



HERITAGE
PARK
SOLOMON ISLANDS

Minimum Standards Covid-19 Extra Care

Standard Operating Procedures for Tourism Businesses in Solomon Islands



Ministry of Culture
& Tourism

Ministry of Health
& Medical Services



March 2022

Introduction

The Minimum Standards Tourism Extra Care program has been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By following the guidelines listed here tourism businesses can operate in a safe way and limit the spread of COVID-19. These guidelines have been developed in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and closely follows international covid-safe practices.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic most countries have experienced several waves of infections and different strains of the virus. No one can say for certain when the pandemic will be over. We may have to live with covid for a long time. However, countries that have been affected by COVID-19 since 2020 are now starting to open up, and both domestic and international tourism is slowly picking up. This would not have been possible without the tourism industry introducing strict covid-safe protocols. Tourism operators in Solomon Islands need to adapt to this new reality, and establish the same measures that are used worldwide. This document outlines covid-safe measures for tourism operators, and specific guidelines for accommodation, restaurants, attractions, transport and tours.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The corona virus spreads in a similar way to flu. The infection spreads through droplets of infected fluid released in the air which settles on nearby surfaces or objects such as tables, desks and telephones. This happens when an infected person cough or exhales. Anyone standing close to an infected person can easily become infected by breathing in the droplets. People can also be infected by touching contaminated objects and later touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Training

The Extra Care for COVID-19 is now part of the Minimum Standards program for the tourism industry in Solomon Islands. Training will be carried out for tourism operators to educate them on covid-safe protocols. This training will take place in both Honiara and the provinces. The training will initially prioritize high risk areas, and areas where tourism operators are concentrated. Due to covid related travel restrictions the schedule for the training is yet to be confirmed. Tourism operators will be notified when the training is available in their area.

Implementation of covid-safe protocols

Do not wait to implement covid-safe measures until training has been provided. Introduce the guidelines listed here as soon as possible. The government may introduce additional regulations under the emergency act depending on how the situation evolves. These changes might be introduced with short notice. If your business already has covid-safe protocols in place you

are well prepared to be compliant with new regulations. Remember that these regulations are put in place to protect everyone in the community, including you and your family.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

You have probably heard the term PPE a lot lately. PPE stands for Personal Protective Equipment and is used to minimize exposure to hazards, in this context exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Basic PPE means wearing a mask, and in some cases gloves. Those who come into contact with a lot of people, for example a cashier at a shop, can add a face shield.

Full PPE is used by front liners who work in high-risk environments, for example nurses. This includes:

- Mask
- Face shield
- Gloves
- Disposable apron, gown or boiler suit.
- Recommended: disposable shoe covers and hair cap.

Covid-19 emergency action plan

Accommodation owners should have emergency action plan in place before opening for guests. This is in case any guests contract covid while travelling in Solomon Islands. Prepare at least one isolation room within the premises. Make sure that essential PPE is available and ready to use. It is a good idea to practise isolation protocols with staff, and make sure they know how to use PPE correctly. For covid-related emergencies also contact the National Health Emergency Centre (NHEOC) 115 /25256. Critically ill guests might need emergency evacuation by helicopter or air ambulance. Some tourists have insurance to cover evacuation costs, but not everyone. Remind guests when they book that it is highly recommended to get a good travel insurance before travelling to Solomon Islands.

General guidelines for tourism and hospitality staff:

- All tourism staff should be fully vaccinated.
- Wear a mask while working.
- Practice social distancing, approximately 2m.
- Regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with other staff and guests.
- Keep your work area clean by frequently disinfection surface areas.
- Stay home if feeling unwell.

COVID-SAFE GUIDELINES FOR ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS

Tourism Accommodations comprises of a number of departments, like front office, housekeeping, food & beverage, security etc. All have an important part in keeping an accommodation covid-safe. Key hygiene standards are already outlined in the minimum standards for accommodation, but covid-safe operations require additional protocols and much higher hygiene standards than normal.

Front Office

Front office is the first place where staff came in contact with arriving guests. Receptionists and security should strictly follow covid-safe procedures to lessen any chances of contracting and spreading of the virus when doing guest check-ins.

Covid safe measures for front office:

1. Front office staff should wear mask and gloves and frequently sanitize hands. During busy times such as group check-ins, front-line staff may also wear face shields for additional protection.



2. Anyone entering the premises must wear a mask and show proof of vaccination.



3. The entrance of the premises should have a sign outlining the rules for entry, for example; “no mask, no entry – please show proof of vaccination”.



