quarantine a lot shorter and a little more fun. Sections of six hotels became "resort bubbles." Visitors and residents who provided evidence of negative tests could stay for three days - wearing electronic tracking bracelets - and then go on their way after testing negative again. National Guard troops conducting enforcement at Lihue Airport showed no mercy. Again, Kauai's strategy worked, and the island went for days at a time with no new confirmed coronavirus cases. But the economy was struggling. Residents missed fixtures like the Kukui Grove Cinema, whose closure left the island without a movie theater. Unemployment has declined to 10% as more tourists have arrived on Kauai. But visitor numbers aren't likely to rebound to pre-pandemic levels for at least two years, according to a forecast by the University of Hawaii's Economic Research Organization. One factor limiting recovery of tourism is a severe shortage of rental cars. Last year, rental companies across the state tried to cover losses by selling off vehicles. With rental prices surging to as much as \$700 a day, desperate tourists have resorted to driving U-Haul trucks. Some would-be visitors have canceled their trips. In early April, Kauai rejoined the state system, enabling travelers to avoid quarantine with a single negative pre-flight test. More than 100 people have since tested positive for the virus - the island's worst surge. After aggressive contact-tracing identified several hundred people to quarantine, the island is back to about half a dozen new cases a week. In contrast to Texas, Florida and other states that have banned government mandated "vaccine passports," Hawaii has begun allowing people who show proof of vaccination to bypass testing and quarantine requirements when travelling between islands. But the shots must have been given in Hawaii. For now, officials' inability to verify vaccinations given on the mainland or abroad has prevented them from expanding the system to include people arriving from across the Pacific. Even before the pandemic, life for many on Kauai was getting harder. Wealthy outsiders were competing to buy homes, driving up housing prices and rents. The disparities have only grown. After housing prices fell briefly, more mainland residents plunged into the real estate market, often buying sight-unseen to move to the island to work remotely. Studio apartments fashioned from carports now rent for more than \$1,000 a month. The median sale price of a single-family house on Kauai soared past \$1 million in January, up 30% from the same month last year, widening the gap between rich and poor. Back at Salt Pond Beach Park, several dozen occupants maintain a tidy campsite, with tents pitched beneath palm trees and toys stacked for children. But the campers are growing anxious. They have until June 30 to leave so that the park can reopen for public use.

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-06-01/hawaii-kauai-coronavirus-economy>

856) *June 1.* When COVID-19 emerged in early 2020 in Southeast Asia, its governments took rapid containment actions: lockdowns, travel restrictions and trade suspensions, alerting the public about the virus. The pandemic has also put illegal or unsustainable wildlife trade under the spotlight due to enhanced restrictions on movement and increasing awareness about the public health risks associated with wildlife consumption. The long-term impacts, though, remain to be seen. Recent reports on wildlife trafficking in Southeast Asia suggest that, compared to 2019, on-the-ground activity has decreased due to pandemic restrictions and weakened demand for wildlife products. However, advertisements and trade continue to proliferate on social media platforms, and there is evidence that traders may be resorting to stockpiling animal parts in anticipation of demand recovering as restrictions are eased. Data from the fourth edition of the Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), released May 21 this year, indicate that seizures of pangolin parts in China, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand dropped significantly in 2020, with 48 incidents in 2020 compared to 82 in 2019. The total volume of seizures also fell sharply to 9,765 kilograms (10.8 tons) of pangolin products from 2019's 155,795 kg (171.7 tons). Recent data from the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reveal a similar trend. Body parts and live specimens accounting for 58 individual animals were recovered from a total of 12 seizures in 2020. That's the lowest number of seizures recorded by the environmental department in the past decade, down by half from 24 in 2019. But it's possible the pandemic did little to dissuade traffickers, despite evidence that fewer traffickers are being caught on the ground, says Serene Chng, program officer of the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC. The trade in wildlife and wildlife products is increasingly shifting to online platforms as traffickers have found new ways to connect with potential buyers. Experts say that due to limited law enforcement capacities, encrypted online or undetected transactions, the online trade is particularly difficult to address.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/wildlife-trafficking-like-everything-else-has-gone-online-during-covid-19/>

857) *June 2.* The first delivery of the Covid-19 vaccine has arrived on **NIUE**, raising the prospect of a travel bubble with New Zealand. The small number of doses in the first batch will be used to inoculate the vaccinators and other important people. A much larger delivery will arrive next Wednesday, enabling the wider rollout to start. Niue's Ministry of Health said it was important for everyone aged 16 and over to get vaccinated to protect the country. Niue has remained completely untouched by the pandemic, with no cases or deaths from Covid-19 reported.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/443857/covid-vaccines-arrive-in-niue-rollout-expected-next-week>

858) *June 2.* A fortnight after the launch of the two-way **COOK ISLANDS** travel bubble and Rarotonga is noticeably busier. But with the return of quarantine-free travel the Cook Islands' focus has moved from encouraging the arrival of tourists to stopping island residents from leaving. The waterfront market in Avarua calls itself 'the pulse of Rarotonga', and is a microcosm for the mood of the wider Pa Enua. Once again New Zealand visitors are browsing the stalls, which are mostly open and tended



to by freshly vaccinated residents. 56 per cent of the Island's population has received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Having provided 8000 first doses in the Covid-19 vaccination, Te Marae Ora is now rolling out the programme to Aitutaki and other islands. The Cooks appear to have weathered the Covid storm well, without a single case being reported.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/rarotonga-bubble-cook-islands-stop-shrinking-two-weeks-on/WECV2HZQU66THSUU5SZCPGIWQU/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/444981/cook-islands-travel-bubble-businesses-see-uptick-but-labour-shortages-remain>

859) *June 2.* No one really knows the true state of the COVID-19 pandemic in **INDONESIA**, and that means it is unpredictable. But there are good reasons to worry about what will happen next. Fifteen months after Indonesia reported its first case of COVID-19, testing for the coronavirus remains among the lowest in Asia. Perhaps because it is not free, testing has reached only around 40 per 1,000 people, compared with 115 in the Philippines, 373 in Malaysia, and more than 2,000 in Singapore. Testing is better even in Myanmar, where a military coup has triggered daily protests and an increasingly fraught security situation. And Indonesia's test results are not reliable. The country is still excessively reliant on rapid antigen tests, which are less accurate than PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests. Indonesia's official death reports are questionable too. LaporCovid-19, an independent website established to provide accurate information about the pandemic, noted a discrepancy between the 48,477 COVID-related deaths reported by the government in May and its own total of 50,729. It reached its tally by simply adding the death tolls of each province - and that was with out-of-date data from six provinces and none from Papua. In fact, researchers and journalists have long pointed to significant "excess deaths" as evidence of significant under-reporting of COVID fatalities in Indonesia. Excess deaths refer to the number of deaths occurring beyond what would be expected in a normal year. One study found a 61% increase in excess deaths in Indonesia in 2020 compared with the previous five years, which was not reflected in the official data. But even on the clearly inadequate official data available, COVID case numbers are now on the rise. Indonesia reported 2,385 new cases on May 15. Two weeks later, daily cases had more than doubled to 6,565. If numbers keep growing at this rate, Indonesia's health system will not be able to cope. When daily cases peaked earlier this year at 10,000-14,000 new cases per day (officially), Jakarta's hospitals were overwhelmed and COVID patients were turned away. And there is a real possibility the numbers will get this high again - maybe even worse. Countries in the region that had managed the pandemic well through 2020, such as Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia are now experiencing deadly third and fourth waves. In early May, Indonesian authorities also reported cases of the UK variant (B.1.1.7), South African variant (B.1.351) and Indian variant (B.1.617.2), which are more contagious than the original strain. To make matters worse, Indonesia just experienced a national super-spreader event: Eid al-Fitr, the most important Islamic holiday. Traditionally, millions of Muslims return to their home villages to see family and friends during this time - a mass event known as *mudik*. Fearing a repeat of last year, when daily cases shot up by 93% after *mudik*, the government banned travel this year - the second time it has tried to halt *mudik*. But, as is so often the case in Indonesia, enforcement was badly lacking, and *mudik* rolled on, even if numbers were down. WhatsApp groups were ablaze with ways to avoid police checkpoints. Over the past fortnight, Indonesians have been gradually returning to the cities, fuelling concerns of a major outbreak.

<https://theconversation.com/indonesia-may-be-on-the-cusp-of-a-major-covid-spike-unlike-its-neighbours-though-there-is-no-lockdown-yet-158955>

860) *June 3.* **VANUATU** has finally started rolling out COVID-19 vaccines, after 24,000 doses of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine arrived through the COVAX facility. Health care workers, border and quarantine staff, public transport drivers and people aged 55 and above, plus those over 35 with existing medical conditions, will get the first doses. Vanuatu has had three recorded cases of COVID-19 according to the WHO. In an interview, Len Garae, Vanuatu's Director General of Health talked about the importance of the partnership government has with the Vanuatu Christian Council of Churches in drumming home public awareness messages. We have also involved the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs since culturally Custom Chiefs have overall control of the people.

<https://islandsbusiness.com/islands-business/news-break/vanuatu-vaccines/>

861) *June 3.* **FIJI** government says there's no need to declare a state of emergency, despite a growing number of cases of Covid-19. The country has now confirmed more than 300 active cases, including 35 new cases reported last night. Of the 35 latest cases, 14 of them linked to the country's main hospital in Suva. The opposition and civil society groups have called for the government to consider declaring a state of emergency. But Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama told Parliament today it wasn't necessary. He said it is within the scope of the Ministry of Health to decide whether it was necessary to take that option, and it had not expressed the need.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/443999/fiji-no-need-for-covid-19-state-of-emergency-pm>

<https://islandsbusiness.com/islands-business/news-break/aust-gives-another-f42-5-million-to-fiji-for-budget-support/>

862) *June 4.* **GUAM** has joined other US states dangling lottery money and other cash prizes in a bid to achieve herd immunity by 21 July, marking the 77th anniversary of the island's liberation from Japanese forces. The island's governor, Lourdes Leon Guerrero, said the "vax n' win" incentive program is intended to accelerate the government's "Operation Liberate Guam" – a campaign to fully inoculate 80% of the island's 160,000 people by liberation day. "As of today, we have vaccinated 82,778 people. To achieve herd immunity, we are targeting to vaccinate as many as 96,000 people," Leon Guerrero told a press conference Friday. "We need over 13,000 more shots in arms to achieve Operation Liberate Guam." The government is using a portion of its coronavirus-relief aid from the US government to fund the online lottery, which offers \$10,000 in cash, a brand-new car and other small prizes each week starting 16 June leading up to liberation day. Free vaccine shots are being administered at government facilities and private clinics. The territory is among the US jurisdictions with the highest vaccination rates. To date, Guam has a Covid count of 8,193 cases and 139 deaths since March 2020. At least 63 are in active isolation. Guam, whose economy is driven by the service industry, has repeatedly attempted to reopen tourism, but the plan has been hampered by the intermittent emergence of Covid clusters. The island hit its Covid peak in September and the large wave of positive cases was feared to cause the island's fragile healthcare system to

collapse. At some point, the island's lone government hospital reached overcapacity, forcing it to set up beds at the kerbside of the emergency driveway.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/vax-n-win-guam-launches-lottery-prize-for-vaccine-recipients>

863) *June 4.* The root cause of pandemics – the destruction of nature – is being ignored, scientists have warned. The focus of world leaders on responding to future outbreaks overlooks the far cheaper and more effective strategy of stopping the spillover of disease from animals to humans in the first place, they have said. The razing of forests and hunting of wildlife is increasingly bringing animals and the microbes they harbour into contact with people and livestock. About 70% of new infectious diseases have come from animals, including Covid-19, Sars, bird flu, Ebola and HIV. However, preventing this root cause of spillover is scarcely mentioned by leaders and authorities, said the scientists behind a new independent taskforce, which will report to the coalition on Preventing Pandemics at Source. The PPS said the issue has been ignored by the World Health Assembly and a recent report for the World Health Organization on the coronavirus pandemic. Recent research estimated the annual cost of preventing further pandemics over the next decade to be \$26bn (£18bn), just 2% of the financial damage caused by Covid-19. The measures would include protecting forests, shutting down risky trade in wildlife, better protecting farm animals from infection and rapid disease detection in wildlife markets. The new taskforce comprises experts from every region of the world and is hosted by Harvard University in the US. By the end of the summer, it will produce an action plan on preventing spillovers, which will then be championed by a group of high-level figures.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/end-destruction-of-nature-to-stop-future-pandemics-say-scientists>

864) *June 7.* While most of the world suffered through hundreds of millions of cases and millions of deaths from Covid-19, the 23.5 million people in **TAIWAN** largely lived a normal life, thanks to a well-documented strong and early response that saw it go 250 days without a single local case. It lobbied for inclusion in the World Health Organization's decision-making body off the back of its undeniable success and expertise under the slogan "Taiwan can help". But now the tables have turned and the island itself is in need of assistance, after an outbreak that started among airline staff in April spread across the island. The government appears to have been caught short by something it thought would never happen: the poster child for outbreak prevention had apparently failed to fully prepare an outbreak response. It has so far recorded more than 11,000 cases and 260 deaths, more than 90% of them since mid-May. Affected by inadequate orders, global shortages and geopolitics, it has vaccinated fewer than 3% of its 23.5 million people. The president, Tsai Ing-wen, on Monday gave a broadcast address from her office to assure a population at its second-highest alert level that 750,000 vaccine doses promised by the US would arrive soon.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/07/a-victim-of-its-own-success-how-taiwan-failed-to-plan-for-a-major-covid-outbreak>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/11/taiwan-factory-migrant-workers-dormitories-covid-outbreak>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/14/how-taiwan-struggle-for-covid-vaccines-is-inflaming-tensions-with-china>

865) *June 8.* **WALLIS AND FUTUNA** plans to return about a third of its Covid-19 vaccine stocks by the end of the month because of resistance to the inoculation programme. France sent 18,000 doses to Wallis in March when a community outbreak rapidly infected several hundred people and prompted an immediate lockdown. Within weeks almost half the population received a first shot of the Moderna vaccine, but since then the uptake has slowed. In the past month, just over 200 people were vaccinated, meaning that 53.4 percent of eligible people have had a first injection. Medical staff said it is unacceptable to let vaccines expire and therefore 5,500 doses will be sent back. A lockdown declared in early March has been gradually eased, and as of this week, restaurants are allowed to serve guests outside. However, several establishments have decided to remain shut until either late June or early July. The territory's Covid-19 outbreak infected more than 400 people and killed seven, but since April 29 there has been no new case reported. The territory now has no active cases.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/444255/wallis-and-futuna-to-return-vaccine-stocks-blaming-resistance>

866) *June 9.* Italy's plummeting birth rate has been worsened by the pandemic. **SARDINIA** has the country's lowest birth rate of all: less than one child per family. In the little town of Gadoni in the centre of the island, the school of 25 pupils has brought together year groups in the same class, since there aren't enough to be separated. In one classroom, 11 to 14-year-olds sit together for a lesson about depopulation, learning about the life they're leading. For the school, the future looks bleak. With no births in Gadoni last year and none anticipated in 2021, there's a constant risk that the school will eventually close. Maternity wards, too, are trying to resist being shut down. When we visited one in the southern city of Carbonia, just two rather hungry newborns lay in the nursery, surrounded by empty cribs. Last year, it fell far short of the threshold of 500 babies to stay open. And now it could close, says Debora Porrà, the mayor of a nearby town that the unit serves. "At this rate, the estimate is that Italy would lose a quarter of its population within 30 years," she says. They are beginning to tackle the problem with a new "family plan" that the government will finance with EU Covid recovery funds. It will include child benefits and investment in day care and schools. But it could be too late to turn the tide.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57396969>

867) *June 10.* Small island developing states (**SIDS**) face an uphill battle as they strive to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis amid vulnerabilities worsened by the pandemic. The 2021 edition of UNCTAD's Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures report, released on 10 June, highlights the numerous strengths and challenges facing these economically vulnerable countries. The report is published ahead of UNCTAD's 15th quadrennial ministerial conference to be held online from 3 to 7 October, hosted by Barbados, one of the SIDS. The contributions and vulnerabilities of SIDS will be key elements of the discussions at the conference. "This report offers a unique perspective on SIDS by combining a wide variety of statistical information to examine these countries from the aspects of trade, the economy, the environment and society," said UNCTAD Acting Secretary-General

Isabelle Durant. “I hope the report will serve as a useful statistical and analytical tool for SIDS and for all those interested in understanding these islands,” she said.

<https://unctad.org/news/small-island-developing-states-face-uphill-battle-covid-19-recovery>

868) *June 10*. Going hand in hand with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic was the vaccine development required to combat it. In the **CARBBEAN**, there has been a lot of discussion around vaccine equity, with many regional territories signing up for the COVAX facility, whose mandate is to ensure that every country in the world - regardless of its means - has equitable access to vaccines. In the Americas, the procurement agent for vaccines distributed by COVAX is the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Revolving Fund, through which, Jamaica was the first Caribbean nation to receive 14,400 doses out of its full 124,800-dose COVAX allocation (about four percent of its total population). Still, getting the vaccines is one thing; getting people to take them is another. On May 19, Trinidad and Tobago's foreign affairs minister, Dr. Amery Browne, in announcing the receipt of 16,000 additional doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, noted that many smaller regional territories are experiencing vaccine hesitancy. Rather than have the doses expire, regional governments have been donating part of their allocations to larger Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbours who need them. Launched on February 17, a Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) survey aimed at determining the willingness of the region to be vaccinated, found that anywhere from 32 to 62 per cent of adults in several Caribbean countries were sceptical about taking the COVID-19 vaccine. CARPHA's executive director, Dr. Joy St. John, noted that there must be “wide uptake, acceptance, and trust” in order for vaccination programmes to be successful.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/06/10/vaccine-hesitancy-in-smaller-caribbean-islands-benefits-larger-neighbours-with-high-covid-19-rates/>

869) *June 11*. While the numbers of people infected with the Covid-19 virus continue to soar in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, the Health minister Jelta Wong, says they have it under control. In the past four months Covid-19 infection numbers in PNG have climbed at a rate of about 1,000 a week with total infections standing at nearly 17,000. Meanwhile, according to the minister, PNG health officials are struggling to sway elements of the public about the threat posed by Covid-19. Wong said that to ram home the message about the seriousness of Covid-19, they are using the media to advertise and sending health workers into communities to raise awareness. But he conceded health authorities can only do so much.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/444540/covid-19-situation-under-control-says-png-health-minister>

870) *June 11*. Two people on board a cruise ship in the **CARIBBEAN** have tested positive for coronavirus, operator Royal Caribbean has confirmed. The guests, who were sharing a room on the Celebrity Millennium, don't have symptoms and are in isolation. Royal Caribbean restarted cruises in June after they were suspended for more than a year due to the pandemic. Cruises were seen as hotbeds for the virus during the first half of last year, with a number of outbreaks. Cruising is a global industry that, before the pandemic, was worth \$150bn (£106bn) and supported about 1.2 million jobs. The Celebrity Millennium is a week-long trip from St Maarten with



additional stops in Aruba, Barbados and Curacao. All guests had to show proof of vaccination and a negative Covid test before boarding, the company said. All on-board staff had been fully vaccinated. The two cases were confirmed during end of cruise testing and Royal Caribbean are conducting contact tracing. Royal Caribbean has worked with the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) to restart its sailings. The CDC gave cruises the go-ahead if 98% of crew and 95% of passengers are vaccinated. One day after Royal Caribbean announced that two guests on the first cruise ship to sail from a U.S. port since the pandemic shutdown have tested positive for COVID-19, the governor of the **U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS** implored Florida and Gov. Ron DeSantis to allow cruise lines to mandate vaccinations. Albert Bryan Jr., governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, said the infection of vaccinated passengers is precisely the reason cruise lines need the freedom to require vaccinations. While vaccines do not eliminate risks, he said, not having them could be catastrophic, including to the people in the islands that cruise ships visit. “It emphasizes the need for us to have these protocols,” Bryan said. “Our ports, which are some of the most popular ports of call for cruises in the Caribbean, are in the direct line of fire, alongside the other port of call destinations.” During the start of the pandemic last year, a number of cruises suffered large outbreaks of Covid on-board. The Diamond Princess hit the headlines in February 2020 after more than 600 tested positive for the virus. At least nine people died, according to the CDC. Meanwhile, state agencies and cruise tourism sector partners have collaborated to support the **BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS** government’s COVID-19 vaccination program and encourage their staff to get the vaccine.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-57446583>

<https://eu.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/politics/state/2021/06/11/us-virgin-islands-governor-implores-desantis-back-vaccinated-cruises/7651289002/>

<https://www.cruiseindustrynews.com/cruise-news/25241-vaccinate-to-participate-program-launched-in-british-virgin-islands.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/25/travel/caribbean-vacation-coronavirus.html>

871) *June 11*. Tourism authorities in **THAILAND** will propose that fully vaccinated foreigners be allowed to travel to Koh Samui, Koh Phangan and Koh Tao after a seven-day stay on Phuket, starting on Aug 1. Phuket is preparing to receive foreign travellers starting on July 1, on condition that they have to stay on the island for 14 days before they can go anywhere else in Thailand. An earlier version of the so-called Phuket sandbox envisioned a mandatory stay of just seven days before onward travel could begin, but the severity of the third Covid wave has prompted authorities to tighten the requirement. Other tourist destinations in the country are not scheduled to reopen until Oct 1.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/2130999/aug-1-opening-sought-for-samui-phangan-and-tao-islands>

872) *June 14*. While most **PACIFIC** islands have escaped the worst of COVID-19, a cornerstone of their economies, tourism, has taken a big hit. By June 2020, visitor arrivals in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu had completely ceased, as borders were closed and even internal travel restricted. In Fiji, where tourism generated about 40% of GDP before the pandemic, the economy contracted by 19% in 2020. One economic



alternative lies just offshore. The Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) is a deep-sea trench spanning 4.5 million square kilometres in the central Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Mexico. On its seabed are potato-sized rocks called polymetallic nodules which contain nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese. These formed over centuries through the accumulation of iron and manganese around debris such as shells or sharks' teeth. There are estimated to be around 21 billion tonnes of manganese nodules in this trench alone, and demand for these metals is likely to skyrocket as the world ramps up the development of batteries for electric vehicles and renewable power grids. While much of the CCZ lies beneath the high seas where no single state has control, it's adjacent to the exclusive economic zones of several Pacific island states, including the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. Lacking the means to search for the metals themselves, these states have sponsored mining companies to take out licences with the International Seabed Authority (ISA), which is responsible for sustainably managing the seabed in international waters. This would allow these companies to explore the seabed and determine how viable mining is likely to be, and its potential environmental impact. To date, ISA has approved 19 exploration contracts, 17 of which are in the CCZ. A Canadian company, The Metals Company (formerly DeepGreen Metals) has contracts with Tonga, Nauru and Kiribati. With so little known about the biodiversity of this largely unexplored part of the ocean, it's difficult to accurately predict how deep-sea mining will affect species here. Environmental organisations and scientists have argued for a moratorium on mining until more extensive research can be done. Some Pacific islanders, including The Alliance of Solwara Warriors, representing indigenous communities in the Bismark and Solomon Seas of Papua New Guinea, have protested the lack of information given to local communities about the potential impact of mining. In April 2021, Pacific civil society groups wrote to the British government seeking support for a moratorium. Meanwhile, a former president of Kiribati, Anote Tong, has described deep-sea mining as "inevitable" and urged businesses to figure out how to do it safely. But time is running out. Seven exploratory licences are due to expire in 2021, making it imperative that either a moratorium is adopted internationally, or the ISA adopts a legal framework for determining the conditions under which extractive mining can take place. Work towards this framework has been ongoing since 2014. Despite this, the 168 nations of the ISA assembly have yet to agree a code for regulating extractive mining contracts. The ISA's ambition to reach an agreement in 2020 was derailed by the pandemic, and it's unclear whether meetings will go ahead in 2021. It's likely that exploratory contracts will expire in the meantime, increasing pressure on the ISA from mining companies and those states sponsoring them to grant exploitation licences. Exploratory licences are regulated by the ISA. Without an agreed code, extractive ones are not. Even if a consensus were reached, enforcing environmental safeguards would be difficult. Pinpointing responsibility for the source of any pollution or environmental damage is tricky when mining takes place in such deep water. There are also few, if any, physical boundaries between one mining area and another. The effects of mining on different ecosystems and habitats might take time to manifest. International consensus on a moratorium is unlikely too. Mining companies have ploughed a lot of money into developing technology for operating at these depths. They will want to see a return on that, and so will their investors. States which have sponsored mining contracts – including some Pacific islands – will want to reap the royalties they have been promised. Pacific island states find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They are among the countries most vulnerable to climate change and so support strong action. But unless alternatives are found, the developed world's green transition will probably accelerate demand for metals resting peacefully in the deepest parts of the ocean surrounding these islands. It will be the people here who

will bear the costs of deep-sea mining undertaken without sufficient caution, not the drivers of electric cars in the global north.

<https://theconversation.com/covid-19-made-deep-sea-mining-more-tempting-for-some-pacific-islands-this-could-be-a-problem-158550>

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/pacific-island-nations-consider-deep-sea-mining-despite-risks/>

873) *June 16*. The business community on **MARTHA’S VINEYARD** is slowly working its way out of an economic crisis that shook the foundations of nonprofit organizations and for-profit companies and how they operate. During the pandemic, businesses faced staffing shortages and diminishing revenue due to health regulations, and were forced to adjust their models to cut costs. They were also required to purchase personal protective equipment and spring for other safety measures in order to comply with state and federal mandates. With so many rapid and expensive changes happening, businesses had little time to apply for lifeline grants, and some were unaware of the opportunities that were available. Even now, as the state continues to reopen and commerce begins to ramp up, current estimates show that 25 percent of Vineyard businesses and nonprofits will not survive COVID without more Island-wide financial support. In 2020, according to industry figures, commercial airline travel was down 69 percent and Steamship Authority passenger numbers were down 25 percent. Based on research conducted by Oxford Economics, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism estimated Vineyard tourism suffered a 40 percent loss in business for 2020. The Island lost at least \$76.5 million in direct visitor spending, an additional \$112 million in indirect spending, and a minimum of \$4.3 million in local tax revenue. As the Island economy attempts to recuperate, many organizations and businesses will be looking to get in a better financial position, and that’s where grant funds come in. In order to support industry and commerce on the Vineyard, Dukes County and the Martha’s Vineyard Chamber of Commerce have teamed up and hired a professional grant writer, Patricia Mitrokostas, to identify grant opportunities that could benefit certain businesses and industries. The collaborative effort, called the Martha’s Vineyard Economic Recovery Initiative (MVERI), highlights the need for collective action between businesses with similar goals, and partnerships with entities like the county and the chamber of commerce.

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2021/06/16/new-initiative-combats-economic-downturn-island/>

874) *June 16*. Fringed by vibrant coral reefs, **FIJI** is a popular destination for international tourists and marine scientists. But when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived last year, forcing lockdowns and travel restrictions around the world, many (though not all) international field research projects ground to a halt. Through its abrupt absence, the dominance of a practice known as parachute science was highlighted by the clampdown. In Fiji, as in other lower-income countries, parachute science occurs when international scientists, often from wealthier nations, travel to a country to complete fieldwork and then leave without meaningfully engaging with local researchers or communities. With flights grounded and borders closed, Fijian coral reef ecologist Sangeeta Mangubhai suddenly wasn’t fielding constant requests for foreign collaboration. And she wasn’t spending her time tracking which international academics might be swooping in to her field sites and quickly publishing papers on issues that she had been gathering data on for years—and working to bring

it to communities and decision-makers. Since 2014, Mangubhai has been leading coral reef monitoring efforts as the director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Fiji office. She can easily list a half-dozen ways foreign scientists have gone around, and even dismissed, her and her team. Some blithely fly to Fiji with predetermined research priorities and fail to learn about her team's existing work or their needs, she says. Others add a local scientist to a foreign research proposal at the last minute, a "tokenistic inclusion" that implies there is "no genuine interest in collaboration, and we are a tick box for them to say they have 'local partners' and get funding for themselves," Mangubhai says. Other times, fully qualified local scientists working on international collaborations are relegated solely to collecting data—in other words, doing manual labor—rather than analyzing data or writing manuscripts. Mangubhai says she doesn't know if scientists exhibiting parachute behavior are "intentionally manipulative or just naive—just clueless about how colonial their approaches to working with us [are]." **SEYCHELLES** marine scientist Sheena Talma is all too familiar with the problem. In a recent paper, she and her colleagues showed that the academics publishing the most scientific papers on coral biodiversity are mainly based out of high-income countries with few, or no, coral reefs. Over time, negative experiences with foreign scientists have made Mangubhai increasingly protective of her staff and their research. She says she has to evaluate possible partnerships to avoid those predatory scientists who come in and strip information from her country "just to profit their own career." But with so many research trips canceled because of the pandemic, Mangubhai and her peers found new opportunities in the research landscape because they were no longer subjected to this problematic practice. One opportunity came in the form of a unique Pacific Islander research collaboration led by the Locally Managed Marine Area Network International, an association of community-based marine conservation practitioners in the Indo-Pacific. Mangubhai's team, along with nonprofit WorldFish and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, quickly designed and implemented a study focused on the impacts of the pandemic on the Pacific. They developed a rapid response survey designed to assess how COVID-19 was affecting 181 villages across seven Pacific island countries. On top of the pandemic, Fiji was hit in April 2020 by Tropical Cyclone Harold, a Category 4 storm that displaced 6,000 people and racked up US \$22.6-million in damages. For Fiji, the survey the combined effects of the pandemic and cyclone on issues like hunger, livelihoods, fishing practices, and gender equity. More broadly, it allowed the collaborators to put real data into the hands of government officials in the countries surveyed. Socioeconomic studies like this would often be the focus of parachute scientists, who can easily fly in and out after a disaster, Mangubhai says. But taking the lead on this type of work encouraged some Pacific Islanders who don't come from a traditional academic background to step up in new ways, she says, allowing them to contribute to data analysis and scientific manuscripts—and receive rare formal recognition as authors on those papers. "We have a really amazing, young, dynamic woman from Fiji that really has just been driving the energy for it," says Mangubhai. It's been "quite empowering for everyone to see how capable we are." Still, with COVID-19 vaccinations on the rise and travel plans along with them, many researchers are likely to return to the field—and to old habits. In their paper about parachute science in coral biodiversity research, Talma and her colleagues laid out recommendations to reverse these trends. For example, they suggest that scientists in high-income countries develop joint research agendas with local collaborators early in a project, establish programs to invest in early career researchers in low-income nations, and share their copies of key academic papers with colleagues working in places with limited access to scientific literature. While Talma is encouraged by the number of researchers contacting her about how to act on the

ideas from this paper, she says she hasn't yet seen much difference on the ground in Seychelles. "I think in most scientists' minds, this is temporary," she says of the pandemic's effects. "Perhaps what is changing is the fact that [parachute science] is being put in the spotlight." Still, there are signs of progress. Emily Darling, a Toronto, Ontario-based biologist who runs the Wildlife Conservation Society's global coral monitoring program, says the pandemic's interruption has been a wake-up call. It has prompted her and others working at global environmental nonprofits to reexamine how research is undertaken, to develop new processes and tools to empower local scientists, and to focus on "decarbonizing and decolonizing" their work. "This is an opportunity to recalibrate what we do, and we should take it," she says. "But I do really miss coral reefs."

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/covid-19-lockdowns-show-a-world-without-parachute-science/>

875) *June 17*. There have been few travel sectors worse hit by the coronavirus pandemic than the global cruise line industry. In 2019, it contributed more than \$154bn (£110bn) to the global economy, says the trade body Cruise Lines International Association. Then we all went into lockdown last March, and the world's cruise ships were anchored up. The plight of the sector is perhaps best shown by the financial performance of the largest cruise line company, US giant Carnival. In 2019 it made a profit of \$3bn, while in 2020 it reported a loss of \$10bn, after its revenues plunged 73%. It had to secure \$26.3bn of investment to help it stay afloat. The wider industry must be hoping that loyal cruise fans who can't wait to get back onboard - will be its saviours. However, there are major issues facing an industry that is desperate to re-open for business. Anti-Covid measures on every ship mean more cleaning, better ventilation, health checks and more staff to serve meals, which all push up costs. Continuing coronavirus restrictions also seriously limit the destinations that are willing to accept liners and their thousands of passengers. The vast majority of ships are not being used, and the cruise firms are now advertising like mad to drum up business, and move on from the reputation they gained at the start of the pandemic as super spreaders. If that is not bad enough, the situation in Florida in the US, the world centre for the cruise line industry, is just making things worse. There politics has got between the industry and its clients, just when the cruise lines were gearing up to reopen for business in July. In what is proving to be a disastrous re-launch for the sector, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is insisting that 95% of both crew members and passengers must have had two vaccinations before they can join a cruise. Unfortunately for the cruise lines, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, says any company that asks passengers if they have been vaccinated will face a \$5,000 fine, per passenger. The governor claims that requiring vaccine passports discriminates against the young who haven't had the jab, and impinges on citizens' civil rights. His critics claim he is a Trump supporter who is putting petty politics ahead of Florida's best interests. Whoever is right, the end result is to seriously threaten the re-opening of business, and Florida's role as the centre of the industry. Some cruise companies will follow the governor's lead, but others are refusing to. For the US industry, which has been completely closed down for the past 15 months, this is a disaster. Some cruise firms are threatening to move their ships from their Florida home ports - such as Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Tampa - to New Orleans in Louisiana or Savannah in Georgia. But, says Christopher Muller, professor of hospitality at Boston University, there just isn't the infrastructure in such places to get thousands of passengers on board. "Turning around these ships in a couple of hours needs a monster support network, cleaning, food and drink supplies, bunker oil," he

says. "In south Florida you have thousands of people, not going out to sea, but just servicing these giant ships."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57482017>

876) *June 17*. We have the power to end this pandemic. We have the technology, materials and productive capacity to vaccinate the world against Covid-19 this year. We can save millions of lives, protect billions of livelihoods and reclaim trillions of dollars worth of economic activity along the way. But instead, our countries are now moving into the pandemic's deadliest phase. Mutant strains are spreading into regions where the vaccines are not only scarce; they have barely arrived. At present rates of vaccination, the pandemic will continue to rage until at least 2024. This is not a coincidence. The system of pharmaceutical patents at the World Trade Organization was designed to prioritize corporate profit over human life. Even in the midst of a deadly pandemic, a coalition of pharmaceutical companies and global north governments refuses to re-order these priorities – blocking patent waivers, refusing to share vaccine technologies and underfunding multilateral responses. That is why government ministers and health officials from around the world are convening the Summit for Vaccine Internationalism. Hosted by the Progressive International, the Summit's aim is simple: to develop a common plan to produce and distribute vaccines for all – with concrete commitments to pool technology, invoke patent waivers and invest in rapid production. The G7 has proven unwilling and incapable of delivering on this promise. The central banks of the world's major economies mobilized roughly \$9tn to respond to the economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, acting swiftly and decisively to protect the interests of their investors. The cost of global vaccination, by contrast, is estimated at just \$23bn, or 0.25% of this monetary response. That number would dramatically decrease if the governments in the US, EU and UK compelled their pharmaceutical companies to share technology with manufacturers around the world – an idea that commands large majority support in the United States, where taxpayers have footed the entire bill for the development of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine. But the will to do so has yet to manifest. Even the 1bn doses that the G7 pledged to the world at its meeting in Cornwall has now fallen to 870m, of which only 613m are truly new. The G7 plan is not only stingy. It is also stupid: the ICC has estimated a cost of \$9.2tn to the global economy for the failure to deliver vaccines to every country. And – in the final count – it may also prove suicidal: the longer the virus travels, the more often it mutates, and the more viciously it may boomerang back to the rich countries that are already rolling out vaccination programs. But the problem runs much deeper than the number of doses in the G7 pledge. The Covid-19 virus will continue to circulate across the world for the foreseeable future. Without a transformation in the global health system, governments everywhere will have to shell out billions for annual purchases of boosters from big pharma corporations like Pfizer – or beg the US government to come to the rescue. We cannot wait for the G7 to find its common sense – or its conscience. That is why the Summit for Vaccine Internationalism will strive for solutions that undermine – rather than reinforce – the dependency of these governments on big pharma and the countries where they are headquartered. To do so, our governments are considering three key proposals. The first is focused on intellectual property. Pleas for big pharma to share technology have fallen on deaf ears. One year after the launch of the WHO's Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), not a single company has donated its technical knowhow, choosing instead to retain complete control of supply. As countries with vaccine candidates and manufacturers, we will consider a platform for sharing ongoing progress with candidates, trial protocols and data – setting the stage for real

transparency and allowing local vaccine manufacturers' world over to produce the critical doses of Covid-19 vaccines. The second is focused on manufacturing capacity. A dangerous myth continues to circulate that developing countries cannot produce vaccines for themselves. This is simply untrue. Attempts by local manufacturers of vaccines, biologics, and drugs to produce Covid-19 vaccines have been rejected by pharmaceutical companies that are keen to control the world's supply within their closed ranks. Every vaccine has two elements: the legal rights to make the vaccine, and the knowledge about how to make it. If vaccine recipes are shared – and the opportunity to produce them is provided – then we can adapt our factories to produce the vaccines required. We will consider investing in public industry in each of our nations and equipping our factories to produce the vaccines required, not only for our own countries but for each other. We will do what we can to end this pandemic together by sharing the capacities we have. For example, where one of us has greater capacity to regulate Covid-19 vaccines and treatments we will lend these capacities to countries that don't. The third proposal is focused on collective disobedience. Certain provisions to override intellectual property protections already exist, for example, through the 2001 Doha declaration of the WTO. Yet countries have been hesitant to do so due to fear of sanctions from certain governments and reprisals from big pharma. We will consider how we could introduce national legislation to override intellectual property protections collectively, introducing a credible threat to the monopoly pharmaceutical model currently at play. Together, these proposals can begin to shift the entire logic of the global health system – from nationalism to internationalism, from charity to solidarity, and from competition to cooperation. The Summit is a first step on this journey of transformation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/17/covid-vaccine-nationalism-internationalist-approach>

877) *June 17.* **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND** is introducing the P.E.I. Pass to help with ease of travel to the province. The pass is a form that will expedite entry to P.E.I. and will take effect June 27 at its points of entry. It confirms Islanders and travellers meet all criteria to be exempt from self-isolation in P.E.I. after travel within the provinces of Atlantic Canada. All Islanders, Atlantic Canadians and visitors who have lived in the region for a minimum of two full weeks, and have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine 21 or more days before entering P.E.I., can now apply online for a pass. Applicants will need to include a government-issued ID, as well as proof of their vaccination record. Anyone 12 years old and over will need to provide their own P.E.I. Pass when entering the province. Until July 31, anyone 12 to 15 years of age is only required to have their first vaccination to be eligible for the P.E.I. Pass; they do not need to wait 21 days after vaccination to apply for the pass. Permanent residents of the **MAGDALEN ISLANDS**, Que. will also be eligible to apply for the P.E.I. Pass under the same conditions as Atlantic Canadians. Magdalen Island permanent residents will also require proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72-hours of arrival. Canadians from outside the Atlantic region and the Magdalen Islands can begin applying for their P.E.I. Pass as early as July 7. Due to the anticipated high volume of submissions, those travelling in early July or later are asked to defer their P.E.I. Pass application until late June.

<https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/prince-edward-island-opens-applications-for-p-e-i-pass-streamlining-entry-into-the-province-1.5474966>



878) *June 18*. Exhausted delegates have concluded three weeks of virtual climate negotiations with little progress on key issues. The UN subsidiary bodies meeting was meant to clear the decks ahead of the major COP26 gathering in Glasgow in November. But technical glitches and multiple time zones scuppered attempts to find common ground. Ministers from 40 countries will meet in July to push the process forward. Developing nations are also concerned that a lack of vaccines may limit their ability to take part in the Glasgow conference. The technical challenges mean there is a strong appetite among delegates for face to face talks in Glasgow. However the question of Covid-19, especially in developing countries is a key issue of concern for many. "Covid-19 remains a serious concern for many of us, and travel restrictions continue for many countries," said Ambassador Diann Black-Layne of Antigua and Barbuda, who is a lead negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States (**AOSIS**). "A significant portion of our membership will face onerous travel restrictions regardless of their personal vaccination status. Some islands in the Pacific have just two flights per month, with one month of quarantine, while other islands still have closed borders. This will not change unless their entire populations have vaccine access." But UK minister Alok Sharma, who will chair the global gathering, told a news conference delegates unable to get jabs from their own countries "will get support from us".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-57520510>

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/how-covid-19-is-threatening-the-world-s-last-chance-climate-talks-20210618-p58273.html>

879) *June 18*. Are **ASIA** and **PACIFIC** Covid 'winners' entering shaky new territory? Australia. New Zealand. Singapore. Vietnam. Japan. Hong Kong. South Korea. Taiwan. These places in the Asia Pacific region have all been praised for their pandemic response; with several ranked among the best in the world. All were able to get on top of Covid-19 in 2020 through aggressive actions like strict lockdowns and contact tracing, which were later often replicated by the rest of the world. Yet in the second year of the pandemic, they are being challenged by new issues. Stronger variants have broken through established defences, creating the worst outbreaks yet in some countries. Meanwhile, many other parts of the world appear to be surging ahead with vaccinations and are beginning to gradually open up again. That means that many of these poster boys of Covid containment are now facing criticism that they don't have a solid plan to get out of their zero-case approach - and that they can't hide from the world forever.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57492961>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-56825920>

880) *June 18*. **SOUTH AMERICA** is losing battle against Covid. On Wednesday this week, Paraguay registered 18.09 deaths per million, compared with 2.71 in India, 2.2 in South Africa, 1.01 in the US, and 0.14 in the UK. And as the US and Europe begin to emerge from the pandemic, discard their masks and ponder how best to spend the recovery funds, the crisis most evident in Paraguay is playing out across much of South America. India may have commanded much of the world's attention over recent weeks, but Paraguay, Suriname, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, Brazil and Peru are suffering – in that order – a silent decimation by Covid unlike that anywhere else in the world. Even in seventh-placed Peru, the number of deaths per million

stands at 9.12 – more than three times the figure in India. In the early months of the pandemic, Paraguay and nearby Uruguay were praised as Latin America’s standout success stories in Covid management. But since March the two countries have seen an explosion of the disease, largely attributed to the aggressive Brazilian variant that has torn through much of South America, and to decreased compliance with social distancing measures.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/18/covid-south-america-paraguay-argentina-peru>

881) *June 18*. The coronavirus pandemic has raised so many questions as it has continued its inexorable spread across the planet, but perhaps the first of them remains the most contentious: where did Sars-CoV-2 come from? In recent weeks there has been renewed focus on whether it could have escaped from a Chinese laboratory. However, new findings strengthen the case for a natural origin, in what has become a heavily politicised debate. The resurgence of the lab leak theory – promulgated early last year by Donald Trump and his supporters, before being dismissed – has been fuelled by the publication of emails in which Joe Biden’s chief medical adviser, Dr Anthony Fauci, discussed it, and dissatisfaction with the World Health Organization’s initial efforts to investigate the pandemic’s origins. Most scientists favour the theory that the virus spilled over from an animal to a human in nature. “The best scientific evidence points to this,” said the Wellcome Trust’s director, Jeremy Farrar, on 4 June. But if there is less evidence to support the lab leak theory, others say, it’s because nobody has searched for it. When the WHO sent a preliminary mission to China in January, the team interviewed personnel at labs in Wuhan, the city where Covid-19 was first reported, but it did not carry out a thorough forensic investigation, because that wasn’t its remit. “It was never an audit,” says Keith Hamilton, the head of preparedness and resilience at the Paris-based World Organisation for Animal Health, who accompanied the team. “It was collaboration with colleagues in China to look at evidence and design studies for further investigation.” For Filippa Lentzos, an expert in biological threats at King’s College London, the WHO mission should have gone sooner and probed deeper, sampling viral collections at the labs that were working with coronaviruses, for example, and examining the types of experiments carried out and the security procedures followed. “The real problem was China’s influence,” she says. “China influenced the mission’s mandate, independence and access.” Since a theory can never be definitively proved – only disproved – when the WHO director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, presented the findings of the month-long mission on 30 March, he said all theories remained on the table. One of the signatories of a letter to the *Science* journal in May calling for investigation of a possible lab leak, David Relman, a Stanford University biosecurity expert, has since argued that the evidence for both theories is weak and circumstantial. But David Robertson, who studies viral evolution at the University of Glasgow, said this set up a “false equivalence” between them, because a lot of evidence now points to a natural spillover event. As of March 2020, scientists were confident that Sars-CoV-2 was not the product of deliberate manipulation. They couldn’t rule out an accidental leak of a natural virus from a lab that was studying it, but thanks in part to research from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), it was also known that coronaviruses that had the capacity to infect people, and that were related both to the one that caused the original severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) epidemic in 2003, and to Sars-CoV-2, were circulating in Chinese bat populations. In parts of rural China where bat guano is collected from caves and used as fertiliser, people had been found to be carrying antibodies to those viruses, indicating previous infection. In other words, a spillover

event could have happened without the involvement of any lab. Still, it remains possible that the virus escaped from a lab. Some lab leak theorists consider it suspicious that the initial outbreak of Covid-19 happened in Wuhan, home to several high-security labs that study coronaviruses. But Robertson says the fact that Wuhan is a city is explanation enough. Unlike the rural areas where the virus might have infected people previously, Wuhan has the population density – 11 million people – to sustain an outbreak. Of all the known bat coronaviruses, the most similar to Sars-CoV-2, sharing 96% of its genome, is RaTG13, a virus that researchers at the WIV were studying prior to the pandemic. But since RaTG13 was identified, others have been isolated from bats in China and south-east Asia that are also highly similar to Sars-CoV-2. A cluster of them, from the Chinese province of Yunnan, was described last week in the journal *Cell*. “The connection between RaTG13, the Wuhan Institute of Virology and Sars-CoV-2 isn’t required any more,” says Robertson. The Fauci emails suggest that prior to the publication of the paper ruling out deliberate modification of a virus, there was a high-level discussion about how to interpret those findings. This has encouraged speculation as to whether unusual features of Sars-CoV-2 could have been the product of “gain-of-function” experiments – where a virus is made more dangerous to shed light on how outbreaks happen – at WIV or another Wuhan lab. One such feature is the furin cleavage site, a structure in the protein that forms the spikes on the surface of Sars-CoV-2, and that enhances its ability to break into human cells. But many researchers have pointed out that it is not surprising that a virus with pandemic potential – itself a rare occurrence – has rare attributes. Coronaviruses often swap bits of their genomes in natural gain-of-function experiments, says Paul Bieniasz, a virologist at Rockefeller University in New York. “Within the last two decades, such an event gave rise to Sars.” Marc Van Ranst, a virologist who is helping to coordinate Belgium’s pandemic response, says: “Nature is the biggest bio-terrorist there is. It has shown time and time again that it doesn’t need a lot of help in creating a virus and making it jump between species.” The claim that Sars-CoV-2 was suspiciously well adapted to humans at the beginning of the pandemic also finds little support. It infects a wide range of species – including cats, dogs, mink, tigers and lions – and if anything has become better adapted to humans over the pandemic, in part through further alterations to the spike protein. This leaves the lab leak theory resting principally, for now, on unverified reports of three cases of respiratory illness among the WIV’s nearly 600 staff in November 2019, a winter month in Wuhan, and the fact that the institute took a database of viral genome sequences offline two months earlier – to protect it from hackers, they told WHO investigators. Among the WHO mission’s findings was that two-thirds of the earliest lab-confirmed cases of Covid-19 had a connection with the Huanan seafood wholesale market in Wuhan, making exposure to that market the single biggest risk factor for contracting the illness prior to January 2020. For a while, researchers were thrown by the early cases that had no obvious connection with the market, but knowing as they do now that asymptomatic transmission of Sars-CoV-2 is common, that seems less surprising. Those people could have caught the virus from others who visited the market but who themselves developed no symptoms. Sars reached humans from bats via civets and raccoon dogs, and a path via an intermediate host – perhaps an animal sold at the Huanan market – is also considered most likely for Sars-CoV-2, though it is possible that it jumped directly from bats. By the time the WHO investigators inspected the market in January, it had already been closed for several weeks, but a paper published last week confirmed earlier reports that wild and farmed live animals were on sale there immediately before the pandemic. This has led some to argue that interviewing market stallholders is more pressing than forensically investigating labs. For now, the identity of a putative intermediate host remains a

mystery, and a virus sufficiently close to Sars-CoV-2 to indicate what path an ancestral virus took from bats has not been found. It may never be. The intermediate host might have harboured that virus for decades or only transiently – for a few weeks, say – and in the latter case the infected animals may have long since died. The more time passes, the harder it becomes to identify that species, because the virus has now had opportunities to spill back into other animals from humans – as happened on Danish mink farms last year. One of the problems with the dispute over Covid’s origins is that it suggests there is a binary choice between theories, when the reality is far more complex. Was the origin “natural” if the virus spilled into a farmworker from a farmed animal rather than a wild one? What if the spillover event involved a researcher doing fieldwork in a bat cave, who unwittingly brought the virus back to the city on her guano-spattered shoe? Meanwhile, other theories may not be getting the attention they deserve. In research that has yet to be peer-reviewed, for example, Xiaowei Jiang, a viral evolutionary biologist at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, China, and others point out that after African swine fever decimated pig populations in China in 2018, demand rose for more exotic meat sources, including wild animals, which could potentially have been infected with Sars-CoV-2. This might have increased the ecological pressure for Covid-19 to emerge. The WHO has yet to announce details of the further studies it plans, but Hamilton, like many others, feels that expectations of the preliminary mission were too high. It has often taken years to establish where new diseases came from. The bat origins of Sars weren’t identified until 2017, while researchers investigating the origins of the 2009 flu pandemic – the first cases of which were reported in North America – homed in first on Asian pigs and then, in 2016, on Mexican ones. On 28 May, Mike Ryan, the executive director of the WHO’s health emergencies programme, said the WHO – which is only as strong as its members allow it to be – had been placed in an “impossible position to deliver the answers that the world wants”, and asked that scientists be allowed to follow the evidence in a politics-free environment. However, it’s not clear if that will be possible. Relman, for example, has long argued against gain-of-function research with potentially dangerous pathogens, since lab accidents have happened in the past and could happen again. For Robertson, that is a valid debate, but it doesn’t make a lab origin of Covid-19 any more likely than the evidence indicates. Some, like the French biologist Virginie Courtier, feel that even discussing the lab leak theory in scientific forums has become too fraught, and have taken their concerns to more mainstream outlets, while others worry that the finger-pointing will make future collaboration with China – and, hence, finding answers – harder. Robertson wishes his peers would take a leaf out of meteorologists’ book: “You don’t blame the country where the storm began.” For Van Ranst, who has been living under police protection since receiving death threats in connection with his pandemic response work last summer, identifying Covid’s origins is important – with a view to mitigating the risk of future spillovers – but it isn’t a priority. “Let’s focus on the pandemic at hand and stopping this virus,” he says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/18/in-hunt-for-covids-origin-new-studies-point-away-from-lab-leak-theory>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/coronavirus-lab-leak-theory/2021/06/20/30b10be2-c3d9-11eb-8c18-fd53a628b992\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/coronavirus-lab-leak-theory/2021/06/20/30b10be2-c3d9-11eb-8c18-fd53a628b992_story.html)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/14/covid-origins-australias-role-in-the-feedback-loop-promoting-the-wuhan-lab-leak-theory>

882) *June 18*. The United Arab Emirates dispatched COVID-19 vaccine doses to Yemen's **SOCOTRA** governorate on Thursday. Yemen's fight against the coronavirus is hindered by the war raging in the country. The 60,000 vaccine doses were sent by the Emirates Red Crescent to Khalifa bin Zayed Hospital, named after the Emirati president. They will be used in a free vaccination campaign for local residents in Socotra, according to the official Emirates News Agency. Socotra is an archipelago controlled by the separatist Southern Transitional Council, which the UAE supports in the Yemeni civil war. It controls much of southern Yemen, including Socotra in the Arabian Sea. The council broke away from the Saudi-backed government in 2017, but the two sides reconciled last year. The Yemeni civil war began in 2014 between the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and the Houthi rebels, who are supported by Iran. The war has been devastating for the Yemeni people and is often called the world's worst humanitarian crisis by international observers. A UN official said Tuesday that five civilians are killed or injured every day in the country. The war has made it difficult for the country to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In war-torn Marib province, for example, displacement and poor sanitation heighten the risk of people contracting the virus, according a UN report from May. Socotra is not currently experiencing the intense warfare now affecting other parts of Yemen. Yemen as a whole has made little progress with its vaccine rollout so far, and less than 1% of the population has received a dose, according to Oxford University's Our World in Data. The Emirati shipment could make a significant dent in vaccinating Socotra, though. There are only between 90,000 and 150,000 people on the islands, including Yemenis who fled fighting on the mainland. Emirates News Agency did not specify which type of vaccine the UAE sent to Yemen. One of the vaccines used in the UAE is China's Sinopharm, which Emirati authorities later concluded was not sufficiently effective for some recipients.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/06/uae-sends-vaccines-yemeni-islands>

883) *June 19*. Door-to-door Covid-19 vaccine registration at the Malaysian state **SABAH ISLANDS** proves effective. The lukewarm turnout at the vaccination registration station at Pulau Timbang and Pulau Sanghai, which saw only 50 people signing up in two hours, made the Covid-19 Immunisation Task Force (CITF) decide to go to the people instead. Most of the residents were afraid of needles and complications after being vaccinated because they were influenced by rumours or fake news. CITF staff's approach of going door-to-door proved effective as the number of residents registered for vaccination on both islands exceeded the set target.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/06/19/door-to-door-covid-19-vaccine-registration-at-sabah-islands-proves-effective>

884) *June 19*. Immigration detention centres on **CHRISTMAS ISLAND** pose a similar COVID outbreak risk as aged care facilities and should be closed, the Australian Human Rights Commission says in a new report released on Wednesday. The report comes days after the Murugappan family from Biloela were released from detention on Christmas Island after spending more than two years there. As of the end of April, there were 1,497 people in immigration detention, with 204 on Christmas Island. There are currently no COVID-19 cases within Australia's immigration detention centres.



