

# Guidelines for border traffic during pandemic as of 19.3.2021

*The instructions of the Finnish Border Guard to passengers regarding entry to Finland*

These instructions issued by the Finnish border guard provide passengers with information on the changes that apply to entry to Finland **as of 19 March**. Restrictions on entry into Finland will continue until 17 April 2021.

These instructions issued by the Finnish Border Guard during the pandemic use the terms:

- Border traffic returned to normal
- Restriction category 1
- Restriction category 2.

The purpose of the country based classification is to make these instructions more reliable and understandable for the citizens. These restriction categories reflect which border traffic restrictions and entry requirements are observed for passengers arriving from various countries to Finland or the citizens of these countries. Instructions are based on latest decisions of the Finnish Government.

## Health safety instructions (regarding for example voluntary quarantine or coronavirus tests and certificates):

A negative test result, proof of having previously had COVID-19 disease or a certificate of vaccination alone does not entitle a foreign national to enter Finland. A foreign national must meet the requirements of normalised traffic, restriction category I or II, to enter. A Finnish citizen does not need to present a certificate in a border check in order to enter the country. However, several transport operators require a certificate of a negative test result as a condition for boarding the means of transport. Questions related to this condition can be addressed to the transport company.

A certificate for a negative test result and a medical certificate for COVID-19 that the person has had less than six months earlier will have an impact only on the health security measures applied upon the person's entry into Finland. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is responsible for and instructs on such health security measures and safety instructions for passengers arriving in Finland (including voluntary quarantine). See THL's guidelines for up-to-date health and safety recommendations related to travel: [Instructions for passengers and employees arriving in Finland](#)

# 1. General

According to section 9 of the Constitution of Finland, Finnish citizens must not be prevented from entering Finland, and everyone has the right to leave Finland. However, limitations on the right to leave the country may be provided by law if they are necessary for the purpose of safeguarding legal proceedings or for the enforcement of penalties or for the fulfilment of the duty of national defence.

Every person travelling from Finland to another state must check for themselves the restrictions on entry into the destination country. Destination countries may have in force their own restrictions and conditions on entry for travellers.

**Internal border traffic**, or traffic crossing the internal border, refers to traffic crossing the border between Finland and another state that is a member of the Schengen area. The Schengen countries include Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Spain, and of the non-EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

**External border traffic**, or traffic crossing the external border, refers to traffic between Finland and a state that does not belong to the Schengen area. To traffic crossing the border between Finland and another state, the guidelines concerning border crossing apply, if the other state does not belong to the Schengen area. This also applies to non-Schengen EU member States. Of the EU member states, Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are not part of the Schengen area.

## 2. Border traffic turned to normal

This section applies to:

- Internal border traffic to Finland from countries for which internal border controls has been lifted: travel from Iceland and by pleasure craft between the Schengen countries.
- External border traffic to Finland from countries for which external border traffic restrictions have been lifted: **the Vatican**
- External border traffic between Finland and **Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand** for the residents of these countries, when arriving to Finland from their country of residence (only direct flights)

### 2.1 Internal border traffic without restrictions: travel from Iceland and by pleasure craft between the Schengen countries

Travel between Finland and Iceland and recreational boat traffic (travel by pleasure craft) between Schengen countries is unrestricted by border control.

Recreational boat traffic between Schengen countries is unrestricted by border control, and recreational boats are not obliged to enter a border checkpoint. In addition to the sea areas, it is also possible to enter the country on a recreational boat at the river border between Finland and Sweden (the rivers Tornionjoki and Muonionjoki).

## 2.2 Lifting of restrictions on external border traffic for the Vatican

Travel between Finland and the Vatican is unrestricted at all border crossing points, however taking into account the provisions on the entry of a foreign citizen.

## 2.3. Lifting of restrictions on external border traffic for residents of Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand (only direct flights)

The entry of residents of Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand into Finland, when arriving from abovementioned countries, is unrestricted while taking into account the provisions on the entry of foreign nationals into Finland.

