



THE FUTURE OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY MOVING FORWARD

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In the latest in our series of trade articles, Kieron Franks, Assistant Head of Risk Underwriting, examines what the UK still has to do before experiencing full respite from travel restrictions.

Travel arrangements and procedures are starting to change in the UK, moving towards an easier and safer experience for travellers. However, this remains an evolving situation, with restrictions by the UK and other governments impacting travel movement in and out of the country.

Most importantly, the UK's 'traffic light system' indicating the level of risk in different countries, has been abandoned. Previously, the system looked like this:

Green Country: Take a Covid-19 test in the three days before returning to the UK and a PCR test on or before the second day of return. You would need to quarantine or take additional tests if you received a positive test result.

Amber Country (fully-vaccinated travellers): Take a Covid-19 test in the three days before returning to the UK and a PCR test on day two of returning. You would not need to quarantine or take additional tests unless you received a positive result.

Amber Country (travellers not fully-vaccinated): Take a Covid-19 test in the three days before return to the UK, followed by a PCR test on the second day of return, and additional PCR test on the eighth day of return. You would also be required to quarantine at home for 10 days when you returned.

Red Country: Requirement to stay in a quarantine hotel for 10 days upon your return, as well as take a Covid-19 test in the three days before returning to the UK, followed by PCR tests on day two and eight of your return.

The latest system (as of 15 December 2021) scraps the categories, lessening the impact on those travelling to the rest of the world.

All vaccinated passengers arriving in the UK must continue to take a pre-departure test (PCR or lateral flow) two days before they depart for the UK and must take a PCR test on or before day two and self-isolate until they receive a negative result.

Unvaccinated passengers must also take a pre-departure test, PCR test on day two and eight, and self-isolate for 10 days. Test to release remains an option to shorten their self-isolation period.

Is this the road to recovery?

Changes to the traffic light system saw a [surge in travel bookings](#) in October and both Gatwick and British Airways welcomed the news as a significant "step towards recovery". Gatwick Airport CEO, Stewart Wingate said that "fully vaccinated passengers now have a larger choice of destinations and can book with more confidence in the months before Christmas and beyond - free from the need to arrange pre-departure tests before coming back into the UK.

“We know there is significant pent-up demand for travel and our staff, restaurants, cafes and bars are ready to welcome back passengers over the coming months.”

While this all sounds promising, the government will continue to assess the situation in the coming months, while the travel industry persists in its call for an end to restrictions.

Despite what appears to be a strong progression to recovery for the UK travel industry, the easing of measures to travel has not yet seen traveller numbers return to pre-pandemic levels.

Heathrow Airport was still only seeing 40% of pre-pandemic passenger levels by the end of summer 2021, though EU airports noted a stronger resurgence.

The Bank of England has released data suggesting that the main UK travel companies owe an accumulated £2bn in Covid-19 protection loans. Clearly, despite the positive outlook the travel industry has still got a long way to go before reaching pre-pandemic profits. It is hoped that a gradual change is on the horizon as more and more customers feel encouraged by the ease of restrictions to return to global travel.

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