

# IN DETAIL: NEGATIVE COVID-19 TEST REQUIRED WHEN TRAVELING TO SPAIN



Spain will require negative Covid-19 test results from travelers of up to 65 countries, including the U.S., France, and Germany.

As of November 23, Spain will require negative Covid-19 test results for tourists coming from countries at risk. **The measure affects the largest source markets: Germany, France, Italy and Portugal.** However, other countries with a high number of cases, such as India and Brazil, are not included in this at-risk list.

As of Monday, November 23, all tourists arriving in Spain from a country with a high number of Covid-19 infections will have to show a negative Covid-19 test carried out over the last 72 hours before boarding the plane.

The government announced that communities such as Madrid and the Balearic Islands had been requesting the measure since July, and countries like Italy began to implement it in August: "Spain will require a negative CRP test from people traveling to Spain from at-risk countries within 72 hours before arrival to be able to enter the country," announced the Ministry of Health. In the case of the Canary Islands, the autonomous community will be the first one to introduce the measure and has already approved a decree to enforce it.

## How Will Be the Measure Applied

From now on, the Health Control Form that all passengers must fill out before entering the country will also ask them whether they have had a negative Covid-19 test performed within 72 hours prior to arrival. This form, filled online before the flight, will generate a QR code.

Government sources say airlines will verify the information prior to boarding through the passenger's QR code. If the form hasn't been filled online, they can submit it on paper and attach the test results.

## Will Any Covid-19 Test Work?

No. In the Official State Gazette, the government specified that only CRP (C-reactive protein) tests will be accepted, and not antigen tests (the so-called rapid tests) or serological tests: "As long as their wide use in the European Union is not accepted, no other diagnostic tests such as rapid antibody tests, rapid antigen detection tests or high-throughput serology diagnostics (ELISA, CLIA, ECLIA) will be accepted."

## How Will Compliance with the Measure Be Ensured?

Once in Spanish territory, "there will be random control checks where test results may be required at any time," adds the government. Moreover, regardless of whether the result presented by the tourist is negative, authorities may require the tourist to undergo a CRP test within 48 hours after arriving in Spain.

## **What If a Tourist Lies When Filling the Form?**

If a traveler lies on the form, a sanction established in Title VI of the General Public Health Law will be applied. This regulation contemplates fines of between 6,000 to 600,000 euros, depending on the severity of the offence.

The sanction in the General Law of Public Health contemplates fines of up to 600,000 euros when “following certain behaviors or omissions that produce risk or very serious damage to the health of the population.”

## **What Is a Country at Risk?**

In the European Union, there is a standard for knowing the level of risk of a country based on its pandemic situation: the ‘traffic light’ system. For example, those countries with reported Covid-19 cases of more than 150 per 100,000 inhabitants, or 50 cases and a positive CRP test rate of 4% or more are considered high-risk or red zones.

Third countries (outside the EU and the Schengen Area) will be considered at risk if they have a cumulative number of Covid-19 cases of more than 150 per 100,000 inhabitants but within 14 days. Therefore, this scale is lower than the requirement for EU countries.

## **Which Markets Would Be Affected?**

Among the countries currently considered ‘at-risk’ due to their pandemic situation are all of the Schengen Area, except Finland, Norway and Greece. The main source markets for tourists to Spain (Germany, France or Italy) will therefore be affected.

However, it is striking that Sweden, areas of Denmark and Norway are considered at risk, while India or Brazil, two of the countries with the highest number of Covid-19 cases in recent months, are not included in the list of at-risk countries.

At the moment, the list of EU countries is made up of Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Croatia, Croatia and Denmark (except Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, France, Greece (except the regions of Kitri, Ionia Nisia, Dytiki Ellada and Sterea Ellada), Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal (except the autonomous region of the Azores Islands), Romania, Sweden and Liechtenstein.

Among non-EU countries, the U.S., UK, Argentina, Russia, Colombia and Morocco will be affected by the newly-implemented measure.

## **What Is the Role of Tourism Companies?**

Travel agencies, tour operators, air or maritime transport companies and any other business that sells tickets individually or as part of a combined trip must inform passengers at the beginning of the process of selling tickets to Spain, as well as in the process of issuing the boarding pass, the mandatory requirement to fill out the Health Control Form at the destination airport or port. Likewise, if the country or starting place of the trip is classified as ‘at-risk’, the company must inform about the mandatory negative CRP test result, carried out in the seventy-two hours prior to the trip.

## **Will the Measure Be Effective?**

Yes and no. Requiring tourists to carry a negative Covid-19 test result in the last 72 hours is not a serious response to the goal of minimizing imported Covid-19 cases, but has a more direct impact on lifting lockdowns and giving the tourism industry a break by portraying a safe destination image.

The negative CRP test results for travelers does not guarantee that they are coronavirus free; therefore, from that point of view, only social distancing, quarantines and isolation are highly effective. In any case, the Minister of Health explained yesterday that less than 0.1% of confirmed cases are imported.

Therefore, the purpose of the measure has more to do with lifting lockdowns and quarantines that hurt the tourism industry and with projecting the image of a safe destination. As Reyes Maroto, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, explained: “[the measure] gives confidence” to tourists when traveling and will help to position Spain as a “safe destination”.

### **Too Little Too Late?**

For many, the measure is being taken too late, right at the end of November, while other competing destinations in the Mediterranean, like Greece and Italy, have been using this measure as a means to regain confidence for weeks.

**In the case of Spain, it is a strategic measure taking into account the weight of tourism in the economy, and that 50 million tourists have been lost so far this year.** According to estimates by the Tourism Board, the cost of having performed diagnostic tests on those 50 million lost tourists would have amounted to 1 billion, a “negligible” amount compared to the “devastating” losses that now surpass 135 billion euros, said Juan Molas, president of the Tourism Board.

Implementing this at the end of November could be a lifesaver for destinations like the Canary Islands, which now enter the high season, but for the rest of the country, the measure might come too late.

Date: 2020-11-16

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travelers-will-be-required-a-negative-covid-19-test-in-spain-news11766>