4. The entry point should be manned by staff (usually security) that checks proof of vaccination and use of mask. At this point hand sanitizer should be offered



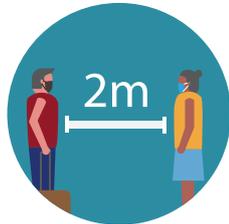
5. It is recommended that temperature of all visitors is checked at the entry point. Limit entry points for guests to one. Don't allow anyone to move in and out of the premises unchecked.



6. The reception counter must be sanitized after each guest check-in or check-out.



7. Social distancing must be observed (2m) to avoid close contact between guests and staff. For any room there is a limit of 2 people for each 4m².



8. Signs for queuing should be in place to avoid overcrowding at the counter. Put markers on the floor to indicate distance between people while queuing.



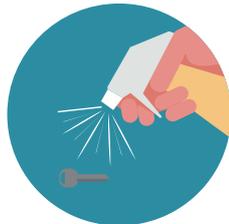
9. Cash handling should be minimized or limited where possible. Pre-payments, credit and debit cards, and signing to accounts should be maximized. If a guest or staff member handles cash, hand sanitizing must be done immediately.



10. Reduce surface areas in areas which see a lot of traffic. Remove chairs and tables in the reception area to reduce potential points of contamination.



11. When check-in is complete, keys must be sanitized in advance before handing over to guest by placing them on the counter. Once keys are returned, they must be sanitized immediately.



12. Encourage guests to carry in their own luggage, but if assisted make sure to sanitize or wash hands immediately before and after.



13. In case of contact tracing of infected guests become necessary, accommodation operators must maintain a guest register. Apart from the usual details this should also include information on where the guests stayed before arrival, and where they are going next.



Security

Security Guards play a crucial role in maintaining covid-safe operations, as they are the first point of contact for anyone entering an accommodation.

Covid-safe measures for security:

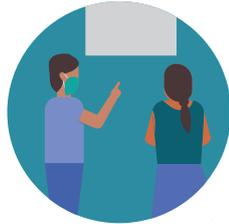
1. Administer temperature check at entry point before guests enter the premises



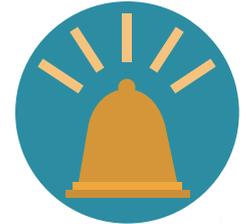
2. Ensure the guests are wearing masks, provide proof of vaccination and ID before entering.



3. Security staff should remind staff and guests to follow covid-safe measures, for example wearing mask at all times.



4. Security staff must alert management and staff in case of any breach of covid-safe protocols by visitors or staff.



5. Ensure that all entry points are manned by security and movement of people into the premises are controlled. The entrance normally used for deliveries must also be manned by security.



6. It is recommended that anyone entering the premises, apart from in-house guests and staff (e.g., guest visitors, contractors, service-providers) are recorded in a visitor register.



Guest Rooms

One major point of contamination between guest and staff is when housekeeping staff enters guest rooms. To limit this, some services that are normally offered have to be reduced or cancelled altogether.

Covid-safe measures for house-keeping:

1. Reduce room cleaning and linen change frequency. Longer stays rooms clean every two to three days and linen change every three to four days.



2. Reduce surfaces in rooms. All excess cushions, blankets and décor items should be removed.



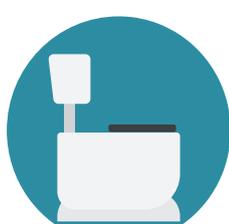
3. Reduce mini-bar stocks to a minimum or provide only on request



4. Hand sanitizer to be provided in all guest rooms.



5. Housekeeping staff should (where available) undergo training for covid-safe room cleaning standards after guest checkouts, which include how to handle used linen and sanitize bathrooms etc.



6. Disposable gloves and aprons should be worn when cleaning bathrooms.



7. Cleaning staff must sanitize their hands and shoes when finishing each room before moving on to the next.



8. Stay-over guestroom cleaning should concentrate on a careful sanitizing all surfaces including items like phones, TV, AC controller etc.



9. Consider removing glasses, cups, and teaspoons or change for disposables.



10. Room cleaners should not wash used utensils like cups and plates in bathrooms



11. On check-out, all door handles, furniture, surfaces, TV remotes, wall close to traffic/seating/bedside areas or lamp and all floors, bathroom (walls) should be thoroughly cleaned with an effective disinfectant.



12. Room keys or cards must be sanitized after every check-out and before every check-in.



13. Allocate more time between room turnovers to ensure housekeeping have sufficient time to thoroughly clean the rooms.



14. During cleaning, air out the room thoroughly by opening doors and windows



15. Used linen should be removed from bed with care to avoid contamination. Simply fold the linen and place it in plastic bags which can be securely tied/closed or in washable cloth bags. Use the same procedure with other linen like used towels before transporting to laundry.



