

## Be safe if travelling to high risk Covid-19 countries

Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister, Dr Naledi Pandor, is pleading with South Africans travelling to the Northern hemisphere countries to exercise caution as most nations are deep in the second wave of Covid-19.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Speaking during a media briefing on Monday, Pandor said she was worried about travellers becoming distressed or even destitute pending the reintroduction of stricter lockdown restrictions with the likelihood of cancelling international flights at short notice.

"Please note that you will be travelling at your own risk to these countries knowing the current circumstances and the uncertainty going forward," the Minister added.

Pandor has also asked the holidaymakers to familiarise themselves with immigration and health entry requirements of the country they will be visiting during the pandemic.

"If you have any uncertainty regarding the entry health requirements of the country you will be visiting, then please contact their embassy in SA for assistance. If you need any clarity about the health entry requirements upon your return to SA, and then please consult the website of the Department of Health," she added.

According to the Minister, travellers should also ensure that they have adequate travel insurance.

"Many South Africans had no or inadequate travel insurance during the peak of the pandemic earlier this year to cover extended hotel accommodation, new flight tickets, and so on."

The Minister also asked them to register with the embassies abroad and contact particulars of embassies available on Dirco's website.

"South Africans are encouraged to register via the e-mail addresses provided as some of our officials might be working remotely due to local lockdown regulations and will not always be able to take your calls. Inform your family or next of kin of your destination and duration of stay."

Also, ensure that you meet the immigration requirements of the country you wish to visit as countries have revised their visa regimes during the global pandemic.

"Read thoroughly on the country you intend visiting as the global situation is unstable. If the country you visit is a high risk one, consider postponing your visit or proceeding with caution if the travel is avoidable."

Also, know the Covid-19 protocols of the country you intend visiting as should you not comply, you might be refused entry, she advised.

"Although not yet common, many airlines will likely require proof of Covid-19 vaccinations before commencing travel. Currently, a Covid-19 test is compulsory."

## **Repatriation**

Meanwhile, one of the hurdles faced by the department this year was the repatriation of citizens who found themselves stuck outside of South Africa due to lockdowns that were implemented by many countries, including South Africa.

According to Pandor, the department's Consular Services managed to repatriate just over 30,000 South Africans who were stranded from all corners of the world, using over 350 flights.

The Minister said this was when President Cyril Ramaphosa announced South Africa's level 5 lockdown on the 15 March 2020 to when international travel was again permitted under level 1.

"The number excludes tens of thousands who used our land borders."

She has expressed her gratitude to all the officials who were involved in this process.

"I know many spent sleepless nights, working seven days a week trying to bring our fellow citizens back to their loved ones."

Pandor has also urged people to keep safe, as the number of Covid-19 cases peak in South Africa - by wearing masking, maintain social distance and washing hands.