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-19/human-rights-commission-close-christmas-island-detention-centre/100223052>

885) *June 19*. The Covid-19 situation in the **SEYCHELLES** is not receding and remains a cause for concern. The country now counts 55 Covid-19 related deaths, 1,562 active cases as of June 16, 2021 and 14,123 total confirmed cases. The Public Health Commissioner, Dr Jude Gedeon, expressed concern at the increasing and significant number of Covid-19 positive cases in the country, particularly on the inner islands. The inner islands have a total of 337 active cases, as of June 16, which makes up 11% of the 1,562 active cases in the country, small in number but quite high when the small population of these islands is taken into account. "It is also significant that the number of admissions from the inner islands has increased and several of them are in severe or critical conditions," stated Dr Gedeon. Dr Gedeon noted that there have been increasing cases of Covid-19 in schools which has led to closures of some schools. He noted these schools are made to close after too many teachers, students or both are infected, and staffing capacity is too low for effective learning and teaching to occur. In regards to vaccination, the Ministry of Health continues to administer second doses of the Sinopharm vaccine and this week it administered a total of 248 doses. There are 1,832 people who are due to take the second dose of Sinopharm by the end of June. Around 496 persons have taken the first jab of Sputnik V vaccine out of which 225 have also received their second dose. Due to the first batch of Covishield vaccine reaching its expiration date a few weeks ago, there remains 1,538 persons who have yet to receive their second dose of this vaccine. Dr Gedeon noted that the Ministry of Health has acquired new vaccines which it hopes to roll out soon, although he did not specify which vaccine brand.

<https://www.nation.sc/articles/9416/covid-19-situation-in-seychelles-not-receding-remains-a-cause-for-concern>

886) *June 19*. The **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** Council of Churches (PNGCC) declared its support for the Covid-19 vaccination, following a conference in Port Moresby. PNG recorded 72 new Covid-19 cases on Thursday, increasing the total number of cases to 16,933 with 173 known deaths. The PNGCC has decided to adopt the five principles of the Covid-19 vaccination which are - Solidarity, Duty, Safety, Access and Communication:

*Solidarity:* The PNGCC strongly affirm global and national call and support for protecting humankind and protecting the people from serious illness and deaths from Covid-19 infection and that these protective measures fully confirm with Christian principles.

*Duty:* The PNGCC accepts that this is the duty of all persons who are eligible for immunization to join our nationwide 'Sleeves Up Campaign' to help stop Covid-19 in PNG to protect themselves and their loved ones from severe sickness and death. It is the duty of the government to provide critical health and social support to uphold the welfare of its citizens.

*Safety:* The PNGCC acknowledge, based on advice from credible, recognized and reputable medical experts, the safety and effectiveness of all Covid-19 vaccines, and that countries with high immunization rates are beginning to see a decline to almost zero of serious cases and deaths due to Covid-19 infection; and that common side effects are not severe and normal.

*Access:* The PNGCC acknowledges that deadly diseases like Covid-19 can only be controlled and stopped by vaccinating most of the population, especially high-risk groups. It therefore appeals to all responsible departments, agencies and organizations



to ensure that full access to Covid-19 vaccine is provided to all Papua New Guineans especially the high-risk group in all provinces. The PNGCC calls on local communities and their leaders to work with respected Christian organizations to ensure adequate awareness, access and uptake of Covid-19 vaccinations.

*Communication:* The PNGCC appeals to the media, communities, and key leaders to seek the correct information, and not to spread misinformation and rumours that can cause confusion among our communities and ultimately endanger the lives of millions of people. The PNGCC calls on the media to fully engage the national and international religious leaders and medical experts and institutions to address community concerns about Covid-19 vaccinations.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/445112/png-council-of-churches-backs-covid-19-vaccination>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/445020/png-receives-146-thousand-vaccine-doses-from-nz>

887) *June 19.* The number of deaths related to Covid-19 has passed 500,000 in **BRAZIL**, the second-highest in the world, as experts say the outbreak could worsen amid slow vaccination and the start of winter. The virus continues to spread as President Jair Bolsonaro refuses to back measures like social distancing. The health institute Fiocruz says the situation is "critical". Only 15% of adults are fully vaccinated. Congress is investigating the government's handling of the pandemic. President Bolsonaro has been heavily criticised for not implementing a co-ordinated national response and for his scepticism toward vaccines, lockdowns and mask-wearing requirements, which he has sought to loosen. The opposition accuses the president of delaying the purchase of vaccines for political reasons, as he has consistently played down the severity of the pandemic. The outbreak in Brazil has been fuelled by more transmissible variants of the virus, including the one first identified in the Amazon region and now known as Gamma. An average of 70,000 cases has been confirmed daily in the last week. The rate of occupancy of intensive care unit beds remains at or above 80% in most states, and experts warn the start of winter in the southern hemisphere, next week, could result in more infections. Only the US has reported more deaths related to Covid-19.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-57541794>

888) *June 20.* Many UK importers of domestic household goods from East Asia, mainly from China, are feeling the effects of serious bottlenecks in the global container shipping industry, which have led to delays and crippling new costs for small businesses. The price rises have been triggered by a long-running period of intense disruption in the container shipping industry, initially provoked by the Covid outbreak. A collapse in demand during the early stages of the pandemic was followed by a period of frenzied activity, as people who were forced to stay at home rather than travel or socialise ordered large quantities of consumer goods. But this provoked a raft of problems, including acute congestion around deep sea ports and a shortage of containers for new consignments, because too many of them were sitting on quaysides around the world. The Suez Canal blockage closed one of the world's busiest shipping lanes for nearly a week. It created a traffic jam of hundreds of ships, making matters worse because it played havoc with schedules and exacerbated congestion at ports when the delayed vessels began arriving at ports. Most recently, an outbreak of Covid 19 in China's Guangdong province had a significant impact on the Yantian

International Container Terminal, one of China's busiest ports - triggering yet more hold-ups, and prompting warnings from experts that the knock-on effects could last for months. Yet, while shipping lines have been struggling to navigate these choppy waters, and their customers have faced delays in receiving their shipments, or struggled to book space aboard vessels at all, their own earnings have not suffered. Industry analysts Sea Intelligence have highlighted the fact that 11 of the biggest deep-sea carriers made a combined operating profit of \$16.2bn in the first three months of the year. That was significantly more than the \$13.3bn they generated across the entire second half of last year. Sea Intelligence describes these figures as "staggering", with all 11 carriers earning more in the first quarter of this year alone than they did in the same period of the previous ten years combined. While it is clear that a shortage of capacity has been a key factor in driving prices upwards, a number of importers believe a lack of competition between shipping lines has also been having a major impact. Deliberate price fixing between shipping lines on European routes was banned by the EU in 2008 but that doesn't mean they can't match each other's prices informally. Importers in Britain, meanwhile, face another problem. Congestion at UK ports, particularly Felixstowe, last year prompted shipping lines to cut the number of direct services - with many vessels from East Asia heading direct to European ports such as Antwerp or Rotterdam. That in turn means significant extra costs for importers - because space on direct services is at a premium, while containers offloaded at EU ports have to be shipped onwards to the UK.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57531716>

889) *June 20.* **TAIWAN** has reacted with an outpouring of thanks to the United States for shipping 2.5m Covid-19 vaccine doses to the island, more than doubling its arsenal as it deals with a rise in domestic infections. Washington, competing with Beijing to deepen geopolitical clout through "vaccine diplomacy", initially had promised to donate 750,000 doses but increased that number as President Joe Biden's administration advances its pledge to send 80m US-made shots around the world.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/20/taiwan-thankful-us-sends-25m-covid-vaccine-doses>

890) *June 20.* In normal times, the convention centre at **PHUKET** Angsana Laguna resort hosts extravagant weddings and luxury business summits. Since April, it has served as one of seven centres on the frontline of the island's Covid vaccination campaign. Behind the room's white satin curtains medical staff in hair nets and blue aprons administer 1,800 doses each day. The island is racing to vaccinate as many people as possible in the hope that, if 70% of the population is vaccinated before 1 July, Phuket will become the first Thai destination to reopen to foreign tourists. If the island can build its immunity, it could soon come back to life again, said infectious disease nurse Bang-orn Rungruang, who is helping to coordinate vaccines at the Angsana Convention and Exhibition Space. The pandemic, she said, had devastated the island's businesses. "It was like a domino effect. With no tourists coming into Phuket, the economy just collapsed: no buyers, no sellers." The island, famed for its idyllic beaches, drew 10 million visitors a year before the pandemic and the economic impact of the virus has been felt by almost all residents. Drivers who once ferried around an endless stream of tourists can now barely afford to lease their vehicles. Street sellers have packed up. Even at Thalang hospital the number of patients has fallen because so many residents have left the island to return to home provinces. In Patong on Phuket's west coast, known for its nightlife, the streets are almost deserted.

On Friday night, usually raucous bars stand silent, with stools stacked on top of empty tables. Metal shutters and tarpaulins are pulled down across the front of restaurants, clubs and tattoo parlours. The neon bar signs that normally illuminate the streets are switched off. It is hoped that Phuket, which is set to ease restrictions from 1 July, could provide a model for the rest of the country, and potentially other tourism destinations in Asia. “We will be the first country east of Maldives to open up,” said Ravi Chandran, managing director of Laguna Phuket, a resort in the island’s north-west, who described the programme as a stepping stone towards restarting tourism. The new scheme, known as “Phuket Sandbox”, is expected to get final approval next week, and will see the island open its doors to fully vaccinated tourists from low- and medium-risk countries. Guests will need to stay at special, certified hotels where 70% of staff has been vaccinated and if they want to go elsewhere in Thailand they will need to wait 14 days before doing so. They will also need to follow disease prevention measures – including compulsory mask-wearing outdoors – and there is a national ban preventing the sale of alcohol in restaurants. Reports suggest visitors will be required to download a tracking app or wear a GPS wristband, so that authorities can spot if they leave the island prematurely, although the exact details are yet to be confirmed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/20/devastated-phuket-in-race-to-vaccinate-70-of-islanders-in-time-for-holiday-season>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/01/phuket-reopens-tourists-covid-thai-borders-close-virus-thailand-island-travel>

891) *June 21*. The west side of Oahu is just one of many places throughout **HAWAII** that has been feeling the weight of a tourism industry that has ballooned to what many believe is beyond the islands’ capacity. A rise in vacation rentals, of which there were 23,000 in the islands in 2018, and the growth of social media saw more tourists visiting Hawaii and increasingly going into its more residential and protected areas. In 2019, 10 million visitors came to Hawaii, which has a population of about 1.5 million. It was the highest number of tourists in a single year the islands had seen in its history. The phenomenon, known as overtourism, has seen travelers overwhelm not just Hawaii but many of the US national parks and has frustrated residents in cities around Europe, like Venice and Barcelona, and elsewhere. The Covid-19 pandemic delivered an unusual mixture of pain from economic loss and relief to residents of places that have gotten used to crowds of tourists. In Hawaii, locals hiked popular trails and visited beaches that are usually clogged by tourists. Traffic was noticeably lighter, and things in the islands were generally calmer. Things are already looking much different in 2021. Around 30,000 travelers are now flying into Hawaii each day, over 80% of the number of travelers that were flying in during the same time in 2019. Around the islands, it seems that tourism as it was before the pandemic is coming back. While that means jobs are back, surveys from the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), the state’s tourism agency, have shown local residents are taking on an increasingly negative opinion of tourism, even in light of the pandemic. In 2020, over half of the respondents to the survey agreed that tourism has brought more problems than benefits.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/21/hawaii-tourism-industry-after-covid>

892) *June 21*. An **IRISH ISLAND** off the coast of County Antrim has survived the past 15 months of the pandemic without a single case of COVID-19. The community

of Rathlin Island, a small island with a peak population of just over 100 people, has achieved zero cases of the virus through sheer grit and determination over a grueling 15-month spell.

<https://www.irishcentral.com/news/community/irish-island-survives-pandemic-without-virus>

893) *June 22.* Doctors in **AUSTRALIA** have reported a surge in the number of people cancelling their vaccine appointments, amid a new wave of caution over the AstraZeneca jab. It comes after the government updated guidance last week to recommend only those aged over 60 get the shot, due to the risk of a rare blood-clotting syndrome. Under-60s have been advised to get the alternative Pfizer shot, of which there are limited supplies. Turning down any vaccine - and AstraZeneca is the world's most widely used one - may seem remarkable to other nations still battling rampant Covid. But Australia is one of the few nations where the virus has never truly taken hold. So for many locals, even amid new outbreaks in Sydney and Melbourne, the risk of catching Covid is seen as lower than developing a rare blood clot. Vaccine hesitancy has been an issue in Australia for months. But experts now fear the government's latest downgrade has hindered the nation's vaccination progress. Australia's vaccine programme began in February, and is currently open to all aged over 40. But so far only 3% of adults have been vaccinated, while nearly 25% have received a first shot. Comparatively, it is far behind many other Western nations, partly due to citizens' vaccine hesitancy, but also due to the government's missteps in securing supplies. Until April, the government had relied upon AstraZeneca to be its main jab vaccinating the nation. Local labs were set up to churn out its production. But when reports emerged of the thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome, a rare blood clotting occurrence linked to the vaccine, the government advised people under 50 to take a different vaccine. The catch was that Australia only had one other vaccine - the Pfizer shot - in significantly smaller quantities. The government has promised there will be enough supplies of Pfizer or other vaccines, like Moderna and Novovax, by the final quarter of the year. But the decision by Australia's vaccine safety body last week to limit AstraZeneca's use even further, to those aged 50 to 59, pushed another two million people into the Pfizer-reliant group. It also raised concerns among Australians left with AstraZeneca as their only vaccine option.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-57549796>

894) *June 22.* **INDONESIA** health authorities are battling a new surge in coronavirus infections, as the National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) reported the highest one-day total, with 14,535 confirmed in the 24 hours to Monday. Daily case totals are reaching levels last seen in January, the peak of Indonesia's fight against the virus. The tally brought Indonesia's total to more than two million, the third highest in Asia after India and Iran. At least 294 people died on Monday, bringing the country's total confirmed fatalities to more than 54,950. Both the total cases and total deaths are the highest in south-east Asia. Public health experts say widespread travel during the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday period and the circulation of the more transmissible Delta variant are believed to be driving the latest surge. The increase is putting pressure on hospitals, including in Jakarta, where 80% of hospital beds are full, and has added urgency to the government's plan to inoculate 1 million people each day by next month. Authorities have so far only fully vaccinated 12.3 million of Indonesia's 270 million people and partially immunised another 10.9 million. The WHO last week said Indonesia's drastic increase in hospital bed occupancy rates was a major concern

and necessitated stricter public health and social measures, including large-scale social restrictions. The government has resisted a large-scale lockdown due to fears of the economic impact. But tighter restrictions will apply for two weeks in 29 “red zones” nationwide where infection rates are high, with religious activities at houses of worship suspended and restaurants and cafes and malls required to operate at 25% capacity.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/22/indonesia-tightens-restrictions-as-it-confirms-record-new-coronavirus-infections>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/hundreds-indonesian-doctors-contract-covid-19-despite-vaccination-dozens-2021-06-17/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/27/ive-seen-too-many-bodies-jakarta-gravediggers-chart-indonesias-covid-battle>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/28/indonesian-covid-deaths-add-to-questions-over-sinovac-vaccine>

895) *June 22*. President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened to jail people who refuse to be vaccinated against the coronavirus as the **PHILIPPINES** battles one of Asia’s worst outbreaks, with a cumulative total of more than 1.3 million cases and 23,000 deaths. “You choose, vaccine or I will have you jailed,” Duterte said in a televised address on Monday following reports of low turnouts at several vaccination sites in the capital Manila. Duterte’s remarks contradict those of his health officials, who have said that while people are being urged to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, it was voluntary. “Don’t get me wrong, there is a crisis in this country,” Duterte said. “I’m just exasperated by Filipinos not heeding the government.” As of Sunday, Philippine authorities had fully vaccinated 2.1 million people, making slow progress towards the government’s target of up to 70 million of the country’s 110 million people. Duterte, who has been criticised for his tough approach to containing the virus, also stood by his decision not to let schools reopen.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/philippines-president-duterte-you-choose-covid-vaccine-or-i-will-have-you-jailed>

896) *June 23*. As human settlements creep ever closer to wildlife habitat, replacing swaths of forests with development and farmland, scientists fear those land-use changes could spur the evolution of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19. Areas that have seen dramatic transformations and are home to large bat populations some scientists believe could prove to be the starting point of the next coronavirus pandemic. A group of researchers recently set out to identify where future outbreaks might occur, creating a map of potential hot spots - areas with ingredients potentially favorable to SARS-related coronavirus spillovers. They searched for locations that have a high concentration of Asian horseshoe bats, which host the greatest diversity of coronaviruses, and high levels of both human and livestock settlement and forest fragmentation. By identifying potential hot spots, the researchers can “help think about how we can reduce the chances of another COVID-19 pandemic,” says David Hayman, a professor of infectious disease ecology at Massey University in New Zealand and study co-author. Using their hot-spot criteria, the researchers analyzed more than 28.5 million square kilometers of land densely populated by Asian horseshoe bats, which live in tropical and temperate regions and are named for their



large, lance-shaped noses. In total, the researchers studied more than 10,000 locations. They found areas in China to be the hottest spots, and say some areas in other parts of Asia - including Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines - and Europe could turn into hot spots. The researchers note that they cannot tie land-use changes directly to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the emergence of COVID-19. But they assert that the potential is there, and that greater attention should be paid to how human invasion interrupts bat habitat. "We know that the more you increase contact between species, the more opportunities there are for infections to jump species," including from bats to humans, Hayman explains, and adds that the analysis identifies "areas where these conditions are present."

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/humans-are-creating-hot-spots-where-bats-could-transmit-zoonotic-diseases>

897) *June 24*. The Red Cross called for faster vaccine rollouts in vulnerable Pacific island nations as a record COVID-19 surge threatens to overload **FIJI** health system. Fiji's two largest hospitals have been converted into dedicated COVID-19 facilities, with cases doubling every nine days since a second wave began in April. The situation has been a "serious wake-up call" showing the need for more urgency across the region, Red Cross Pacific chief Katie Greenwood said. "In the Pacific, it's a critical time to ramp up vaccinations ... we can't let our guards down," she said. Only about one per cent of Fiji's population of 930,000 has been fully vaccinated and government health chief, James Fong, said community unease about inoculations was putting a strain on hospitals. "If people keep rejecting vaccination and COVID-19-safe measures, that group will start to take up a lot of our health resources because the sick will come from them," he said. "That means we have less and less (resources) for non-COVID-19 patients." Fiji kept community transmission at bay for more than a year by closing its borders but is currently struggling to contain an outbreak of the highly contagious Delta variant, first identified in India. Field hospitals have been set up to treat non-virus patients as COVID-19 cases hit 2,200 on Tuesday, with the daily infection tally at 180. There have also been seven deaths during the latest outbreak, in addition to two recorded last year. Fong said experts from Australia and New Zealand were drawing up plans to help the overworked healthcare system handle an outbreak that shows no sign of slowing.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/covid-19-fiji-spike-wake-up-call-red-cross-15073418>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/445766/covid-19-png-fiji-situation-a-concern-says-nz-health-expert>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/445890/covid-19-fiji-records-274-more-cases>

898) *June 24*. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has warned that **EUROPE** is "on thin ice" as the Delta variant of Covid spreads on the continent. Her warning came as EU health officials said the variant would account for 90% of the bloc's cases by late August. The spread could disrupt plans for lifting restrictions during the summer. The Alpha variant, first discovered in the UK, hit Europe hard early this year and Delta, now dominant in the UK, is thought 40%-60% more transmissible. Andrea Ammon, the director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), said on Wednesday that the spread of the Delta variant showed the importance of speeding



up vaccinations in Europe, as "preliminary data shows that it can also infect individuals that have received only one dose of the currently available vaccines". Two doses offered "high protection" against the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant, she added.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57594954>

899) *June 24.* A nightclub in **SARDINIA** owned by the former Formula One team boss Flavio Briatore has been accused of "epidemic negligence" after an outbreak of Covid-19 there last summer brought the 2020 tourism season on the island to an abrupt halt and was linked to clusters of infections across Italy. Two other venues - Phi Beach and Country Club - were accused of negligence as Sardinia prosecutors wrapped up an investigation into nightclub contagions. The management at Billionaire, to which the rich and famous gravitate in Porto Cervo on the Costa Smeralda, allegedly failed to take appropriate measures to ensure staff would be well protected from the virus such as providing them with a sufficient number of face masks. Fifty-eight employees tested positive in the outbreak, which emerged in mid-August, and infections among footballers, celebrities and other clubgoers were traced back to the venue. Briatore was hospitalised in Milan in late August after becoming infected, as was his friend Silvio Berlusconi, the former Italian prime minister. Berlusconi was confirmed to have coronavirus in early September, shortly after returning from his villa on the Costa Smeralda. The 83-year-old had been pictured with Briatore outside his Sardinia holiday home, both without face masks on.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/24/sardinias-billionaire-nightclub-accused-of-negligence-over-covid-outbreak>

900) *June 24.* The easing of restrictions on UK travellers heading to the **BALEARICS** has prompted elation among officials and businesses in the islands, even as an outbreak of 394 coronavirus cases among Spanish students who had recently travelled to Mallorca highlighted the risks of opening up. On Thursday, Britain's transport secretary, Grant Shapps, announced that the Spanish archipelago was among the territories added to the UK's green list as of next Wednesday, meaning travellers will not need to quarantine when returning to the UK. Last month Spain began allowing British travellers into the country without the need to provide a negative Covid test, a move that sharply contrasts with the growing push by EU leaders to tighten restrictions on British tourists. The 14-day infection rate in the Balearics is among the lowest in Spain at 48 per 100,000 inhabitants. Before the pandemic, the islands, which also include Ibiza and Menorca, relied heavily on British tourism, with approximately 3.7 million holidaymakers arriving in 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/24/spains-balearic-islands-to-join-uks-covid-green-list-from-wednesday>

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/jul/14/balearic-islands-added-to-covid-amber-list>

901) *June 25.* Thor is an 11-year-old, well-built male lion at **SRI LANKA'S** National Zoological Gardens in the Colombo suburb of Dehiwala. He's something of an icon at the zoo, famed for his regal appearance. Thor should have been enjoying a hassle-free period with his partner, Sheena, and their two cubs in their special den as the COVID-19 lockdown kept visitors away for weeks. But in early June, Thor fell ill, going off food and showing breathing difficulties. In neighboring India, zoos had reported some

of their lions contracting COVID-19 around the same time, so the veterinarians at Dehiwala feared the worst. They took samples of urine and saliva from their lion and carried out PCR tests. The results, released June 15, confirmed that Thor had contracted the coronavirus. Zookeepers took measures to keep him isolated from his family and started him on a medical regime to alleviate his symptoms.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/sri-lanka-zoo-lion-contracts-covid-19-as-reports-of-animal-infections-rise/>

902) *June 26.* There are concerns that deaths related to Covid-19 in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** could lead to an increase in sorcery accusations - and one such case has already been recorded. A community health worker in the town of Goroka contracted Covid-19 and died at home earlier this year. "The family in his tribe said the wife used sorcery to kill her husband, so the community got hold of the lady, stripped her naked and tortured her with hot irons," local MP Aiya Tambua said. Someone alerted the police to the lynching as it was in progress. Before officers arrived, the woman was thrown off a bridge. She survived but Tambua said while the woman was in hospital, her daughter was also attacked and needed to be rescued by police. "[The hospital] found that the mother is Covid positive and the child is Covid positive and the father died from Covid-19," he said. Kissam said Covid-19 was a potential "time bomb" for sorcery-related violence.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/445595/fears-of-covid-19-time-bomb-of-sorcery-accusations-violence-in-png>

903) *June 29.* **RUSSIA** reported its highest daily coronavirus death toll and **AUSTRALIA** locked down major cities as the highly infectious Delta strain has caused mayhem around the world. Fears grew over major sporting events like Euro 2020 and the Olympic Games, even as an AFP tally showed the world passed the milestone of over three billion Covid-19 vaccines administered. At least 3.9 million people have died from Covid-19 and the pattern of vaccinations globally is highly uneven. According to the AFP count, high-income countries as defined by the World Bank have administered an average of 79 doses per 100 inhabitants. In low-income nations, the figure is just one shot per 100 people.

<https://www.terraily.com/reports/Record Covid deaths in Russia as Australia locks down major cities 999.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-57661144>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/01/vaccine-rollout-20-australia-needs-to-do-three-things-differently>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-01/magnetic-island-exposure-worries-in-testing-queues/100258066>

904) *June 30.* Residents on New Zealand's remote islands will be able to receive their Covid-19 vaccines from Thursday – with inoculations planned to roll out all in one go. About 560 eligible residents on the **CHATHAM ISLANDS** will be able to receive their vaccine – the elderly amongst the first in line. The remote location of the islands, 800km east of New Zealand, meant the roll-out required “an enormous amount of logistical planning,” said Ralph La Salle, executive lead for the Canterbury

Covid-19 response. "Given the remote location of the islands and the small population, we are vaccinating the whole community at once because this is more efficient and will make best use of our resources," he said.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/125610538/chatham-islands-residents-to-receive-covid19-vaccinations-all-in-one-go>

905) *June 30*. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the **PACIFIC ISLANDS** has so far exceeded expectations in positive news for the region's prospects of an economic recovery. In part, this is a result of assistance from the region's development partners, in particular Australia and New Zealand. Fiji (the Pacific islands' most populous country) aims to vaccinate 53 per cent of its adult population (one dose each for about 316,000 people) by the end of June and have all adults fully vaccinated by October. Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Cook Islands have all commenced their vaccination programs. The Cook Islands is most advanced. With optimism on vaccine deployment rising, 'herd immunity' could be reached before the end of the year and international tourism may return to the Pacific islands in late 2021, building momentum into 2022. However risks remain. Setbacks on vaccine efficacy (for instance, if approved vaccines are unable to neutralise new variants) would keep borders shut for longer and delay the economic recovery. On the positive side, a quicker rollout of vaccines, to between 80 per cent and 85 per cent of the adult population, could see international borders reopen earlier. Furthermore, many Pacific island countries have not had any community transmission of the virus. Travel bubbles, where quarantine-free travel between countries or regions with low or no incidence of COVID-19, could be implemented before herd immunity is achieved. New Zealand and the Cook Islands have already established a safe travel corridor. Naturally, if a safe travel corridor can be implemented then tourism could return sooner, which would be a welcome economic boost. However, Fiji's recent community outbreak has probably delayed a safe travel zone with neighbours Australia and New Zealand until later in the year.

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/06/30/vaccines-an-injection-of-hope-for-pacific/>

906) *June 30*. As countries around the Asia-Pacific region tighten restrictions once again to curb potential breakouts of the Delta coronavirus variant, **SINGAPORE** has laid out a new vision for life to return to normal. The roadmap, proposed by three members of Singapore's Covid-19 task force, would scrap lockdowns and mass contact tracing and allow for a return to quarantine-free travel and the resumption of large gatherings. It would even stop counting the daily Covid cases. The proposal is a radical departure from the so-called "zero transmission" model adopted by several countries and territories - including rival Asian business hub Hong Kong - which have so far proved successful at avoiding large outbreaks. But this "zero transmission" model, which requires stringent, often punishing quarantine measures, will be almost impossible to maintain as new variants spread, and long term is simply not sustainable, the task force members claim. Instead, they say living with Covid can be done. "The bad news is that Covid-19 may never go away. The good news is that it is possible to live normally with it in our midst," said Singapore's Trade Minister Gan Kim Yong, Finance Minister Lawrence Wong and Health Minister Ong Ye Kung, in an op-ed in the Straits Times last week. "We can turn the pandemic into something much less threatening, like influenza, hand, foot and mouth disease, or chickenpox, and get on with our lives." It's a bold plan that could become a template for other countries looking to return to normal life and resume travel and tourism - and offer

hope for frustrated residents eager to get their lives back on track after 18 months of pandemic restrictions. The key for a lighter approach to the pandemic is high vaccination rates. Singapore is on track for two-thirds of its population to have received their first vaccine dose by early July, and aims to fully vaccinate that figure by August 9. "Vaccines are highly effective in reducing the risk of infection as well as transmission. Even if you are infected, vaccines will help prevent severe Covid-19 symptoms," the ministers said. As more people get vaccinated, the way Singapore monitors daily Covid-19 infection numbers will change. Following a path similar to how it tracks influenza infections, Singapore will monitor those who fall seriously sick or how many are in intensive care units. Infected people will be allowed to recover at home. "We will worry less about the health care system being overwhelmed," they said. With new, potentially more contagious variants posing a concern around the world, the ministers said booster shots may be needed in the future and suggested a "multi-year vaccination program" be established. While testing and surveillance will still be needed, they propose conducting tests in specific scenarios such as ahead of large social events, or when traveling back from abroad, rather than to track and quarantine close contacts. To do this, the ministers say faster and easier methods of testing will be rolled out as PCR tests take too long to provide results. Other methods "in the pipeline" include breathalysers that take about one to two minutes to produce results. In time, more treatments will become available for Covid-19. Already, the ministers point to therapeutics as effective in treating the critically ill, and quicken recovery, as well as reducing severity of illness and deaths. They also say citizens will be urged to practice "social responsibility" such as good hygiene and staying away from crowds when feeling unwell to reduce transmission rates. "With vaccination, testing, treatment and social responsibility, it may mean that in the near future, when someone gets Covid-19, our response can be very different from now," the ministers said. Singapore had been held up as a success story in controlling the virus, thanks to strict border controls, instituting quarantines and contact tracing as well as rules on social gatherings and mask wearing. It managed to contain earlier outbreaks, including a peak of cases in April last year. In May, a small cluster of cases was connected to Changi Airport employees, prompting tighter curbs. The city-state of 5.7 million people has been averaging about 18 cases a day in the past month and has recorded just 36 deaths since the pandemic started, according to Johns Hopkins University. Its new approach is a departure from other places that have been successful at managing the pandemic but have comparatively low vaccination rates and have recently reimposed tougher restrictions.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/singapore-covid-plan-intl-hnk/index.html?form=MY01SV&OCID=MY01SV>

907) *July 1.* **INDONESIA** has announced a lockdown on its main island Java, as well as the tourism destination of Bali. The announcement by President Joko Widodo comes as the country battles multiple outbreaks and an alarming spike in Covid cases. Indonesia recently recorded two million Covid cases, attributed to increased holiday travel and the Delta variant. The lockdown will last two weeks and aims to reduce the number of cases to below 10,000 a day. The country is currently recording more than 20,000 new cases each day. However, experts warn that the case numbers are potentially much higher, because of severely inadequate testing outside Jakarta. Under the new rules, all staff working for non-essential businesses will have to work from home, and distance learning will be implemented across schools. Malls, places of worship and public leisure facilities like parks will also be shut, with dining-in banned. Businesses including those in the health, security and energy industries have

been deemed critical and will be allowed to run at 100% capacity, which means all employees can go to work. Others like financial services, which have been deemed essential, can run at 50% capacity. Indonesia has had the worst Covid outbreak in South East Asia, with about 2.1 million positive cases and 57,000 deaths so far.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57647693>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/02/indonesia-triple-oxygen-supplies-covid-19-outbreak-worsen-delta-variant>

908) *July 1.* Global leader in flexible workspace solutions, International Workplace Group has opened its first property in the **CAYMAN ISLANDS**. Located in the capital George Town just five minutes from George Town Cruise port, the Regus centre opened to an event attended by the territory's premier Wayne Panton, tourism minister Kenneth Bryan as well as members of senior government, the Chamber of Commerce, and business leaders from around the region. Designed to serve local enterprises and entrepreneurs, Regus provides flexible workspace solutions for modern-day businesses, which, in tandem with government initiatives such as the Global Citizen Concierge Programme – a campaign to attract digital nomads to the territory – provide a springboard for growth and business development. "The appetite for flexible, co-working spaces was growing in Cayman pre-COVID and the pandemic has only increased demand now that work habits have changed significantly. There is also a clear international demand from those who wish to take advantage of the Regus network and the Government's Global Citizen Concierge Program, and we've been delighted to welcome several new members who seek a professional and flexible workspace under this initiative," says Sophia List, Client Relationship Officer of the Regus Cayman location. IWG has been at the fore of global workspace solutions for more than 30 years, with 2021 serving as a record year for the company, which added half a million users to its network in just the first quarter. The pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the way people work, with companies of all sizes indicating that hybrid work is here for the long term. The addition of the Regus centre in George Town demonstrates the workplace provider's investment in Grand Cayman's capital, a move that will promote the brand's expansion throughout the Caribbean, adding to locations in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/regus-opens-its-first-location-in-the-cayman-islands-813428101.html>

<https://trade4devnews.enhancedif.org/en/op-ed/prioritizing-digital-communications-infrastructure-digital-nomads-and-new-economic-promise>

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/tourism/corporate-nomads-flee-to-european-islands-before-office-return>

909) *July 3.* Many **PACIFIC ISLAND** nations are heavily dependent on remittances. Tonga is the most remittance-reliant country in the world, with the money sent back to the country, mostly from Tongans working abroad, making up 37% of the country's GDP last year. But as Covid-19 shattered economies around the world, remittances became a lifeline for the Pacific. This was especially true in **FIJI**, where the tourism-dependent economy contracted by 19% in 2020 and where as many as 120,000 Fijians, or 7.5% of the population, lost their jobs. As borders closed,



remittances replaced tourism as the main source of income in Fiji, bringing in a record AU\$414.6m last year. But senders face huge fees, with those in the Pacific some of the highest in the world. While the global average cost of sending remittances is 6.38% of the sum, the average for the Pacific is 9.12%. For decades remittances to the region have been dominated by Western Union and the big banks. But that could be about to change, as two global foreign exchange companies launch in Fiji. The London-based financial technology company Wise, known previously as TransferWise, launched in Fiji in June while the New Zealand-based OrbitRemit is set to launch its mobile payment service in both Fiji and Samoa in the coming weeks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/04/i-could-help-more-could-two-new-transfer-companies-change-the-game-for-pacific-ex-pats>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/06/im-always-afraid-fiji-reels-as-it-moves-from-covid-haven-to-frontline>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/09/no-jobs-no-job-fiji-threatens-unvaccinated-workers-with-sack>

<https://devpolicy.org/fijis-covid-19-crisis-a-closer-look-20210709/>

910) *July 6.* On Tuesday afternoon in **TAIWAN** about 170 people, some dressed in hazmat suits and face shields, boarded a plane bound for the Pacific island of **GUAM**. The sold-out flight was a package holiday with a Covid twist: dubbed “Air V&V” (vacation and vaccination), Guam is capitalising on its abundance of vaccines to revive its tourism industry, and Taiwan’s residents are the first customers. Guam, a US territory in Micronesia, announced the tours in June, with the campaign pitch “vacation while you wait”. The island has fully vaccinated about 75% of its adult population. Taiwan, suffering major shortages, has given at least one dose to just over 10% and fully vaccinated about 0.2%. The first four Air V&V tours from Taiwan, carrying a total 439 travellers, have sold out. “This program captures a unique demographic of travellers around the world that are tired of waiting to get vaccinated in this pandemic,” Carl Gutierrez, president of the Guam Visitors Bureau in Guam, said in June. “This will give a shot in the arm to our tourism industry through this unique and valuable service, offering more opportunities to put our people back to work and get our economy roaring again.” The program involves a dozen hotels, hosting travellers while they receive the Pfizer, Moderna or single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccines from Guam’s private clinics. Taiwanese people can book on one of 10 tours, ranging from five to 22 days, getting the first shot on the day after they touch down before freely touring the country. The most popular vaccine so far is Moderna, chosen by 38% of people with bookings, followed by Pfizer at 34% and Johnson & Johnson at 23%, the major Taiwan travel agency Lion Travel said on Tuesday. Other regions, including Bali and the Maldives, have flagged similar ventures, but Guam is among the first to actually receive travellers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/07/air-vnv-sold-out-flights-start-from-taiwan-to-guam-for-vacation-and-vaccination-trips>

911) *July 8.* **SCOTTISH ISLAND** health boards have been among those to make the greatest progress in vaccinating all adults eligible for a Covid jab. NHS Shetland leads the way with 93% of the eligible population receiving a first dose, according to the latest Public Health Scotland data. For the other islands health boards, NHS Western



Isles and Orkney are both on 91.9% for first doses delivered. NHS Western Isles is top for the whole of Scotland for second dose jabs with 85% of the eligible population having had both doses, and the last mass vaccination clinics have been held on Uist, Barra and Lewis. The Western Isles health board also said it was the first area in Scotland to complete the target of inviting all eligible adults for their first dose of vaccine back in May. While Scotland's islands have small populations, there are challenges around travel with many communities having to be reached by ferry or plane. NHS Western Isles said its mass vaccination programme had required a "huge team effort from the start". Coastguard teams, firefighters and street pastors have played a part in helping to deliver vaccines, and spread the word about vaccinations. NHS Western Isles chief executive, Gordon Jamieson, said he was "humbled and hugely grateful" for how communities had pulled together over the past months. He said: "The clinics simply couldn't have run without the invaluable input of all the agencies involved, and I would like to thank everyone from our own staff, our partners who provided instrumental and varied support, local volunteers, and local businesses and organisations."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-57749045>

912) *July 8.* **ICELAND** has relaxed all domestic coronavirus restrictions as its vaccination campaign for adults nears completion, officials announced last week. The news means tourism, a major contributor to Iceland's economy, will likely resume at a higher rate - and that a key Arctic conference is now planned to take place in-person this October. The country no longer requires masks or physical distancing, and limits on public gatherings and restrictions on businesses' operating hours have been lifted. International visitors who have been vaccinated or had COVID-19 previously, as well as children under the age of 16, no longer need to take a COVID-19 test to enter Iceland, and they don't need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms. The health ministry announced the changes on June 25, with restrictions lifting the following day and the testing requirement ending on July 1. About two-thirds of adults in Iceland are fully vaccinated, and 87 percent have received at least one COVID-19 shot. All eligible Icelanders should be vaccinated by the end of July, the health minister said. That means that vaccination plans and restrictions are now "completed," according to the health ministry. Iceland announced in April that it would open to vaccinated travelers with no quarantine required, making it the first European country to do so. Relaxing the rules further could mean more visitors to Iceland's sites, shops and restaurants. The pandemic dealt a critical blow to tourism in Iceland, as it did in many other countries.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/iceland-fully-reopens-amid-rising-vaccinations-and-demand-for-tourism/>

913) *July 13.* **CUBA** has been plunged into turmoil by the largest protests against its Communist government in decades. Thousands took to the streets in towns and cities across the island shouting "freedom" and "down with the dictatorship" on Sunday. Protests are rarely seen on the Caribbean island, where opposition to the government is stifled. So what have been the main drivers of these protests? Sunday's protests appeared to be the result of societal exhaustion stemming from acute economic and health crises. The pandemic and economic measures taken by the government have made life in Cuba increasingly difficult. The island, which had kept the Covid-19 pandemic under control in 2020, has seen infections explode in recent weeks. On Sunday, the island officially reported 6,750 cases and 31 deaths although many

opposition groups say the true figures are likely to be far higher. Last week the country broke records for daily infections and deaths, pushing health centres to the point of collapse. Social media posts in recent days with the hashtag #SOSCuba have been calling for a humanitarian intervention to address what is seen as a critical situation on the island. Thousands of Cubans joined in, while several videos of overwhelmed hospitals went viral. In a message on Sunday, President Miguel Díaz-Canel said he considered the current coronavirus situation to be comparable to that of other countries. He also stressed that Cuba had produced its own vaccines against the coronavirus (although the administration of doses is still limited in most areas).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-57802170>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-16/desperate-cubans-brave-sea-to-flee-covid-and-island-s-unrest>

914) *July 13*. Three months since **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** launched its Covid vaccine rollout, just 60,000 people – or 0.6% of the population – have received their first dose, with many people hesitant due to misinformation and fears around the vaccine. Despite a recent surge in cases, that has overwhelmed the already rickety health system, just over 2,800 people have received their second dose. Recent monitoring of Covid-19 awareness programmes by Caritas Australia found that the overwhelming majority of communities in rural areas still have extremely limited knowledge about the disease and how to prevent its spread. Diane Unagi, Caritas Australia’s country representative in PNG, said that the bulk of the population was getting their information by word of mouth, rather than on social media or from watching and reading the news. “When messages are not communicated properly it increases the public health risk,” she said. “People are avoiding being tested because they are worried that they will be locked up when they hear the word isolation,” she added. Other common misconceptions include the belief that Covid-19 only affects people living in cities and towns, and not people in rural areas. As of 9 July, the country had counted a total of 17,340 Covid-19 cases with 179 known deaths although experts believe the figures are likely to be far higher. To date there have only been just over 136,000 Covid tests conducted over the entire course of the pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/14/its-just-like-flu-misinformation-and-fear-hamper-papua-new-guineas-covid-vaccine-rollout>

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/07/papua-new-guinea-battles-covid-19-health-workers-vaccine-scepticism/>

915) *July 13*. **BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS** citizens are dealing with a COVID-19 spike brought on by the delta variant and officials took the dire step Thursday of setting up a field hospital for potential patient overflow from the territory’s sole hospital. BVI officials have been struggling since the start of the month to stop the spread of cases, which ballooned to 821 in just over a week. Of that total, officials say they found 548 individuals via contact tracing. In all, the territory has recorded a total of 1,147 cases since the pandemic began last year.

<https://vifreepress.com/2021/07/bvi-confronts-covid-19-spike-that-leaves-tiny-uk-territory-with-1147-cases/>

<https://viconsortium.com/caribbean-coronavirus/virgin-islands-bvi-sees-three-covid-related-deaths-in-one-week-as-active-cases-skyrockets-cruise-ship-visit-canceled->

<https://viconsortium.com/caribbean-coronavirus/virgin-islands-turning-to-faith-bvi-calls-for-21-days-of-prayer-and-fasting-as-covid-cases-surge-to-1147>

916) *July 14.* The World Health Organization's chief scientist has advised individuals against mixing and matching Covid-19 vaccines from different manufacturers, saying such decisions should be left to public health authorities. "It's a little bit of a dangerous trend here," Soumya Swaminathan told an online briefing on Monday after a question about booster shots. "It will be a chaotic situation in countries if citizens start deciding when and who will be taking a second, a third and a fourth dose." Some studies are showing positive results from mixing vaccines, but these are in preprint stage and need further studies to support them. Mixing vaccines is seen as an option in some countries where supply is short of one particular vaccine. But WHO is concerned about a situation where individuals decide for themselves which vaccines to get and how far apart to space them without guidance from health authorities. Several countries, including Canada, Spain and South Korea, have already approved such dose-mixing mainly due to concerns about rare and potentially fatal blood clots linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine. A Spanish study found the Pfizer-AstraZeneca combination was highly safe and effective, according to preliminary results.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jul/14/who-warns-of-chaos-if-individuals-mix-covid-vaccines>

917) *July 14.* **INDONESIA** is seeing its biggest spike in COVID cases to date. The country recorded its largest single-day increase in new cases on July 13, with more than 47,000 infections. And this is likely to be a huge undercount because too few people are getting tested. The positivity rate - the percentage of people taking COVID tests who return a positive result - currently sits at 26% which indicates Indonesia is almost certainly missing many more cases. Local research found 44% of Jakarta residents had antibodies against the virus. Only 8% had actually been confirmed cases. One reason for the low testing rates is a lack of access to COVID tests. Free tests are only available in health-care facilities for people with symptoms or who have been in contact with confirmed cases. The price private laboratories charge for COVID tests can be prohibitive.