16. If accommodation is fully booked, try to rotate the rooms that are used. Ideally a room should be left empty for 3 days to ensure it is fully decontaminated before next check-in.



17. All housekeeping cleaning equipment like mop, wet cloth etc., must be sanitized by dipping in sanitizing solution after each room clean.



18. At the end of cleaners shift all mops should be sanitized in sanitizing solutions for 30 minutes, and cloths washed on high heat cycle.



19. Prepare one or several rooms to be used as isolation rooms in case any guests' contract COVID-19. Make a plan for how to manage isolation cases.



20. Acquire sufficient PPE equipment (disposable mask, gloves, gowns and face shields) for staff to use in case rooms are used for isolation.



Restaurant & Bars

Restaurants and bars attached to accommodation is allowed to operate for in-house guests at the time of writing. Operators should closely monitor the governments guidelines on this, as they may change on short notice.

Covid safe measures for Restaurant & Bars:

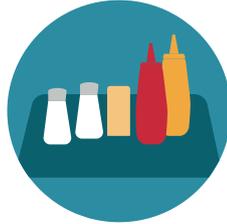
1. Seating arrangements must comply with covid-safe measures and social distancing.



2. Remove table cloths and seat cushions for easy wipe with sanitizers after each use.



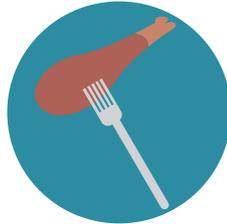
3. Remove salt, pepper and tooth picks from tables but keep available on request.



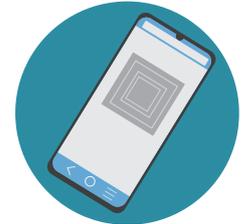
4. Keep hand sanitizer or hand wash with soap for guest use at the entry of the restaurant or bar.



5. Reduce or limited self-service at buffets, only allow to select or pickup pre-portioned items.



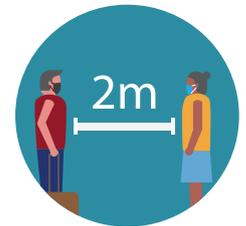
6. To minimize handling of menus, use electronic or fixed board menus. Consider using digital menus or QR codes to further limit interaction between staff and guests.



7. If normal menus are used, collect and sanitize them after an order had been placed.



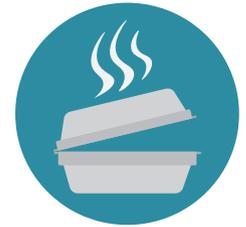
8. Social distancing has to be practiced at the bar counter. Seats should be spaced apart and distanced from the counter to avoid guest leaning on it.



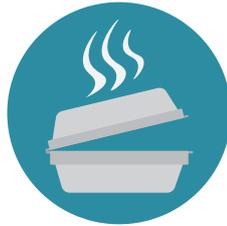
9. Cleaning and clearing should preferably not be done by serving staff, but by staff specially allocated for this task.



10. Room service should be minimized, and guests can collect their takeaways in disposable plates or trays from the restaurants.



11. If room service is offered the food should be placed in front of guest room door. Staff delivering food should not enter guest rooms.



Kitchen

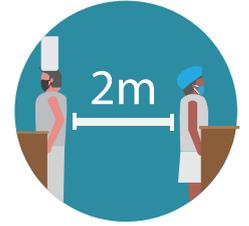
Accommodation kitchens should always observe strict hygiene practices when handling food, cooking and serving to guest. With COVID-19 this is even more important, and added measures have to be put in place.

Covid safe measures for Kitchen:

1. All kitchen staff must wear mask and gloves, and preferably aprons and face masks as well.



2. All workstations must be spaced apart to avoid staff working in close proximity to each other.



3. Hand sanitizer must be well displayed and easily accessible to encourage regular use.



4. Frequently sanitize all equipment used in the kitchen, including equipment, table tops and door handles.



5. Kitchen equipment and guest crockery and cutlery must be washed separately with hot boiling water



6. Packaged food which is not fully used up has to have its exterior packaging wiped with sanitizer before storage.



7. Kitchen ventilation is very important, keep open doors or windows with closed insect screen.

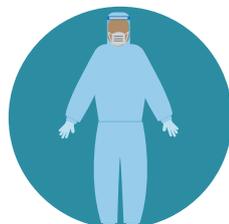


Laundry

There is a high risk of contamination during handling of guest laundry, therefore the laundry area of an accommodation is regarded as a high-risk PPE zone. If possible, laundry staff should undergo COVID-19 extra care training.

