

Guide for air travel



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One of the COVID-19 pandemic side effects has been closed borders, reduced travel opportunities, and closed skies to airlines. As of March 21, 2021, and as published in the Government Gazette, however, 22 domestic airports are operational and international airports are open :

Domestic flights:

The following airports are open for business:

- Bram Fischer International Airport
- Cape Town International Airport
- East London Airport
- George Airport
- Hoedspruit Airport
- Kimberly Airport
- King Shaka International Airport
- Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport
- Lanseria International Airport
- Margate Airport
- Mthatha Airport
- OR Tambo International Airport
- Phalaborwa Airport
- Pietermaritzburg Airport
- Pilanesburg Airport

- Plettenberg Bay Airport
- Polokwane Airport
- Port Elizabeth International Airport
- Richards Bay Airport
- Sishen Airport
- Skukuza Airport
- Upington International Airport



International flights depart from:

- OR Tambo International Airport
- King Shaka International Airport
- Cape Town International Airport

All three are open for International scheduled operations and charter flights carrying passengers. They are also operational during curfew hours.

Travelling to the airport:

If you are heading for an airport, travelling during curfew hours is allowed. A flight ticket must be presented to prove where you are headed, in the event that you are stopped by law enforcement officers.

Navigating yourself safely around the airport:

The steps listed below apply to all domestic and international flights:



- You are required by COVID-19 regulations to maintain social distance and wear a mask.



- Your temperature will be taken.



- Trolleys are disinfected, but it is worth wiping down handles when you use a trolley.



- Disinfect hands when handing over boarding passes or getting tickets from ground staff.



- Be aware that most airlines have adopted a no-touch policy on any customer documents or personal items unless assisting passengers with special needs.



- Where buses are provided for embarking or disembarking from an aircraft, only 50% of seats can be occupied. Directions from the ground crew should be followed, and sanitising stations on buses should be used.

Domestic flights:

When flying locally, travellers with travel documents are the only people allowed to enter terminal buildings. No proof is required that travellers have been vaccinated or have a valid COVID-19 test certificate.



- Be at the airport at least two hours before flying time.



- Wear a face mask as face shields are not allowed.



- Have a medical certificate if unable to wear a mask.



- Be prepared to undergo temperature screening.

In-flight procedures:



- In-flight procedures are virtually the same for domestic and international flights. The only major difference is that catering is not allowed on domestic flights, while meals are served on international flights.



- Passengers on domestic flights are excluded from taking and eating their own food on flights. Only bottled water will be served on request.



- Passengers who are worried about air quality on aircraft can relax as domestic operators have aircraft equipped with HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters that remove germs and viruses and recycle cabin air every three minutes.

During flights:



- Masks should be worn and cover the mouth and nose.



- Movement within the cabin should be avoided.



- When disembarking, await instructions from the flight crew.



- Stay seated and only leave when social distancing can be maintained.



When using onboard toilets, take the following precautions:

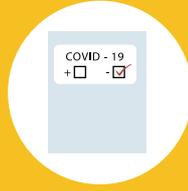
- Allow time to pass before using the facility after another passenger.
- If the lid is open, close it and then flush before use.
- Sanitise your hands before entering the cubicle and after leaving.
- Avoid touching the toilet lid with bare hands. Use a tissue and then sanitise hands.

International flight requirements:

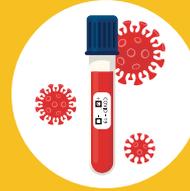
On international flights, catering is allowed. It is the operator's responsibility to take all the mitigation, health and safety measures required to contain the spread of COVID-19.



- If you are travelling internationally, you must have a vaccination certificate, or proof of a negative COVID-19 test, recognised by the World Health Organisation, which was issued not more than 72 hours before the travel date.



- If you cannot provide a negative COVID-19 test, you will have to take an antigen test on arrival at your own cost.



- If you test positive on arrival, you will have to isolate for ten days at your own cost.



- You must wear a mask during a flight.

What airlines are doing to keep aircraft COVID-19 free:

Airlines across the world, whether they are domestic or international operators, report that they are taking several steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections. Although these may vary from airline to airline, the most common precautions are:



- Sanitising aircraft interiors and 'misting them' between flights.



- Equipping staff working with passengers with masks and personal sanitisers.



- Equipping aircraft with High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters. These circulate and refresh the air in the cabin while catching particles as small as 0.1 to 0.3 microns—small enough to intercept the COVID-19 particles.



- Ensuring social distancing on board by not allocating all seats.



- Supplying passengers with hygiene kits containing a mask, antibacterial wipes, gloves, and hand sanitiser.

Airport lounges offer safe relaxation:

Airport lounges offering relaxation and refreshment before local and international flights are available at all South African airports. As they are privately operated and offer services only to qualifying travellers, different facilities are available, and opening hours can vary.

New operating procedures:

To ensure that travellers can safely use them, comprehensive COVID-19 precautions have been taken at airport lounges. These include:



- Restricting the number of guests allowed in lounges and insisting that users book to gain admission. No 'walk-in' un-booked guests are allowed access.



- Disinfecting of surfaces and sanitising premises. These steps include:
 - Using 'long-life' disinfectants that have a lifespan of between 90 and 180 days that have been specially developed for high traffic areas.
 - Ongoing cleaning and sanitising of surfaces during operating hours.
 - Placing hand sanitising dispensers at entrances and within facilities for guest use.



- Enforcing accepted personal COVID-19 precautions that include:
 - Mandatory wearing of masks at all times in lounge facilities.
 - Reducing available seating so that social distancing is maintained.
 - Stopping normal buffet food services.



- Introducing new food service standards. These include:
 - Offering individually wrapped snacks and light meals.
 - Sealed metal cutlery and condiment bottles that are regularly disinfected.
 - Offering bottled and canned beverages
 - Changing self-service hot beverage services to baristas-assisted refreshments.
 - Switching linen napkins with disposable paper serviettes



- Temporarily closing library services that are part of many facilities and removing books and magazines from lounges.



- Closing spa and shower facilities where these were offered.

Questions that are often asked are:



Must I have my baggage plastic-wrapped, and what else is being done to ensure that baggage does not become contaminated with the virus?

- Yes. The Airports Company of South Africa requires that bags are plastic-wrapped for international and domestic flights. In addition, all baggage handlers wear full PPE when assisting passengers and handling baggage.



Can my family come to the airport to see me off?

- No. Terminals are open only to passengers. Family members may drop and collect you outside terminals but may not enter unless you are disabled and need assistance to enter the facility.

What should I be doing if I am going to fly and have a disability?

The best thing to do is get in touch with your carrier and find out how the airline can help. Various regional airlines ask that:



- Passengers call at least 48 hours before boarding.
- Disabled passengers will then be asked to submit a form at least 24 hours before departure so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Generally, assistance for passengers is divided into several categories. These include:

- Being met and assisted to board the aircraft without having to use a wheelchair.
- Needing a wheelchair to get to and from the plane, but then being able to board or disembark without help.
- Requiring a wheelchair to and from aircraft and assistance up and down stairs and into the aircraft.



How do I know that the wheelchairs are clean?

- The Airports Company of South Africa sanitises wheelchairs after every use.



How can I minimise handing over my ID or driver's license to reduce the chances of contamination?

- Passengers are encouraged to use online check-in to minimise touching of personal identity documents. Security will also request that passengers scan their boarding cards.

References

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