<https://theconversation.com/indonesia-records-its-highest-increase-in-covid-cases-and-numbers-are-likely-to-rise-again-before-they-fall-164063>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57830770>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jul/16/making-coffins-giving-shelter-volunteers-step-in-as-covid-overwhelms-indonesia>

918) *July 14.* The Government of **SOUTH GEORGIA** and **SOUTH SANDWICH ISLAND**, GSGSSI is committed to facilitating visits without compromising the high standards in safety and environmental protection. The GSGSSI website now includes the latest information and details of the upcoming 2021/22 tourism season. South Georgia remains free from COVID-19 and will be taking extra precautions to ensure the safety of staff and visitors. The mitigation measures created last season have been updated, but stand largely unchanged. The main mechanism being the three-part

health declaration which is in place to ensure vessels are risk assessed before arrival into the Maritime Zone, again before landing at Grytviken and a third element ensures that contact tracing is achieved should anybody test positive for COVID-19 in the 14 days following embarkation. For vessels not coming into direct contact with station personnel, there is no mandate for quarantine or vaccination, but the information provided in the health declaration will inform GSGSSI decision making about how visits are facilitated and determine if Government Officers will board vessels or conduct clearances remotely. Vessels with confirmed COVID-19 cases will not be permitted to land, but vessels carrying people with more generic symptoms will be able to land outside of Grytviken if they have dispensation. Landings at Grytviken will only be permitted if assurance can be provided that the vessel is free from COVID-19.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/07/14/information-on-the-upcoming-south-georgia-2021-22-tourism-season>

919) *July 15.* **PACIFIC ISLAND** countries will seek debt relief from their creditors as the spread of COVID-19 leaves some governments struggling to provide basic and essential services, Tuvalu's Minister of Finance Seve Paeniu said on Thursday. Paeniu said the COVID-19 crisis has decimated the dominant tourism industries of some Pacific countries, and a meeting with creditors will be sought to secure financial assistance. Some countries in the region were facing huge strains amid rampant borrowing. "If the majority of the debt can be forgiven, that would be the first preference for the forum countries," Paeniu told reporters during a virtual news conference after the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) earlier this year said more than one million people in the region could fall into extreme poverty as a result of COVID-19. The Pacific countries have been flooded with offers of loans from Western countries and China as both sides battle for influence in the region. The United States has criticised China for extending loans to poorer countries for infrastructure projects that risk saddling them with unsustainable debt. China rejects the criticism. To counter, Australia in 2018 created AUS\$3 billion (\$2.2 billion) fund to offer Pacific Island countries grants and cheap loans to build infrastructure.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pacific-islands-seek-debt-relief-covid-19-batters-economies-2021-07-15/>

920) *July 15.* Deep-rooted mistrust in the Malaysian federal and state governments is preventing many Indigenous Penan people from accepting the COVID-19 vaccine. While there have been reports of some individuals traveling up to 140 kilometers (87 miles) to the nearest vaccination clinic, many Penan in the Bornean state of **SARAWAK** are reportedly wary of accepting vaccines after decades of losing the forests they call home to state-owned and private timber companies. Most Penan live in rural areas, a double-edged sword during the pandemic: while avoiding urban centers limits their exposure to the virus, the great distances between their homes and the nearest hospital or clinic results in limited available medical care - and limited available medical knowledge. There have also been worrying reports of anti-vaccine videos spreading on WhatsApp, the mobile messaging app, deepening these communities' mistrust. Activists are sounding the alarm that the Sarawak state government needs to better inform these communities about the dangers of COVID-19 and the necessity of the vaccine, but say mismanaged top-down outreach programs are seeing little success.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/07/for-malaysias-indigenous-penan-vaccine-doubt-is-part-of-historic-govt-distrust/>

921) *July 15*. Unvaccinated workers in restaurants and tourism companies on some **GREEK ISLANDS** will be regularly tested for COVID-19 after the Delta variant fuelled a surge in infections. Mykonos, Santorini, Ios, Paros and the cities of Rethymnon and Heraklion on the island of Crete have all seen rapid increases in cases in recent days, Deputy Citizen's Protection Minister Nikos Hardalias told a news conference. The workers, as well as crew on ferries and cruise ships, will have to be tested twice a week from Saturday onwards if they haven't been vaccinated, he added. The government has been hoping for at least a partial revival of its crucial tourist industry over the summer, but has tightened restrictions as cases have spread. This week, the government said customers at indoor restaurants and bars would have to prove they had been vaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-orders-testing-unvaccinated-tourism-staff-islands-2021-07-15/>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/mykonos-greeces-famed-party-island-falls-silent-under-new-covid-rules-2021-07-18/>

922) *July 16*. Boris Johnson's plan to lift virtually all of **ENGLAND** pandemic restrictions on July 19 is a threat to the world and provides fertile ground for the emergence of vaccine-resistant variants, international experts say. At an emergency summit on Friday government advisers in New Zealand, Israel and Italy sounded alarm bells about Downing Street's policy, while more than 1,200 scientists backed a letter to the Lancet journal warning that the strategy could allow vaccine-resistant variants to develop. The concerns expressed in other countries comes after Dr Chris Whitty, the chief medical officer for England, warned on Thursday that the number of people in hospital with Covid-19 could reach "quite scary" levels within weeks, as cases soared caused by the more contagious Delta variant and the lifting of lockdown restrictions. New coronavirus infections in the UK are at a six-month high, according to government figures, and the number of people in hospital and dying with Covid-19 are at their highest level since March. Thursday's data showed 3,786 people in hospital with Covid-19 and another 63 virus-related deaths. Downing Street, which has defended the lifting all remaining legal restrictions on social gatherings in England on 19 July, is hoping that the rapid rollout of vaccines will keep a lid on the number of people becoming seriously ill. It will no longer be a legal requirement to wear a face covering in most settings in England, although the government has said it "expects and recommends" that people continue to do so in crowded areas. More than two-thirds of British adults have received both doses of a vaccine, and almost 88% have had one dose.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/16/englands-covid-unlocking-a-threat-to-the-world-experts-say>

923) *July 16*. The head of the World Health Organization has acknowledged it was premature to rule out a potential link between the Covid-19 pandemic and a laboratory leak, and said he was asking China to be more transparent as scientists search for the origins of the coronavirus. In a rare departure from his usual deference to powerful member countries, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus



said getting access to raw data had been a challenge for the international team that travelled to China earlier this year to investigate the source of Covid-19. The first human cases were identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Tedros told reporters that the UN health agency based in Geneva is “asking actually China to be transparent, open and cooperate, especially on the information, raw data that we asked for at the early days of the pandemic.” He said there had been a “premature push” to rule out the theory that the virus might have escaped from a Chinese government lab in Wuhan – undermining WHO’s own March report, which concluded that a laboratory leak was “extremely unlikely.” “I was a lab technician myself, I’m an immunologist, and I have worked in the lab, and lab accidents happen,” Tedros said. “It’s common.” He said that the WHO was laying the groundwork for fresh investigations into where Covid-19 came from, adding “we hope there will be better cooperation to get to the bottom of what happened.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/16/who-chief-says-push-to-discount-lab-leak-theory-was-premature>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-57782955>

<https://theconversation.com/silenced-in-china-the-covid-truth-tellers-and-political-dissent-164642>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/22/china-refuses-further-inquiry-into-covid-19-origins-in-wuhan-lab>

924) *July 16*. The Pacific archipelago of **WALLIS AND FUTUNA** has declared itself Covid-free, with no cases among the French remote island's 11,500 inhabitants since April 1, authorities said. Many remote Pacific island nations have remained free of the virus after shutting the borders soon after the pandemic began but the risk of an outbreak remains high. Mask-wearing in public spaces remains mandatory and authorities reminded residents that vaccination was "the only way to get out of the epidemic for good". So far 41 percent of the population are fully vaccinated and over 55 percent have received one shot. Wallis and Futuna recorded 445 coronavirus cases between March and April with seven deaths.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210716-pacific-islands-wallis-and-futuna-branded-covid-free>

925) *July 16*. It is not just humans who have changed their habits as a result of the pandemic. On the **FARNE ISLANDS** in north-east England, seabirds have used Covid as an opportunity to try out new nesting spots while rangers and tourists stayed away. While the absence of people has been a boon for some species, it has made life harder for others. Arctic terns have been attracted to new spots on the islands while visitors and rangers are absent. Rangers suspect that Arctic terns have moved to new islands partly because National Trust staff that would normally ward off seabird predators had been unable to do so due to lockdown restrictions. Covid has meant a skeleton team has carried out core conservation work on the islands, which has seen predators such as black-headed gulls become more prevalent in some areas. The islands, off the coast of Northumberland, reopened to visitors on 21 June after an 18-month closure. The Farne Islands are home to around 100,000 pairs of nesting seabirds, including three species of tern, eiders, shags, puffins, razorbills, gulls and guillemots. Rangers are keen to see how the return of tourists will affect the birds’



new habits. “One of the fascinating consequences of not having visitors to the islands over the last year and a half has been the effect it appears to have had on wildlife,” said Harriet Reid, a Farne Islands National Trust ranger. “While Arctic tern numbers seem to have reduced on the Inner Farnes, they have likely taken the opportunity to nest on the outer islands, including the National Trust’s colony at Beadnell Bay, other islands such as Brownsman and Staple, Lindisfarne and RSPB Coquet. “We think this is the first time this has ever happened and could be a result of several factors including gulls changing their behaviour and the locations they frequent in response to the lack of people.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/16/seabirds-nest-in-new-spots-on-farne-islands-as-covid-keeps-people-away>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-59312874>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/02/it-is-phenomenal-farne-islands-seal-numbers-expected-to-reach-new-high>

926) *July 16*. As more migrants arrive in the **CANARY ISLANDS**, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has provided shelter, protection services, medical, legal and other types of assistance to 1,361 migrants on Tenerife. The arrival of more than 23,000 people in the Canary Islands by sea in 2020, particularly in the last three months of the year, strained the reception capacity and COVID-19 has further complicated the response. In November 2020, the Government of Spain announced “Plan Canarias” to renovate and expand the archipelago’s reception facilities to accommodate and assist 7,000 migrants. Since 26 February this year, IOM has been operating at the Las Canteras Emergency Reception Facility (ERF) on Tenerife to support the Spanish government in managing the site. The EU-funded facility is an open centre which can accommodate as many as 1,100 people. “Our priority is to support Spain with site management to provide safe and dignified living conditions and tailored services for migrants who have arrived via extremely treacherous journeys to the Canary Islands,” said Maria Jesús Herrera, Head of IOM’s Office in Spain. Today, some 300 migrants are staying at the facility from Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Sudan, The Gambia, Mauritania and Côte d’Ivoire. At Las Canteras, IOM provides meals, core relief items, water and sanitation, maintenance, and Multipurpose Cash Assistance. The Organization also offers protection assistance, which includes vulnerability assessments, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), primary health care, legal information and counselling for family reunification or international protection, and assistance with transfers of eligible vulnerable migrants to the mainland. IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) scheme is also available to migrants who wish to return to their country of origin.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/canary-islands-spain/iom-provides-over-1300-migrants-emergency-shelter-and-assistance-canary>

927) *July 19*. Every time you do a lateral flow coronavirus test, you throw away around 10g of plastic. If every adult and secondary school student in the UK did the recommended two tests a week, it would produce more than 1,000 tonnes of rubbish every seven days. In less than a month this would fill an Olympic-size swimming pool. Those of us who before the pandemic were involved in campaigns to cut our dependence on plastic, encouraging our communities to become “plastic free”, may

feel like criticising such consumption. Should we stop these tests, knowing what we do about the plastic pollution crisis? Absolutely not, they are at the forefront of our ability to control the virus and help our country return to a form of normality. So too are the countless tonnes of plastic used in the development, production, transportation and delivery of the vaccine, not to mention all the single-use medical consumables essential to help those unfortunate enough to end up in hospital. Plastic has shown yet again what a wonderful, versatile and lifesaving product it can be. Without it, the pandemic would be going very differently. However, it is all too easy to forget this when stepping over the Covid cast-offs littering our streets. Single-use face masks, surgical gloves, tiny bottles of hand sanitiser and antiseptic wipes have become as common as cigarettes butts were a few years ago. An interesting aspect of all this is a recently identified phenomenon called “hygiene theatre”. That is, individuals and businesses that make sure they look like they’re fighting the pandemic, but perhaps not doing very much of real effect. From repeatedly incorrectly changing single-use face masks to the use of disposable laminated menus in restaurants and metre-high plastic dividers between tables in rowdy pubs, there has arguably been an abundance of this behaviour throughout the various stages of the pandemic. And as we now approach the great unlocking on 19 July (in the UK), some measures and behavioural changes are likely to remain – not least our desire to be personally protected, and our increased dependence on takeaway food and online shopping, both great generators of plastic. But the question is how can we achieve safety and convenience in our post-lockdown world in a more balanced way? The most visible symbol of the pandemic also presents us with an excellent case study for how necessary this rethinking is: face masks. A single-use disposable face mask can be 10 times more damaging to the climate than a reusable cotton one. Most of us, most of the time, when we’re nipping into shops do not need to use a disposable surgical-type face mask. Yet still 53m are being sent to landfill every day in the UK, which doesn’t cover all those that make up the bulk of Covid cast-offs on our streets. A significant proportion of people are using them because of our accepted cultural insistence on convenience, or perceived convenience. We think it’s easier to pick up a throwaway mask when we’re entering a shop than it is to remember our own, in the way it was once more convenient to use free plastic bags in a supermarket than remember our own. But shifting our reliance away from single-use plastic doesn’t have to mean the end of convenience – far from it. Instead it just means we need to move towards “considerate convenience”: giving a little more consideration to our actions, and being a bit more considerate towards each other and the planet. There have been reports of takeaway sales surging by up to 600% during lockdown. This, in turn, brings a mountain of single-use plastic to landfill. A great example of considerate convenience in this sector is the Shrewsbury Cup scheme, whereby the town’s cafes all using the same type of reusable take-out cup. Customers pay a deposit for the cup which can be returned to any of the businesses serving drinks. It’s then washed and reused. Yes, it may require a tiny bit more effort than just throwing a used cup in the bin, but it’s far better for the environment. The Shrewsbury Cup scheme is part of a wider move among increasingly environmentally conscious takeaway providers to find plastic-free ways of delivering food, including, for example, making deliveries in sturdy packaging customers can take away with them again. Little known too is that Amazon will reduce the plastic packaging used in your deliveries – but you have to contact customer services to ask for the option to be applied to your account. Hope is also provided by a growing amount of biodegradable plastic coming on to the market. Improving plastic recycling is another area that needs investment to ensure it’s both efficient and viable. Less than 10% of plastic is currently recycled and this is usually downgraded to poorer quality plastic so alternatives to plastic need to be considered

wherever possible. Moves are being made to make the polluter pay, which could see companies such as Coca Cola take responsibility for the plastic rubbish they produce. It's also clear that the traditional take-make-waste model for our plastic use must be replaced with a more circular system – designing products and consumer processes differently. The pandemic has highlighted the good and the bad of plastic use, showing more clearly than ever that plastic consumption is all about balance. Wasteful use of virgin plastic turns our oceans into plastic soups. This was part of the message many of us were trying to get out before the pandemic hit. Now that we're being urged to "build back better" as we come out of lockdown, let's seize the opportunity to change our thinking about plastic. Let's appreciate what a wonderful resource it can be – and crucially let's realise that, like all resources, it must be used wisely and not wasted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jul/19/covid-plastic-lockdown-resource>

928) *July 19.* China and Australia have found another battleground for their deepening diplomatic standoff: the **PACIFIC ISLANDS** pandemic response. Canberra has hit back at Beijing's claims it is derailing the rollout of Chinese vaccines in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** (PNG), the most-populous Pacific nation. "We support Papua New Guinea making sovereign decisions," Australia's minister for the Pacific, Zed Seselja, said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday. That's not the way Beijing sees it. In early July, Chinese state-run tabloid Global Times accused Australia of sabotaging China's vaccine rollout in the Pacific. At a press conference earlier this month, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry slammed Australia for "undermining vaccine cooperation" in the region. For years, the countries have jockeyed for influence in the Pacific, a region of 14 island nations and territories with a population of about 10 million people with strategic advantages for both sides. The islands' location between US and Asia makes them key military staging grounds and the potential site of future defense installations for either Australia or China. Australia has longstanding economic and cultural ties with the Pacific, and it is crucial to the country's national security to ensure the Chinese government doesn't gain a large foothold in the region. For China, the region represents an opportunity to expand its influence. Several of the islands are among the last nations in the world to recognize Taipei as a diplomatic partner over Beijing. The Chinese government would like to lure them away from Taiwan as part of its long-running strategy to isolate the island. Now all that political maneuvering has turned PNG's Covid-19 outbreak into another area of competition as Australia and China present themselves as benevolent partners. Yet China's 300,000 vaccine donations to the Pacific have failed to meet Australia's nearly 600,000 - and with Canberra promising to supply another 15 million doses to the region, Beijing is on the backfoot. PNG avoided the worst of the pandemic in 2020, but this year its cases have skyrocketed, bringing its total to more than 17,000 reported cases and 179 deaths. When PNG's cases were starting to soar in February, China announced it would send vaccines. The shots it offered hadn't yet been approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), so China agreed to provide trial data, according to the Global Times. Yet PNG didn't approve the vaccines until May. That delay, according to the Global Times, was due to Australian consultants "working in the shadows" in PNG to "manipulate" local policies. "Australia has been found sabotaging and disturbing Pacific Island nations' cooperation with China on vaccines and anti-virus measures," the Global Times report claimed. While Australia has dispatched health experts to PNG during the pandemic to strengthen government systems and provide frontline logistic support, Seselja said he wasn't aware of them

giving advice on Chinese vaccine efficacy. He also noted that Australia had been contributing a range of health care expertise to PNG long before the pandemic. "Our commitment to the Pacific is longstanding and comprehensive," Seselja said. "Any suggestion we do it in response to other countries is not well founded if you look at decades of consistent wide-ranging support." Joanne Wallis, a professor in international security at the University of Adelaide, said it wouldn't have been unreasonable for Australian health experts to act as consultants to provide information to PNG on the efficacy of different vaccines. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and PNG's Covid-19 National Pandemic Response office did not reply to CNN's request for comment. The reality for the delay in approving the Chinese vaccines was likely a simple case of timing. PNG authorities said they wanted Sinopharm to get WHO approval before rolling the vaccine out. By the time that happened in May, PNG had found alternatives. It had little choice. During March, the country of 7 million was reporting hundreds of Covid cases a day, raising fears the outbreak could overwhelm the island's already fragile health system. That month Australia announced it would send 8,000 doses of AstraZeneca to PNG. In April, PNG received 132,000 AstraZeneca vaccines from global vaccine alliance COVAX. Australia sent another 10,000 doses in May, and New Zealand sent 146,000 in June. Australia is able to be so generous due to an excess of AstraZeneca shots at home. After initially intending to use AstraZeneca for its entire population, the government now only advises its use for those over 60, due to the greater risk of blood clots in younger people. Extra Pfizer vaccines have been bought for under the 60s. Jonathan Pryke, director of the Lowy Institute's Pacific Islands Program, said it was "terrible optics" that Australia wasn't rolling out AstraZeneca to everyone domestically, but was happy to give it to Pacific countries. "The silver lining of that is that (Pacific Islands) are getting much more vaccine much earlier than they otherwise would have been, if these restrictions weren't in place in Australia." Seselja dismissed the idea that AstraZeneca was not good enough for Australians. "It is good enough - millions of Australians are receiving it," he said.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/18/asia/papua-new-guinea-china-vaccines-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57845644>

929) *July 19.* **FRENCH POLYNESIA** president has spoken out for mandatory vaccinations against Covid-19. Edouard Fritch says there is no other way to deal with the pandemic, and Tahiti cannot afford to close the border for a third time as the territory is financially dead. He told local media French Polynesians will have to live with the virus and therefore anyone who is in contact with other people needs to be vaccinated. French Polynesians closed its borders in March 2020 for four months and Paris ordered them shut again in February for another three months. Mr Fritch says since May he has lobbied the French High Commissioner to make vaccination compulsory for anyone entering or leaving French Polynesians. In the past year, more than 19,000 people in the territory caught Covid-19, more than 1,200 people needed hospital care and 144 patients died. Fritch and six other French Polynesian mayors joined more than 370 French mayors and elected officials across the political spectrum to publicly back President Emmanuel Macron's Covid-19 policies to contain the pandemic. In May, the French overseas minister Sebastien Lecornu said that for France to allow French tourists back to Tahiti, 70 percent of French Polynesians would have to be vaccinated against Covid-19. The local government in Tahiti has said it plans to have immunised 70 percent by September.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/447216/french-polynesia-president-calls-for-compulsory-covid-vaccination>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/450675/tahiti-lockdown-extended-to-september-20>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/450753/french-polynesia-reports-another-17-covid-19-fatalities>

930) *July 20.* Muslims across **INDONESIA** marked a grim Eid al-Adha festival for a second year on Tuesday as the country struggles to cope with a devastating new wave of coronavirus cases. Three weeks of surging infections and deaths have resulted in Indonesia replacing India as Asia's Covid-19 hotspot, with the most confirmed daily cases. In the wake of the new wave, the government had banned large gatherings and toughened travel restrictions. Religious leaders have also urged the faithful to pray inside their homes and children were told to not go out to meet friends. Last week, the country reported more daily Covid-19 infections than India and Brazil for three days running. More than 72,000 people have died, according to official records. These figures are thought to be an underestimate, due to a lack of testing. Most of Indonesia's cases are on the densely populated island of Java, where more than half of the country's 270 million people live. This year's forest fire season in Indonesia is expected to be less severe than in previous years, but the haze from the burning could still compound the coronavirus crisis in the country. The restrictions on mobility introduced to stop the spread of the virus, have been catastrophic for the poorest in Indonesia. With little financial support available, families face an impossible decision: go out to find what little work is available, and risk dying from the virus or die at home because you can no longer afford to survive.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/20/muslims-across-indonesia-mark-grim-eid-al-adha-as-covid-crisis-deepens>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/07/indonesia-eyes-less-severe-fire-season-but-covid-19-could-turn-it-deadly/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jul/22/struggling-for-work-and-food-indonesias-poorest-suffer-as-covid-crisis-deepens>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jul/23/fears-for-indonesia-provinces-delta-variant-java-covid>

931) *July 20.* **TOKELAU** Nukunonu atoll began its vaccination process today after receiving its delivery of the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Monday, courtesy of the New Zealand Navy Patrol Vessel HMNZS Wellington. The Tokelau atolls' population was 1499 in the 2016 Census. For Nukunonu, which is home to approximately 420 people, vaccinations started today for the first eligibility group: including people aged 16 and over, with an exemption for pregnant women. This group represents about 300 people out of the entire population. The vaccination programme has been in the works since the beginning of 2021. One-hundred and twenty vials of Pfizer vaccine, sufficient to vaccinate 720 people, arrived on 19 July after a six day journey from New Zealand aboard the HMNZS Wellington.



<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/447286/pfizer-vaccine-roll-out-begins-in-covid-free-tokelau>

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-vaccines-delivered-to-remote-tokelau-in-pacific-islands/MX6UXX67QXKINHICGIPR2TM6GQ/>

932) *July 21*. Hundreds face being excluded from elections in the **ISLE OF MAN** because of a lack of contingency plans for those self-isolating, it was claimed on the eve of polling. Elections are due to take place in a third of the Isle of Man's local authorities on Thursday, having been postponed twice due to Covid-19 restrictions. But with case numbers rising, many people who need to isolate are said to have been unable to access alternative voting arrangements as a deadline for absentee ballots was seven days before polling day. Coronavirus cases in the Isle of Man have risen exponentially over the past week, with an increase from 30 to 238 new cases between 13 and 19 July. The Channel Islands Pride event was also cancelled due to an increase in the number of coronavirus cases in **JERSEY**. There are currently 3,061 active Covid cases in Jersey with more than 13,000 known contacts. The first Covid-19 outbreak on **ALDERNEY** caused the Channel Island to "almost shut down", a hotel manager has said. Before 16 July, Alderney experienced just one case but the individual was already self-isolating having arrived in the island.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/21/self-isolation-could-stop-hundreds-voting-in-isle-of-man-elections>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-jersey-57918978>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-guernsey-58024475>

933) *July 21*. The **COOK ISLANDS** pearl industry is suffering a shortage of supply which is threatening its future. Local farmers are being forced to kill off oysters because of a lack of highly-skilled Japanese technicians in country due to travel restrictions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Jewellers are concerned this is creating a shortage of black pearls from the Cook Islands which they fear will devastate supply chains leaving lasting ramifications. Just over 200 people live on Manihiki and 20% of them are pearl farmers. Black pearls specifically are their main form of income but with the skilled technicians locked out of the country due to covid the situation is dire. At least 10 farmers who supply pearls to whole-salers for jewelry production face uncertainty. One of these, Kora Kora, has 40 years' experience in the industry, and said for some it was already too late. "It is a lot of challenge to be honest. We've lost quite a bit of money when we didn't have the technicians back then we had 15 months with no sales. My Uncle is not farming anymore because all of those challenges. My cousin - about three or four of them actually - have finished, they no longer want to farm again." The technicians shut out by the pandemic are needed to seed the oysters and harvest the pearls. Kora said their Japanese technician would normally harvest around 70,000 oysters for three different farmers on the island. Over the last 18 months without him almost double that number has gone to waste.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/447340/cook-islands-pearl-industry-in-peril>



934) *July 26.* **GREENLAND** can expect fluctuating rates of new COVID-19 infections as it seeks to fight back an outbreak of the illness that public health authorities suspect has been caused by the virus's Delta variant. It is still too early to tell whether the 30 people in Greenland with an active case of COVID-19 have been infected with the Delta variant, but the speed with which the current outbreak has spread, and the fact that many cases can be traced back to flights from Denmark, where the variant is now the most common strain, meant it most likely was, according to Paneeraq Noahsen, a doctor with Nunatsinni Nakorsaaneqarfik, the office of the chief medical officer. After a slight decline in the number of cases at the end of last week prompted a relaxation of a requirement that only those who had been vaccinated against COVID-19 would be permitted to use public transit or fly on Air Greenland flights, the number of active cases rebounded over the weekend as new cases were reported in Nuuk, the capital, and the town of Upernavik.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/delta-variant-suspected-in-greenlands-most-recent-covid-outbreak/>

<https://www.arctictoday.com/greenland-to-require-vaccination-for-foreign-travellers/>

935) *July 26.* Scores of people in **ANTIGUA** demonstrated outside the office of Prime Minister Gaston Browne but the government remained resolute that it would not move away from its policy to get public servants vaccinated. The protestors, some shouting that “PM Browne is a dictator” and that the policies “were against their human rights” urged the government to re-think the policy that indicates that, effective immediately, all officers and ancillary staff are encouraged to get vaccinated or subject themselves to a COVID-19 PCR test every 14 days. Following the Cabinet meeting last Thursday, the government said that all unvaccinated frontline public sector workers who refuse to pay for twice-monthly COVID-19 tests would be required to stay home without pay. Prime Minister Browne over the weekend said that his administration must act in the safety of all government workers, saying also that he was prepared for the political fallout from the policy. Browne said that's a risk he's willing to take in the interest of the country, insisting that tough decisions must be taken in the interest of the health and economic well-being of all citizens. The Chief of Staff in the office of the Prime Minister, Lionel Hurst, said that at least 30,000 people here have so far not taken the vaccine as the government moves to ensure herd immunity as soon as possible. Antigua and Barbuda has registered 43 deaths and 1,428 cases of the virus since March last year.

<https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/news/antigua-residents-protest-governments-covid-19-policy/>

936) *July 27.* Endangered loggerhead sea turtles make their main nesting spot on the Mediterranean island of **ZAKYNTHOS** – one of the most visited islands in Greece, with roughly 1 million yearly visitors, including many British tourists. Mass tourism has long threatened the loggerheads: tourists frequently break rules designed to keep them away from nests. But new research suggests the Covid-19 pandemic has allowed these turtles to come up for air. The researchers found that loggerhead turtles changed their behaviour after the drastic reduction in visitor numbers and boats in 2020. In pre-pandemic years' turtles in Laganas Bay usually moved from warmer waters 100m from the shore to deeper, colder waters, 400m away from the beaches, during their prime breeding season (May through June). But in 2020, the turtles stayed in the warmer waters “even when sea temperature reached the optimal temperatures

elsewhere”. The study, funded by the Queen Mary University of London and the Deakin University, Australia, suggests “increased tourism pressure, not temperature” was likely driving the turtles offshore, “potentially at the cost of [turtles] losing access to optimal thermal conditions that accelerate egg maturation and shorten inter-nesting intervals”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/27/pandemic-gives-respite-to-greek-island-sea-turtles-but-returning-tourists-could-wreck-it>

937) *July 27*. With more than 49,000 confirmed cases a day, **INDONESIA** is now a major epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with Brazil and the United Kingdom, which are reporting 54,517 and 39,315 cases a day respectively. Indonesia also is the latest country in Southeast Asia to face a major outbreak due to the Delta variant, and many believe that the reported cases are a severe undercount of the situation. More than 27 percent of people taking COVID-19 tests are infected, indicating that many more cases are circulating throughout the population undetected. A recent survey of antibodies in Jakarta, the country’s capital, suggests that nearly half of the city’s 10.5 million people may have already been infected. Meanwhile, the healthcare system across the country is straining under the pressure. Last week hospitals were running out of rooms and oxygen in Java, while this week Bali is experiencing a similar crash. Jakarta’s hospitals are currently at 73 percent capacity, according to the vice governor. In the first half of July alone, 114 doctors died from the virus. More than 1,500 healthcare workers have died since the beginning of the pandemic. For now, the COVID-19 death rate is around 2.6 percent - compared to 1.8 percent in the United States or 2.8 percent in Brazil - but this number is set to rise as the virus spreads to Indonesia’s more rural islands with weaker healthcare infrastructure.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/covid-19-and-indonesia>

938) *July 29*. Greece’s south **AEGEAN ISLANDS** were marked ‘dark red’ on the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control’s COVID-19 map on Thursday after a rise in infections, meaning all but essential travel to and from the region is discouraged. The cluster of 13 islands includes Greece’s most popular destinations for foreign tourists - Mykonos, Santorini and Rhodes - which, combined, draw millions of people every summer. Greece had relied on promoting “COVID-free” islands to draw visitors back this summer, hoping a rebound in international travel would resuscitate its vital tourism industry after its worst year in decades in 2020. Despite a strong June in terms of arrivals, uncertainty remains over how the season will unfold. The dark red zones on the ECDC map help distinguish very high-risk areas and also helps EU member states uphold rules requiring testing on departure and quarantine upon return. Last week it downgraded Crete, Greece’s biggest island and another popular destination, to the dark red zone.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-tourism/update-1-eu-health-body-warns-against-visiting-popular-greek-islands-over-covid-19-idUSL8N2P57HS>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/30/greece-sends-police-to-covid-hotspot-islands-to-step-up-controls>

939) *July 29*. There is growing concern among officials in Paris over the infection rates in France's overseas territories in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific where vaccination uptake is far lower than the nationwide average. **REUNION** will from Saturday for the next two weeks go into partial lockdown, with movement only allowed 10 kilometres from people's home in the daytime and 5 kilometres on a Sunday, said its top official, prefect Jacques Billant. In the evenings, there will be a strict curfew from 6:00 pm at night until 5:00 am in the morning, with no movement allowed except for essential reasons, he added. Cafes, restaurants and gyms will also close for the next two weeks. He described the situation as "worrying", saying that there was "unprecedented exponential growth of the epidemic" with 350 out of every 100,000 inhabitants infected. The situation on Reunion island is being particularly closely watched after Britain said it was the main reason why travellers from France - unlike all other non-red list destinations - were still being obliged to quarantine for 10 days on arrival in the country due to the prevalence of the Beta variant on Reunion, which is off Madagascar and over 9,000 kilometres (almost 6,000 miles) from Paris. "It's not the distance that matters, it's the ease of travel between different component parts of any individual country," he explained. A spokesman for Brittany Ferries, which runs ferries across the Channel, however said this logic is "like France hammering British holidaymakers due to a Covid outbreak on the (British Atlantic territory of the) Falkland Islands." French European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune earlier lambasted the British restrictions as "discriminatory towards French people" and making "no sense in terms of health policy". Beaune said the Beta strain accounted for fewer than five percent of Covid cases in France, and mostly occurred in overseas territories from where relatively few people travelled to the UK. But Prime Minister Jean Castex earlier expressed alarm over the "dramatic" situation in some overseas territories, with only 3 out of every 10 adults vaccinated on Reunion compared with over half nationwide. The Caribbean territory of **MARTINIQUE**, where only 15 percent of people are vaccinated, will also go into a three week lockdown from Friday with only limited movements allowed in daytime and a curfew from 7:00 pm, its prefect Stanislas Cazelles announced.

<https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210729-partial-lockdown-announced-on-reunion-island-as-covid-cases-surge>

940) *July 29*. As **HAITI** has been plunged into political turmoil by the assassination of President Jovenel Moise this month, the poorest country in the Americas has battled the pandemic against a backdrop of scant medical resources, lack of vaccines, and simmering street violence. About 40 COVID-19 patients were receiving care at St Luke's Hospital on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, down from approximately 100 during the past few months. That could be a sign that the pandemic is easing in the crisis-racked country, which still bears the scars of a devastating 2010 earthquake. But it is almost impossible to know for sure, according to Father Rick Frechette, St Luke's founder and president. "I can't even guess," he said. Frechette said there were many other factors at play, including an almost total absence of testing and vaccines, plus the raging gang violence that keeps many infected Haitians from accessing medical care. In a cavernous warehouse, where supplies were stacked high next to an industrial oxygen concentrator capable of filling 40 tanks a day, Frechette paused at a spot where coffins were assembled with scraps of wood. "We need them all the time," he said. The death rate, among the roughly 800 COVID-19 patients treated to date, at the hospital was running at about 10 percent, Frechette said. Haiti's already under-resourced administration was plunged into chaos by Moise's killing, which the government blamed on a gang of mostly Colombian mercenaries. A newly appointed

prime minister said this week he would try to hold elections as soon as possible. Haiti's health ministry reported on July 6 nearly 19,400 total infections and only 487 deaths. But the numbers have not been updated since and many experts are sceptical of them. "The figures are wrong," said Dr Ronald LaRoche, who runs Haiti's DASH network of nonprofit private clinics that provide comprehensive medical services to some 40,000 patients for \$10 a month. "We must have a higher contagion rate than the whole world," he said, pointing to packed public transportation and crowded living conditions in the impoverished nation. Vaccination rates are among the lowest in the world. This week, St Luke's is scheduled to begin administering some of Haiti's first publicly distributed coronavirus vaccines, following a 500,000-dose donation from the US government via the COVAX global vaccine programme aimed at boosting inoculations in poor countries. But LaRoche said the population is much more resistant to the virus thanks to strong immune systems built up by exposure to many other bugs over years. The median age of Haiti's nearly 12 million people is about 23, according to data from Haiti's IHSI statistics agency, and average life expectancy is barely 64, another factor that has likely cut the former French colony's pandemic toll.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/29/covid-plagues-haiti-amid-political-uncertainty>

941) *July 30*. The **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA** has mandated that its adult population be inoculated against Covid-19 in an effort to continue to prevent the pandemic reaching its shores. FSM, with a population just over 113,000 and covering more than 600 islands, has not recorded any locally acquired Covid-19 cases after it shut its international borders to prevent the spread of the virus. In a statement issued late on Thursday, the Pacific island nation said everyone over 18 years will have to receive a Covid-19 vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-pacific-island-nation-mandates-covid-19-vaccination-2021-07-30/>

942) *July 30*. The **PHUKET** experiment lasted 30 days. On July 1, the Thai government launched a plan called Phuket Sandbox and opened up the island of Phuket to international vaccinated tourists without quarantine. On July 30, it announced it would seal the island off from the rest of the country. Under Phuket Sandbox, tourists were not required to quarantine upon arrival, but they were required to stay in Phuket for a minimum of 14 days before being allowed to travel to other parts of the country. All tourists were required to present a series of documents, including a certificate of entry, proof of vaccination, and a negative RT-PCR test. But now, as of August 3, travelers from other Thai provinces will no longer be allowed to enter Phuket, the Bangkok Post reported. Overseas travelers, however, will remain largely unaffected, per Reuters. The rule amounts to a walling off of Phuket from the rest of the country.

<https://www.insider.com/phuket-travel-thailand-seals-island-off-from-thailand-covid-2021-7>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/amp/thailand-phuket-sandbox-model-asia-cmd/index.html>

943) *July 30*. A COVID booster programme will be rolled out on the **ISLE OF WIGHT** in the next few months, which will see everyone over 70 offered a third jab. The third jab will be given to those in the top 4 priority cohorts, who were vaccinated first during the initial COVID vaccine rollout. As well as those over the age of 70, it includes those in care homes for older adults as well as their carers, the clinically extremely vulnerable and frontline health & social care workers. Starting in September, people will receive another dose of the vaccine they had before - either the Pfizer BioNtech or Oxford Astra Zeneca. It is possible flu vaccinations will be given at the same time, as part of the annual winter programme, although NHS England and NHS Improvement has not yet confirmed this. Latest figures show 104,986 Islanders have had their first dose of the COVID vaccine - 71.2% of the Island's population or 88.9 % of the 18+ adult population and more than 90,400 people have had both doses - 61.3% of the population or 76.7% of those aged over 18.

<https://www.islandecho.co.uk/third-covid-jab-on-the-way-for-the-islands-most-vulnerable/>

944) *July 30*. As with much of **INDONESIA**, the country's eastern-most provinces of Papua and West Papua are struggling to contain the spread of Covid-19, with the Delta variant on the loose. In their latest update, health authorities in Papua province reported 33,826 confirmed cases of the virus to date, as well as 794 known deaths. In West Papua province, there were 18,027 confirmed cases and 278 deaths. Earlier this week, the Papua provincial health spokesman Silvanus Sumule spoke to media outside a hospital in downtown Jayapura, explaining that hospital capacity had passed 100 percent, while they're short on oxygen tanks for Covid patients. Patients were being treated in corridors or outside the building, the sort of desperate scenes being experienced across Indonesia, which has become the latest epicentre of the pandemic in Asia, with over 3.2 million cases and 90-thousand deaths from Covid. But the health system in Papua is weaker than most other parts of the republic, adding to fears that the virus is on track to cause devastation in indigenous Papuan communities.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/448101/vaccine-resistance-in-west-papua-as-covid-19-rages>

945) *July 31*. Earlier this year, COVID resurged in India with a vengeance. For a week in May, the country contributed over half of the daily COVID cases reported globally. COVID deaths in urban India are now abating, but people in rural India have been dying in droves. Thus far in the second wave, however, the almost 24,000 Indigenous Nicobarese people, living on 11 tiny islands in the Bay of Bengal, have recorded not a single infection. The **NICOBAR ARCHIPELAGO** is home to not only to these Indigenous peoples but also to more than 13,000 officials, defense personnel and settlers from mainland India. Early in the pandemic, they had thoughtlessly brought the virus to this remote outpost by traveling there from the adjacent Andaman archipelago. But despite initial panic, past trauma from a devastating earthquake and tsunami, illiteracy, poverty, lack of the most rudimentary facilities and remoteness from clinics and hospitals (seriously ill Nicobarese must usually travel to a hospital on the Andamans, a journey of up to 30 hours by sea) this remote community has managed to shield itself from the pandemic. Its experience shows that top-down policies that overlook regional and cultural values do more harm than good - whereas their bottom-up approach to self-protection carries important lessons for other vulnerable communities worldwide.



<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-a-remote-indigenous-community-fought-the-pandemic/>

946) *August 2*. When the **FIJI** men's sevens team beat New Zealand to win gold at the Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday, the entire nation celebrated. The win could not have come at a better time. Fiji is in the grip of a deadly second outbreak of Covid-19, on top of a potential political crisis over controversial native land legislation. These problems, including threats of unrest in a country that experienced four coups between 1987 and 2006, were forgotten as the Games' final approached. During the national anthem, tears streamed down the faces of the players, who hadn't seen their families for months. Fiji's second Covid-19 outbreak, which started in April, had forced the players to train under a strict self-imposed lockdown. The weight of the country was on the players' shoulders. They were aware of the grim situation at home. Fiji's Covid infection rate is the highest in the world. The country has had more than 27,000 cases out of a population of just less than one million in the past four months. The official overall death toll is 238. But Fijians forgot their problems for a while to focus on the Fiji-New Zealand final, a nail-biting affair between the two arch rivals. We hate losing to the All Blacks and love to rub it in when we win. A championship victory is never truly satisfying unless we beat New Zealand along the way. When the final whistle blew, fireworks erupted in Suva and a few other parts of the country. In an instant, the streets were filled with men, women and children of all ages. No one cared about the daily 6pm-4am curfew, as they celebrated with abandon. Health Secretary James Fong said the emergency Covid-19 hotlines went quiet for the duration of the game "for the first time in weeks." Four days after the men's win, the country's women's team, known as the Fijiana, beat Great Britain 21-12 to claim a bronze medal.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/02/fiji-has-the-highest-per-capita-rate-of-covid-19-in-the-world>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/448756/covid-19-situation-worsening-in-fiji>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/21/fiji-covid-outbreak-pregnant-women>

947) *August 2*. Wanted: foreigners between 30 and 40 years old willing to party in **IBIZA** in the name of combating the coronavirus pandemic. Spanish officials on the island are working to assemble a squad of detectives who would be capable of infiltrating parties that breach local coronavirus regulations and flagging them to authorities. The idea comes as the island, where the renowned nightlife and music scene has long drawn tourists from around the world, seeks to tackle a two-week Covid incidence rate that has soared to 1,814 cases per 100,000 of the population. With most nightclubs shuttered – except for those able to hold outdoor events where patrons are seated at all times – and gatherings in restaurants and bars limited to small groups, officials have blamed illegal parties for the spike in cases. They have responded with an array of restrictions, from a ban on mixed-household gatherings between 1am and 6am to fines of up to €600,000 (£513,000) for those who organise illegal parties. Even so, the parties have not stopped. "They're not only an issue related to public order, which they have always been, but now they pose an obvious risk to people's health," a local official, Mariano Juan, told the newspaper *Diario de*



Ibiza. “Police themselves say it’s difficult for them to infiltrate, as they are known to locals. So we have to look outside for help.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/02/ibiza-plan-for-foreign-detectives-to-infiltrate-parties-as-covid-cases-surge>

948) *August 2*. Saipan, the largest of the **NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS** in the western Pacific, is famous as the setting of a key US victory against Japan in 1944, but in recent years the US territory has found popularity among scuba divers and snorkellers, and its bars and restaurants filled with international tourists. Just six hours from Brisbane, Saipan is seeking to position itself as the “new Bali” for travel-starved Australians. And with the island set to achieve herd immunity from Covid-19 in weeks after a robust vaccination rollout, and hopes a new airline will create air links with Australia, it seems to be a promising contender. **BALI** was meant to welcome back international tourists by the end of July but the plans have been delayed due to an outbreak of the Delta variant on the island and across Indonesia, which has the country facing its most devastating wave of the pandemic so far. Bali alone reported 1365 new cases and 37 deaths on Friday, according to Al-Jazeera. The outlet reports that although about 70 per cent of Balinese people have had at least one dose of the vaccine, there are concerns about some 11,000 Western expats in Bali who aren’t vaccinated under the government rollout. The Delta outbreak also threatens to bring even more economic turmoil on Bali, which has been eager to resume international tourism to revive its badly battered economy. Bali may also risk losing its go-to status with Australian holiday-makers if it is not ready to reopen as quickly and safely as other affordable destinations when Australia’s travel restrictions ease.

<https://www.news.com.au/travel/destinations/pacific/island-resort-six-hours-from-brisbane-hopes-to-be-next-bali/news-story/6f8c6b536e074ccee2e9d37f98c142ff>

949) *August 2*. While people on the Australian mainland struggle to get a Covid vaccine appointment, residents on **NORFOLK ISLAND** are on track to be fully vaccinated by mid-October. The island is home to about 1,800 permanent residents, more than 60 per cent of whom have received their first jab. NI's administrator, Eric Hutchinson, said one of the things driving the success of the vaccine program was the low instance of vaccine hesitancy that could be attributed to the fact the island's residents have mostly only had access the Pfizer vaccine.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-02/norfolk-island-on-track-to-be-first-fully-vaccinated-community/100342896>

950) *August 2*. Size isn't everything, but when it comes to COVID-19 vaccinations, being small certainly helps. **NIUE**, a Pacific Island nation with a population of 1,600, was recently celebrated for reaching "herd immunity" in its fight against COVID-19. It has fully vaccinated 97 per cent of its eligible population with Pfizer doses donated by New Zealand. "Niue is one of the few countries in the world to be COVID-19 free and to have achieved this historic milestone," the Niue government said. Its Minister of Health, Sauni Tongatule, said the country was now "looking ahead to opening borders". But, despite these high vaccination rates, health experts warn countries like Niue may still be vulnerable to a COVID outbreak and have recommended they do not open borders too quickly. Colin Tukuitonga, Associate Professor of Public Health at the University of Auckland, said herd immunity was not an appropriate target. "In the case of COVID ... even though we have high vaccination coverage, it doesn't

automatically mean herd immunity," Dr Tukuitonga said. Herd immunity is achieved when a large portion of a population becomes protected from a disease either through infection or vaccination. When this threshold is eventually reached, community transmission is prevented and the outbreak fizzles out. Estimates for Australia's herd immunity have so far hovered around 80 per cent, but the figure depends on the type of vaccine people receive, and how they fare against new variants. Several Pacific islands, like **GUAM**, have reached that target already among their adult population. **NAURU**, one of the smallest countries in the world, has declared itself 90 per cent fully vaccinated. Others are fast approaching those targets, with the **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (FSM)** making vaccines compulsory for all adults. Its president David Panuelo told the ABC he hoped FSM would "reach herd immunity by Christmas". But studies have cast doubt over the ability of countries to build herd immunity and protect populations completely from future COVID outbreaks.

Researchers from the University of NSW and the University of Melbourne have found that immunity to COVID may wane over the first year. That's because it appears that the neutralising antibodies that protect cells from the virus are strongest over the first months after vaccination or infection, but begin to decay after that. Many manufacturers already have variant-specific vaccines in clinical trials for booster shots down the track. Fiona Russell from the Asia Pacific Health Research Group at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) said countries should "move on" from vaccination targets linked to herd immunity. "We know that's not going to happen, that is extremely unlikely to happen, and this will be an endemic virus," Dr Russell said. Dr Tukuitonga said herd immunity was not a "silver bullet". "In fact, you don't know if you have herd immunity until there is an outbreak," Dr Tukuitonga said. "I emphasise the unpredictability of the Delta variant ... we don't really know how it's going to behave." The vaccination rollout has helped Pacific nations, many of which rely on income from tourism, to open up with more confidence. The **COOK ISLANDS** has vaccinated almost 95 per cent of its target population with Pfizer donations from New Zealand, and since May a travel bubble has been in place between the two countries. Secretary of health Bob Williams said he expected Cook Islands finish its rollout before the end of the month, and that health authorities would monitor borders as restrictions eased. "Australia could potentially be on the list of options for us to open up our border," he said. Jana Foster, manager of Raela Villas Day Spa in the Cook Islands, is thankful the country is finally opening up. Her business lost almost a year's worth of income during the pandemic, and thanks to the travel bubble with New Zealand, her rooms are fully booked until October. But despite her business picking up, she said she was "not in a rush" for Cook Islands to further open its borders. "We'd rather everybody has this stuff under control before they try and come across here," Ms Foster said. "Because once it's in here, it could potentially just wipe everybody out." Dr Russell praised countries in the Pacific that have reached high levels of vaccination, but said border protection policies would still need to be in place to avoid devastating outbreaks. "It certainly is a wonderful achievement, but it's not suddenly, 'Let's go back to pre-COVID life'. It's certainly not going to be like that."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-03/pacific-nations-covid-herd-immunity-borders-open-travel/100343634>

<https://theconversation.com/pacific-nations-grapple-with-covids-terrible-toll-and-the-desperate-need-for-vaccines-164769>

951) *August 5*. The Covid pandemic brought tourism to a near-halt in **ALASKA** last year. What will happen to the majestic humpback whale when cruise ships and visitors return in August? During a normal summer, Glacier Bay and the surrounding area buzzes with traffic, as vessels of all sizes, from massive, 150,000-tonne cruise liners to smaller whale-watching boats, ply the waters as part of Southern Alaska's massive tourism industry. In 2019, more than 1.3 million people visited Alaska on cruise ships. In 2020, there were 48 - not even enough to fill a New York City subway car. Overall marine traffic in Glacier Bay declined roughly 40%. It takes about a dozen minutes of listening to the soothing hydrophone audio on a Thursday morning in late May to hear traces of human activity - in this case, the high-pitched whine of a small boat's propeller. According to research by Christine Gabrielle sat at her desk at the Glacier Bay National Park headquarters in Gustavus, Alaska, and Cornell University Professor Michelle Fournet, the level of manmade sound in Glacier Bay last year dropped sharply from 2018 levels, particularly at the lower frequencies generated by the massive cruise ship engines. Peak sound levels were down nearly half. All this afforded researchers an unprecedented opportunity to study whale behaviour in the kind of quiet environment that hasn't existed in the area for more than century. By analysing hydrophone data, and taking a small park service boat into Glacier Bay three times a week to photograph and identify whales, Gabrielle has already noted changes. She compared whale activity in pre-pandemic times to human behaviour in a crowded bar. They talk louder, they stay closer together, and they keep the conversation simple. Now, the humpbacks seem to be spreading out across larger swathes of the bay. Whales can hear each other over about 2.3km (1.4 miles), compared with pre-pandemic distances closer to 200m (650ft). That has allowed mothers to leave their calves to play while they swim out to feed. Some have been observed taking naps. And whale songs - the ghostly whoops and pops by which the creatures communicate - have become more varied.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-58032702>

952) *August 5*. **INDONESIA** health ministry has recorded 1,747 new deaths of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, pushing the nation's total deaths to 100,636. The south-east Asian country has been struggling to cope with the highly contagious Delta variant since it was first discovered in Indonesia in late June. According to Our World in Data, Indonesia's total number of infections has now reached 3.53 million. The country recorded a huge rise in cases at the beginning of July, and more than 30,100 deaths. High fatality numbers have left much of the country frustrated with their government, blaming a slow vaccine rollout, while others point blame at conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/05/indonesia-covid-deaths-pass-100000-as-delta-overwhelms-hospitals>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58082216>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/lack-of-id-cards-bars-indigenous-indonesians-from-much-needed-vaccines/>

953) *August 5*. While experts have not yet confirmed the initial source of the novel coronavirus, it is believed to have passed from an animal to a human, a process known as zoonosis, at a major wildlife market in Wuhan, China. This suspected link has drawn intense attention to the wildlife trade - both legal and illegal - over the last

18 months. After contracting COVID-19, a scientist in India delved into data on what mammal species pose the greatest risk for future pandemics. He found that 26.5% of mammals in the wildlife trade housed 75% of known zoonotic diseases. Primates, ungulates, carnivores and bats present the highest risk, as these four groups alone harbor 132 of the 226 currently known zoonotic viruses, or 58% overall. However, according to the researchers, bats, rodents and marsupials pose the greatest risk in the future given expected shifts in the wildlife trade. More specifically, primates alone carry 77 known zoonotic virus, even-toed ungulates host 62, and carnivores 41, highlighting these three groups as particularly acute spillover threats for future pandemics. The findings present an opportunity for greater risk management by governments more closely focusing on these species.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/new-study-finds-that-minority-of-animals-host-majority-of-zoonotic-viruses/>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/address-risky-human-activities-now-or-face-new-pandemics-scientists-warn/>

<https://phys.org/news/2021-08-harvard-global-experts-investments-nature.html>

954) *August 6.* The prime minister of **ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES** has been hospitalised after being injured at a protest against a proposed vaccine mandate. Ralph Gonsalves was walking through a crowd outside parliament when he was reportedly hit in the head by a stone. Protesters had gathered on Thursday to demonstrate against plans to require most frontline health workers to be vaccinated against Covid-19. The country has recorded 2,298 coronavirus cases and 12 deaths since the pandemic began, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. Almost 9% of the population has been fully vaccinated, the university says. Its tourism industry has been badly impacted by the pandemic, and thousands of people were forced to leave their homes following a volcanic eruption in April.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-58110684>

955) *August 8.* Located deep in the South Pacific, nearly 6,000 kilometres away from any continent, **PITCAIRN ISLAND** is one of the few places in the world that has remained COVID-free. Mark Tomlinson left Washington when the virus started taking hold, arriving on the island eight months ago to fill the British government's administrator position. With the ability to be mostly self-sufficient, life for Pitcairn's 47 inhabitants throughout the pandemic has been "just normal and idyllic in many ways", Mr Tomlinson said. He is one of the few expats living on the tiny volcanic island that's known for having one of the most intact marine ecosystems on the planet. With no lockdowns or masks, and enough vaccine supply for the whole population, he says all the worry that the rest of the world is facing "just disappears". "Life here is totally different compared to anywhere else," Pitcairn Mayor Charlene Warren said. "We're pretty lucky to be all the way out here where we can just basically shut our borders." Born and raised on Pitcairn, Ms Warren says isolation is something she's comfortable with. She has only travelled a handful of times to New Zealand and neighbouring Tahiti, which is 2,170 kilometres - a four-day boat trip - away. Instead, she says the most difficult part of the pandemic has been losing the energy and life that tourists bring to the island. "Usually, we're buzzing with tourists coming and going, yachts stopping by for a brief visit, and cruise ships pulling in," Ms Warren said. "It's lovely to be able to interact with new people and share our bit of paradise

with them." Pitcairn closed its borders early in the pandemic to protect its elderly population - the oldest resident is 93 - only keeping a supply ship operating between it and New Zealand. A travel bubble has also been established with New Zealand, for residents who want to take the two-week sea journey to visit loved ones, or to seek medical treatment not available on the island. However, few people have felt the need to venture beyond the island's pristine shores and lush mountainous landscape. "A lot of people stay put on Pitcairn for quite long periods of time without going off the island. So, they're quite a resilient population," Mr Tomlinson said. "They're not really champing at the bit as much as people might be in other countries to travel." While Ms Warren said tight border restrictions and the island's location "served us well", Pitcairn also attributed its COVID-free experience to its successful vaccine rollout. The UK guaranteed vaccines for all British Overseas Territories and in May, after a more than 15,000-kilometre expedition, enough AstraZeneca supply to fully vaccinate the entire population arrived on the island. It was "a huge operation to get the vaccines from the UK and all the way out to Pitcairn", British High Commissioner to New Zealand and the Governor of Pitcairn Laura Clarke said. It took three flights, a road trip, a two-week journey in the rough southern Pacific waters, and a quick transfer in a dinghy to get the doses safely to Pitcairn. Keeping the vaccines at the correct temperature throughout the journeys added to the expedition's complexity, with crews racing between transfers before cooling systems expired. Despite 86 per cent of the adult population being vaccinated, the island is treading carefully. Border restrictions may stay in place until at least next year. "It's been heart-wrenching to listen to what's happening in the rest of the world," Ms Warren said. "We have much to be grateful for."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-08/pitcairn-island-covid-free-pacific-vaccine-success-/100356192>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/126192391/pitcairn-islanders-refuse-to-let-covid19-halt-vital-climate-change-research>

956) *August 9.* The more aggressive Delta variant of Covid-19, detected in the **PHILIPPINES** in mid-July, has spread across much of the country, reaching 13 of 17 regions, health officials have said. On Sunday, the Philippines reported a sharp rise in daily Covid fatalities, with 287 deaths, the highest daily increase in four months. A further 9,671 new infections were also confirmed. The national capital region of Manila, home to almost 14 million people, was placed under lockdown last week in an attempt to slow the spread of the Delta variant. The variant has led to record case numbers in countries across south-east Asia, and it is feared the Philippines could experience a similar rise. The country's cases had fallen after a severe outbreak four months ago but Covid transmission has begun to increase. The restrictions imposed on Friday in the national capital region will last until 20 August and are set at the strictest level used by the Philippine authorities. Only authorised people, including those buying food, travelling for medical reasons, or frontline workers, are allowed to go outside. The day before lockdown was introduced thousands rushed to vaccination centres and queued for hours in the hope of getting a jab. Rumours had spread that unvaccinated people would not be allowed to claim government aid or go outside, according to local media. The president, Rodrigo Duterte, previously threatened to arrest people who were not vaccinated, and recently warned that unvaccinated people would not be permitted to leave their homes. However, a person's vaccination status does not affect the restrictions they face under lockdown. About 10% of the population has been fully vaccinated.



