



# FAQ: UK's New COVID Strain Travel Restrictions



## Overview

The United Kingdom reported identifying a new, faster-spreading strain of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, prompting the British government to place London and other parts of Southeast England in the newly created Tier 4 of its previously three-tiered COVID-response system. Restaurants, pubs, and indoor entertainment facilities must remain closed, as the government has canceled its originally planned relaxation of restrictions for Christmas. Numerous countries have closed their borders for UK travelers and freight. In most cases, U.S. nationals may still leave the UK or countries in the Schengen Area. U.S. nationals also may return to the United States, as there are no indications of a travel ban involving U.S. citizens. The below FAQ should provide private-sector security managers with the most current information. Consult directly with your airline, and follow all local guidelines when making travel arrangements.

### 1. What restrictions have the United Kingdom put in place?

As of December 20, London and other parts of Southeast England have moved to a newly created Tier 4 of the government's previously three-tiered system to prevent the spread of COVID. Tier 4 restrictions include the closing of retail businesses, hairdressers, and salons, on top of Tier 3's closure of restaurants, pubs, and indoor entertainment facilities. Areas placed under Tier 4 may no longer participate in the planned relaxation of COVID rules under the announced "[Christmas Bubbles](#)," while other areas in the UK designated at Tier 3 and below will reduce their planned relaxation from five days to one. Travel between England and Scotland is now banned throughout the Christmas period. Wales entered a new, separate lockdown beginning on December 20. Find more information about the recent changes on the [UK government's coronavirus website](#).

### 2. May U.S. nationals return to the United States from the United Kingdom (or from elsewhere in Europe)?

Any U.S. national *visiting* the UK and in a Tier 4 area may leave to return to the United States. Consult directly with your airline and follow all UK government guidelines when making travel arrangements.

Foreign *residents* in a Tier 4 area are subject to the "Stay at Home" regulations. Do not travel abroad unless it is permitted. Below is a list of legally permitted reasons:

- Traveling to work in a situation where you cannot work from home
- Traveling to education and for caring responsibilities
- Visiting or staying overnight with people in your support bubble, or your childcare bubble for childcare purposes
- Attending hospital and other medical appointments or visits where you have had an accident or are concerned about your health

- Providing emergency assistance, avoiding injury or illness, or escaping a risk of harm (such as domestic abuse)

Access more information [here](#) and [here](#).

In the United States, Presidential Proclamations 9993 and 9996 continue to restrict foreign nationals who have been in the Schengen Area or the United Kingdom and Ireland, respectively, during the 14-day period preceding their attempted entry into the United States, as well as travelers transiting through these locations.

U.S. nationals, Legal Permanent Residents, and other narrow categories of travelers are exempt. (See OSAC report, [National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from Europe](#).) At the time of this report's publication, the United States has not implemented any additional travel restrictions for flights coming from the UK or the Schengen Area. There is a negative COVID-19 test requirement for certain flights landing at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). (See below.)

### **3. Does the United States require a negative COVID-19 test for U.S. nationals to reenter the country?**

Travelers from the United Kingdom must test negative for the coronavirus before boarding flights bound for JFK. For passengers traveling with British Airways, the procedures will begin December 22; for those on Virgin Atlantic and Delta Airlines, the new requirements will begin December 24. The UK government has advised that traveler should not use the NHS testing service for any COVID-19 test required to facilitate travel to another country; instead, arrange to take a private test.

As of the date of this report's release, the U.S. Government has not indicated if it will require a negative test to enter the country via other U.S. airports. Check with your air carrier for more information about testing requirements. Commercial flight availability to the United States continues from multiple UK airports.

### **4. Will U.S. nationals have to quarantine when they come back to the United States?**

If you are planning on traveling to the United States, it is important to check quarantine regulations for the state you are visiting before you depart. The most up-to-date information on the subject is available on the [CDC website](#) and [your state's health department website](#). The CDC [advises](#) that travelers should get tested 3-5 days after returning to the United States from the UK, and stay home for seven days. If you choose not to get tested, stay at home for 14 days. In general, the CDC [advises](#) the following when returning from international travel:

- When you are around others, [stay at least 6 feet](#) (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who did not travel with you, particularly in crowded areas. Do this everywhere — both indoors and outdoors.
- [Wear a mask](#) to cover your nose and mouth when you are in shared spaces outside of your home, including when using [public transportation](#).

- If there are people in the household who did not travel with you, [wear a mask](#) and ask everyone in the household to wear masks in shared spaces inside your home for 14 days after travel.
- [Wash your hands](#) often or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Watch your health: Look for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, and take your temperature if you feel sick.

You must still quarantine as required by CDC and local guidelines even if you are an automatic exception to the current Presidential Proclamations, or have received a national interest exception for direct travel to the United States. (See OSAC report, [National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from Europe.](#))

## 5. Which other European countries are restricting travel from the United Kingdom?

There are new border closures between the UK and some European countries, impacting travel and freight. On December 23, rail, air, and sea services between the UK and France resumed after the French government initially [imposed](#) a ban on December 20. The French government will require travelers, including truckers, seeking admission to present a negative “rapid” COVID-19 test from within 72 hours. NHS workers and the British military will administer the tests.

Ireland has restricted air and ferry travel from Great Britain, while maintaining an open land border with Northern Ireland.

As of December 21, the following European countries have published travel restrictions to/from the UK, though the number of countries restricting travel to and from the UK could change, especially if scientific analysis confirms the new variant strain is highly infectious.

<a href="#">Belgium</a>	Until December 21, 2020
<a href="#">Luxembourg</a>	Until December 21, 2020
<a href="#">Croatia</a>	Until December 22, 2020
<a href="#">Greenland</a>	Until December 23, 2020
<a href="#">Denmark</a>	Until December 23, 2020
<a href="#">Moldova</a>	Until December 23, 2020
<a href="#">Russia</a>	Until December 29, 2020
<a href="#">Germany</a>	Until December 31, 2020
<a href="#">Lithuania</a>	Until December 31, 2020
<a href="#">North Macedonia</a>	Until December 31, 2020
<a href="#">Austria</a>	Until January 1, 2021
<a href="#">Czech Republic</a>	Until December 31, 2020
<a href="#">Latvia</a>	Until January 1, 2021
<a href="#">Estonia</a>	Until January 1, 2021
<a href="#">The Netherlands</a>	Until January 1, 2021
<a href="#">Romania</a>	Until January 3, 2021
<a href="#">Finland</a>	Until January 4, 2021
<a href="#">Spain</a>	Until January 5, 2021

<a href="#">Italy</a>	Until January 6, 2021
<a href="#">Poland</a>	Until January 6, 2021
<a href="#">Sweden</a>	Until January 21, 2021
<a href="#">Bulgaria</a>	Until January 31, 2021
<a href="#">Switzerland</a>	Until further notice
<a href="#">Portugal</a>	Until further notice

Anyone entering Greece will also be asked to undergo a rapid test for COVID-19 on arrival. Anyone entering Greece from the UK before 6:00 am local time on December 25 will be required to self-isolate for seven days in the event of a negative test result. Arrivals from the UK between 6:00 am local time on December 25 and Midnight on January 7 will be required to self-isolate for 10 days in the event of a negative test result. In both cases, travelers will need to undertake a further PCR test at the end of their period of self-isolation.

**6. What if I have more questions about this report or other Europe-related security issues?**

Contact [OSAC's Europe Team](#) and consider reviewing [U.S. embassy COVID-19 webpages](#) for the most up-to-date information available on country restrictions, quarantine requirements, and entry/exit requirements.