

By Dr Roger Tyers

7 October 2021

Coronavirus: International Travel FAQs for England



Summary

- 1 International Travel Restrictions
- 2 Outbound Travel
- 3 Managed 'Hotel Quarantine
- 4 Flight disruption and consumer rights

Contributing Authors

Sarah Barber, Testing, Science and Environment;
Lorraine Conway, Flight refunds, Home Affairs;
Bukky Balogun, Vaxzevria, Science and Environment

Image Credits

20110411-143436 Birmingham airport by Druh Scoff. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 / image cropped.

Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing [‘Legal help: where to go and how to pay’](#) for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at commonslibrary.parliament.uk. If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

Contents

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | International Travel Restrictions | 6 |
| 1.1 | What are the current requirements for entry to England? | 6 |
| 1.2 | What counts as ‘fully-vaccinated’? | 8 |
| 1.3 | How do I prove I’ve been vaccinated in the UK? | 9 |
| 1.4 | I cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Will I be able to skip quarantine when I enter England? | 10 |
| 1.5 | What was the international travel ban? | 11 |
| 1.6 | When did the travel ban end? | 11 |
| 1.7 | What did the Traffic Light system mean? | 12 |
| 1.8 | What Covid-19 testing is required before and after arrival in England? | 13 |
| 1.9 | Which jobs are exempt from travel restrictions? | 14 |
| 1.10 | What is the “test to release” scheme? | 15 |
| 1.11 | When will the current red-list countries be reviewed? | 15 |
| 1.12 | What are the criteria for the different country lists? | 16 |
| 2 | Outbound Travel | 18 |
| 2.1 | Can I travel to red-list countries? | 18 |
| 2.2 | Do the restrictions apply if I transit through a red country? | 19 |
| 2.3 | Can I use my NHS Covid Pass to skip quarantine in other countries? | 19 |
| 2.4 | Are other countries recognising Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) vaccines manufactured in India? | 20 |
| 3 | Managed ‘Hotel Quarantine | 22 |
| 3.1 | What is hotel quarantine for travel from “red list” countries? | 22 |
| 3.2 | Are there any exemptions from hotel quarantine? | 22 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 3.3 | Can I leave hotel quarantine to attend a funeral or visit a dying relative? | 25 |
| 3.4 | What if I cannot afford to pay for hotel quarantine? | 25 |
| 4 | Flight disruption and consumer rights | 26 |
| 4.1 | I couldn't fly because of lockdown, but my flight wasn't cancelled, what are my options? | 26 |
| 4.2 | What is the Government doing about missed or cancelled flights? | 27 |

Summary

This paper answers frequently asked questions about how international travel from and to the UK is currently affected by restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The international travel ban ended in England on 17 May 2021, and was then replaced by a 'Traffic Light' system of restrictions. On 4 October, that Traffic Light system was replaced. Now, the amber and green lists have effectively been combined, meaning there are only two categories: 'red-list' and other countries. Most countries are not on the red list.

Those entering the UK from a red country are still required to undergo managed hotel quarantine for ten days.

Entry restrictions from other countries depend on vaccination status. If a traveller can prove they have been fully-vaccinated (in the UK, or in an expanding list of recognised countries including the USA, Canada, the UAE, South Korea and EU countries), then they no longer need to take a test before they arrive in England, or quarantine after arrival. They only need to complete a passenger locator form before travel, and take a pre-booked Day 2 test after arrival.

Those considered unvaccinated must complete a passenger locator form, take a pre-travel test before travel, and must take Day 2 and Day 8 tests, and quarantine for 10 days after arrival.

The administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also adopted these rules.

Passengers whose flights have been cancelled may be entitled to a refund. If a flight is not cancelled, but a passenger could not take it due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, they should be offered a re-scheduled flight or a refund. The Government has published a Passenger Covid-19 charter, which sets out consumer rights, responsibilities, and reasonable expectations while Covid-19 travel restrictions continue.

1 International Travel Restrictions

1.1 What are the current requirements for entry to England?

The Government [announced](#) on 17 September that from 4 October onwards, the ‘Traffic Light’ system of requirements upon entry to England (see Section 1.7) would end. Since 4 October, the amber and green lists have effectively been combined, meaning there are only two categories: ‘red-list’ and other countries. Most countries are not on the red list. The administrations in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) have also adopted the following rules.

Entry rules from red list countries remain the same as under the previous traffic light system. Entry from red list countries is only allowed for UK and Irish citizens, or those with a right of residence in the UK. Travellers are required to enter hotel quarantine for 10 days following arrival, irrespective of vaccination status. Further information on hotel quarantine is in Section 3.

Entry rules for non-red list countries are determined by vaccination status. Those who are ‘fully vaccinated’ with an approved vaccine received in a recognised country will no longer have to take pre-departure tests, or, after arrival, quarantine at home, or take a Day 8 test. They will only need to complete a pre-departure passenger locator form, and take a Day 2 post-arrival test. What counts as ‘fully vaccinated’ is explained in Section 1.2.