<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/09/manila-covid-lockdown-delta-cases-philippines>

957) *August 9.* **PALAU** is settling into a new normal, and seeing a return of tourists, after it says it achieved herd immunity against Covid-19 among its adult population. Health authorities in the country say over 80 percent of the eligible population has been given both doses of a Covid-19 vaccine, while the vaccination rollout for adolescents is well underway. Palau began its vaccination drive in January, aiming for 13,300 adults but had exceeded that target with 14,300 adults now fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Vaccination of adolescents aged 12-17 years old is now well under way with at least 65 percent having had at least one dose of the vaccine. The ministry of health's liason for the mass vaccination campaign Gaafar Uherbelau says Palauns have been very receptive to getting vaccinated. "In terms of vaccine hesitancy we haven't had too many challenges. Unlike our neighbours in the northern Pacific, we've been able to pretty much roll out our vaccination campaign without any issues in terms of people wanting to come in for the vaccine." Palau has been using various Covid-19 vaccines: Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson / Jansen. The Ministry of Health's liason for the mass vaccination campaign, Gaafar Uherbelau, said there had been a steady increase in both arrivals and departures since the easing of travel restrictions towards the end of June. Uherbelau said prior to June travellers were required to first undergo 14 days of quarantine and testing in Guam before flying to Palau, and then an additional 14 days on arrival. Now they only need to show proof of vaccination and a return a negative test result for Covid-19 three days before their travel date. "Since then I think we have seen more travellers coming in," he explained. "We do have a lot of US military personnel that are also coming in and out for training and exercises. So the same requirements apply to them as well with the full vaccination status and negative PCR test. But we have definitely seen an increase in commercial airline travellers coming in."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/448816/palau-settles-into-new-normal-after-it-claims-herd-immunity>

958) *August 9.* **TONGA** Ministry of Health has confirmed a schedule of when Covid-19 vaccines will next become available for the Kingdom. To start, a consignment of 10,000 doses of AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines is scheduled to arrive tomorrow. Tomorrow's doses are funded by the Australian Government through the COVAX facility and will be sent to Ha'apai. Another batch of Covid-19 vaccines is expected to arrive around mid to late August, funded by Japan. Ministry of Health CEO Dr Siale 'Akau'ola says these vaccines will be used to vaccinate people living at Tongatapu, Eua and the Niuas. More vaccines, including Pfizer doses, funded by New Zealand, are planned for rollout in Tonga at the end of August or towards the last quarter of the year. Dr 'Akau'ola said these vaccines will be used to vaccinate anyone else in Tonga who may have missed out in the early vaccination stages. Tonga has confirmed that Pfizer vaccine doses sent from New Zealand will be used for the youth aged 12 to 17 years and pregnant women. The Ministry of Health CEO Dr Siale 'Akau'ola told local media that if there are pregnant mothers who wished to be vaccinated with AstraZeneca vaccines now, they won't be turned away. Tonga's vulnerability to impacts of Covid-19 infection in terms of non-communicable disease risk factors remains high. Dr 'Akau'ola said that combining these two risks, make the risk for an unvaccinated pregnant woman extremely high. He explained that concluded that the risk of the Delta variant of Covid entering Tonga from Fiji was increasing, and that if



an outbreak happened in Tonga, it could be too late to vaccinate pregnant mothers to protect them. Dr 'Akau'ola said their only chance was to get vaccinated while Tonga is still Covid-19 free. He said data on the safety of Covid-19 vaccine to pregnancy was being continuously collected and analysed. Results so far have not shown any significant short term adverse effects. However, the WHO is advising countries that are choosing to give vaccines to pregnant women, to first consider if the risk of getting Covid-19 is greater than the risk of adverse events from getting the vaccine, which has so far been shown to be extremely low.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/448814/tonga-confirms-next-vaccination-stages-pfizer-for-pregnant-women>

959) *August 10.* The **HAWAII** Department of Health reported 436 new cases of coronavirus statewide Tuesday, bringing the overall total to 47,376. No new COVID-related deaths were reported. A total of 76 new cases were identified on the Big Island Tuesday, where 1,174 cases are active and 25 individuals are hospitalized. Hawai'i County Civil Defense also declared on Tuesday that the Big Island has officially reached the community spread level of viral infection. This means that residents may be exposed to coronavirus whenever they leave their homes. Civil Defense, as a result, has requested the public limit all activity outside the home to essential activity only. The state's two-week average is now 506 new cases daily, with a test positivity rate of 7.3%. The island-by-island case count is as follows:

O'ahu: 33,077

Hawai'i: 4,819

Maui: 4,610

Kaua'i: 658

Lana'i: 114

Moloka'i: 69

Pending: 0

Out-of-State: 1,842

A total of 2,851 individuals have been hospitalized as a result of COVID-19 infection since the pandemic began, while at least 543 have died. To date, a total of 1,787,386 doses of the vaccine have been administered statewide, with 60.9% of the population fully vaccinated and 68.4% having received at least one shot. Governor David Ige is holding a press conference today to address the surge of COVID-19 and the resulting community spread throughout the state. The governor has already mentioned publicly that a return to some restrictions could be coming as early as this week, as hospital resources are stretched thin and many more serious cases of the illness are expected before the surge subsides.

<https://bigislandnow.com/2021/08/10/big-island-reaches-community-spread-amid-surge/>

<https://bigislandnow.com/2021/08/10/governor-ige-reinstates-social-gathering-restrictions-across-hawaii/>

<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2021/08/18/hawaii-news/union-questions-school-safety-as-covid-19-cases-surge-throughout-the-islands/>

<https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/569122-hawaii-governor-tells-tourists-to-stay-home-as-coronavirus-surges->

960) *August 11*. France will strengthen lockdown rules in the overseas territory of **GUADELOUPE** to rein in the spread of COVID-19, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said on Wednesday, as spikes in infections in its Caribbean islands overwhelm hospitals. The French overseas territory of **MARTINIQUE** on Tuesday entered a tougher lockdown for three weeks to tackle the pandemic with the closure of beaches and shops selling non-essential items and restrictions on people's movements. Authorities in Martinique have also advised tourists to leave the island. President Emmanuel Macron, who on Wednesday held a virtual meeting with his senior cabinet ministers to discuss the pandemic, said the COVID-19 situation in Caribbean islands was "dramatic". According to the independent COVIDTracker website, only 21% of the populations of Guadeloupe and Martinique have received a first dose of a vaccine. That compares with 67.05% of all French people having received one vaccine dose and 56.04% being fully vaccinated. Health Minister Olivier Veran on Sunday appealed for volunteer doctors and nurses to travel to the territories to reinforce local health staff. Attal also said that there were no signs of new COVID-19 infections receding in France globally.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-strengthen-covid-19-lockdown-guadeloupe-island-2021-08-11/>

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/19/france-sends-aid-to-guadeloupe-and-martinique-the-islands-struggling-with-covid-19-surge>

961) *August 12*. **NEW ZEALAND** will continue to pursue its ambitious Covid-19 elimination strategy indefinitely, Jacinda Ardern has said, adding that borders would never be the same as she laid out plans for a cautious, phased reopening of the country. The prime minister set out the country's much-awaited reopening strategy on Thursday, and warned that New Zealand would always need some kind of protection at its border. However, she also indicated, that all going well, vaccinated travellers from low-risk countries will be allowed to skip quarantine and enter the country early next year. There are also plans to speed up the vaccine rollout to protect against the threat of the Delta variant. New Zealand's elimination strategy, which has included strict border measures, short and intensive lockdowns and quick contact-tracing methods, has proved successful, with no community cases of the virus in 165 days and a total of 26 deaths since the pandemic began.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/12/new-zealand-covid-ardern-quarantine-free-travel-vaccine-reopening>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/18/arderns-covid-lockdown-finds-favour-as-new-zealand-watches-sydneys-delta-disaster>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/449401/cook-islands-suspends-travel-bubble-with-new-zealand>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58297895>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/25/concerns-for-new-zealand-pasifika-community-over-auckland-church-covid-cluster>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/25/new-zealand-wont-throw-in-towel-on-covid-zero-strategy-despite-rising-infections>

962) *August 15*. In recent days, the **U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS** have seen their highest numbers of confirmed cases and hospitalizations since the start of the pandemic. The islands, a popular tourist destination with a year-round population of about 106,000, are now in the top 20 U.S. states and territories for cases per capita. Active cases have been ticking up for weeks, rising from around 60 at the beginning of July to a high of 401 on Friday, according to data from the islands' Department of Health. Before this summer's surge, the highest number of active cases was 295, reported nearly a year ago. Only 37 percent of the population was fully vaccinated as of Saturday, trailing every state but Mississippi and Alabama, according to federal data. Richard Motta Jr., communications director for the territory's governor, Albert Bryan Jr., said in a telephone interview early last week that there were 26 Covid hospitalizations, more than at any time since the pandemic response on the islands began in March 2020. Mr. Motta attributed the lagging vaccination rate to misinformation, a segment of the islands' population that is deeply suspicious of vaccines and the fact that the shots are not yet fully approved but are being administered under emergency use authorizations. The islands have set up a lottery to incentivize vaccinations, Mr. Motta said, and shots or regular testing are required for the roughly 6,000 government employees, the staff members at the territory's hospitals. Vaccines are mandatory for most on-campus students and staff at the University of the Virgin Islands, as well. The islands made vaccines available to all adults when much of the country still limited them to high-risk groups, leading some Americans to visit in order to be inoculated. All deaths and hospitalizations recorded in the islands involve unvaccinated people, Mr. Motta said, and the few documented breakthrough infections were not serious - more evidence that vaccines offer high protection from the worst outcomes. The islands have stricter precautions than much of the mainland, including an indoor mask mandate, social distancing rules and a curfew on beaches and businesses. Schools, which just reopened, are fully remote, and will stay that way at least until September, Mr. Motta said. The islands normally draw as many as 2,000 visitors a day, Mr. Motta said, but when cases were climbing in the summer of 2020, the islands banned new hotel reservations. Tourism has since roared back; some airlines introduced new flights there this spring. Regardless of vaccination status, visitors ages 5 and older have to post proof on an online travel portal of a negative coronavirus test taken no more than five days before arrival. Mr. Motta said that one dozen to two dozen people had falsified tests, and that some were arrested.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/us/us-virgin-islands-covid-surge.html>

963) *August 18*. One of **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** chief health officers has warned the country's low testing rates, high percentage of positive tests and low vaccination rates provide a "recipe for major spread of the Delta variant" after the country recorded its 12th case of the deadly strain. Dr Daoni Esorom, the deputy controller of PNG's national pandemic response, said officials were so concerned that low testing rates were masking a serious outbreak that they had ordered doctors at the country's biggest hospital to swab all corpses of people who had died from unknown causes or who had respiratory illnesses, to see if they had Covid-19. The Delta variant was first detected in PNG on 10 July after the captain of a ship from the Philippines and one of his crew tested positive and underwent isolation at the Port Moresby General hospital for 15 days. The country now had 12 confirmed Delta cases, the last three detected in Wester province. A team had been dispatched to the province to help with contact tracing and give technical advice and guidance on how to respond on the ground. Similar measures were taken last week when cases were detected in Madang in the

country's north-east. Papua New Guinea had officially recorded 17,827 Covid-19 cases and 192 deaths across the pandemic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/19/png-authorities-order-corpse-to-be-swabbed-amid-fear-of-undetected-delta-outbreak>

964) *August 19*. The **FALKLAND ISLANDS** Government has received a batch of Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines, supplied by the UK government. These 960 doses arrived on 12 August and are being rolled out as part of the ongoing vaccination programme which began in February. On 15 August, 354 vaccines from the new batch were administered to predominantly Indonesian and Peruvian crew from vessels which have been fishing in Falklands waters, using temporary vaccination stations at the Lighthouse Seafarers Mission. A further 180 fishermen will also be vaccinated this coming weekend. The new batch will also be used for people in the local population who have recently turned 18 or people who were eligible earlier in the year but were unable to have their vaccination at that time. Chief Medical Officer, Dr Beccy Edwards, said: "The arrival of this batch means we can continue to immunise the vast majority of our adult population, which continues to be an incredible achievement, and one that we are extremely grateful for. I would like to give a heartfelt thank you, again, to all of the people who have continued to come together and pull out all of the stops to make the vaccination program such a success."

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/08/19/falklands-receive-batch-of-oxford-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccines-fishing-vessels-crews-immunized>

965) *August 19*. For nearly a year and a half after the onset of the pandemic, the **COOK ISLANDS** didn't see a single tourist. In early 2020 the south Pacific country was forced to close its borders to keep Covid-19 out. In doing so it shut the doors on an industry that contributes two-thirds of the remote island country's GDP. Lives were upended, hotels were shut down and the government was forced to borrow tens of millions dollars to keep the economy afloat. Local people left in droves to find work in New Zealand's South Island. Many people took to their gardens and looked to the sea for sustenance, cushioning a government cash subsidy that aimed to keep food on people's tables. Crabs began reclaiming beaches devoid of sunbathers. That all changed in May when a "travel bubble" – suspended this week due to the Covid outbreak in Auckland – was established with New Zealand. Within weeks thousands of sun-starved New Zealanders had booked tickets to escape the southern hemisphere winter and indulge in a luxury that few can experience these days: a tropical vacation on a lush island that has never recorded a single Covid-19 case. Once again, Rarotonga – the most populous island in the Cook archipelago – was buzzing. Markets were alive and bustling, restaurants were booked solid, rental cars and scooters became a hot commodity, and guided snorkel tours were quickly sold out. While the outside world is beginning to grapple with the fourth wave and the Delta variant, in the Cook Islands the pandemic is often referred to in the past tense. Money has begun flowing into people's pockets and into the treasury. But not everybody is feeling the euphoria. "During Covid I thought we were very blessed," says Alex King, a Rarotonga-based photographer with ancestral roots in the Cook Islands. "People within our community started to grow food again, working back in the plantations, spending more quality time with their families, and we experienced the ultimate kindness within our own people, trying to help one another out during a financially tough time for so many." It was a profound shift for the Cook Islands, which had recently reaped the benefits of an unprecedented multi-year economic boom

culminating in a record number of arrivals in 2019. The country's population is 17,500 but that year it welcomed nearly 172,000 visitors – a 37% increase from half a decade earlier. Over the course of a decade GDP per capita doubled to just over NZ\$30,000. “As someone who has worked in the tourism industry for years it is not hard to understand why it has played such a dominant role in our lives,” says King. “But over the past few years I’ve seen exactly what impact this industry is potentially driving our environment, our culture, and our community into.” The effects of tourism running rampant are perhaps most evident in Rarotonga’s Muri lagoon – often described as the island’s crown jewel. Hotels and posh holiday homes dot this stretch of golden sand, but sewerage systems have failed to cope under the strain of increasing visitor numbers. Once pristine, Muri lagoon’s turquoise waters are frequently tarnished with overgrowths of algae. Florence Syme-Buchanan, leader of a Muri lagoon citizen action group and journalist, says Rarotonga’s environment has been neglected for the sake of economic growth. “We do get it that tourism brings in the much-needed dollars. But at what price?” she asks. Demand among New Zealand travellers since the opening of two-way quarantine-free travel in May exceeded expectations. Too many visitors and too fast, says Syme-Buchanan. “One minute we locals were marvelling how wonderful it was to have our island back, despite many of us losing income from tourist related activities, such as the weddings I did as a celebrant,” she says. “We talk amongst ourselves about how tourism has gone right back to what it was, uncontrolled and that constant push for more and more. I really fear for our island because it is undergoing critical environmental damage from which it may never heal again.” Calls for government to put the brakes on the industry go back to at least the early 90s, when the Cook Islands welcomed just 35,000 tourists a year. In 2017 the opposition MP Selina Napa called on the government to cap arrival numbers while upgrades were made to Rarotonga’s roads, waste collection, and sewer systems. Despite receiving strong pushback from government and industry circles at the time, she says her stance on the matter hasn’t changed. “We are a small island nation and the only real resource is our beautiful islands which the tourists are here to enjoy.” Another casualty caused by tourism’s growth may be the country’s demographics. Industry critics often point to the lack of career choices for indigenous Cook Islanders, many of whom head overseas in search of higher-paying jobs. Born and raised in Rarotonga, Nana Short set up a small spa on the shores of Muri lagoon in 2018 while tourism was flourishing. When borders closed, she saw nearly her entire customer base evaporate. To make up the loss in income, she took up a job delivering hydroponically grown vegetables. “I really wasn’t fussed,” she says. “When the pandemic hit, my mind just went back to those old times, when everybody was free and there wasn’t this rush to go here or there or get things done.” Even though tourists have returned, she says she is going to take her time in restarting her business. In the meantime she has begun studying. Looking ahead to the future, Short says she wants to see government policies work towards offering youth opportunities outside tourism while increasing the minimum wage, which is less than half of New Zealand’s. “During the pandemic people began to realise how important it is to use our resources, our people, and create some sort of diversification,” she says. “A lot of these people work in the tourism sector and I know what it’s like. It’s hard work. It is long hours.” Reflecting on tourism’s steep climb since her childhood days on Rarotonga, Alex King says the country is lucky to have a thriving industry, but a lack of oversight by successive governments has the potential to cause critical damage to the environment. “This industry is a double-edged sword,” she says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/20/we-were-very-blessed-in-the-cook-islands-pandemic-proved-a-welcome-respite-from-tourists>



966) *August 21*. The Covid Delta variant has swept across south-east Asia over recent months, prompting lockdowns and overwhelming hospitals – from Malaysia to Thailand and Indonesia. Now the impact is being felt in the **PHILIPPINES**, just as the country's chronic lack of health workers reaches a crisis point. "The disease has become very aggressive," said Michael Bilan, who works on a Covid ward in Manila. This time, patients tend to require a higher amount of oxygen, for longer, he said. The number of Covid patients is also at a record high: last week, 277 were receiving treatment. New wards have been opened to meet demand. The Philippines is one of the world's biggest suppliers of nurses, with 17,000 leaving to work overseas, including in the UK and the US, in 2019. But it is increasingly struggling to staff its own wards, where pay is low and conditions poor. Last week, the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines estimated 40% of private hospital nurses quit last year, and more have left following new waves of infections this year. Maristela Abenojar, president of Filipino Nurses United, warned more will go unless the government begins large-scale recruitment to ease the pressure on wards, and pays overdue benefits to staff. "If they don't act immediately in the next few days there might be a huge mass mobilisation among the health workers," she said. The warning comes as cases in the country, one of the worst hit in south-east Asia, continue to rise. On Saturday, 16,694 infections were reported, as well as and 398 deaths – the second-highest daily death toll since the pandemic began. So far, 31,596 people have died. Last year, the government sought to ease the health worker crisis by setting up an emergency recruitment scheme with benefits such as a 20% salary boost for a minimum three-month contract. It has done little to improve conditions, says the FNU. Controversially, the government banned healthcare workers from moving to work overseas, halting travel plans of nurses who had spent vast sums of money training, taking tests and obtaining the papers required for working in other countries. The measure was later replaced with a cap on the number allowed to leave, following fierce protests from nursing groups.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/21/raging-delta-variant-takes-its-toll-as-philippines-runs-out-of-nurses>

967) *August 22*. A new report on the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic will be placed on the US president's desk this week. His team was given 90 days in May to review the virus's origins after several US scientists indicated they were no longer certain about the source of Sars-CoV-2. It will be intriguing to learn how Biden's team answers the critically important questions that still surround the origins of Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Did it emerge because of natural viral spillovers from bats to another animal and then into humans? Or did it leak from the Wuhan Institute of Virology? And, if so, had it been enhanced to make it especially virulent? These are important questions – to say the least. If we want to prevent another pandemic, it would be very useful to know how this one started. However, given the paucity of new information Biden's team will have unearthed over the past three months – while the Chinese authorities have continued to provide little extra data – it is unlikely hard answers will be provided this week. Professor James Wood of Cambridge University said: "I think there is very strong evidence for this being caused by natural spillovers but that argument simply does not suit some political groups. They promote the idea that Covid-19 was caused by a lab leak because such a claim deflects attention from increasing evidence that indicates biodiversity loss, deforestation and wildlife trade – which increase the dangers of natural spillovers – are the real dangers that we face from pandemics." In other words, fiddling with



viruses in laboratories is not the dangerous activity. The real threat comes from the wildlife trade, bulldozing rainforests and clearing wildernesses to provide land for farms and to gain access to mines. As vegetation and wildlife are destroyed, countless species of viruses and the bacteria they host are set loose to seek new hosts, such as humans and domestic livestock. This has happened with HIV, Sars and very probably Covid-19. And that, for many scientists, is the real lesson of Covid-19.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/22/the-wuhan-lab-leak-theory-is-more-about-politics-than-science>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/25/us-intelligence-biden-inconclusive-report-covid-origins-wuhan-lab-animals>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-58331657>

968) *August 22.* After recording one of the world's lowest Covid rates last year, **CUBA** now has one of the highest in the western hemisphere. The island, which reported 12,225 confirmed cases in all of 2020, has reported almost 50 times that so far this year. And with the Delta variant having taken root, a lack of medical supplies is crippling the medical response. "There are no antibiotics, no painkillers, the basic list of medicines is almost all out of stock," said Daniela, a family doctor in Havana who has hardly had a day off since the pandemic began. In the face of extreme scarcity, doctors are increasingly prescribing herbal remedies. Mortuaries are overwhelmed. The country's main oxygen factory recently broke down, compounding the intensive care crisis. Cuba last year hospitalised everybody who tested positive for Covid, including asymptomatic cases. But even for a country with the world's highest doctor-to-patient ratio, average daily case loads of 9,000 have made that protocol unworkable. Now children, the elderly, pregnant women and severe cases are hospitalised, while others must isolate at home. Hundreds of doctors have been brought back from international "missions" abroad – a major hard currency generator for the state – to support exhausted colleagues. But the move has not been enough to stop the system, which last year was a model of test, track and isolate, from fraying. The pandemic, which eliminated tourism, and US sanctions have knocked billions of dollars from state coffers, creating a dire economic crisis and contributing to unprecedented political unrest on the island. Strapped for cash, Cuba's public health system has been forced to perform triage: focusing on expensive vaccine production at the expense of other medical supplies. Prime minister, Manuel Marrero, last week recognised the depth of the crisis in uncharacteristically forthright language. Provinces "lack antigen tests [and] medicines", he told party officials in Cienfuegos. "But there are more complaints about subjective problems than objective problems. When you add up the [complaints about] lack of medicines, they are less than the number of complaints about mistreatment, lack of care, and home visits." His comments provoked outcry on social media, and 23 doctors in the eastern province of Holguin posted a video rebuttal on Facebook. "We want to keep saving lives," said Dr Daily Almaguer, a heart specialist, in the video. "We are not the ones responsible for our country's healthcare collapse." The doctors have since been summoned by authorities. The spike, unimaginable last year, comes as Cuban scientists race to achieve immunity through vaccination. Cuba is the smallest country in the world to have developed its own Covid vaccines. Both Soberana 2 and Abdala have an efficacy rate of over 90%, according to clinical trials. But US sanctions – supercharged by Trump, left in place by Biden – have slowed rollout. Since the outgoing Trump administration designated Cuba as a "state sponsor of terrorism", firms have taken

fright and just a handful of banks in the world will now transfer funds from Cuban entities, complicating imports. Cuban scientists say industrial scale production of Soberana 2 was stalled for weeks as they could not source an essential component. “The lack of one small ingredient or one small control item can really throw production off,” said Gail Reed, executive editor of *Medic Review*, a peer-reviewed health journal. “US sanctions have had a nefarious, even lethal, effect on Cuba’s ability to face down the latest surge.” Though slow out of the starting blocks, Cuba now has the third highest vaccination rate in Latin America (behind Chile and Uruguay). Twenty-seven per cent of the population has now been fully vaccinated, and 44% have received at least one dose. Come September, scientists say, the island will have produced enough doses to vaccinate the whole population. “We remain in combat against the pandemic,” said Dr Gerardo Guillén, Abdala’s lead developer. “The vaccines are working, as the data is now showing,” he added, referring to falling infection and mortality rates in Havana, where the mass vaccination campaign began. Until millions more are fully vaccinated, the country’s exhausted army of underpaid doctors must trudge on. “We are doing the impossible,” said Julia, the community doctor still mourning the death of her cousin. “Despite the lack of medicines, gloves and oxygen, doctors are fighting to save lives. They really are heroes.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/22/cuba-coronavirus-vaccines-health-system>

969) *August 23*. **TAIWAN** has begun administering its first domestically developed Covid-19 vaccine, amid criticism that its approval was rushed. The island's health ministry authorised emergency use of the Medigen vaccine last month although clinical trials are yet to be completed. Taiwan's vaccination efforts have been hampered by delivery delays and hesitancy amongst its population. President Tsai Ing-wen led the way in receiving the Medigen jab on Monday. At the time of its approval, the vaccine - made by Medigen Vaccine Biologics Corp - has yet to complete phase three trials but was granted emergency approval by regulators. The company said there were no major safety concerns and studies showed that antibodies created were "no worse than" those created by AstraZeneca's vaccine. It's expected to complete the final round of trials being held in Paraguay later this year. Medigen, whose Chinese name literally means "high-end", is a recombinant protein vaccine, similar to the vaccine developed by Novavax. The Novavax jab uses a more traditional method of recreating part of the spike protein of the virus to stimulate the immune system.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58301573>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/25/taiwan-zero-covid-cases-outbreak-vaccine-test-trace>

970) *August 23*. A woman farmer in **SAMOA** using innovation and technology to overcome economic hardship as the Pacific Island nation seeks ways to adapt to the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Although Samoa, with a population of less than 200,000, remains one of a few countries in the world without a positive Covid-19 case, its border closed in March 2020 after the government declared a state of emergency, dealing the country’s economy a decisive blow. Tourism, regarded as the mainstay of the economy, has been crippled by the absence of foreign visitors for nearly two years. Hotels, restaurants and tourism-related businesses have had to shut their doors and look elsewhere to make ends meet. But it’s not just the inner circle of

the tourism industry that has been affected. Domestic growers and farmers, who had relied on the steady and frequent influx of visitors, suddenly found themselves on the back foot. Among them is Shelley Burich, the owner of an organic vanilla farm, which profited from the tourism industry. Burich's farm and business, perched on the cool heights of Vaoala, overlooking Apia, the capital of Samoa, was booming prior to the pandemic. "Before Covid I was relying a lot on tourists that would be coming to the islands," said Burich. "I was getting people looking to come and tour the vanilla farm, and a lot of my business was word of mouth. So when the borders closed, that stopped." Like other farmers, Burich needed to be innovative to survive. She did not sit idle. Days of studying social media and innovation gave birth to her new baby, "Long Distance Vanilla." "I make my own composting and mulching to feed the vanilla, and from the vanilla beans we export our premium beans, which are the grade ones and twos," she explains. "From the other beans I make value-added products like vanilla syrup, vanilla extract and vanilla powder." Outside-the-box thinking and digitalization were critical to transforming her fortunes. "I decided to go full-time into the social media realm. I created an online store, and I had to figure out a way to keep my business generating products and getting it out of Samoa. My products are now being sold to Ireland, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, US and all over."

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/08/samoa-woman-farmer-shows-way-as-small-island-developing-state-battles-pandemics-impacts/>

971) *August 25*. Disney Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean became the latest companies to announce that passengers would be required to show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination in order to board their cruises. The two companies updated their policies on Tuesday, joining Norwegian Cruise Lines, MSC, and Carnival in adding the public health measure in light of pushback from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. In Disney's updated policy, the company will require proof of vaccination for all customers 12 and older for cruises sailing from the Bahamas September 3 until November 1. Tuesday's new guidance for Royal Caribbean mirrors Disney's update and makes mention of cruises also sailing from the Bahamas. Last Thursday, the **BAHAMAS** government enacted an emergency order which would block cruise ships coming into its ports from Florida unless companies provide proof that all passengers on board have been vaccinated against COVID-19. The cruise lines vaccine passport policies have fallen into line this week following a legal win for Norwegian Cruise Line against the state of Florida, and after the new declaration from the Bahamas. On August 8, days before Norwegian Cruise Lines' first voyage from Miami, a federal judge sided with Norwegian and ruled that the state of Florida could not require the company to rescind its vaccine documentation policies. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis first signed an executive order in April banning state agencies and businesses from requiring vaccine documentation, and Florida's GOP-led legislature passed a bill that expanded the order in May. In her ruling, US District Judge Kathleen Williams said that Florida failed "to provide a valid evidentiary, factual, or legal predicate" for a vaccine passport ban, warning about the potential public health hazards. "We are pleased that Judge Williams saw the facts, the law and the science as we did and granted the Company's motion for preliminary injunction allowing us to operate cruises from Florida with 100% vaccinated guests and crew," Daniel S. Farkas, Norwegian's executive vice president, said in the statement.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/disney-and-royal-caribbean-cruise-lines-will-require-vaccine-bahamas-2021-8?r=US&IR=T>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2021/09/17/caribbean-cruise-cdc-do-not-travel-list/?sh=70eccf85964b>

972) *August 26*. **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** has banned all repatriation flights from India, after accusing the country's high commission of a deliberate "deception" that resulted in passengers infected with Covid-19 arriving in the country. "India must respect Papua New Guinea as a sovereign nation, and not participate in actions involving unscrupulous people to violate our laws and undermine public health and safety measures," PNG's police commissioner, David Manning, said in a statement. "As a consequence of this deliberate show of disrespect against the people and government of Papua New Guinea, there is now an indefinite ban on any further repatriation flights from India. Further, CapaJet and Garuda Indonesia are now prevented from entering Papua New Guinea airspace until further notice." Papua New Guinea's borders are closed to most travellers due to the pandemic. Health authorities there fear the country could be ripe for a major Delta outbreak, due to low testing rates, a high percentage of positive tests and low vaccination rates. Manning's statement came after a Garuda Indonesia flight originating in India arrived in Port Moresby last Thursday with 81 people onboard, twice as many as had been agreed to. Manning said the repatriation flight had previously been rejected four times and had only received permission after it was agreed that passengers would be capped at 42 and that all of those onboard would take a Covid-19 PCR test two days prior to departure. "The Indian government allowed some passengers to board the aircraft without undertaking a Covid-19 test and returning a negative result," Manning said. "This failure has meant that the flight carried four individuals into Papua New Guinea who are infected with Covid-19. "We are very fortunate that each of these four people appeared to no longer be infectious, and all other passengers have been tested and returned negative results."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/26/papua-new-guinea-bans-flights-from-india-after-accusing-it-of-covid-test-deception>

973) *August 26*. The struggle against COVID-19 and its Delta variant in **JAMAICA** has been full of twists and turns. August 24, the third of a week-long "No Movement Day" restriction aimed at curbing a major surge in new infections, saw plenty of movement in and around vaccination centres in several rural areas, with the Ministry of Health and Wellness happily reporting that a record 21,000 doses had been administered. Even before the presence of the Delta variant was confirmed on August 18 the number of new cases had been rising steeply. They now stand at 90 per cent of the peak on March 19. Currently, there is a daily average of 625 new infections. A portion of this spike was attributed to large entertainment events that were permitted over the Emancipation/Independence holidays in early August. By August 23, there were close to 14,000 active cases reported on the island, with 149 critically ill patients in hospital. A shipment of the Pfizer vaccine, the first of three tranches donated by the United States, arrived in Jamaica on August 19, with rollout starting just two days later, on August 21. The 208,260 doses were earmarked for the 12 to 18 age group in the hope that they will be able to return to physical school by October. Though slow at first, uptake increased rapidly as COVID numbers reached record highs over the weekend, with some adults also being allowed to take the Pfizer vaccine.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/08/26/after-weeks-of-hesitancy-and-soaring-covid-numbers-jamaicans-crowd-vaccination-centres/>

974) *August 27.* Before the pandemic, many **PACIFIC** island countries grappled with low numbers of students completing secondary education. Now experts in the region are concerned that the closure of schools to contain the spread of COVID-19, and the economic downturn, will lead to even more students dropping out of education early. It's an issue that has consequences for the region's future development, given its large youth population. The Pacific Islands is home to about 11.9 million people, more than half aged below 23 years. And 90 percent of Pacific Islanders reside in the southwest Melanesian countries of Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/08/pacific-community-warns-threat-education-retention-wake-covid-19/>

975) *August 29.* In **GADELOUPE** and **MARTINIQUE**, the two main French islands in the Caribbean, obituaries are traditionally read by radio anchors during popular segments that last about 20 minutes every day. But as the two islands battle a fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic, radio stations have had to make space for obituary segments that now can last up to an hour, with 60 deaths announced per day. While the rise in COVID-19 infections in mainland France over the summer caused fewer hospitalizations and deaths than the previous waves, a failed vaccination campaign in the islands, hindered by distrust in national authorities - especially on health matters - led to what doctors on the ground call "a war scene." The contrast between islands and mainland is stark: 62.9 percent of the overall French population is fully vaccinated as of August 25. On the islands, it's a third of that. Only about 22.5 percent of people aged over 12 are now fully immunized in Martinique, and about 20 percent in Guadeloupe, which both have slightly under 400,000 inhabitants. In Guadeloupe, the pandemic registered a "slight decline" but remains "serious," Valerie Denux, director general of Guadeloupe's regional health agency, said in a statement. Local authorities on the island said they have surpassed 6,000 cases last week with 336 new patients in hospitals. The number of intensive care beds has been tripled (92 beds) and 26 patients were evacuated to mainland on August 25. In one week, 115 people died. This has led authorities on both islands to extend their lockdown, closing beaches and shops selling non-essential items. Tourists, who flocked to the islands' sandy shores in June and July, flew back for the most part. Those who are still there are advised to leave. "If we needed proof that the vaccination is the best response to the [faster-spreading] Delta variant, unfortunately the Antilles have provided, if I can put it this way, a cruel proof," President Emmanuel Macron said during a cabinet meeting. On social media, Health Minister Olivier Véran appealed for volunteer doctors and nurses to travel to Guadeloupe and Martinique, where he said hospitals were "overflowing." In two weeks, almost 500 doctors, nurses and firefighters went to Guadeloupe and Martinique.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/french-islands-martinique-guadeloupe-coronavirus-pandemic-fourth-wave-vaccines-infections-chlordecone/>

976) *August 29.* Finding ways to be smarter producers of food was a priority in SIDS before the outbreak of Covid-19. Now the ideas of farmers and entrepreneurs, such as Piri Maao in the **COOK ISLANDS**, are being avidly sought by governments and development bodies, which are keen to drive resilience and recovery as the pandemic moves into its second year. Similar to other SIDS, the Cook Islands has limited arable land and finite water resources, while agricultural production has declined in recent decades and food imports increased. In April this year, Maao was awarded a SMART AgriTech funding grant by the government of the Polynesian nation to establish a



solar-powered hydroponics greenhouse to grow vegetables year round. “Growing in a greenhouse eliminates any environmental issues, such as rain and wind, which I currently face in a soil-based system. There is a reduced use of pesticides; insect screens will help eliminate a lot of the larger insects, such as moths and beetles. Solar power to run the system ensures sustainability and low running costs,” Maa, an agricultural entrepreneur on the island of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, told IPS. The SMART AgriTech Scheme, which was launched in July 2020, is one way the Cook Islands government has responded to the pandemic with a long-term vision.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/08/cook-islands-entrepreneur-develops-hydroponics-greenhouse-boost-local-food-production/>

977) *August 30*. Even as COVID-19 walloped the **JAMAICA** economy last year, the government overhauled its energy emissions milestones to create what many described as a post-pandemic recovery package, based on stronger carbon targets for the farming and forestry sectors. According to the plan, the country would reduce emissions from both sectors by almost a third over the next decade, by optimising water and energy use and diversifying food production. Released at a time when most countries around the globe struggled to manage their economies during the pandemic using measures that were expected to set back their sustainability goals, experts hailed the plan as a game changer for a country in a steep economic decline resulting from COVID-19. Changes in land use, for development and increased agricultural activities, and reducing deforestation will cut emissions up to 28.5 per cent by 2030, according to the plan, which satisfies both local and international targets. Agriculture currently contributes about six per cent to Jamaica’s total emissions, while land use change and forestry account for 7.8 per cent.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/08/jamaica-walking-tightrope-boosting-economy-cutting-emissions-covid-19-era/>

978) *August 30*. After almost 18 months, children in Jakarta will begin to re-enter classrooms on Monday, as **INDONESIA**, which faces one of the worst Covid outbreaks globally, eases restrictions in some areas. Indonesia began gradually loosening its lockdown measures last week, allowing restaurants and places of worship to open their doors at 25% capacity, and malls to operate at 50% capacity. The relaxed rules were introduced across several regions in Java and Bali, including greater Jakarta, greater Bandung and greater Surabaya. In Jakarta, schools are also beginning to reopen their doors. From Monday, 610 schools will be ready to start face-to-face schooling, with classes held at 50% of the usual size, according to the Jakarta Education Agency. The schools will open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, while the remaining days will be used to spray classrooms with disinfectant. “The teachers, students and parents are excited with this new policy because we haven’t studied in class for a very long time,” said Nidia Khaofiya, 27, a teacher at an elementary school in East Jakarta. Schools in Jakarta have been shut since 16 March 2020. In the run up to the reopening, teachers have held online meetings with parents to make sure the correct safety measures are followed. Washbasins have been installed in front of every class and hand sanitisers prepared. “I think our work will be broader as we have to make sure that students will always wear masks and that they practise social distance at school,” said Nidia, who is teaching 10 and 11-year-olds in a fourth grade class. Children will take it in turns to attend school, so that class sizes are kept at 50%. This means more work for teachers, who will need to juggle both teaching online and offline. Just months ago, Jakarta was one of the worst hit

provinces in Indonesia, consistently recording the highest number of Covid-19 cases. But the capital has slowly seen a fall in infections. As of Sunday, Jakarta recorded 474 daily new cases, a major drop compared to months ago. By contrast, on 12 July it recorded one of its highest number of Covid cases with more than 14,600 new infections in a day. “Everything is going very well in Jakarta; the active cases, the bed occupancy rates at hospitals, the Covid deaths, everything is consistently decreasing. [That happened because] the restriction has been implemented well and the vaccination coverage has been boosted up,” said Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist from University of Indonesia. Across Jakarta, which has the highest vaccine coverage in the nation, 9.8 million people have received their first dose, while 5.6 million people have had two doses. Nidia said all of their students and almost all teachers have been vaccinated. In other provinces, however, where access to vaccines has been more limited, there are concerns about school reopenings leading to a rise in infections among children. Indonesia has seen one of the highest numbers of fatalities among children who have caught Covid. Data from Save the Children showed that until July, 351,336 children aged under 18 had been infected by Covid and 777 of them had died because of the virus. According to the Health Ministry, the percentage of overall Covid cases among children that were under 18 years of age has risen to 12.9%, compared to 5% in July last year. The ministry also recorded a case fatality rate in children under 18 years old was at 1%. While daily infections in Jakarta have fallen, elsewhere it’s a different story. Cases have risen in several areas such as Aceh, Lampung, Riau and North Sumatera. These areas are among the provinces that will remain under the strictest restrictions, known as level four, until 6 September. Indonesia still has the highest daily death toll globally, according to Our World in Data. Over the past week an average of 861 fatalities were reported each day, more than in any other country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/30/children-return-to-school-in-jakarta-as-indonesia-eases-covid-restrictions>

979) *August 31*. The British Virgin Islands are part of a rising number of **CARIBBEAN** destinations that attract vaccinated travelers - while proving less attractive to unvaccinated people. Along with Barbados and St. Lucia, the British Virgin Islands allow unvaccinated travelers to enter only if they quarantine. Data shows few are willing to do so, especially when they have other options in the Caribbean that don’t require quarantines or vaccine certificates. The relative strictness or leniency of entrance requirements in the Caribbean is reshaping travel trends in the region. Unvaccinated travelers are gravitating to the islands that will let them in, while the vaccinated want places that keep the unimmunized out. At least seven Caribbean nations and territories have announced mandatory vaccination policies for incoming adult travelers - Anguilla, Grenada, St. Barts, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, as well as the Cayman Islands.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/31/which-caribbean-islands-are-open-only-to-vaccinated-travelers.html>

<https://news.yahoo.com/most-caribbean-under-level-4-214000408.html>

980) *September 1*. Radically different experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic have created toxic geographical, generational and societal divides across **EUROPE** that could shape the continent’s politics for years to come, according to a study. Research by the European Council on Foreign Relations based on polling in 12 EU states shows

a “tale of two pandemics and two Europes”, with the past 18 months taking a vastly different toll on regions, age groups and individuals in the bloc. “Europe is today a continent of split experiences: stark divides have emerged that could be as serious as those of the eurozone debt crisis and the 2015 migration crisis,” said Mark Leonard, the director and co-founder of the ECFR and a co-author of the report. Although 54% of Europeans overall said they had not been seriously affected by the pandemic, the figure masked major differences, with majorities in southern and eastern Europe reporting significant personal challenges – while those in northern and western Europe largely viewed it as a “spectator sport”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/01/covid-toxic-divides-could-shape-europe-years-study>

981) *September 1*. A new coronavirus strain, named Mu, has been designated a variant of interest by the World Health Organization. Mu, or B.1.621, was first identified in Colombia and cases have been recorded in South America and Europe. The WHO’s weekly bulletin on the pandemic said the variant has mutations suggesting it could be more resistant to vaccines, as was the case with Beta, but that more studies would be needed to examine this further. It said: “Since its first identification in Colombia in January 2021, there have been a few sporadic reports of cases of the Mu variant and some larger outbreaks have been reported from other countries in South America and in Europe. “Although the global prevalence of the Mu variant among sequenced cases has declined and is currently below 0.1%, the prevalence in Colombia (39%) and Ecuador (13%) has consistently increased. “The epidemiology of the Mu variant in South America, particularly with the co-circulation of the Delta variant, will be monitored for changes.” There are four coronavirus variants of concern, as deemed by the WHO, with the Alpha variant – first recorded in Kent, England – seen in 193 countries, Beta in 141, Gamma in 91 and Delta in 170 countries, while Mu is the fifth variant of interest.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/01/who-monitoring-new-coronavirus-variant-named-mu>

982) *September 3*. Vaccines on horseback: **FIJI** doctors take long and muddy road to protect remote villages from Covid. To reach Nakida village in the highlands of Fiji, Dr Losalini Tabakei and her colleagues hiked for hours, up and down mountains, through forests, down muddy slopes, across rivers and along treacherous ridges with steep slopes of bamboo forest on either side. Their supplies – clothing, medical equipment and, crucially, the Covid-19 vaccines they were bringing to administer to the remote community of just 60 people – were sent separately on horseback; the vaccines in refrigerated boxes, the rest in bags wrapped in plastic. The horses took the longer but flatter route to the town along the river. The team, made up of Tabakei, a junior surgical consultant at CWM hospital in Fiji’s capital of Suva, as well as other surgeons, nurses, consultants, registrars, a police officer, interns and a local health worker, made the trip as part of the Fiji government’s campaign to “leave no one behind”. The country is grappling with a devastating Delta outbreak that has seen more than 500 people die and 47,000 cases – more than 5% of the country’s population of about 900,000 people. The Pacific nation has the dubious honour of having the highest per-capita rate of infection at times over the past month.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/04/vaccines-on-horseback-fiji-doctors-take-long-and-muddy-road-to-protect-remote-villages-from-covid>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2021/sep/04/fijian-doctors-trek-up-and-down-mountains-to-reach-remote-village-with-covid-vaccines-video>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451342/covid-19-infections-continue-to-rise-in-fiji-s-remote-islands>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451416/fiji-urged-to-speed-up-vaccination-restrictions-hamper-ngo-work-in-remote-islands>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451507/villagers-in-fiji-s-remote-islands-seek-clarity-on-covid-19-restrictions>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451723/fiji-govt-outlines-strategy-to-reopen-borders>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451950/villagers-in-remote-fiji-plead-for-food-refuse-covid-19-vaccine>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452457/covid-19-fiji-54-new-cases-reported-as-remote-villagers-step-up-vigilance>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452686/church-ministers-in-fiji-quit-over-refusal-to-vaccinate>

983) *September 4.* A large crowd has taken to the streets in Noumea in a demonstration against yesterday's decision by the **NEW CALEDONIA** Congress to make vaccinations against Covid-19 compulsory. According to *Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes*, several thousand people joined a march from the seat of government to the Congress building, organised by the group Reinfocovid. The demonstrators are also against the so-called health pass introduced in France. The rally comes just a day after the Congress unanimously voted to make vaccinations for adults mandatory by the end of the year. There is no general penalty for those refusing to comply, but medical staff and port and airport workers will be fined US\$1,750 if they refuse inoculation. New Caledonia is Covid-19 free but only a third of the population has been vaccinated.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/450754/new-caledonians-rally-against-compulsory-covid-19-vaccination>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/450735/new-caledonia-imposes-covid-19-vaccination-regime>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/451155/all-medical-personnel-in-new-caledonia-urged-to-help-with-covid-19-outbreak>

984) *September 5.* The work day in Fangshan starts before dawn and finishes at midday when fishers or farmers of mango and onion sit together in the shade, sharing a bucket of cooked prawns and bottles of Taiwan beer. The hometown of **TAIWAN** president, Fangshan's borders encompass a long stretch of coast and four villages that are home to around 5,500 people, sandwiched between mountains and oceans. Quiet and picturesque, it's left off most tourist trails, which instead focus on Kenting

national park to the south. But over the past few months something remarkable has happened here. The community, one of the poorest in Taiwan's poorest county, has beaten the Delta variant. How it did so offers very simple lessons for other countries struggling to suppress an outbreak. In June, midway through Taiwan's worst Covid outbreak of the pandemic with thousands of cases of the Alpha strain, authorities in the southern county of Pingtung detected a rush of cases in Fangshan, none of which appeared connected. At least three had some travel history, so the area's director of health, Shy Cherng-Guei, requested genomic sequencing. Two days later the results came back: Delta. "I was definitely in shock," recalls the county's political leader, magistrate Pan Men-An. "Pingtung was the first. All the preventative measures were for Alpha. We had no reference point, or anyone we could ask." Fangshan had much in its favour – a low-density rural population with an outdoor lifestyle, and high community compliance. But it also had a lot against it. Fangshan's health system is listed as "insufficiently resourced", 20% of the population is over 65, and there were no protocols in place for being Delta ground zero. Almost nobody was vaccinated. What followed was surprising in that it was nothing extraordinary. But it worked, and the outbreak was over in 19 days. The cluster would stop at 17, with one fatality. The first patient identified was 63-year-old Chang Feng-nan, one of his village's three or four taxi drivers. Other early cases included a 56-year-old woman and her eight-year-old grandson, both recently returned from Peru and quarantining at home. Delta spreads quickly. A total 667 people were quarantined or hospitalised as cases or close contacts. Chang's contacts alone – identified through a notebook he kept of his daily interactions – numbered around 100 and included passengers, friends and family, and their friends and family. Chang is believed to have caught the virus from a passenger he drove to hospital, who caught it from their partner who caught while taking out the garbage and having a fleeting chat with the boy next door who had been to Peru. A couple in Fangliao, 50km away, are suspected to have caught in when they sat in the same hospital waiting room as the pair who'd been to Peru. The 72-year-old wife died on 21 July. Pingtung's response had some simple key elements: speed, decisiveness, and overwhelming community cooperation with restrictions and contact tracing. Shy says a local response with central government resources was the key, as it limited bureaucratic delays. But the people's cooperation and existing pandemic hygiene (masks and handwashing) "gave us a lot of time to react". Before the genomic test results were back magistrate Pan announced a three-day soft lockdown of Fonggang and Shanyu villages over the community loudspeaker, and boxes of food and daily necessities were delivered to each household. Authorities established a command centre and Pan, Shy and senior health officials spoke nightly to discuss and enact new measures. "We felt like soldiers being assigned missions," says Lu Meng-lun, who led the command centre. More than 14,000 people were tested, some reportedly lining up for kilometres. The central government redirected 1,200 vaccines doses for all adults who had tested negative. Three days were spent disinfecting the villages. "People were scared," says Tai Feng-chin, Fangshan health clinic's head nurse, who led contact tracing investigations. "People in the villages kept calling the centre to ask how it was going, what they needed to do, how to prevent the virus," she says. Tai kept taking phone calls from home, estimating it peaked at 2-300 a day. At a Buddhist temple overlooking Fonggang, village warden Lin Jung-ji says he's proud of the community for looking after each other, but there should have been more government support. "I wish there were more resources and subsidies to those affected by the virus or who lost revenue," he says. The outbreak and lockdown coincided with the crucial annual harvest of mangoes, devastating many local farmers. Officials and leaders have been quick to praise for the people coming together for the greater good, but questions of formal financial compensation are often waved away. In Shanyu, taxi



driver Chang is at home, furious. He's still suffering some lingering effects from Covid, and an empty bedroom serves as a constant reminder that his elderly mother is still sick. He says he hasn't received a single follow-up call since he was discharged two months ago and was turned down for financial help for his mother's care. He feels aggrieved after helping investigators – often in the middle of the night – while he was sick himself, only to now be “abandoned”. He can't make any money either because people are too scared to get in his taxi. Many in Fangshan blame the government Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC) for the outbreak by allowing home quarantine for residents like the people returning from Peru. Taiwan bars most non-citizens from entering and puts most people in hotel quarantine, but eligible residents were allowed to isolate at home. “The CECC owes the people here a big apology,” says the head of Fonggangs's development association, Huang Lung-sien, angrily. The CECC has since reversed the policy, requiring all arrivals to isolate in hotels. It has also adopted other measures used in Pingtung, including second tests of quarantined cases before discharge, and expanded testing. Way back in March 2020, Dr Michael Ryan, the outspoken executive director of the WHO's emergencies program, warned the world that the greatest error countries could make was to hesitate. “Be fast, have no regrets. You must be the first mover. The virus will always get you if you don't move quickly.” Taiwan's first brush with Delta is unlikely to be its only one. At the time of publishing authorities were quarantining students at a northern school and their families as close contacts of a suspected Delta case – the child of a pilot. Pingtung's response was not perfect but it worked better than most. “I didn't think the transmission could be curbed so rapidly,” says director-general Shy. “Transmission of Delta in the outside world has been terrifying. When we contained the virus it felt like I was dreaming.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/05/speed-decisiveness-cooperation-how-a-tiny-taiwan-village-overcame-delta>

985) *September 8.* The **COOK ISLANDS**, **NIUE** and **TOKELAU** have some of the highest vaccination rates against Covid-19 in the world. But getting the vaccines to people on such isolated islands wasn't easy. Brittany Keogh spoke to some of those who helped ensure the roll-outs went smoothly. Wearing army fatigues, a motorbike helmet and latex gloves, a member of the New Zealand Defence Force carefully transferred a blue cardboard box labelled “Palmerston” from the HMNZS Wellington onto a waiting zodiac inflatable. Once the package was safely onboard, the little boat motored across the translucent water for the final stretch to take its contents to their destination. This was no ordinary contactless delivery. Inside the box were vials of the Pfizer vaccine which would be administered to the 57 residents of Palmerston Island, a coral atoll about 500 kilometres northwest of the largest of the Cook Islands, Rarotonga. Since that day in late July, the immunisation rollout against Covid-19 in the Cook Islands has become one of the most successful in the world – 96 per cent of the population aged 16-plus are now fully vaccinated. The country is one of several Pacific Island nations that have some of the best coverage rates internationally. Niue officials report that 97 per cent of its eligible population have had two Pfizer shots. Figures from Tokelau are even higher – with 99 per cent of those 16 and older fully immunised against Covid-19. But achieving that was no easy feat. Staff at the Immunisation Advisory Centre (Imac) in Auckland, New Zealand Defence Force personnel and local health authorities worked together to get the vaccine from Aotearoa to communities up to 3750 kilometres away. Imac national manager, Loretta Roberts, said planning for the rollout in Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau – which are self-governing, but have strong ties to New Zealand – began in December and

January. In April, Imac ran online training sessions for vaccinators on the ground in the Pacific and ensured they had access to the fridges and equipment needed to store the vaccine at a temperature of between 2 degrees Celsius and 8C for up to 31 days. While most vaccines come as doses already in a syringe with a needle attached, in an individual sealed box, the Covid-19 Pfizer vaccine is distributed in vials containing about five doses. To prepare the vaccines for injection, vaccinators have to dilute each vial with saline and then go through a procedure to equalise the vial to get the air out. If the pressure level is wrong, the vaccine won't be sucked into the syringe evenly. Imac staff and doctors, nurses and pharmacists in the Pacific practised the process together over Zoom, using equipment Imac had airfreighted to Niue, Tokelau and the Cook Islands. Once the training was done and the rollout ready to begin, the vaccines themselves were sent to Rarotonga by plane. Getting the vials to the more remote Palmerston Island and Tokelau was trickier, as they are not as accessible by air. So the Defence Force decided to use the HMNZS Wellington instead. When it came to the actual jabbing programme, which started in May, vaccinators got "creative" to ensure they reached everyone who wanted a vaccine. "They know their community. They know their people," Roberts said of the strengths of the respective rollouts. In the Cook Islands, they focused on each village. Public health staff picked up residents and drove them to a vaccination clinic. Afterwards they shared kai and refreshments at the community hall. Vaccinators also came to the homes of any community members who were less mobile and gave them injections there. Imac cold chain management expert Bernadette Heaphy said similar ingenuity was required in Tokelau. Because some villages on the atoll are extremely isolated, vaccinators had to transport the vaccines in chilly bins. To prevent the vaccines from expiring, they needed to ensure the temperature in the chilly bins remained below 8C. That was more difficult than just sticking a thermometer inside and shutting the lid, requiring staff to make a hole and insert a probe that monitors the temperature before sealing the hole. "Everything we planned for and the eventualities ... all of those things just actually ran incredibly smoothly from my point of view," Heaphy said. Roberts said New Zealand could learn something from Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau's vaccination rollouts. "I think one of the key [strengths was] being able to vaccinate as a family and a community group. If one person's getting vaccinated then everyone's getting vaccinated."

