



INTRODUCTION

Falling sick, becoming a victim of crime or facing an emergency are traumatic events. When these problems happen abroad, they can make one's situation even more difficult and traumatic. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), through the Chief Directorate: Consular Services in Pretoria and our diplomatic and consular missions abroad, assists South African citizens who find themselves in distress and / or destitute abroad, as set out in this pamphlet.

Most South African citizens travelling for business or pleasure, or living abroad, do so without serious difficulty as they prepare themselves before their trip. This publication provides helpful hints on how to stay safe abroad and ensure that you are covered in case things go wrong. There is a lot that you can do, for example:

- acting responsibly and being aware of the risks
- registering at a South African Embassy / Consulate General abroad after arrival at your destination / or before your departure from South Africa
- taking out full travel insurance
- respecting the culture and customs of the countries you are visiting.

Take time to learn about your destination. By doing your homework before you leave, you minimise the chances of something going wrong.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOURSELF

- Take note of news reports of any problems in the area you will be / are visiting.
- Before your departure, visit our website – www.dirco.gov.za under *Foreign Relations – South African Representatives Abroad* – to ensure that you have the contact details of the (South African) Embassy, High Commission or Consulate in the country you will be visiting.
- Get full travel insurance or an overseas health plan. If you do not take out proper insurance, you will have to pay the costs of any emergency yourself, including expensive medical bills. (Your travel agent will advise you on the options available to suit your budget.)
- At least six weeks before you travel, check with your doctor or travel clinic what vaccinations and other health precautions you may need to take for your trip.
- If you have a medical condition, or are pregnant, you



should seek medical advice from your physician prior to travel.

- If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could present a problem while you are travelling, it is advisable to wear a Medic Alert bracelet, containing basic vital medical information, which is essential in the case of emergency medical treatment. For further information, refer to the website of Medic Alert South Africa – www.medicalert.co.za.
- If you require medication for an existing medical condition, take a sufficient supply of prescribed medicine with you and keep it handy. Find out if your prescription medication is legal in the countries you plan to visit. Check the website of the country you are visiting. In certain countries, over-the-counter medication is prohibited e.g. codeine is a banned substance in certain countries. Keep all medication in its original, labelled containers. Carry a copy of the doctor's prescription with you. If syringes are needed, have a medical certificate stating their use.
- Essential medication should be stored in hand luggage to ensure availability in cases where luggage is delayed, lost or stolen.
- If you have prescription spectacles, carry a copy of the prescription for easy replacement should you lose or break them.
- Make sure your passport is valid for the whole period of the travel and in good condition, and that you have all the necessary visas / permits.
- Fill in the next-of-kin details in your passport.
- Registration of South African Citizens Abroad: By

registering your trip, you assist DIRCO to locate you during a declared emergency, thus verifying your status and liaising with your next-of-kin. The registration is a free, voluntary service provided by government, through DIRCO. We encourage you to consider registration as an integral part of your travel planning and security. Please visit our website: www.dirco.gov.za; or contact the following e-mail address: rosahelp@dirco.gov.za

- Leave copies of your passport, insurance policy (plus the insurer's 24-hour emergency number), ticket details, your itinerary and contact details with your family and friends.
- Take enough money for your trip and some back-up funds, such as traveller's cheques or credit cards. Before you leave, find out how you can replace your traveller's cheques and credit cards if you lose them, and keep a separate note of their numbers.
- Before you travel, get a good guidebook and get to know your destination. Find out about local laws and customs, and follow them. Be aware of your personal security and take sensible precautions to protect yourself.
- Always lock luggage, not only to discourage theft but also to make sure it does not open during handling. Buy small locks to lock all external zipper pockets of bags. This will also protect you against others slipping illegal substances into your luggage. Little plastic cable ties are invaluable, as they have to be cut to be opened.
- Never carry luggage, a package or letters for someone else, unless you have been able to verify the contents completely. Pack your own baggage, fasten it securely

and never leave it unattended. Keep an eye on your children's backpacks, toys and stuffed animals.

- Do not be tempted to use drugs. While illegal drugs are readily available and openly used in many countries, the fact remains that they are dangerous and illegal. When caught, you can face lengthy jail sentences and / or the death penalty.
- For information about what you are allowed to take out of the country or bring home to South Africa, contact the South African Revenue Service (SARS) – www.sars.gov.za. Note: If you want to take out more than your travel allowance, you will need to get exchange control permission from the South African Reserve Bank.

WHO CAN WE HELP

- South African citizens and permanent residents.
- Dual nationals, provided they have entered the country in question on their South African passport and they are not in the country of the second nationality. If you are a dual national travelling on your South African passport in a third state (that is, a country of which you are not a national), we will offer you our full support. If you are travelling on the passport of your other nationality, we will direct you to that state's local Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

WHAT CAN WE DO

We offer non-financial assistance, which is appropriate to the individual circumstances of each case, including:

- issuing emergency travel documents against the payment of the prescribed fee after verifying citizenship (in cases of lost South African passports)
- providing appropriate help (non-financial assistance) if you have suffered serious assault, are a victim of other crimes, or are in hospital
- providing details of local law commissions, interpreters, doctors and funeral parlours (without assuming responsibility for their effectiveness or costs thereto)
- contacting you as soon as possible after being informed (dependent on local circumstances) that you have been detained
- non-financial assistance to families of deceased persons
- consular notarial functions (e.g. legalisation of South African public documents for use abroad and providing Commissioner of Oaths services).