In principle, those travelling on passports from the above-mentioned countries can be expected to reside in the country in question. If necessary, the traveller may be asked questions during the border check to determine his or her country of residence. As a rule, authorities assume that the traveller's own notification of their country of residence is correct. If necessary, place of residence can be confirmed by presenting, for example, an ID or driving licence issued by the third country in question or another document demonstrating residence. In addition, residence and work permits of the countries concerned indicate a person's residence in those countries. Other official documents that confirm the traveller's residence may also be used to establish residence in the country in question.

Entry into Finland from these countries for persons other than those living in these countries is permitted under the same restrictions as under restriction category 2.

## 3. Restriction category 1

Restriction category 1 applies to:

- Internal border traffic to Finland from countries to which internal border controls are still applied: **Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Sweden and Switzerland**
- External border traffic between Finland and **Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Romania, San Marino, Cyprus and Monaco**

### **3.1 Partial continuation of internal border control: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Lithuania, Latvia, Liechtenstein and Poland**

Internal border control will continue to be in place in travel between Finland and Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, with the exception of pleasure craft travel.

Those wishing to cross the internal border must use border crossing points where border control has been reinstated. Crossing the border in other places is not permitted without a border crossing permit.

On the border rivers between Finland and Sweden and Finland and Norway, border crossing on ice is permissible. However, going ashore on the soil of another country is not permitted.

The border crossing points between Finland and Norway are open for passenger traffic 9:00–21:00 and the border crossing points of Karesuvanto, Kolari, Muonio, Pello and Ylitornio between Finland and Sweden are open for passenger traffic 7:00–21:00.

The restrictions on opening hours do not apply to freight transport and logistics personnel in their duties, health care personnel, rescue services personnel and elderly care professionals in their duties, authorities travelling while performing their necessary duties, or those travelling under the basic rights and crossing the border regularly to go to their normal place of employment. In addition, the Finnish Border Guard may allow border crossing outside opening hours on a case-by-case basis if there is a special reason for doing so.

### **3.2. External border traffic from Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Romania, San Marino, Cyprus and Monaco**

Travel between Finland and Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia, Romania, San Marino, Cyprus and Monaco is allowed with similar restrictions as at internal borders.

### **3.3. Restriction category 1, permitted traffic**

- **Return to Finland**
  - Finnish nationals and their family members
  - nationals of EU and Schengen countries residing in Finland and their family members
  - third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit

- UK citizens and their family members residing in Finland who the Withdrawal Agreement applies to
- **Return traffic to or through other EU and Schengen countries**
  - nationals of other EU and Schengen countries and their family members
  - third-country nationals residing another EU or Schengen country with a residence permit
  - UK citizens and their family members residing in Finland who the Withdrawal Agreement applies to
- **Essential travel**
  - work that is significant for the functioning of society or supply security, the implementation of which requires the work performance of a person or persons coming from another country and the work cannot be delayed
  - health care and rescue service personnel (including first aid) and elderly care professionals during assignments as well as in internal border traffic authoritative personnel performing essential work tasks
  - transport and logistics personnel during assignments
  - diplomats, staff of international organisations, military personnel and humanitarian aid workers in the exercise of their duties
  - state representatives participating in international negotiations and persons engaged in work for international NGOs
  - persons studying in Finland
  - persons with a Finnish residence permit and EU/Schengen citizens who have registered their right of residence
  - persons travelling for family matters (e.g. meeting a relative, relationship, funerals, weddings, illness)
  - persons in need of international protection or who are travelling for other humanitarian reasons
  - other necessary and justified reason (e.g. necessary or otherwise justified personal reasons, representatives of foreign media, scheduled air services at airports, property, residence or secondary residence in Finland, property arrangements in Finland and in internal border traffic pursuit of the Sámi livelihood and culture).
- **Special groups** (such as representatives of culture, sports and business life)

Pursuit of the Sámi livelihood and culture is considered essential traffic. Sámi may also cross the land border between Finland and Sweden and Finland and Norway and the border rivers at locations other than the official border crossing points. However, this does not give Sámi the right to cross the border by a motor vehicle, with the exception of off-road vehicles.