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/126262881/covid19-how-some-of-the-worlds-most-remote-islands-achieved-the-best-vaccination-rates>

986) *September 8.* **SCOTLAND** islands ferry operator CalMac has appealed to passengers to heed advice on wearing face coverings after multiple sailings were disrupted by Covid cases. Masks must be worn indoors on ferries, but CalMac said compliance had dropped from 95% to almost 50% on some routes. Managing director Robbie Drummond said in 10 of the past 31 days sailings on the west coast network had been affected by positive cases. Cases mean crew members having to self isolate and a deep clean of ferries. CalMac runs more than 30 boats to over 50 ports and harbours, which are located in the Western Isles, Inner Hebrides, Highlands, Ayrshire and Argyll and Bute. Services had been drastically reduced due to the pandemic, but following the relaxation of Covid rules earlier this year passenger numbers have rebounded to almost the record levels seen in 2019. To protect customers and crew from infection, face coverings are mandatory indoors on ferries unless a person is exempt.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-58487363>

987) *September 8*. While NSW is chasing a 70 per cent double-dose vaccination target, **LORD HOWE ISLAND** off the coast of Port Macquarie has hit about 95 per cent. The majority of the 400 residents who live on the island, which has not had a single case of COVID-19 since the pandemic began, have had two shots of the Pfizer vaccine. The island is considered regional NSW and is currently in lockdown just like everyone else in the state. Dr San Clarke said the decision was made to only send the Pfizer vaccine to the island because of the logistics of getting it there and appropriate for the greatest number of people, given there are pregnant woman on the island. "People here were very enthusiastic about being vaccinated so we can move back towards normality because having guests here is our primary industry," she said. "When we say 95 per cent vaccinated we mean 95 per cent of the eligible population, so initially that excluded under 16s." But as soon as the TGA approved the Pfizer vaccination for 12-15 year olds we went ahead and vaccinated our 12-15 years olds because they were off from school.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-08/lord-howe-island-hits-95-per-cent-vaccinated/100433614>

988) *September 9*. Since May, the Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has spread rapidly through most of Southeast Asia. It's now the **PHILIPPINES** that are cause for most concern in the region. The country has reported more than two million cases and 34,000 deaths. The daily case rate is the second highest in Southeast Asia, after Malaysia. The Philippines has experienced four waves of COVID-19. The first wave was modest, reaching a peak seven-day rolling average of 316 in early April 2020. From early June 2020, cases began to steadily increase leading into the second wave, which reached a peak of around 4,300 daily cases in late August. The third wave reached a peak of 11,000 average daily cases in mid-April 2021. However, it is the fourth wave, fuelled by the Delta variant, which is the most severe since the pandemic began and shows no sign of slowing. By September 8, the daily average had reached almost 19,000. The Philippines government imposed strict restrictions early in the pandemic. In mid-March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered Metro Manila and adjacent provinces to be put under "enhanced community quarantine" (ECQ). Under ECQ, mass gatherings were prohibited, government employees worked from home, school and university classes were suspended, only essential businesses stayed open, mass transportation was restricted, and people were ordered to observe social distancing. When ECQ was imposed on March 15, the country had reported just 140 cases and 12 deaths. Despite the restrictions, the totals reached 5,453 cases and 349 deaths one month later. The government relied heavily on the police and military to ensure all health protocols were followed. This led critics to denounce its militarist approach. Some civic groups providing assistance to communities faced harassment and attacks. Others criticised the government for taking a war-like approach that focused on identifying and punishing those who breached the rules rather than working cooperatively with, and providing financial support to, affected communities. The term "pasaway", a Filipino word referring to a stubborn person, became a punitive target in government communications. Amid the lockdown, the term pasaway referred to people violating government-imposed health protocols. At the end of May 2020, restrictions were gradually loosened, entailing the re-introduction of mass transportation and the opening of government offices and certain businesses. At this time, the average had risen to 578 daily cases, the highest since the pandemic began. The easing of restrictions was driven by economic factors – the unemployment rate had risen to 17.7% and 26% of businesses had closed. Amid the gradual easing of

quarantine restrictions, the Philippines saw an accelerating increase of COVID-19 cases. By the end of July, 75% of beds in intensive care units, 82% of isolation beds and 85% of ward beds in Metro Manila were occupied. Fast forward to early August 2021 as daily cases surged past 8,000. A new lockdown was announced in the National Capital District, which comprises more than half the country's economy. By August 20, Manila and surrounding provinces had been in either ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) or modified community quarantine for a total of 170 days since the beginning of the pandemic. On that day, restrictions were eased even as daily cases surged to a record high of 17,231 and 317 deaths. More than 26% of samples tested positive, the country's highest positivity rate so far. The Philippines is trying desperately to spur activity in an economy that contracted a record 9.5% last year. However, this risks having the health system totally overwhelmed. Many hospitals fear a mass exodus of nurses who are overworked, underpaid and constantly exposed to the virus. Filipino nurses are paid the lowest salaries among nurses in Southeast Asia. The response by the Philippines has often been among the strictest in the world. However, the imposition and lifting of restrictions have not always been based on the caseload. The easing of restrictions has been driven by a desire for economic revival. With only 14% of the population fully vaccinated and case numbers continuing to soar, the country is unlikely to vaccinate itself out of this outbreak before the health system is overwhelmed. With cases now occurring in all 17 provinces, a clear national "vaccine plus" policy needs to be urgently implemented to save both lives and livelihoods. This means while accelerating the vaccine rollout, there also need to be other preventive measures, such as mask wearing, physical distancing, attention to indoor ventilation, an effective test-trace-isolate system and, when necessary, localised lockdowns.

<https://theconversation.com/the-philippines-passes-the-2-million-mark-as-covid-19-cases-surge-in-southeast-asia-167186>

989) *September 10.* **VIETNAM** plans to reopen the beach-fringed island of Phu Quoc to foreign tourists from next month, authorities said, as the country looks at ways to revive an economy suffering from extended lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic. The island, 10 km (6 miles) off the coast of Cambodia, is expected to open for a trial period of six months, the government said in a statement issued late on September 9. Vietnam, which is currently shut to all visitors apart from returning citizens and investors, had managed to contain the virus for much of the pandemic but in the past three months has faced a surge in infections driven by the Delta variant.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/phu-quoc-vietnam-reopening-intl-hnk/index.html>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/vietnam-delays-reopening-resort-island-over-low-vaccination-rate-2021-09-24/>

990) *September 10.* After 20 months, 219 million cases, and more than four million deaths, we've learned a lot about the COVID-19 pandemic. But the most polarizing question and central mystery remains: We still don't know where the virus that started it all actually came from. Most experts were not surprised in late August when a 90-day investigation by the U.S. intelligence community came up empty-handed on the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. A brief, one-page unclassified summary released on August 27 revealed the only point on which the intelligence community agreed: that the virus was "not developed as a biological weapon." Understanding where, when, and how this pandemic started is important information for public health officials

seeking to control its spread and even prevent future outbreaks. If the source of the virus is found to be bats or another animal, as many experts suspect, preventative measures might include curtailing contact between that animal and those living or working in close proximity. Measures could involve regular surveillance of animals and humans living where the virus is endemic to reduce the likelihood of future spillover - when a virus is transmitted to a human, directly or via a host animal, triggering an outbreak. The results may also lead to broader policy decisions to curb deforestation and habitat fragmentation, and to block human settlements in known viral hot zones. Knowing where the pandemic virus arose could also lead to changes in human behavior, such as reducing demand for bushmeat and wildlife-derived products that drive the illegal wildlife trade. And if the virus is instead found to have leaked from a lab, that finding would no doubt spur scientists and policy-makers to find safer ways to study these pathogens.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/why-its-so-tricky-to-trace-the-origin-of-covid-19>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/10/biosurveillance-of-markets-and-legal-wildlife-trade-needed-to-curb-pandemic-risk-experts/>

991) *September 14*. When the COVID-19 pandemic first struck, and national governments responded with lockdowns of varying degrees, conservationists warned it would lead to a surge in illegal logging in tropical countries. They argued that with fewer eyes and ears on the ground for monitoring, combined with a ready supply of short-term labor in the form of unemployed people migrating from cities back to their home villages, the world's rainforests were bound to take a hit. Indeed, environmental campaigners interviewed by Mongabay in June 2020, just a few months into the pandemic, said their organizations had already detected signs of increased illegal activity. But according to new research in *Forest Policy and Economics*, different forces acting on the global macroeconomics have largely balanced each other out, so that increases in deforestation in one part of the world have been offset by decreases elsewhere. Global Forest Watch (GFW) found that tropical forest tree cover dropped by 12.2 million hectares (30.5 million acres) in 2020, a 12% increase over levels in 2019, according to the new paper. That's an area nearly the size of Greece. But the researchers write that the analysis should focus on a "three-year moving data average, which with the large 2016-18 declines was still dropping in 2020." This is because rates of loss in 2020 were still considerably below those in 2016 or 2017, so the three-year average of 2018-2020 is much lower than the two previous periods (2016-2018 and 2017-2019). Trends in the three largest tropical forest countries - Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Indonesia - continued largely unaffected by the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/study-fails-to-find-link-between-increased-deforestation-and-covid-crisis/>

992) *September 15*. Businesses at Malaysia's prime holiday destination are gearing up to welcome the return of tourists this week, as the country takes an early step towards recovery from a devastating coronavirus crisis. **LANGKAWI**, a cluster of 99 islands in the Straits of Malacca, will reopen from September 16 to fully vaccinated travelers as part of a domestic tourism bubble, with strict protocols in place to thwart the spread of the coronavirus. The plan is similar to that introduced in Thailand, which started with the July opening of Phuket, 220 km (137 miles) north of Langkawi, to vaccinated



foreign tourists. Like Phuket, Langkawi, known for its beaches, geoparks, bird life and rock formations, is not expecting huge numbers initially, with 400,000 visitors targeted by the end of the year and estimated revenues of 165 million ringgit (\$39.66 million).

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/langkawi-malaysia-travel-bubble-intl-hnk/index.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/09/28/where-can-i-travel-in-southeast-asia-here-whats-open-for-tourists.html>

993) *September 15*. There was “huge challenges” across the conservation world according to an IUCN report about the pandemic’s effect on protected areas in 90 countries. The unprecedented reduction in human activity during 2020 could shed light on otherwise impossible-to-measure human-wildlife interactions, according to scientists calling this window for crucial data collection the “Anthropause.” For example, beaches across the planet emptied as COVID-19 spread in 2020, with the first full lockdowns in many places coinciding with sea turtle nesting season. With less noise, less tourist boat traffic, less fishing, less beach furniture clutter and less light pollution, the hazards and challenges for sea turtles nesting appeared to decline. Nesting figures increased in 2020, according to many turtle conservation organizations across the globe. Initially, conservationists ascribed this uptick to populations “thriving” because humans were in lockdown. But researchers and conservationists say the truth is more nuanced.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/saving-sea-turtles-in-the-anthropause-successes-and-challenges-on-the-beach/>

[https://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Waithaka\\_et\\_al\\_10.2305-IUCN.CH\\_2021.PARKS-27-SIJW.en\\_-1.pdf](https://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Waithaka_et_al_10.2305-IUCN.CH_2021.PARKS-27-SIJW.en_-1.pdf)

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-1237-z>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/when-north-america-locked-down-birds-filled-the-gap-left-by-people/>

994) *September 15*. **CUBA** seeks WHO approval of its Covid-19 vaccines. A vetting process will start Thursday with WHO experts examining the nation's Abdala and Soberana 02 jabs, said Rolando Perez of state pharma group BioCubaFarma. Perez said the experts would examine the vaccines' "safety, immunogenicity (the ability of a vaccine to provoke an immune response) and efficacy." Cuba has been using domestically-produced vaccines in its Covid-19 inoculation campaign, including for children. The vaccines, the first developed in Latin America have yet to undergo international, scientific peer review. They are based on recombinant protein technology - the same used by the United States' Novavax and France's Sanofi jabs. Unlike many other shots in use, recombinant vaccines do not require extreme refrigeration. Perez said Cuba's ability to sell its vaccines to other countries does not depend on WHO approval, as this is a decision for national health authorities. But it would "facilitate (the vaccines)" entry into the market in other nations, once the island's needs are covered." Several countries including Argentina and Mexico have shown interest in acquiring the Cuban jabs, Venezuela has already signed a purchase contract, and Iran is producing Soberana 02 on home soil. Under American sanctions

since 1962, communist Cuba has a long tradition of making its own vaccines, dating back to the 1980s. Nearly 80 percent of its inoculations are produced locally. Cuban scientists say the Abdala and Soberana 02 jabs have been shown to be more than 90 percent effective at preventing symptomatic Covid-19 cases. The island of 11.2 million people has fully vaccinated about 38.5 percent of its population, also using China's Sinopharm inoculation. The country has registered 768,497 Covid cases and 6,523 deaths.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210915-cuba-seeks-who-approval-of-its-covid-19-vaccines>

995) *September 16*. Policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis have exacerbated rather than reduced global inequalities. On the one hand, the net wealth of billionaires has risen to record levels since the outbreak of the pandemic (increasing by more than US\$ 5 trillion to US\$ 13.1 trillion from 2020 to 2021), on the other hand, the number of people living in extreme poverty has also increased massively (by approx. 100 million to 732 million in 2020). These contrasts alone show that something is fundamentally wrong in the world. In response to the disastrous effects of the pandemic, there was much talk of solidarity with regard to health support, including access to vaccines. But the brutal national competition for vaccines shows that solidarity is embraced by many world leaders merely as a rhetorical flourish. The World Health Organization (WHO) made an early appeal to countries to agree on a coordinated distribution of vaccines, with available doses distributed fairly according to the size of each country's population. This has not happened. By the end of August 2021, more than 60 percent of the people in high-income countries had received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, but less than 2 percent have done so in low-income countries. The European Commission, the USA, the UK, and numerous other countries have signed bilateral COVID-19 Vaccine Agreements with pharmaceutical producers to secure vaccine quotas. By the end of August 2021, more than 400 agreements were concluded, securing over 18 billion doses of vaccine. The European Commission has so far negotiated supply agreements for 4.3 billion doses of vaccine, equivalent to 8 vaccine doses per capita of the EU population. The UK could vaccinate its population 9 times with the contracted doses, the USA 10 times and Canada as many as 16 times. Exacerbating the problem for many countries in the global South is the enormous cost of vaccines. The producers do not charge standard prices, but vary their prices depending on the quantity purchased and the bargaining power of the purchaser. Occasionally, they grant preferential terms to rich countries, while countries in the global South sometimes have to pay higher prices. For example, the European Commission received a batch of AstraZeneca vaccine for US\$ 2.19, while Argentina had to pay US\$ 4.00 and the Philippines US\$ 5.00. Botswana had to pay US\$ 14.44 million for 500,000 doses of Moderna vaccine, or US\$ 28.88 per dose, while the USA got Moderna's vaccine at almost half the price (US\$ 15.00). While the vaccine pharmaceutical oligopoly makes exorbitant profits, countries of the global South are confronted with falling government revenues and rising debt burdens. The situation will worsen as regular vaccine boosters become necessary in the coming years. What is tantamount to a license to print money for the pharmaceutical companies is a massive burden on public budgets. In view of this dramatic disparity, the promise to "leave no one behind" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains an empty slogan.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/09/covid-19-recovery-requires-justice-beyond-rhetoric/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/sep/22/big-pharma-fuelling-human-rights-crisis-over-covid-vaccine-inequity-amnesty>

996) *September 20*. On the nightly television news, there are tears and recriminations from family members as curious neighbours gather to stare at the scene of yet another murder. While **JAMAICA** fights its way through a daunting “third wave” of the COVID-19 pandemic, another insidious, seemingly intractable trend continues: a rising homicide rate. Throughout a recent series of three-day lockdowns to combat the increasing number of COVID-19 infections - over the period August 22 to September 14 - violent crime continued unabated. According to the latest police statistics, murders have increased by 10.5 per cent compared with the same period in 2020 and, at 991 up to September 11, the island is about to reach the 1,000 mark for murders committed this year. Three police divisions, two in the capital, Kingston, and one in the St. James area of Montego Bay along the country's north coast, have logged the highest numbers this year and according to police as many as 72 per cent of the murders have been gangland killings. The regional crime investigative reporting organisation Insight Crime reported that Jamaica had the highest murder rate in the Latin America/Caribbean region in 2020, at 46.5 per 100,000, ahead of Venezuela and Honduras.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/09/20/a-sweeping-spate-of-murders-rivals-covid-19s-third-wave-in-jamaica/>

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/10/08/jamaica-forced-to-dump-55000-doses-as-covid-19-vaccine-hesitancy-persists/>

997) *September 21*. Before the pandemic, most visitors to **MONTSERRAT** floated in for maybe a day, anchoring their sailboats in the port or scurrying off the ferry for a hike before returning to nearby Antigua for the night. Now in order for a tourist to even set foot on Montserrat's black sand beaches, they must pass a rigorous background check and make at least \$70,000 a year. Until recently, they also had to commit to sticking around for at least two months. In exchange, visitors get almost exclusive access not only to beaches, but also an alternate reality, roughly the size of Manhattan, where the coronavirus does not seem to exist. Soon after the British territory detected its first few coronavirus cases in March 2020, it closed its borders to tourists. In April 2021, it cautiously reopened with the remote worker program, requiring both vaccinated and unvaccinated visitors to quarantine for two weeks and then take a coronavirus test before exploring the island. So far, 21 travelers from seven families have participated. The island is certainly not alone in devising creative ways to lure visitors during the pandemic. Countries around the world have crafted and recrafted a vast array of systems to try to keep the money flowing in without endangering the local population's health. Malta bans unvaccinated tourists from more than 30 countries, but provides hotel vouchers to visitors deemed safe. Numerous Caribbean islands have tried to lure remote workers with “digital nomad visas” that allow a visitor to stay a year or even longer. But Montserrat's program stands out even in a sea of unconventional experiments because the island chose to flip the standard term of a visa - the maximum amount of time someone can stay - on its head, requiring instead a minimum visit. It's also unusual because while other islands have emphasized how easy they want to make it for remote workers to visit, Montserrat has seemed proud of making it hard to join its roughly 5,000-person bubble, where few wear masks or lock their doors. “They're very selective in who they let in,” said David Cort, a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts,

Amherst, who spent three months working from Montserrat with his wife, a travel risk analyst, and their daughter. “I was told that they actually turned people down.” As to whether the program has benefited the island depends on who you ask. What everyone agrees is that the stakes are high. The primary driver of the economy is exporting volcanic sand, not tourism. Still, Rose Willock, a broadcaster who lost her home to the volcano, noted, “It’s always a challenge when we don’t have enough people coming to our island.” Before the pandemic, local businesses counted on 18,000 to 21,000 tourists a year, according to the tourism authority. But more pressing is, of course, the virus. As of Sept. 15, 33 people had tested positive in the previous 18 months, according to the Ministry of Health. In April 2020, long before tourists were permitted to visit, one infected person died. Given that only around 23 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated, there’s a widespread understanding that if the virus ricocheted across the island, the medical system could not handle it. Should that happen, it could set Montserrat back by years. The volcanic eruption drove two thirds of the population off the island. It has been recovering, but slowly. “We cannot afford to have the pandemic overtake our situation,” Ms. Willock said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/21/travel/montserrat-vacation-coronavirus.html>

<https://cayman.loopnews.com/content/grenada-launch-digital-nomad-programme-0>

998) *September 21*. The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is preparing for the start of the **ANTARCTIC** travel season following months of discussion and collaboration with Antarctic gateways. The organization, which turned 30 this year, held a meeting with members on September 16 to discuss operations for the season ahead following recently released COVID-19 parameters for travel from Antarctic Gateways Argentina, Chile and the Falkland Islands. Gina Greer, IAATO Executive Director, said: “The past year-and-a-half has been challenging as we’ve learned more about COVID-19, and we and our members have constantly been re-evaluating the feasibility of a season. This has required a great deal of flexibility and agile working on behalf of our members and conversations are continuing as the season draws closer.” The Association, which has more than 100 members worldwide, has been working diligently over the last 16 months to deliver keystone recommendations regarding COVID-19 protocols when Antarctic operations resume in late 2021. Much of this work has involved close collaboration with Antarctic gateway countries. Some members have taken the difficult decision not to operate for the 2021/22 season, but for the majority, preparations are continuing.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/09/21/iaato-preparing-for-the-season-with-tour-operators-and-antarctica-gateways>

999) *September 21*. Geopolitical jockeying for influence has got some **PACIFIC** island nations vaccinated against Covid-19 much quicker than New Zealand. But is there a quid pro quo? The Marshall Islands has said they don’t need vaccines from COVAX, Palau and Guam are vaccinating tourists and Fiji is preparing to open its borders as 80 percent of its adult population will soon be vaccinated. Vaccination rates in some Pacific countries and territories are tracking at levels higher than those in New Zealand and nearing some of the best in the world. It’s an achievement that wouldn’t be possible without the donations of rich benefactors. Those donations, in part, come because global vaccination is crucial to ending the pandemic. But countries are also donating vaccines as a way to win friends at a time when both China and the U.S are trying to grow political influence and cement relationships in the region. “All

aid comes with what we call a ‘soft diplomacy’ approach,” says Berlin Kafoa, director of the Public Health Division at the Pacific Community (SPC). Even so, he says the vaccines are welcome as Pacific countries can’t safely reopen without them. “If vaccines are delivered in bulk and in time, then the economic impact on poor nations will be less,” says Kafoa. A number of the countries including Palau, the Cook Islands, Niue and Nauru have fully vaccinated more than 60 percent of their total population, according to Our World in Data, a project based at Oxford University. Other countries such as Fiji are rapidly catching up. In comparison, just 3.7 percent of Africa’s total population is vaccinated. There are some exceptions – Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati are still struggling to gain vaccine momentum with less than 10 percent of their total populations fully vaccinated. The countries are facing issues with vaccine hesitancy and logistical challenges in their rollouts. Papua New Guinea recently transferred unused vaccines donated by New Zealand to Vietnam. In August, China’s President, Xi Jinping, said this year his country aimed to provide two billion Covid-19 vaccines to the world and a further US\$100 million to the global fight. This announcement came days after the White House said it had already donated and shipped more than 110 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to more than 60 countries, making it, at that point, the biggest donor of vaccines globally. The US has pledged to donate half a billion Covid-19 vaccines worldwide. “The United States has not and will not use its vaccines to secure favours from other countries. Our aim is to save lives,” a White House statement said at the time. However, President Joe Biden added in a speech the donations were sending a message in “proving democracies can deliver and, yet again, that America is back leading the world – not by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.” New Zealand’s offer has been smaller but not insignificant. The Government announced in May it would donate vaccines to immunise an estimated 1.2 million people in the Pacific over the coming year. Priority was given to the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, but if they need them, Samoa, Tuvalu and Tonga will receive vaccines for their populations. And vaccines would also be donated to Fiji. “The support from New Zealand was great,” says Bob Williams, Cook Islands Health Secretary. “A small country like ours wouldn’t have been able to secure the vaccine if we had to secure it ourselves.” The Cook Islands has vaccinated nearly all of its population over the age of 16 and has just approved vaccines for 12-to-15-year-olds. Larger or richer countries such as Israel and Russia have also made donations of their own to support countries without the money (or the size) to buy vaccines. “Essentially global vaccine diplomacy is mixing your larger health goals with your shared foreign policy objectives,” says Teesta Prakash, a sessional academic at Griffith University with a doctorate in international relations. “Specifically in the Indo-Pacific this is very important because it has become a region where there’s a lot of economic and strategic competition.” Many of the vaccines are donated through COVAX, aka the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access facility. COVAX is an international alliance that works to deliver vaccines to poorer countries. But vaccine donations in the Pacific that have come directly from other countries have been more efficient than the distribution from COVAX, says Anna Powles, a senior lecturer in the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at Massey University. She says French Pacific territories, New Zealand’s ‘realm countries’ and the three Micronesian countries have all benefited from their relationships with a larger power. “Vaccine diplomacy has played out to the benefits of the Pacific but even without that strategic competition I would have hoped that Australia and New Zealand would have vaccinated them,” she says. While Beijing initially sought to shape the pandemic narrative in the Pacific, vaccine donations by Australia have outpaced China’s, she adds. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokeswoman says the donation of vaccines from New



Zealand was consistent with our ongoing responsibility to Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands and supporting the Pacific region more broadly. China's influence has grown in the Pacific region over the past two decades as it has provided loans and aid, Chinese businesses have set up shop and its fishing fleets have ventured south. In response, the U.S, Australia and New Zealand have all stepped up their engagement with the region. The Pacific, with its votes at the United Nations, its resources – particularly tuna – and its location between the two superpowers has some strategic importance. A key figure in the US administration, Kurt Campbell, said in July he recognised the US needed to substantially step up its game in the Pacific region and focus on pandemic issues along with traditional issues such as poverty, obesity and health security. Key to the vaccine roll-out in the Pacific (and South East Asia) has been a pledge by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, which includes Australia, the U.S, India and Japan. The group, which is seen as a bulwark against Chinese expansionism, said after a meeting in March that Australia would provide full vaccine coverage to nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste and help deliver vaccines to South East Asia. In a series of tweets, Australia's Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, has documented the successes of Australia's vaccine and other medical equipment deliveries. In the past six weeks, she has posted on Twitter photos showing boxes of vaccines emblazoned with 'Australian Aid' and a bright red hopping Kangaroo in warehouses and on airport tarmacs in Indonesia, Vietnam, Kiribati, and Fiji. When the Solomon Islands started its Sinopharm roll-out in May the local Chinese Ambassador was pictured standing over the country's deputy prime minister as he took off his shirt to be vaccinated. At the opening ceremony, large signs declared in blue and white 'China Aid', as the ambassador said the provision of 50,000 doses highlighted the countries' "genuine friendship and trustworthy partnership". Vaccine diplomacy tensions hit a peak in July when China accused Australia of "vaccine sabotage" in Papua New Guinea. The Global Times, a nationalist tabloid with strong ties to China's Communist Party, reported, citing sources, that Australia planted consultants in the country to manipulate local epidemic policies and obstruct the authorisation of Chinese vaccines used in the region. Australia denied this. Derek Grossman, a senior defence analyst at think-tank RAND Corporation, says China was able to roll out its vaccines around the globe earlier than others. But now, as concerns grow about its efficacy – particularly against the Delta variant – "some countries are starting to get cold feet about using it". In Fiji, as the outbreak worsened, support came in from countries around the world in the form of vaccines, money and personal protective equipment. New Zealand has announced support for more nurses, 100,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and money for things such as extra testing capacity, oxygen supply and personal protective equipment. This support has elicited thanks and comments of goodwill to donating countries. In July, after the New Zealand Government pledged more vaccines to Fiji, Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said in a statement the expressions of warmth and generosity from New Zealand were "testament to the depth of the bilateral relations" and that in recognition of this the two nations would work towards a "statement of partnership" which reaffirms the bonds of friendship. America's relationships with territories and other affiliated countries such as Palau meant they got their vaccines relatively early compared with much of the world. Palau started vaccinating frontline workers in early January, and now more than 80 percent of the population has been vaccinated. Such is the availability of vaccines that anyone arriving in Palau unvaccinated is able to get vaccinated there – this has resulted in people unable to get vaccinated in Taiwan, flying in to be jabbed. A similar scenario is occurring in Guam. "We were very lucky," says Gaafar Uherbelau, deputy incident commander at Palau's Ministry of Health. He adds they have now started providing boosters for people with

underlying illnesses. The country, which like many in the region is reliant on tourism, closed its borders early to prevent Covid-19 coming in but has since been able to reopen, thanks in part to vaccination rates. “Getting our community protected is not only for our health and wellbeing of community members but as well for our economic recovery,” adds Ritter Udui, incident commander at the ministry. But even as many countries around the region are thankful for the donations, the pandemic issues aren’t over yet, and nor is the need for aid or the opportunity for soft diplomacy. “The question for the island countries is: ‘is there a discussion around booster doses to maintain the immunity’,” Kafoa, from the SPC, says.

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/09/21/covid-19-vaccine-diplomacy-swings-in-pacific-nations-favour/>

1000) *September 22*. As the Covid-19 threat spreads further in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, the Bishop of Daru, Joseph Durero, says a mistaken belief that it only affected white people has been largely banished. Daru, in Western Province, has seen a recent surge with dozens of cases admitted to the hospital and several deaths, including a doctor. Bishop Durero said previously there was a common belief that Covid-19 was a 'white man's disease' and so wouldn't affect them. "But now they realise it is not. So the diocese really emphasises about wearing masks - I think everyone is following, even outside. Bishop Durero said while most government workers in Daru are vaccinated, the numbers are lower among the general population. The doctor who died was one of three medical staff from Daru Hospital reported to have died due to Covid in the past fortnight. Hospitals in both PNG provinces at the border with Indonesia, Western and West Sepik, are reportedly full with Covid-19 patients including people confirmed to have the Delta variant. The Eastern Highlands is also facing a surge, while Port Moresby General Hospital's ICU Covid ward is full again and the hospital has reactivated an ancillary field hospital to treat moderately ill covid patients. The United States has given US\$3.8 million in urgent Covid-19 assistance to Papua New Guinea.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452051/png-bishop-says-white-man-s-disease-belief-now-dismissed>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/27/a-great-loss-tributes-pour-in-for-pioneering-png-female-doctor-who-died-from-covid>

1001) *September 22*. With the COVID-19 pandemic stretching health systems worldwide, **PACIFIC** countries have capitalised on their relative isolation to avoid the worst. Border closures and other measures have slowed and stopped the spread of the virus to the point some nations have recorded no cases at all. Even where the virus has not spread, however, establishing screening, quarantine and mass vaccination programmes has stretched already limited health systems. Where community transmission has occurred, as in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, it has severely tested national health systems. The good news is that these small nations have been more resilient than they might otherwise have been due to a dramatic increase in the number of doctors employed in the Pacific in the past decade. In some countries this has seen a doubling or more of doctor numbers. For example, from 2012 to 2019, the number of doctors in Kiribati increased from 18 to 51. Remarkable increases have also been recorded in the Solomon Islands (79 to 170), Tonga (44 to 80), Vanuatu (27 to 67) and Tuvalu (7 to 27). Where these doctors come from may surprise you. Most are new graduates of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in **CUBA**.

Over the past decade, more than 250 Pacific students have travelled to Cuba, learned Spanish, and completed six years of medical training on full scholarships from the Cuban government. Cuba has a long history of international medical cooperation and Cuban doctors have served in over 150 countries. In the Pacific, approximately 50 Cuban doctors have served in Nauru, Kiribati and Vanuatu since 2006. But Cuba has also recognised that having foreign doctors' staff health systems indefinitely is unsustainable, and that "the ideal provider is a well trained, homegrown health professional". The purpose of ELAM is therefore to train students from lower income and medically under-resourced communities who will go on to serve their countries. Training doctors is an act of solidarity and compassion built on Cuba's commitment to health as a human right.

<https://theconversation.com/how-cuban-medical-training-has-helped-pacific-nations-face-the-pandemic-challenge-167631>

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/11/22/neglect-at-home-profits-abroad-cubas-medical-system/>

1002) *September 23*. England's Covid travel rules and refusal to recognise vaccines administered across huge swaths of the world have sparked outrage and bewilderment across Latin America, Africa and south Asia, with critics denouncing what they called an illogical and discriminatory policy. Under the new rules, travellers fully vaccinated with Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna or Janssen shots in the US, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea or an EU country will be considered "fully vaccinated" and exempt from quarantine when they arrive in England from an amber list country. But people who have been fully vaccinated with the same vaccines in Africa or Latin America, as well as other countries including India, will be considered "not fully vaccinated" and forced to quarantine for 10 days on arrival from an amber list country. In Europe, there is frustration at Britain's refusal to accept as "fully vaccinated" people who have had Covid and then a single dose of a two-dose shot. Such people are considered fully vaccinated in most EU countries and are able to travel freely around the bloc with an EU digital Covid certificate. To visit the UK, however, they must quarantine for 10 days, with UK government guidelines currently requiring people vaccinated with a two-dose vaccine such as Moderna or Pfizer to have had both doses "even if you have recently recovered from Covid-19 and have natural immunity". Britain did relax its rules on Wednesday to allow quarantine-free travel by people from Europe who have had doses of two different vaccines. Hundreds of thousands on the continent received mix-and-match shots after the use of AstraZeneca was restricted to older age groups over rare blood clot concerns. But amid mounting anger abroad at what many view as discriminatory treatment, the Indian politician Shashi Tharoor announced on Monday that he was pulling out of a series of appearances in England to protest the "offensive" decision to ask fully vaccinated Indians to quarantine.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/23/englands-covid-travel-rules-spark-outrage-around-the-world>

1003) *September 23*. A **SRI LANKA** shaman who touted a potion which he said would protect people against Covid-19 has died with the disease, his family says. Eliyantha White treated sports stars and top politicians with the potion, which he said came to him in a dream. He said pouring it into rivers could end the pandemic in Sri Lanka and neighbouring India. The 48-year-old fell ill with the virus earlier this

month and was taken to hospital where his condition worsened. His potion was publicly endorsed by Sri Lanka's former health minister, who subsequently spent two weeks in intensive care with Covid. He also gave consultations to the current Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, who tweeted his condolences. Mr White's body was cremated on Thursday in line with Covid regulations. Sri Lanka has been under curfew for the past month because of the spread of the Delta variant. Officials say 12,000 people have died with the virus in the country and more than half a million have been infected, but medics say the death toll could be twice as high.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58669914>

1004) *September 23.* Ninety-one percent of eligible St. Paul residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to city officials. That - along with strict protective measures - has helped keep the coronavirus largely out of the small **PRIBILOF ISLAND** island community. St. Paul has recorded just two COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, said City Manager Phil Zavadil. The first was in April and the second in August. Zavadil said St. Paul's remoteness and limited health care options, plus hospitals reaching capacity in other parts of the state, have driven the island's strict COVID-19 precautions. St. Paul has just one clinic with two mid-level providers and a health aide, but no doctor. It has a ventilator, but doesn't have a health care employee trained to use it. And, it's a thousand-mile medevac flight to Anchorage. St. Paul's vaccination rate is higher than many communities in Alaska. Statewide, just 58% of Alaskans age 12 and older are fully vaccinated. Zavadil said the majority of the island's 371 residents also support local COVID-19 measures. They include having to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test before traveling to the small community, a mandatory quarantine upon arrival - even for vaccinated people - and required masking in indoor public spaces. The last time the community relaxed those rules, a fully-vaccinated traveler tested positive. Zavadil said that person had 44 close contacts. It prompted the city to pass a two-week "hunker down" order in August and to delay the start of the school year. "We made it through without any additional cases," he said. "I think we got lucky. It could have been worse." Zavadil said implementing such strict precautionary measures has taken a toll on city workers. It's added an extra burden to have staff review travel forms and workforce protection orders. But, he said, it's been worth it to protect the community. It has also helped keep the island's 50 students learning in-person, which is critical because the internet is so slow. The school shut its doors last March with the onset of the pandemic, but students returned to their classrooms in the fall of 2020. "The remote learning didn't work for us, just because our internet service at home is poor, at best," Zavadil said. "So (teachers) actually put together packets and hand-delivered those to each household when there wasn't in-person learning." St. Paul's current emergency ordinance, which includes the mask mandate and other precautions, is set to expire in a month.

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/09/23/were-being-proactive-st-paul-island-has-recorded-just-2-covid-cases-since-the-pandemic-started/>

1005) *September 24.* Jacinda Ardern wants to make **NEW ZEALAND** a world leader in Covid vaccinations, inoculating 90% of the population, but experts warn there will be challenges ahead as the prime minister seeks to find a way to take the harshest lockdowns "out of the toolbox". Ardern's aim to make the population one of the most vaccinated in the world may seem ambitious but it was made as Covid modellers warned that anything less could result in 7,000 deaths, and 60,000 hospitalisations in

the event of a community outbreak. So far, New Zealand has recorded a total of just 27 deaths.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/24/jacinda-ardern-looks-to-life-beyond-lockdowns-with-90-vaccination-target>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/sep/24/once-covid-world-beaters-the-mood-in-new-zealand-is-changing-and-jacinda-ardern-knows-it>

1006) *September 25*. On 16 September, Miami-based Oceania Cruises, a luxury culinary-focused cruise company that is a division of Norwegian Cruise Lines, set an all-time, single-day booking record. It was driven by the introduction of its newest ship, Vista, due to take its first passengers in April 2023. Nearly half the available inventory of Vista's inaugural season was sold in one day. These were new cash bookings, 30% of which came from people booking with the company for the first time. It's hard to know what this means for Australia. According to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), 1.34 million Australians took a cruise in 2018, one of the highest rates in the world by population, yet international travel is currently off limits. At least 28 people died and more than 800 were infected with Covid after the Ruby Princess docked in Sydney in March 2020, the most disastrous of numerous outbreaks on board cruise ships in the early weeks of the pandemic. Since 27 March 2020, no foreign-flagged cruise ships have been allowed to enter Australian waters and they remain banned until 17 December at least. It's unclear whether it will then be lifted, and there is no published plan for how the industry might reopen. Nonetheless, James Kavanagh, Australia's managing director at Flight Centre Travel Group, says Australians' interest in setting sail has been steadily on the rise, increasing about 40% each month since June. CLIA has established extensive new health protocols, but it has not mandated compulsory vaccinations for crew and guests on its member cruise lines. This would appear contrary to the best advice of epidemiologists. Catherine Bennett, an epidemiologist at Deakin University, says, it makes "absolute sense" to require vaccinations for passengers and crew. "The traditional cohort of cruise passengers is also older and more at risk of serious Covid disease due to other underlying illnesses but, thankfully, generally has a higher vaccine uptake. "UK studies show unvaccinated people are three times more likely to be infected. If vaccinated people have a breakthrough infection they're 95% less likely to develop a very serious illness. "Vaccinations reduce the risk of someone needing acute care beyond what the ship can easily provide. Cruise ships should do rapid testing, especially after shore visits, but it's not enough. It's all about minimising the risk and maximising the preventative measures. Among other things, they also need to improve air filtration, launch with lower passenger density, and ensure their capacity to deal with people going downhill rapidly. "When cruising is brought back, the last thing the industry wants is a Covid outbreak on a maiden voyage. We'll soon get to a point that we'll have high enough vaccination rates to no longer worry about mandating this," she says. "But, in the interim, there are still high levels of Covid where ships visit all around the world." Numerous individual cruise lines have established vaccine mandates, but they can vary by port and destination and even by specific sailings, as some companies distinguish between vaccinated and unvaccinated cruises. Some require unvaccinated guests to have travel insurance. And definitions for what it means to be fully vaccinated can vary by country. The vaccination rules are bound to change over time, too, as Covid cases ebb and flow, so booking in advance requires a leap of faith about what the protocols might be in 2022 or 2023.



Elsewhere, new cruise regulations will come into force in **FRENCH POLYNESIA** from Jan. 1, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/sep/26/we-feel-were-not-going-to-get-really-sick-why-the-pandemic-hasnt-dissuaded-ocean-cruisers>

<https://www.cruiseindustrynews.com/cruise-news/25900-islands-of-tahiti-position-to-small-and-medium-sized-cruise-ships.html>

1007) *September 26.* Covid vaccination campaign continues on **FRENCH POLYNESIA** Tuamotu Archipelago. This campaign follows the Department of Health's Ora Ora mission, of May and June 2021. Transportation support from the military has been necessary to carry the vaccine to the remote settlements. A total of 19,567 Covid shots were administered during **SAMOA** two day mass vaccination campaign but it is below what officials hoped to achieve. The Director General of Health Leausa Dr Take Naseri said preliminary figures indicate that 12,228 received their first dose and 7,339 are now fully immunized with their second dose. Leausa said this means that 93.3 percent of the eligible population have their first dose but only 46.6 percent have been fully vaccinated.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452350/covid-vaccination-rollout-continues-on-french-polynesia-s-tuamotus>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452295/samoa-covid-vaccination-figures-below-official-expectations>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/453853/french-polynesia-vaccination-law-to-be-amended>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/454227/pro-independence-party-joins-french-polynesia-anti-vax-march>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/455200/french-polynesia-s-vice-president-fired-for-not-getting-jab>

1008) *September 26.* As more coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine mandates go into effect, vaccination rates continue to rise across New York City, including on **STATEN ISLAND**, according to the latest data from the city's health department. As of Sunday, Sept. 26, 65% of all Staten Island residents, or a total of 310,283 people, received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine. That's an increase from 58% on Aug. 17. Currently, 59%, or 280,777 Staten Islanders, are fully vaccinated. That's another increase from 52% on Aug. 17. Despite these increases, Staten Island is still below the citywide average of 70% receiving at least one dose, and 63% who are fully vaccinated. The large increase in vaccinations could likely be attributed to recently introduced vaccine mandates, or upcoming mandates, across New York City. Last month, Mayor Bill de Blasio issued new vaccine mandates for all employees and patrons of restaurants, gyms and performance venues. It meant that New Yorkers now have to show proof they received the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine to participate in many indoor social activities in the Big Apple.

<https://www.silive.com/coronavirus/2021/09/covid-vaccinations-on-staten-island-what-zip-codes-have-the-highest-rates.html>

<https://www.silive.com/coronavirus/2021/09/parents-school-staffers-rally-on-staten-island-to-oppose-nyc-coronavirus-vaccine-mandate.html>

<https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/staten-island-crowd-defies-vaccine-mandate-by-storming-mall-food-court-video-shows/>

1009) *September 28.* **JAPAN** will lift emergency coronavirus measures across the board at the end of this week, amid a dramatic fall in cases and rapid progress in its vaccination rollout. The Prime Minister, Yoshihide Suga, said restrictions in 27 of Japan's 47 prefectures would end on Thursday. But bars and restaurants may not immediately return to business as usual, as experts warned that complacency could spark another wave of infections this winter. It will be the first time since early April that none of Japan's 47 prefectures is subject to emergency restrictions. The state of emergency, which applies to large parts of the country, has been repeatedly extended and expanded since it was first declared in April. The measures were in place in Tokyo during the Olympics and Paralympics, forcing residents to watch most of the sport on television. While Japan has managed to avoid the catastrophic number of deaths experienced in countries such as Britain and the US, it has not fared well by east Asian standards, with about 1.69m cases and 17,500 deaths. Infections began to rise quickly in July and peaked in mid-August after the Olympics, surging to more 5,000 a day in Tokyo and 25,000 across Japan. Pressure on hospitals forced thousands of Covid patients to battle the illness at home. However, new daily cases have fallen over the past month, to 1,128 nationwide on Monday, almost half that of the previous day. Infections are typically low on Mondays due to a lack of testing facilities over the weekend. Long-term trends in Tokyo - the centre of Japan's outbreak for most of the pandemic - also point to a marked fall in cases. The capital reported 154 infections on Monday, down 148 from the same day last week and the 36th straight day of week-on-week decline.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/28/japan-to-end-state-of-emergency-as-covid-cases-plummet>

1010) *September 28.* The head of the UN has called on rich countries to step up efforts to protect workers hit by the Covid-19 pandemic with an additional \$1tn (£736bn) injection of funds to avoid a twin-track recovery that widens the gap with the world's poorest nations. He said the gap between rich and poor nations is evident in the different access to vaccines and the ability of rich nations to borrow cheaply to fund welfare programmes while poorer nations are left to finance debts at high rates of interest.

