

India charter flights to return thousands more stranded Brits

This follows seven charter flights, already launched, from Goa, Mumbai and New Delhi (8-12 April) and will take the total number of people brought back on these 19 flights to around 5,000.

The first charter flight from India arrived at London Stansted on Thursday morning, bringing back 317 from Goa.

The Foreign Office's Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

We are doing all we can to get thousands of British travellers in India home. This is a huge and complex operation which also involves working with the Indian Government to enable people to move within India to get on these flights.

Over 300 people arrived from Goa on Thursday morning, 1,400 more will arrive over the Easter weekend and these 12 flights next week will bring back thousands more.

The following flights to the UK are scheduled for the next two weeks and British travellers should visit the India Travel Advice pages for further information and to reserve seats:

- Goa – UK: 14, 16 April
- Goa (via Mumbai) -UK: 18 April
- Amritsar – UK: 13, 17, 19 April
- Ahmedabad-UK: 13, 15 April
- Hyderabad (via Ahmedabad) – UK: 17 April
- Chennai (via Bengaluru) – UK: 20 April
- Kolkata (via Delhi) UK: 19 April
- Thiruvananthapuram (via Kochi) – UK: 15 April

The UK Government is working with the airline industry and host governments across the world to help bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab last week (30 March) – with up to £75 million available for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers. So far, charter flights have returned British travellers from the Philippines, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nepal, Ghana, Tunisia, Algeria and Peru.

India, as well as South Africa and Peru, is a priority country for the FCO to arrange charter flights from, with a large number of Britons seeking to return and a lack of commercial options – made more challenging by the size

of the country and the restrictions on movement that are in place.

The charter flights are for UK travellers who normally reside in the UK and their direct dependants. A number of seats will be reserved for those deemed vulnerable.

To book flights and register their details, British nationals should visit the [India Travel Advice](#) page and use the city-specific webpages:

- Goa – UK: 14, 16, 18 April (18 April is a Goa-Mumbai-UK flight)
- Amritsar – UK: 13, 17, 19 April
- Ahmedabad – UK: 13, 15 April
- Hyderabad (via Ahmedabad) – UK: 17 April
- Chennai (via Bengaluru) – UK: 20 April
- Kolkata (via Delhi) – UK: 19 April
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Movement within India is currently very restricted. The British High Commission will contact those who have confirmed seats on the flight with further details regarding transport.

Those who are eligible to fly will be sent information on getting to airports and flight itineraries directly when their seat is confirmed.

Details regarding luggage allowance, flight costs and carriers will be available on the booking portal.

The British High Commission continues to provide consular support to any British nationals who remain in India. Consular helpline numbers: New Delhi: +91 (11) 2419 2100; Chennai: +91 (44) 42192151; Mumbai/Goa: +91 (22) 6650 2222.

[Culture that's worth staying at home for this Easter](#)

- Demand for online content surges as people stay indoors and spend more time online

This Easter weekend, millions of people across the UK will be able to access new arts and culture offerings from their homes as museums and theatres launch special events for the Bank Holiday weekend.

In recent weeks, cultural organisations who have had to close their doors to visitors have continued to engage and entertain audiences online. The series of digital initiatives, ranging from live premieres to literature festivals is helping to make sure that no one is missing out on the best of British creativity by having to stay in.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

No matter where you are in the UK, our outstanding cultural institutions can keep you entertained throughout the whole Easter weekend.

Thanks to these digital events, you can watch a play, learn a craft or see an exhibition with a world class institution while staying at home, protecting the amazing NHS, and saving lives.

Internet usage has boomed as people stay indoors with broadband providers reporting an up to 65 per cent increase in daytime traffic. This is expected to continue over the Easter long weekend – a time when many would normally be heading outdoors on holiday.

Industry is playing its part and has announced a series of measures to help consumers during this time, including free boosts to data allowances, which will mean even more people can take up the fantastic online offerings from the UK's brilliant arts and cultural organisations.

Easter events to keep you entertained include:

You can see some of this year's top exhibitions and popular shows you may have missed without leaving home.

On Monday 13 April, a new online tour of Tate Britain's Aubrey Beardsley exhibition will launch on the [Tate website](#) and YouTube channel.

From Thursday 9 April, Jane Eyre, the collaboration between Bristol Old Vic and the National Theatre, will be available to watch for one week as part of the [National Theatre At Home](#) programme.

