
Repatriation Process for Cook Islanders in New Zealand to Begin 22 April 2020

Cook Islanders and Cook Islands residents caught in New Zealand when travel to their homeland was suspended about a month ago will start hearing today when they can go home.

Cook Islands officials will begin contacting people who have registered to travel to Rarotonga today and the first cohort will be required to enter supervised quarantine in a designated managed isolation facility in Auckland tomorrow.

The quarantine will last for two weeks, and towards the end of that fortnight they will undergo a COVID-19 test and medical clearance before being allowed to fly to Rarotonga.

On arrival in Rarotonga the travellers will be required to undergo a further two weeks of supervised quarantine and another COVID-19 test before being allowed back into their homes and the community at large.

The Cook Islands is one of only a handful of countries which is so far free of COVID-19 and is determined to keep the virus out. Based on information regarding the dangerous and aggressive behaviour of the virus, Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health has established the current public health measures to ensure the Cook Islands remains a COVID-19 free zone.

The Secretary of Health for the Cook Islands – Dr Josephine Aumea Herman – is in New Zealand to oversee the repatriation process. She says, “I appreciate that some people have become frustrated waiting for the opportunity to return home. But I hope they also realise that back home the whole country has been working very hard to ensure that our people have a safe place to return to; and that we have been putting in place procedures to protect - as much as we can - our vulnerable population and to shore up our health system for the good of all our citizens. We’re all in this together.”

The first repatriation flight is scheduled to depart Auckland on Saturday 9th May, arriving into Rarotonga on the afternoon of Friday 8th May. There are potentially two repatriation flights planned and more details will be released as they are firmed up.

For up to date information visit www.covid19.gov.ck

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INFO SHEET

Returning to the Cook Islands

Here you can find details for the process for supervised quarantine and medical clearance (SQMC) in Auckland and Rarotonga, and eligibility criteria for those requiring financial assistance from the Government of the Cook Islands.

The SQMC policy is limited to persons who:

1. Normally reside in the Cook Islands and were stranded in New Zealand due to border restrictions issued by the Government of New Zealand on 14 March 2020 and Government of the Cook Islands on 24 March 2020.
2. Upon being stranded, were already in possession of paid tickets for onward travel.

Before Arriving in the Cook Islands

- All Cook Islanders and eligible persons intending to travel from Auckland to Rarotonga must undergo 14 days SQMC in Auckland. This is to be followed immediately upon arrival in Rarotonga with an additional 14 days SQMC in Rarotonga.
- In addition to SQMC in Auckland and Rarotonga, all travellers will be tested for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), in order to receive medical clearance to travel and enter the Cook Islands.
- All intending travellers must register with Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health (TMO). TMO will arrange contact with the Auckland and Rarotonga Health Quarantine Managers to facilitate SQMC.
- Health Quarantine Managers (HQM) in Auckland and Rarotonga will organise accommodation, including meals and services for those travelling from Auckland to Rarotonga.
- Prior to travel to Rarotonga, all persons must be tested for COVID-19. Only those with negative results will receive medical clearance to travel to Rarotonga.
- Persons with existing chronic medical conditions will require medical assessment by a health provider to determine the level of health care required in Auckland and in Rarotonga.
- Travel to the designated Auckland accommodation facility, as well as onwards travel to Auckland International Airport will be organised by the Auckland HQM.
- Aircraft hand and check-in luggage restrictions will apply for all travellers. No food or plants are permitted.
- It is strongly recommended that any person(s) with a chronic medical condition NOT TRAVEL as health services in the Cook Islands cannot be guaranteed.

Upon arrival in the Cook Islands

- Upon arrival at Rarotonga International Airport, TMO will organise travel to the designated accommodation facility where 14 days SQMC will take place.
- The Rarotonga HQM will organise meals and services, however families who wish to bring food and/or clothes for those in supervised quarantine must leave these at the facility reception.

General

- Any person who does not abide by this policy will be refused entry in the Cook Islands
- The SQMC processes along with all aspects of the Covid-19 response by the Cook Islands government are included in the Ministry of Health Act 2013, COVID19 Act 2020, Public Health Act 2004, Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga Regulations 2020.



Q&A

I want to return to the Cook Islands. What must I do?

The first step for all prospective travellers is to register with Te Marae Ora – The Cook Islands Ministry of Health (TMO). TMO will then arrange contact with the New Zealand Health Quarantine Manager to begin the process. Registration information required includes:

1. Full passport name
2. Passport details (with any applicable permit details)
3. Address and contact details (including phone, email)
4. Cook Islands residency status
5. Health status (including existing chronic medical conditions)
6. Most recent date of arrival in New Zealand
7. Purpose of travel to the Cook Islands

NOTE - All persons must be able to travel with minimal assistance.

