



HIGH COMMISSIONER

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
PRETORIA

27 March 2020

LETTER TO AUSTRALIANS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

Hello everyone

Further to my letter to registered Australians yesterday I hope that you are all getting through Day 1 of South Africa's lockdown as well as you can.

I'm conscious of course that in addition to the many Australians in South Africa, we also have Aussies in Angola, Namibia, Eswatini, Botswana, Mozambique and Lesotho. The table below provides some information on the current lockdown and border restriction status for all of these countries. Please keep in mind that this will be current at the time of sending but as you know things are moving quickly and if you see an error please let us know by email. We're a small team and doing our best to stay on top of developments, but remember we're all in this together and we welcome your insights on developments in the areas you're in.

Country	Lockdown	Dates of Lockdown	International departures possible	All borders closed	Further information
Angola	Yes	27 March to 11 April	No	Yes	Government website: http://www.minsa.gov.ao/TodasNoticias.aspx
Botswana	Partial	Not available	No	Yes	Government website: https://www.gov.bw/
Eswatini	Partial	27 March to 17 April	No	Yes	Government website: http://www.gov.sz/
Lesotho	Yes	29 March to 21 April	No	Yes	Government website: https://www.gov.ls/
Mozambique	No	N/A	Yes	*No	Government website: http://www.misau.gov.mz/ *Note entry is not possible from South Africa or Eswatini as the borders are closed.
Namibia	Yes	27 March to 16 April	No	Yes	Office of the President: http://www.op.gov.na/ Namibia Ministry of Health: http://www.mhss.gov.na/
South Africa	Yes	27 March to 16 April	No	Yes	Government website: https://www.gov.za/Coronavirus http://www.nicd.ac.za/ https://www.sanews.gov.za/ http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/

The information provided below relates to South Africa. You'll see a new item on use of Uber during the lockdown. We'll shortly add information that we're gathering on conditions in Angola, Namibia, Eswatini, Botswana, Mozambique and Lesotho. Information will be repeated and updated where appropriate in each letter as we're having new Australians register each day and we don't want them to miss what's been given to others in previous letters.

I encourage everyone to spread the word to Australians you may know in southern Africa. If they haven't already registered with us please get in touch through consular.pretoria@dfat.gov.au Again, the information we really need includes:

- . Full names, dates of birth and passport numbers for yourself and all accompanying Australians;
- . Where you are located – if this is a hotel please provide the full hotel address, phone number and your room number;
- . The best way to contact you – email and phone please. We would like to be able to speak to you all individually, but please understand that we are a small office and that we are under lockdown restrictions. Email communication is most efficient from our end, but if this is not possible for you of course phone us on 012 423 6000. We don't currently have reception staff but we're doing the best we can to answer your calls.
- . Advice if you suffer from a chronic medical condition and you are concerned about access to medications or treatment.
- . Name and Australian contact information for a nominated family member that we are able to contact on your behalf in the event of an emergency. We are of course bound by the Australian Privacy Act so will not contact other persons about your situation unless it relates to a life-threatening emergency. It would be helpful though if you could confirm your consent for this in your email.

South Africa

Lockdown

A 21-day lockdown commenced at midnight 26 March and will be in effect until after Easter, to 16 April. It is very important to follow the advice given by South African government authorities, particularly in relation to lockdown procedures and restrictions in place.

Information is available at www.gov.za. Lockdown regulations are enforceable by the police and other law enforcement authorities. Violations will be dealt with seriously and may result in legal action and imprisonment.

We, and our families, at the High Commission are also in lock-down at our homes but will do what we can to continue to keep in touch with you and provide consular advice as best we can, particularly for Australians who may have chronic health conditions or who are particularly vulnerable in other ways.

Transport options while under lockdown: While of course movements will be heavily restricted during lockdown if you do need to travel, for a medical appointment for example, there are options. The South African Minister of Transport announced on 25 March that e-hailing services such as Uber are authorised to operate but with restricted hours and conditions.

I received a message from Uber on 27 March advising that they are authorised to operate daily for all riders but under restricted hours from 5am to 9am and 4pm to 8pm for permitted travel purposes only. The Uber app will only be available during the restricted operating hours and travelling is restricted to obtaining an essential good or service (e.g. grocery shopping and medical appointments) or rendering an essential service. For UberX, UberGO, UberBLACK, Uber ASSIST, UberVIP there is a maximum of one passenger; for UberXL a maximum of 2 passengers and for UberVan a maximum of 3 passengers. Passengers are requested to sit in the back seat of the vehicle. It is illegal to transport any alcoholic beverages in any vehicle during the lockdown.

Medical: If you have a condition that you take regular medication for it's of course vital that you have ample supplies to see you through. Australian prescriptions cannot be filled in South Africa so if you do need to get additional medications it's important to start thinking about this.

Doctors and pharmacies will remain open during the lockdown. I recommend you visit a GP rather than going to a hospital at this time, unless of course you have an emergency. Your hotel should be able to give you advice on a GP nearby or may have a doctor on call that you can access. I suggest you have a chat with your hotel's concierge or reception about this, including what arrangements they have in place in the event you have some sort of medical emergency.

Visas: We've heard from several Australians concerned about the issue of overstaying their visas if they go into lockdown. South African authorities have advised that there will be no penalty for travellers whose visas expire as a result of the lockdown.

Information common to all countries

Safety and Security: Whether in lockdown or not it is important to consider your personal safety and security.

- Information on security concerns can be found in the "Safety" section of our travel advice at www.smartraveller.gov.au – just type South Africa or the country you are in into the destination box and follow the prompts.
- It's important to be vigilant about your safety even when in lock down – the basics are crucial: ensure your hotel room doors are locked and use the extra safety latch; if you do go out make sure you are back at your accommodation before it gets dark; make sure you watch your wallet, mobile phone and other valuables, and ensure your passport is secure. All those normal common sense precautions but it's easy to be complacent. We want you to be safe.

Keep in touch: As we continue efforts to ensure we know of all Australians in the region and their location, please let us know if your circumstances change, i.e. if you move address or contact number, or if you return safely home to Australia.

Keep monitoring our social media platforms – Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn - for further updates, and continue to monitor the government’s Smartraveller website – both the general COVID-19 bulletin on the main page of the site, and individual Travel Advices for each country, on the website www.smartraveller.gov.au.

As I will say each letter - I and my staff at the High Commission are committed to your safety at this time. It is a challenging period for everyone so please take care and look after yourself and your family and friends.

Warm regards
Gita

Gita Kamath
Australian High Commissioner

ACCOMMODATION SUGGESTIONS:

In addition to hotels you might want to consider booking accommodation via Air BnB www.airbnb.com, which is very popular in South Africa. Just keep security considerations in mind and remember you will not have access to things like room, laundry, ATM services etc. There are of course many other suggestions and options available through websites such as www.booking.com.

Johannesburg

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