

INDIA

This week, we are reminded again the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing with the set of unknowns surrounding the pandemic's newest Omicron variant COVID-19. In India, while there is no case of Omicron infection as of now, local authorities are exercising caution. From genome sequencing to mandatory quarantine to RT-PCR tests, local authorities have announced a slew of measures to make sure that the Omicron variant doesn't make any inroads in India.

In a piece of good news for international passengers waiting to visit India, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has announced the resumption of regular international flights to and from all countries considered 'not at risk' with effect from 15th December 2021 with revised guidelines w.e.f. 01st December 2021.

Here are the key points from the guidelines:

- i. All travellers are requested to upload a negative COVID-19 RTPCR report conducted within 72 hours on the Air Suvidha portal and submit travel details of the last 14 days before the journey.
- ii. Children below the age of five are exempted from undergoing pre- and post-arrival COVID testing at airports.
- iii. Only asymptomatic passengers are allowed to board the flight after the thermal screening.
- iv. Thermal screening would be conducted on arrival for all the passengers.
- v. Travellers from certain countries would need to follow additional measures on arrival in India, including post-arrival testing ([Countries at-risk](#)).
- vi. Asymptomatic travellers from all countries considered 'not at risk' would be allowed to leave the airport.
- vii. A random sample of 5% of travellers arriving from 'not at risk' countries would undergo RT-PCR testing on arrival.

[Click here](#) to view the algorithm based on our updated [guidelines](#) for International arrivals released by the MoHFW.

As the COVID-19 cases in the country continue to drop it is expected the economy will continue to pick up, as will aviation and travel. Domestic passenger numbers have breached 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels during the peak holiday season of October – November and this trend is likely to continue in December. Overall, 2022 is expected to be a much better year for the industry.

American Airlines is re-entering India's sky after a gap of 10 years. Last week, it launched a new non-stop flight between New York to New Delhi. After Delhi, the airline plans to start a Bengaluru-Seattle service from March 2022. Australian carrier Qantas has announced the launch of a new international route between Melbourne and Delhi from 22nd December '21.

The winter is fast approaching across the country. The combination of crisp air and the warm sun is the perfect motivation for a hot cup of tea on a winter afternoon in India. With the vaccination drive in full swing, India's cumulative vaccination coverage has exceeded 1.21 billion, with over 31 per cent of its population fully vaccinated and nearly 4.2 million people being vaccinated in the last twenty-four hours. In a positive move intended to welcome Indian travellers, almost a hundred countries have approved use of both Covishield and India's indigenously-made Covaxin to simplify travel.

For detailed and latest updates, please [click here](#).

NEPAL

Nepal has been open for international travellers since the end of September '21. To mitigate any risk of new variant, Nepal Government made seven day quarantine compulsory for air-bound passengers travelling from and via South Africa and on Sunday decided to restrict visa on arrival facility for travellers from African countries. Nepal has not detected the Omicron variant COVID-19 as of now.

Our first leisure group from France returned home after a wonderful ten days' trip to Nepal. We have received great appreciation from guests for a hassle free and safe travel experience and arrangements during their travel in this new normal.

Recently, India and Nepal have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mutually recognise the vaccine certificate and ease travel-related issues for fully vaccinated people of both countries.

In what is being called a first-of-a-kind initiative, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nepal, has inaugurated the first e-passport centre in Kathmandu, introducing an e-passport service in Nepal with a chip consisting of biometric data. The Government of Nepal has also resumed the visa-on-arrival facility for fully vaccinated international travellers.

For latest figures and detailed statistics, please [click here](#).

SRI LANKA

As of the midnight of 28 Nov 2021, the Sri Lanka Government restricted the entry of travellers from South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe & Eswatini (Swaziland). Any prior arrivals from these countries were subjected to on arrival PCR test and quarantine at Level safe & secure hotel. Sri Lanka has not detected the Omicron variant COVID-19 as of now.

India's flagship carrier Air India has resumed direct flights between India and Sri Lanka under the air bubble arrangement. The airline will operate two weekly flights from Delhi and three weekly flights from Chennai to Colombo. This will definitely help the country to rebuild its tourism industry.

Tourism guidelines and protocols for travelling to Sri Lanka remain the same. To know the detailed requirements, you can [click here](#).

For latest statistics on new reported cases and vaccination status, Please [click here](#).

BHUTAN

Bhutanese borders remain closed for international tourism until further notice.

Please [click here](#) for the detailed updates.