<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2021/sep/28/wealthy-nations-must-share-more-resources-or-risk-crisis-for-billions-warns-un-chief>

1011) *September 28.* **PACIFIC** island countries are betting big on vaccination as a strategy for resuming tourism by Christmas and bringing much needed relief for their struggling economies. For much of the Pacific, tourism has long been the goose that laid the golden egg. But the pandemic has underlined how fragile and temperamental tourism can be. It relies on stable social and economic conditions at both destination and source - the opposite of what has happened since early 2020. While border openings dependent on vaccination rates might seem hasty, some Pacific leaders see it as the only viable path forward for economies that have nosedived because of COVID. As the South Pacific's second pandemic summer approaches, the question is

how to balance the risk of further outbreaks with a return to tourism and some kind of economic normality. Against a backdrop of hesitancy and misinformation, vaccination rates in some parts of the Pacific are now breaking world records. Niue and the Cook Islands have almost fully vaccinated all eligible citizens this year. Samoa is also ramping up its vaccination programme in the hope of joining the Cooks and Niue if and when travel resumes within a contained New Zealand-Pacific bubble. With vaccination also gaining traction in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji, tourism officials are hopeful a fully vaccinated population will allow them to reopen borders while protecting the health and safety of citizens. But some tourism-dependent states that opened earlier are now struggling. Guam had to suspend a “vacation and vax” programme - which allowed international visitors to receive a bonus COVID shot in an effort to jump-start tourism - after a Delta surge caused deaths and mass hospitalisations. With some 278,000 residents, French Polynesia has recorded more than 40,000 COVID cases and over 600 deaths. With just 54% of the population having received their first vaccine dose, tourism is now largely quarantine-free for fully vaccinated visitors. In Fiji, despite the virus having spread to tourism spots such as the Yasawa islands, Beqa and Kadavu, tourism stakeholders are optimistic the country (which has begun to ease local restrictions) will re-open its international borders on November 1. The other side of the coin, of course, is how prepared and willing tourists will be to plan a Pacific holiday - and what conditions are placed on their travel (such as New Zealand’s current quarantine requirement for re-entry). After opening to quarantine-free travel with New Zealand in May this year, then closing the borders again due to a largely Auckland-based COVID outbreak in August, the Cook Islands has chosen to adopt a cautious approach. In future, it will allow inbound travel only for fully vaccinated people and only when there has been zero community transmission in New Zealand. Given the stubbornly long tail of Auckland’s current Delta outbreak, this could mean longer delays. Similarly, New Zealand has taken a cautious approach with Fiji after declaring it a high-risk country and limiting travel for the foreseeable future. For its part, Fiji is relying on mass vaccination and compliance with COVID guidelines, including stringent enforcement of vaccination for certain workers. And despite its devastating recent outbreak, Fiji’s government has claimed it is showing regional leadership in managing tourism recovery. The aim is to offer quarantine-free travel to visitors from “green list” countries (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, Korea, Singapore and parts of the US), with visitors needing to be fully vaccinated and testing negative for COVID before departure. But the eagerness to re-open isn’t shared by all, including the country’s opposition leader, Bill Gavoka, who has said: We have got to have our priorities right - health first over the economy. I don’t believe Fiji is ready. Ultimately, given these many uncertainties, the fate of tourism-dependent Pacific nations will hinge less on government proclamations than on the risk calculations of tourists themselves. Elsewhere in the world, tourism destinations have tried to reassure travellers while also protecting their own populations. Greece, for example, enacted Operation Blue Freedom with the aim of vaccinating all resident adults on specific islands such as Corfu and Crete by the end of July. Subsequent Delta surges have disrupted re-opening plans, however. Pacific nations could potentially implement similar policies in selected locations. But it remains to be seen how much vaccine “passports”, currently being touted as a prerequisite for international travel, will be the crucial circuit breaker. The ability to track and trace visitors is also important, with some countries wanting tight oversight of tourist itineraries, while others hope voluntary use of tracer apps will be enough. However there are limitations on using such technologies in the Pacific because they rely on people owning and carrying a mobile phone, having sufficient data and GPS permanently

enabled. Network coverage is very poor in some places, and phones often cannot provide sufficiently detailed location information to determine virus exposure. Whatever the measures, Pacific governments have a major challenge on their hands, especially given their weak public health systems. Having gambled hard on tourism being a mainstay of their economies, they must now live in hope that the tourism goose can get back to laying its golden eggs.

<https://theconversation.com/vax-and-vacation-why-that-pacific-island-holiday-will-still-mean-traveller-beware-168380>

<https://phys.org/news/2021-09-south-pacific-islanders-afloat-tourists.html>

1012) *September 29.* Outside **GUAM** Memorial hospital, blue medical tents have sprung up to accommodate an overflow of Covid patients. The sight is bewildering for Guam residents. The island ran an incredibly successful vaccination campaign, with almost 90% of eligible people having received two doses, and even began offering jabs to tourists in an “Air VnV” - vacation and vaccination - scheme. But the tents have been installed to accommodate an overflow of Covid patients at the hospital as the territory grapples with a third wave of the virus, with daily deaths reaching the highest rates since March 2020. Even before the onset of the pandemic, Guam’s healthcare system was fragile, but the surge in Covid cases triggered by the Delta variant has pushed it to the verge of collapsing. Last week, the government hospital paused services for all elective surgeries in order to realign its limited resources. Guam has been seeing close to 300 cases some days in the last few weeks, reversing months of steady decline. It has recorded 14,705 cases - nine percent of Guam’s population of 160,000 - and 195 deaths. Covid test results in the past two months have shown an alarming rate of breakthrough cases of people who had been vaccinated, including 554 of the 1,765 positive cases in August. Overall, breakthrough cases represent 31% of infections – the highest rate in the US, where most states have less than 1%. Breakthrough patients in Guam account for about 40% of hospital admissions. The Covid surge is perplexing for a territory with a vaccination rate close to 90%, ranking sixth in the US. To date, a total of 118,756 people – or 87.13% – of Guam’s eligible population (residents 12 years and older) are fully vaccinated. That includes 10,318 residents aged 12 to 17. The high rate of breakthrough cases has led to fear in the community. While there has been some vaccine hesitancy, experts caution that the vaccines are working to protect citizens, and estimate that case numbers would be three times higher than they are had the vaccination rate not been so high and that when vaccinated people are hospitalised, their stays are much shorter and illnesses much less severe. “It is clear that most people who stay longer in the hospital are unvaccinated. The length of stay for people who are vaccinated average around two days. They are minor admissions and use a less amount of resources at the hospital than those who are unvaccinated,” said Dr Nathan Berg, who heads the governor’s physician advisory group. As for the reasons why there has been such a big third wave on the island, experts point to a number of factors. “Best guess on our higher rate may be related to close family culture and our high co-morbidities, which might lower the immune system,” said Dr Hoa Nguyen, the former chair of the governor’s physician advisory group. He attributes the surge to the lifting of restrictions on social gatherings such as weddings and funerals, and believes Guam may have prematurely returned to normal as the Delta variant reached the island. “You have to look at the number of tests we are doing,” says Berg, who pointed to the fact Guam’s testing rate was higher than any other US state. “That is a good thing, and those numbers should not be taken out of context.” He added that the people who

died despite being fully vaccinated all had multiple co-morbidities. Dr Peter Lombard, a member of the advisory group, attributed the high rate of breakthrough cases to waning efficacy of the vaccine six months after being administered. “I trust that the data is real. Now is it a cause for alarm? That is the question,” he said. “One thing you need to do is look at other places that have good vaccination rates and high allocation of vaccines early on. “Looking at distribution of vaccines and the high volume of vaccines given to Guam, I suspect that is since we have a larger vaccinated population early on and the vaccines’ efficacy waned sooner than we see in other states.” Lombard also said a premature lifting of restrictions was partially responsible for the Covid surge. Lombard and Berg agreed that Guam had benefitted from its high vaccination rate, with Lombard saying Guam’s case numbers would have been three times worse if not for the vaccination campaign. Berg said that despite the recent Covid surge, “if you look at the population’s fatality rate, we are still doing well – that is an accomplishment in itself”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/29/guams-vaccination-success-story-turns-grim-with-covid-surge>

1013) *September 29*. Countries in the **PACIFIC** risk a “lost decade” following the Covid pandemic, with the region facing its greatest economic contraction in four decades, according to a new report into foreign aid. The latest Lowy Institute Pacific Aid Map, which sets out aid spending and donations to the Pacific Islands region, shows US\$2.44bn in foreign aid reached the Pacific in 2019, which is about 8% of the region’s GDP. Australian aid to the region has increased, after growing fears China’s “soft diplomacy” through concessional loans for infrastructure projects was lessening Australia’s influence on the region. While Australia’s total foreign aid budget has shrunk under the Coalition, the Pacific has been the focus of what remains, with Australia “retooling” its budget to increase its contributions to Pacific neighbours. But China, an emerging force in the region, slashed its contributions that same year, reducing its aid budget from US\$246m in 2018 by 31%, delivering US\$169m in 2019. Lowy reports that is the lowest level of aid China has given to the Pacific region since 2012, with the drop occurring even as Beijing secured new diplomatic alliances. China’s funding to the region is more commonly given in the form of a concessional loan, leaving countries indebted to the government. In 2019, 67% of Chinese aid was given in the form of loans, up from 41% the year before. The early analysis for 2020 shows no indication China has increased its financial support, leaving governments in the region with financial gaps it has little hope of filling. The Lowy Institute analysis, to be released on Wednesday, estimates an additional US\$3.5bn will be needed for the region to recover from the pandemic, but donors appear in short supply. All up, aid to the Pacific declined by 15% in 2019, with health spending accounting for just 11% of the US\$2.44bn. Lowy reports Australia accounted for 42% of all aid to the Pacific region between 2009 and 2019, but in more recent years, the amount of money being spent on health has been cut in favour of infrastructure projects. As part of its pandemic response, Australia established a temporary AU\$305m Covid package within the Pacific Step-Up program, which aimed to “to help address the economic and social costs of the pandemic in the Pacific and Timor-Leste, helping to underpin our region’s stability and economic recovery”. The package was mostly designed to help Pacific governments maintain essential services, including aviation, during the worst of the pandemic. Vaccines have also been sent to Pacific Island governments, along with specialist teams, to help curb the spread of Covid. But with the world beginning to move on, the Lowy Institute points to more needing to be done to ensure nations within the Pacific region do not fall



further behind. Australia is also facing pressure from its Pacific neighbours to act on climate, with warnings the Coalition's "inertia" on the issue was undermining its position within the Indo-Pacific, at the same time as scrambling to reassure partners the new strategic Aukus pact would not heighten defence tensions in the region.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/29/pacific-nations-face-lost-decade-due-to-economic-cost-of-covid>

1014) *October 1.* Australia will reopen its international border from November, giving long-awaited freedoms to vaccinated citizens and their relatives. Since March 2020, Australia has had some of the world's strictest border rules - even banning its own people from leaving the country. The policy has been praised for helping to suppress Covid, but it has also controversially separated families. "It's time to give Australians their lives back," PM Scott Morrison said. Australia has recorded more than 1,300 deaths from Covid-19 and more than 107,000 cases of infection. People would be eligible to travel when their state's vaccination rate hit 80%, Mr Morrison told a press briefing on Friday. Travel would not immediately be open to foreigners, but the government said it was working "towards welcoming tourists back to our shores". At present, people can leave Australia only for exceptional reasons such as essential work or visiting a dying relative. Entry is permitted for citizens and others with exemptions, but there are tight caps on arrival numbers. This has left tens of thousands stranded overseas. Mr Morrison said Australia's mandatory 14-day hotel quarantine - which costs each traveller A\$3,000 (£1,600; \$2,100) - would be replaced by seven days of home quarantine for vaccinated Australians or permanent residents. Unvaccinated travellers must still quarantine for 14 days in hotels. Australian carrier Qantas responded by announcing it would restart its international flying a month earlier. It had already put flights to major overseas destinations on sale from 18 December. Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra are currently in lockdown due to outbreaks of the virus. That has helped prompt a surge in the vaccine uptake in recent months.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-58757888>

1015) *October 1.* More than 50 countries have missed the World Health Organization's (WHO) target for 10% of their populations to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 by the end of September. Most are in Africa, where the WHO's overall figure for those fully vaccinated is currently 4.4%. However, **SEYCHELLES** had reached 72%, **MAURITIUS** 62%, **CAPE VERDE** 23%, **COMOROS** 20% and **SAO TOME & PRINCIPE** 11%. In the UK, nearly 66% of the whole population has been fully vaccinated, in the EU about 62% and in the US it's 55%. But surprisingly wealthy **TAIWAN**, whose vaccine programme has been dogged by delivery delays and other issues, is still just below 10%.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56100076>

1016) *October 1.* An improving COVID-19 situation in **GREENLAND** has resulted in the relaxation of a ban on direct entry to its isolated hamlets Friday, and will also see the end of measures imposed to control a recent outbreak in its second-largest settlement. The hamlet travel restriction was imposed a year ago and required people traveling from abroad to quarantine for five days in a city or town where they could be tested for COVID-19 before traveling on to a hamlet. The aim was to prevent the illness from being introduced in parts of the country that have minimal health

services. The relaxations come as Nuuk, the capital city, continues to struggle with its worst outbreak of the illness to date. That, coupled with, the introduction of the illness on Greenland's eastern coast via a flight from Iceland, has public health authorities warning that the threat of COVID-19 is far from over. Calling the outbreak in Nuuk "an epidemic of the unvaccinated," Henrik L. Hansen, the chief medical officer, said that nearly two-thirds of those reported to have contracted the illness hadn't received a vaccine. "If we'd have had the same vaccination rate as in Denmark or Iceland, this outbreak would have been much less severe, and we wouldn't be seeing the level of community transmission we're seeing right now," he said. Denmark and Iceland both have vaccination rates of around 75 percent. Greenland's vaccination rate is 64 percent, though the figure is increasing rapidly. In Kommuneqarfi Sermersooq, the local administrative region that includes Nuuk, the figure is slightly higher than the national average. Most of those infected in the current wave in Nuuk, which began in mid-September and has been traced back to a nursery school, can be associated with another known case, but a significant number of cases could not.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/epidemic-of-the-unvaccinated-continues-in-nuuk/>

<https://www.arctictoday.com/a-nuuk-super-spreader-event-underscores-need-for-covid-19-booster-shots-say-greenland-health-authorities/>

<https://www.arctictoday.com/a-greenland-health-clinic-closes-amid-covid-outbreak-fears/>

1017) *October 2*. Back in mid-June, **THAILAND** Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha surprised everyone by promising to reopen the country to foreign tourists by October. The time had come, he said, to take that calculated risk. At the time, few took him seriously. Thailand had zealously guarded its borders, imposing quarantine and mountains of paperwork on all arrivals since April last year. Foreign tourism, once an engine of the Thai economy, collapsed. Just over 70,000 came into the country in the first eight months of this year, compared to 40 million in the whole of 2019. Covid-19 was successfully contained through most of 2020, but by June this year infections were rising quickly, and the government was being roundly criticised for being too slow to start vaccinating. Opening up in October seemed impossible. But true to his word, the great reopening appears to have begun, albeit with only very modest steps. The night-time curfew has been shortened by an hour, starting at 10pm, and libraries and museums can open. You can visit a spa, but only with advanced booking and a recent negative Covid test. Fully-vaccinated tourists will now be quarantined for just one week instead of two. Further minor relaxations are expected in November. This is welcome news for the battered hospitality industry, but hardly sufficient to get the visitors pouring back in. Why is the Thai government proceeding so cautiously? The simple answer is vaccines and the limited number of ICU beds. Despite significantly ramping up its orders of vaccines, the government started late and is still a long way short of its official target of inoculating at least 70% of the population. By the end of September just over one quarter had received two doses, and many of those who received the less effective Sinovac vaccine now have to get booster shots.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58758310>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/world/asia/thailand-phuket-covid-quarantine.html>

1018) *October 2*. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, **TRINIDAD & TOBAGO** has had several stay-at-home orders, curfew impositions and restrictions on gatherings, with limits on the operations of non-essential businesses. Supermarkets and grocery stores, however, have been a constant, with food-shopping giving people a genuine reason to leave the house - but with beaches still closed, COVID-19 cabin fever has been getting to many netizens. One of them - dancer, choreographer and filmmaker Sonja Dumas - decided to counteract the COVID blues with creativity. In a September 27 Facebook post, Dumas uploaded several professional photographs of herself, decked out in a colourful gown made entirely of reusable shopping bags and branded with the logo of one of the Caribbean region's largest supermarket chains, Massy Stores. The post struck a chord with social media users, who found it refreshing, imaginative, and a welcome break from discussing infection rates and vaccine hesitancy.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/09/30/covid-couture-trinidadian-creative-sonja-dumas-responds-to-the-pandemic-with-a-feel-good-dress-that-has-a-deeper-meaning/>

1019) *October 3*. Although many pandemic unemployment programs are no longer available, **HAWAII** businesses are still having trouble finding workers. Federal pandemic unemployment benefits, including the Pandemic Extended Unemployment Compensation program and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, ended on Sept. 6. Despite this, there has not been a surge in people returning to work. "There may have been a blip, a small increase, maybe, but businesses are still struggling," said Miles Yoshioka, executive officer of the Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce. Yoshioka said Big Island businesses ranging from small restaurants to large retail operations like KTA Super Stores are struggling to fill positions, with some employers reporting more than 100 job openings. Chad Yang, managing owner of Hula Hula's restaurant at the Grand Nanihoa Hotel, said he is having difficulty finding employees willing to work. Yang said he received 40 responses to a job listing, from which he selected 10 candidates for interviews. Of those 10, only four actually showed up to interviews, and two were offered jobs. Of those two, Yang said, one claimed they contracted COVID-19 and didn't show up on their first day. The other also didn't show up, but never offered a reason why. "So, we're right back at square one," Yang said. "I've seen people blow off interviews, I've seen people pass their interviews and not show up for their first day," said Russell Ruderman, owner of the Island Naturals grocery chain. "I never saw that before. It's not about money - sometimes we hadn't even gotten to the point of discussing the money." Yang and Ruderman speculated that many "job seekers" are really just going through the motions in order to be eligible for unemployment benefits. In May, Gov. David Ige reinstated rules requiring unemployment beneficiaries to apply for at least three jobs a week in order to receive benefits. Yoshioka agreed that many applicants are likely only doing so to maintain eligibility, but added that workers' priorities also have shifted during the pandemic. "People are a lot more conscious of their families' needs, and their own quality of life," Yoshioka said, adding that, after so many businesses allowed workers to work from home over the pandemic, workers are resistant to return to a public work environment where they will directly interact with more people.

<https://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com/2021/10/03/hawaii-news/big-island-businesses-still-struggling-to-find-workers-despite-end-to-pandemic-aid/>

1020) *October 5.* New Zealanders are grieving for the end of the country's Covid elimination strategy and anxious about what the future holds, a day after prime minister Jacinda Ardern, announced the country would switch to a suppression approach. **NEW ZEALAND** has held fast to a Covid-zero strategy for the past 18 months. That has been rewarded with some of the world's best outcomes through the pandemic: extremely low hospitalisations and deaths, little in the way of day to day restrictions, low unemployment and robust economic survival. But on Monday, almost two months into a Delta outbreak, the country stepped into the unknown, pivoting for the first time away from strict elimination despite vaccination rates that remain low. The shift was introduced by Ardern with a three-step plan to let people gather outdoors and reopen early childhood education, before reopening retail and hospitality. It comes at a time when just 40% of the full population and 47% of the eligible population (those aged 12 and over) are fully vaccinated, while 65% of the full population and 77% of the eligible population have had at least one dose. Vaccination rates are particularly low among Maori, who are around two thirds behind the wider population. Health experts agree it will probably result in a further rise in cases. For a country that has never had to reckon with widespread transmission or illness from Covid-19, any excitement over loosened restrictions has been tempered with apprehension and, in some cases, anger at the toll that could lie ahead.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/05/anger-and-grief-new-zealanders-fearful-as-covid-elimination-strategy-ends>

1021) *October 8.* Hospitals in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** are being pushed to the brink and morgues are overflowing, as the country suffers what health authorities say is the worst surge in Covid-19 cases since the pandemic began. The country's health care system has long been plagued by shortages of drugs, funding, an ailing infrastructure and a severe lack of health workers. Now, major hospitals around Papua New Guinea have been forced to scale down vital medical services while at least one says it may be forced to close altogether. As of Wednesday, the country has recorded a total of 21,896 Covid cases and 243 deaths over the course of the pandemic, according to the National Department of Health. The latest available breakdown shows a surge in cases, rising to 600 in the week beginning 20 September from 255 four weeks earlier. Deaths rose from two to 17. However, these figures may not reflect the severity of the outbreak due to the country's low testing rate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/08/crisis-unfolding-as-papua-new-guinea-hospitals-hit-by-worst-covid-wave-yet>

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/10/11/png-and-fiji-were-both-facing-covid-catastrophes-why-has-one-vaccine-rollout-surged-and-the-other-stalled/>

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/10/19/png-is-back-on-the-brink-of-a-delta-variant-disaster/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/454075/png-morgues-full-as-covid-19-runs-rampant>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/26/mass-burial-to-relieve-overflowing-papua-new-guinea-morgue-as-covid-cases-surge>

1022) *October 13.* **BALI** is reopening to tourists, but nervous locals wonder what the future will bring. After being shuttered for 17 months, the upmarket Hujan Locale

restaurant in the Balinese town of Ubud is slowly coming back to life. Outside, staff greet a box truck driver who delivers fresh vegetables and stacks of lemongrass, ginger flowers and kaffir lime leaves. Kitchen workers are busy preparing for the day ahead. A chandelier above a stairway is once again casting a warm yellow shimmer across the walls. Before the pandemic, Hujan Locale was a thriving business that served local dishes – including bebek goreng, Balinese fried duck with mango chilli sauce, and tongseng kambing, central Java’s slow-braised lamb wrapped in cabbage – to foreign tourists. Covid, and a ban on foreign travellers introduced late March 2020, destroyed its income. The restaurant used to employ 50 staff members; now there are just 15. There are, however, some signs of hope. On Thursday, Bali is due to reopen to travellers from several countries including China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates. Visitors will be required to follow certain regulations – they need to be fully vaccinated and take two PCR tests, both before their flight and on arrival. They will also need to quarantine. Initially, officials said people must do so for eight days on arrival, but a last minute announcement this week reduced the requirement to five days. Bali, Indonesia’s main tourism hotspot drew more than 6 million travellers in 2019. But since the start of the pandemic, the streets in Ubud, which would normally be filled with tourists, have been empty. Many businesses are closed, and the area is peppered with “for rent” signs. The plan to partially reopen Bali is a first step towards reviving the tourism industry, which contributes more than 50% of the island’s income, according to the UN World Tourism Organisation. The pandemic has prompted a debate about the role of tourism in Bali, with some arguing the island should become less dependent on the sector and instead develop other areas of the economy. Reports of foreign tourists who remained on the island during the pandemic but refused to follow health protocols has added to such sentiments. This week, Bali’s governor said that tourism had benefited “a handful of people, especially foreign investors”, but not the general public. He said he instead planned to promote areas such as cultural crafts, agriculture and fisheries. Government officials have spoken of the need to alter the tourism sector to focus on attracting “quality” tourists. Luhut Pandjaitan, the coordinating minister for maritime affairs and investment, said last month that the authorities would “filter” tourists. “We do not want backpackers,” he said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/13/bali-is-reopening-to-tourists-but-nervous-locals-wonder-what-the-future-will-bring>

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/10/23/more-good-news-for-the-island-of-the-gods.html>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/bali-tourism-collapse-2021-intl-hnk/index.html>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/12/20/bali-entrepreneurs-eye-sustainable-future>

1023) *October 13.* **TUVALU** is one of few countries in the world to have so far evaded the pandemic. But, while it has achieved a milestone with no recorded cases of COVID-19, its population of about 11,931 continues to battle food uncertainties and poor nutrition. These challenges, present long before the pandemic emerged, have been exacerbated by lockdown restrictions and economic hardships during the past year and a half. In the low-lying Pacific island country, people have strived to grow food with “lack of access to land, lack of compost for growing food and, more so, with high tides and cyclones flooding the land with seawater,” Teuleala Manuella-



Morris, Country Manager for the environmental and development organization, Live & Learn, in the capital, Funafuti, told IPS. For years the islanders have watched their food gardens destroyed by extreme tropical weather and disasters, such as cyclones and tidal surges. These factors have contributed to their increasing consumption of imported foods. But now, the future is looking more certain with the introduction of an innovative farming system on Funafala, an islet situated close to the main Funafuti Island. The new farming method is based on a modular structure of specially designed boxes, known as ‘food cubes’, which give local food growers greater control over their harvests. On Funafala, a vast interlocking array of boxes, raised above the ground, creates a patchwork field of green abundance. The ‘field’ contains 80-100 cubes spread over an area of 1.2 acres in which fruit and vegetables are being grown for more than 16 local households. Each ‘food cube’, which is one-metre square and 30 centimetres deep, is manufactured from 80 percent recycled food-grade plastic and designed with features that expose the plants grown within to oxygen and controlled irrigation. “The Funafala garden has showcased the growing of local foods, like pulaka (giant swamp taro), taro, local figs, cassava, dwarf bananas and dwarf pawpaw trees...It is not only providing more food for the community but has also proven that the food cubes are another way of growing food in areas being flooded with seawater while maintaining soil fertility for more planting. At the same time, it saves water,” Manuella-Morris told IPS. The ‘food cube’ was designed and produced by Biofilta, an Australian company developing modular urban farming systems six years ago. In 2017, the business won a worldwide competition called LAUNCH Food, commissioned by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to reward new solutions to the global issue of poor nutrition. “To put it into a food security context, I think those food cubes will be able to produce up to 150 kilograms of vegetables and greens for a year, and that is sufficient to meet the green vegetable requirements for the member households,” Susumu said. Biofilta claims that the system is “raised, so there is no risk of saltwater inundation, and our wicking technology is extremely water-efficient, using only a fraction of the water needed in conventional agriculture.” These are important features, as Tuvalu possesses no renewable water resources and its point of highest elevation above sea level is only 5 metres. Further, the farm uses compost, specifically tailored to the country’s soil needs by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), which also draws on ingredients from the island’s green waste treatment facility. Another key partner, Live & Learn, has expanded trials of the farming system on other islands in Tuvalu. The long-term goal is better health outcomes and longer productive lives for islanders. “Because of agricultural challenges, the diet diversity is very low...So, with the diversification of the production systems, it means that the households have more access to healthy diets, and if the surpluses can be marketed, it also supports the income side of the households,” Susumu explained.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/10/atoll-nation-tuvalu-adopts-cubes-step-nutritious-food-production/>

1024) *October 14.* **FIJI** says it is already experiencing a boom in demand after announcing this week that it would open up quarantine-free travel to visitors from select countries, almost two years after closing its borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fiji will reopen its borders to fully vaccinated travellers from countries including the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and most Pacific Islands countries from November 11, though the official reopening will be on 1 December, when the country’s first scheduled tourism flight on national carrier, Fiji Airways, will arrive. Visitors must have a negative Covid test three days before arrival and also take a

rapid test on arrival. Tourists and returning residents will still have to undergo a two or three-day hotel confinement respectively. The easing of travel restrictions and quarantine requirements comes after the government launched an aggressive vaccination campaign; 96.6% of the target population of those aged 18 and over have received their first dose, while 80.3% have received both doses. The government's "no jab, no job" work policy for civil servants and staff in the private sector, announced in July, forced many Fijians to get vaccinated.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/14/were-ready-fiji-prepares-to-welcome-tourists-almost-two-years-after-closing-borders>

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/10/11/png-and-fiji-were-both-facing-covid-catastrophes-why-has-one-vaccine-rollout-surged-and-the-other-stalled/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/455976/covid-19-fiji-eases-restrictions-further>

1025) *October 17*. The loss of work and skyrocketing food prices, brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, could lead to an increase in child stunting in the **PACIFIC**, experts have warned. A new report from World Vision, released today, found that 60% of people in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste having lost their job or main source of income due to the pandemic and that this had had a serious impact on the health of children. Many families have been unable to afford enough food as a result of lost income, with one in four families saying they had reduced the quantity or quality of their meals. Half of those surveyed say they are unable to meet household food expenses. The report notes that the financial strain has had a significant impact on children, with 14% of families saying they have sent their children out to work or engaged family members in begging or high-risk jobs, to make up for lost income. It warns that the lack of nutrition could lead to an increase in the rate of child stunting, caused by chronic undernutrition in children six months old and above, with 8% of children having two or less meals a day. In addition, the price of food has also skyrocketed, with a 30.6% increase in Vanuatu, a 17.7% increase in Timor-Leste, a 7.4% increase in Papua New Guinea and a 4.2% increase in Solomon Islands. World Vision's report also found that violence against children had increased during the pandemic. In the month preceding the data being collected, 80% of parents or caregivers used physical punishment and or psychological aggression against their children.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/18/child-stunting-from-malnutrition-could-increase-in-pacific-in-wake-of-covid-experts-warn>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/453749/aftershocks-of-covid-19-threaten-to-undo-gains-across-pacific-says-report>

1026) *October 19*. **PUERTO RICO** leads U.S. states and territories with the highest vaccination rate against the coronavirus. The island has 72.2 percent of its total population fully vaccinated, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows. That means 2.3 million out of the island's 3.3 million population have been fully vaccinated. Guam is close behind with 71.5 percent fully vaccinated. Puerto Rico has been able to contain the virus on the island with strict coronavirus restrictions that were implemented throughout the past year and a half. The island only recently lifted a pandemic curfew that was put in place, and it also lifted its ban

on alcohol sales. The territory is still requiring masks indoors and is making employees for certain industries show their coronavirus vaccination cards to their employers.

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/577488-puerto-rico-leads-us-states-territories-in-covid-19-vaccination>

<https://www.afar.com/magazine/this-island-destination-is-the-most-vaccinated-place-in-the-us>

1027) *October 19.* **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND** is once again holding off on moving into the last stage of its COVID-19 recovery plan based on the epidemiology of the pandemic, chief medical officer Dr. Heather Morrison said Tuesday. Morrison told a briefing the reasoning is similar to the decision made in early September, when officials announced that the final step of its plan would be delayed from mid-September to at least mid-October. The last measures slated to fall include border and travel measures, as well as rules around screening, testing and self-isolation, but the province is maintaining those public health protections without providing a date when they might be lifted. “Based on the epidemiology in Atlantic Canada and the country, these travel measures and other public health measures, including gathering limits and public health guidance, will remain in place as additional layers of protection as we continue to navigate this fourth wave of the global pandemic,” she said. Morrison also announced that pharmacists will now be able to vaccinate eligible Islanders aged 12 and older. Previously, pharmacists were only able to administer COVID-19 vaccines to eligible adult residents. As of Oct. 16, more than 92 per cent of eligible Islanders have received at least one dose of a vaccine, while nearly 87 per cent are fully vaccinated. Despite some of the highest vaccination rates in the country, Morrison said she had some concerns about rates in younger groups, especially with 20- to 29-year-olds, where the rate of full vaccination is 74 per cent, “well below the provincial average.” The province now has seven active infections.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/8279889/pei-recovery-plan-last-stage-delayed/>

1028) *October 19.* The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruption and poverty, but it also inspired many to organize campaigns aimed at supporting those in need. From community pantries in the **PHILIPPINES** to the White Flag movement in Malaysia and the “citizens helping citizens” initiative in **INDONESIA**, this pandemic has spurred communities to mobilize and provide aid during this public health emergency. These movements were all conceptualized in response to inadequate and slow governmental assistance in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Yet they also highlighted, that if governments would not properly perform their duties, ordinary citizens would step up to ease the burden of their fellow community members. Amid a flurry of depressing pandemic stories, we were uplifted by these organic, inspirational stories of support that exemplify hope, solidarity, and community care. In May 2021, Global Voices reported how a single community pantry in Quezon City in the Philippines’ National Capital Region sparked a nationwide movement that saw volunteers setting up pantries to provide food and other necessities to hungry citizens. The government said it monitored 6,700 pantries which offered assistance while communities were placed under COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Some researchers estimate that Indonesia's poverty rate has increased 12.4 percent during this pandemic, underscoring the need for expanded social welfare programs. However, due to a shrinking economy and loss of income from tourism, the

Indonesian government has struggled to meet this increased demand for assistance. Luckily, in many parts of the country, community members have stepped up to fill the gap. In March and June 2021, the nation went into unofficial “lockdowns” known as PPKM (*Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* — community activities restrictions enforcement), meaning all restaurants, shopping malls, and non-essential services were forced to restrict services or close. During this period, many citizens struggled to find sources of income and pay their bills — particularly vulnerable gig workers and workers in the informal sector. The hashtags #wargabantuwarga (citizens helping citizens) and #Salingjaga (take care of each other) went viral earlier this year as citizens all over the nation stepped up to care for each other, using social media to arrange monetary, food, and supply donations. Some groups even found creative ways to support the community while also addressing deep-rooted societal issues, such as I Made Janur Yasa's Bali-based Plastic Exchange Program, which allows citizens to trade plastic for rice. The group describes itself as “A sustainability movement that empowers communities to change their waste behavior through dignity-based exchange systems that result in cleaner, healthier environments.” In recent years, Bali — one of the top tourist destinations in Southeast Asia — has become infamous for its widespread plastic pollution. Yasa envisioned the initiative as a way to simultaneously provide for impoverished communities while cleaning up the environment and preserving citizens’ pride and dignity. Grassroots efforts have also been essential in helping to track and trace COVID-19 in Indonesia. In Bali, Jackie Pomeroy, an economist and data specialist who has lived in Indonesia for 15 years, created the Facebook page “Bali Covid-19 Update” and has been releasing daily information about COVID-19 infection rates, COVID deaths, COVID news, vaccination rates, vaccine locations, and data trends since April 7, 2020 — 559 consecutive days (as of publication). The page has over 41,000 members and has been a crucial source of information for many on the island. Alternative data tracking services have sprung up on other corners of the internet like KawalCovid19, a volunteer organization that releases daily statistics about Indonesia's COVID-19 cases to its nearly 140,000 Twitter followers.

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/10/19/community-care-during-the-pandemic-in-indonesia-malaysia-and-the-philippines/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/oct/08/we-just-need-food-manilas-newly-homeless-tell-stories-of-survival-in-lockdown-photo-essay>

1029) *October 20*. The **MARSHALL ISLANDS** is urging collective global action over both the climate crisis and the pandemic. A low lying island country which has been a poster child for climate change impacts, the Marshalls remains one of the most vocal advocates for global moves to curb greenhouse gas emissions. And while the country has been largely free of Covid-19 cases, it has not escaped the pandemic's economic impacts, the Marshalls' Foreign Minister Casten Nemra said. "In terms of the global pandemic on Covid-19, it's really clear that no country is an island. We all need to collaborate collectively to combat this terrible virus, Covid-19. In a similar fashion, it's a same issue with climate change efforts," Nemra said. The Marshall Islands was one of the first countries to close its borders in March last year when the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, and has since maintained tight restrictions. Nemra said reopening depends on the country's vaccine rollout, as well as offshore outbreaks, especially in the Marshalls' main points of entry. "We're looking at it from both

lenses: what's happening outside of the Marshall Islands; and our own efforts with the national vaccination." So I envision we will start to gradually reduce the number of quarantine days, but we will not eliminate it right away." The Marshall Islands has only had four confirmed cases of the virus to date. Meanwhile, Nemra said over 80 percent of the eligible population in the Marshalls had been vaccinated against Covid. He said the recent move to lower the age threshold for vaccination from 18 to 12 years meant the numbers would increase further in coming weeks. The Marshall Islands also recently became the first nation in the Pacific Islands to offer Covid vaccinations for fishermen on longline and purse seine vessels when it started in June in Majuro. Nemra said this was important given the importance of fisheries to the country's economy, and the need to maintain ongoing economic activity during the disruptive times of the pandemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/453889/marshall-islands-calls-for-global-collaboration-on-twin-crises>

[https://mvariety.com/news/marshall-islands-moves-to-reduce-world-s-strictest-covid-quarantine/article\\_e617e064-5119-11ec-9c57-5f935180cd75.html](https://mvariety.com/news/marshall-islands-moves-to-reduce-world-s-strictest-covid-quarantine/article_e617e064-5119-11ec-9c57-5f935180cd75.html)

1030) *October 20*. COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations on **HAWAII** have declined to the point where the islands are ready to welcome travelers once again. Gov. David Ige said vacationers and business travelers are welcome to return to the islands starting Nov. 1. His announcement comes nearly two months after he asked travelers on Aug. 23 to avoid Hawaii because case counts were surging with the spread of the highly transmissible delta variant and hospitals were becoming overwhelmed. The state didn't impose any new travel quarantine restrictions, and Ige's plea was a mere request. Even so, it prompted thousands of travelers to cancel plans to visit Hawaii. In the intervening months, Hawaii's seven-day average of daily new cases has plummeted from 900 to 117. COVID-19 hospitalizations have dropped from more than 400 to about 100 statewide. To avoid 10-day quarantine upon arrival, travelers must show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of their departure for Hawaii. The governor said Hawaii was seeking information from the federal government about its plans to require foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. to show proof of vaccination beginning Nov. 8. Hawaiian Airlines, which is one of the state's biggest employers, has said it will be crucial for Hawaii to match its travel policies with federal rules on international travel to avoid confusion and eliminate redundant screening. Most visitors to Hawaii during the pandemic have come from the other 49 states, in part because countries like Japan still have strict quarantine requirements for those returning to home after traveling abroad.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Travel/wireStory/hawaiis-governor-welcomes-travelers-covid-counts-drop-80674950>

1031) *October 21*. The **ST HELENA** claim to fame since March 2020 is that it remains one of only a handful of places on Planet Earth to have not reported a single case of coronavirus. This meant that when the UK government introduced its Covid traffic light system back in May, for countries (and overseas territories) that people could visit, St Helena was always one of the few on the green list - meaning you wouldn't have to quarantine upon your return. The island hopes that this spotlight has encouraged more potential tourists to visit. Matthew Joshua, the St Helena Government's head of visitor information services, says this already appears to be the case. "We're getting an increase in inquiries. It has put St Helena on the map."



Another very remote, and Covid-19 free British island that was permanently on the UK government's green list, is **SOUTH GEORGIA**. Located in the south Atlantic, some 800 miles south east of the Falkland Islands, it is 1,362 sq miles (3,528 sq km) in size. Only accessible by sea, the island has no permanent human population. Instead there are two government officers, and two dozen or so staff from the British Antarctic Survey, the UK's polar research institute. Like St Helena, South Georgia is now waiting for tourists to return. Prior to the pandemic, it would be visited by cruise ships going to and from the coast of Antarctica. In the summer of 2019/2020 (its summer is during winter in the UK) it had 12,568 visitors, but this fell to just two people in 2020/21. "In a normal year, tourism accounts for around 20% of our income," says Ross James, visitor management & bio-security officer for the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-58966376>

<https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/travel-stories/st-helena-island-is-one-of-the-few-places-that-is-still-covidfree/news-story/11819fe75ea7bd2b9267a0895c644bea>

1032) *October 25*. Despite being cut off from the world for more than a year and a half because of the Covid pandemic, the inhabitants of **EASTER ISLAND** on Sunday voted against reopening their home to tourists. Sixty-seven percent of those who voted on the remote island, known for its impressive megaliths of mysterious origin, said they wanted to keep their borders shut – despite not having seen a tourist since March 2020. The vote on the Chilean island in the South Pacific, some 3,700km off the coast of Chile, is not binding however. The final decision will be made by health authorities in the mainland region of Valparaiso. So far Easter Island, which has some 10,000 inhabitants, has recorded eight cases of Covid-19 – and no new infections since September 2020. There have been zero deaths. Most of those who live on the island are Rapa Nui, the indigenous name of the island, and are of Polynesian culture. The simple question put to the people on Sunday was “Do you want to open the island to tourists in January?” Despite the resounding No vote, some 80 percent of islanders failed to cast a ballot at all. "The island derives its income from the tourist industry. It's the source of the economy," said Salvador Atan, vice president of the local Ma'u Henua community, which administers Rapa Nui National Park. Like the local authorities, Atan is in favor of reopening the island on 1 January. More than 73 percent of Easter Island's population is vaccinated against Covid-19, but the medical centre in Hanga Roa, the capital, has no intensive care unit. In contrast, Chile has recorded more than 1.6 million coronavirus cases and more than 36,000 deaths since the pandemic began.

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20211025-remote-easter-island-votes-against-welcoming-back-tourists>

1033) *October 26*. Last week the **ISLE OF MAN** counted 106 new cases of Covid-19. According to Dr Tim Kerruish, an emergency department consultant who works on the island, the numbers simply don't make the kind of splash as they would in New Zealand where he comes from but the Isle of Man experience will look familiar to New Zealanders. It successfully pursued a policy of elimination, beating back multiple waves of Covid-19. Their pandemic started on March 19, 2020, when the virus arrived via a man who had been in Spain. He flew back to the island from

Liverpool. Days later, the Isle of Man shut its borders to non-residents and went into its first lockdown. During the pandemic the island has restricted access and mandated 14-day self-isolation. Yes, it is an island, but it's certainly not as remote as New Zealand. Case in point, in December last year a man managed to make it to the island from Scotland, via jetski, to visit his girlfriend. The trip took four hours, and he'd never driven such a vehicle before. By June there were no active cases, and life pretty much went back to normal. Some 336 people had caught the virus and 24 had died, almost all of them in a single rest home. New Zealand's deadliest Covid cluster was also in a rest home. Age is by far the most important factor in determining someone's risk. So, like Aotearoa, the Isle of Man fought off the first incursion. But Covid seems to find a way. In January 2021, the island once again entered a snap lockdown as a handful of cases popped up. At that time, the BBC's Sadhbh O'Shea wrote people were shocked but defiant. "The island had beaten back the virus during the first wave, and there was a sense it could be done again." They did beat it down. For the Isle of Man, elimination worked once more. A third wave was only weeks away, though, and another lockdown was announced on March 3. But again, the island managed to stamp it out and all restrictions were lifted by the end of April. By that time, the government was already laying out plans to "live with Covid-19". The island's Covid journey was, of course, intrinsically linked to the UK's. Long-term elimination was simply not realistic for a tiny island hemmed in between Ireland and the British mainland. Instead, the Isle of Man pivoted towards "mitigation", which it notes carries a higher acceptance of risk. The emergence of the Delta variant in the UK slowed the island's plans down a touch. Instead of fully opening to the British Isles by the end of June, it instead decided to allow fully vaccinated UK and Irish people to travel without undergoing isolation. At the time, about 72 per cent of the population had received their first dose. Only about 50 per cent, however, were fully vaccinated. When the border settings changed, the virus came. On July 1, seven new cases were found. At the time, health minister David Ashford said people "must now adapt to live with the virus as part of our lives". The BBC reported this meant "being less concerned with case numbers". The only reason this was at all feasible was because of the vaccine rollout, Ashford said. The vaccination numbers at the time were quite interesting. Initially the island's health authorities went for a three-week gap for the Pfizer jab and four weeks for the AstraZeneca one. That later changed to mirror the UK's approach, which prioritised giving people the first dose as soon as possible. If there are a limited number of doses, giving someone two doses means another person theoretically misses out on their first dose and is entirely unprotected. Therefore, the Isle of Man enacted a longer gap between doses. This is why the Isle of Man reached 70 per cent first dose coverage early in its rollout, and also explains why it was able to ramp up delivery of the second dose. By early August, 70 per cent of the entire population was fully vaccinated. Over that time, case numbers soared. The island even needed to drop mandatory isolation and testing for close contacts of Covid cases to keep the place up and running. By July 21 there were 1100 active cases, and three people in hospital. Each of those had some four close contacts, meaning about 5 per cent of the entire population would have had to isolate if the rules stayed as they were. I wrote last week that New Zealand has been boxed into a corner by the rest of the world, which has pretty much accepted Covid. That dilemma extends to the Isle of Man. *Stuff* has written about Ireland, Singapore and now the Isle of Man. The reason I've written these stories is to offer a snapshot of countries (at a single moment in time) that can offer insight into what a transition away from no-Covid looks like. We've talked since the start of the pandemic of looking overseas and learning from others' experiences. This has always been a key advantage. Right now, our Government will be looking at the UK and Ireland, for example, where case numbers

are going up as winter approaches and hospitals are under significant pressure. This is real-world experience that can inform the best ongoing Covid response. But, of course, no two places are the same and the comparisons can only go so far. New Zealand and the Isle of Man both successfully eliminated, but paths diverge. The current iteration of the Isle of Man's Covid strategy document is titled *Learning to Live with Covid-19*. It outlines that modelling suggests more than 90 people's lives were saved and more than 30,000 infections avoided because of the elimination strategy. Remember, this is an island of 90,000 people. It adds that the vaccines alone will not be enough to stop Covid. It suggests high vaccination coverage, along with public health measures, will lead to an "endemic equilibrium". Tragically, it says, 48 people died of Covid-19 (the document was published in September) and also notes: "Over the same period, since the start of the pandemic, there have been over 1200 deaths on the island through a wide range of other causes, some of whom may have unfortunately been impacted by the measures taken in response to the virus. "As we learn to live in a world where the virus becomes endemic, a sustainable level of balance needs to be found between protecting against the virus, and maintaining a new normality as far as possible." It talks of the need for the government to support people in making their own personal choices and says: "Individuals who may be at a higher level of risk from serious illness may need additional advice and guidance around the risks posed, and may need to consider additional mitigations, such as further shielding from time to time." A partial emphasis on the individual may not be overly surprising for a place that's pretty much never had a national speed limit – although a 40mph limit was brought in at the start of the pandemic to dampen down the chances of serious accidents and reduce the risk of hospitals being clogged up. The plan, however, states very clearly that uncontrolled spread of the virus cannot be allowed to occur. It pretty much rules out future lockdowns, unless the virus threatens to overwhelm the health system (there are six ICU beds on the Isle of Man). According to the Weekly Surveillance Report published on October 21, the island is experiencing widespread community transmission. Another wave is expected over winter. The impact, it says, is being significantly mitigated by the vaccine rollout and *Stuff* journalist, Keith Lynch, and Dr Kerruish then go on to provide further information on the present situation (as of October 21) in this excellent article.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/explained/126753688/covid19-nz-the-british-island-that-also-beat-covid-back-until-it-couldnt>

<https://covid19.gov.im/media/1869/strategicapproach1009.pdf>

1034) *October 28*. Nearly two years after the first reported case of Covid-19, the world is still facing the repercussions. At the same time, the extent of our planetary emergency - of climate crisis, biodiversity loss and inequality - has become evident. As we rebuild our societies and economies, we are faced with a unique opportunity to build a nature-positive future that we must not let slip away. It is time for all of us to chart a planetary response to our planetary crisis - a response that puts nature at the centre. Our shared global experience with Covid-19 has underlined the interconnectedness of our different systems. The science is clear: climate, biodiversity and human health are fully interdependent. Yet, within discussions around post-Covid recovery, nature is not yet recognised enough as an essential piece in the puzzle of a resilient future for all. A just, green and nature-positive recovery is a crucial first step towards emergence. It holds incredible potential – from the creation of 395 million jobs globally to delivering \$10.1tn (£7.4tn) in economic value by 2030 – if anchored in long-term systemic transformation of our societies and economies. This is not to

say that the path towards transformation is an easy one. However, inaction would be the worst option of all – we would not just miss out on \$10tn in potential economic value but lose an additional \$10tn or more globally over the next 30 years. The Planetary Emergency Plan, published by the Club of Rome and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, identifies key actions that support a paradigm shift from limiting the harm we do to the world through our day-to-day activities to a world where we enhance and restore the health of ecosystems. The plan calls on governments and sectors to adopt commitments to protect our global commons and develop national and sectoral roadmaps for regenerative land use and green, inclusive, circular societies. In shifting towards regenerative models and reforming our food systems, for instance, we simultaneously tackle global health issues such as air pollution and malnutrition, regenerate our land, forests and waterways, enhance our ability to store carbon to reach net zero and reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases. Within the EU alone, health co-benefits are estimated to cover 84% of the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (within a 1.5C scenario).

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/28/net-zero-is-not-enough-we-need-to-build-a-nature-positive-future-aoe>

1035) *October 29. INDONESIA* President Joko Widodo has urged richer countries to share their vaccines with poorer ones saying it "shouldn't be just a few countries that get all the vaccines and some other countries get only a little". He was speaking ahead of a visit to the G20 and COP26 meetings, where he will be meeting other world leaders. Indonesia was one of the countries hardest hit by the Covid pandemic. President Jokowi - as he is popularly known - also made the case for why there should be more vaccine equity so that developing and poorer countries aren't left behind in this pandemic. "Everyone has helped, but in my opinion it's not enough," he said, in a virtual interview from the Indonesian presidential palace in Jakarta. "In this time of crisis, advanced countries need to do more in helping poor countries get vaccines, so that we can overcome this pandemic together." Mr Widodo's comments come as Indonesia attempts to recover from the ravages of the pandemic. At its peak, the country officially recorded more than 50,000 cases a day, but the real numbers may have been higher. Nearly 150,000 people have died, according to government data. People died in their homes, gasping for breath as oxygen supplies ran out across the archipelago. The sick were turned away from overflowing hospitals and funeral grounds ran out of space for the dead. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said that the country was "teetering on the edge of a Covid-19 catastrophe". But Mr Widodo's administration initially downplayed the disease. His former health minister Terawan Agus Putranto famously said the country would be spared from the virus, because of "all the prayers." In the interview, he acknowledged the mistakes his administration made in managing the pandemic, saying that it was down to the lack of healthcare infrastructure in the country. "Our hospitals, our facilities were full and could not handle the load," he said, "and that led to a lot of deaths." The COVID situation has improved since then, with both deaths and case numbers falling, according to government data. The vaccination drive has also picked up. According to the latest data from the World Bank, Indonesia has given more than 100 million doses of vaccines in the country, with almost 30% of the population fully vaccinated - no easy feat in a huge archipelago. But while urban areas like Jakarta are now seeing high levels of vaccination rates, rural areas are harder to get to. "The difference between facilities is huge [between rural and urban areas], this is what we need to reform," Mr Widodo said. "For example there is no ICU in some hospitals, we need to fix that and buy the equipment and get these facilities ready so that we can

make it better." But critics say that it was not just a lack of investment in healthcare that was the problem - it was a lack of preparedness on the part of the government that led to hundreds of thousands dying when they could have been saved. Among them healthcare workers, who had been inoculated using the Chinese Sinovac vaccine that Indonesia first used in its attempts to vaccinate its population. Authorities later added other vaccines into the mix and have been able to procure more supplies. But the delay in getting vaccines to the vast population has cost the country dearly which is why Mr Widodo is pushing for developing countries to be allowed to house manufacturing facilities for vaccines - a proposal he is taking with him to the G20 meeting where he will meet with his global peers.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-59073105>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/covid-19-has-killed-nearly-5-million-people-and-the-pandemic-is-far-from-over>

1036) *October 30.* **TONGA** records first coronavirus case since start of pandemic. The infection was detected in a fully vaccinated person who had arrived on a repatriation flight from New Zealand. Tonga's Prime Minister Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa warned that residents on the main island of Tongatapu face a possible lockdown next week. Tonga was one of the last countries not to have reported Covid infections. Over 100,000 people live on the island nation, located north-west of New Zealand. Only a third of Tonga's population have been fully vaccinated. But national immunisation co-ordinator Afu Tei told AFP news agency that thousands had been turning up at vaccination centres to receive their jabs.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-59101584>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/01/panic-lockdown-and-a-rush-to-vaccinate-in-tonga-as-first-covid-case-recorded>

1037) *October 30.* US intelligence agencies say they may never be able to identify the origins of Covid-19, but they have concluded it was not created as a biological weapon. In an updated assessment of where the virus began, the Office of the US Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) said an animal-to-human transmission and a lab leak were both plausible hypotheses for how it spread. But there was not enough information to reach a definitive conclusion. China has criticised the report. The findings were published in a declassified report which is an update of a 90-day review that President Joe Biden's administration released in August. It said the intelligence community remains divided on the most likely origin of the virus. Four agencies assessed with "low confidence" it had originated with an infected animal or a related virus. But one agency said it had "moderate confidence" that the first human infection most likely was the result of a laboratory accident, probably involving experimentation or animal handling by the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The report also said Chinese officials were unaware of the existence of the virus before the initial outbreak of Covid-19 in the city of Wuhan, in late 2019. But it said China was continuing to hinder the global investigation and to resist sharing information. This BBC report provides numerous charts, maps and video tracking the pandemic that is continuing to spread around the world, with around 240 million confirmed cases and more than 4.9 million deaths across almost 200 countries.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-59100114>



1038) *November 2*. The Asian Development Bank will help the **COOK ISLANDS** prepare for the return of tourists through a \$2 million grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. Together with \$500,000 of in-kind contribution from the Government of the Cook Islands, the grant will fund the Supporting Safe Recovery of Travel and Tourism Project, which will improve the Cook Islands' airport and health services. Over 10,000 men and women in the Cook Islands will benefit from the project, particularly workers in the hospitality sector 60.5% of whom are women. The grant project will extend the Rarotonga Airport terminal building to improve COVID-19 screening and physical distancing, upgrade a health facility to provide hospital-like services and install a medical waste treatment system. The existing structure of the Rarotonga Airport terminal requires additional upgrades to incorporate updated international COVID-19 safety measures. The project will fund an extension to the airport terminal to allow sufficient space between incoming passengers and waiting areas for vulnerable groups. The Cook Islands' health system has limited capacity to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients. Through the project, a health care facility in Rarotonga will be refurbished to function 24/7 and provide services such as triage, specialized primary health care, emergency services, maternal and reproductive health, and counselling - including for gender-based violence and mental health cases. The only medical waste incinerator in the country will struggle to safely dispose of the increased volume of protection, testing, and treatment waste the COVID-safe return of visitors will generate. The project will install a waste treatment system to complement the incinerator and manage the additional waste in an environmentally friendly manner. The project complements efforts by the governments of the Cook Islands and New Zealand in ensuring over 96% of the adult population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, making it one of the most highly vaccinated countries in the world. It also complements New Zealand's support to improve screening, testing, contact tracing, and isolation processes in the Cook Islands.