In addition to diplomats, holders of service and official passports are allowed entry in the exercise of their duties.

Other essential traffic is assessed on a case-by-case basis based on information gathered during the border check.

For more detailed interpretation, see Section 5.

## 4. Restriction category 2

Restriction category 2 applies to all external border traffic other than that referred to in Section 3. This category includes entry from **Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey**, for example.

### 4.1 Permitted traffic in restriction category 2: third countries, for example Russia and the United States

- **Return to Finland**
  - Finnish nationals and their family members
  - nationals of EU and Schengen countries residing in Finland and their family members
  - third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit
  - UK citizens and their family members residing in Finland who the Withdrawal Agreement applies to
- **Return to or through other EU and Schengen countries**
  - nationals of other EU and Schengen countries and their family members
  - third-country nationals residing another EU or Schengen country with a residence permit
  - UK citizens and their family members residing in Finland who the Withdrawal Agreement applies to
- **Essential reason**
  - work that is significant for the functioning of society or supply security, the implementation of which requires the work performance of a person or persons coming from another country and the work cannot be delayed
  - health care and rescue service personnel (including first aid) and elderly care professionals during assignments as well as authoritative personnel performing essential work tasks
  - transport and logistics personnel during assignments
  - diplomats, staff of international organisations, military personnel and humanitarian aid workers in the exercise of their duties
  - state representatives participating in international negotiations and persons engaged in work for international NGOs
  - Persons travelling on a Finnish residence permit
  - persons in need of international protection or who are travelling for other humanitarian reasons
  - pressing family matters (for example, the birth of one's own child, a serious illness of a close relative, one's own wedding, dating relationship) or other pressing personal reasons
  - other necessary and justified transport such as representatives of the foreign media; transit of scheduled air services at airports and the arrival of a family member of a Finnish citizen living abroad
- **Special groups** (such as representatives of culture, sports and business life)

In addition to diplomats, holders of service and official passports are allowed entry in the exercise of their duties.

The opening hours of the border crossing points of Vartius, Niirala, Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa are restricted. The Vartius border crossing point is open for passenger traffic from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., the Niirala border crossing point is open for passenger traffic from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa border crossing points is open for passenger traffic from 7 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. The border crossing point of Imatra is closed for passenger traffic. The restrictions on opening hours do not apply to freight traffic or persons who have a necessary and urgent need to cross the border outside the opening hours.

Cruise ships are allowed to visit seaports without passenger disembarkation.

Other essential traffic is assessed on a case-by-case basis based on information gathered during the border check.

For more detailed interpretation, see Section 5.

## **5. Interpretation guidelines for clarification**

### **5.1 interpretation guidelines: general**

#### **Border crossing outside the opening hours of border crossing points in some cases**

The border crossing points between Finland and Norway are open for passenger traffic 9:00–21:00 and the border crossing points of Karesuvanto, Kolari, Muonio, Pello and Ylitornio between Finland and Sweden are open for passenger traffic 7:00–21:00.

The restrictions on opening hours do not apply to freight traffic or essential passenger transport with a justified need to cross the border outside the opening hours. Essential passenger transport, which has a justified need to cross the border outside opening hours, is considered to include freight transport and logistics personnel in their duties, health care personnel, rescue services personnel and elderly care professionals in their duties, authorities travelling while performing their necessary duties, or those travelling under the basic rights and crossing the border regularly to go to their normal place of employment. In addition, other justified needs to cross the border outside the opening hours can be considered to include, on a case-by-case basis, a meeting with a relative due to an urgent illness, significant impacts of weather conditions on traffic, or other justified need if the waiting time at the border crossing point would become unreasonably long.

