

FAQ: Omicron variant

What does it mean for business travel?

The picture and understanding of the Omicron variant is rapidly evolving and information is likely to change. Travel and other restrictions can be implemented with little or no advance warning - be prepared for the risk that onward travel may be delayed or not possible.

Click the questions below to quickly find the answers you need:

1. What is the current situation?

2. Which countries have imposed a travel ban?

3. How long will the travel ban last?

4. What's our advice for travellers currently in, or near, the impacted countries?

5. What's our advice for travellers due to travel to impacted countries?

6. What do we do if we get 'stuck' in a country that is impacted by a travel ban?

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1. What is the current situation?

Scientists in South Africa reported a new COVID-19 variant, B.1.1.529, to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 24 November 2021; the WHO on 26 November designated it as a **Variant of Concern**

Experts and authorities are rapidly scaling up testing and investigations to understand the extent of the risk. There is limited information however so far it appears:

- **further geographic spread is highly likely**
- **rapid surges in infections may occur, especially in locations with low vaccination rates**
- **the illness is similar in symptoms and severity to other strains of COVID-19**
- **it may be more transmissible than the Delta variant**
- **current vaccines are still effective, but how well they prevent infection, transmission and disease is uncertain**
- **other preventive measures effective against COVID-19 will reduce transmission of Omicron.**

An increasing number of countries are finding the variant in travellers, some are fully vaccinated, and some have no obvious links to South Africa. The variant is likely to spread, and cases have already been identified in countries outside of South Africa.

Many countries have implemented sudden changes to their management of travellers from South Africa, affected and neighbouring countries, such as banning entry or extending quarantine and testing requirements.

5. What is our advice for business travellers due to travel to impacted countries?

The picture and understanding of Omicron is rapidly evolving. Information is likely to change. Restrictions can be implemented with little or no advance warning. Ensure that you reconfirm your itinerary, stay flexible, have appropriate contingency plans in place and check the latest restrictions for your destination.

We recommend businesses and individuals review the need, risk and viability of travel in light of the potential for travellers to be:

- suddenly barred from entry to your next destination, including your home country.
- “stuck” in a location for an extended period of time (due to both unavailability of flights, new entry requirements and new lockdowns)
- be quarantined and tested, regardless of your vaccination status
- unable to access local medical infrastructure due to rising cases

