

COVID-19: Policies & Protocols

South Africa (June 7, 2022)

Quick Summary of the Outbreak

1. The novel Coronavirus disease was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020.
2. For daily reports about the situation, please visit these links on the WHO website:
 - <https://covid19.who.int/>;
 - www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports

Symptoms of COVID-19

According to the CDC, people with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as it learns more about COVID-19. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>)

The Current Situation in South Africa

1. The first case of coronavirus was reported in South Africa on 5 March 2020. South Africa has one of the most extensive testing regimes in Africa (only Botswana and Gabon in continental Africa, and the islands of Mauritius, Seychelles and Cabo Verde have conducted more tests per 1 million population to date) which would explain why as of 25 January 2022, it had the highest recorded number of COVID-19 cases in Africa and the 19th highest number of confirmed infections worldwide, although with a relatively low reported death rate.

South Africa has seen four distinct waves of infection: the first peaked in July 2020, the second in January 2021, the third in July 2021, and the fourth in December 2021.

2. As of June 6, 2022, there have been more than 3.9 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in South Africa and around 101,317 related deaths. As a result of general vaccine hesitancy, as of 01 April 2022 only just more than 30% of the population was fully vaccinated
3. South Africa's National State of Disaster in response to the Covid-19 pandemic was lifted from midnight on Monday 04 April 2022.
4. **Masks are still mandatory** for indoor public spaces including public transport.
4. The South African tourism industry has developed comprehensive COVID-19 Protocols which are adjusted continuously in line with the risk-adjusted economic activity allowed by the South African government, the pandemic status, new information and published government regulations. Aligned to these, GEI developed our own specific COVID-19 Health & Safety Protocols to create a safety-net that reduces fear (and risk) and increases comfort, not just for our travelers, but also for our employees and communities. These protocols will be outlined and explained to all travelers at their arrival briefing.

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

Current Entry and Exit Requirements

1. **Fully vaccinated travelers** must, upon arrival at the land border, produce a valid vaccination certificate. You should ensure you can present the digital version, with the QR code, when you arrive. You should also carry a paper copy as alternative proof of vaccination status. Unverified vaccination cards are not accepted.
2. **With effect from 27 May 2022, only vaccination proofs with QR Codes, either paper-based or electronic are accepted.**
3. **Unvaccinated travelers** must, upon arrival, provide a valid certificate of a negative Covid-19 test, recognised by the World Health Organisation, which was obtained **not more than 72 hours before the date of travel**. They may also produce a **negative antigen test** performed by a medical practitioner, registered public health authority or accredited/approved laboratory **provided it was taken not more than 48 hours before travel**, or **a certificate showing they have tested positive for Covid within the last 90 days**.
4. Children between the ages of five and 12 years no longer need to provide a negative PCR test when travelling to South Africa. The regulations now only require this from children over 12 years of age
5. Whilst we have not been able to obtain confirmation in writing, we confirmed with an immigration officer directly that **fully vaccinated** for entry into South Africa means that the individual either had the one-dose Johnson & Johnson (J&J) shot or completed any of the two-dose vaccines such as Pfizer. **Booster shots** are not required to be classified as fully vaccinated at this stage.

6. Outbound travelers from South Africa must continue to comply with the requirements of the country of destination

7. 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.

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 provide our clients with local COVID-19 related information for pre-departure dissemination.
3. **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.
4. **Traveller Behaviour Agreement:** All participants will be required to sign a Health & Safety Traveller Behaviour Agreement. Breach of behavioural protocols may lead to a participant's suspension from a program, should their actions be deemed to put the safety of fellow participants, staff or local communities at risk. Any consequential costs incurred will be for the account of the client, who may recover the costs from the participant.
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.

7. Hotels and lodges typically require that we submit scanned passport copies for each program participant in advance.
8. **A COVID-19 Health & 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. Our standard protocols include specific preventive measures such as:
 - We recommend that participants keep some social distance when possible.
 - Participants must wear a mask in public places or when required by the Safety Officer.
 - Masks should meet the following requirements:
 - 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 day 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.

We strongly recommend that participants use N95 masks (if those are available in their country) or surgical masks. We do not recommend that participants use cloth masks as those do not offer sufficient protection. Please note that N95 masks are not readily available at pharmacies in South Africa, so it is important that participants bring their own. Surgical masks are available from pharmacies (including at the airport) or general food stores, and widely worn by South Africans.

- 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 available. 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:

- PCR testing and rapid antigen tests are widely available in South Africa, including on arrival at OR Tambo, Cape Town, and King Shaka International Airports. The cost of PCR tests has been standardized at R500 (around USD34) and the cost of rapid antigen tests at R250 (around USD17).

For travelers 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.

- All lodges and hotels are required to temperature screen their guests daily, which happens typically upon entering reception & restaurant area(s) and bar(s). In case any person has a high temperature (confirmed 38 C or higher on the forehead/36.7 C or higher on the wrist), 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-19 Health & Safety Officer will arrange this together with the hotel as conveniently and economically as possible.**
- 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.
 - 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.
- **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 38 C (36.7 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. We may also ask participants to self-monitor their temperature and report back in case they have a high temperature.
 - 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 (38 C or higher on the forehead/36.7 C or higher on the wrist), the test will be repeated 10 minutes later. If the temperature is then still high, 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 participant will have to self-isolate. 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 and isolation room will be at the participants' expense.
- **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.**

13. Any travelers who contract COVID-19 while in the 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 for the duration of their isolation (if not for the rest of the program depending on logistics and time remaining on the program) 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.

- If a participant does not have a temperature but is showing other symptoms which may be symptomatic of COVID-19 during the program, he/she will be asked to self-isolate. 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.
- A participant who tests positive and has symptoms will be required to self-isolate for seven days. He/She must stay in a single room and have all meals in the room. He/She must also be fully masked should they have to interact with anyone else. Unless the participant displays

serious symptoms, he/she does not need to test and can rejoin the group on day 8 but must always wear a mask while interacting with the group. The rest of the program will continue as normal but with close monitoring of participants for symptoms, and strict monitoring of mask compliance.

- If a participant tests positive without any symptoms, he/she will not be required to isolate but will have to wear a mask at all times.
- The close contacts of the participant who test positive will not be required to isolate unless they themselves also develop symptoms.

14. 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. 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.

- 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. Medical facilities in South Africa:

- **Mediclinic Southern Africa** operates a range of multi-disciplinary acute care private hospitals in South Africa. Their extensive list of hospitals can be found [here](https://www.mediclinic.co.za/en/corporate/hospitals.html):
<https://www.mediclinic.co.za/en/corporate/hospitals.html>
- In addition, 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:

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>

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.