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Covid-19: Travellers to UK from “red list” countries will pay £1750 for 10 day hotel quarantine

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The UK government has introduced new quarantine measures for international travellers in a bid to prevent the spread of covid-19, with heavy penalties for those who do not comply.

From 15 February, any UK residents returning to the UK having visited a country on the travel ban “red list”¹ in the previous 10 days will be required to purchase a quarantine package.

Bookings will be made through a dedicated online portal and will include assigned government transportation, food and drinks, accommodation in a government approved facility, security, welfare, and testing. The charge for a single adult will be less than £1750 (€2000; \$2420). The government has so far contracted 16 hotels with 4600 rooms, and more will be secured as needed.

Under the new rules all arrivals at English ports will be required to undertake two mandatory covid-19 tests, on days 2 and 8 of their 10 day quarantine. The measures build on those already in place, which include refusing entry to non-UK residents from red list countries.

All passengers, no matter which country they have travelled from, are already required to provide proof of a negative covid-19 test taken no more than three days before departure, and they must self-quarantine on arrival in the UK.

Penalty fines

From 15 February the passenger locator forms already in use will include not only passengers’ journey details but also their quarantine and testing package. To ensure compliance with the new restrictions fines will be issued, ranging from £5000 to £10 000 for arrivals who fail to quarantine in a designated hotel.

A £1000 penalty will also be given to any international arrival who fails to take a mandatory covid-19 test, followed by a £2000 penalty to any international arrival who fails to take the second mandatory test. This will be accompanied by an automatic extension of the quarantine period to 14 days.

Any passengers attempting to conceal that they have travelled in a red list country on their form could face a £10 000 fine or prosecution and a maximum of 10 years in prison. Anyone travelling back to England from a country not on the travel ban list will be required to quarantine at home for 10 days and to take mandated covid-19 tests on days 2 and 8 of quarantine.

Ahead of the introduction of the new rules the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, told BBC Radio

4’s *Today* programme that people should not book summer holidays yet.²

“Please don’t go ahead and book holidays. I simply don’t know the answer to the question of where we’ll be up to this summer,” he said. “It’s too early to give that information. The best advice to people is: do nothing at this stage.”

Commenting on the new quarantine measures, England’s health secretary, Matt Hancock, said, “Our fight against this virus has many fronts. And just as we’re attacking this virus through our vaccination programme, which is protecting more people every day, we’re strengthening our defences through these vital measures, so we can protect the progress that we’ve worked so hard to accomplish.”

1 Department for Transport. Coronavirus (COVID-19): travel bans to the UK. 18 Nov 2020 (updated 29 Jan 2021). <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-measures-to-protect-the-uk-from-variant-strains-of-covid-19>.

2 Covid: Don’t book holiday yet, government warns. *BBC News* 2021 Feb 10. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56008363>.

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