

Saudi Arabia to lift travel curbs on 'immunised' citizens

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Saudi Arabia will permit citizens immunised against COVID-19 to travel abroad from May 17, the interior ministry said Sunday, more than a year after Saudis were barred from external trips.

The ministry said three categories of people would be considered immunised—those who have received two doses of the coronavirus vaccine, those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior to travel, and people who have recovered from the infection within the last six months.

Saudis under the age of 18—an age group that is not receiving vaccines—would also be allowed to travel from May 17, provided they carry an [insurance policy](#) approved by the [central bank](#), the ministry said in a statement published by the official Saudi Press Agency.

"The decision to lift the suspension on citizens travelling outside Saudi Arabia will go into effect at 1:00 am on May 17," the ministry said, adding that the kingdom will re-open its land, sea and air borders.

The policy represents an incentive for citizens, barred from travelling abroad since the pandemic began, to get vaccinated.

The kingdom's [health ministry](#) said it has administered more than nine million coronavirus vaccine doses, in a country with a population of over 34 million.

The country has reported more than 419,000 coronavirus infections and nearly 7,000 deaths from COVID-19.

Last month, Saudi Arabia permitted only people immunised against COVID-19 to perform the year-round umrah pilgrimage from the start of Ramadan, the holy fasting month for Muslims.

It is unclear whether that policy, which comes amid an uptick in coronavirus infections in the kingdom, would be extended to the annual hajj pilgrimage later this year.

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