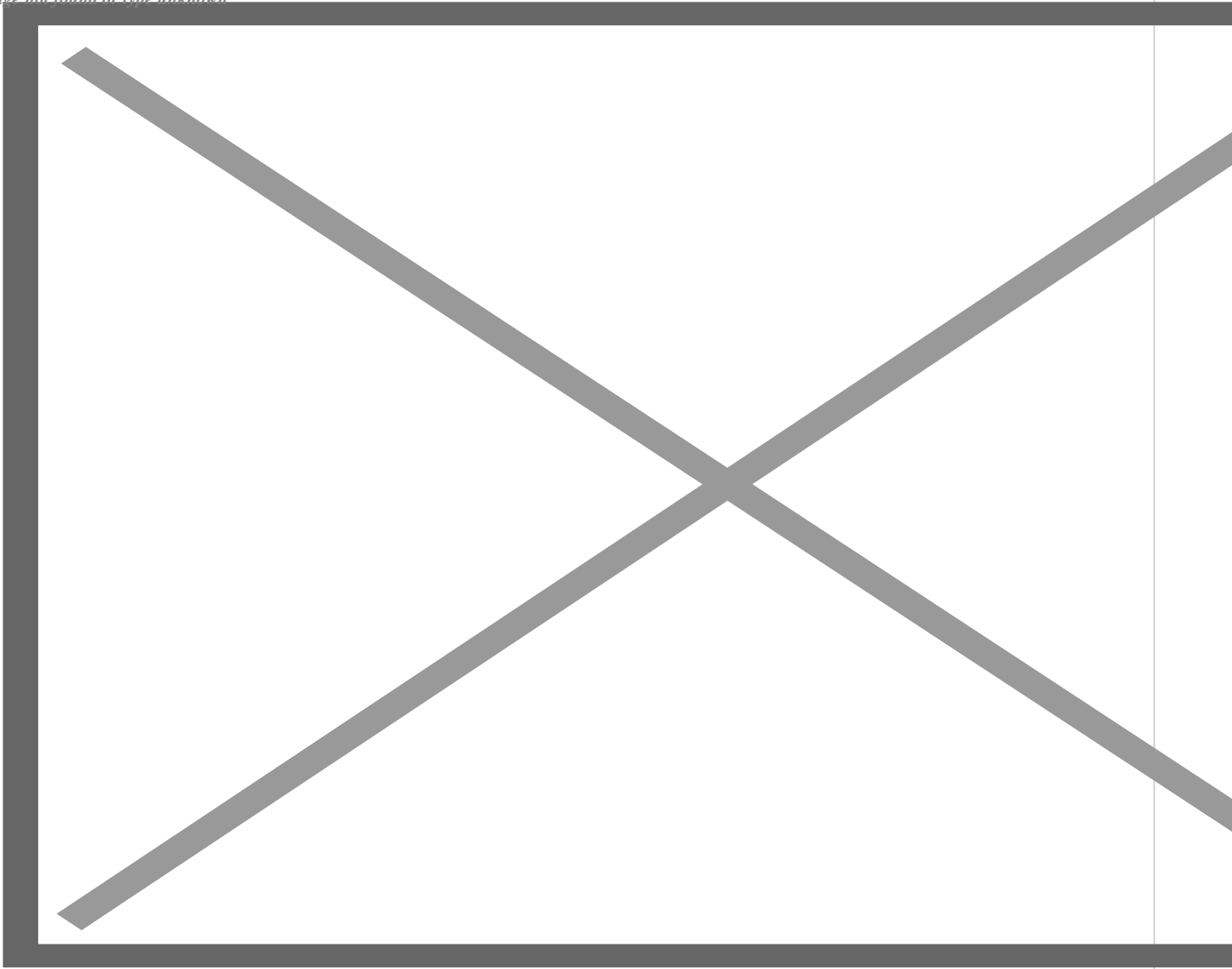


U.S. lifts COVID restrictions for many foreign travellers

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The US has opened up travel from several countries, previously barred under coronavirus restrictions [File: Rick Bowmer/AP Photo]

Washington, November 8 (RHC)-- The United States is opening its doors to travellers from a long list of countries that had been subject to previous pandemic restrictions. Fully vaccinated travellers from Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom and most of Europe, as well as China, India, South Africa, Iran and Brazil, will be allowed into the U.S. at airports and land borders as the restrictions are lifted on Monday.

The pandemic controls, originally put in place at the beginning of 2020, had barred access to the US for non-citizens who had been in those countries 14 days before travelling. The restrictions ravaged the tourism industry, preventing friends and family from easily visiting the US. Under the policy, missed weddings, funerals, and reunions piled up.

River Robinson's U.S. partner was not able to be in Canada for the birth of their baby boy 17 months ago because of pandemic-related border closures. She told The Associated Press news agency she would soon be heading south for the long-awaited reunion

"I'm planning to take my baby down for the American Thanksgiving," said Robinson, who lives in St Thomas, Ontario. "If all goes smoothly at the border, I'll plan on taking him down as much as I can. Is crazy to think he has a whole other side of the family he hasn't even met yet."

The countries in question account for 53 percent of all overseas visitors to the US in 2019, according to trade group U.S. Travel. Data from travel and analytics firm Cirium showed airlines are increasing flights between the UK and the U.S. by 21 percent this month over the last month.

There are expected to be few if any empty seats on many of the international flights on Monday, and passenger volume is expected to remain high in the coming weeks. Air travellers will be required to show not only their vaccination status, but also a negative COVID-19 test. Those travelling by land from Canada and Mexico will need to show only proof of vaccination.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. will accept travellers who have been fully vaccinated with any of the vaccines approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO), not just those approved by U.S. authorities. That means that the AstraZeneca vaccine, widely used in Canada, and the India-developed Covaxin vaccine, will be accepted.

The lifting of restrictions come as the US has seen its COVID-19 outlook improve dramatically in recent weeks since the summer surge spurred by the Delta variant.

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