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News

# 11 countries removed from international travel red list

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Testing remains in place to safeguard health against Omicron variant.

Eleven countries are to be removed from the international travel red list as Omicron cases increase globally.

Pre-departure tests and PCR testing measures on or before day 2 on arrival in Scotland will remain in place, with a review of all travel measures in the New Year.

The change has been guided by the latest risk assessment from the UK Health Security Agency, with the red list countries and territories removed from 4am Wednesday 15 December.

Passengers returning from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe will not have to stay in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival in Scotland from this date.

As Omicron cases rise in Scotland and in countries around the world, restrictions targeted at specific countries on the travel red list are no longer as effective as they were in slowing the incursion of Omicron from abroad.

Other temporary protections will remain effective and proportionate for longer. All passengers arriving in the UK must continue to take a pre-departure test before they depart for the UK and must take a PCR test on or before day 2 and self-isolate until they receive a negative result.

These testing measures are vital in preventing any additional cases of Omicron from entering Scotland and stopping people from passing it on to others.

The Scottish Government recognises the impact that these temporary health measures have on the travel and aviation industry and they will be reviewed again early in the New Year.

Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport Michael Matheson said:

“The red list restrictions were proportionate as an immediate response to limit importation of the new variant.

“But the rapid growth of Omicron across the world, including here in Scotland, means it is appropriate at this point to remove the red list restrictions.

“The swift decisive action we implemented was vital to delay further seeding of Omicron while we roll out the booster jag programme.

“This action was not taken lightly, with the risk to the public guiding our actions, and we recognise the disruption this has caused to the travel and aviation sector.

“These latest changes will be kept under review with a testing regime in place to safeguard the wider public health.”

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