The opening hours of the border crossing points of Vartius, Niirala, Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa are restricted. The Vartius border crossing point is open for passenger traffic

from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., the Niirala border crossing point is open for passenger traffic from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the Nuijamaa and Vaalimaa border crossing points is open for passenger traffic from 7 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. The border crossing point of Imatra is closed for passenger traffic. The restrictions on opening hours do not apply to freight traffic or persons who have a necessary and urgent need to cross the border outside the opening hours. The following are considered necessary and urgent:

- The movement of maintenance and winter maintenance personnel related to the obligations included in the State agreement on the Saimaa Canal lease area;
- A pressing and surprising work task that cannot be delayed (e.g. to prevent significant additional damage or harm);
- Urgent medical transport or other rescue personnel tasks;
- Other, case-by-case, particularly pressing, necessary and urgent reason that cannot be delayed.

## **Family member of a Finnish citizen**

A family member of a Finnish citizen may enter Finland if he or she fits the definition of a family member as laid down in Section 37 of the Aliens Act. The family member of a citizen of Finland must be the member of a family of a Finnish citizen who resides in Finland. However, a family member of a citizen of Finland may enter across an external border also if the Finnish citizen lives outside of Finland. The family member must also have the required travel documents and, if required, a visa or residence permit.

The provisions on freedom of movement will apply to a family member of a Finnish citizen if the Finnish citizen has exercised their right of movement under the Directive on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States by settling in another Member State and the family member comes to Finland with them or follows them later. A family member of a Finnish citizen may arrive in the country if they have the required document proving their right of residence in Finland or another EU or Schengen country.

## **Residence permit granted by Finland**

It is possible to enter Finland with a residence permit granted by Finland. The residence permit card must be presented at the border check.

The holder of a residence permit granted by Finland entering the country may bring a child/ person under his or her care.

## **Transit of regular scheduled air services at an airport**

For external border traffic and to the extent that internal border controls have been restored, the transit on regularly scheduled routes is permitted. As a rule, during the transit journey, a person must remain in the transit area of the airport, but in isolated

cases, a person may also be permitted to enter the country for the purpose of the transit referred to above. For example, a person may stay at a hotel near the airport especially if the waiting time at the airport would prove to be lengthy. Such situations include unreasonable waiting times resulting from a cancelled connecting flight.

Destination countries may also require passengers to take a coronavirus test at transit airports. Waiting for the test and the test results is not in itself a ground for allowing entry during transit.

## Entry is decided during the border check

The Finnish Border Guard does not grant advance permits for entry to Finland. In external border traffic and where internal border control has been reinstated, the decision to allow entry is always made during border checks.

## Travel documents

Finnish citizens must have the required travel documents when leaving the country.

Foreign citizens must have the required travel documents and, if necessary, the required visa or a residence permit.

In traffic between the Nordic countries, it is sufficient for Nordic citizens to be able to prove their identity if necessary.

## Work significant to the functioning of society and the security of supply

Work that is significant in terms of the functioning of society and, in particular, the security of supply is considered other essential reason, if the implementation of the work requires that the work be performed by a person or persons arriving from another country and the performance of the work cannot be delayed.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has overseen the process of defining the types of work that are important for the functioning of society or security of supply and cannot tolerate delay. This list of critical tasks does not constitute an advance decision granting entry into the country. The employer or the client must use a separate form to justify the necessity of an employee entering the country. In addition to the other documents required for border crossing, the employee seeking to enter Finland presents this form at the border check.

The border control authority will consider the list of critical tasks and the employer's explanation when assessing a necessary reason for entry.

## Seasonal workers (third-country nationals)

The admission of seasonal labour critical to security of supply is permitted during the growing season 2021.

The seasonal work permit must be granted before entering the country, so that the employee has a real opportunity to carry out work that is critical to security of supply that cannot be delayed.