The rules are summarised in the table below.

Entry Requirements to England from 'non-red list' countries from 4 October 2021: A summary

| Vaccination status | Passenger locator form | Pre-arrival test | Post-arrival test on Day 2 | Post-arrival test of Day 8 |
|---|------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Adults fully vaccinated in UK or a recognised country | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Children under 18 from UK or a recognised country | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Unvaccinated adults | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Children under 18 not from UK or a recognised country | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Rules for fully vaccinated adults, and children

Since 4 October, people who can prove they have been fully vaccinated with an approved vaccine from a recognised country must do the following:

Before travel to England, they must:

- complete a [passenger locator form](#)
- [book and pay](#) for day 2 PCR Covid-19 travel tests - to be taken after arrival in England

On arrival in England they must:

- take a Covid-19 PCR test on or before day 2

They do not need to quarantine.

These rules also apply to children under the age of 18 if they are from the UK or a country with a recognised vaccination programme (regardless of if they are vaccinated themselves). Children under the age of 4 do not need to take

any Covid-19 travel tests. For children under the age of 18 who are not from a country with a recognised vaccination programme, rules for unvaccinated people apply, as below.

Rules for unvaccinated people

Since 4 October, people who cannot prove they have been fully vaccinated in a country with a recognised vaccination programme must do the following:

Before travel to England, they must:

- complete a [passenger locator form](#)
- take a (PCR or lateral flow) [Covid-19 test](#)
- [book and pay](#) for day 2 and day 8 PCR Covid-19 travel tests - to be taken after arrival in England

On arrival in England they must:

- quarantine at home or in the place they are staying for 10 days
- take a Covid-19 test on or before day 2 and on or after day 8.
- Travellers may be able to end quarantine early if they pay for a private Covid-19 test through the [‘Test to Release’ scheme](#).
- More information on this is provided in the Government document, [Quarantine and testing if you've been in an amber list country](#).

These rules apply to children under the age of 18 if they are not from the UK or a country with a recognised vaccination programme (regardless of if they are vaccinated themselves). Such children under the age of 4 do not need to take any Covid-19 travel tests, but do need to home-quarantine.

1.2 What counts as ‘fully-vaccinated’?

Adults will be considered fully-vaccinated for the purpose of these rules if they have been fully vaccinated for at least 14 days:

- under [the UK NHS vaccine programme](#), OR
- with a full course of the Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna or Janssen vaccines from a relevant public health body in a country on the [Government’s list](#) of countries and territories with approved proof of vaccination for travel to England, OR

- under a formally approved COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial in the US, Canada and Australia and have a proof of participation (digital or paper-based) from a public health body, AND
- can provide proof that they have been fully vaccinated (plus 14 days) with a document (digital or paper-based) from a national or state-level public health body that includes, as a minimum:
 - forename and surname(s)
 - date of birth
 - vaccine brand and manufacturer
 - date of vaccination for every dose
 - country or territory of vaccination and/or certificate issuer
- Full details of acceptable vaccination proof can be found on the [list of countries and territories](#) with approved proof of vaccination for travel to England.

Children under the age of 18 who are from one of the countries listed will be treated as a fully vaccinated adult when entering England.

1.3

How do I prove I've been vaccinated in the UK?

In England and Wales, vaccination status can be proven through using the NHS Covid Pass in either digital or paper form.

NHSX was commissioned by the Cabinet Office to develop the 'NHS COVID Pass' to show a person's Covid-19 status, and more information on how to use it can be found on the NHS Covid Pass [website](#). The pass is available in England and Wales to those over the age of 16 who are registered with a GP / have an NHS number and who have had:

- 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine
- A negative PCR test or rapid lateral flow test within the past 48 hours, or
- A positive PCR test within the past 6 months

The [NHS Covid Pass](#) website explains that the digital version of the Pass can be accessed in two ways, either by using the NHS App or the NHS Covid pass service website (where the pass can be downloaded as a PDF, or a paper version can be requested). A letter can also be requested by telephoning 119.

The NHS Covid pass displays the type of vaccine received, date and batch number, with an accompanying QR code which can be scanned at border controls.

People in Scotland can use the [NHS Scotland COVID Status App](#) or paper equivalent to prove they are vaccinated or exempt. In Northern Ireland there is a separate [COVIDCertNI app](#) which can be used to show vaccination status, or a paper-based certificate can be requested.

1.4

I cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Will I be able to skip quarantine when I enter England?

