Travel is getting easier: Here are some of the countries that have eased COVID-19 protocols

(Courtesy of Caroline Tanner, The Points Guy)

Since January, a host of countries have relaxed COVID-19 restrictions to make the experience for incoming travelers easier.

Some countries like Sweden have eliminated protocols altogether, while others like Australia have kept some safeguards in place.

At the same time, a few countries, primarily in Europe, have made it more difficult for Americans to visit by requiring a booster shot.

Destinations that have eased COVID-19 protocols

Thus far, 17 destinations are easing restrictions. Here are the new protocols for those nations:

- Australia will reopen its doors on Feb. 21 to vaccinated travelers who show an arrival test.

- The Bahamas suspended plans on Jan. 7 to require vaccinated travelers to present an arrival PCR test, instead allowing them to continue presenting a rapid test taken within three days. However, all travelers who are in the country for more than 48 hours must also take a second rapid test.

- Bali, Indonesia, reopened on Feb. 4 to vaccinated visitors who present an arrival PCR test and agree to quarantine.

- Bermuda will no longer ask vaccinated visitors to take a test before arrival or quarantine come March 7, though travelers must test upon arrival and unvaccinated visitors are currently prohibited from entering.

- Greece said fully vaccinated visitors from the European Union do not need to present arrival tests as of Feb. 7, which is expected to apply to vaccinated Americans as well.

- Denmark no longer declares COVID-19 a "socially critical disease," and as of Feb. 1 became the first country in the EU to lift nearly all nationwide restrictions.

- Ireland scrapped almost all of its coronavirus-related restrictions on Jan. 24, including its arrival test for vaccinated travelers.

- Morocco reopened its borders to vaccinated travelers on Feb. 7, but both a pre- and on-arrival test are required for entry.

- New Zealand plans to reopen borders in March, though most tourists will have to wait until October to enter without quarantine.

- Norway dropped its quarantine requirement on Jan. 26 to allow vaccinated visitors to test on arrival and their unvaccinated counterparts to test pre-arrival.

- The Philippines reopened its borders to tourists on Feb. 10 without quarantine for vaccinated visitors, though unvaccinated travelers need to take a pre-arrival test and quarantine.

- Portugal announced on Feb. 3 that an arrival test for vaccinated EU visitors is no longer compulsory.

- Puerto Rico relaxed rules on Feb. 2 to no longer require vaccinated travelers on domestic flights to present an arrival test, while unvaccinated travelers may test sans quarantine.

- Sweden dropped all domestic COVID-19 restrictions on Feb. 9, though non-EU visitors are still prohibited from entry until at least March 31.

- Thailand reinstated guidelines on Feb. 1 to allow vaccinated visitors to test upon arrival and quarantine while awaiting test results before taking a second test on day five.

- The United Kingdom suspended arrival testing requirements on Feb. 11 for those who are vaccinated, while unvaccinated visitors must take a predeparture test and take a PCR test on day two.

- The United States has largely dropped mask mandates in states, and Hawaii canceled its plans to require travelers be boosted to skip quarantine.

Countries that have added stricter protocols

Simultaneously, a handful of countries have tightened existing COVID-19 measures:

- Italy restricted ski destinations on Jan. 10 to those with vaccination proof through at least March 31.

- Mexico added pandemic-related restrictions for the first time in late January, with cities such as Puerto Vallarta requiring proof of vaccination.

- The EU announced in December that the EU Digital COVID Certificate would only remain valid for holders who have been boosted within the past 270 days, meaning only Americans boosted in that time frame are considered fully vaccinated. Since then, Austria, Croatia, France, Iceland, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland have all implemented similar requirements that apply to American travelers.

- Outside of Europe, Israel and Singapore have followed suit and require proof of a booster shot.

Bottom line

Overall, countries appear to be backing off COVID-19 protocols as they welcome back international travelers, particularly those who are vaccinated. Although some destinations in Asia (Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia) remain closed to most tourists, the majority of nations in North America, Europe, the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East are open and loosening entry requirements every day.

Of course, countries are still changing their COVID-19 protocols daily, so be sure to verify a country's current status via TPG's reopening guide before visiting.