The employer must fill in the employer's [justification form](#) with the reasoning for the seasonal worker's entry to the country. In addition to the other documents required for border crossing, the seasonal worker seeking to enter Finland must present this form at the border check. The border inspection authority takes into account the employer's justification when assessing the entry of a seasonal worker.

A minor child of a third-country national may accompany a seasonal worker arriving in the country for seasonal work, if the best interests and care of the child so require.

For seasonal workers arriving on a seasonal work certificate or a seasonal work visa (third-country nationals), work critical to the security of supply covers work on farms, gardens and in farm forestry. Work carried out at fur farms is not considered as critical to the security of supply.

Persons who have a residence permit for seasonal work may arrive in Finland in a similar manner as persons who have a residence permit.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry instructs employers on health-secure entry into Finland of seasonal workers, and seasonal workers on health security: [Instructions for health-secure entry of seasonal workers in primary production](#).

## Special groups

In internal and external border traffic entry to Finland may be permitted for special groups, such as representatives of culture, sports and business life if entry is justifiable for those persons or groups of persons. These kinds of tasks include activities essential for ensuring the revitalization, new growth, regional economy or long-term operating conditions for a field of activity.

Applications relating to special groups should be sent by email directly to the Finnish Border Guard ([rajavartiolaitos@raja.fi](mailto:rajavartiolaitos@raja.fi)). The application is made by the party extending the invitation.

The applications must include justification regarding the national significance of the activities and the reasons why other procedures cannot be observed as well as the procedures that will be used to ensure the implementation of health security. The

employer or other such party inviting the person or persons to enter the country must be able to present a health security action plan that complies with the national instructions for them.

If the health security measures are at least in accordance with currently valid national recommendations from the health authorities, the application does not require a separate statement from the health authorities on these measures. In cases where the health security measures presented in the application contain deviations from the current recommendations or an application is otherwise different (e.g. a large group size or several separate groups), a separate statement from the local infectious disease authority (municipality or hospital district) must be included in the application.

The applications are sent from the Finnish Border Guard to the relevant government ministries and, if necessary, also the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, who then issue a statement on them. After receiving the statement, the Finnish Border Guard will prepare a policy concerning the necessity of entry to Finland and inform the applicant of that policy. The processing time of the application is estimated to be 2 weeks. However, the final decision on entry to the country is made during the border check.

## **5.2 Interpretation guidelines: restriction category 1**

### **Traffic between local border communities at the land border between Finland and Sweden and between Finland and Norway**

The right to enter Finland on the basis of belonging to a border community will end on 27 January 2021. However, a Finnish citizen will continue to have the right to enter and leave the country.

### **Family matters**

Under restriction category 1, you may arrive in Finland for family matters.

Persons travelling to meet a relative living in Finland are categorized as persons travelling for family matters. For the purpose of meeting a relative living in Finland, the entry into the country is applied not only to the relatives of Finnish citizens who live in Finland but also to the relatives of EU/Schengen citizens and their family members residing in Finland and to the relatives of third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit.

A relative refers to a spouse, children, parents, grandchildren, parents-in-law and grandparents. Fundamentally, border inspectors trust the words of travellers. In this case, a guardian of a ward or guardian of interests is also considered a relative.

Persons arriving in the country on the basis of a relationship are also considered persons travelling for family matters. In practice, a relationship refers to a romantic relationship. Relationship refers to a marriage or people living continuously in a marriage-like relationship within the same household regardless of their sex. In this case, it is not mandatory that the couple has lived together continuously for two years. Additionally, relationships between people who live in different countries (“long-distance relationships”) are accepted. Fundamentally, border inspectors trust the words of travellers. More detailed information may be inquired in isolated cases. The regulations for entering Finland on a basis of a dating relationship apply to partners of Finnish citizens and to partners of EU/Schengen citizens residing in Finland and their family members as well as partners of third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit issued by Finland. A dependent of a person who is entering the country on the basis of a dating relationship may also enter Finland.

