

Portugal moved to amber list to guard public health against variants of concern following first traffic light review

- first 3-weekly review of the government's traffic light list for travel sees no new countries added to green list
- Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) moved to amber list from Tuesday due to variants of concern and emerging mutations
- further measures to safeguard vaccine rollout implemented as 7 countries added to the red list

The first update to the government's [traffic light list for international travel](#) has taken place today (Thursday 3 June 2021), with Portugal moved to the amber list to safeguard public health against variants of concern and protect our vaccine rollout.

Seven countries – including Sri Lanka and Egypt – have also been added to the red list. All changes to the lists will come into effect at 4am on Tuesday 8 June.

The decision to move Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores) to the amber list follows increased concern in the spread of variants of coronavirus, including a mutation of the Delta variant, and the risk that is posed of bringing these back to the UK if people are not required to quarantine.

The situation in Portugal has required swift action to protect the gains made with the vaccine rollout – there has been an almost doubling in the COVID-19 test positivity rate in Portugal since the first review for traffic light allocations, far exceeding the ONS estimated national positivity rate in the UK. More significantly, according to [data published on GISAID](#), 68 cases of the Delta variant of concern have been identified in Portugal, including cases of the Delta variant with an additional, potentially detrimental, mutation.

Public Health England is investigating this variant and mutation, to better understand whether it could be more transmissible and less effectively tackled by vaccines, potentially putting our progress with the roadmap at risk.

The government's priority is to protect public health, and it has therefore decided to act quickly to make this change. All classification changes have been decided by ministers, informed by the latest data and analysis by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and wider public health factors, to help people understand the risks to public health here from travellers returning from different destinations.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The public has always known travel will be different this year and we must continue to take a cautious approach to reopening international travel in a way that protects public health and the vaccine rollout.

While we are making great progress in the UK with the vaccine rollout, we continue to say that the public should not travel to destinations outside the green list.

The full list of additional countries added to the 'red list' includes Afghanistan, Bahrain, Costa Rica, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Trinidad and Tobago. For countries going on the red list today, COVID-19 prevalence is assessed to be high and there is evidence to suggest community transmission of variants of concern.

While the number of ['green list' destinations](#) remains low, the government is urging the public not to travel to [amber classified destinations](#) to play their role in protecting public health. This is due to the prevalence of variants of concern and general rates of coronavirus being greater in amber destinations, meaning the risk to public health is also greater.

UK Health Security Agency chief executive Dr Jenny Harries said:

Increases in case rates in the UK serve as a reminder that this pandemic is not over yet and we need to take a cautious approach. Everyone should observe the travel guidance, continue to follow hands, face, space and fresh air, and have both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine when offered. Testing will help to break chains of transmission and allow us to see which variants are circulating so make sure you get tested when you return to the UK in line with the guidance.

People returning to the UK [require proof of a negative test](#), taken within 3 days before the service on which they will arrive in England departs. Those returning from amber countries must also [book and pay for day 2 and day 8 COVID-19 travel tests](#) for when they return to the UK; only the [day 2 test is required](#) for those returning from green countries.

The government has always stated that international travel will be different this year, both in terms of passenger experience and with regards to what countries the public could visit to protect the hard-fought gains of the vaccine programme rollout. However, passengers should be aware that while COVID-19 travel restrictions are in place, queue waiting times may be longer than usual.

The government is also announcing that as part of a limited trial, from 8 June, direct flights will be permitted to England from [countries on the 'red](#)

[list](#)' that were previously subject to flight bans, so long as they arrive at dedicated terminals at Heathrow and Birmingham airports.

The requirement for these direct flights to arrive at dedicated facilities will help keep more red list passengers separate from others, helping to ensure they are processed as safely and efficiently as possible and then travel straight to their managed quarantine hotel and reduce queues at the border.

As international travel reopens safely, the government will maintain 100% health checks at the border. Our top priority is protecting the health of the public and our enhanced borders regime, including mandatory hotel quarantine for arrivals from red list countries, is helping minimise the risk of new variants being imported into the UK.

However, many 'green list' countries will continue to place restrictions on travelers from the UK, including quarantine measures, so passengers are strongly encouraged to check all entry requirements and [FCDO travel advice](#) before they book any foreign travel.

If travelling abroad, you need to take steps to keep safe and prepare in case things change while you are there. Check and subscribe to FCDO travel advice updates to understand the latest entry requirements and COVID-19 rules.