Yes. Although the Government has encouraged all eligible people to take up the offer of a vaccination, it also recognises that some people cannot have one for various medical reasons. DfT [guidance](#) says that if you are not fully vaccinated, the ‘fully vaccinated’ rules for travel apply if you:

- are under 18 and resident in the UK or one of the countries or territories with approved proof of vaccination
- are taking part in an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial in the UK or the USA (US residents only for USA trials). UK trial participants should have received a letter from their clinical trial site which proves they were in a clinical trial and therefore should be recognised as fully vaccinated, Further information is [here](#).
- cannot have a COVID-19 vaccination for a medical reason which has been approved by a clinician under the new medical exemptions process, and you are resident in England. Further information on medical exemptions is provided [here](#) by the DHSC.

Proof of vaccination or an exemption from vaccination is required. [The Gov.uk guidance](#) says that “if you cannot prove that you qualify under the fully vaccinated rules, you must follow the rules for people who are not fully vaccinated.”

As well as showing vaccination status, the NHS Covid Pass can also be used to show negative PCR or lateral flow test results (which will be valid for up to 48 hours after the result), and positive PCR test results (which will be valid for up to 180 days after the result). This will enable those who cannot receive a vaccination, but are able to undergo testing, to still use the app to demonstrate a reduced risk of transmission. This will not be accepted as being equivalent to ‘full vaccination’ for entry to England but may allow easier entry to other countries. [FCDO Travel pages](#) for the destination country should be consulted. This feature – showing negative or positive test results – is only available through the app and not through the paper version of the NHS Covid pass. More details are on the [NHS Covid Pass](#) page.

1.5 What was the international travel ban?

During the pandemic at various stages there have been restrictions on international travel. From 29 March to 16 May 2021, there was a ban on international travel (in England), as provided for by the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(Steps\) \(England\) Regulations 2021](#) (The “Roadmap Regulations”). This meant that a ‘reasonable excuse’ or a work-related exemption was required to travel from England to anywhere beyond the Common Travel Area (CTA), which comprises the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands. Travellers also had to complete a [travel declaration form](#), and present that form to relevant persons when directed to do so.

Subject to reasonable excuses, the regulations made it an offence to:

- leave England to travel to a destination outside the United Kingdom; or
- travel to, or be present at, an embarkation point for the purpose of travelling from there to a destination outside the United Kingdom.

On 7 May 2021, the Government [announced](#) that this travel ban would end on 17 May, “meaning leisure travel from England will no longer be illegal”.

The lifting of the ban now applies to all regions of the United Kingdom, although different rules do apply for international travel if you are departing from [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

1.6 When did the travel ban end?

Since 17 May, it has no longer been illegal to leave England to travel to a destination outside the United Kingdom. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability\) \(England\) Regulations 2021](#)¹ removes the requirement for a ‘reasonable excuse’ to travel. This requirement has also been removed in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Travel declaration forms and evidence of a reasonable excuse are now no longer required when leaving England.

This is in line with the [Government’s ‘roadmap’ plans](#), published on 22 February 2021, for the easing of lockdown restrictions in England. Under step 3 of the roadmap, international travel was to resume no earlier than 17 May 2021, subject to review. As discussed in Section 1.9 below, the Government has advised against travel to countries classified as ‘amber’ or ‘red’ according to the traffic light system, until 8 July, when it was [announced](#) that the formal

¹Referred to henceforth in this paper as the ‘International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations’

FCDO advice for people to not travel to amber countries will be removed from 19 July.

In addition, what had been a complete ban on aircraft arriving into England directly from certain 'red-listed' countries was amended on 8 June. Under Section 13 of [International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations](#), flights can enter the country from these countries (including Turkey, Brazil and UAE, at the time of writing), but only into segregated terminals at Birmingham and Heathrow airports.

1.7 What did the Traffic Light system mean?

Since 17 May 2021, non-essential travel from England has been allowed to resume. For (re-)entry into England, different 'traffic light' restrictions applied depending on the country from which travellers enter from, and whether that country has been assigned 'red', 'amber' or 'green' status. The traffic light system was recommended by the Government's [relaunched Global Travel Taskforce](#). The taskforce [reported](#) on 9 April and recommended the implementation of a "traffic light" country system, to which different restrictions are applied depending on risk.

On 7 May the Government [assigned](#) different countries to red, amber or green status for travel after 17 May. These country lists were subject to review every three weeks.

On 8 July the Government announced that people who are fully vaccinated through the UK NHS vaccination programme (plus 14 days), and children aged 18 or under, will no longer have to quarantine after entering England from an Amber country, from 19 July onwards. The restrictions applicable to them would be the same as if they had entered from a green country. On 28 July, the Government [announced](#) that it would extend this quarantine-exemption to travellers fully vaccinated in the USA and most European countries too, starting on 2 August. The Government [announced](#) on 17 September that from 4 October onwards it would recognise vaccinations received in more countries.

On 17 September the Government [announced](#) that it would be replacing the Traffic Light system with a new regime, starting from 4 October.

