

Royal Caribbean Updates Rules for Puerto Rico, Barbados Cruises

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Royal Caribbean International has reportedly made some adjustments to its health and safety protocols that apply to its voyages from the United States, Barbados and Puerto Rico. The announcement first arrived in a letter to travel advisors, as part of the line's recent practice of periodically updating agents about its onboard health and safety measures, according to Cruise Hive.

These policy alterations aren't staggering, and onboard regulations don't deviate from the well-established set of regulations that have been in effect for the past eight months. Mandatory testing procedures, established vaccination requirements and the required use of face masks while people are in indoor spaces will continue.

But, to align with local regulations in Puerto Rico and Barbados, Royal Caribbean updated a few rules, which took effect yesterday and are set to continue through April 14, 2022.

— Guests 12 years of age and older must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, which means that they've received the final dose of an approved two-dose or single-dose vaccine series at least 14 days prior to boarding the ship. For the time being, booster shots are not included in the vaccination requirements.

— Vaccinated guests 12 and older also need to provide proof of a negative PCR or antigen test taken within two days of embarkation. Unvaccinated travelers ages two-11 must supply a negative PCR test taken two to three days before boarding. However, this test shouldn't be administered on the actual day of embarkation, as it could interfere with the antigen test that must be taken at the kids' terminal just prior to boarding.

Puerto Rico

Regulations for guests boarding a Royal Caribbean cruise ship in Puerto Rico are a bit more complicated. Regardless of their vaccination status, passengers will need to provide a negative PCR or antigen test taken within 48 hours of arriving at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan. Travelers coming from outside the U.S. will need a test that's no more than 24 hours old.

Guests must also bring negative test results to the cruise terminal to board their vessel, but it can be the same one used to enter Puerto Rico, if timed correctly.

— Vaccinated guests must provide a negative PCR or antigen test taken within two days of boarding day. Any vaccinated children ages five-11 can also present proof of vaccination to follow the testing protocols for vaccinated guests.

— Kids ages two-11 who are unvaccinated must provide a negative PCR test taken no more than three days prior to boarding day.

— Guests under the age of two aren't required to complete pre-cruise testing and may follow the same onboard procedures as vaccinated passengers.

Guests ages two and up who wish to extend their travels by remaining in Puerto Rico after the sailing disembarks must take a post-cruise COVID-19 test and upload the results to Puerto Rico's TravelSafe Declaration form within 24 hours of leaving the ship. Unvaccinated travelers ages two and up are also subject to a seven-day quarantine if arriving in Puerto Rico one or more days before the cruise, or if staying in Puerto Rico post-cruise.

Barbados

Regardless of vaccination status, all travelers ages five and older must provide a negative PCR test to enter Barbados; either an RT-PCR test taken within three days of departure for the island or a rapid PCR test taken within one day of flying into the country.

— Unvaccinated guests ages two-11 will need to show a negative PCR test, taken no more than three days prior to boarding, at the cruise terminal. This can be the same test used for entry to Barbados, if timed correctly.

— Regardless of vaccination status, all passengers ages two and older will be administered an antigen test at the terminal before boarding the cruise ship and are also required to take a test, provided by Royal Caribbean, to re-enter Barbados at the end of their voyage. In many cases, this test can also satisfy requirements for flying back to travelers' home countries.