Covid safe measures for laundry:

1. Laundry staff must dress in full PPE: face-shield, disposable mask, gloves, apron or boiler suit. It is recommended to also use hair and shoe-coverings.



2. Before entering the PPE zone carefully wash hands and make sure PPE equipment is clean..



3. Mark and label areas in laundry for clean and dirty linen area. Avoid cross contamination where PPE is worn into clean linen area.



4. All equipment must be sanitized and wiped down before and after use.



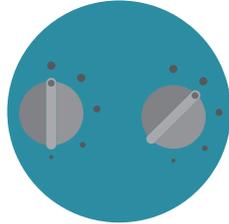
5. Laundry trolleys used for dirty laundry should be washed with soap and water then sanitized.



6. Open one laundry bag at a time when received from housekeeping. It is recommended to not mix laundry from different rooms.



7. Laundry must be washed on the correct setting and temperature. Avoid short cuts in the wash process.



8. When washing is done the attendant must remove the PPE and place gloves, mask, shoe covering in a bio-hazard box or suitable sealable receptacle and the overall into a laundry bag for washing. Clean PPE must be used to handle the newly washed laundry.



9. After all washing is done, thoroughly clean all equipment, washing machines and surfaces with sanitizer or disinfectant. Provide a bucket with disinfectant or bleach at the exit doorway for mops and cloths at the end of each shift.



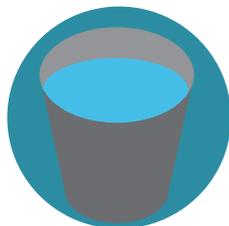
10. Avoid changing all linen at the same time to avoid back log in the laundry



Manual Washing

Some smaller operators may not use washing machines. Follow all procedures listed above where applicable, in addition to the guidelines for manual washing.

1. Use a big bucket of 25 liters or above. Add washing powder or liquid.



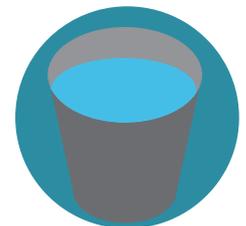
2. Add hot water with bleach before adding the laundry. Remember to separate towels and linen.



3. Stir or turnover the laundry using a stick before put it to rest for 2 – 3 hours with a lid on it.



4. When cool, slowly remove the laundry to another bucket with water to dilute the concentration or soap. Repeating it twice is enough.



5. Squeeze laundry drip dry and transfer it to the sun area for drying



6. After all washing is done wash and thoroughly apply disinfectant in laundry area and equipment used, before removing the PPE.



Deliveries & Contractors

An accommodation needs regular supplies and services from outside the operation. During normal times, there is a regular flow of service providers in and out of the premises. As much as possible this must be limited to avoid contamination.

Covid safe measures for deliveries and contractors are:

1. Limit entry points to the premises to one for guests, and one for deliveries, contractors and staff. Both of these should be controlled by security.



2. All visitors must wear a mask, and sanitize their hands at the entry point.



3. All visitors should have their temperature checked, and be entered into a visitors register by the security.



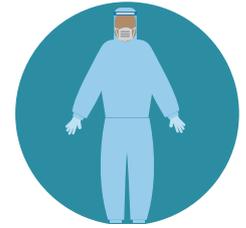
4. Limit the number of deliveries arriving to the premises to a minimum. Suppliers should take turn for delivery to avoid overcrowding. Avoid close contact between staff and drivers during off-loading.



5. Its preferable that in-house staff handle off-loadings of deliveries.



6. Make sure staff members manning the loading and off-loading wear full PPE.



7. All goods must be fully sanitized at the loading bay before transferring them to the stores or refrigerators. Use spray sanitizers.



8. Notify your service provider on how your establishment will accept goods delivery and recommend them arriving with necessary protective gears



Waste Disposal

An accommodation operation will generate a lot of contaminated waste, such as used PPE and cleaning material. Waste must be managed carefully to avoid infecting staff.

Covid safe measures for waste disposal:

1. Waste bins must be equipped with lids that seal properly.



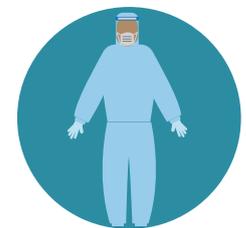
2. Guest rooms should ideally have four bins. (1. Recycling, 2. compost, 3. Tins/plastic/ bottles/ paper 4. Medical wastes i.e. face mask, gloves etc.). This is particularly important for isolation and quarantine rooms.



