

MBC & GLOBAL OUTREACH COVID TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Updated: February 2023

POST GLOBAL PANDEMIC, INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL IS RESUMING TO NORMAL RHYTHMS!

MBC and Global Outreach seek to offer a variety of short-term trips each year. However, ongoing transmission of COVID-19 and emergence of new variants may at any time impose new travel restrictions and even border closures based on the country, the airline, or the partner organization. Global Outreach will regularly evaluate the status of each trip as departure dates approach. For all approved and proposed international trips, we continue to consult various sources for information and guidelines: our ministry partner(s) in-country, State Department, our insurance, like-minded churches, and organizations like the Center for Disease Control or the World Health Organization. Should a situation arise that potentially compromises the ability for us to travel to a destination as planned, alternative plans will be considered. Taking all of these factors into account, our primary concern is to care well for our partners and participants.

CARE FOR PARTNERS

Once we commit to a trip, we maintain open and clear communication with global partners to develop contingency plans that express our ongoing commitment to them and their work. We will ensure that no partner incurs financial loss for projects already committed to and planned in coordination short-term trips, so that previously planned ministry still occurs.

CARE FOR TRIP PARTICIPANTS

We are excited for our church family to join us on mission around the world! In trip planning, we look to avoid the disruptive hardships that could develop if trip participants are stranded due to health concerns (hardships can include financial, emotional, etc.). There is always inherent risk in any type of travel, whether that be national or international. Our intention is to mitigate risk and engage missions with wisdom. Global Outreach and MBC take the safety and security of our short-term trip (STT) participants seriously.

Global Outreach strongly recommends that people over age 65, or pregnant persons, or

persons with compromised immune systems not join short-term trips while health risks remain high. Additionally, on all trips, those 18 years old and younger must travel with a parent or guardian.

Currently, our STT policy as it relates to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is as follows:

Vaccine Requirement

- Anyone choosing to participate in a STT will need to adhere/agree to following all the vaccination guidelines (including those for COVID-19) for destination countries, as well as countries with restrictions for layover passengers, and restrictions for returning from travel back to the USA. The CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccination for international travel. Since the CDC recommends this, Global Outreach does too. It is also recommended by many countries and airlines along with many of our global partners. However, a COVID-19 vaccine will only be required for a trip if it is a “required” vaccine (as opposed to recommend only) by the country, partner, or airline of a given trip. So, please carefully review the requirements for the destination country of the trip you desire to participate in. We view any inconvenience as a small price to pay so that we can join in the advance of the gospel in the world in the country they are traveling to.

Destination Countries

- When considering the [CDC COVID-19 Travel Recommendations by Country](#), Global Outreach will consider the specifics of each country, before committing to a trip. Trips may include travel to countries rated levels 1-4. It is important to note that the CDC list of countries with a high COVID risk level is ever changing, and as recently as February 2022, the USA was listed as a Level 4 country, as is most of Europe, South America and parts of the Middle East and Africa.

Trip Cancellation

- Cancellation by the In-Country Partner: If at any point the partner, or the partner’s organization, feels their environment is unsafe or if local authorities impose regional closures or quarantine due to COVID-19, we will cancel or postpone the trip immediately.
- Cancellation due to Border Closure: If at any point the destination country closes its borders to foreigners, we will cancel or postpone the trip immediately.
- Routing of Flights: Additionally, considering the warnings above, we would avoid flight paths or layovers into or out of any countries that could be problematic.

Financial Policy

- All contributions for Global Outreach short-term mission teams are tax deductible (to the extent allowed by law) and therefore nonrefundable. The donor acknowledges and releases control of how their contribution will be utilized for the team. However, if the team is successful in raising their financial goal, all excess funds will be applied to either the needs directly related to the ministry of the trip or to fund additional mission needs within Global Outreach. In the case when a trip is cancelled and depending on what point the cancellation happens, after paying for non-recoverable expenses, Global Outreach will work with the team participants to potentially reschedule the trip in that calendar year.

IS THE COST OF A COVID-19 VACCINE INCLUDED IN THE FUNDS I RAISE?

No. As with other immunizations and vaccines, any cost associated with the COVID-19 vaccine are the responsibility of the trip participant and are not included in funds raised for the trip.