<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/business/1791602-adb-to-help-cook-islands-boost-tourism-through-2m-grant-from-japan>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/127011690/covid19-cook-islands-holiday-bookings-slow-ahead-of-january-14-travel-bubble>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/456755/govt-announces-100m-support-package-for-cook-islands-and-fiji>

1039) *November 3*. How creative industries could boost the economies of small islands crippled by COVID. Small islands in the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean or in the Pacific islands promise dream holidays and the fulfilment of bucket lists. And, for the islands themselves, tourism is a vital source of jobs, income and prosperity. But the pandemic and its effect on the travel industry has meant places such as the Maldives and the Seychelles have seen their economies brought to the brink of collapse. These islands are mainly powered by the “blue economy” - sectors such as tourism and fisheries which depend on the sea. But COVID-19 has shown the risks of such reliance. So how can these islands build economic resilience while protecting the fragile ecology on which they depend? As I explain in my new book (*Beyond the Blue Economy*), one response could be to look to the “orange economy” - a term which describes the various sectors - everything from art, film, music and video games - of the creative and cultural industries. The impact of these industries is often underestimated. In the UK for example, they add £13 million every hour to the

national economy - more than the automotive industry, life sciences and aerospace combined. And globally, the orange economy employs more people aged 15–29 than any other sector. It has become an engine for regeneration in inner cities such as Liverpool in the UK, and Pittsburgh in the US. But this potential economic boost should not be limited to wealthy countries. Indeed, for developing regions there is no reason why these sectors should not play an increasingly important role. In small island developing states (known as SIDS) in particular, the orange economy could play a valuable role in supporting the blue one. Yet many of the entrepreneurs, educators and government officials I spoke to in St Lucia, the Maldives, the Seychelles and the Pacific islands, mentioned the lack of an ecosystem for developing and supporting the creative industries. That said some encouraging steps have been taken. For example, in 2017 the Caribbean Development Bank launched a dedicated fund to stimulate growth in these sectors, with an initial injection of US\$2.6 million (£1.8 million). Among other projects, this has supported visual artists across the region as well as film and animation projects in St Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. This kind of access to finance is crucial. But independent investment is virtually nonexistent in these islands, meaning entrepreneurs and startups often have to rely on costly borrowing. Another serious challenge is developing an economic model which has a positive effect on the environment - especially when that environment is essential to the other industries. But a further strength of an orange economy is that creativity and innovation are renewable resources. It is also a development that could quickly fit into the established economic fabric of a small island. After all, the relationship between digital content, technology platforms and culture has already had a positive disruptive effect on tourism, providing people with more choice and information. One good example of a digital-creative project is the non-profit company Hydrous which allows users (potential tourists) to go on a virtual dive into the marine environments of Palau in Indonesia, using an immersive technology app. This includes a guided tour of the coral reefs, where virtual divers can explore the islands' marine wildlife, including sea turtles, manta rays and sharks. This kind of creative content delivered through virtual reality channels can enhance visitor experiences, engage new audiences and increase marketing opportunities. Before a trip is booked, a potential traveller could explore resorts using high-definition virtual reality software. Once they've arrived, they could use "SLAM" (Simultaneous Localisation and Mapping) technology, which responds to a user's precise location to provide information (either in text, animation, or audio and visual recordings) about their immediate environment, enhancing their enjoyment and understanding. From a business perspective, optimising this kind of technology requires creativity. This is just one way in which a move to more digital and creative businesses could enhance tourism and support the wider ocean economy. The orange economy has the potential to redefine the recovery of small island states, while protecting the blue economy they have relied on for so long. The focus for SIDS should be on establishing a creative economy which allow islanders to create, innovate and monetise their ideas. By doing that island states can build a strong, resilient and sustainable economy that supports the health of ocean environments - and the creative and entrepreneurial ambitions of the people who live in them.

<https://theconversation.com/how-creative-industries-could-boost-the-economies-of-small-islands-crippled-by-covid-168502>

<https://www.routledge.com/Beyond-the-Blue-Economy-Creative-Industries-and-Sustainable-Development/Rudge/p/book/9780367820251>

<https://today.caricom.org/2021/07/29/cdb-awards-25-visual-artists-with-grants-to-participate-in-the-visual-arts-biennial-accelerator/>

<https://today.caricom.org/2021/02/05/cdb-awards-us50000-in-grants-to-animation-film-projects-in-saint-lucia-trinidad-and-tobago/>

1040) November 3. With New Zealanders unable to travel overseas, they've flocked to Aotearoa's third-largest island allowing it to buck the trend of most tourist markets. **STEWART ISLAND** has benefited from a tourist boom due to the pandemic. Locals said when the borders closed in March last year and the country was plunged into lockdown, Rakiura faced an uncertain future as tourism - one of its biggest exports - disappeared overnight. But as New Zealanders were soon allowed to move around the country again, many visited Rakiura for the first time. Stewart Island Promotions chair Aaron Joy said the island benefited from two waves of tourists. "When the Covid restrictions were lifted [in May last year] there were still 350,000 international visitors still in New Zealand and then New Zealanders woke up to the fact that international travel was going to be a no go, so we started seeing this in-surge of New Zealanders." The Delta outbreak in August and Auckland's ongoing lockdown had dampened demand, but the island remained busy, Joy said. Operators were still trying to wrap their heads around the future Covid-19 traffic light system but they looked forward to New Zealanders having more freedom to travel, he said.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/454851/rakiura-stewart-island-bolstered-by-domestic-tourism-over-pandemic>

1041) *November 4.* Global carbon dioxide emissions are set to rebound to near the levels they were at before Covid, in a finding that has surprised scientists. The amount of planet-heating gas released in 2020 fell by 5.4% as the pandemic forced countries to lock down. But a scientific report by the Global Carbon Project predicts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will rise by 4.9% this year. It shows the window is closing on our ability to limit temperature rise to the critical threshold of 1.5C. This rise in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) released into the atmosphere underlines the urgency of action at summits like COP26 in Glasgow, scientists say.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-59148520>

1042) *November 5.* Following over a year of travel restrictions, lockdowns and various COVID variants, the Caribbean tourism sector is showing significant signs of recovery. A major player in the tourism revival is the Federation of **ST KITTS AND NEVIS**. This week, the nation announced the addition of several cruise calls and flights to its winter roster. St Kitts and Nevis enjoyed a thriving cruise sector before the global health crisis, welcoming approximately one million passengers in two consecutive years. It was named a marquee destination by the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association. This was bolstered by the island's inauguration of Port Zante, which can accommodate three world-class vessels simultaneously, increasing the number of passengers the islands can welcome. However, St Kitts and Nevis is not just a popular holiday destination. The last year has seen a surge of investors settling on the islands by way of its Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme. American entrepreneurs and crypto investors have increasingly been interested in securing second citizenship to diversify assets and essentially plan for a rainy day. As pioneers of the CBI industry, St Kitts and Nevis is recognised as Platinum Standard brand and

thus appeals to investors seeking a reputable and trusted product. It also offers one of the most straightforward application processes, enabling applicants who can successfully pass the due diligence stage with a receipt of citizenship within two months. Economic citizens of St Kitts and Nevis gain greater travel freedom, a second home in a stable democracy and alternative business prospects in one of the fastest-growing economies in the region.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/tourism-recommences-in-st-kitts-and-nevis-as-islands-welcome-back-cruise-ships-and-new-american-flights-301417579.html>

1043) *November 5.* The **MALDIVES** Health Protection Agency (HPA) has revealed that 23 islands are currently under monitoring due to risks of widespread Covid-19. Maldives total Covid-19 case count has surpassed the 88,000-mark. Maldives reported its first Covid-19 fatality in April 2020 and since then, the death toll has risen to 243. Maldives was faced by a fourth and more infectious coronavirus wave in early May, with cases rising to alarming levels at 1,000 on a daily basis. With the implementation of stricter measures, cases began declining once again, and authorities introduced further eases to restrictions in early July for the extensive government holidays. Cases have been doubling with those that have completed both doses of Covid-19 vaccine allowed to travel domestically without the need to quarantine, with a negative PCR test result. HPA continues to practice caution as the pandemic is far from being controlled, despite declining numbers in recent months. For over a month, the country has been free from further restrictions in the face of the pandemic, however, the authorities continue to remind the public to be vigilant as the country heads down the road to full recovery from the impacts of Covid-19. Although life is far from reaching normal yet, the government's resilience to vaccinate the entire nation has revived hopes of eases from further burden, in the new normal. The geographical advantage of being comprised of a scatter of islands initially enabled Maldives to keep tabs on the spread of coronavirus when the first few cases surfaced. Things spiraled out of control after a community transmission was detected in the congested capital on 15 April 2020 to which authorities responded by imposing an immediate lockdown. Months later, authorities began easing the lockdown in phases, with cases going on a downward spiral. Things seemed to be in control until the New Year rolled around and cases began spiraling once more. Since April 2020, authorities have been repeating a cycle of curfews, lockdowns, partial lockdowns and other restrictive measures in their successful efforts to curb the spread of the virus. The country has been in a state of public health emergency for over a year, since 12 March 2020. It has been extended a 20th time to expire on November 30.

<https://raajje.mv/108970>; <https://raajje.mv/109101>; <https://raajje.mv/109166>;

1044) *November 8.* For the first 18 months of the coronavirus pandemic, life in **TAIWAN** was blessed. As cities locked down across China, Europe and Asia, and death tolls climbed into the millions, Taiwan was safe, vibrant, and almost normal. Thanks to a strategy of case prevention and swift elimination, it recorded a relatively low 16,430 cases – mostly imported and detected in quarantine – and 847 deaths. But now, as the world begins opening up, having accepted coexistence with the virus while mitigating it with high vaccination rates and other measures, Taiwan risks being left behind. Almost two years after Covid first emerged, the island has held tight to the measures that made it an early success - closed borders, strict quarantine, intensive case tracing and widespread mandatory mask-wearing. And there is little sign of these

requirements ending. The island is now among a few holdouts - alongside China and Hong Kong - that are resisting rejoining the post-Covid world and wrestling with what that means for the economy and the public. The restricted borders have crushed international tourism, hindered trade and exacerbated supply chain issues. Airmail services to and from several countries are suspended. Families have been separated, livelihoods hurt. Throughout the pandemic tourists and other non-residents have been banned from entry, including the foreign partners and children of Taiwan residents. Authorities recently lifted the ban, but it only applied to the families of Taiwanese citizens, not foreign residents. In 2019 there were more than 29 million international arrivals in Taiwan. In 2020, during the height of the pandemic and prior to vaccines, the figure dropped to 3.9 million. So far this year there have been just 335,000. "How long can you maintain it? There's a price for it," says Prof Chunhui Chi, the director of Oregon State University's centre for global health. "Taiwan sacrificed international collaboration in commerce and exchange." In July, the Economist Intelligence Unit said the Zero Covid approach used in Asian countries "has delivered both health and economic benefits, and has been popular where implemented". "If the rest of the world had adopted a similar approach, zero-Covid might prove a sustainable strategy," it said but they hadn't, and the policy "will become unviable as the global economy reopens", the report found. Some Taiwan-based businesses relying on the global market have begun looking at moving manufacturing on the island, given there is no indication when the problems will ease, because there is no clear roadmap being presented to residents. Currently all entrants must quarantine in designated hotels or government facilities, and then spend another week "self managing" limited isolation. Home quarantine ended after it was linked to Taiwan's only significant Delta outbreak in Pingtung and observers don't see it returning soon. A primary factor in Taiwan's continued closure is its struggle to match international vaccination rates, especially in second doses. A drive to deliver Moderna doses to some sector workers saw delivery of second shots, which are recommended at 28 days by the WHO, delayed to at least 12 weeks, with some recipients forced to cold-call hospitals around Taiwan looking for doses. A combination of under-ordered supplies, global shortages, and foreign interference by China, means Taiwan's vaccination program has been largely propped up by significant but inconsistent donations, and lately its own domestically developed vaccine. About 73% of people in Taiwan had received at least one dose - with the highest proportions among the elderly - and just over one-third has received their second dose. The government says it's on track to meet its 60% target by year's end, when they will consider unspecified future changes. Politics is also a factor, says Prof Chi. With local elections on the horizon, Chi predicts the DPP will wait to open borders because of the high chance any outbreak will be used by the opposition KMT to criticise the government. "It cannot afford any new outbreak," he says. In September the central epidemic command centre (CECC) told the Guardian Covid Zero was not its target but they were heading in that direction. Asked in parliament last month if their plan was for Covid zero or coexistence, health minister Chen Shih-chung appeared to say both. "The current goal is to achieve Covid-19 zero, but Taiwan must also be prepared to coexist with Covid-19," he said, suggesting they were hoping the virus eventually lessened in severity. In October, special adviser to the CECC, Professor Lee Ping-ing, appeared to suggest that would take three years. "We must wait until the virus becomes mild and the human immune system can adjust before it can start coexisting with the virus," he said. Observers note readying the public is a key issue for the short term if Taiwan is to open up, in order to address strong fear and significant stigma attached to infections. "Even if Taiwan had 70% of the population who received two doses, it is still worrying to think of opening up," said one resident on Taiwan's social media



platform PTT, saying other countries have become accustomed to the pandemic. “Taiwanese are afraid of death and opening after vaccination. They still hesitate.” Prof Steve Tsang, of the SOAS Institute, said he understands why the government is going slow, “but it will have to accept that we will have to live with Covid now, and the Zero Covid policy is not sustainable”. “It may well need more time to increase the rate of vaccination before it can relax substantially the travel restrictions, but it should provide clear guidelines on the criteria for doing so.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/08/how-long-can-you-maintain-it-cost-of-taiwans-pursuit-of-covid-zero-starts-to-show>

1045) *November 8.* France has given **NEW CALEDONIA** a further \$US46 million to help cover the costs of its Covid-19 response. The French High Commission says the funds were sought by New Caledonia's president Louis Mapou to cover expenses for equipment, the vaccination effort and personnel reinforcements for the hospitals. A community outbreak two months ago infected more than 10,000 people and killed more than 260. Strict lockdowns have been retained only for weekends as the pandemic has eased and the mortality rate plummeted, although 20 Covid-19 patients are still in intensive care. Much of public life has been reopened, but a decision to allow nakamals, or kava bars, to reopen has been rescinded. Today, more school children have returned to their classrooms for the first time since September. 70 percent of those over the age of 12 have now been vaccinated.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/455212/new-caledonia-gets-more-funds-to-deal-with-covid-19>

1046) *November 8.* Social tensions are rising in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** over Covid-19 vaccination, as people working to help curb the spread of the virus face mob attacks. PNG's biggest urban centres and numerous provinces have been grappling with the third wave of the pandemic, driven by widespread community transmission of the Delta strain of the virus. The outbreak has overwhelmed PNG's national and provincial health systems which are also under attack by elements of the public when it comes to the vaccine rollout. According to the National Control Centre, around 3.8 percent of PNG's eligible population of 4.7 million have been fully vaccinated. Three different Covid-19 vaccines are available in PNG: AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, and Janssen. Vaccination against Covid-19 is not mandatory in PNG, but protests over recent vaccination requirements have been held in recent days in PNG's two biggest cities, Port Moresby and Lae, in defiance of rules disallowing gatherings of more than 20 people. In Moresby, angry market vendors held a massive rally to call for an end to municipal rules that restrict access to market facilities for the unvaccinated. And in Lae, hundreds held a street protest over private employers increasingly demanding staff be vaccinated, with one protestor describing it as an infringement on basic rights. The mood in Lae has deteriorated with urban clinics this week forced to close indefinitely following attacks on health workers and support staff subjected to stone-throwing, verbal abuse and threats. Morobe province is also withdrawing mobile clinics and health teams conducting Covid vaccination and awareness programmes because of increasing attacks on them. Furthermore, vaccination teams in the Highlands have also had rocks thrown at them. While the national capital has notably opted against a lockdown to contain the current surge in cases, some provinces have been enforcing them to try and break community transmission. Lockdown measures extended for another two weeks in Eastern Highlands Province have seen police mount road blocks to restrict movement between districts, while only essential

services are allowed to operate, and a province-wide curfew between 6am and 2pm continues. In nearby Western Highlands Province a two-week lockdown which was lifted yesterday has been credited with easing local Covid case numbers, providing a little relief for the overwhelmed wards at Mt Hagen Hospital. Furthermore, the Covid response clinical lead at the hospital, John Junior McKup, said the arrival of a British emergency medical assistance team late last month had brought much needed support for the local health workers. However Dr McKup said low vaccination rates remained a concern in his province, with recent news of protests and social media posts against vaccination turning people off.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/455215/mob-attacks-on-vaccination-teams-commonplace-in-png>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/455621/nz-sends-medical-team-to-png-as-covid-19-overwhelms-its-health-system>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/02/the-fear-of-this-vaccine-is-real-how-papua-new-guineas-covid-strategy-went-so-wrong>

1047) *November 8.* Plastic waste from the Covid-19 pandemic weighing 25,900 tonnes, equivalent to more than 2,000 double decker buses, has leaked into the ocean, research has revealed. The mismanaged plastic waste, consisting of personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves, vastly exceeded the capability of countries to process it properly, researchers said. Since the beginning of the pandemic, an estimated 8.4m tonnes of plastic waste has been generated from 193 countries, according to the report, published on Monday. “The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increased demand for single-use plastics that intensifies pressure on an already out-of-control global plastic waste problem,” said Yiming Peng and Peipei Wu from Nanjing University, the authors of *Magnitude and impact of pandemic-associated plastic waste* published in the online journal PNAS. “The released plastics can be transported over long distances in the ocean, encounter marine wildlife, and potentially lead to injury or even death,” they added. A study in March presented the first case of a fish entrapped in a medical glove, encountered during a canal cleanup in Leiden, the Netherlands. In Brazil a PFF-2 protective mask was found in the stomach of a dead Magellanic penguin. The scientists predicted that by the end of the century almost all pandemic-associated plastics will end up on either the seabed or on beaches. The Chinese study found that 46% of the mismanaged plastic waste came from Asia, due to the high level of mask-wearing by individuals there, followed by Europe, 24%, and North and South America, 22%. Peng and Wu said their research suggested 87.4% of the excess waste was from hospitals, rather than from individual use. PPE usage by individuals contributed only 7.6% of the total, while packaging and test kits accounted for 4.7% and 0.3% respectively. “Most of the plastic is from medical waste generated by hospitals that dwarfs the contribution from personal protection equipment and online-shopping package material,” they wrote. “This poses a long-lasting problem for the ocean environment and is mainly accumulated on beaches and coastal sediments.” The thousands of tonnes of masks, gloves, testing kits and face visors which leached into the oceans from the start of the pandemic up to August this year, were transported in 369 major rivers. Chief among these were Shatt al-Arab in south-eastern Iraq, which carried 5,200 tonnes of PPE waste to the ocean; the Indus river in western Tibet carried 4,000 tonnes and the Yangtze river in China 3,700 tonnes. In Europe, the Danube carried the most plastic pandemic waste into the ocean: 1,700 tonnes. The top 10 rivers accounted for 79% of pandemic plastic discharge, the top 20 for 91%, and the top 100 for 99%. About 73% of the discharge

was from Asian rivers followed by European watercourses (11%), with minor contributions from other continents, the report said. “These findings highlight river hotspots and watersheds that require special attention in plastic waste management,” the authors said. “We find a long-lasting impact of the pandemic-associated waste release in the global ocean. At the end of this century, the model suggests that almost all the pandemic-associated plastics end up in either the seabed (28.8%) or beaches (70.5%).” The authors said the findings showed better medical waste management was needed in pandemic epicenters, especially in developing countries.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/08/about-26000-tonnes-of-plastic-covid-waste-pollutes-worlds-oceans-study>

<https://www.pnas.org/content/118/47/e2111530118>

<https://oceansasia.org/covid-19-facemasks/>

1048) *November 9.* **SINGAPORE** will no longer pay the Covid-19 medical bills for people “unvaccinated by choice”, the government said, as the country grapples with a surge in cases. The government currently covers the full Covid medical costs for all Singaporeans, as well as permanent residents and long-term visa holders, unless they test positive soon after returning home from overseas. However from 8 December, the government said it will “begin charging Covid-19 patients who are unvaccinated by choice”. It said unvaccinated people “make up a sizeable majority of those who require intensive in-patient care and disproportionately contribute to the strain on our healthcare resources”. Covid-related medical bills will still be paid for people who aren’t eligible for a vaccine. The government will also foot the bill for individuals who are partially vaccinated until 31 December, giving them time to get a second dose. Singapore has among the highest coverage rates in the world, with 85% of the eligible population fully vaccinated. Yet the city state is struggling with rising Covid infections and last month warned its healthcare system was at risk of being “overwhelmed” by surging cases. It came a day after the country expanded quarantine free travel as part of a shift in its approach to dealing with the pandemic. The Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, previously said the global business hub could not remain closed indefinitely, and Singapore has moved from a zero-tolerance strategy with lockdowns and closed borders to living with Covid-19. A spike in infections after the relaxation of some restrictions prompted the island to pause further reopening in late October. Social curbs were extended for around a month in order to contain the spread of Covid and ease the pressure on the healthcare system. On 8 November, the country reported 2,470 new cases and 14 deaths. The ministry of health said 67 Covid cases were critically ill in intensive care.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/09/singapore-to-start-charging-covid-patients-who-are-unvaccinated-by-choice>

1049) November 9. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added two northwestern European countries to its list of “very high” risk of travel destinations this week amid a surge in cases in Europe that a WHO official has said is “of grave concern.” The **FAROE ISLANDS** were also added to the Level 4 category and in the Caribbean the **CAYMAN ISLANDS** also received a Level 4 designation. Destinations that fall into the CDC’s “Covid-19 Very High” Level 4 category have had more than 500 cases per 100,000 residents in the past 28 days.

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/cdc-very-high-risk-travel-destinations-november-8/index.html>

<https://www.caymancompass.com/2021/11/09/covid-contingency-testing-key-to-keeping-frontline-workers-in-action/>

1050) *November 9*. Argentine Minister of Tourism Matias Lammens and Tierra del Fuego governor Gustavo Melella officially opened the 2021/22 cruise season this Monday, in Ushuaia, with the arrival of *National Geographic Endurance*, which tomorrow leaves for **ANTARCTICA**. “It was very difficult to think in a cruise season, but we made the political decision since we know what it means for the local and national economy. Tourism is the locomotive of the province's recovery”, pointed out Lammens. He added “we've worked hard to sustain the sector, but now is the moment to grow with the support of an innovative State”. Governor Melella expressed his satisfaction and said it was a great moment to begin the recovery, thanking the federal government and the private sector for their joint efforts in sustaining jobs. The head of Tierra del Fuego provincial ports Roberto Murcia said he was grateful to the federal ministries and local health authorities in helping draft and approve “Covid 19 protocols and establishing a safe corridor from the international Malvinas Argentinas airport to the dock for passengers to embark”. The provincial official said they were looking forward to a very encouraging tourism season since some 243 cruise calls are scheduled involving 37 vessels. “Our strict sanitary measures and the successful vaccination program in the province are the great support for the season.” The *National Geographic Endurance* is an expedition vessel for 126 tourists, and has a very revolutionary hull with an X-Bow, which allows for a more gentle and ecologic sailing, more fuel efficient and less carbon contaminating. On Friday November 19, she is expected to meet in Ushuaia with her sister, *National Geographic Resolution*.

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/11/09/antarctica-cruise-season-2021-22-launched-in-ushuaia-with-national-geographic-vessels>

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/11/18/arrival-of-first-expedition-vessels-into-the-falkland-islands>

1051) *November 9*. The housing situation on **MARTHA'S VINEYARD** was already in crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The worldwide health crisis has made the situation with rentals and homeownership even worse, because when families fled from crowded urban areas they took either refuge in their summer properties and worked from home, or they scooped up available properties on the Island - paying cash above the asking price, and driving up prices on all properties. In one year, the median sale price skyrocketed from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million on the Vineyard. That's put the price of housing on the Island, already a stretch for some families even with two incomes, out of reach.

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2021/11/09/island-going-figure/>

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2021/12/03/island-sees-elevated-covid-numbers/>

1052) *November 10*. The Mediterranean island-nation of **MALTA** may be small but its response to the pandemic has been mighty. Once enforcing some of the strictest restrictions in Europe, the country has finally been able to open its borders and

welcome back visitors safely, boasting one of the world's highest vaccination rates. Nearly 81% of all Malta residents are fully vaccinated. In fact, Malta and Portugal are the only two nations in Europe that have reached a more than 80% vaccination rate across their total population (including teenagers age 12 to 17, who have been eligible to get the vaccine since summer 2021), according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). This makes them two of the only places likely to avoid a winter resurgence says the ECDC director, and among the safest places to travel in 2021. Visitors to Malta must be vaccinated themselves if they want to skip a 14-day quarantine. The country is more than ready to welcome back vaccinated international visitors – especially those looking to take advantage of their company's new remote work policies. In June 2021, Malta launched their Nomad Residence Permit, which enables visitors to keep their current employment in another country and live in Malta for up to a year (with the opportunity for renewal). Applicants must prove they can work remotely, work for an employer or offer freelance or consulting services and earn at least the equivalent of €2,700 monthly. Visitors to Malta may also benefit from the tourism-boosting Free Independent Traveller (FIT) scheme, which allows participating hotels to give guests who stay three days or more up to €200 (€100 from the government and a matching subsidy from the hotel) in incentives (which can include a room discount or on-site perks). Malta has also been making some of the largest strides in environmental sustainability in recent years, ranking 10th in Earth.org's Global Sustainability Index. In 2021, the country launched its action plan toward a circular economy – one which ensures that producers remain responsible for where their products end up, encouraging reuse, recycling and overall reduction of resources. To encourage this, the Malta Ministry for Tourism launched its Green Mobility programme for hotels in 2019, which awards hotels for encouraging sustainable modes of transport like bicycling, electric vehicles and shuttle services for its employees and guests to get to and from the hotel and urban centres. Eating sustainably and serving local ingredients from local farmers and fishermen has been on the rise here as well. Though locals say restaurants and bars are pretty much back to business as usual, some pandemic-related regulations remain in place, like group gatherings (including restaurant seatings) limited to eight people and 1.5m distances between indoor tables at restaurants and bars. Masks are still mandatory indoors, but as of recently, not required outdoors for those who are vaccinated.

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20211109-malta-the-island-welcoming-digital-nomads>

1053) *November 10*. The COVID-19 crisis has devastated **MADAGASCAR** tourism sector, sending communities near the country's iconic forests into a period of economic hardship even tighter than usual for the impoverished country. This is the case around the Vohibola forest, one of the last scraps of primary forest still standing in eastern Madagascar, and home to the world's tiniest frogs and other natural oddities. For a time, in the quiet imposed by COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, Vohibola got a reprieve from some of the difficulties that have long plagued it, including deforestation, fires, and timber and charcoal trafficking. Local people banded together to plant thousands of trees, and the forest and its wildlife seemed to be relaxing and recovering. Now, however, Vohibola, a community forest under the management of an underresourced group of volunteers, appears to be returning to its old normal, with incidents of illegal logging ticking back up.



<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/after-a-pandemic-relieve-loggers-return-to-a-unique-madagascar-forest/>

1054) *November 10*. More than 18 months into the pandemic, we're still hunting for effective antiviral treatments for COVID - medicines that target the coronavirus itself and stop it from developing in the body. So far we have only a handful of options. Remdesivir has been authorised for use, but the latest research shows it doesn't improve outcomes for COVID patients, and so the World Health Organization has recommended it not be used. A new alternative, molnupiravir, will soon be available, but demand will be high. It could also be very expensive for some patients. So if we need alternative antivirals, where will we find them? Possibly in nature since it is an outstanding hub for valuable natural compounds, and provided us with one of the most important scientific discoveries in history: penicillin, the first naturally occurring antibiotic to be used therapeutically. Thanks to this drug, various diseases caused by bacteria are no longer life threatening. There's a very good chance that researchers could discover a highly effective antiviral agent in nature too, if they were able to test all of the substances within the natural environment. This, however, would be an enormous task. So we need to find shortcuts, which is something I and my colleagues have been working on. The marine environment in particular is a treasure trove for potential new medicines. Many products derived from marine organisms have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for medical use, for example, and many others are currently in different stages of clinical trials. However, the sea and its natural products are still under-investigated as far as medicines are concerned. One set of substances that are particularly interesting are marine sulphated polysaccharides, or MSPs. These are a type of carbohydrate that contain sulphur, and are mainly found in the cell walls of marine algae or seaweeds. They're also less commonly found in some fish skins and in mangrove plants. They're significant because they've shown that they can inhibit many disease-causing viruses, such as herpes simplex virus, HIV, chikungunya virus, cytomegalovirus, influenza and hepatitis virus. But even if we know MSPs in general are worth investigating, discovering which ones specifically are effective against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID, would be very time and resource-consuming using traditional laboratory testing. To get around this, my colleagues and I used computer-assisted methods to predict how MSPs would behave with the coronavirus, and so filter out those unlikely to work against it. Many drugs currently on the market were developed with this kind of assistance, including the flu treatment zanamivir and the HIV drugs nelfinavir and saquinavir. First, we looked at past research, focusing on papers that mentioned MSPs having an effect against different viruses. We looked at around 80 papers, spanning 25 years, and came up with a shortlist of 45 substances that might potentially have an antiviral effect and so be worth investigating further. These shortlisted MSPs came from various marine sources, including different types of algae, microalgae, sea cucumbers and squid cartilage. We then built 3D computer-generated versions of these molecules, together with the spike protein that covers the outside of the coronavirus, which is what the virus uses to get inside cells. Using these computer models, we then simulated how well each MSP would bind to the spike protein. This process - of using computer simulations to test binding - is known as "molecular docking". Knowing that we should focus interactions with the spike protein wasn't just a guess. A substance chemically similar to the MSPs we were looking at, called heparin, had recently shown promise against SARS-CoV-2 by binding to its spike proteins and stopping it from infecting cells. (The issue with heparin is that it's a blood thinner, and so it's not highly suitable as a COVID medicine.) If we could find MSPs that bound to the virus in the same way as heparin, then we'd have a list of substances that could plausibly

have the same antiviral effect as it too. And so, we ran computer simulations for all of our MSPs. Of the 45 MSPs we shortlisted, nine showed the same binding activity as heparin, suggesting they would have real promise as avenues for future drug development. And while some of these had already been flagged as having potential use against SARS-CoV-2 – such as carrageenan an algae product already used in nasal sprays and lozenges for the common cold – crucially, five hadn't. Carrageenan is already being tested for its potential to stop people from being infected with COVID. The other substances we uncovered are some way behind, but hopefully with their potential having been speedily revealed, they can now move on to the next stage of drug development – lab testing to properly confirm their activity against SARS-CoV-2. If that were to go well, then a marine-derived drug for treating COVID could be something we see in the future.

<https://theconversation.com/promising-covid-treatments-could-be-growing-under-the-sea-heres-how-to-find-them-166038>

1055) *November 11*. In May, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) found that just 12 influencers were responsible for nearly 65% of anti-vaccine content on Facebook and Twitter. “Many of these leading anti-vaxxers are alternative health entrepreneurs ... They're reaching millions of users every day,” says Callum Hood of the CCDH. “This is a serious problem. Vaccine hesitancy has become a difficult and entrenched obstacle to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.” Included within the CCDH's “disinformation dozen” are Joseph Mercola, a US wellness entrepreneur called the “most influential spreader of Covid-19 misinformation online” by the New York Times; Dr Christiane Northrup, a wellness expert who helped popularise the notorious Covid pseudo-documentary *Plandemic* by sharing it with her 560,000 Facebook followers; and Kelly Brogan, a contributor to Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop wellness platform. Mikki Willis, the director of *Plandemic*, is well known in the California yoga scene, while David “Avocado” Wolfe, a conspiracy theorist and raw food advocate is a regular figure at anti-vaccination protests across the US. Away from the CCDH's list, other prominent figures include the yoga instructor Stephanie Birch, who has posted QAnon hashtags on her now-deleted Instagram account, and Krystal Tini, a wellness influencer with 169,000 Instagram followers, who has consistently posted anti-vaccine content, including one post that compared lockdowns to the horrors inflicted on Polish Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. Comparing vaccine deployment to historic atrocities such as slavery and the Holocaust is a routine trope in anti-vaccine wellness circles; the Los Angeles wellness and beauty guru Shiva Rose recently compared vaccines to McCarthyism, slavery, the Cultural Revolution, the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust, all in one post. Beres says many of these wellness influencers are “using cult leader techniques in digital spaces”, sowing fear and hesitancy about the Covid vaccine among their followers, one Instagram post at a time.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/11/injecting-poison-will-never-make-you-healthy-how-the-wellness-industry-turned-its-back-on-covid-science>

1056) *November 11*. As America's pandemic - for now - seems to be moving into a new phase with national rates in decline from the September peak and vaccines rolling out to children, a new worry has appeared on the horizon: wildlife passing on the virus. A new study shows that deer can catch the coronavirus from people and give it to other deer in overwhelming numbers, the first evidence of animals transmitting the virus in the wild. Similar spillover and transmission could be

occurring in certain animal populations around the world, with troubling implications for eradicating the virus and potentially even for the emergence of new variants. One-third of Iowa deer sampled over nine months had active infections, with a peak of 80% testing positive between November and January, according to a preprint study that has not yet been peer-reviewed or published. It builds on previous findings that one-third of deer in other US states were exposed to the virus and developed antibodies, but it differs in showing high rates of active infections, which last for a much narrower window of time. The virus very likely spilled over from humans to deer through several different interactions, and then it probably spread to other deer, according to the analysis. Nearly everything about their study shocked the scientists. They knew deer could be infected with the coronavirus. But they were stunned by the numbers – four out of five deer tested positive at the highest peak – as well as high viral loads that were “truly gobsmacking”, Suresh Kuchipudi, clinical professor of virology at Penn State and coauthor of the study, told the Guardian. They were also surprised by the fairly clear links in the genetic analysis connecting human transmission to the animals and then the rapid transmission to other deer. These results have implications for other wildlife as well. It is possible certain other animals are also contracting and spreading the coronavirus around the world, which would make it difficult to eradicate the virus and to prevent mutations that could lead to new variants. Around the world, SARS-CoV-2 has been reported in cats, dogs, ferrets, minks, lions, tigers, pumas and gorillas. Hyenas at the Denver zoo recently tested positive, the first confirmed cases in those animals. In August 2020, an outbreak at a mink farm in Utah led investigators to sample wild mink nearby – and they found antibodies and active infections in some of the wild animals. In November 2020, Denmark killed 17 million mink after the virus jumped from people to farmed mink and back to people again – the only documented case of animals passing the coronavirus back to people. The virus mutated, but none of the changes were dangerous. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, coronaviruses were well known for infecting animals, and vaccinations against common coronaviruses were standard for pets in the US. Another coronavirus, which now causes mild cold symptoms, may have driven the 1889 pandemic that claimed 1 million lives – and it probably spilled over from cattle. Notably, cattle have also passed coronaviruses to deer, prompting concerns that SARS-CoV-2 could similarly move between deer, cattle and people to possibly catastrophic effect. A virus that can circulate among animals as well as people is much harder to eradicate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/11/us-covid-wildlife-virus>

1057) *November 12*. It's *deja vu*, yet again. The pandemic first hit Europe in March 2020, and Americans were in denial, thinking it wouldn't happen here. Then, later in the year, the Alpha variant wave took hold in the United Kingdom and the United States was unprepared. This recurred with Delta in the summer of 2021. Now, in the fall of 2021, Europe is the outlier continent on the rise with Covid, with approximately 350 cases per 100,000 people and many countries are soaring to new records. This not only involves eastern and central Europe, where there are some countries with low vaccination rates (such as Georgia, only 24% fully vaccinated) and caseloads as high as 160/100,000 (Slovenia) but also Western Europe, such as Austria, Belgium, Ireland and several others. Indeed, in Germany, leading virologist Christian Drosten recently warned their death toll could be doubled if more aggressive mitigation and vaccination strategies were not quickly adopted. Why is this happening again in Europe after the Delta wave passed through and high rates of vaccination were achieved? There are a few important reasons. First, there are a large proportion

of unvaccinated individuals in each country, and only countries such as Spain at 80% and Portugal at 88% that fully vaccinated their total populations have set a high bar and have thus far withstood the continental trend of rise in cases. Noteworthy is Belgium with 74% fully vaccinated and one of the hardest-hit countries in the world, now at 79/100,000, currently 10th highest caseload globally. That alone tells us 74% isn't enough, and that prior Covid (without vaccination, what some refer to as "natural immunity") is unreliable for representing a solid immunity wall against the Delta variant. In fact, it has been projected for Delta that any country needs to achieve 90-95% of its total population fully vaccinated (or with recent Covid) in order to have population-level immunity that covers, providing relative protection, for the others. Key among the unvaccinated are teenagers and children. For European countries, the UK was slower in starting their vaccination program for teens and that has been suggested as one of the reasons their cases started rising again. There is compelling data from both the UK and United States that children and teens have been a key driver of spread in recent months. It is noteworthy that we are not dealing with just cases or a "casedemic". For example, Greece's cases have now quickly soared to 650/100,000 people and so has their death rate increased. While many countries have "uncoupled" their rise in cases from hospitalizations and deaths, that is incomplete at best, and many infected individuals are getting seriously ill, no less the risk of long Covid which remains under-recognized as to its importance and potential of durable disabling effects. Second, there is evidence of waning of immunity on top of the hyper-contagious Delta strain. Even though much of Europe got a later start in vaccination, a recent study showed that with the AstraZeneca vaccine the decline in anti-spike antibody occurred quite early and there was a clear relationship between antibody levels and breakthrough infections. Decline below the anti-spike antibody threshold of 500 U/ml was reached at 96 days for AstraZeneca's vaccine compared with 257 days for Pfizer's. The impact of waning, and the opportunity to restore very high (~95%) effectiveness of mRNA vaccines (specifically Pfizer/BioNtech) with booster (third) shots has been unequivocally proven from the Israeli data. Yet the adoption of boosters, even in the highest-risk groups such as age 60 plus, has been very slow. Third, there has been relaxation or abandonment of mitigation measures. Countries such as Denmark and Norway completely reopened and have seen resurgence of cases since that occurred. Throughout the world, the profound pandemic fatigue has led to the irresistible notion that the pandemic end is nigh, that masks, distancing, and other measures have run their course, essentially that enough is enough. It is hard to imagine fighting a foe as formidable as Delta that a vaccine-only strategy can be effective. We've seen a dramatic improvement in Japan, with full return to baseline after their worst outbreak, by the combination of high level of vaccination and the continued use of masks and mitigation measures. That brings us to the United States, sitting in the zone of denial for the fourth time during the pandemic, thinking that in some way we will be "immune" to what is happening in Europe. That somehow the magical combination of mRNA vaccines with only 58% of the population fully vaccinated, a relatively low proportion of booster shot uptake, a start to vaccinating teens and children, and a lot of prior Covid, and little in the way of mitigation, will spare us. That's no magic. Add to that the complete lack of availability of cheap, rapid home tests to screen for infectiousness. Unlike Europe, the US was not capable of uncoupling cases from hospitalizations and deaths during its initial Delta wave – fully 75% of hospitalizations and 66% of deaths occurred compared to its third wave peak before vaccinations were available. We are already seeing signs that the US is destined to succumb to more Covid spread, with more than three weeks sitting at a plateau of ~75,000 new cases per day, now there's been a 10% rise in the past week. We are miles from any semblance of Covid containment, facing

winter and the increased reliance of being indoors with inadequate ventilation and air filtration, along with the imminent holiday gatherings. Now is the time for the US to heed the European signal for the first time, to pull out all the stops. Promote primary vaccination and boosters like there's no tomorrow. Aggressively counter the pervasive misinformation and disinformation. Accelerate and expand the vaccine mandates that unfortunately became necessary and have been proven effective, and mass distribute medical quality masks and rapid home testing kits at no cost. Soon enough potent pills (Molnupiravar and Paxlovid) that take down the Sars-CoV-2 virus will get authorized and should also be made widely available to help prevent hospitalizations and deaths. Otherwise, we will probably face a fifth wave. Now is not the time for happy talk, but to instead show we can persevere, run this marathon and make it to the finish line. We can acknowledge and accept endemicity – that a low level of Covid will remain in the background, but that is not >75,000 new cases a day. Instead of succumbing to yet another major rise in cases and their sequelae, this is a chance for America to finally rise to the occasion, showing an ability to lead and execute.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/12/covid-cases-surg-ing-europe-america-denial>

1058) *November 12.* **SEYCHELLES** is ready to welcome cruise ships and is expecting the first high-end luxury ship for the season on November 18, following a ban lasting over a year. Seychelles officially announced the closure of borders to cruise ships in March 2020 as one of the means to protect the local population following the explosion of Covid-19 infections on cruise ships such as the Diamond Princess in Japan. During that season the country had received 22 cruise ships and recorded 13 cancellations following the ban announcement.

<https://www.nation.sc/articles/11307/cruise-ship-season-reopens-for-high-end-luxury-ships-in-seychelles-waters->

1059) *November 15.* Thousands of children have returned to their classrooms after more than 18 months of home study in the **PHILIPPINES**, thought to be the last country to reopen schools since the start of the pandemic. On Monday morning, 120 schools began on-site lessons through a pilot project. Students, who wore face masks and face shields, sat at desks that were partially covered by plastic windows. To reduce mixing, children are required to eat lunch at their desks and are only allowed to leave the classroom to go to the bathroom. On top of school closures, children in the Philippines have also faced tough lockdown restrictions, including rules banning them from playing outside or in public spaces. Until this month, children in the capital, Manila, have been barred from going to indoor restaurants, shops and arcades. Earlier in the pandemic, doctors' groups had advised against allowing young children into malls, arguing they are less able to follow disease control measures such as wearing a mask.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/15/children-back-at-school-in-philippines-after-20-months-of-home-study>

1060) *November 16.* The credibility of **NEW CALEDONIA** third and final independence referendum has been questioned after indigenous leaders warned that participation could be adversely affected by the Covid pandemic. The French government has announced that the referendum will proceed as planned in December



after the coronavirus crisis eased. But the pro-independence FLNKS party has been calling for a postponement and has called on supporters not vote on 12 December because the indigenous Kanak people – who are more likely to vote for independence – are in mourning for victims of the pandemic. Kanaks have been far more seriously impacted by the pandemic than Europeans in the Pacific territory. The referendum is the third and final poll asking whether the Pacific territory wishes to become an independent nation. Support for independence increased from 43.3% in the first vote in 2018, to 46.7% in 2020. It had expected to be close to, if not over the required 50% in the final vote. However, Covid has greatly impacted the push for independence. Eighty percent of New Caledonia's 267 deaths and 10,500 Covid cases have been among the Kanak and other Pasifika people, who were more likely to support independence in previous votes. The virulent Delta surge saw the territory go from zero cases at the start of September to more than 10,000 cases within six weeks, with lockdown measures affecting traditional Kanak mourning rites. The lockdown measures include curfews, a ban on gatherings of more than five, and a limit of nine mourners at a funeral. As lockdowns lift, FLNKS leaders have said that the first priority of Kanak communities will be to complete customary mourning ceremonies, which often take several months, rather than campaigning for the upcoming independence vote.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/17/we-are-not-in-the-mood-for-campaigning-covid-threatens-to-derail-independence-vote-in-new-caledonia>

1061) *November 18*. The Portuguese island of **MADEIRA** will impose new restrictions on unvaccinated residents and visitors amid a surge in coronavirus cases across Europe\*. People who have not been vaccinated will be banned from attending public events such as concerts from Saturday, Miguel Albuquerque, the president of Madeira's regional government, said in a televised press conference on Thursday. Unvaccinated people are allowed to attend mass or go to the supermarket as long as they show a negative Covid-19 test. The use of masks will become mandatory in public spaces. Mass testing will also be carried out on a weekly basis to try to contain the spread of the virus, Albuquerque said. Madeira already requires visitors to present a vaccination certificate, proof of recovery from Covid-19 or a negative test.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-18/portugal-s-madeira-island-imposes-curbs-on-unvaccinated-people>

\*<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-59343650>

\*<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-58973334>

\*<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/19/storm-clouds-over-europe-but-uk-covid-rates-remain-higher>

1062) *November 19*. The first known Covid-19 case was a market vendor in the Chinese city of Wuhan, not an accountant who appeared to have no link to the market but whose case contributed to speculation the virus could have leaked from a lab, according to a US study. The origin of the virus that causes Covid-19 remains a mystery and a major source of tension between China and the United States. A joint study by China and the World Health Organization this year all but ruled out the theory that Covid-19 originated in a laboratory, saying that the most likely hypothesis was that it infected humans naturally, probably via the wildlife trade. A WHO-led

team of experts spent four weeks in and around the central city of Wuhan with Chinese scientists and said in a joint report in March that the Sars-CoV-2 virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans through another animal but that further research was needed. The accountant, who was widely thought to be the first person with Covid-19, reported that his first symptoms appeared on 16 December, several days later than initially known, Michael Worobey, head of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona, said in the study published in the journal *Science* on Thursday. The confusion was caused by a dental problem man had on 8 December, the study said. “His symptom onset came after multiple cases in workers at Huanan Market, making a female seafood vendor there the earliest known case, with illness onset 11 December,” the study said. It said most early symptomatic cases were linked to the market, specifically to the western section where raccoon dogs were caged, and it provided strong evidence of a live-animal market origin of the pandemic. Prof Worobey was one of the 15 or so experts who in mid-May published a column in *Science* demanding serious consideration of the thesis that the virus had leaked from a laboratory in Wuhan. In this latest article, he argued that his research into the origin of the outbreak “provides strong evidence of a live-animal market origin of the pandemic”. One earlier criticism of the market theory was that because health authorities raised the alert about cases of a suspicious disease linked to the market as early as 30 December 2019, that would have introduced a bias that led to the identification of more cases there than elsewhere, since attention had already been drawn to it. To counter that argument, Prof Worobey analyzed cases reported by two hospitals before the alert was raised. Those cases were also largely linked to the market, and those which were not were nevertheless geographically concentrated around it. “In this city of 11 million people, half of the early cases are linked to a place that’s the size of a soccer field,” Worobey told the *New York Times*. “It becomes very difficult to explain that pattern if the outbreak didn’t start at the market.” Peter Daszak, a disease expert who was on the WHO investigation team, said he was convinced by Prof Worobey’s analysis. “That 8 December date was a mistake,” he told the *Times*. The WHO proposed last month a new expert panel to investigate the source of the coronavirus.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/19/first-covid-patient-in-wuhan-was-at-animal-market-study-finds>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/31/why-hunt-for-covid-origins-still-wrapped-in-politics-impasse-china-west>

1063) *November 19*. Authorities imposed a curfew on the French overseas territory of **GADELOUPE** on Friday following five days of civil unrest over COVID-19 protocols that have seen barricades burned in the streets and firefighters and doctors walk out on strike. Guadeloupe's prefect, Alexandre Rochatte, who represents the government on the Caribbean archipelago, said the nightly curfew would run from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. The sale of petrol in jerry cans would also be forbidden, he added. Trade unions launched an indefinite strike on Monday to protest the compulsory vaccination of health workers against COVID-19 and health pass requirements. Protesters have torched cars and erected makeshift barricades across streets. Video on social media showed police charging protesting firefighters who used fire hoses to try and repel the officers, and plumes of smoke rising over neighbourhoods. Earlier in the day, the Paris government said it would send 200 police to Guadeloupe to help quell the unrest.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/covid-france-send-police-reinforcements-guadeloupe-after-violent-protests-2021-11-19/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/22/france-cracks-down-on-guadeloupe-protests-over-covid-measures>

<https://www.dw.com/en/guadeloupe-france-ready-to-discuss-autonomy-for-the-island/a-59954851>

1064) *November 20*. The Covid-19 community spread in the **NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS** shows no signs of abating as Saipan recorded its single-day high of 22 local positive cases on Thursday. The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation said the individuals were identified and confirmed through surveillance testing on Wednesday. The individuals have been isolated and are actively monitored. Including one individual tested through travel screening, the CNMI saw 23 new positive cases on Thursday bringing its total to 431 cases since March 28, 2020. Since October 28 this year, there have been 140 new cases, of which 92 were identified via contact tracing, 38 were identified via community testing, and 10 were identified via travel testing. A total of 744 Covid-19 tests were conducted on November 17, 2021, which comprises travel testing and surveillance testing. Governor Ralph Torres, meanwhile, reiterated the importance of vaccinating children from Covid-19 as he believes the virus is not going to leave the CNMI or even the rest of the world anytime soon. Torres emphasized the need to continue vaccinating children ages 5 to 11 and urged adults who are still unvaccinated to get the shots now.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/456146/cnmi-posts-highest-single-day-local-positive-cases-at-22>

