

More flights for Brits stranded across South America

Press release

The Government has announced more charter flights from Argentina, Colombia and Honduras to bring home over 900 British nationals to the United Kingdom.



The Government has announced four new special charter flights from Argentina, Colombia and Honduras to bring home over 900 British nationals to the United Kingdom.

Foreign Office Minister for the Americas, Wendy Morton said:

These special charter flights will provide a lifeline to hundreds of British travellers who have been stranded in South America.

We have already brought home over 1,200 British travellers from the region on charter flights and these will return over 900 more.

The details of the charter flights are as follows:

- Friday 1 May: Bogota, Colombia – San Pedro Sula, Honduras – London Heathrow
- Monday 4 May: Bogota, Colombia – Cartagena, Colombia – London Heathrow
- Thursday 7 May: Buenos Aires, Argentina – London Gatwick
- Tuesday 12 May: Buenos Aires, Argentina – London Heathrow

Additional special charter flights from Roatan and Utila in Honduras have also been arranged to enable British travellers to reach San Pedro Sula, in time for the connecting flight to London.

British travellers stranded in Colombia and Honduras who wish to return home can book a place on these flights through a dedicated booking portal from today (Sunday 26 April). The booking portal for British travellers in Argentina will open in the coming days. Priority is initially being given to

vulnerable passengers including those over 70 and others who have medical requirements.

These UK Government chartered flights follow flights from Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, meaning we will have brought back over 2100 British travellers from South America and helped hundreds more return through commercial routes.

These flights form part of the £75m partnership between government and airlines to bring home British travellers stranded abroad due to the coronavirus pandemic, as announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March 2020.

ENDS

Published 26 April 2020

Environment Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 26 April 2020

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference. I'm pleased to be joined today by Stephen Powis, the National Medical Director of NHS England.

Before I update you on the latest developments in the food supply chain, let me first give you an update on the latest data from the COBR coronavirus data file. Through the government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme, as of today:

- 669,850 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 29,058 tests carried out yesterday;
- 152,840 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 4,463 cases since yesterday;
- 15,953 people are currently in hospital with the coronavirus in the UK, down from 16,411 on 25 April.

And sadly, of those hospitalised with the virus, 20,732 have now died. That is an increase of 413 fatalities since yesterday.

We express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of these victims.

At the beginning of the outbreak of this virus we saw significant problems in panic buying. That episode quickly subsided and food availability now is back

to normal levels and has been for several weeks. All supermarkets have introduced social distancing measures to protect both their staff and their customers and it is essential that shoppers respect these measures.

The food supply chain has also seen a significant reduction in staff absence over recent weeks. As staff who had been self-isolating through suspected coronavirus symptoms have returned to work. So absence levels are down from a peak of typically 20% in food businesses three weeks ago to less than 10% at the end of last week and in some cases individual companies reporting absences as low as 6%.

We have put in place measures to support the clinically vulnerable. So far 500,000 food parcels have been delivered to the shielded group, that is those who cannot leave home at all due to a clinical condition that they have. In addition, the major supermarkets have agreed to prioritise delivery slots for those in this shielded group. So far over 300,000 such deliveries have been made, enabling people to shop normally and choose the goods that they want to buy.

We recognise that there are others who are not clinically vulnerable and therefore are not in that shielded group but who may also be in need of help. Perhaps through having a disability or another type of medical condition, or indeed, being unable to draw on family and neighbours to help them. We have been working with local authorities to ensure that those people can be allocated a volunteer shopper to help them get their food needs. Charities such as Age UK and others can now also make also direct referrals on the Good Samaritan App to locate volunteers for those in need.

Many supermarkets have taken steps to increase the number of delivery slots that they have. At the beginning of this virus outbreak there were typically 2.1 million delivery slots in the entire supermarket chain. That has now increased to 2.6 million, and over the next couple of weeks we anticipate that that will grow further to 2.9 million. So supermarkets have taken steps to increase their capacity but while this capacity has expanded, it will still not be enough to meet all of the demand that is out there.

Some supermarkets have already chosen to prioritise some vulnerable customers with a proportion of the delivers slots that they have and others have offered to work with us and also local authorities to help establish a referral system so that when somebody is in desperate need, a local authority is able to make a referral to make sure that they can get a priority slot.

As we look forward more generally towards the next stage in our battle against this virus, there are encouraging signs of progress, but before we consider it safe to adjust any of the current social distancing measures, we must be satisfied that we have met the five tests set out last week by the First Secretary.

Those tests mean that the NHS can continue to cope;

- that the daily death rate falls sustainably and consistently;

- that the rate of infection is decreasing; and operational challenges have been met;
- and, most important of all, that there is no risk of a second peak.

For now, the most important thing we can all do to stop the spread of the coronavirus is to stay at home, to protect the NHS and save lives.

I want to pay tribute to all those who are working throughout the food supply chain from farmers, manufacturers and retailers. The response of this industry to ensure that we have the food that we need has been truly phenomenal.

Thank you.

[UK firm pioneers technology to help communication in hospitals](#)

A new and innovative UK business has developed a collection of digital flashcards to address the problems healthcare workers wearing Personal Protective Equipment were having in transferring vital information to deaf, blind and critically ill coronavirus patients.

CARDMEDIC, founded by NHS anaesthetist Dr Rachael Grimaldi while on maternity leave, launched at the beginning of April and is already available in 10 languages. Dr Grimaldi was inspired by a news article about a COVID-19 patient who was admitted to intensive care and became worried when he couldn't understand what his healthcare providers were saying through their face masks, visors and hoods.

