

COVID-19: Policy & Protocol

Rwanda (October 25, 2021)

Quick Summary of the Outbreak

1. A pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan China was first reported to the WHO Country Office in China on December 31, 2019.
2. On February 11, 2020, the WHO announced a name for the new coronavirus disease: COVID-19.
3. The novel Coronavirus disease was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020.
4. On April 16, 2020, the WHO issued guidance for governments related to public health and social measures to avoid the spread of the disease. These lockdowns had already been in place in numerous countries. Travel restrictions have also been in place.
5. To date, the total number of confirmed cases is just under 239 million with about 4.8 million deaths.
6. The countries with the highest numbers of cases are the USA (more than 45 million), India (more than 33 million) and Brazil (more than 21 million).
7. For daily reports about the situation, please visit this link on the WHO website:
www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports

Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly. People with coronavirus may experience symptoms such as but not limited to:

- fever
- respiratory symptoms
- coughing
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- Other symptoms can include runny nose, acute blocked nose (congestion), headache, muscle or joint pains, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, loss of sense of smell, altered sense of taste, loss of appetite and fatigue.

The Current Situation in Rwanda

1. The first case of COVID 19 was confirmed on March 14, 2020. As of 25 October 2021, there have been 99,374 cases of COVID-19 in Rwanda, with 1,320 related deaths. About 13.6% of the population has been fully vaccinated and the vaccination campaign is ongoing.

2. Some of the country-wide restrictions include:

- **A curfew enforced from MIDNIGHT to 4am.** Businesses close at 11:00 PM.
- **Mandatory wearing of masks in public remains in effect.**

Current Entry and Exit Requirements

1. Currently, US passengers are permitted to enter Rwanda and they are exempt from quarantine. Entry in Rwanda is allowed under the following conditions:

- **All travelers arriving in Rwanda** are required to have a negative COVID-19 certificate. The **only** accepted test is a SARS-CoV2 Real Time Polymerase (RT-PCR) performed **within 72 hours prior to departure for Rwanda. All other forms of COVID-19 tests are not permitted.**
- **All travelers arriving in Rwanda** must complete the **Passenger Locator Form** and upload their negative COVID-19 test certificate before their departure to Rwanda. The Passenger Locator Form is available on RBC's website <https://www.rbc.gov.rw/index.php?id=188>.
- COVID-19 testing is not required for accompanied children under 5 years old.
- Travelers will be tested for COVID-19 upon arrival at the Kigali International Airport. The payment for the test at the airport is \$60. The payment is to be made online, or by debit/credit card or cash upon arrival. Fully vaccinated travelers are no longer required to quarantine at designated quarantine hotels upon arrival, and before receiving their PCR test results. Non-fully vaccinated travelers are required to wait 24 hours for PCR test results in designated hotels.
- Transit passengers who are not leaving the airport will not be required to test for COVID-19 while waiting for their next flight.
- The Government of Rwanda has a zero-tolerance policy for exporting positive COVID-19 cases. If a traveler tests positive for COVID-19 upon arrival or during his/her time in Rwanda (even if fully vaccinated), the severity of the symptoms will determine whether the traveler is isolated in a government-run treatment center or a hotel at his/her own cost. Travelers will not be permitted to leave Rwanda until they receive a negative PCR test result, which could take several weeks from the first detection of your infection.
- There are currently no guidelines as to the number of negative PCR tests needed before a traveler is released from isolation.
- **All travelers departing Rwanda** must test negative for COVID-19. The **only accepted test is a SARS-CoV2 Real Time Chain Polymerase (RT-PCR) performed within 72 hours before departure. All other tests are not permitted.** Travelers are encouraged to book and pay for their tests at least three days prior to departure through the online platform https://irembo.gov.rw/home/citizen/all_services. Payments can be made either by cash or debit/credit card. GEI can facilitate the payment process.
- RBC offers rapid antigen testing without appointment at dozens of accredited private hospitals/clinics throughout Rwanda. Rapid antigen tests cost approximately \$5 (RWF 5,000). Rapid antigen test results are available shortly after the sample is taken and are delivered in person and/or via text message.
Source: <https://rw.usembassy.gov/health-alert-covid-19-information/>.

