

Tourism sector welcomes SA's removal from UK red list

The South African tourism sector has welcomed the announcement by the UK government to remove South Africa from its red list.



Source: Anete Lusina via [Unsplash](#)

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the United Kingdom, said that the expensive quarantine packages would be scrapped and that travellers from South Africa could self-isolate at a location of their choice.

"When the UK initially red-listed South Africa following the discovery of the Omicron variant in November, countries around the world immediately followed suit and issued travel bans on our country. Within the space of a couple of hours, South Africans were banned from travelling to dozens of countries around the world. We urge that these countries react with the same swiftness and urgency now by also lifting their travel bans and restrictions on South Africa with immediate effect," says Otto de Vries, Asata CEO.



UK to remove all countries from Covid travel red list

Kylie MacLellan and Elizabeth Piper 14 Dec 2021



The travel bans imposed on South Africa were nothing short of devastating for the travel industry. Forward bookings collapsed with feedback from the industry suggesting that bookings until mid-February 2022 were severely impacted.

"The travel industry rallied together once more and lobbied for the travel bans to be lifted as a matter of urgency. I'm happy to see that our collective efforts have been successful and that we can once again focus on the recovery of our travel industry. We are hopeful that we can save a part of the December/January holidays for at least some South African travellers whether they'd like to spend a well-deserved holiday or have been dreaming to spend the festive season with their loved ones overseas," adds de Vries.

"We are simply delighted that reason and fact have prevailed and that travel between South Africa and the UK is once again open," says Euan McNeil, managing director, Flight Centre Travel Group South Africa.

"This not only means that South Africans can reunite with their loved ones over the festive season but is welcome news for the travel and tourism industry. The UK is one of our largest source markets so the knee-jerk decision on 26 November to place South Africa on the red list was absolutely devastating for outbound and inbound travel. It put our economy, and the millions of jobs employed in these sectors, at risk."



Source: Supplied

"We continue to work closely with all our travel suppliers and are hopeful that full air access can resume as soon as possible so that there is enough capacity to service the expected demand."

As the information currently stands:

- Any travellers currently in quarantine will need to remain there.
- All testing requirements remain in place, such as a Covid-19 PCR test taken in the two days before travel to England.
- A Covid-19 PCR test needs to be pre-booked prior to travel and taken after arrival in England.

- A passenger locator form needs to be completed within 48 hours of arrival in England.
- Travellers will be required to self-isolate until they receive their test result.
- If you are in England for less than two days, you still need to book and pay for a day two Covid-19 test. You must quarantine until you receive a negative test result, or until you leave England (whichever is sooner).
- Isolation/quarantine would no longer take place at a quarantine hotel/facility.

David Frost, Satsa CEO, says:

“ This is welcome news but red-listing Southern Africa for just three weeks caused incalculable damage to jobs and livelihoods in the region, with little discernible benefit to health outcomes in the UK. "The UK government must now consign this blunt instrument to history and recognise the devastating impact red lists have to confidence amongst the travelling public. ”

Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, chief executive officer, TBCSA, comments:

“ You are as likely to catch Omicron in Coventry as you are in Cape Town, and the scientific evidence is clear, that for most people this variant results in a mild disease which poses no threat to public health. "Millions of people across Southern Africa are dependent on tourism for an income, and thousands more families are waiting anxiously to know if their loved ones will be home for the holidays. The UK needs to act immediately to begin rebuilding trust with the Global South where this travel policy has caused anger and resentment. ”

After a week of speculation and clear indications from health experts and epidemiologists that the travel bans are not effective, we now have the building blocks to try to rebuild international inbound tourism to Southern Africa, says Rosemary Anderson Fedhasa national chair.

"This second red listing in less than a year, and one that was unfairly imposed against Southern Africa, has done immense damage to the region's international brand and created unnecessary insecurity and lack of confidence in inbound travel to the destination.

"We now have to do our best to rebuild confidence and save what is left of our summer season – working together like never before to position the destination as appealing," says Anderson.

Travellers need confidence

The red list had the effect of eroding confidence in long-haul travel to Southern Africa and it would be naïve not to acknowledge this, adds Anderson.

"However, that does not mean we can't try harder than ever before to regain what we have lost and build a public-private partnership the likes of which has already been initiated by Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu to get South Africa back on the map. In times of difficulty lies opportunity and I sincerely believe with the proactive and positive attitude and actions that Minister Sisulu has demonstrated so far, together we will build the destination so that we are in an even stronger position than before Covid."



Source: Supplied

The R1bn lost in the first 48 hours of the red listing at the end of November is a drop in the ocean compared to what has been lost over the past three weeks. "We are still counting the short-, medium- and long-term collateral damage that the second red listing caused to many companies that depend heavily on inbound international tourism.

"Many of these businesses had just managed to survive the last red listing and had borrowed funds to provide capital to carry them forward into the summer where they could try to stabilise their precarious financial situation," explains Anderson.

With the second red listing, the oxygen was snuffed out and some businesses had to let staff go and close their doors. "Their contribution to the economy, the jobs they created and the taxes they paid to the fiscus were lost, but we need to start looking forward and start to rebuild."

With this announcement, Fedhasa urges the South African government to continue diplomatic discussions with their Western counterparts on how variant discoveries should be handled in future.

"What governments around the world don't realise or perhaps don't value is the mental, emotional, financial and social toll their actions cause. History will not look kindly on the actions that our global governments have taken over the past two years in the 'spirit' of stemming the spread of Covid. It will take many years to heal," concludes Anderson.

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