Under restriction category 1, you may also arrive in Finland for other family matters. Such matters include, for example, funerals, weddings, or illness.

## **Students in Finnish institutions**

Under restriction category 1, a student approved to study at a Finnish educational institution may enter Finland. Students may also enter Finland with a residence permit issued by Finland.

## **Essential personal or otherwise justified reasons**

A person may enter Finland for an essential personal or otherwise justified reason under restriction category 1.

An essential personal or otherwise justified reason should involve a task or event that requires one to be physically present, which cannot tolerate delay, and which, if left undone, would cause undue harm within the context in question. Essential or otherwise justified personal reasons are assessed on a case-by-case basis at the border check.

If the person can bring documents with him or her that prove the situation, this may streamline the border check.

## **Entry into Finland of a person who own a property, home or a secondary home in Finland or who enters the country for property arrangements**

A person who owns a property, home or secondary home in Finland may enter Finland under restriction category 1. The family of the owner may also arrive. In such a case, the family refers to the spouse, the cohabiting partner and the children of the owner and their families. A long-term rental (a rental agreement of more than a year signed before

the restoration of internal border controls in March 2020) shall be treated in the same way as owning an equivalent property.

A travel trailer is not real estate, a leisure home, or a holiday home in the original sense, so in principle, owning a travel trailer is not a sufficient reason for arriving in the country. The instructions on rental housing referred to above may be applied to this item on a case-by-case basis. Entry to Finland may be permitted if the person is able to demonstrate his or her long-term use of a travel trailer using a single campsite as a basis, and the trailer is used as a holiday or leisure residence (has a fixed terrace and an awning, etc.), and the person needs to check the condition of his / her property.

A person is considered to arrive in the country for the purpose of property arrangements if the person enters, for example, for the sale, purchase, rent or other property arrangements of a property, a residence or a second residence. In principle, buying or selling assets of low value (less than EUR 15,000) does not qualify as property arrangements.

### **5.3 Interpretation guidelines: restriction category 2**

## **Pressing personal reasons under restriction category 2**

Under restriction category 2, a person may arrive in Finland for a pressing personal reasons.

A pressing personal reason should involve a compulsory or unpredictable cause which requires personal attendance, which cannot tolerate delay, and which would cause undue harm within the context in question if the person concerned would not tend to it. A pressing personal reason can be, for example, participation in the funeral of next of kin. Compulsory personal reasons are assessed on a case-by-case basis in connection with the border check.

If the person can bring documents with him or her that prove the situation, this may streamline the border check.

A pressing personal reason in restriction class 2 may also be the arrival of a person who owns property in Finland if that person is entering the country for the purpose of essential maintenance work on the property, or measures related to maintenance that cannot be delayed, and if the failure of the person to come would lead to significant damage to the property considering the circumstances.

## **Compelling family matters under restriction category 2**

Travellers may enter Finland for pressing family matters under restriction category 2. Pressing family matters include, for example, the birth of one's own child, serious illness of a close relative, or one's own wedding or courting relationship.

Visiting one's own underage child who lives in Finland can also be seen as a pressing family matter.

## Relationship

Under restriction category 2, it is possible to enter Finland based on relationship.

Relationship refers to a marriage or people living continuously in a marriage-like relationship within the same household regardless of their sex. In this case, it is not mandatory that the couple has lived together continuously for two years. Additionally, relationships between people who live in different countries ("long-distance relationships") are accepted, as are other committed ways of being together.

Fundamentally, border inspectors trust the words of travelers. More detailed information may be inquired in isolated cases. The regulations for entering Finland on a basis of a dating relationship apply to partners of Finnish citizens and to partners of EU/Schengen citizens residing in Finland and their family members as well as partners of third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit. A dependent of a person who is entering the country on the basis of a dating relationship may also enter Finland.