For more information, please visit these websites:

- The Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) website is the source of detailed guidance for travelers to Rwanda. U.S. citizens are encouraged to read the “Info Note for Passengers”, with the link located on the left side of RBC’s website. <https://www.rbc.gov.rw/index.php?id=188>
- U.S. Embassy in Rwanda: <https://rw.usembassy.gov/health-alert-covid-19-information/>
- Rwandan Embassy in Washington D.C.: <https://rwandaembassy.org/>
- US Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Rwanda.html>
- CDC page on COVID-19: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html

GEI Global Policy

1. We take daily updates from core, factual, reliable sites:
 - www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public
 - www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html
 - www.worldometers.info/coronavirus
 - Further local in-country sites for Rwanda
2. We immediately address and action any amendments required to the Company Protocol (see below) arising out of the updates.
3. We follow country-specific guidelines and protocols, and those may supersede our Company guidelines and protocols.
4. We disseminate the Company Protocol to all in-country staff (including all program managers and guides) and we train and update them before the start of every program.
5. We assess program managers and guides prior to each program of their up-to-date knowledge of the available information and their comfort with the Company Protocol.
6. We have an internal written document of our Company Protocol for all in-country staff on how to operate programs during the global COVID-19 spread. The Company Protocol is as follows:

GEI Protocol

1. Our staff members are all fully vaccinated. Tourism personnel in Rwanda have been given priority to get vaccinated and a majority of them got vaccinated. We will only work with tourism personnel who have been vaccinated and who have submitted a vaccination certificate to us.
2. We have identified the government-appointed medical facilities/clinics/hospitals in Rwanda capable of providing the best available care to our clients if required. These are:
 - **The King Faysal Hospital** – Kacyiru, Gasabo district, Kigali, Rwanda. Tel: (+250) 252 588 888, www.kfh.rw.
 - **Legacy Clinic** – KK 3 Rd Kigali. Tel: (+250) 788 122 100.
 - **Kigali Citizen Polyclinic** – KG 176 St, Gasabo district, Kigali. Tel: (+250) 788 511 076.
3. We provide our clients with local COVID-19 related information for pre-departure dissemination.
4. **We require that all our guests be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 at least 14 days before travelling to one of our destinations.** Guests who cannot get vaccinated because of a health condition could be exempt upon submission of a medical certificate attesting of the condition. We will review the medical certificate and take a decision on a case-by-case basis. Any further requirements that will be in place such as the submission of negative COVID-19 tests prior to departure and upon arrival will be communicated.

5. We request that our clients ensure that all program participants have adequate travel and medical insurance, including medical evacuation insurance.
6. Hotels and lodges require that we submit scanned passport copies for each program participant in advance.
7. **A COVID-19 Safety Officer will be assigned to each program.** The Safety Officer will be responsible for ensuring best practice is followed throughout the program by monitoring behavior, environment, and adherence to agreed hygiene measures. **For groups with up to 20 participants, the Program Manager or Guide will play this role and will be supported by other team members who will be on standby in case of an emergency.** For larger groups, the Program Manager or Guide will play this role as well as a second member of our team who will be appointed to be with the group.
8. Specific preventive measures will be put on place and include the following:
 - Participants must keep a social distance of 1.5 meters at all times.
 - Participants must wear a mask in public places or when requested by the Safety Officer.
 - Participants must wear a mask when their temperature is being checked, when visiting public places or when adhering to social distancing of 1.5 meters is not possible.
 - Masks should meet the following requirements:
 - Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric
 - Must completely cover the nose and mouth
 - Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps
 - Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask
 - It is important to change face masks that cannot be washed or reused at least every 4 hours and to dispose safely of any used face masks in a bin bag that is then closed tightly.
 - If masks are taken off, it is important to place them somewhere safe to keep them clean, such as in the pocket, purse, or in a paper bag.
 - Participants must avoid shaking hands and regularly use hand sanitizers.
 - Vehicle configuration and utilization limits will be applied as per industry protocols and per agreement with client.
 - Participants will be encouraged to occupy the same seat for the day, if not the whole program.
 - Number of occupants on game drive vehicles will be limited.
 - Accommodation: **Single rooms will be reserved for all participants unless otherwise instructed. If rooms are to be shared, rooming lists are to be adhered to and not changed during the course of the program.**
9. Personal protective equipment (PPE):
 - No PPE (including facemasks) or cleaning/sanitizing supplies will be provided for travelers unless specifically requested and travelers will be expected to bring their own.
 - Hand sanitizer will be available on embarkation and disembarkation of vehicles, and at all sites in line with global industry protocols.
 - GEI will have on hand a limited emergency supply of face masks should guests need to buy some for themselves. It will be a small supply and guests are generally expected to have enough masks for the duration of the trip.
 - GEI will supply face masks and sanitizer for all ground staff and drivers.