international departures 10:15

| flight | destination | time | gate | status |
|---------|-------------|-------|------|----------|
| UA 269 | HARRARE | 09:15 | A26 | Boarding |
| SA8052 | MASERU | 09:35 | A27 | Boarding |
| EP 212 | MALDI | 10:10 | A27 | Boarding |
| SA 212 | MALDI | 10:10 | A27 | Boarding |
| PDF 408 | VILANCULOS | 10:20 | A28 | Boarding |
| SA 172 | BLANTYRE | 10:30 | A28 | Boarding |
| SA8054 | MASERU | 10:30 | A29 | Boarding |
| DA 395 | HELEA | 10:30 | A27 | Boarding |
| SA 022 | HARRARE | 10:40 | A21 | Boarding |
| SA 021 | HARRARE | 10:40 | A21 | Boarding |
| SA 062 | LUSAKA | 10:50 | A19 | Boarding |
| SA 042 | LUSAKA | 10:50 | A19 | Boarding |
| SA 074 | WINDHOEK | 10:55 | A20 | Boarding |
| SA 071 | WINDHOEK | 10:55 | A20 | Boarding |
| LV 512 | TEL AVIV | 11:15 | A2 | |

Travel Smart with DIRCO

#TravelSmartWithDIRCO

Department of International Relations and Cooperation

How to access Consular Services when travelling or living abroad





WHAT WE CANNOT DO

- Get you out of prison, prevent the local authorities from deporting you after your prison sentence or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings.
- Help you enter a country, for example, if you do not have a visa or your passport is not valid, as we do not interfere in another country's immigration policy or procedures.
- Give you legal advice, investigate crimes or carry out searches for missing people.
- Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people.
- Pay any bills or give you money.
- Make travel arrangements for you, or find you work or accommodation.
- Make business arrangements on your behalf.
- Assist with transfer of funds to a national who is not in distress.
- Return a child that has been abducted by a parent / family member.

TRAVELLING ABROAD

- Always make sure that you have full travel insurance.
- Make sure your insurance is up to date, valid for the entire trip and covers everyone who is travelling.
- Carry the details of your travel insurance with you.
- It is suggested that you inform your travel agent, a friend or relative how to contact your insurer.
- Make sure that all your vaccinations are up to date and find out about any other suggested medical advice by visiting your healthcare provider. Pack enough supplies of any medication that you are taking in your hand luggage.
- Fill in the next-of-kin details in your passport.
- Register at a South African Embassy / Consulate General abroad / or before your departure from South Africa.
- Make sure you are aware of the immigration and customs controls of the country you are travelling to.
- If you are planning to drive, make sure your South African driving licence is current and valid and make sure you know the local driving laws. Be careful about who and what you carry in your vehicle, if on a driving trip abroad. As the driver, you could be held responsible for the misdeeds of passengers, even if committed without your knowledge or involvement.
- Contact the Automobile Association South Africa (AA) for further information – www.aa.co.za.



SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Travel can be tiring and difficult, therefore, travellers are encouraged to plan trips with particular care. In addition, travellers may have to take into account other considerations depending on their circumstances. These travellers might include:

- women travelling alone
- children traveling alone or with only one parent
- religious pilgrims
- young travellers
- backpackers and independent travellers
- travellers with disabilities.

WHEN YOU ARE AT YOUR DESTINATION

- Only carry as much money as you need for the day. Leave the rest (jewellery and valuables), and at least one credit card, in the hotel safe if one is available. Keep copies of your passport, insurance details and other important travel documents separate from the originals.
- Have the contact details of the local South African Embassy, High Commission or Consulate for the country you are visiting.
- When you arrive, find out how to get in touch with the local emergency services in case you need them during your stay.

- Stay in regular touch with your family and friends in South Africa, especially if you are travelling alone or in a remote area.
- You must respect local laws. There are very serious penalties for breaking a law which might seem trivial to you or for doing something which may not be illegal in South Africa.
- Respect the host country's local customs and behave and dress appropriately, particularly when visiting religious sites, markets and rural communities.
- Ensure that what you are bringing back to South Africa is legal.
- Be aware of local attitudes to alcohol and know your own limit.
- Be aware of what may happen if you become involved with drugs abroad. Pack your own baggage, fasten it securely and never leave it unattended. Keep an eye on your children's backpacks, toys and stuffed animals.
- Choose your travel companions wisely. If your fellow travellers happen to be carrying, using or selling illegal drugs, you could be found guilty by association.
- If your luggage appears to have been tampered with, be cautious and rather call a customs official or a security guard and report the matter.

YOU SHOULD ALWAYS

- Treat our staff with respect.
- Follow local (your host country's) laws.

- Be prepared to pay for some types of consular assistance, for example, issuing an emergency travel certificate (we do not make a profit from these charges).

NOTE

- Like any organisation, we have a duty of care to our employees. We will not send staff into a situation where we judge that their safety could be seriously at risk.
- Many people need our support at a time of great personal distress or anxiety and our staff will always try to be sensitive and as helpful as possible.
- Please remember that staff may be dealing with a number of difficult cases at any one time.

GIVE US FEEDBACK

We welcome your views on the support we provide. They will help us to identify what we do well and what we could do better. If you have any comments on the support you received, please write to: consular@dirco.gov.za

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, neither the South African Government nor its employees, including any member of South Africa's diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

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For more information, consult our website at www.dirco.gov.za – Consular Services

For a list of South African diplomatic, consular and other representatives in foreign countries, visit www.dirco.gov.za



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