

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

GROUP TRIPS

Leatherback Travel is the operator of several travel brands, including Patch Adventures, Camino Women, Magnificent Rail and Fencox.

1.0 Leatherback Travel Guidelines for Group Trips

The World Health Organisation downgraded COVID-19 from a global health emergency on 5th May 2023.

For this reason, we are moving towards a general policy that covers **Highly Transmissible Communicable Diseases** including Covid-19, Influenza, and Gastro.

We do realise that COVID-19 remains a risk to our groups and that some of our destinations still have local COVID regulations in place. The following guidelines will help us to manage the risk.

1.1 Destination Monitoring

In line with current Industry Standards, **Leatherback Travel** has removed the requirement for all guests to be fully vaccinated or take a COVID test to be able to travel with us.

Guests are encouraged to check specific entry requirements regarding vaccines and be up to date regarding COVID information before travel. We cannot recommend vaccines or provide information about general vaccination needs before travel; for this reason, it is best to talk to a medical professional before traveling, if you have any concerns about these issues.

Trips will not be cancelled as a result of a change in destination entry/isolation requirements; standard cancellation terms will apply if you decide to cancel.

1.2 Expectations

We run trips to many countries that have very low vaccination rates against Covid-19, influenza, and other diseases. Public health policy is weak or poorly implemented, and public health education is either lacking or non-existent. While it is possible to reduce risk to a limited extent, it is not possible to eliminate risk of sickness. This is one of the few downsides of travel.

For this reason, if you have strong concerns about contracting a disease, or have particular vulnerabilities in terms of your own health, you should reconsider travel, or consult with a medical professional as to the best ways to ensure you stay healthy and safe.

We do have guidelines - more on that below - but even perfect adherence to these guidelines cannot guarantee that you'll be protected. The risk of contracting illness is real, and unfortunately, it does happen that even the most prepared guests on trips can fall ill.

Please come to your trip prepared for different eventualities. Covid-19 is not the only risk - many of our destination countries have an elevated risk of diarrhoea, gastro, food poisoning, or waterborne illnesses. Because it is possible to test for COVID-19, we recommend bringing 10+ RAT tests as it is easy to run out quickly, and it is difficult to locate tests in many of the destinations we travel to. In fact, in most of our destination countries, it is now almost impossible to acquire RAT tests in many areas - including major cities.

1.3 Guidelines

Leaders:

- **Leaders** are expected to follow our protection protocols below if they appear to be ill with a transmissible disease that does not have widely available testing (eg influenza, gastro.)
- **Leaders** are no longer required to be fully vaccinated or to test routinely for Covid-19 before leading a group.
- If a **leader** shows clear COVID symptoms in the days prior to a tour, they should take a COVID test. The **leader** will not be able to join the trip if they receive a positive test result. Leatherback will source an alternative trip leader.
- **Leaders** should still have access to the following items in case they are required: face coverings/masks, hand sanitiser, COVID tests (if available).

Guests:

- **Guests** are no longer required to be fully vaccinated or to test routinely for Covid-19 before joining a Leatherback group.
- If a **guest** shows clear COVID symptoms in the days prior to a tour, they should take a COVID test. To avoid embarrassment, please proactively test before being asked. The **guest** will not be able to join the trip if they receive a positive test result; they can join the trip upon a negative test.

Guests should still have access to the following items in case they are required: face coverings/masks, hand sanitiser, COVID tests (if available).

1.4 Group Briefing on COVID

Leaders should inform guests at the start of the trip:

- Of the current local regulations and cultural norms that relate to COVID and the requirement to follow these. This should include what happens in the case of a positive COVID-19 test result.
- That they may be required to take a test should they, or others in the group show clear COVID symptoms during the tour. This may be in line with local guidelines or at the request of the **leader** if there are circumstances where it would be wise, such as vulnerable group members or where significant concerns exist.
- Of the need for guests to report any test results to them (both positive and negative).

2.1 Guest displays COVID symptoms during tour

- **Guests** who arrive displaying potential symptoms should take proactive steps to test themselves if they show symptoms of Covid illness.
- The **Leader** will decide whether a guest with clear COVID symptoms needs to take a test. This decision should be based on factors such as whether there are local guidelines on who requires testing, whether there are any vulnerable guests in the group if any guest expresses concerns, or if the trip includes travel to remote areas far from medical help.
- The **leader** has full discretion regarding who they ask to take a test; and it is at their discretion as to whether the symptoms on display point to a need for testing. The primary symptoms to be monitored will be a persistent cough or fever.
- If a test result is negative, the **leader** will monitor and, if the symptoms persist and the **leader** considers it necessary, may ask that they take further COVID tests over the following days.
- **Guests** may contact Leatherback if there have been concerns raised within the group about how the situation is being handled.