10. Temperature checks and symptoms scanning:

- **Daily temperature checks and visual assessment of any COVID-19 related symptoms will be conducted and recorded by the GEI Safety Officer/guide.**
- Additionally, guests will also be asked to self-monitor and immediately inform the guide if they have a temperature of 37.5 C (36.2 on the wrist) or higher and/or if they are feeling unwell.
- **During the daily monitoring by GEI, the Safety Officer/guide will do the following:**
 - o Take every participant's temperature with a handheld thermometer each time they embark on the vehicle in the morning.
 - o Assess if a participant is showing any other symptoms of COVID-19.
 - o Wear a face mask while doing the readings, and so must each program participant.
 - o Have a clip board with a participant list for every day, where the reading of each participant will be recorded every day, thus always keeping the record up to date.
- If the temperature check by the Safety Officer/guide shows that a person has an initial elevated temperature (37.5 C or higher), the test will be repeated 10 minutes later. If the temperature is then still higher than 37.5 C, the participant will be sent to his/ her room, and the temperature check will be repeated an hour later by the Safety Officer or by a GEI member of staff. If the temperature is still high an hour later, the GEI Safety officer or GEI member of staff will call the nurse on duty. If the group is out in the field, the participant will be requested to wear a face mask and will be seated on the back seat of the bus, until the temperature check can be repeated an hour later. If the temperature is still high an hour later, the participant will be taken to the nearest hospital for a check-up and medication if needed. The GEI Safety Manager will decide if a PCR test needs to be taken and will advise the participant accordingly. The cost of the PCR test will be at the participants' expense.
- **Reminder: Temperature screening will not identify a person who has COVID-19 who is asymptomatic (not showing any symptoms), does not have an elevated temperature as one of their symptoms, or is on medication that reduces their temperature. A person may also have an elevated temperature for other reasons, including a medical condition not related to COVID-19.**
- If a participant does not have a temperature but is showing other signs of COVID-19 during the program, he/she will be asked to self-isolate until a PCR test is conducted. If the group is out in the field, the participant will be requested to wear a face mask at all times and will be seated on the back seat of the bus or be taken to the nearest hospital for a check-up and medication
- PCR tests can be booked online through the online platform Irembo at https://irembo.gov.rw/home/citizen/all_services. PCR tests cost approximately \$50 (or RWF 47,200). Payment is required for U.S. citizens. Online payment is available through the scheduling website. PCR test results are generally delivered within 48 hours via text message

(results only) and through the RBC's COVID-19 Test Results Portal <https://rbc.gov.rw/index.php?id=188>

- **Passengers departing Rwanda are required to print out the travel certificate available through the COVID-19 Test Results Portal and hand carry them to enter the airport for departure.**
 - All lodges and hotels temperature screen their guests daily, upon entering reception & restaurant area(s) and bar(s). In case any person has a high temperature (confirmed 37.5 or higher), he/ she has to go to an isolation room at the hotel until a doctor or nurse can be dispatched to perform the COVID test. **The isolation room and COVID test will be for the guest's own account. The GEI COVID Safety Officer will arrange this together with the hotel as conveniently and economically as possible.**
11. Every GEI Program Manager/Guide ("Guide") is individually briefed about key health and safety measures for each program. This includes the following:
- On arrival, all guests are requested to alert the Guide immediately if they have any symptoms typical of a cold or flu at any time during the program. For this purpose, he/she ensures that all guests have access to his/her mobile phone/WhatsApp number and email address.
 - The Guide will also proactively approach any guest who shows symptoms (cough, fever, etc.). Such guest is asked to stay at the hotel, to wear a mask, and to avoid contact with other people as much as possible.
 - During the arrival briefing session, the Guide informs all guests about hand washing: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/hand/handwashing.html.
 - In case of any concern at any time during the program, the Guide organizes an evaluation by a medical practitioner as soon as possible and follows said practitioner's instructions. He/she will also immediately alert the GEI local office and GEI's global head office.
 - If the guest is suspected of having, or is diagnosed with, COVID-19, the Guide shall follow the GEI policies and also follow the instructions of the local authorities and health facilities. He/she shall also keep GEI's global Head Office informed at all times so that Head Office can alert and communicate with the client and any emergency contacts.
12. **In the event of a positive diagnosis, a decision on whether the other program participants need to be tested and possibly even self-isolated as well is taken together with local health authorities. In general, GEI recommends that program participants get a PCR test done 3 to 5 days after exposure. The PCR tests will be at the participants own costs. If a participant is positive, isolation rooms will be made available at the hotels and lodges at the participants' own cost.**
13. Furthermore, GEI's global head office will decide together with the client and the local health authorities whether to proceed with or cancel the program.
14. **Any travelers who contract COVID-19 while in the destination country will be required to self-isolate or quarantine in line with government regulations at that time. Their participation in their program will be suspended and any costs incurred are to be covered by participants and/or their institution. Travel and medical insurance are compulsory and expected to be in place.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The information provided in this document has been researched carefully but due to the current situation, it changes regularly so we cannot guarantee its accuracy. We invite our guests to always check the travel updates and restrictions both in their home country and Rwanda before traveling.