

US and UK airlines demand end to 'overly cautious' transatlantic travel restrictions

A coalition of transatlantic airlines have demanded that Joe Biden and Boris Johnson lift "overly cautious" travel restrictions between the US and UK given the strength of the two countries' coronavirus vaccine programmes.

The companies, which include all the carriers offering passenger services between the nations and other industry players including Heathrow Airport, argued that fully reopening the key market was "essential to igniting economic recovery" on both sides of the ocean.

American Airlines, British Airways (BA), Delta Air Lines, JetBlue, United Airlines and Virgin Atlantic issued the plea at a time when the UK is [tightening its green list of destinations](#) and just days ahead of a meeting between the two leaders in Cornwall this week – the first face-to-face encounter since the president was elected.

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Tourists scramble to return from Portugal

They said in their statement: “With world-leading vaccination programmes in both the UK and US, there is a clear opportunity to safely open up travel between these two low-risk countries, enabling consumers on both sides of the Atlantic to reconnect with loved ones, re-establish business relationships and explore new destinations after more than a year of lockdowns and restrictions.”

They pointed to a £23m hit to the UK economy for each day the rules remained in place.

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The US is on the UK’s amber list, which requires travellers to the country to quarantine for 10 days when they arrive home and pay for two PCR coronavirus tests.

Entry requirements for the United States demand that UK citizens provide a negative COVID test ahead of arriving in the US, proof of recovery or are fully vaccinated.

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The industry issued its plea at a time when it remains under severe financial pressure globally.

[COVID-19](#) restrictions have taken a hard toll on transatlantic

operators for 15 months – rules that have been blamed for the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the two countries.

[BA](#) alone has cut almost 13,000 roles while [Virgin](#), which secured a refinancing to survive the turbulence, was also forced to halve its own workforce last year as demand slumped.

The UK airlines highlighted a recent York Aviation report that a second “lost summer” for international travel would result in £55.7bn in lost trade and £3bn in tourism if reopening was delayed until September.

Shai Weiss, the CEO of Virgin Atlantic, said: “There is no reason for the US to be absent from the UK ‘Green’ list.

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‘Constant change is frustrating’- holidaymakers

“This overly cautious approach fails to reap the benefits of the successful vaccination programmes in both the UK and the US.”

He added: "We urge Prime Minister Johnson and President Biden to lead the way in opening the skies, making it a top priority at the G7 Summit."

His counterpart at United, Scott Kirby, commented: "Throughout the pandemic, experts have encouraged governments, businesses and the public to follow the science.

"United and other airlines have done just that and implemented the necessary safety protocols to confidently re-open key international routes like the air corridor between our two countries.

"Programmes like the trials of COVID-free flights between Newark and Heathrow and the US Department of Defense air filtration study conducted on board United aircraft not only contributed to the body of scientific knowledge, they have demonstrated the near non-existent rates of viral transmission aboard an aircraft.

"And now, through mobile app, travelers can upload verified test results and vaccine records before international travel."