



# White Paper: Making Travel Plans? Here's the Short-Term Outlook

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## Summary

As the holidays approach and travel increases, several countries are experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases once again. Risk assessments and tricky entry and exit requirements vary from country to country. The situation is obviously more complex and inconvenient for unvaccinated travelers than for the vaccinated, but even the latter have risk-mitigation considerations and requirements to meet.

Meanwhile, the United States opened up travel for vaccinated people as of November 8, 2021 and is no longer banning entry based on country of origin. With respect to processing at U.S. embassies and consulates, delays have increased, and services and appointments are not available everywhere.

## Trend: Travel Numbers, Costs Tick Upward

With the recent easing of travel restrictions, traveling has increased significantly over this time in 2020, although it's not quite at 2019 levels. For example, the seven-day average for the period November 7 through 13, 2021, was 1,840,343 travelers passing through Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints per day. In 2020 for the same period, the average was 789,478. In 2021, it was 2,588,386.

The TSA said that as of November 8, 2021, all non-U.S. citizen, non-U.S. immigrants must be fully vaccinated against the virus that causes COVID-19 before traveling to the United States. (This requirement does not affect visa issuance, only travel.) All air passengers two years of age



or older traveling internationally, regardless of vaccination status, must provide a negative test to the airline before boarding a flight. This is required by a presidential proclamation and orders from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The U.S. Travel Association reports that the percentage increase in the Travel Price Index (TPI) from October 2020 to October 2021 is 14.4%. Even when compared with 2019, prices show a 6.2% increase. The TPI measures the cost of travel away from home in the United States, based on Department of Labor price data collected for the monthly Consumer Price Index. Lodging costs increased significantly, with a 25.5% increase from October 2020 to October 2021. Airfares, on the other hand, showed a slight downward trend (-4.6%) in the same time period, and a significant drop from 2019 (-23.7%). However, they are expected to rise due to the upcoming holiday period and increases in jet fuel prices.

### [Travel to the United States: Vaccination, Testing, Masking Requirements; Visa Appointment Wait Times](#)

The TSA noted that passengers who are fully vaccinated must provide a negative test no more than three days before the flight's departure from a foreign country to the United States, in addition to showing proof of vaccination. Passengers over two years of age who are not fully vaccinated must provide a negative test no more than one day before the flight's departure. "Except in the limited circumstances allowed by CDC, unvaccinated travelers will be U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents," the TSA said.

The TSA further noted that those who recently recovered from COVID-19 "may travel with documentation of recovery and a letter from a licensed healthcare provider or public health official indicating the patient is cleared for travel."

The CDC lists the following as acceptable proof of COVID-19 vaccination:

Documentation Type	Examples
Verifiable records (digital or paper)	Vaccination certificate with QR code <sup>1</sup> , digital pass via smartphone application with QR code <sup>1</sup> (e.g., United Kingdom National Health Service COVID Pass, European Union Digital COVID Certificate)
Non-verifiable paper records	Printout of COVID-19 vaccination record or a COVID-19 vaccination certificate issued at national or subnational level or by an authorized vaccine provider (e.g., the CDC vaccination card)
Non-verifiable digital records	Digital photos of vaccination card or record, downloaded vaccine record or vaccination certificate from official source (e.g., public health agency, government agency, or other authorized vaccine provider), or a mobile phone application without QR code <sup>1</sup>

1. The QR code in a verifiable vaccination record links to information confirming the credential was generated from an immunization record in an official database and is protected from tampering.

According to the CDC:

- Your last dose must have been given a full 14 days before the day you board your flight to the United States.



- You are considered fully vaccinated on the 14th day after the vaccination series was completed. For example, if your last dose was any time on October 1, then October 15 would be the first day on which you meet the 14-day requirement.