The communication aids can be used in electronic format on the patient's or hospital's phone, tablet, smart device or desktop. As well as the visual aspects helping to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing patients, CARDMEDIC also includes a "read aloud" option for patients who are either too unwell or unable to read, or those partially sighted or blind.

The communication flashcards are free to download on CARDMEDIC's website, which has seen more than 7,800 users in 49 countries across 6 continents since its launch on 1 April 2020. Going from concept to launch in just 72 hours, CARDMEDIC is now being used by NHS Trusts all over the UK and frontline hospital staff across Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and the United States.

Dr Rachael Grimaldi at CARDMEDIC said:

Unable to be patient-facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was desperate to do something to help while on maternity leave. What started out as me wondering if healthcare staff could use a pen and paper to communicate with patients, within 72 hours, turned into an online A-Z index of digital flashcards.

Initially, I thought I would share the site with colleagues at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust, and it would hopefully help make a difference to a few patients. I never envisaged it would have grown so rapidly and at such pace. I am overwhelmed by the generosity in time and expertise from so many organisations, colleagues, friends and family.

Our trade advisor from the Department for International Trade has been fantastic and introduced me to a wide range of business contacts which has helped enormously.

The Department for International Trade has supported CARDMEDIC since its launch date by connecting Dr Grimaldi with local businesses in Brighton including digital consultancy Grow Global which provided a free website review. CARDMEDIC's dedicated trade advisor also provided the business with advice to apply for the Innovate UK competition to receive funding.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

CARDMEDIC is one of the many businesses working hard to support our NHS at a crucial time, and I am proud to see them already making a global impact and helping save lives”.

This is a truly innovative product that could change the future of the healthcare industry and be widely applied across the world long after the pandemic.

CARDMEDIC is now set to provide its flashcards in 30 different languages in the coming weeks, and is currently working with a hospital in Australia to translate them into African, Asian and European dialects.

The business is also developing an app which will include illustrations and videos for British Sign Language, as well as creating downloadable PDF versions for healthcare professionals to print, laminate, write on, wipe off and reuse.

Notes to Editors

If you would like to learn more about CARDMEDIC or how you can support them, please contact info@cardmedic.com.

UK announces 5 more flights from Bangladesh to bring home over a thousand Brits

Press release

An additional 5 charter flights will bring home more than 1,250 British travellers to the UK from Bangladesh.



Details of the flights are as follows:

- 29 April: Dhaka-London
- 1 May: Dhaka-London
- 3 May: Dhaka-London
- 5 May: Dhaka-London
- 7 May: Dhaka-London

This brings the total number of special charter flights organised by the UK Government from Bangladesh to nine. Once completed, they will have brought back more than 2,100 British travellers in total.

Four in-country connecting flights between Sylhet and Dhaka are also taking place. These will run on 29 April and 1, 5, and 7 May.

Given the number of people who have already registered for a flight, the majority of seats are likely to be allocated to people who are already on waitlists, having registered via the CTM website.

To register interest in a future flight, and for more information, British travellers should visit the [travel advice pages for Bangladesh](#).

One of the outbound planes from the UK will carry United Nations staff and medical professionals who are deploying to support the COVID-19 response in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Foreign Office Minister of State, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

This weekend, a total of 850 British travellers are due to return to the UK from Bangladesh on the first phase of our special chartered flights. I'm pleased we have now announced five additional flights which will enable over a thousand more Brits to come back home.

Our teams in Bangladesh and the UK continue to work around the clock to support British nationals during this difficult time and get them home safely.

Since the coronavirus outbreak began, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has worked consistently with governments, air carriers and travel companies to minimise disruption and help British travellers return home safely – supported with £75 million for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable people.

Notes to editors:

- Tickets will cost £600
- Demand for flights has been high and seats are likely to be allocated to those on existing waitlists, having previously registered via the Government's online booking portal – CTM
- Details of the previously announced Government charter flights from Bangladesh to the UK are on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)
- Guidance on how to book onto a government charter flight back to the UK can be found on our YouTube channel

[How to book a government charter flight back to the UK](#)

Further information

Published 26 April 2020

[An open letter to vets to mark World Vet Day.](#)

News story

The Environment Secretary writes to those working in the veterinary profession, to thank them for the part they are playing at this time.



Photo Credit BVA.

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to thank you for the part you, and the wider veterinary profession, are playing in our fight against what is perhaps the greatest health challenge this country has faced in our lifetime.

The Government has taken some unprecedented steps to ask people to stay at home, to protect our NHS and save lives. The more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal.

Our success in responding to, and recovering from, the outbreak will come from all of us working together. It has been so encouraging to see many fantastic examples of this across many sectors and groups, including the veterinary profession. As you may know, today marks World Vet Day, so I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your profession for playing your part. Your willingness and support in providing critical veterinary equipment to the NHS for medical use has helped individuals, their families, and our fantastic health colleagues.

I know for the veterinary profession, the COVID-19 outbreak has its own specific pressures. Every animal you see has a person linked with it. I appreciate that, in responding to urgent animal health and welfare issues, you are dealing with a number of challenges: respecting social distancing, finding new ways of working at speed including tele-consultations and responding to clients' worries and expectations – your work is vital. This is why I and my Government colleagues are enormously thankful for all the work that you have done in recent weeks, and will continue to do in the weeks ahead.

Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Published 26 April 2020