

COVID-19: Policy & Protocol

South Africa (October 26, 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 have already been in place in numerous countries. Travel restrictions have also been in place.
5. To date, the total number of confirmed cases is over 242 million with over 4.9 million deaths.
6. The countries with the highest numbers of cases are the USA (more than 46 million), India (more than 34 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

1. 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 South Africa

1. As of October 21, 2021, there have been more than 2.9 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in South Africa, with more than 2.8 million recovered patients and around 88,900 related deaths. About 19.5 % of the population has been fully vaccinated and the vaccination campaign is ongoing.

2. On November 11, 2020, it was announced that the Government of South Africa would open up international travel to all countries subject to the necessary health protocols and the presentation of a negative COVID-19 certificate. Domestic and international air travel is currently operating within South Africa.
3. The government of South Africa updated the lockdown alert level for South Africa to level 1 on October 1, 2021. The level 1 lockdown maintains several COVID-19 preventative regulations including mandatory masks in public places (with penalties for non-compliance) and a nationwide curfew each day from midnight to 04:00. Restaurants and eateries are able to operate while observing strict health protocols. Certain other venues, such as gyms and fitness centers, also remain open, but will need to close by 11 PM. Although a curfew is in effect, travellers to and from the airport will not be affected. People who arrive on a flight or are travelling to or from an airport will be allowed to do so during the restricted hours. They will, however, need to carry a valid boarding pass or a copy of the flight ticket.
4. The wearing of masks remains compulsory, even for vaccinated international travellers, and it is a criminal offence not to do so. There are fines and possible imprisonment (up to 6 months) for non-compliance of mandatory mask wearing in public places. Vaccinated international travelers still need to observe all COVID-19 health and safety protocols in public places. This includes observance of guidelines for social distancing of 1.5 meters, sanitation and hygiene and the wearing of a face mask.

(Main source: <https://za.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information-2/>)

Current Entry and Exit Requirements

1. Currently, US passengers are permitted to enter South Africa and they are exempt from quarantine under the condition that they present a negative COVID-19 test result **not older than 72 hours from time of departure**. Should a traveller not be able to present a valid negative COVID-19 PCR test, he/she will be required to do an antigen test on arrival at his or her own cost and in the event of a traveller testing positive for COVID-19, he or she will be required to isolate him or herself at their own cost, for a period of 10 days.
2. All travelers will be asked to install the COVID Alert South Africa mobile app. This application provides alerts and relevant information when someone has been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for the virus.
3. For more information, please visit these websites:
 - National Department of Health: <http://www.health.gov.za/>
 - U.S. Embassy in South Africa: <https://za.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information-2/>
 - South African Embassy in Washington D.C.: <https://www.saembassy.org/>
 - US Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/SouthAfrica.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 South Africa
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. As much as is possible to do so, 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 South Africa capable of providing the best available care to our clients if required. These are:

Mpumalanga:

- Rob Ferreira Hospital, General Dan Pienaar Street, Nelspruit, 1201. Tel: +27 (0)13 741 6282

Gauteng:

- Charlotte Maxeke Hospital, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193. Tel: +27 (0)11 488 4911.
- Steve Biko Hospital, Steve Biko Road & Malan St, Prinshof 349-Jr, Pretoria, 0002. Tel: +27 (0)12 354 1000.
- Tembisa Hospital, 539-541 Reverend R.T.J. Namane Dr, Hospital View, Tembisa, 1632. Tel: +27(0)11 923 2000.

Western Cape:

- Tygerberg Hospital, Francie Van Zijl Avenue, Tygerberg, 7505. Tel: +27(0)21 938 4911.

KwaZulu Natal:

- Grey's Hospital, The Msunduzi, Town Hill, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel:+27 (0) 33 897 3000.

We have also nominated Netcare group of hospitals which has a wider network of units around the country. All their hospitals are well equipped to admit COVID patients. Their emergency contact number is **+27 (0)82 911** for the EOS (Emergency Operations Centre). Follow the link to view all their hospitals <https://www.netcare.co.za/Hospitals>

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. Our guests will be required to send us a copy of their vaccination certificates prior to traveling.** 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.
5. Any further requirements that will be in place such as the submission of further negative COVID-19 tests prior to departure and upon arrival will be communicated.
6. We request that our clients ensure that all program participants have adequate travel and medical insurance, including medical evacuation insurance. Copies of such documents should be sent to us prior to departure.
7. Hotels and lodges require that we submit scanned passport copies for each program participant in advance.
8. **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.
9. 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 except when eating and/or drinking
 - 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.**

10. Personal protective equipment (PPE):

- No PPE (including facemasks) or cleaning/sanitizing supplies will be provided for travelers unless specifically requested beforehand 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.

11. 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:**
 - Take every participant's temperature with a handheld thermometer each morning.
 - Assess if a participant is showing any other symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Wear a face mask while doing the readings, and so must each program participant.
 - Have a clip board with a participant list for every day, where the reading of each participant will be recorded, 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. If a PCR test is done and is positive, a second PCR test will be done to rule out a false positive. The cost of the PCR tests will be at the participants' expense.

- 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 PCR tests can be 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
- **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.**
- PCR testing and rapid antigen tests are widely available in South Africa. There are some private enterprises running COVID-19 testing with a price around USD 80-100. PCR test results are generally available within 72 hours. However, there are some reports of test results taking longer than 72 hours, and some testing laboratories only guaranteeing results within 3-5 days. It is recommended that you always check with the facility or laboratory for specific information on how long on average it takes to receive results.

Hospitals will generally only conduct COVID-19 tests for incoming patients in possession of a doctor's letter. There is also PCR testing at OR Tambo International, Cape Town International and King Shaka International. For travellers wanting concierge PCR testing, there are several private medical providers who provide testing facilities at any accommodation including lodges in the Kruger National Park. The cost of a PCR test is around USD 50-60 with results available between 24 and 48 hours.

(Source: <https://za.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information-2/>)

- 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.**

12. 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 staff can alert and communicate with the client and any emergency contacts.
13. **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. If a participant is positive, a second PCR test will be performed to rule out a false positive. The PCR tests will be at the participants' own costs. Isolation rooms will be made available at the hotels and lodges at the participants' own cost.**
14. 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.
15. **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 South Africa before traveling.