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Travel Alert - COVID-19 Update

Recent developments involving SARS-2 Covid variants changes in nations' travel and domestic restrictions have significantly changed the landscape of the pandemic and the consequences for travelers and expatriates.

- ❖ The delta variant is clearly now the dominant viral subtype in most regions of the world with the exception of South America. This variant is more readily transmitted and may cause more serious illness.
- ❖ In countries with high levels of vaccination, delta is responsible for most infections among unvaccinated individuals, especially the younger adult population. These now represent the majority of infections in these regions and a growing portion of hospitalized patients.
- ❖ There are mounting reports of delta variant infections among fully vaccinated individuals. While most of these cases are mild, they have been associated with more serious cases in the elderly and immune-suppressed. However, full vaccination makes it much more likely that "breakthrough" infections will cause mild illness.
- ❖ General relaxation of social distancing and masking restrictions and increased travel as result of eased border restrictions may lead to additional surges in cases.
- ❖ Emerging social unrest related to ongoing restrictions and other issues may stall or reverse efforts to contain outbreaks.

The following cautions apply by region:

- **Europe and North America**
 - Europe and North America are experiencing a renewed surge in cases related to the delta variant. The UK is now seeing an increase in hospitalizations.
 - The European Commission has implemented the EU Digital Covid Certificate that enables residents to upload vaccination and testing information. Individual countries still have the right and are applying their own restrictions.
 - Several countries, including the UK maintain strict quarantine requirements upon entry, especially from "red" and "amber" countries.
- **Africa**
 - Africa has experienced major fluctuations in recent surges. Evacuation to the main higher centers of care, South Africa and Kenya, remain highly volatile due to changing availability of health facilities. Bed-finding takes longer than in pre-Covid times.
 - South Africa has seen a downturn in hospital and overall cases, but widespread protests and looting with no social distancing measures are likely to result in a new spike and renewed pressure on the health system.
 - Various countries are seeing a rise in cases, putting additional strain on already under-resourced health facilities.



➤ **Asia**

- Asia is witnessing surges in several countries with Indonesia bearing a serious impact. Health facilities are generally overloaded reaching a saturation point. Covid cases will not be accepted for evacuation by nearby countries.
- India has seen a downturn in cases in the major cities, whose medical facilities are generally able to handle inpatient needs. However, cases have been difficult to control in less urban parts of the country where vaccination rates are lower and hygiene precautions more difficult to enforce.
- Japan is coping with a spike in cases and concerned about a surge related to the Olympic Games, even with the limited number of spectators permitted.

➤ **South and Latin America**

- South and Latin America are still struggling with a high caseload, especially in Brazil, Argentina and Colombia. Case rates have moderated in these countries, but are still significant. Several countries in South America are dealing with surges and sustained high levels, straining medical resources.
- A recent variant known as Lamda, which arose in Peru, appears to be taking hold on the continent. It is considered more transmissible. It is responsible for a high hospitalization and death rate in Peru and unclear whether this is due to the limited health infrastructure or a potentially more virulent strain.
- Evacuations for Covid in this region will not be permitted to neighboring countries. In some cases, we can arrange acceptance in Mexico or the U.S.
- In general, Covid patients will not be accepted in evacuation by regional countries. A qualified destination may be identified on a case-by-case basis, but the default option may again be the home country.

REMINDERS WHEN YOU TRAVEL

- Please refer to previous advisories and maintain hygiene precautions when preparing for travel or expatriation.
- Make every effort to be fully vaccinated before departure.
- Carry supplies of masks and hand sanitizer.
- Make sure any health conditions are well-controlled, to avoid the likelihood of needing emergency care in resource-limited locations.
- Take stringent precautions to avoid other types of infection such as malaria and food-borne illness that can simulate Covid illness.
- To better ensure a smooth evacuation in the event of a serious medical condition:
 - Have your passport and all travel document in hand to present immediately.
 - Have any vaccination documentation at hand and available.
 - Be reachable, have a local contact for communication and keep your mobile phone charged and reachable.
 - Ask that your Covid PCR test results document be printed and available. Authorities frequently ask for the official result.
- Reconsider travel to countries with weak healthcare infrastructure if you have serious underlying health conditions or would be unable to deal with the prospect of a delay in evacuation due to regional Covid restrictions.

Reference: <https://covid19.who.int/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

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