3. No food leftovers or kitchen food waste is allowed to be taken home by staff, or given away.



4. Staff assigned to handling waste has to put on PPE ie. gloves and mask, or preferably full PPE.



5. Waste storage (before disposal) has to be a no-go area for other staff. Only those designated for the task is allowed to handle waste.



6. All bins must be well washed and sprayed with sanitizer after emptied before sent back to kitchen and other bin locations.



Transport

Transport of guests is a high-risk activity which need to follow strict covid-safe procedures, especially when transporting guests arriving from overseas.

Covid safe measures for Transport:

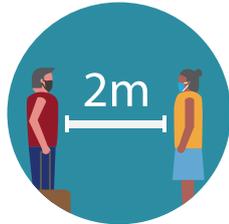
1. Before picking up guest's driver/crew has to put on mask and gloves.



2. Don't shake hands when welcoming guests, use fist bump, elbow shake or bow.



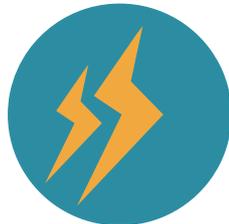
3. While loading passengers and luggage try to maintain social distancing for both guests and staff.



4. Ask guests to sanitize their hands before entering the vehicle or boat and remind them to put on their mask in the course of traveling.



5. Pickups and loading of luggage should be fast and efficient to avoid guest and staff waiting around in crowded airport/port areas.



6. When travelling by boat instruct guest to put on life jackets themselves



7. Don't fill transport to capacity, allow for empty seats to maintain social distancing. This applies for any transport including boats (max. 2 persons per row).



8. When transporting guest do not allow anyone else on the transport, except relevant staff. Do not pick up anyone else on the way.



9. Monitor newly arrived guest for signs of illness. If you notice someone with covid symptoms, notify the front desk.



10. When arriving at your destination (accommodation, airport, port) instruct your guests on where to go and what to do, to avoid crowding while waiting around.



11. Ensure the vehicle or boat used for guest pick-up goes through proper disinfection before it is used again.



12. After disinfection of transport properly dispose of any PPE material used and thoroughly sanitize your hands. If practical have a shower immediately after.

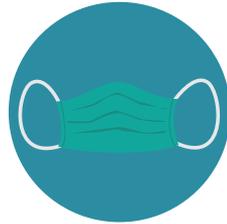


Tours, Attractions & Activities

At the time of writing most tours and activities are not operating due to lack of guests and covid restrictions. As restrictions are eased, it is important that tours and activities start up again in time for when borders open for tourists. Operators should start preparing for this now, and instruct staff on how to manage tours and activities.

Covid safe measures for Tours, Attractions and activities:

1. Face mask for all participants including the guides and drivers.



2. At the start of the tour/activity, brief the guest on covid-safe protocols.



3. Bring hand sanitizer with you, for the guest to use during the tour.



4. Remind guest to sanitize hands at every new entry points.



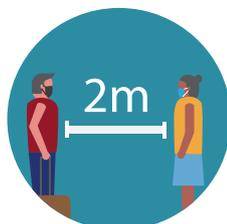
5. Don't fill transport to capacity, allow for empty seats to maintain social distancing.



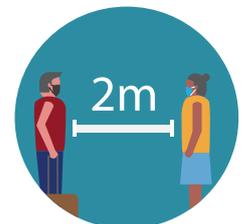
6. Group sizes may have to be limited to allow for social distancing on transport and during visits to attractions.



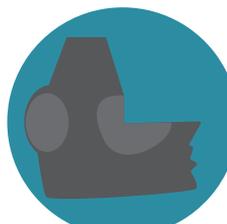
7. Avoid overcrowding and “bunching up” at points of interest during the tour. During talks and briefings remind guests to maintain social distancing.



8. Guides and entertainers should limit close contact with guests, even if its normally part of your duties.



9. Avoid guest touching artifacts by creating boundaries at attractions.



10. After the tour properly dispose any PPE material used and thoroughly sanitize your hands. If practical have a shower immediately after the tour



Uimi Tugeda Against COVID-19

Businesses and individuals have suffered severe economic hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry is one of the hardest hit sectors, as travel have been restricted since early 2020. Our nation needs your business to operate to keep our economy afloat. The way forward is to learn from other countries that have managed to re-open for tourism despite covid. Many of these lessons learned from overseas are listed here. Solomon Islands needs your support to make our tourism industry covid-safe so that we can open up for tourists as soon as possible.



