

SANParks calls for shared responsibility in light of Covid-19 surge

South African National Parks (SANParks) has called for shared responsibility in exercising responsible travelling and behaviour in the midst of an increase in Covid-19 cases in areas where some of its national parks are situated.



Entropy1963 via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Acting head of communications, Rey Thakhuli says that some of the national parks managed by SANParks fall within the jurisdiction of the identified hotspots in both the Eastern and Western Cape where an increase in Covid-19 cases have been reported.

He says that these areas include the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality and Sarah Baartman District both in the Eastern Cape, bordering Addo Elephant National Park and part of the Garden Route District in the Western Cape, bordering Garden Route National Park (Tsitsikamma, Knysna and Wilderness sections).

There are also some concerns highlighted in areas such as Table Mountain, Agulhas and West Coast National Parks in the Western Cape.

“ We urge those travellers who elect to proceed with their travel to our parks in the Cape to assist us and practise the basic hygiene principles to mitigate the spread of the disease and adhere to the set rules of the park. ”

According to Thakhuli, in line with the call made by the President on 3 December 2020 to help curb the further resurgence of Covid-19, SANParks will continue to implement stringent protocols in all its national parks including those in identified hotspots and those likely to be potential hotspots.

He indicated that the organisation is currently seeing a lot of uncertainty and anxiety in particular concerning travelling in the identified hot spots with some cancellations already effected by guests for bookings in Addo Elephant and the Garden Route National Parks starting from 16 December 2020 to 15 January 2021.

"Despite the negative effect brought by these cancellations, SANParks welcomes the move by guests and would accept more voluntary cancellation as a means of helping to manage lower occupancy levels and curb the spread of Covid-19 especially in those parks that are situated within the Eastern and Western Cape."

Curbing the spread of Covid-19

Thakhuli said to ensure that occupancy remains low during this difficult times, SANParks has also taken a decision not to take new bookings if cancellations are realised for Addo Elephant and Garden Route National Parks (Tsitsikamma, Knysna and Wilderness); "Should travellers elect to cancel or postpone their bookings to a later date for these specific areas, SANParks will not charge fees or penalise cancellations, amendments and postponements for a 12 month period from the departure date of an existing booking in those areas."

He emphasised that cancellations, amendments and postponements for bookings in all other national parks will carry penalties as per the SANParks Reservations Policy.

Enforcing responsible conduct

He added that there will be a visible presence of rangers and other park officials in Cape parks to enforce responsible conduct for the safety of both visitors and staff, these officials will also administer temperature checks regularly and ensure that there is adherence to obligatory wearing of masks and maintaining the prescribed social distancing.

Ablution blocks and areas frequented by guests will be disinfected often, sanitising stations will be made available and travellers are also encouraged to double the efforts by utilising their own sanitizers. Parents are encouraged to monitor the movement of their children at all times.

Further measures to be introduced in the parks in the Eastern and Western Cape include a total ban on the transport or consumption of all alcoholic beverages for day visitors within the parks; introduction of day visitor quotas and closure of some public areas - these include some picnic sites, day visit attractions and some beaches managed by SANParks. In addition, open safari vehicles for game-viewing specifically in Addo Elephant National Park will only load 50% of the allowed capacity. These measures will prevail from 16 December 2020 to the 15 January 2021.

"We urge those travellers who elect to proceed with their travel to our parks in the Cape to assist us and practise the basic hygiene principles to mitigate the spread of the disease and adhere to the set rules of the park," concluded Thakhuli.