



The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;372:n446<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n446>

Published: 15 February 2021

Sixty seconds on . . . hotel quarantine

Elisabeth Mahase

Is this a new covid themed hotel?

You could put it like that. From 15 February UK residents returning to England having visited a country on a “red list” in the previous 10 days will be required to quarantine in a hotel for 10 days, to try to prevent new chains of transmission. Many countries have already rolled out similar policies, including China, Australia, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand, the Philippines, Qatar, Taiwan, Singapore, and Thailand, though most of them took this action during the first covid-19 peak in early 2020.

Plenty of room?

That’s what the government is saying. It has struck deals with 16 hotels so far, providing 4963 rooms, with a further 58 000 rooms on standby.

What’s the cost?

The charge for a single adult is £1750 (€2000; \$2420) for 10 days and 11 nights, £650 for an additional adult, and £32 for a child. They will get three meals a day, fruit, tea and coffee, soft drinks, and water, and two covid-19 tests.

And access to the spa?

Uhm, no. Most people won’t be allowed out of their rooms. Only in exceptional circumstances will people be allowed outside to exercise and then will be escorted and required to wear a face covering. Families with children and people with specific medical needs will be prioritised. Let’s hope the wifi is good.

Which countries are on the “red list”?

Brazil, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe are among the countries on the list. Non-UK residents and citizens from those destinations are currently banned from entering the UK.¹

What reception has the plan had?

One potential flaw in the plan is that most other countries, including Scotland, have implemented such hotel quarantine rules for all international travellers, rather than just those from a small number of countries. There are concerns that people could travel via another country and stay there for 10 days before re-entering the UK, as a way to avoid the system and the large fee.

This could be heaven or this could be hell

Even highly regarded systems have had their problems. In Australia, a recent cluster of 13 covid-19 cases have been linked to a quarantine hotel in Melbourne, which led to a five day lockdown being imposed in the state of Victoria. But overall the consensus seems to be that quarantine restrictions are generally effective at preventing transmission.

¹ Rimmer A. Covid-19: Travellers to UK from “red list” countries will pay £1750 for 10 day hotel quarantine. *BMJ* 2021;372.

This article is made freely available for use in accordance with BMJ’s website terms and conditions for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic or until otherwise determined by BMJ. You may use, download and print the article for any lawful, non-commercial purpose (including text and data mining) provided that all copyright notices and trade marks are retained.