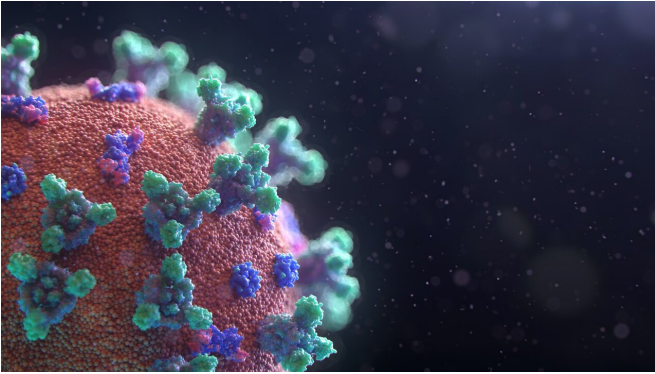


UK to announce new international travel rules

5 April 2021



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Britain will on Monday set out plans to restart international travel, using a "traffic-light" system as the country cautiously emerges from lockdown.

The UK has set a tentative date of May 17 to relaunch foreign travel, currently banned except for a handful of permitted reasons. This has created massive pent-up demand for summer holidays abroad.

Travel destinations will be ranked green, amber or red according to [virus](#) risk, Downing Street said late Saturday, with the [government](#) to provide more details on Monday.

"We are doing everything we can to enable the reopening of our country... as safely as possible," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

The government said the new system "will help ensure the UK's vaccine progress isn't jeopardised and provide clear guidance for travellers".

People heading to low-risk "green" countries will simply take a virus test before and after they travel, the government said.

But those going to amber or red countries will have to self-isolate or quarantine afterwards.

Health minister Edward Argar said as cases surge on the European continent, Britain would have to be "very careful" as it considered further restrictions.

"One of the things we don't want to see—and just as the vaccination programme is working so well—is getting new variants or risking new variants getting imported into this country," he said.

Currently people arriving in the UK from abroad are required to self-isolate for 10 days.

British nationals who arrive from a banned "red list" of high-risk countries face costly quarantine in government-approved hotels.

The government urged people not to book summer holidays, saying it was "too early to predict" which would be the green-lighted countries.

The government has announced it will allow a number of people to attend public events such as football matches from this month in trials of a virus certification system.

'Virus passports'?

But it has not made clear whether it will issue "virus passports" for international travel, an idea backed by many tourism-dependent countries and airlines but opposed by more than 70 UK MPs.

Argar said the government was still considering measures like Israel's green passes, which allow COVID-vaccinated people access to hotels, bars and other services.

"I think it is right that we look at this and see if there is a way that, while balancing all of those practical, ethical and fairness considerations ... could in the

short-term, speed up our reopening of the country," © 2021 AFP Argar said.

The UK has already given out more than 31 million first vaccine doses and over 5 million second doses.

The rollout has far outstripped popular holiday destinations such as France.

This has boosted the public mood after more than 126,000 people died from the virus in the United Kingdom, the highest toll in Europe.

On Monday in Scotland, where the devolved government in Edinburgh has set its own [coronavirus](#) restrictions, hairdressers and some non-essential retail were allowed to reopen for the first time in four months.

In Glasgow, salon owner Anne Ferguson told AFP it was "fantastic" to return to work, adding that she was flooded with appointments.

"Getting into the space and making it come alive again. That's just a huge, huge thing. It's just been very strange," she said.

Rapid virus tests

Non-essential shops are set to reopen in England on April 12 and pubs and restaurants can start serving outdoors as part of plans to ease restrictions that Johnson is expected to sign off on at a Monday cabinet meeting.

From Thursday, those living in England will be able to access two free rapid virus tests per week, a measure aimed at curbing symptom-free virus spread.

This will make such tests far more accessible than currently. "More cases will be detected, breaking chains of transmission and saving lives," the government said Monday.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock urged people to take up the offer, saying "getting back to normal hinges on us all getting tested regularly".

APA citation: UK to announce new international travel rules (2021, April 5) retrieved 22 September 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-uk-international.html>

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