

More countries added to red list to protect UK vaccination programme against variants of concern

- travel bans implemented for visitors from Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia and Qatar from 4am Friday 19 March 2021
- British, Irish and third-country nationals with residence rights (including long-term visa holders) arriving from these countries will be required to quarantine in a government-approved hotel quarantine facility for 10 days
- move follows new data showing an increased risk of importation of variants of concern

Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia and Qatar have been added to [England's red list](#) to protect the country against new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19), at a critical time for the vaccine programme.

With over 24 million vaccinations delivered in the UK so far, the move will help to reduce the risk of new variants – such as those first identified in South Africa and Brazil – entering England.

From 4am on Friday 19 March 2021, visitors who have departed from or transited through these countries in the previous 10 days will be refused entry into England. Only British and Irish citizens, or those with residence rights (including long-term visa holders), will be allowed to enter and must [stay in a government-approved facility for 10 days](#).

During their stay, they will be required to [take a coronavirus test on day 2 and day 8](#).

A ban on commercial and private planes travelling from Oman, Ethiopia and Qatar will also come into force on Friday to reduce the risk of importing variants of concern. This excludes cargo and freight without passengers.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of the spread of variants of concern internationally. These risk assessments cover a range of factors for each country including:

- assessment of surveillance and sequencing capability
- available surveillance and genome sequencing data
- evidence of in-country community transmission of COVID-19 variants
- evidence of exportation of new variants to the UK or other countries
- travel connectivity with the UK

The government has made it consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus and has taken the decision to add these destinations to the red list.

Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) and Mauritius will be removed from England's red list. The flight and maritime ban from Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) will also be removed, following evidence that shows the risk of importing a variant of concern from these destinations has reduced. Portugal has put steps in place to mitigate the risk from its links with countries where variants have become a concern, and now has genomic surveillance in place.

This means that passengers arriving into England from these destinations will no longer be required to quarantine in a government approved facility. However, they must [self-isolate for 10 days](#) on arrival to the UK at home and take a COVID-19 test on day 2 and day 8 and will be able to end self-isolation early through [Test to Release](#). Passengers from these destinations who arrived before 4am on Friday 19 March must stay in their hotel for the remainder of their 10-day quarantine period.

The government continues to work with the hospitality sector to ensure it is ready to meet any increased demand – with over 58,000 rooms on standby, which can be made available to book as needed.

British nationals currently in the countries on the red list should make use of the commercial options available if they wish to return to England. Commercial routes that will enable British and Irish nationals and residents to return to England continue to operate.

British nationals in these countries should check Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) [travel advice](#) and follow local guidance. The FCDO will continue to offer tailored consular assistance to British nationals in country in need of support overseas on a 24/7 basis.