The following table summarises the differences in requirements under the previous Traffic Light system depending on the country a traveller had departed from or transited through.

| 'Traffic Light' Requirements: A summary | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Country of Departure/ Transit | Passenger locator Form | Pre-arrival Test | Post-arrival test on Day 2 | Post-arrival test of Day 8 | Home Quarantine for 10 days | Hotel Quarantine for 10 days |
| Green | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Amber (Fully UK/Europe/USA vaccinated + children) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Amber | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Red | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |

1.8 What Covid-19 testing is required before and after arrival in England?

Testing before arrival

People considered full vaccinated do not, since 4 October, need to take any tests before arriving in England. Unvaccinated travellers must take a test within three days before travel to England. If the test result is positive, they must not travel. [Guidance](#) from the Department for Transport states that “tests must be taken in the 3 days before the service on which you will arrive in England departs. For example, if you travel directly to England on Friday, you must take the test on the Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.” If travellers do not take this test, they can be fined £500.

Travellers will need to find a private test provider in the departure country to take a test. Travellers cannot take an NHS test with them to use on themselves before return, and the tests must meet certain [specified](#) standards. Lateral flow tests are acceptable.

Testing after arrival

Unvaccinated travellers entering England must take two separate PCR Covid-19 tests, on day two and day eight after arrival. Vaccinated travellers entering England must take a single PCR Covid-19 test on day two after arrival. These

tests must be purchased prior to arrival in the UK, using the [Find a coronavirus \(Covid-19\) travel test provider](#) page. Free NHS tests are not to be used for travel purposes.

A number of test providers offer test packages for purchase (including NHS Test and Trace). Providers must declare to the Department of Health and Social Care that they meet the minimum legal [standards required](#). These providers and the prices of the test packages are listed [on the Department of Health and Social Care website](#). The package prices vary between providers, the Government guidance explains that this may be for a number of reasons, such as different levels of customer support.

The guidance states that the Government does not endorse/support any test provider:

This list is continually updated by DHSC as providers declare that they meet the required standards and are reviewed by UKAS.

The Government does not endorse or recommend any test provider. Individuals should conduct their own research about available providers, the tests they supply and their terms and conditions of sale.

On 4 October the Government [repeated](#) its intention to allow fully vaccinated travellers to use cheaper lateral flow tests for their Day 2 post-arrival tests instead of PCR tests, from the end of October 2021. It aims “to have this in place for when people return from half-term breaks.” It was not clear, at the time of writing, whether the devolved administrations will follow this change. On 17 September, the Scottish Government [said](#) it was opposed to changing to lateral flow from PCR tests “due to significant concerns at the impact on public health”.

1.9 Which jobs are exempt from travel restrictions?

Some people are exempt from some or all Covid-19 travel and entry requirements because of their job. The kinds of exemptions that apply, and the evidence that travellers may need to produce, differ depending on the kind of job and whether the traveller is entering England Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland. More detail can be found in the Government [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions](#) guidance.

1.10

What is the “test to release” scheme?

The [Test to release scheme](#) was launched on 15 December 2020. Under the scheme, unvaccinated travellers arriving in England who need to quarantine, can choose to pay for a private Covid-19 test, to be taken after 5 days of self-isolation. Subject to a negative result, travellers will then be able to stop self-isolating. If an individual tests positive, they will be required to self-isolate for a further 10 days. This is in addition to the tests that everyone must take on or before day two and on or after day eight of their quarantine period.

As with the day two and day eight test packages, private providers are required to declare that they meet the minimum standards required. The providers and the test prices are listed on the [Department of Health and Social website](#).

More information on the test to release scheme is provided in the Government guidance, [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): Test to Release for international travel](#).

1.11

When will the current red-list countries be reviewed?

The [Secretary of State for Transport said](#) that the colour lists will be reviewed every three weeks, based on an assessment of countries’ risk (see Section 1.8 below). Countries that are likely to change from one colour to another are placed on a ‘[watchlist](#)’ to help travellers and other stakeholders plan ahead.

The first changes to the colour lists were announced on 3 June and took effect on 8 June. In [that review](#), countries were then added to the red list, and Portugal was moved from the green to amber list. A second review was [announced](#) on 24 June, with changes taking effect on 30 June. In that review, some countries were added to the green list, including the Balearic Islands and Malta. On the third review of 14 July, Bulgaria and Hong Kong were added to the green list. On the fourth review of [5 August](#), Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia, Romania and Norway were added to the green list. India, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were moved from the red to the amber list, with these changes taking effect from 8 August. On 26 August, it was [announced](#) that Montenegro and Thailand would move to the red list, and The Azores, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania and Switzerland would move to the green list. On [17 September](#), it was announced that Turkey, Pakistan, the Maldives, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Oman, Bangladesh and Kenya would be removed from the red list. If the three-week review pattern continues, the next red list reviews are expected around 7 October and 28 October.

