

CONFUSED BY COVID TRAVEL TESTS?

Submitted by: Breathe Assured

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Though a doctor and the director of a Covid testing company, I'm struggling to keep up with the frequent changes to travel regulations.....so I can understand the hundreds of enquiries we get daily, from people around the world, who don't know where to start!

So, as we start to dream of travel again, here are the latest regulations. Please bear in mind that it could be different tomorrow!

Leaving the UK

Of course, travel abroad is currently heavily restricted and governed by lockdown rules. You need a legitimate reason to leave your home, let alone leave the country.

But, there's light at the end of the tunnel, and when you are permitted to travel, you'll need to know the entry requirements of the country you are travelling to (check gov.uk foreign travel) and whether there are specific requirements of the airline etc. And then the hassle starts.....

You'll almost certainly need a Covid test, usually within 3 days of travel. Many countries, including the UK, accept rapid antigen tests for entry. Our stress-free service (<https://www.breatheassured.com/what-travel-test>) can deliver tests to your home, where you perform the test yourself, under the supervision of one of our online healthcare professionals. The test result will be verified within 15 minutes and you'll get an instant Fit to Travel certificate, if negative!

Some countries require a PCR test for entry. Again, these can be done in your own home or a clinic but then you need to send them to a lab for analysis which can take 24-72 hours, unless you pay extra for a same day service.

And a few countries have their own additional requirements, including quarantine on arrival, so you need to check the rules before travel as they can change at a moment's notice.

Time will tell whether a vaccine passport for travel becomes universal - but it would make sense, if the vaccines prove to be as effective as we hope. The precedent is there, with diseases such as yellow fever.

Entering / returning to the UK

This is where some of the rules have just changed and caused havoc.

As before, you simply need a negative Covid test within 3 days of travel to enter into the UK. Again, our online service (<https://www.breatheassured.com/what-travel-test>) is the simplest way to do this, avoiding the stress and infection risk of airport test queues! Just take some of our UK government approved rapid antigen tests with you and book an online test with our healthcare professional from the comfort of your hotel room - providing you with a Covid-free Fit to Travel certificate within 15 minutes!

You'll also need to fill out a government passenger locator form on entry into the UK, or a day or so before, showing where you will be quarantining.

If you are coming from a Red List country (see gov.uk) you need to book and pay in advance for a 10 day,

hotel-based, quarantine and travel test package via a government portal, which will include additional Covid PCR tests to be taken on, or before, day 2 and on, or after, day 8 of the 10 day quarantine. The hotel and test package (which aims to identify and stop the spread of existing and mutant Covid) costs around £1790 which will be prohibitively expensive for many travellers. Let's hope it won't last too long.

If entering UK from an Amber List country (all countries not on Red List at present, though excluding Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey and Isle of Man) you will need to pre-book those same, day 2 and 8, PCR tests and then quarantine for 10 days in your home or designated address, unless you apply for Test to Release on day 5.

The Test to Release option, to escape quarantine early, only applies in England (not the rest of the UK) and only after returning from non-red list countries. It requires an additional PCR test at day 5. Once you get the result back, which may take a day or so, you can leave quarantine early, if negative. The previously allowed rapid antigen option with an instant result on day 5 has mysteriously been withdrawn.

So, that's the travel test situation in a nutshell. For today, at least!

Whilst there's nothing we can do about the compulsory PCRs which we hope won't be needed for long, we are doing our best to make travel affordable and as stress-free as possible using our online rapid antigen test and supervision service (<https://www.breatheassured.com>). Otherwise, that much needed family holiday, or other travel plans, will be unaffordable for the many who have suffered financially in this dreadful pandemic.

If you want regular updates or want to book some of our rapid antigen tests with online supervision, head over to Breathe Assured (www.breatheassured.com).

Dr Sally Norton MB ChB MD FRCS is an NHS consultant who has set up a Covid testing service, along with medical and scientific colleagues, out of frustration at the high prices and complexity of current options. Using her experience of regular testing at work, she is keen to get us all testing properly under healthcare supervision, using our new-found familiarity with online communication! The service at Breathe Assured ensures that government approved tests are performed to high standards, with data upload to Public Health England, in line with governmental policy.

We have a number of free test and supervision sessions to offer to journalists or bloggers who want to try out the service.

Please get in touch via contact@breatheassured.com 0203 677 0009