

Covid 19 Delta outbreak: Auckland border explained - what you need to do to get out

17 Nov, 2021 04:00 PM

(Pearse, 2021c)

Kiwis will be able to travel to and from Auckland in time for Christmas as Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern revealed the Government's upcoming plans. Video / Michael Craig / Dean Purcell / Mark Mitchell

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Lockdown-fatigued Aucklanders now have hope of a Christmas outside the City of Sails after today's announcement that the region's border will relax next month.

As revealed by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, travel will be allowed for some from December 15, which will mark almost four months in alert level 4 and 3 lockdowns for Auckland residents.

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But who can get through? Who can come in? What does this mean for the rest of the country?

Here are answers to some of the basic questions regarding today's Auckland border announcement.

I live in Auckland, when can I leave?

As mentioned above, December 15 - which is a Wednesday - is the day when certain Aucklanders can leave the city.

Technically, the border relaxation will come into force at 11.59pm on December 14, but most travellers will be packing their cars for a Wednesday departure.

Ten days out from Christmas, it should allow everyone to travel where they wish to celebrate the holiday with loved ones.

Do I need to be vaccinated or test negative for Covid-19?

Yes, only people who are fully vaccinated - having had two doses of either the Covid-19 vaccine - or those who have tested negative for Covid-19 within 72 hours of departure will be allowed through the border from December 15.

Prior to the announcement, it was speculated people moving through the border would need to be vaccinated and test negative prior to travel. However, that is not the case - it is one or the other.

There is a three-week gap required between the two vaccine doses which means anyone yet to get a vaccination will need to have had one dose by Tuesday, November 23 - to allow them to get their second dose on December 14.

Director-general of health Dr Ashley Bloomfield has often referenced a two-week period following a person's second dose, after which their protection from the virus is maximised.

However, it is not necessary to have waited two weeks after your second dose to move through the border, people simply need to have had their second vaccine.

I live outside of Auckland, can I travel into the city from elsewhere?

Yes, you can and while you don't need to be vaccinated or test negative to enter, you must satisfy those requirements when you leave.

How can I prove my vaccination status?

By the time the border is relaxed, people will be able to access their Government vaccination certificate, which can be used to prove vaccination history - alongside another form of identification like a passport, driver's licence or birth certificate.

Vaccinated people can log onto [My Covid Record](#) to make a request for the free pass or call 0800 222 478.

What if I want to go to Auckland for a day trip?

This is where vaccination becomes a key asset. For people with both vaccinations, they will be able to move freely across the border with no concern for how long they've stayed in Auckland.

For unvaccinated people, it is more tricky. They will need evidence of a negative Covid-19 test and as has been widely reported, test results have been known to take up to five days to be returned.

This could jeopardise plans of unvaccinated people who only wish to visit Auckland for a short time as they could find themselves waiting longer for their test results to come in.

Ardern referenced this point, saying the process will be much smoother for those who are fully vaccinated.

What does it mean for kids under 12 years old?

As we know, children under 12 years old can't be vaccinated yet. Medsafe is currently analysing a submission from vaccine manufacturer Pfizer but a decision isn't expected soon.

As a result, unvaccinated children under 12 can move through the border. They are also not required to get tested for Covid-19, in line with current alert level settings.

On the question of whether children will need to prove their age at the border, it is less clear. A statement from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet said police will have "operational discretion" regarding the enforcement of the rules and how spot checks will be undertaken.

While there doesn't appear to be a clear answer on this, it is expected more specific guidance will be provided before December 15.

How long will these requirements stay in place?

At the moment, the border set-up which will come into force next month will be in place until January 17.

The Government has chosen this four and half week period as it will be when most people are travelling over the holidays.

Closer to that time, it is expected more details will be announced as to whether the same restrictions will apply, be tightened or loosened.

Will the border be monitored?

Yes, but not to the extent it is currently.

Much has been made of the logistical challenges which would be experienced if tens of thousands of Aucklanders were individually checked as they tried to exit the city.

As a result, the Government has taken a softer approach and police will operate spot checks to assess compliance.

What happens if I get caught breaking the rules?

As police will be checking some people coming through the border, there is every chance those who aren't vaccinated or don't have evidence of a negative test could be caught by officers.

Ardern today warned those who attempt to travel illicitly could face a \$1000 fine.



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 A Flourish data visualization

What does this mean for regions with low vaccination levels?

Letting Aucklanders leave the city while the Delta outbreak continues obviously puts other regions at risk, especially if they have lower vaccination levels.

Also announced today, New Zealand will move into the new Covid-19 Protection Framework shortly after Cabinet approves the decision to scrap the alert level system on November 29.

Auckland will move to the more restrictive Red setting, as well as other regions with low vaccination levels. All other regions will move to Orange - none will shift to Green immediately.

With more public health measures utilised under the Red setting, this will provide further security to residents of other regions still with work to be done regarding vaccination.

Ardern specifically referenced Northland, which has one of the lowest vaccination levels in the country - 83 per cent first dose, 72 per cent second dose.

Recognising that many Aucklanders travel north for the summer and Northland houses many vulnerable people, Ardern said police would be engaging iwi and Māori health providers to ensure travel was enabled but the proper checks were in place.

Is there any impact on travel to the South Island?

The same restrictions at the Auckland border apply for those flying with Air New Zealand or travelling on inter-island ferries.

This means people hoping to drive or fly to the South Island - regardless of whether you live in Auckland or not - will need to be vaccinated or test negative 72 hours before departure.