The Transport Secretary has also [said](#) that the red list in particular is under constant review, and countries may be added to the red list at very short notice if necessary.

In addition to colour list reviews, the entire traffic light system was reviewed at three ‘checkpoints’ on 28 June, 31 July and 1 October, in line with the Global Travel Taskforce [plan](#) for the ‘Safe Return of International Travel’ published in April 2021. On 17 September the Government [announced](#) a large-scale change to the travel restrictions to start on 4 October and replace the Traffic Light system, details of this are in Section 1.1.

1.12

What are the criteria for the different country lists?

The international travel traffic light system is informed by a [risk assessment methodology](#) designed by the [Joint Biosecurity Centre \(JBC\)](#) and the devolved administrations.

Under the risk assessment [methodology](#), all countries are assumed to be medium public health risk unless there is specific evidence to suggest they are:

- low public health risk to the UK from all COVID-19 strains – that is, low assessed prevalence, good surveillance and no evidence of community transmission of variants that pose a significant public health risk to the UK (see, for example, PHE’s [risk assessment framework](#) for more information)
- high public health risk to the UK from known variants of concern (VOCs), known emerging or high-risk variants under investigation (VUIs) or because of very high (or rapidly increasing) and unexplained prevalence of COVID-19

The Department of Health and Social Care guidance, [Risk assessment methodology to inform international travel traffic light system](#), explains that the JBC methodology involves four stages:

1. variant assessment
2. triage
3. risk assessment
4. outcomes to inform ministerial decisions.

Ultimately, the key variables that inform these ministerial decisions are a country or territory’s:

- genomic surveillance capability
- COVID-19 transmission risk
- VOC/VUI transmission risk

More information about the four stages is provided in the [guidance document](#). It states that the methodology will evolve to take account of changes in the pandemic and to potentially use new data sources or analyses. The methodology will be reviewed on a quarterly basis at a minimum.

The DHSC document, [Data informing international travel traffic-light risk assessments](#) provides a summary of the data used by JBC to inform its country risk assessments to date.

2 Outbound Travel

2.1 Can I travel to red-list countries?

Since the international travel ban ended on 17 May 2021, travel from England to any country beyond the Common Travel Area is legally permitted. On 8 July it was [announced](#) that the formal blanket recommendation against travel to amber countries would be removed from 19 July and amber countries could be visited for holidays, family visits, or any purpose. This was a change from [previous](#) advice against leisure travel to amber countries. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has said that [Red countries should not be visited "except in the most extreme of circumstances."](#)

Regardless of its colour category, there may be entry restrictions placed by the Government of the destination country. Some countries may prohibit all non-nationals from entry or require travellers to produce certain evidence to justify entry and/or produce negative Covid test results. Travellers may wish to consult the [Foreign travel advice](#) website of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and/or Government websites of destination/transit countries.

Although it may be legally permissible to travel to a country, if the FCDO advises against travel there, due to Covid-risks or another perceived travel risk, travellers may not be able to obtain travel insurance to cover their trip. They should check [FCDO advice](#) as well as their insurance company policy before departure. On 8 July, the Government announced it [would remove](#) the blanket guidance against travel to 'amber' countries from 19 July, meaning that travel insurance will be far easier to obtain for trips to these countries. However, it can be the case that a country is not a 'red list' country yet the FCDO still advise against travel there, based on an assessment of Covid-risk (or other, non-Covid related travel risks).

Finally, while it may be legal to travel to other countries, travellers should be mindful of restrictions which may apply when they wish to return to England, and that restrictions and colour designations under the traffic light system might change while they are on their trip.

The Commons Library Briefing Paper [Coronavirus: enforcing restrictions](#) (particularly Section 1.3) explains how entry requirements are enforced by the police, UK Border Force and other authorities.

2.2 Do the restrictions apply if I transit through a red country?

Yes. Current [DfT guidance](#) states that you must follow the rules for entry to England from a red-list country, even if you have only transited through it briefly. This includes changing flights within the same airport. The guidance states the following:

A transit stop is a stop where passengers can get on or off the transport in which you are travelling. It can apply to ships, trains or aeroplanes. Your ticket should show if a stop is a transit stop.

Making a transit stop would not affect what you have to do on arrival in England if, during the stop:

- no new passengers board your aircraft, vessel or train carriage
- passengers get off but do not get back on
- you are kept separate from passengers who did not arrive on the same aircraft, vessel or train carriage as you

Transiting also includes driving in a private vehicle through a country, even if you do not stop or get out.

2.3 Can I use my NHS Covid Pass to skip quarantine in other countries?

As of 14 July, the NHS Covid Pass is explicitly recognised by over thirty countries, as listed below. This number may increase over time as countries improve their ability to recognise each other's vaccine certification schemes.