1065) *November 21*. Some **PACIFIC** countries will have less than a quarter of adults vaccinated by the end of the year, with predictions that Papua New Guinea will take five years to vaccinate just one-third of its population, undermining economic recovery and threatening huge loss of life across the region. The predictions come from modelling released on Sunday by the Lowy Institute, which takes into account factors including access to vaccines, numbers of healthcare workers, urbanisation, topography, and vaccine hesitancy to estimate when Pacific countries will hit key vaccine milestones. The modelling reveals a divided region. Papua New Guinea, which is in the midst of a devastating Delta outbreak, currently has around 3% of its adult population vaccinated. Solomon Islands is predicted to have just 23% of its adult population vaccinated by the end of the year, with Vanuatu predicted to have just 29% of adults fully vaccinated. However, many smaller Pacific nations reached almost 100% vaccine coverage months ago, supported by partner nations such as the US, Australia and New Zealand. Palau, in the north Pacific, has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, with more than 99% of its adult population fully vaccinated. The country of nearly 20,000 people is now rolling out booster shots. Similarly, Nauru, Niue, Cook Islands and Tuvalu have close to 100% of their adult populations fully vaccinated. The research also looked at supply of vaccines to the region from donor countries. Australia has committed to provide 11.4m doses – 66% of the region’s supply – with Covax committing 4.5m doses, followed by New Zealand, China, the US and India. Many Pacific countries have remained largely Covid-free throughout the pandemic by keeping their borders closed to international arrivals, something that has come at enormous economic cost to tourism-dependent economies. Fiji, one of the largest and most developed Pacific countries, had a very

serious Delta outbreak in the middle of 2021 recording more than 50,000 cases in a country of just under 1 million people, and nearly 700 deaths. Just 8% of Fijian adults were fully vaccinated in June 2021, when the outbreak began, but an ambitious vaccine rollout program, and a controversial “no jab, no job” policy, saw vaccination rates skyrocket. As of Friday, 90% of adults in Fiji were fully immunised and more than 97% of adults had received at least one dose. The country plans to reopen quarantine-free travel to tourists from some countries, including Australia, in December.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/21/some-pacific-countries-will-take-years-to-vaccinate-50-of-adult-population-modelling-shows>

1066) *November 22*. Pacific island nations saw their economies shrink an estimated 5.8 percent in 2020 amid a collapse in tourism and businesses look local to survive Covid. Dressed for work in a torn T-shirt and a plain black baseball cap covering his thinning dreads, Lopez Adams’s appearance belies his success. He is at the forefront of a wave of business owners in tiny south Pacific nation **VANUATU** who are finding new ways to survive in a world without tourists. His Coffee Tree cafe has become a fixture in Port Vila, the picturesque capital of Vanuatu, an island nation of 300,000 people located about 1,750km (about 1,100 miles) east of Australia. Despite its unprepossessing ambience, the cafe has become the meeting place – and workplace – of the city’s trendsetting laptop brigade. Adams, who has spent his life in and around the capital, takes pride in spotting trends before they happen. His secret to pandemic survival is his secret to success: treat the tourists as a surplus crowd, and focus on the locals to survive. “We were not focusing too much on tourism, because we know it’s always a fragile business to do.” He cites his reliance on local producers as key to weathering the country’s pandemic isolation. Leveraging his longstanding relationship with growers and fishers, he negotiated a survival plan in which they guaranteed volumes of sales in exchange for reduced prices. While other businesses struggle with shortages of flour and other staples due to global shipping disruptions, he is making gnocchi with locally-grown sweet potato, known as “kumala”, and selling it at prices well below those of local resorts. There is another benefit to his cooperative approach. When the economy finally recovers, businesses will “come back equally”, Adams said. “All the business [will] come back when the borders are open.” Businesses in Vanuatu, like those in other remote Pacific island nations that heavily rely on visitors, will be dealing with adversity for some time yet. Before sealing its borders in response to COVID-19, Vanuatu, which has yet to report any cases in the community, generated about 45 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) from tourism and travel. Last year, Vanuatu’s GDP shrank 8.5 percent, according to the Asian Development Bank, the largest contraction since the country gained its independence from Britain and France in 1980. Taken as a whole, the economies of 13 island nations in the Pacific shrank 5.8 percent in 2020, according to ADB data. Vanuatu Prime Minister Bob Loughman has expressed hope that border restrictions will begin to ease in March, but Director of Public Health Len Tarivonda has flagged the end of the second quarter as more likely.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/11/22/in-remote-pacific-islands-businesses-pandemic-isol>

<https://devpolicy.org/pacific-indigenous-responses-to-the-global-pandemic-20211125/>

1067) *November 22*. When face-to-face Cabinet meetings resumed in **JAMAICA** following more than a year of virtual meetings due to COVID-19, Ministers lined up to have their immunisation cards inspected. Prime Minister Andrew Holness said the Government “has to lead the country towards normality”. “The way to do it is for every Jamaican to comply with the infection, prevention and control measures that have been established, which will eventually be relaxed the higher the level of vaccination,” he said after the October 12 meeting. In the current atmosphere, outbreaks, no-movement days that shut down commerce and vaccine hesitancy send ripples through the economy. So, while Jamaica has no national vaccine mandate, private sector companies and some government agencies are already demanding that staff vaccinate. In addition to several vaccination drives that target employees, Jamaica Private Sector Organisation joined the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and the Jamaica Manufacturers and Exporters Association to put their support solidly behind a campaign for a national mandate. The groups say that with the low vaccination rates almost two years into the pandemic, Jamaica is being left behind in achieving population immunity, putting the country’s recovery at risk. The groups contend that the social and economic impact will be devastating, and “the ripple effects will continue for years to come”. But even with growing support for a mandate, opposition leader Mark Golding opposes one. Only about 17 percent of the Jamaican population is vaccinated.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/11/corporate-fear-drives-caribbean-vaccine-covid-19-mandates/>

1068) *November 22*. Trade unions on the French Caribbean island of **MARTINIQUE** have called for a general strike as of Monday. Their demands include an end to mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations, a salary hike, and free testing for chlordecone, a pesticide used in banana plantations. Meanwhile, in neighbouring Guadeloupe, elite police have begun dismantling barricades erected during a week of unrest sparked by measures to curb Covid-19. The call for a general strike on Martinique - with a list of at least 13 demands - was signed by 20 trade unions in Martinique, on the 15th of November and begins today, the 22nd of November. Why people are angry? There has been a push back against the mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations and health passes for health workers. Strikers are calling for this rule to be dropped. The government-imposed deadline for full vaccination for health workers in Martinique was already pushed back from the 14th of November to the 31st of December. In mainland France, the deadline was 15th of September. The unions also say suspending, or penalising, health workers who are not vaccinated must stop. There has also been a call to stop using schools as massive vaccine centres, which strikers say is a form of "propaganda". So far the island has vaccinated only 39.4 percent of the population compared to 89 percent of over 18s on the mainland. On the 16th of November there was 74 patients patients in hospital with Covid, including 23 in intensive care, according to the most recent figures compiled by the public health body ARS. According to a local public news channel, the strikers are also angry over what they see as a policy to develop an unstable, short term job market. Strikers are calling for a salary increase and for minimum wages to be pushed up. They have also called for a cap on fuel prices. There are also concerns over the government's controversial pension reform, which strikers want abandoned. Other demands relate to increasing protection for taxi drivers and workers in the performing arts, sectors which have been hit particularly hard by the Covid crisis. Finally, the strikers are also calling for the government to pay for tests to diagnose symptoms linked to chlordecone, a pesticide used in banana plantations in Martinique and Guadeloupe from 1972 to 1993, despite



the knowledge of the dangerous side effects as early as the 1960s. More than 90 percent of the adult population in Guadeloupe and Martinique has been contaminated by chlordecone, a study by public health body Santé publique France showed in 2018. As a result, the region has one of the highest levels of prostate cancer in the world.

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20211122-strike-in-martinique-why-islanders-are-furious-with-the-french-state>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/26/france-delays-vaccine-mandate-for-caribbean-islands-amid-protests>

1069) *November 27*. Countries around the world are racing to introduce travel bans and restrictions on southern African countries in an effort to contain a new variant of Covid-19, called Omicron. The moves come after the variant was officially named by health officials. Early evidence suggests Omicron has an increased re-infection risk, the World Health Organization (WHO) says. Meanwhile, hundreds of passengers arriving in Amsterdam from South Africa were tested for the new variant. Some 61 people on two KLM flights tested positive for Covid-19 and have been quarantined at a hotel near the airport while they have further tests, Dutch officials said. The Netherlands is currently struggling with a record-breaking surge in cases. An extended partial lockdown comes into force there on Sunday evening. The new Omicron variant was first reported to the World Health Organization from South Africa on 24 November. It has also been identified in Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong and Israel. More suspected cases were reported in Germany and the Czech Republic on Saturday. The WHO said the number of cases of this variant, initially named B.1.1.529, appeared to be increasing in almost all of South Africa's provinces. "This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning," the UN public health body said in a statement. It said "the first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on 9 November". The WHO said it would take a few weeks to understand the impact of the new variant, as scientists worked to determine how transmissible it was. A top UK health official warned that vaccines would "almost certainly" be less effective against the new variant. But Professor James Naismith, a structural biologist from the University of Oxford, added: "It is bad news but it's not doomsday."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-59442129>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/dec/02/omicron-may-cause-more-covid-reinfections-say-south-african-experts>

1070) *November 27*. While European governments weigh up new mandates and measures to boost the uptake of Covid jabs there is on the slopes of **SICILY** Monte delle Rose a village with a vaccination rate that defies mathematics: 104%. The figure is in part a statistical quirk - vaccine rates are calculated by Italian health authorities on a town or village's official population and can in theory rise above 100% if enough non-residents are jabbed there - but Palazzo Adriano, where the Oscar-winning movie Cinema Paradiso was filmed, is by any standards a well-vaccinated community. A good portion of the population has already taken or booked a third dose and since vaccines were first available it utilised its close-knit relations to protect its people. "It seems like an impossible statistic," said the mayor, Nicolò Granà, proudly. "But, in fact, at Palazzo Adriano, those inhabitants who live in our town, even though they are not official residents and other people who live in neighbouring villages have also

been vaccinated.” With a population of 2,100, Palazzo Adriano is one of more than 5,500 Italian villages with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. Most have been severely affected by young people leaving to look for work in other countries or large cities and have an average age of over 60. If Covid were to spread among these populations, these villages would risk being wiped off the map. “Last March, we feared the worst,” says Salvatore Spata, 54, the village’s councillor for culture. “A nun and a priest, who came from another town and who did not know they were positive, infected some residents, causing an outbreak that affected about 16 inhabitants. Fortunately, in those days, the vaccination campaign had started.” He described the vaccination effort as “an extraordinary word of mouth campaign” making the most of Palazzo Adriano’s human networks. “At least one representative of each family in the village passes through this square, every day. We took advantage of those intense relationships between relatives and friends to spread the vaccination campaign. All we had to do is inform every person we met, reminding them to get vaccinated, and, the next day, their relatives showed up in the lab for the jab.” “There was almost an air of celebration at the vaccination hubs,” said Granà. “It was like being at a popular town festival. People understood that, with vaccines, they were creating a shield that would protect their community, safeguarding the very survival of the village.” Where there were concerns over the vaccine, the village set up a WhatsApp group of hundreds of residents to discuss them. “In this group, we responded to fake news and reassured people about vaccine safety,” Granà said. “I am convinced that, if we had spread the wrong information about the dangers of jabs, today we would be here to tell you another story- that of dozens of deaths from Covid that would have risked halving the inhabitants of this village.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/27/palazzo-adriano-sicilian-town-covid-vaccination-rate>

1071) *November 29.* The suspension of tourism activities around the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic gave researchers the chance to answer an important question: What impact does tourism have on wildlife populations? In Ecuador’s famed **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**, researchers have for more than a year now been carrying out a turtle census on Tortuga Bay, a beach popular with tourists, but which was off-limits during lockdown. With tourists now returning, the researchers have been able to record tangible changes in the number and behavior of the turtles on the beach, although a full analysis is only expected to begin in December.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/galapagos-census-looks-at-impacts-on-turtles-during-and-after-covid-lockdown/>

1072) *November 30.* A person has tested positive for the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus on the French Indian Ocean island **REUNION**, official researcher Dr. Patrick Mavingui said on Tuesday. Mavingui said the person was a 53-year old man who had traveled to Mozambique and made a stop-over in South Africa. The patient who returned to La Reunion some two weeks ago, is currently in isolation, Mavingui told local French media. Omicron – first reported in southern Africa and which the World Health Organization (WHO) said carries a “very high” risk of infection surges – has triggered global alarm, with border closures casting a shadow over a nascent economic recovery from a two-year pandemic.

<https://nationalpost.com/pmnh/health-pmn/case-of-new-covid-omicron-variant-found-on-french-territory-of-reunion>

1073) *December 2.* Widespread lockdowns and working from home to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have led to booming demand for home furnishings. As furniture manufacturers scramble to keep up with the rush on desks, chairs and sofas, industry bodies are emphasizing the need for legal and sustainable timber to satisfy international trade regulations and environmentally conscious consumers. In a recent move to mainstream ethically sourced furniture in Southeast Asia, where illegal logging, poor forest management and scant law enforcement blight the timber trade, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) teamed up with the ASEAN Furniture Industries Council (AFIC), a trade organization that represents the furniture industry across the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Over the next four years, they aim to improve sustainability throughout the region's furniture supply chain by boosting consumer and manufacturer demand for certified timber.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/12/amid-a-furniture-boom-timber-certification-is-just-a-start-say-experts/>

1074) *December 4.* The **CAYMAN ISLANDS** has approved the first cruise call since cruise travel was suspended in March 2020. The Ministry of Tourism and Transport approved the Holland America's Nieuw Statendam to call on Grand Cayman on Dec. 28. The country set several conditions for the call. Grand Cayman must be the first port of call on the cruise; ship capacity is limited to 1,600 passengers, representing 60% capacity; all guests and crew must be fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to the beginning of the cruise; guests and crew must have a negative PCR or antigen test within two days of embarkation and all must observe local requirements for masks and social distancing. "The health and safety of our people and our visitors continue to be a priority in our phased reopening plan. The cruise sector will be a key part of the tourism industry's recovery," said Kenneth Bryan, minister for tourism and transport. "This single call is an opportunity for us to find the safest way to welcome back our cruise visitors while we continue to navigate the challenges of the pandemic," he said.

<https://www.travelweekly.com/Caribbean-Travel/Cayman-Islands-to-welcome-a-cruise-ship-with-conditions>

1075) *December 4.* The **COOK ISLANDS** on Friday recorded its first case of Covid-19 since the pandemic began, as the South Pacific country edges toward reopening its borders to tourists. The nation of around 17,000 people has one of the highest vaccination rates globally, with 96 percent of the eligible population double-dosed. The virus was detected in a 10-year-old boy quarantining after arriving on a repatriation flight with his family on Thursday, Prime Minister Mark Brown said in a statement. The boy was believed to have flown in from New Zealand. "We have been preparing ourselves for the time we reopen our borders. Our testing regimes have shown the value of that preparation by catching this case at the border," Brown said. The island nation, which shut itself off from the world when the pandemic hit has announced plans to resume quarantine-free travel with New Zealand on January 14. A short-lived travel bubble with New Zealand was paused earlier this year when an outbreak of the virus emerged in Auckland. The case led to a state of panic but proved to be a false alarm as officials subsequently announced that while the boy had returned two "weak positive" Covid-19 tests while in managed quarantine after

arriving in Rarotonga on Friday, his final test came back negative, and he was deemed not to be infectious. The country is still considered Covid-free.

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/nearly-2-years-after-covid-outbreak-cook-islands-reports-its-first-case-2636636>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/07/cook-islands-panic-abates-after-first-ever-covid-case-proves-to-be-a-false-alarm>

1076) *December 7*. COVID-19 not only affects humans; our closest relatives, the great apes, are also at risk. A team of experts, including Oxford Brookes University researchers say that jungle trekkers could be risking the lives of Critically Endangered species of orangutans, by passing on human viruses like COVID-19. The researchers examined Instagram images of tourists in **INDONESIA** and saw them breaking the rule of maintaining a 10 meter distance, posing for selfies, stroking, cuddling or feeding the wild orangutans. This activity exposes the orangutans to human diseases which can prompt deadly infections. Lead author of the research paper, Andrea Molyneaux, a conservation biologist based in North Sumatra and a passionate advocate of safe jungle trekking practices, said that "the risk of zoonotic disease transmission between visitors and orangutans is extremely concerning. There are national park rules that inform visitors of the risks but our results indicate that tourists may not be aware of them. There appears to be apathy within the wider conservation community to promote awareness of these rules. We desperately need to promote awareness of these rules so visitors know they must not get close to or feed orangutans."

<https://phys.org/news/2021-12-tourist-selfies-deadly-viruses-critically.html>

1077) *December 7*. The western world has written plenty about its high-profile COVID vaccines: the mRNA products of Pfizer and Moderna, viral-vectored jabs from AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, and those that are just emerging, such as Novavax's protein-based vaccine. Many countries are relying on them for protection but not **CUBA**. It's been quietly working on its own vaccines, immunising its population and selling doses abroad. Cuba's vaccine efforts have maintained a relatively low profile in the west to date. Politics may well be a reason. The US embargo against Cuba that began in the cold war is still in effect, and tensions between the countries remain high. But for those familiar with Cuba, its COVID vaccine development should come as no surprise - the country has a long history of manufacturing its own vaccines and medicines. Nor should it be surprising that two of its COVID vaccines - Abdala and Soberana 02 appear to have performed very well in trials.

<https://theconversation.com/cubas-covid-vaccines-the-limited-data-available-suggests-theyre-highly-effective-172725>

1078) *December 9*. The coronavirus pandemic has shuttered almost all the resorts and restaurants across Indonesia's **GILI ISLANDS**, famed for their turquoise waters, sandy beaches, and diverse marine life. Situated close to Bali, tourism and the local economy had been booming, with around 1,500 foreign visitors visiting Trawangan every day. But when authorities first imposed a nationwide virus lockdown in March 2020 and then closed borders to international travellers, resorts and restaurants could not survive the loss of business. The three Gili islands - Trawangan, Meno and Air -

have long been reliant on foreign travellers. There are some 800 hotels with 7,000 rooms but only between 20 and 30 properties remain open, according to Lalu Kusnawan, the chairman of Gili Hotel Association who runs a resort in Trawangan. Shops, bars, cafes, restaurants all stand empty, some up for sale, others abandoned altogether. Dust and spider webs gather on long unused tables and chairs with staff forced to find other ways to earn a living - some have turned to fishing just to feed their families. In Gili Trawangan's port, most of the boats - used to transfer tourists from one island to another or to reach diving sites - have been anchored for months. A bit further, a pontoon is left to rot. Borders were officially re-opened in October, but direct international flights to Bali are yet to resume as tourists face quarantine and strict visa requirements, limiting the demand. And as fears grow over new Covid variant Omicron, Indonesia has extended its mandatory quarantine to ten days, dashing hopes of an imminent tourism revival. The coronavirus pandemic will cost the global tourism sector \$2.0 trillion in lost revenue in 2021 - the same losses as 2020, the UN's tourism body warned last week. International tourist arrivals will this year remain 70-75 percent below the 1.5 billion arrivals recorded in 2019 before the pandemic hit, according to the World Tourism Organization, adding that the sector's recovery will be "fragile" and "slow".

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211209-virus-turns-indonesia-holiday-island-into-desert-of-abandoned-resorts>

1079) *December 13*. Experts have warned that the next variant of Covid-19 to sweep the world could emerge on Australia's doorstep, due to incredibly low rates of vaccination rates in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**. Papua New Guinea is Australia's closest neighbour, and at its nearest point is just 4km from Australian territory in the Torres Strait. At various points in the pandemic there have been fears that travellers from PNG could bring the virus to Australia. "I'm worried that PNG is the next place where a new variant emerges," said Adrian Prouse, head of international humanitarian programs at the Australian Red Cross. "In PNG less than 5% [of the adult population is vaccinated], in Indonesia, just under one-third. Two countries right on our doorstep with significant challenges in getting vaccines into arms." Stefanie Vaccher, an epidemiologist with the Burnet Institute who has been based in PNG since last year, echoed this concern. "In populations that have low rates of vaccination coverage, there are more opportunities for the virus to spread and mutate. In PNG, where less than 4% of the population is vaccinated, there are a lot of opportunities for the virus to mutate and spread." Papua New Guinea has been dealing with a devastating outbreak of Covid-19 throughout 2021. The official death toll from the virus is 573, with about 35,000 cases, but the true scale of the outbreak is hard to define due to low testing rates and stigma about having the disease. Reports suggest people ask doctors not to put Covid-19 as the cause of death on death certificates of their loved ones. Vaccher said a study conducted in PNG around March 2021 - before the big wave of the virus - showing that 24% of healthcare workers at Port Moresby general hospital already had antibodies to Covid-19 pointed to how widespread and undetected Covid transmission had been. Covid has also crippled Papua New Guinea's already stretched and under-resourced health system.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/13/experts-warn-papua-new-guinea-is-potential-breeding-ground-for-new-covid-variants>

1080) *December 15*. Struggling tourism operators in **VANUATU** could be forced out of business after the government's announcement borders may stay closed for another



year, the Espiritu Santo Tourism Association says. Association chairperson Calvin Rhodes said he was disappointed by comments from the director-general at the Prime Minister's Office, Gregoire Nimbtik, that the government does not have a plan to reopen the borders. "I think it was very concerning and really [highlighted] the shortfalls of the government's planning for vaccination for the countries reopening targets." Rhodes said Vanuatu needs to keep Covid-19 out of the country due to the limitations of its health care system. But also that the country's tourism industry is in survival mode after almost 20 months of no tourist arrivals - and another year would completely destroy what is left of the industry. "Another 12 months of the border's closure is actually going to create another wave of tourism businesses that will not be able to afford to keep their business running again." Tourism is the main driver of Vanuatu's economy. Before the pandemic it provided up to 40 percent of the country's GDP, and employed almost 13,000 Ni-Vanuatu people directly, as well as another 38,000 indirectly.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/457972/hopes-for-reviving-tourism-in-vanuatu-dented-by-slow-vaccinations>

1081) *December 18*. Countries around the world pushed to accelerate booster vaccination programmes to contain the spread of the Omicron variant as daily Covid case numbers in Australia and New York hit records. French Prime Minister Jean Castex on Friday likened the spread of the Omicron variant in Europe to “lightning”, adding it would be the dominant strain in France from the start of 2022. Much remains unknown about Omicron, but authorities are concerned it may be more transmissible than the Delta variant, which has already put pressure on hospitals worldwide. Castex said the “fifth wave is here and it is here in full force” as he announced new restrictions. In an effort to stem the rising infections, he said France would also cut the time people become eligible for booster jabs down to four months after their second vaccination, from five months previously. Calls for people to have booster shots intensified in other countries – including the UK, US and Australia – as Covid infections spiked.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/18/omicron-countries-push-to-ramp-up-booster-shot-rollouts-as-covid-cases-spike>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/21/germany-omicron-europe-spain-sweden-cov>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-59780318>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-59814661>

1082) *December 19*. **ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS** have achieved 100% double dose COVID vaccination of its target beneficiaries. The administration said it was the first among the States and Union territories to achieve the feat using only Covishield. As per a health bulletin, 2.87 lakh people have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine against the target of 2.86 lakh beneficiaries, leading to 100.41% vaccination.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/andaman-and-nicobar-islands-achieve-100-double-dose-covid-19-vaccination/article37989767.ece>

1083) *December 20*. Before the pandemic, the **PHI PHI ISLANDS** national marine park with its white sandy beaches and coral reefs attracted more than 2 million visitors a year. Until it was closed, Maya Bay's dazzling beauty and Hollywood fame drew up to 6,000 people a day to its narrow 250-metre-long beach. Mass tourism had brought the archipelago to the brink of ecological catastrophe. Now Thailand hopes to make it the standard bearer for a sustainable tourism model as the country reopens to visitors after the Covid shutdown.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2021/dec/20/phi-phi-islands-thailand-sustainable-tourism-renaissance>

1084) *December 20*. While the COVID-19 impact has been predominantly negative, the pandemic appears to have sparked increased interest in developing agricultural technology (agtech) to improve the efficiency of food systems, from input supplies through farming and processing to delivery and retail. The COVID-19 pandemic has admittedly upended economic activity in the Asia-Pacific region, but a recent event in **SINGAPORE** (Asia-Pacific Agri-Food Innovation Summit, 16-18 November 2021) showed that, in the case of agriculture and food, it has greatly spurred investments in technology to scale up food production sustainably. During 2020-21, momentum has been building up among financial institutions such as venture capital companies to invest in startup companies that produce technological innovations to address the shortcomings in food production and food supply chains. The UN Climate Summit COP26 further spurred activity before and after it was held, to focus on farming with reduced carbon footprints, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and valorization of food waste, all aimed at promoting more sustainable and circular food systems. During the pandemic, the international media highlighted phenomena like farmers dumping milk and feeding quality produce to cattle, vegetables rotting in fields due to lack of labour to harvest, increased food waste in urban environments, delays in supply of inputs for growing crops or feeding fish, and supermarkets with empty shelves. The pandemic has highlighted the need to produce more food locally and to use techniques which both minimize the use of labour and avoid a high carbon footprint. Governments have responded to some of these through policies and action. The private sector has responded even quicker, having detected investment opportunities to support solutions to these problems. Venture Capital funds like AgFunder and Yield Lab have set up their Asian bases in Singapore to support initiatives throughout the Asia-Pacific. Some of the exciting new agtech developments deal with ensuring new sources of inputs for farming crops and fish. This is exemplified by waste valorization to extract valuable elements from water and biowaste that can be used to grow plants. Many new ventures use the Black Soldier Fly, a ubiquitous insect that feeds on food waste, to harvest larval protein directly or indirectly for use as feed supplements for fish and chicken. Countries like Singapore and Malaysia, which import almost all their agricultural inputs, have provided incentives to spur these activities so that they have more resilience in their supply of fertilizers and animal feed. For on-farm production, digital farming is another area which has seen much progress during the pandemic to safeguard food production. Applications of remote sensors for environmental factors such as temperature, light and water quality increased. These sensors included both stationary and mobile sensors mounted on drones. Many now utilise cloud technology to send data back to a centralized processing facility which, among the more "intelligent" sensors, further have capabilities to take action. In Indonesia, one new company in Java has implemented among several hundred shrimp farmers an "Internet of Things" (IoT) system which not only monitors the water in which the shrimps grow for any danger

signs, but also the growth of the shrimps and ultimately links the farmer to a potential buyer. In Singapore, Camtech Diagnostics has created Aquafarm, a remote water management tool for aquaculture farmers, which uses wireless sensors to maintain optimal water quality for their stocks. The remote monitoring and wireless communication system allows farmers to monitor the water quality in real-time, reduce labour costs, and increase the yield rate due to the prevention of stock loss. In India, likewise, a startup company has enabled several hundred fish farmers with ponds and indoor tanks to optimize their stocking density of fish and therefore increase their final harvest with minimized mortality. This company also helps the farmers secure credit from banks by providing risk profiles of the fish farmers. These startups are run by relatively young “agropreneurs” and illustrate the growing phenomenon of younger graduates entering farming by providing value-added services.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/12/covid-19-accelerated-new-agtech-development-adoption-asia-pacific/>

1085) *December 20.* **FIJI** Health Ministry is concerned that people are not taking the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus seriously. Fiji reported two cases of the variant two weeks ago - both patients had arrived in the country from Nigeria on 25 November. Health Secretary James Fong said more than 70 countries had reported cases of Omicron and it was probably in most countries, even if it hadn't been detected yet. He said if there was an outbreak in Fiji, it could again overwhelm the health system. Dr Fong said vaccines alone would not get any country out of the crisis, and that nations must prevent the spread of Omicron with mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/458255/covid-19-fijians-urged-to-take-omicron-variant-seriously>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/458723/fiji-braces-for-covid-19-third-wave>

1086) *December 21.* Science and support teams from British Antarctic Survey (BAS) are gearing up for the start of the **ANTARCTIC** summer field season. All five BAS research stations will be open and undertaking essential science research after a year's break caused by Covid-19 last season. This will be another challenging season with ongoing Covid-19 protocols to maintain safety for our staff and collaborators. A large number and variety of science projects will be delivered across a huge geographical area in Antarctica. Projects will address climate science, ecosystems and biodiversity, and test our new autonomous science capability – where scientific instruments collect data without regular input from science or support staff. Professor Dame Jane Francis, Director of British Antarctic Survey said: “We have a busy and exciting season ahead of us, with some innovative new projects and the imminent arrival of our new polar ship at our research stations. The safety of our staff remains our number one priority and while Covid-19 continues to present us with challenges, teams at BAS have worked hard to ensure our vital research can continue, while keeping Antarctica Covid-free.”

<https://en.mercopress.com/2021/12/21/bas-2021-22-antarctic-summer-field-season-underway-rothera-falklands-air-link-twice-a-week>

1087) *December 22*. The **KIRIBATI** government closed their international border late in March 2020, to keep their island population of approximately 140,000 people safe from COVID-19. Luckily the system worked, and the country has managed well, with only two (unconfirmed) cases. Many I-Kiribati seafarers, however, ended up stranded overseas as a consequence of the strict border closure. For some this has meant that, after completing their on-board contracts, they have not seen their families for over two years. From March 2021, 159 I-Kiribati seafarers were stranded in Fiji. Caught by Fiji's community outbreak of COVID-19 in April, and the cessation of international air travel to and from the country, the seafarers waited for repatriation for almost eight months. During their time in Fiji, the seafarers' employers covered their basic living costs (accommodation and food), but without regular wages the men were unable to remit money to support their families at home. Some of the men's pleas for repatriation to the Kiribati government were finally answered on 22 November 2021, when a ship left Nadi for the six-day trip to Tarawa with 141 seafarers on board. Prior to departure from Fiji, all seafarers had multiple COVID-19 screening tests, their health was monitored during the six-day trip, and all undertook 14 days' quarantine onboard the vessel on arrival in Kiribati. However, another 105 men are still waiting to be repatriated, located in South Korea, Indonesia, Germany, Fiji and Australia. Eleven of those stranded in Fiji have started jobs with a different shipping company. Of the 39 seafarers stranded in Brisbane who have subsequently lost their contracts with their Danish shipping employer, Maersk, 14 have taken up seasonal work in South Australia and are hoping to switch, onshore, to a Seasonal Worker Programme visa before their current visas expire in January 2022. One of the obstacles to repatriation is the continuing requirement by the Kiribati government to have citizens repatriated via Fiji – and by ship, not by plane. Seafarers currently waiting overseas are concerned about transferring to Fiji and then being caught there, unable to make the final leg of the journey home.

<https://pina.com.fj/2021/12/22/has-covid-19-ended-seafaring-for-kiribati/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/26/shipping-industry-tortuous-ordeal-of-seafarers-marooned-by-covid>

1088) *December 23*. A Royal Caribbean cruise ship skipped docking at two island countries this week after 55 passengers and crew tested positive for Covid-19, the cruise line company has said. The *Odyssey of the Seas* departed for an 8-day trip on Dec. 18. While the ship had scheduled ports in Curacao and Aruba, a decision for the ship to avoid those stops "was made together with the islands out of an abundance of caution due to the current trend of Covid-19 cases in the destinations' communities as well as crew and guests testing positive on board," said a statement from Royal Caribbean. The ship has about 5,000 people aboard and 95 percent of them are vaccinated, the company said. Its maximum capacity is just under 7,175, including passengers and crew. Royal Caribbean requires travelers who are 12 and older to have two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Everyone who has tested positive was fully vaccinated and mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic, according to Royal Caribbean. Close contacts were also identified and placed in quarantine to be monitored for 24 hours prior to testing. The outbreak comes after Royal Caribbean's *Symphony of the Seas* returned to Miami Saturday after 48 passengers and staff members had tested positive for Covid-19.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/royal-caribbean-cruise-skips-two-islands-55-test-positive-covid-19-rcna9771>

<https://news.yahoo.com/third-florida-based-cruise-ship-235218363.html>

<https://www.cruisehive.com/msc-cruise-ship-denied-entry-to-its-own-private-island-in-the-bahamas/62897>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-59834211>

1089) *December 23.* **HAWAII** reported 1,511 new coronavirus cases Thursday as state officials say the omicron variant is likely spreading widely throughout the islands. Hawaii's single-day record of 1,678 cases was recorded at the height of the delta surge at the end of August. The new case count is the latest in a week of high infection numbers for the state, which had been averaging about 100 daily cases in early December. Hawaii has had among the most rapid increases in new COVID-19 cases nationally over the past 14 days, according to data sourced from Johns Hopkins University. Hawaii Department of Health Director Dr. Libby Char said at a news conference Thursday that people need to get vaccinated, noting that more than 370,000 Hawaii residents have not gotten their shots. She also said the state has a low rate of people getting boosters, but emphasized that the additional protection is critical for flattening the curve. "I'm not sure why it's so low and we're trying to figure that out," Char said. "People just have a sense that two shots are enough." Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said last week that data suggests omicron is more transmissible than the delta variant. Given that, full vaccination "really should be a three-shot series," Char said. The state has a test positivity rate of around 8% and the most populous island of Oahu has a positivity rate over 10%, Char said. The first confirmed case of the omicron variant in Hawaii was announced on Dec. 2. As of Wednesday, there were least 74 confirmed omicron cases. Hawaii, with a population of about 1.5 million people, has had more than 600,000 travelers in December, according to the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/hawaii/articles/2021-12-23/omicron-hits-hawaii-as-infection-surge-nears-all-time-record>

1090) *December 29.* Health authorities have confirmed eight new cases of coronavirus on **THURSDAY ISLAND** in the Torres Strait. Acting Director of Medical Services in the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service, Marlow Coates, said they were all connected to the one case confirmed overnight. The initial case was double vaccinated and is believed to have contracted the virus in New South Wales. Dr Coates said all those who had tested positive so far were well and being supported at home. He said some of the new cases were vaccinated, but others weren't. "Today there's a lot of discovery going on around how far the spread of this outbreak may be on Thursday Island," he said. He said all non-critical health functions had been suspended while authorities tried to track the outbreak and protect vulnerable community members. The double-dose vaccination rate on Thursday Island is currently at 76 per cent for residents aged over 12. Dr Coates said while the virus would reach all parts of the state eventually, severe weather and grounding of flights would temporarily slow this outbreak, giving authorities a slight head start in contact tracing. He said the weather should not impact testing or vaccination capacity.



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-12-29/thursday-island-covid-19-outbreak-more-cases-detected/100730560>

1091) *December 29*. The **PHILIPPINES** has lifted a four-year ban on new open-pit mines, an official said Wednesday, in a bid to revitalise the country's coronavirus-battered economy slammed by activists as "short-sighted". The move sees the Philippine government reverse a ban imposed in 2017, when the then-environment minister blamed the sector for widespread ecological damage. Manila has since reversed course, encouraging mining investments to shore up government revenues as lockdowns and quarantine restrictions ravaged the economy.

[https://www.terraily.com/reports/Philippines\\_lifts\\_ban\\_on\\_new\\_open-pit\\_mines\\_999.html](https://www.terraily.com/reports/Philippines_lifts_ban_on_new_open-pit_mines_999.html)

1092) *December 29*. Even some of Quebec's most remote regions are feeling the effects of Omicron's rapid spread this week, with the number of new cases topping 120 in the Gaspé and the **MAGDALEN ISLANDS** in the past two days. But despite that record number, the local health authority is urging the public to stay calm and follow guidelines. There are 38 active cases on the Magdalen Islands right now - a chain of islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence that has a population of about 12,000 people. Sophie Doucet, who heads the regional health authority, the CISSS des Îles, says that's an alarming number considering there were only about 50 cases total from the beginning of the pandemic to last October. She said her main focus right now is to try to make sure those cases do not make their way into the region's hospitals.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/magdalen-islands-covid-19-rise-1.6300212>

1093) *December 29*. On November 24, researchers in South Africa became the first to report the B.1.1.529 variant of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The World Health Organization (WHO) designated the variant Omicron and classed it as a variant of concern (VOC) two days later. The spike protein, which is the principal antigenic target of antibodies generated by infection or immunization, has 26 to 32 mutations in the Omicron variation. Early reports imply that Omicron has higher transmissibility and immunological escape potential than earlier variants, while a neutralization investigation found that previously infected and vaccinated mice with the Omicron variant had decreased neutralization activity. Despite the fact that several nations around the world have implemented travel restrictions to prevent the Omicron variant from spreading, the variant managed to spread swiftly inside Europe and beyond during the early weeks of December 2021. Because of the rapid spread, it is expected that the Omicron variant will become the dominant form in a short period of time, so monitoring the severity and transmissibility of the Omicron variant will be crucial in the coming weeks and months. Even though all infected participants had been vaccinated three times and had a recent negative test, this paper from a team of researchers from the **FAROE ISLANDS** describes a super-spreading incident in which 21 of 33 healthcare workers were infected with the Omicron variant after attending a social gathering in early December 2021. These findings suggest that the Omicron variant has potent immune-escape capabilities, putting even newly boosted patients at risk of infection. In this investigation, Omicron had a short incubation period. If the incubation period for Omicron is shorter than for prior versions, this could explain why infection rates are higher in people who have some immunity. This short study does not allow for the estimation of hospitalization or death rates. The chance of developing Long Covid

after an Omicron infection is unknown at this time. Despite the fact that the individuals in this study mostly had moderate sickness, all of the reported cases had previously acquired immunity by vaccination. It's worth noting that all infected people had symptoms, and that loss of taste and smell, in particular, appears to be less common in these instances than in prior outbreaks. Even if protection against infection has faded, vaccination is still likely to protect against severe disease with the Omicron variant, underscoring the value of vaccination. It's worth noting that the findings might not apply to SARS-CoV-2 naive people, thus more research in Omicron with SARS-CoV-2 naive people is needed.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20211229/Impact-of-an-omicron-outbreak-at-a-private-gathering-in-the-Faroe-Islands.aspx>

1094) December 29. At least 20,000 people are stuck indoors due to COVID-19 quarantine as the number of confirmed new virus cases continues to surge in **MALTA**. The number of people locked indoors could have a crippling impact on the economy, employers have warned, with policymakers urged to take swift action. The health authorities yesterday said almost 1,300 people had tested positive for the virus overnight between Monday and Tuesday. The figure is a national record. This meant there are now some 7,735 active cases, with several more in quarantine as a result of being in contact with these individuals. Malta currently requires people who test positive for COVID-19 as well as anyone they were in direct contact with to quarantine for 14 days. Public health experts have urged the government to tweak those rules. The United States has added the Mediterranean island to its highest-risk category for travel and urged its citizens not to visit.

<https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/at-least-20000-people-in-quarantine-as-covid-cases-surge.924367>

<https://wtvbam.com/2021/12/29/malta-hits-covid-record-as-u-s-warns-against-travel-to-island/>

1095) *December 30*. In **GUAM**, vaccinating against Covid-19 has been an island-wide effort, with the governor of the U.S. territory occasionally stepping in to help. Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero joined the Guam National Guard and the Department of Public Health and Social Services on Tuesday to administer vaccines at the University of Guam. Leon Guerrero, a registered nurse, has been lending a hand since vaccines became available in December 2020 in an effort to promote vaccination on the island. Though she doesn't do it regularly, Leon Guerrero said she administers the vaccines when she thinks it might be impactful. "What more connection could people have than a nurse going out there, vaccinating people, and not only am I a nurse, but their governor," she said. Leon Guerrero said she first vaccinated her medical advisers and the island's lieutenant governor to try to demonstrate support for the vaccine's efficacy. "It's a real kind of demonstration about our commitment to get our community vaccinated," she said. When children became eligible, Leon Guerrero returned to the front lines to vaccinate kids, including her grandchildren, to try to convince parents to do the same. Now, as the island waits to learn whether the omicron variant has been confirmed there, she has taken up the role once again. "We are assuming that it's already here," Leon Guerrero said. "We're preparing for it by making sure we have increased access to testing and making sure that we are on a major campaign to have our people boosted." About 84 percent of the total population and 91 percent of those eligible are fully vaccinated, according to Guam's Joint

Information Center. Leon Guerrero gave credit to Guam's residents for their willingness to cooperate with safety measures and get vaccinated. Two years into the pandemic, the island of close to 154,000 residents has had a total of 19,531 cases and 270 deaths, according to the Joint Information Center. Leon Guerrero said Guam has faced some challenges combatting the pandemic because it is an island territory. "We are not a state, and we are not a country. We are a territory governed by the U.S. laws, and we have no control over our borders," she said. Guam got its first three cases in March 2020 as the coronavirus spread across the globe. Without the authority to regulate entry, Leon Guerrero said Guam instead established a quarantine requirement to try to slow the spread. Officials have also been working to improve testing and access to vaccines, she said. The island's location in the western Pacific Ocean, east of the Philippines, has also created supply chain challenges. "You have to think ahead of time about the distance and the shipping time and period in order for you to get your necessary supplies to fight the pandemic," Leon Guerrero said. "Sometimes we feel isolated," she added. "But we are very creative and innovative in trying to prevent community spread and trying to save lives out here."

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/guams-governor-takes-hands-approach-administering-covid-vaccines-rcna10390>

1096) *December 31*. Two years ago today, as New Year's Eve fireworks lit up skies across the world, news reached the World Health Organization (WHO) about an outbreak of "pneumonia" in Wuhan, China, the cause of which was unknown. There had been several cases in December and possibly as far back as November in the region. But the subsequent WHO announcement was the first time that the world at large was made aware of its existence. At first the announcement garnered little public attention: like the fireworks that had preceded the announcement, fears of potential diseases usually just flared then faded, but as it turned out the disease that came to be known as Covid-19 was something entirely different. In the two years that followed, more than 5 million people worldwide have lost their lives to the virus; "lockdown" has become part of the world's common vocabulary and governments and their citizens are still waiting for a "new normal" to emerge. The virus has also exposed inequalities within countries in terms of the impact on lower-paid, public-facing employees, as well as exacerbating global inequities as vaccine rollouts take place at vastly different rates. This global retrospective shows, in graphics, the varying impact of Covid worldwide.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/31/two-years-of-coronavirus-how-pandemic-unfolded-around-the-world>

1097) *January 2*. Armed with her vaccine passport and a giddy urge to celebrate the holiday season, Laura Delgado - and 60,000 other people in **PUERTO RICO** - attended a Bad Bunny concert three weeks ago. Three days later, she was sick with Covid-19, one of about 2,000 people who fell ill as a result of the two-day event. The superspreader concert helped usher in an explosion of Covid-19 cases in Puerto Rico, which until then had been celebrating one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the United States. The concert was one of a series of business events, company holiday parties and family gatherings that fueled a 4,600 percent increase in cases on the island, a surge that public health officials worry could linger into the New Year; the Puerto Rican holiday season stretches to Three Kings Day on Jan. 6. While the Omicron variant has besieged the entire country, it is especially worrisome in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory already overwhelmed by government bankruptcy, an

exodus of health professionals and a fragile health care system. Officials imposed a new wave of tough restrictions on travelers and diners in hopes of staving off the new wave of cases. Rafael Irizarry, a Harvard University statistician who keeps a dashboard of Puerto Rico Covid-19 data, tweeted the daunting facts: A third of all coronavirus cases the island has recorded since the start of the pandemic occurred in the past month. The number of cases per 100,000 residents jumped to 225, from three, in three weeks. In December, the number of hospitalizations doubled - twice. Without the polarizing politics that have plagued the debate over vaccines in other parts of the country, nearly 85 percent of those in Puerto Rico have received at least one vaccine dose, and about 75 percent have gotten both shots. But in the face of a highly contagious new variant, a high vaccination rate is not that meaningful anymore, Mr. Irizarry said. Most in Puerto Rico have passed the six-month limit beyond which the vaccine's effectiveness begins to wane, yet at least 40 percent have yet to receive their booster shots, health officials said. At one point this week, the daily case count had surpassed 11,000, a very high figure for an island with just 3.2 million inhabitants. The exponential increases have begun to taper off, but case numbers are still climbing, Mr. Irizarry said. "I first noticed something going on on Dec. 13, and I alerted the Department of Health," he said. "By the 14th and 15th, it was obvious. I called the guy who runs the database and said, 'Is there some kind of glitch in the database?'" There are currently 317 people hospitalized with Covid-19, more than a quarter of who are children, according to the island's Department of Health. That's about half the number of people who were hospitalized with the illness at this time last year, before so many people were vaccinated. But it is still proving to be a challenge for hospitals. "The problem is, let's suppose Omicron is half as bad," Mr. Irizarry said. "If you have eight times more cases, the math doesn't work out in your favor." Gov. Pedro R. Pierluisi has ordered lower capacity limits in restaurants. To attend large public events, people now have to be vaccinated and present a negative Covid-19 test. Passengers arriving on domestic flights must show a negative test taken within 48 hours before arrival, regardless of their vaccination status. Similar rules were already in place for international flights. Mass public events, including an important celebration to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the island's capital, San Juan, have been canceled. "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve," which ABC had planned to broadcast live from Puerto Rico in front of big crowds, was downgraded to a virtual event. After a few dozen Miss World contestants got sick, the pageant finals in Puerto Rico were canceled. On Thursday, the Scientific Coalition, a group of scientists and health professionals that has been advising the governor, recommended even stricter measures, such as limits on alcohol sales and shorter hours for bars and other establishments. On Friday, the governor followed the recommendation and ordered businesses closed between midnight and 5 a.m. from Jan. 4 until Jan. 18. He also mandated booster shots for restaurant employees and public safety workers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/02/us/coronavirus-puerto-rico.html>

1098) *January 2.* **SRI LANKA** is facing a deepening financial and humanitarian crisis with fears it could go bankrupt in 2022 as inflation rises to record levels, food prices rocket and its coffers run dry. The meltdown faced by the government, led by the strongman president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, is in part caused by the immediate impact of the Covid crisis and the loss of tourism but is compounded by high government spending and tax cuts eroding state revenues, vast debt repayments to China and foreign exchange reserves at their lowest levels in a decade. Inflation has meanwhile been spurred by the government printing money to pay off domestic loans

and foreign bonds. The World Bank estimates 500,000 people have fallen below the poverty line since the beginning of the pandemic, the equivalent of five years' progress in fighting poverty. Inflation hit a record high of 11.1% in November and escalating prices have left those who were previously well off struggling to feed their families, while basic goods are now unaffordable for many. After Rajapaksa declared Sri Lanka to be in an economic emergency, the military was given power to ensure essential items, including rice and sugar, were sold at set government prices - but it has done little to ease people's woes.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/02/covid-crisis-sri-lanka-bankruptcy-poverty-pandemic-food-prices>

1099) *January 5.* General Máximo Gómez, a key figure in Cuba's 19th-century wars of independence against Spain once said: "Cubans either don't meet the mark – or go way past it." A century and a half later, the aphorism rings true. This downtrodden island struggles to keep the lights on, but has now vaccinated more of its citizens against Covid-19 than any of the world's major nations. More than 90% of the population has been vaccinated with at least one dose of Cuba's homegrown vaccines, while 83% have been fully inoculated. Of countries with populations of over a million, only the United Arab Emirates has a stronger vaccination record. "Cuba is a victim of magical realism," said John Kirk, professor emeritus of Latin American studies at Dalhousie University, Canada. "The idea that Cuba, with only 11 million people, and limited income, could be a biotech power, might be incomprehensible for someone working at Pfizer, but for Cuba it is possible." Like most Latin American countries, **CUBA** knew it would struggle to buy vaccines on the international market. So in March 2020, with foreign exchange reserves plummeting due to the loss of tourism revenue and ferocious new US sanctions, the island's scientists got to work. The gamble paid off: this spring Cuba became smallest country in the world to successfully develop and produce its own Covid vaccines. Since then the well-staffed, if dilapidating universal health service has rolled out injections at a fast clip, inoculating even young children (all vaccination on the island is voluntary). Both vaccines are over 90% effective, according to Cuban-run clinical trials conducted last spring. Successful rollout has brought infection rates down from among the highest in the western hemisphere last summer to low levels today. Last August the island reported hundreds of Covid deaths per week; last week there were three. The vaccine success is all the more striking when set against the parlous state of the healthcare service in other areas. With hard currency inflows cut in half over the last two years, antibiotics are now so scarce 20 pills of amoxicillin trade on the black market for the equivalent of a month's minimum state salary. Out of plaster cast, doctors in some provinces now resort to wrapping broken bones in used cardboard. After registering less than 100 cases a day for weeks, infection rates are now rising due to the highly contagious Omicron variant. Cuban scientists have not released data on the efficacy of their vaccines against Omicron but have begun work to update their vaccine against the variant. In the meantime, the Cuban ministry of public health has fast-tracked its booster campaign, and aims to give almost the entire population an extra shot of vaccine this month.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/05/cuba-coronavirus-covid-vaccines-success-story>

1100) *January 5.* Italy's National Association of Small Island Municipalities (**ANCIM**) has warned the country's smaller islands will be left behind by the latest



COVID-19 restrictions. ANCIM represents 35 towns and over 200,000 total permanent residents. From Monday, Italy will only allow vaccinated citizens who have a "super green pass" to use public transport, such as planes and boats. The pass will only work for Italians who have been fully vaccinated against the virus or have recently recovered from infection. A negative test will no longer be sufficient to use transport under next week's new rules. But a number of officials have warned that some island residents will now be unable to travel to the Italian mainland and will find themselves in "forced exile". "Sea and air transport ... represent the only possible link for some inhabitants," said Francesco Del Deo, president of ANCIM.

"Prohibiting access to these means of transport means condemning to forced exile the residents who, for various reasons, have not been vaccinated," he said. In a letter to Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, ANCIM called for island residents to still use a negative test to travel to the mainland for "health, education or work reasons". Most of Italy's 87 small islands - which are represented by ANCIM - have no permanent health facilities. "It's a complicated situation," said Del Deo, who is also mayor of a municipality on the island of Ischia, off the coast of Naples. "In a democracy, the rights of minorities must also be protected," he added, while also voicing his support for COVID-19 vaccines. ANCIM has suggested that Italy could set up special areas on ferries for those islanders who travel with a negative test result. "I personally am very much in favour of vaccines, but I believe that the super green pass requirement for ferries is an oversight by the government," said Dino Ambrosino, mayor of the island of Procida. "Since there are no alternatives to reach the mainland, the islanders' right to mobility must be protected." Italy has paid a heavy price for the pandemic with more than 137,000 deaths since early 2020. But more than 85% of people aged over 12 are vaccinated, as well as more than 10% of children aged 5 to 11.

<https://www.euronews.com/2022/01/05/italy-s-small-islands-will-be-exiled-by-vaccine-restrictions-warns-ngo>