Museums have plenty for families to do over the long weekend from creative craft ideas, like the [V&A's guide](#) to making a paper peepshow, to the Science Museum's [fun experiments](#) that can be done in the kitchen. The Natural History Museum is holding a [Digital Dino Family Festival](#) full of themed crafts for the whole family to try, including T.Rex origami and making footprint cookies.

For a traditional Easter experience, the [National Gallery](#) is telling the story of the Passion through paintings in their collection.

[Historic England](#) has an interactive quiz to help you discover your ideal Easter tradition, from egg rolling to Morris dancing, and learn more about ways we have celebrated this springtime occasion throughout history.

[Sunderland Museum](#) and the [National Glass Centre](#) have teamed up to provide a daily family fun activity including make-your-own decorative Easter eggs.

[Fun Palaces'](#) are collating 'Tiny Revolutions of Connection' – activities suggested from around the UK of things to do with others or in isolation,

supporting community connection at a distance.

Wiltshire Creative's Young Ambassadors (14-21) have been working with [Wiltshire Creative](#) staff to plan their first Takeover Festival – an exciting mix of events, performances and activities – over the Easter Holidays.

[Fleabag for Charity](#) – Phoebe Waller-Bridge's stage play Fleabag will be available to watch online on the Soho Theatre's website to raise money for charities helping stop the coronavirus pandemic.

[The Royal Shakespeare Company](#) are streaming a number of productions such as Shakespeare's King Lear and Tim Crouch's I, Cinna. They also run interactive online backstage tours and provide a range of free resources for young people to enable them learn from home, including live lessons on Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet.

On Sat 11 April the [British Museum](#) will host a special virtual version of its monthly, autism-friendly Early Morning Explorers event: a relaxed and sensory-friendly early opening for kids. The online experience will include storytelling.

ENDS

[Covid-19 adoption support fund scheme to help vulnerable families](#)

Adoptive families will be offered emergency support including online counselling and couples therapy as the Government expands the scope of the Adoption Support Fund to meet needs arising from the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Education Secretary has today (Friday 10 April) announced that up to £8 million will be available to pay for different types of therapeutic support for families whose adopted children may have already suffered trauma and be made more anxious owing to the uncertainty of the effects of the virus.

It comes as the Department for Education confirms it has spent more than £150 million on the Adoption Support Fund since it was launched in 2015, helping more than 45,000 adoptive and special guardianship order families across the country.

The £8 million fund can be used by local authorities and regional adoption agencies to pay for activities such as virtual peer to peer support, access to helplines, couples therapy and online counselling, given the social distancing measures that have been brought in by the Government to protect the NHS and save lives.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are taking urgent action to protect the country from the spread of coronavirus, meaning many of us have seen changes in our daily lives as we practice social distancing and stay at home. For adoptive families, often still adjusting to their new environments, this may create additional strain.

That is why today I am freeing up £8 million from our Adoption Support Fund to pay for therapies that will help families to cope in this uncertain time.

The therapies available through the COVID-19 Adoption Support Fund will be delivered alongside those already offered by the Fund, such as music activities, play therapy and family support sessions. The Fund will be flexible so that local authorities and regional adoption agencies have discretion to spend their share of the money on the support that adoptive families in their areas need most at this time. The funding aims to help fill gaps in provision caused by the impact of COVID-19, including where local authority staff are unable to attend work due to sickness or self-isolation.

It adds to advice and [guidance](#) published by the Department for Education for professionals working in children's social care to help them meet the needs of their families safely and effectively during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance outlines that adoption can still take place, with Regional Adoption Agencies utilising communication technology to continue with the process.

Feedback from the sector shows that adoptive families have been experiencing greater stress due to children with attachment and trauma needs being isolated at home and having their routine disrupted, which can lead to an increase in adoption breakdown and child to parent violence.

Andrew Christie, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, said:

I wholeheartedly welcome this news. Many adopters and special guardians are struggling during the current crisis and this funding will help provide much needed support for them and their families during these difficult times.

The £8 million, which comes from the £45 million 2020-21 budget that was announced by the Education Secretary in December, will fund the temporary COVID-19 scheme.

The funding comes after the Government announced that it would make £1.6 billion available for local authorities to manage the impact of COVID-19, including on children's services.

[Coronavirus: Government launches campaign urging people to stay at home this Easter](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

[Syria OPCW report: Foreign Secretary statement](#)

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