DO I NEED A PCR TEST TO LEAVE AND RE-ENTER THE USA AND WHO PAYS FOR IT?

According to current guidelines, no. We will follow current guidelines, which may change at any point. Some countries and/or airlines will require proof of vaccination status or a negative PCR test to enter (usually 24-72 hours prior to boarding). As each person's needs and insurance companies vary, the cost of these tests is the responsibility of each trip participant and are not included in the funds raised for the trip. For PCR travel testing in the USA, we recommend [Same Day Health](#), which has testing sites in MD, DC, and VA.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM THE USA BEFORE THE TRIP BEGINS?

As with any other illness, if you test positive for COVID prior to travel, you will be unable to travel with the team. After paying for non-recoverable expenses, Global Outreach would work with you to see if you can join another trip in the same calendar year. All funds raised are tax-deductible and non-refundable.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID WHILE IN THE DESTINATION COUNTRY?

All trips will include detailed plans for this contingency. Each trip's contingency plan may vary and will include various courses of action, depending on the time that symptoms present during the trip and/or when the positive test occurs, and the quarantine rules in the destination country (how many days required by local law etc.). In addition, the contingency plan will provide for:

- Trip leader communication with local authorities as needed if illness reporting is necessary
- If illness occurs with multiple days left in the trip, and participant must quarantine in hotel room, team leader to provide meals, etc.
 - If symptoms worsen, partner and team leader to facilitate transfer to doctor/hospital
- If illness occurs with multiple days left prior to departure for the US, participant will quarantine in hotel room and will follow the trip contingency plan.
- Directions for re-test after appropriate amount of quarantine days are complete.

In addition to travel insurance which may cover some expenses for extended quarantine, a detailed cost estimate for expenses likely to be incurred due to this contingency will be reviewed with each team member. Participants will be financially responsible for any fees over and above what travel insurance may cover that are associated with extending their stay in country.

WHAT IF I NEED TO APPLY FOR A PASSPORT OR RENEW A PASSPORT?

The State Department lists the current processing time for passport applications between 8-11 weeks. Please review the State Department Passport information [HERE](#). Additionally, passports should have at least six months of validity when traveling internationally. Most countries will not permit a traveler to enter their country unless the passport is set to expire at least six months after the final day of travel.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FUNDS I'VE RAISED IF THE TRIP IS CANCELED?

After paying for non-recoverable expenses, all remaining excess funds will be donated to ministry efforts of the partner ministry where the trip was intended to go at the discretion of MBC staff. For more information, see Global Outreach Trip FAQs [HERE](#).

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE TRIP?

Team members work to raise the support necessary through personal support letters and fundraising, and each trip participant should commit to fully participating in this process to raise their necessary funds. Once you are accepted to a team, you will be given resources to help in this support raising process. If you feel God is leading you to participate on a short-term mission trip, He will provide the necessary funds...so, we encourage you to step out in faith. It is the expectation of Global Outreach that each member fully raises their support.

Each trip participant should have a plan to personally contribute any funds that they fail to raise through donors so that they are able to meet their individual portion of the overall team funding goal. As unique situations arise, Global Outreach will work with each team/team members to extend trip giving goals past the end date of the trip. Each participant is responsible for their portion of the trip.

REMINDERS

There is risk in life and risk in following Jesus. Even though we will always work to minimize unnecessary risk, we cannot avoid all risks when we travel. Also, we cannot avoid risk by not traveling. The decision of acceptable risk is ultimately a matter between each individual and the Lord. Should a brother or sister decide to forego participation in a trip, that decision will be respected and honored. We remain confident that the Lord is our shepherd (Psalm 23) and that in uncertain times we can rest in his Sovereignty. 1 Peter 4:19 says, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." In both serving and suffering, God is faithful in His care for us. We also recognize that the greatest risk for many is not that they may contract a virus but that they may never hear the gospel. Our trips are designed to help people hear the gospel and encourage ministers of the gospel where they live, which is often in difficult places.

The decision to travel or not is personal, and should be decided wisely through prayer, consideration with family, and consultations with your doctor as needed.

HELPFUL HEALTH RESOURCES

- [State Department](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization; Coronavirus Updates](#)

MORE QUESTIONS?

- See our [Trip FAQ](#)
- Email scott.logsdon@mcleanbible.org, Director of Global Outreach