

# EAST AFRICA TOURISM PLATFORM

## ADVOCATING FOR HARMONIZED COVID-19 HEALTH PROTOCOL GUIDELINES

Kigali, December 17, 2020





# ADVOCATING FOR HARMONISED COVID-19 HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND TRAVEL GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

- Tourism is among the East African Community's (EAC) major economic sectors. It is a major foreign exchange earner for the countries, employing millions of people and accounting for most of the region's global trade.
- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector across East African economies contributed an average of 8.1% to GDP and 17.2% to export earnings and generates 7.1% of employment. As regards to employment, tourism employed about 1,278,000 direct and 1,981,000 indirect jobs in the partner states.
- The COVID-19 global pandemic has hugely impacted the sector, with revenues falling by as much as 90% in some of the countries as a result of global lockdowns and halt of travel.
- Tanzania resumed international flights on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 whereas Rwanda and Kenya reopened to commercial flights of 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2020. Uganda and Burundi resumed international air travel on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020 respectively.
- As countries gradually lift travel restrictions and tourism slowly restarting in many parts of the region, health must continue to be a priority and coordinated health protocols that protect workers, communities and travellers, while supporting tourism employers and their employees must be firmly in place.
- Although most of the EAC countries have the necessary COVID-19 prevention and travel health guidelines in place, they vary from country to country and can be a deterrent for encouraging the resumption of regional travel and boosting travellers' confidence.

## COVID-19 PREVENTION AND TRAVEL RESUMPTION GUIDELINES IN EAC COUNTRIES

- Prior to arrival, all EAC member states require travellers to take a COVID-19 test hours before departure and present negative test certificates at the airports. However, for Kenya and Rwanda, the only accepted test is a SARS-CoV 2 Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) performed within 96 and 120 hours before departure respectively. Other tests, such as Rapid Diagnostics Test (RDTs) are not accepted. This is different in the other EAC countries.
- The period within which a traveller takes a COVID-19 test before departing for a country in the EAC is not the same. Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda require the test be taken within 72 hours before departure, while Kenya and Rwanda require it taken within 96 hours and 120 hours respectively.
- Regarding quarantine on arrival, Tanzania and Uganda don't have a mandatory quarantine requirement for arriving passengers while Burundi and Rwanda require travellers to quarantine for 72-hours and 24-hours respectively in designated hotels of choice as a second COVID-19 test is carried out at their own expense. In Kenya, a 14-day quarantine is mandatory for symptomatic travellers arriving in the country and those seated within 2 rows of a symptomatic patient in an aircraft.
- In Burundi, the cost of a COVID-19 test is US\$100 for foreigners and US\$30 for Burundians; while Rwanda charges US \$60 for a COVID-19 test, which includes US \$50 for the test and a US \$10 medical service fee. In Kenya, the COVID-19 test is US \$100 in private hospitals and US \$50 in government health facilities. Uganda and Tanzania don't

have specified cost for taking the COVID-19 test and may vary depending on the medical facility.

- Kenya and Rwanda have strict night curfew hours, which are between 10pm and 4am for Kenya and 9pm and 4am for Rwanda. Movement is prohibited during those hours and those found violating this and other public health guidelines against the spread of COVID-19 are either put in mandatory quarantine of 14 days in Kenya or fined up to US\$50 or placed under police custody for up to 5 days in Rwanda.
- Travellers departing from Rwanda and Uganda must present negative COVID-19 test results taken within 120 hours before departure; while the test is not mandatory for travellers leaving Kenya and Burundi. Tanzania requires passengers be screened before leaving or entering the country.
- The COVID-19 prevention measures and safety protocols at the different tourist attractions and hospitality facilities within the EAC countries vary or aren't in place in some cases. For example, Rwanda requires conference facilities to have all participants test for COVID-19 prior to attending sessions and venues shouldn't exceed 30% sitting capacity while this is not the case in other EAC countries.

## **PARTING SHOT**

While the tourism sector is under pressure at the moment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be a bounce-back not too far off. Nonetheless, the ability to rebound will be enhanced through the continued collaboration and joint efforts between the EAC partner states.

- In order to promote the safe re-opening and promotion of the EAC as a single travel destination, it is important that the EAC countries align their COVID-19 prevention and travel resumption guidelines across the policy levels.
- This would mainly include;
  - agreement and recognition/or consideration of COVID-19 testing methods and results within the EAC member states,
  - cut disproportionate waiting times for tests results
  - establish a common quarantine period
  - harmonise passenger locator forms where required
- The EATP also encourages the formation of bilateral agreements and travel corridors between EAC member states to foster seamless travel for its peoples; and as travellers from non-EAC members states.
- Ministries of Tourism and tourism boards should ensure the development of crisis/emergency management plans.

### **About the EATP:**

The East Africa Tourism Platform is the apex private sector body for Tourism in East Africa. The EATP Mission is to promote intra and inter-regional tourism through advocacy, marketing, skills development, research and information sharing. The East Africa Tourism Platform was established in 2011 and is supported by Trademark East Africa. The Platform under the leadership of key tourism leaders in the region motivates and define private sector participation in the emerging EAC policies and behaviour. It makes the voice of the private sector heard and relevant in the regional integration process, pursuing common a common agenda as a sector.

Since July 2020, The Rwanda Chamber of Tourism has committed to contribute to providing both technical and operational support to the EATP which includes hosting the EATP Secretariat. The Rwanda Chamber of Tourism is the private sector pillar, of the Rwanda Private Sector

Federation, which dedicated to promoting and representing the interests of the Rwandan tourism and hospitality business community.





## Borderless Borders Celebrate Culture

Experience the rich cultural  
heritage of our people

# Destination East Africa



## EAST AFRICA TOURISM PLATFORM

EATP - Secretariat| Rwanda Chamber of Tourism  
M&M Plaza | Gishushu, Kigali  
Tel: +250782523055  
Facebook: East Africa Tourism Platform|  
Twitter: @EA\_Tourism|  
Skype: tourismea