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Anguilla | Iceland | Cyprus |
| Ascension Island | Malta | Denmark |
| Brunei | Portugal – Madeira | Estonia |
| British Virgin Islands | Bahamas | France |
| Barbados | Bosnia & Herzegovina | Gabon |
| Cayman Islands | Bulgaria | Georgia |
| Gibraltar | Croatia | Greece |

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Grenada | Poland | Bahrain |
| Hong Kong | Portugal – mainland, Azores | Ecuador |
| Jordan | St Lucia | Mongolia |
| Lebanon | Spain | Tunisia |
| Lithuania | Slovenia | Turkey |
| Moldova | | |

By using the NHS Covid Pass to prove they are fully vaccinated, travellers can avoid having to quarantine after entering these countries, although some countries still require a negative Covid-19 test result. Travellers should check the [FCDO Travel Advice](#) for specific countries' restrictions. The UK Government [advises](#) that travellers should check that the name on their passport matches how it is displayed by NHS COVID Pass at least 2 weeks before travel. If the names are different, travellers should contact their GP practice to have their details updated.

The EU has stated that it will be open to all vaccinated visitors this summer, and the EMA, the EU's medical regulatory body, has approved the Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson jabs – which includes all the vaccinations being used in the UK vaccine programme. However, the decision on whether to recognise the NHS Covid Pass, and whether to allow travellers who hold one to skip quarantine, still depends on individual Member States. Travellers should check the [FCDO Travel Advice](#) for specific countries' restrictions.

2.4 Are other countries recognising Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) vaccines manufactured in India?

Approximately 5 million doses of Vaxzevria were manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and administered as part of the UK's vaccination programme.

Concerns have been raised about the regulatory status of these vaccines. These are largely based on the fact that the SII also manufactures another Covid-19 vaccine called Covishield. There has been some suggestion that SII-manufactured Vaxzevria vaccines are being identified as Covishield by other countries.

Whilst it has exactly the same chemical composition as Vaxzevria, the proprietary and licensing arrangements for Covishield differ, and it has largely only been approved for use in low and middle income countries. On

the other hand, Vaxzevria has been widely approved for use across the EU and in western countries.

The UK's medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted authorisation for these doses of Vaxzevria to be manufactured at the SII, and that they were assessed and treated as AstraZeneca (now Vaxzevria) vaccines. No Covishield vaccines have been authorised for use or administered in the UK.

There have been reports in the press that people travelling from the UK who received SII-manufactured Vaxzevria vaccines had been refused entry from countries where Covid-19 vaccination is a requirement for entry.

Few countries have responded specifically to this issue and travellers are advised to check the FCDO pages for the destination country, or the country's Government website prior to travel.

For a more detailed discussion about SII manufactured Vaxzevria vaccines and responses to relevant FAQs, see the Commons Library briefing, [Vaxzevria \(AstraZeneca\) Covid19 vaccine: Recognition of batches manufactured in India](#).

3 Managed ‘Hotel Quarantine

3.1 What is hotel quarantine for travel from “red list” countries?

Since 15 February 2021, UK and Irish citizens, or those with a right of residence in the UK, who have been in or through a red list country in the previous 10 days, have been [required](#) to quarantine in a Government-approved hotel facility for a period of 10 days. This is legislated for under the [International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations 2021](#).

Those who do not have the right of residence in the UK and have been in or through a country on the travel ban list will be refused entry to the UK unless exemptions apply.

Travellers must purchase a quarantine package at a cost of £2,285 for one adult. This [increased](#) from £1,750 on 12 August. Additional adults and children are priced separately, more information is provided in the guidance document, [Booking and staying in a quarantine hotel when you arrive in England](#). Some individuals may be eligible for assistance with the costs of a managed quarantine package, see section 3.3 below.

Individuals who do not purchase a hotel quarantine package or fail to comply with the requirement to undertake managed quarantine will be liable for a fixed penalty notice of up to £10,000.

These rules apply even to people who are fully vaccinated.

3.2 Are there any exemptions from hotel quarantine?

Requirements to quarantine in a designated hotel following arrival in England from a ‘red list’ country are set out in Schedule 11 of the [International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations 2021](#). This Schedule also provides information on when the requirement may be modified by the Secretary of State, to allow a “relevant person” to self-isolate in a different place.

There are very limited circumstances where individuals may be exempted from managed hotel quarantine, these include:

- Unaccompanied children coming to the UK from red-list countries to attend [boarding school](#);
- People undertaking specific [jobs](#) that require travel to/from the UK; and
- For medical or compassionate reasons on a case-by-case basis.

Unaccompanied children

Under Schedule 11 of the International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations 2021 it is possible for children travelling unaccompanied from a red list boarding school in England to self-isolate at their school rather than in a hotel. Government guidance, [Quarantine arrangements for boarding school students from red list countries](#) explains that this exception only applies in certain circumstances. It also states that the Secretary of State has confirmed in writing that this exemption applies to all children who meet these criteria.