Cook Islanders and eligible persons in New Zealand intending to travel to the Cook Islands must undergo supervised quarantine and medical clearance (SQMC) in both Auckland and Rarotonga. This includes being tested for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in order to receive a medical clearance to travel and enter the Cook Islands.

I'm now registered with TMO. What about my airline ticket to Rarotonga? Who pays for that?

All persons returning to Rarotonga are responsible for purchasing their Air New Zealand airline ticket.

I'm now registered. How do I begin my 14-day supervised quarantine?

The Auckland HQM will organise accommodation, including meals and services for those travelling from Auckland to Rarotonga, as well as access to health providers.

Travel to the designated Auckland accommodation facility, as well as onwards travel to Auckland International Airport will be organised by the Auckland HQM.

The place of SQMC will be determined by TMO at an approved facility. Persons in supervised quarantine must comply with strict quarantine rules laid out by TMO.

The duration of the supervised quarantine will be 14 days, without exceptions.

What can I expect during supervised self-quarantine in NZ?

Rooms will be assigned as follows: Single persons will be assigned to a single room, couples will be assigned a double-room, and families will be assigned appropriate rooms to ensure physical distancing.

While in supervised quarantine, all individuals must remain in their assigned room. Meals are to be eaten by individuals in their assigned room upon delivery.

Individuals are only permitted to use the bathroom and toilet facilities assigned to their room, and are responsible for keeping facilities clean and tidy.

Rooms should be ventilated regularly by opening windows, and individuals in quarantine are not permitted to share clothes, towels, or bed linen with others.

At no time is it permissible to make physical contact with any other guests at the assigned premises. Medical advice provided to maintain health and wellbeing must be adhered to.



Q&A

What are some tips for practicing person hygiene while in quarantine?

All individuals should be washing their hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Hands should always be washed before and after eating, and after using the toilet/bathroom.

When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue. Used paper tissues must be discarded into a separate bin located in the assigned rooms. Ensure any waste soiled with bodily fluids (faeces, blood, discharge) is disposed in a separate bin in one's assigned room, before being disposed of with other waste.

Clean and disinfect any surfaces using the disinfectants supplied. All surfaces such as bedside tables, bedframes and other bedroom furniture, including the bath, basin and toilet should be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

What is the process for children that require self-quarantine?

If a child needs to be placed in supervised quarantine prior to travel, a person must be appointed to look after the child.

I've finished my supervised 14-day quarantine, what comes next?

Prior to travel to the Cook Islands, all persons having completed managed isolation in NZ (supervised quarantine) will be tested for COVID-19. Only those with negative results will receive medical clearance to travel to the Cook Islands. Travel to Auckland International Airport will be arranged by the Auckland HQM.

It is strongly recommended that any person with a chronic medical condition does NOT TRAVEL as health services in the Cook Islands cannot be guaranteed. If you have an existing chronic medical condition and must travel, you will be required to undergo a medical assessment by a TMO approved health provider to determine the level of health care required in the Cook Islands.

What if I do not complete the required 14-day supervised quarantine in NZ?

The 14-day supervised quarantine is a requirement for any individual wishing to travel to the Cook Islands. All persons must adhere to the specific requirements during the supervised quarantine period as laid out by TMO. Any person who does not abide by this policy will be refused entry in the Cook Islands.

Note - The SQMC processes along with all aspects of the Covid-19 response by the Cook Islands government are included in the Ministry of Health Act 2013, COVID19 Act 2020, Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga Regulations 2020, and Domestic Travel Restrictions Regulations 2020.

Am I eligible for funding assistance?

Cook Islands Government financial assistance is available to certain individuals.

Financial assistance is available to persons who normally reside in the Cook Islands and meet specific criteria, but remains subject to approval from TMO. The following individuals are eligible:

- Cook Islanders who normally reside in the Cook Islands
- Cook Islands approved Resident and Work Permit holders
- TMO patient referrals to New Zealand who have received a medical clearance

I have more questions, who should I contact?

For queries contact the Planning and Funding Directorate in Tupapa if you are in Rarotonga on **29 664**, or if you are in New Zealand phone or text, **021 0907 4000**, or email: **TMOAH_PHDoctor@cookislands.gov.ck** or visit **www.covid-19.gov.ck**