

# Why Europe's summer season could boost UK vaccination numbers

► The prospect of avoiding travel restrictions will act as inducement to be jabbed, says leading behavioural expert



Unvaccinated travellers to Ibiza, Spain, must self-isolate for up to 10 days upon return to the UK. Getty

**Tim Kiek**

Feb 9, 2022

A boom in UK bookings for summer holidays in Europe makes it “highly possible” many people yet to be vaccinated against [Covid-19](#) will be immunised, a leading behavioural scientist has said.

[Figures from digital travel agency Skyscanner](#) show bookings for economy return travel from the UK this summer increased by 394 per cent in January 2022 compared with the previous month.

A survey by the same company found 40 per cent of British travellers intend to travel abroad in 2022 for summer holidays, with 15 per cent doing the same at Christmas and 13 per cent at Easter.

So how could the desire to escape the UK this summer affect the country's vaccination numbers?

## MORE ON TRAVEL

**Countries you can travel to without a PCR test**

The fundamental answer is convenience.

“It seems highly possible that incentivising people by telling them that they are going to have a very inconvenient time of going abroad for some vacation if they're not vaccinated will then cause them to get vaccinated,” Tali **Sharot**, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London, told *The National*.

Our actions are “a result of potential rewards and potential punishment,” she said.

## The summer holiday boom

The [UK bookings bonanza](#) was kick-started by the [unwinding of Covid travel rules in early January](#), and has been incentivised by a smorgasbord of mouth-watering deals dished up by travel firms seeking to capitalise on the pent-up demand.

With one in four British travellers making guaranteed sun their destination priority, the perennial – and perennially sunny – British favourites Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Turkey are drawing the most attention.

Skyscanner data show the fab five are the most booked European destinations over the last month for travellers from the UK for economy return travel this summer, with countries in Europe occupying seven places in its overall top 10.

## Skyscanner's top 10 summer destinations



10. Cyprus. Getty Images

*\*Top countries for UK travellers for economy return travel booked on Skyscanner in January 2022 for travel in summer 2022 (June, July and August 2022)*

## Europe's Covid outlier

But here's the rub.

Whilst the UK has been going full-steam ahead in one direction on the loosening of its [Covid travel rules](#), many of the destinations proving so popular with aspiring British holidaymakers have been taking a less full-throttle approach – and in some cases reintroducing Covid restrictions.

The divergence between the UK and much of mainland Europe will be brought into even sharper relief this Friday when the UK removes all testing requirements for fully vaccinated travellers and those under the age of 18, regardless of their vaccine status.

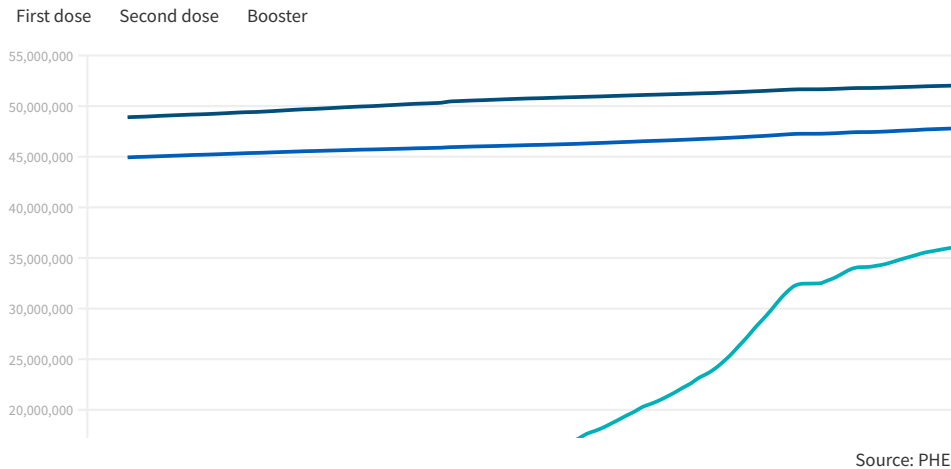
By contrast, many destinations popular with UK holidaymakers have far stricter Covid vaccination rules, frequently requiring under-18s to be vaccinated.

Spain and France are first and eighth respectively in the Skyscanner table of most popular places for UK residents to book a summer holiday this January.

Both countries require anyone who enters the country after February 12 to have had a Covid booster if their previous vaccinations were completed more than 270 days ago.

This means the 18 million people in the UK who received their second shot before mid-May would need to have been boosted to enter Spain or France come Saturday. While 37.5 million people in the UK have been boosted, according to the latest UK vaccine data, this still leaves 35 per cent of over-12s in the UK unboosted.

## UK Covid booster vaccinations



 A Flourish map

Yet this isn't evidence that all of those yet to be fully vaccinated or boosted are implacable anti-vaxxers.