An exemption from completing self-isolation in a managed hotel may also be considered, on a case by case basis, where an unaccompanied child is arriving in England, and it is not reasonable for the person responsible for that child to join them in hotel quarantine (See Schedule 11 of the [International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations 2021](#)). However, the [Government guidance](#) states that “in general, a child will not be able to travel alone unless the parent, guardian or appropriate adult already in the UK can enter managed quarantine with the child on their arrival.”

Jobs that qualify for exemptions

The Government’s guidance, [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions](#) lists the jobs that qualify for exemptions from travel restrictions.

For certain jobs, hotel-quarantine is not required where the individual is arriving from a red-list country.

Medical and compassionate exemptions

On 21 April 2021, the Government published guidance stating that it will consider, on a case-by-case basis, [exemptions](#) from hotel quarantine on medical or compassionate grounds. It stated that these exemptions are “exceptional and limited”, and that evidence would be required to support the request.

On 23 April 2021, the international travel regulations were amended to allow modification to the requirement to self-isolate in a hotel to individuals for medical/compassionate reasons, subject to certain criteria. This is now in Schedule 11 of the [International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations](#).

Exemption requests should be submitted to:

DHSCtesttrace.customerfeedbackteam@nhs.net at least seven days before travel. The Government guidance explains that for people with medical

conditions there is support available in managed quarantine, and it is only in “extremely limited circumstances where due to pre-existing severe medical conditions or vulnerabilities, an individual may be incapable of entering a managed quarantine facility because they cannot be supported there.”

Current [guidance](#) on medical exemptions is as follows:

Exemptions may be granted where:

- the existing medical condition or vulnerability is severe;
- sufficient evidence is provided that the needs of the individual cannot be met either through the provision at the managed quarantine facility, or from a household member joining the individual in managed quarantine;
- the medical condition or vulnerability will worsen in managed quarantine to such a significant degree that emergency treatment may become necessary;
- clinical evidence is supplied, providing clear evidence of existing treatment and conditions, explaining the risk to the patient – and this evidence must be satisfactory to the assessor;
- any evidence provided in support of the application for an exemption is provided from a registered and suitably qualified healthcare professional with direct oversight of the individual’s care and provision for that condition – it is not generally expected that this is provided by your GP or equivalent in other countries.

Exemptions from hotel quarantine may also be considered on [compassionate](#) grounds:

In extremely limited circumstances, where it is not possible to accommodate a visit to a severely ill or dying relative or member of your household from within managed quarantine, you may be able to be exempt

Again, this is considered on a case-by-case basis and evidence would need to be provided.

Providing evidence of the exemption

If an exemption to hotel quarantine is granted it will be communicated in writing. Travellers will need to present evidence on arrival at the border that they have been granted an exemption and to have booked and paid for the day 2 and day 8 tests.

Travellers will still need to complete the passenger locator form and arrangements must be made for travel (see point 2.1 above). Travellers cannot use public transport to travel to their place of self-quarantine.

3.3 Can I leave hotel quarantine to attend a funeral or visit a dying relative?

Yes. Permission to leave quarantine [may be granted](#) “for a limited period... if a close family member or member of your household is dying... or to attend a funeral.” Permission needs to be obtained from security staff at the hotel, and you must specify a return time. You are encouraged to attend the funeral or visit and return to quarantine within one day if at all possible, but overnight stays may be allowed if necessary. While outside quarantine, public transport is to be avoided, and safety measures like mask-wearing and social distancing should be observed.

3.4 What if I cannot afford to pay for hotel quarantine?

[Financial assistance to help pay for hotel-quarantine](#) is available for those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the costs. For such people, payment for the hotel-quarantine (currently £2,285 for one adult) is deferred, and they are required to pay back the debt to the Government in 12 monthly instalments.

4 Flight disruption and consumer rights

4.1 I couldn't fly because of lockdown, but my flight wasn't cancelled, what are my options?

This section deals only with flight-only purchases affected by coronavirus travel restrictions. For package holidays, see the Commons Library briefing, [Coronavirus: holiday bookings](#).

While many flights have been cancelled during the public health-imposed lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic, some flights have still gone ahead for those travellers who are still legally allowed to travel (for work purposes etc.). Whether an airline decides to fly (or not fly) an aircraft is an entirely commercial decision.

Passengers are legally entitled to a refund where flights are cancelled (see Box 1 below), but where they are unable to fly and the flight goes ahead there is no automatic right to a refund. It is advisable to take out insurance when making holiday and/or flight bookings for circumstances in which you are unable to travel. Generally, if someone cancels their flight they would in effect be forfeiting their rights under the original contract. The airline is therefore under no obligation to provide a cash refund for the cancelled flight. The [advice from consumer body Which? states](#),

If you were due to go on holiday during the lockdown period, do not cancel your holiday or flight. It is essential that you wait to hear from your airline or holiday company. If you cancel, you risk forfeiting your right to a refund.