2.3 Guest has fallen ill with a communicable disease that doesn't have rapid testing available

- The **leader** should ask the guest to take reasonable and practical steps to reduce the risk of the infection spreading to other group members. This will typically include not being able to join group meals or activities and arranging separate transport, but will depend on practicality and circumstances. The **leader** will make the final decision.
- The **leader**, in conjunction with our **support staff**, will do their best to enable the guest to enjoy as much of their trip as possible, with minimal disruption, however this is dependent on the circumstances and can't be guaranteed.
- The **leader** should ask all group members to take sensible preventative measures for a reasonable length of time, such as wearing face coverings when in enclosed spaces, increased hand sanitisation, ensuring good ventilation when indoors, and encouraging regular monitoring of symptoms and self-testing if appropriate.
- *Note - if the **guest** is on a walking-focused trip, they will be able to continue walking with the group at their own discretion but must take responsibility for their own symptoms and request medical care where needed. The **guest** will be asked to walk at the rear of the group.

2.4 Guest tests positive to COVID during a tour

- The **leader** will report the issue to Leatherback Travel.
- The **leader** will follow any local regulations in place and will advise the guest of these. If local regulations mean that the guest cannot continue on the trip, the guest should be encouraged to contact their travel insurance provider.
- If the **guest** is very unwell or needs medical attention, medical attention should be sought. The **guest** is responsible for communicating this to the Leader.
- The **leader** will inform the rest of the group of the positive COVID case and those who exhibit clear symptoms may need to take a test.
- The **leader** and **driver** should also take a COVID test.

If there are no local requirements in place following a positive COVID-19 case, we have a **'Separate not Isolate'** policy:

- The **leader** should ask the guest to take reasonable and practical steps to reduce the risk of the infection spreading to other group members, the local team and members of the public. This will typically include wearing a mask and practising social distancing. If the guest has a twin share spot, they will be required to upgrade to a private supplement for five days from the time of the positive test, or until a negative test, whichever comes first. The **leader** should arrange this for the guest on their behalf, and the guest should pay the hotel directly. If any contracted hotel is unable to accommodate the COVID-19-positive guest for any reason, an alternative hotel will be arranged for the guest. In the event that RAT testing is not available, a guest displaying cold or flu symptoms should be separated from twin share accommodation for a period of 5 days.
- Wherever possible, the guest must travel separately to the group and that expense will be the responsibility of the Leatherback Travel Group.
- The **leader**, in conjunction with our **support staff**, will do their best to enable the guest to enjoy as much of their trip as possible, with minimal disruption, however, this is dependent on the circumstances and can't be guaranteed. We will do our best to provide the activities listed in the itinerary, but there will be some instances where this won't be possible, and alternative arrangements as close to the original itinerary as possible will be made.
- The **leader** should ask all group members to take sensible preventative measures for a reasonable length of time, such as wearing face coverings when in enclosed spaces, increased hand sanitisation, ensuring good ventilation when indoors, and encouraging regular monitoring of symptoms and self-testing if appropriate.
- If a **guest** is unable to wear a mask, they should indicate if they have a medical exemption.

2.4 Guest tests positive to COVID during a tour

- If any of the above arrangements incur an additional accommodation, the guest or their travel insurance provider will be expected to cover these. **We** will pay for any additional costs in terms of activities, and guides. Any additional expenses that we incur will be at our discretion.
- The steps to reduce the risk of the spread of infection may be stepped down when any/all guests who have tested positive.
- If a **guest** believes a RAT test is inaccurate or faulty, they may source a PCR test at their own expense; if it is practical to do so.
- The **guest** should take reasonable and practical steps to reduce the risk of the infection spreading to other group members **and** local teams. This may include not being able to join group meals or activities and arranging separate transport, but will depend on practicality and circumstances. The **leader** will make the final decision.
- *Note - if the **guest** is on a walking-focused trip, they will be able to continue walking with the group at their own discretion but must take responsibility for their own symptoms and request medical care where needed. The **guest** will be asked to walk at the rear of the group.

3.1 Contacting Insurance

- If you test positive and plan on claiming on insurance, you will need to contact your insurance company immediately to understand their requirements and get approval on next steps. The insurance company may require you to take a PCR test and go through additional steps that may extend your isolation period.
- Travel insurance is mandatory for travelling with Leatherback Travel and we encourage all guests to ensure that their policy includes COVID-19 medical and trip interruption coverages, and to understand the testing requirements of their policy. Please note, we **cannot** recommend travel insurance.

3.2 Supporting You

- For all our trips, we have contracted a local back office support team that helps us to resolve emergency situations if they arise. If you test positive, you will be connected with that service and they will work with you to manage your case for your five days of separation, or until you test negative - whichever occurs first. You will also be added to a group Whatsapp chat with our team, where you can ask questions and receive support.

3.3 Rejoining the group

- Once the guest tests negative, or 5 days passes from the original positive test, Leatherback will make the arrangements necessary for the guest to rejoin the group, as soon as logistically possible.
- It is at our discretion to move the guest to a new location if the circumstances warrant. Examples would include a lack of accommodation, available support staff, or local medical facilities. This would happen in separate transportation to the main group.