



**NAMIBIA**  
**TRAVEL & TOURISM FORUM**  
[www.namibiantourism.com](http://www.namibiantourism.com)

Attn: Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister

House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Attn.: Mr Grant Shapps  
Secretary of State for Transport

Attn.: Mr. Dominic Raab  
First Secretary of State

Attn.: Mr Rishi Sunak  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Attn.: Mr Sajid Javid  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Windhoek, 11 September 2021

### **Open Letter Requesting Reclassification of Namibia As A Safe Destination For Tourism**

Dear Sirs,

Let me briefly introduce the Namibia Travel & Tourism Forum to you. We are an open platform for all tourism industry in Namibia and try to represent the sector in large without being biased or focusing on one group of businesses in the sector. For the last months, we have been closely working with the Namibian authorities and tourism entities to achieve the best in these difficult global times.

It is with greatest concern that we write this open letter, as we are still listed as a high-risk country for travel, even though our 7-day numbers have come down significantly low now. As you might understand, this decision comes as a big surprise to Namibia and will hamper the just restarted tourism industry to a major extent. Especially, as Namibia currently has one of the lowest 7-day rolling average in the number of cases of COVID-19 globally.

As of September 10, 2021, the daily average number of cases, from past 7 days, are as follow :

Asia 218,096.00

North America 176,667.57

Europe 125,743.29

**United Kingdom 37,848.86**

Africa 20,073.57

Germany 10,707.86

**Namibia 101.71**

Source : <https://ourworldindata.org/>

Currently it is unknown on what figures this decision has been based. From the official figures of the World Health Organization and the Namibian Ministry of Health and Social Services one can clearly see that Namibia is lower than other countries and the numbers have been ever decreasing, It is therefore unclear and incomprehensible how your authorities came to the conclusion that Namibia should be a high-risk country. Moreover, while Namibia and in fact the whole of Southern Africa remain on the UK red list. Ireland has recently taken us off their red list, and on 1<sup>st</sup> of September USA downgraded our 'risk level' from 4 to 3. Germany has taken Namibia off the risk status applicable from 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Austria has confirmed that Namibia will be taken off the risk list on 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2021. UAE has also removed Namibia from the list of banned countries. Why is the UK still punishing the industry locally and in Namibia when it comes to travel & tourism?

With no word on when or how Namibia or other Southern African countries can come off the red list, all our bookings for the peak months of September and October have cancelled or postponed. If things do not change within the next month, many more companies will most probably be forced into bankruptcy. During 2019 some Namibian companies, that cater exclusively to UK market, turned over almost £50 million, 90% of which came from UK agents. Your actions are directly forcing these to close, and some have already lost all our personal savings trying to stay afloat. Likewise for the many UK small travel firms who send business to Africa, they will not survive much longer.

Countries such as Namibia desperately need the UK's assistance to get through this pandemic for the good of everyone, and whilst your AZ development and Covax commitment is invaluable, we have to be able to get back on our own feet and trade as soon as possible. We do not want handouts; we want to get back to business. Before more local communities' resort to poaching as the only way to feed their families now that local tourism projects have been closed for 16 months. Before more wildlife rangers are laid off and our wilderness areas overtaken by livestock because the farmers no longer receive their community tourism levies. And before poverty descends to a politically dangerous level (as we are already seeing in South Africa).

As avid football, cricket and F1 fans, we watched with relief and enjoyment as full capacity crowds returned to sporting events over the past week, especially at Silverstone yesterday with 340,000 unmasked visitors over the whole weekend. This is a massive step towards freedom, boosting the economy and allowing the vaccinated population to enjoy the benefits of their sacrifices. However, I am sure you can appreciate just how galling it is to watch this when we hear nothing about when, or even if, international travel will be allowed to re-start in any meaningful and economically viable way. You would secure so much more support from the travel industry if your policies were fair, consistent, and logical across all sectors of the economy.

I'm sure by now you are aware of the fact that there is a significant time lag between travelers confirming holidays and tour operators realizing the profit from those tours. Most tour operators keep the payments in trust accounts until after their guests have travelled, meaning that even if the rules were changed today and people started booking holidays, most travel companies would need to wait several more months before being able to spend any profits earned on repaying their significant debts, servicing their overheads, or paying salaries.

I am also sure that the airline industry has made it clear to you that they cannot just open up routes or add more flights to their schedule immediately, and that they require lead time in order to plan for demand? So once again, where is the travel 'road map' which would enable them to start planning?

Travelers in the UK have lost patience and any semblance of confidence in your traffic light policy, so are unlikely to book anything until government shares a solid plan for re-opening, as you sensibly did with the domestic road map. One of the UK agents mentioned this morning that their guests do not think international travel is likely to happen for the whole of 2022. This is the message that you are unrelentingly sharing with your electorate, the UK travel industry, and your worldwide trade partners. I don't think this is in anyone's interests, least of all yours. We are working with the travel industry and private testing providers to see how the cost of tests can be further reduced, while ensuring travel is as safe as possible.

On the background that basically all neighboring countries to South Africa (except for the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Kingdom of Lesotho, which have been declared a SARS-CoV-2 virus variant country) have been declared “high-risk”, it seems that the current move of your ministries is rather based on assumptions that the virus variant might also be in Namibia, than on the given explanation of rising case numbers.

The Namibia Travel & Tourism Forum has been in close contact with the Namibian Ministries of Health and Social Services as well as the of Environment, Forestry in Tourism to have clear Corona testing and hygiene standards in and for the sector. We sincerely hope you, the Government Of The United Kingdom, will reconsider their decision with regards to declaring Namibia a “high incidence area” and thus give hope to the tourism sector in Namibia. We on our side will further campaign for sticking to the tight health and hygiene regulations that have been implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Services to safekeep Namibians and tourists alike.

**Ahead of the review of the traffic light system no later than 1st October, and the next country review due by 16th September 2021, we urgently call on you to:**

- Scrap the traffic light system completely, including the red list. Return to the more rational and proportionate FCDO travel warnings which advise directly on all issues of concern, including any heightened risk of increasing Covid caseloads or variants of concern.
- Scrap hotel quarantine.
- Allow all fully vaccinated travelers, whether British residents or not, to enter the UK without need for any testing.
- Accept ex-pat proof of vaccination for vaccines administered abroad.

Only by taking these decisions will the UK finally start to catch up with most other countries around the world, including USA & EU.

Yours faithfully,

Nrupesh Soni  
Founder

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