

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT QUARANTINE HOTELS



Before March 2020, the concept of a quarantine hotel would have seemed like something out of a zombie apocalypse to many people. The thought of being locked away to prevent the spread of a dangerous virus is still quite unsettling and goes against the idea of a hotel as a place of leisure.

Yet in 2021, they're a necessary part of life for people wishing to travel from 'red list' countries. Not only that, but several countries reliant on tourism see them as part of a route back to normal life.

If you're wondering exactly what life in a quarantine hotel would be like, then read on to find out what countries are doing about them, and what you can expect should you visit one this summer.

First, what's a red list?

A red list is a list of nations deemed to present a high risk of Covid transmission by a particular country. These vary by country as each one has its own method of determining what constitutes 'high risk', and they're regularly subject to change according to case numbers, vaccinations or even political and economic reasons.

While many experts agree such lists are necessary to keep infections under control, others have criticised them for several reasons. First, countries might engage in 'tit-for-tat' red-listing, where they ban visitors from a country as an act of revenge for being banned themselves, rather than scientific reasons. Also, it might not make economic sense to ban some nations thanks to close ties, something that might have influenced the UK's decision to allow Indian travellers to enter instead of Pakistani visitors, despite the new dangerous Indian variant that has wreaked havoc across New Delhi. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson even planned a visit to India in a show of support.

Yet despite this criticism, countries are following this red list system to determine who has to go to a quarantine hotel, and for how long.

What happens in a quarantine hotel?

As you've probably worked out by now, the whole point of quarantining is isolation. In a hotel, that means being confined to your room, with no mixing between guests allowed.

In a hotel with good room service, this might be fine for the first few days - even enjoyable. However, many places demand a two-week confinement: a much tougher task - there are only so many things to keep you entertained, after all.

As well as distancing from other people, there's an obvious focus on cleanliness, too. In the cases where you are allowed out of your room to make use of a communal area like a sauna or pool, you might be expected to sanitize your area after use.

Hotels are also moving away from physical money: many have a digital service where you just pay for everything on your card, while others have started accepting Bitcoin. While this shouldn't be a

surprise - you can even use Bitcoin in online casinos these days - it does signal a move towards a hotel industry that refuses to deal in coins and notes.

Speaking of money, while it's obvious that holidaying guests cover the costs of the stay as it's their own choice, countries such as the UK have demanded that visitors from 'red-list countries' pay for the cost of compulsory hotels - a demand that has not gone down well with most tourists, with the cost an eye-watering £1,750 (€2,020).

What are different countries doing?

Australia was one of the first countries to enforce obligatory quarantining during the pandemic. Visitors had to confine themselves in a hotel room for 14 days at their own cost, but the strategy worked. New cases fell into single figures for much of the winter, or summer in Australia, making the nation [one of the world's safest places](#) in terms of virus transmission.

However, not all countries are adopting a stance as strict as Australia's. In an effort to boost tourism, the Greek government called upon six of its islands, including Crete, Corfu and Rhodes, to offer their hotels for quarantine purposes in mid-April. The move came with a financial incentive: hotels would receive 45 euros per day per room from the authorities, as well a daily amount of 15 euros for empty rooms. To qualify, the enterprises would need to follow strict health instructions and offer room service to guests whenever they require it.

There might not even be a need to quarantine for visitors who are vaccinated or possess a negative PCR test. Greece is one of the first European countries to accept visitors from anywhere on the continent in this way, and others might follow suit.

On the opposite side of the scale, the European Commission requested that Ireland soften measures they introduced in March which forced visitors from several EU states to quarantine up to 14 days at a cost of almost €2,000. While the Irish government were keen to prevent the spread of new Covid variants within its borders, the Commission feared that the policy broke discrimination and freedom-of-movement laws.

Are quarantine hotels forever?

If you hate the sound of quarantine hotels, then you shouldn't get too worried. Widespread vaccination means that they'll become less common, especially in countries with well-developed immunisation programmes.

However, a disjointed global vaccine effort means that spikes of the virus are always likely as travel becomes more widespread. Failure to vaccinate everyone means a much higher risk of infection, which makes quarantining more likely. Quarantine hotels might exist in some form or other for years to come, depending on how well the world tackles the deadliest pandemic in over a century.

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