In addition to the requirements above, TSA has also implemented an executive order on wearing face masks at airport security checkpoints and throughout the transportation network when indoors. In addition to airports and onboard commercial aircraft, this includes over-the-road buses, and commuter bus and rail systems. TSA says that airline travelers should check with their airlines about additional inflight restrictions before taking their trip, along with checking the CDC website for additional guidance. There are exemptions to the face mask requirement for travelers under the age of two and for those with certain disabilities. Civil penalty fines for noncompliance remain in place.

For visas, appointment wait times have increased significantly at many U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide due to COVID-19-related restrictions. Wait times can be checked at the Department of State's website. Travel to a third country or automatic revalidation may be possible, but travelers should check this in advance with their local U.S. embassy or consulate.

### [Travel to Other Countries: Know Before You Go](#)

The CDC released a map showing COVID-19-related travel recommendations by destination. The map is coded at various levels depending on the current risk assessment: Level 4 (Very High), Level 3 (High), Level 2 (Moderate), Level 1 (Low), and Level Unknown. Even in low-risk countries, the CDC recommends being fully vaccinated, wearing a mask, and practicing social distancing. The CDC's recommendation for high-risk areas is for unvaccinated travelers to avoid nonessential travel, and for COVID-19-vaccinated travelers to follow recommendations and requirements in the destination country. And of course, other vaccinations are recommended when traveling to various regions.

Below are selected continent-by-continent highlights:

#### Africa

A swath of African countries, mainly across the middle region, are designated low risk, including Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Zambia. Most others are at moderate or high risk. A few are at very high risk, including Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan. Several are designated unknown, and therefore travel is not recommended, including Algeria, Madagascar, and Tanzania.

As an example, Ivory Coast has a variety of entry and exit requirements. Travelers arriving in Abidjan must have a negative COVID-19 test certificate and complete a travel declaration form, among other requirements.

#### Americas

In the Americas, the United States is at very high risk, along with Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guiana, French Guiana, and Suriname. Most other countries in the Americas are at high risk,



including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and some others. Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru are at moderate risk; Paraguay is at low risk; and the situation is unknown in Venezuela (therefore the CDC recommends not traveling there). United States requirements are detailed above.

#### Asia/Middle East

China and Hong Kong are designated low risk. India and Pakistan are at moderate risk. The situation in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan is unknown, along with North Korea. Laos, Mongolia, and Vietnam are at high risk. The situation in Cambodia is unknown. Myanmar and Singapore are at very high risk. Singapore has a "Vaccinated Travel Lane" program.

Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and most nearby countries are designated either very high risk, high risk, or unknown. Oman is low risk.

#### Australia

Australia is at high risk. In general, travelers must show evidence that they have been vaccinated at least seven days before international travel into or out of Australia, along with evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within three days of the flight's scheduled departure shown to the traveler's airline upon check-in for a flight to travel into Australia.

#### Europe

Almost every European country is reporting a rise in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. Many parts of Europe are at Levels 3 or 4 (High to Very High) risk. The CDC recommends avoiding travel to very high-risk areas, including (as of November 2021) Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Eastern European countries are also at very high risk, including Russia. Countries have their own entry and exit requirements. The Department of State publishes specific country-by-country information related to COVID-19. Because of the current situation, with COVID-19 again spreading in multiple countries, the CDC says that "all travelers may be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 variants."

As an example, Italy has a variety of entry and exit requirements that vary depending on the traveler's country of origin. A traveler from the United States who is vaccinated must fill out a digital Passenger Locator Form, present a certificate of vaccination, take a molecular or antigenic COVID-19 test. Travelers from the United States who are not vaccinated must undergo a test, self-isolate for five days, and get tested again upon completing the self-isolation period.

It's also important to check in-country conditions to ensure that what you plan to do once you arrive is possible. In the Netherlands, for example, as of mid-November 2021, Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced a new partial lockdown, including three weeks of restrictions on shops, sports, and catering, in response to record COVID-19 numbers and rising admissions to intensive care. Similarly, Austria was expected to institute a lockdown shortly; Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said it was "probably inevitable."



[Contact your WR attorney](#) for advice and help in specific situations.

## Resources

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