Box 1: Flight refund entitlements

UK passenger rights to compensation are provided through retained EU law – [Regulation 261/2004/EC](#) as amended by the [Air Passenger Rights and Air Travel Organisers' Licensing \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#). The law sets out what airlines must provide their passengers if a flight is delayed or cancelled. This applies even if the information is not contained in the airline's terms and conditions.

The UK legislation covers all flights which (i) depart the UK, (ii) arrive in the UK with an EU or UK carrier, or (iii) arrive in the EU with a UK carrier.

The EU Regulation covers passengers on flights between two designated countries or on flights departing or arriving from a designated country from a third country, as the law doesn't require you to be an EU citizen to claim compensation. A list of designated countries is available on the [CAA website](#); essentially it is all EU countries, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

Full details of the current passenger rights to compensation are available on the [CAA website](#) and in their [Know Your Rights leaflet](#), updated in September 2019.

An airline is not obliged to pay compensation if it can prove that a delay or cancellation was caused by '**extraordinary circumstances**', as defined in paras [14 and 15](#) of the preamble to the 2004 Regulation.

What constitutes 'extraordinary circumstances' has been subject to legal challenge. Travel restrictions imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic have caused a number of cancellations. The CAA considers that flights cancelled as a result of Covid-19 would fall under the extraordinary circumstance exemption. You can see a [list of cancelled flights relating to Covid-19 on the CAA website](#).

It is also worth noting that anyone who pays for an airline ticket using a credit card can contact the credit card provider to see if there is any additional compensation available under [section 75](#) of the *Consumer Credit Act 1974*.

4.2

What is the Government doing about missed or cancelled flights?

In December 2020, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced that it had launched an [investigation](#), which will

...consider situations where airlines continued to operate flights despite people being unable lawfully to travel for non-essential purposes in the UK or abroad, for example during the second lockdown in England in November.

On 11 March 2021, Transport Minister Robert Courts answered a PQ on this issue ([PQ163150](#)) as follows:

The Government is continuing to work with industry to ensure timely refunds to consumers during the pandemic. The Civil Aviation Authority reviewed airlines' compliance on refunds last summer and

worked collaboratively to improve their performance on consumer obligations. A significant majority of airlines now pay refunds within a reasonable time.

The Competition and Markets Authority are currently reviewing the practices of airline and travel agents in issuing refunds to customers affected by the travel restrictions.

On 9 June 2021, the CMA announced that it is investigating whether British Airways and Ryanair have broken consumer law by failing to offer refunds for flights consumers could not lawfully take because of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The CMA has written to both airlines outlining its concerns. An extract from this [announcement](#) is reproduced below:

During periods of lockdown across the UK, British Airways and Ryanair refused to give refunds to people that were lawfully unable to fly, with British Airways offering vouchers or rebooking and Ryanair providing the option to rebook.

The CMA is concerned that, by failing to offer people their money back, both firms may have breached consumer law and left people unfairly out of pocket. It is now seeking refunds, or other redress, for affected customers.

On 7 October the CMA [announced](#) that it was closing this investigation into Ryanair and British Airways. While it recognised that people who had been legally prevented from taking flights due to lockdown laws should be offered a full refund, it concluded that current laws do not provide passengers with a sufficiently clear right to a refund in such unusual circumstances, and the potential costs of pursuing this case in the courts did not justify continuing with it. In a statement, Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

We strongly believe people who are legally prevented from taking flights due to lockdown laws should be offered a full refund and we launched this investigation in the hope that we would be able to secure a positive outcome for consumers. However, after considering the relevant law and gathering evidence in our investigation, we have concluded that the length of time that would be required to take this case through the courts, and the uncertain outcome, can no longer justify the further expense of public money.

Given the importance of this to many passengers who have unfairly lost out, we hope that the law in this area will be clarified.

Both the above cases form part of the CMA's ongoing work in relation to holiday refunds during the Covid-19 pandemic. For more information, see the Commons Library briefing, [Coronavirus: holiday bookings](#).

On 17 May, the Global Travel Taskforce published a Passenger [Covid-19 charter](#). This sets out consumer rights, responsibilities and 'reasonable

expectations' for international travel while coronavirus (Covid-19) restrictions remain in place.

This charter explains what travellers can reasonably expect if travel restrictions suddenly change (either in the UK or in other countries), if flights, trains or ferries are delayed or cancelled, and ways to access refunds. The charter provides links to other sources of information that will provide further help and guidance, including the Financial Conduct Authority's guidance on how to get a [refund](#).

Further information on this topic can be found in the Commons Library briefing [Aviation FAQs for 2021](#).

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on commonslibrary.parliament.uk.

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe or scan the code below:



 commonslibrary.parliament.uk

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)