

GOVERNMENT

As Brexit deadline nears, COVID-19 prompts travel bans to UK

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An estimated \$5.84 billion, or 4.5 billion, in luxury sales was generated last year by international visitors to the United Kingdom. Image credit: Walpole, Heathrow Airport

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The United Kingdom has found itself on a growing list of travel bans, as a variant of COVID-19 is likely contributing to rising infections in London and elsewhere in southeastern England.

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The new restrictions come as the U.K. government continues Brexit trade negotiations with the European Union ahead of a Dec. 31 deadline. Much of continental Europe continues to struggle with another wave of coronavirus cases ahead of the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Travel bans and lockdowns

While it is unclear if the new COVID-19 mutation leads to more serious illness or death, early reports suggest it may be up to 70 percent more transmissible.

Germany, India and Canada are among the countries that have halted flights to the U.K. in recent days. European-bound train services through the Channel Tunnel have also been temporarily stopped as well.

Countries have placed varying timeframes on the restrictions, while others have extended quarantine periods for British travelers.



Boris Johnson, prime minister of the United Kingdom, will oversee the U.K.'s separation from Europe on Jan. 1. Brexit is expected to deal a blow to luxury brands. Image credit: 10 Downing Street

In particular, France has suspended all travel to the U.K., including by freight, for at least 48 hours. This border closure could cause disruptions in fresh food supply, particularly if it is extended beyond the initial period as the two governments work to resume travel safely.

According to the [BBC](#), approximately 10,000 lorries travel between Dover and Calais at peak times.

Travel congestion has worsened ahead of the current Brexit deadline, as businesses try to move as many goods as possible between the U.K. and the E.U. ahead of a possible "no-deal" scenario.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated ongoing Brexit negotiations. If the two sides are unable to finalize a deal or extend the deadline, millions of businesses and consumers would be subject to tariffs and quotas.

Meanwhile, London and other nearby regions are under "Tier 4" restrictions, with residents being urged to stay at home except for food, medical or work reasons. Essential shops remain open.

The U.K.'s November lockdown came on the heels of similar national restrictions on movement in France, Germany, Belgium and parts of Italy and Spain. Extensions have further jeopardized the Christmas season that was British luxury's last chance to recover lost ground this year ([see story](#)).