As Prof **Sharot** stipulated, for reasons of convenience a rump will acquiesce to the shot if it means making their lives much easier.

This is the logic behind [President Macron stating in January](#) that he intended to make life difficult for the unvaccinated.

The approach won't work on everyone.

"There are people who are not just hesitant to get the vaccine but have very strong opinions about this," Prof **Sharot** said.

"And it's part of their identity, this whole idea that maybe vaccines are just not working, or there's some kind of conspiracy.

"I think for those people, simple inconvenience is not going to be strong enough to change their actions, but it will definitely have an effect on some of the population."

Nonetheless, a comparison of current vaccination rates in France and the UK figures align with Prof **Sharot's** view that convenience is still a strong motivator: France vaccinates more people each day than the UK.

## France vaccinating faster than UK

Daily share of population receiving a Covid-19 vaccine dose (%)



Source: Our World in Data

A Flourish map

England briefly introduced a light-touch version of the [Covid passports](#) used in some countries, including EU states, to enter public places such as restaurants and shops. The NHS Covid Pass was required to visit nightclubs and certain large events.

SIGN UP

# TRAVEL

lack but that the decision not to go down that route was not epidemiologically based.

"I don't think the reason that the UK is not deploying strong measures is because they think it won't work. It's a political question that involves a lot of angles," she said.

"Maybe questions of freedom, maybe it's a question of the amount of time and money that takes that they would have to put in to change this."

Regardless of the rights and wrongs of Britain's approach, the liberty unvaccinated people enjoy there is not replicated elsewhere.

## Holidays bereft of pleasure

In mainland Europe, it's not merely entering countries that would be inconvenient. If the UK's unvaccinated are so desperate to go abroad that they endure the associated PCR tests and mandatory 10-day self-isolation upon their return, they will be subject to more restrictions while abroad.

Take Portugal, the fourth most popular destination for British holidaymakers this summer in the Skyscanner top 10. As things stand, travellers must prove their vaccination status to enter restaurants, tourist venues and accommodation in the Iberian idyll.

### MORE ON TRAVEL

[Revealed: top 5 Europe summer destinations for UAE holidaymakers](#)

A similar situation exists in Italy, fifth in the Skyscanner top 10. Here, a "super-green pass" is required to use public transport and enter the vast majority of indoor venues. The pass is granted only to those who have been fully immunised.

The message from the travel industry is unequivocal.

"Travel this summer for those who are double vaccinated and boosted looks set to be near-normal," Thomas Cook's head of marketing, David Child, told *The National*.

"Vaccination certification is now standard across the EU and travel in and out of European countries often requires little more than showing your latest proof.

"We would expect that to continue and encourage people to ensure their vaccination records are up to date."

Updated: February 9th 2022, 12:48 PM

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE SPAIN FRANCE

EDITOR'S PICKS



Ticket prices announced for Dubai's Museum of the Future

UAE



Revealed: Top 10 supercars for going furthest on a full tank - Ferrari California leads

EUROPE



How Emirates staff race against clock to return lost items to passengers

UAE



UAE hotels set for a busy half-term as bookings surge

UAE



A war in Ukraine could spark Europe's next big refugee crisis

COMMENT

NEWSLETTERS

Energy this Week (Wednesdays)

Email Address Sign up

MORE FROM THE NATIONAL



**Covid-19 reaches Cook Islands, one of the last uninfected places in the...**

COVID-19 TRAVEL



**Set on an island, Ras Al Khaimah's newest hotel will open on Februar...**

TRAVEL



**InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Mina Al Arab Resort & Spa - in...**



**A booming Valentine's Weekend is just the pick up the UK needs**

BUSINESS

UAE

Expo 2020 Courts Government Education Heritage Health Transport Science Environment UAE in Space

Coronavirus

Gulf

Saudi Arabia Bahrain Oman

MENA

Egypt Iraq Iran Jordan Lebanon Syria Tunisia Captagon Crisis

World

UK US Africa Asia Australasia Europe The Americas Cop26 Health Arab Showcase

Business

Aviation Economy Energy Money Cryptocurrencies Property Banking Technology Markets Travel and Tourism Start-Ups Road to Net Zero Future Comment

Opinion

Comment Editorial Obituaries Cartoon Feedback

Lifestyle

Fashion Food Motoring Luxury Family Home Wellbeing Things to do Comment

Arts & Culture

Art Books Film Music On Stage Television Comment

Travel

News Hotels Destinations Covid-19 Travel Airlines Responsible Tourism

Sport

Football Cricket IPL F1 UFC Golf Rugby Horse Racing Tennis Other Sport

About Us Contact Us Newsletters Sign Up Work With Us Privacy Policy Advertise With Us Terms & Conditions Sitemap Special Offers Archive

Follow us