



Hospitality Association
of Namibia

Tourism in times of Corona: Covid-19

6 March 2020

Managing the tourism change in times of crisis: doing business unusual

The tourism supply chain has in the past always proven valuable, and partnerships and transparency are now more important than ever, as Covid-19 has shaken the entire global travel trade.

Every day, more and more countries are calling out travel bans on either their citizens, or selected incoming nationalities, with direct impact on the free movement of people across the globe. In unprecedented times like this, Namibian suppliers and operators can no longer cling to standard operating procedures, including cancellation policies. What is key in aiming towards a uniform approach by the Namibian tourism sector at this time, is absolute trust that all players, service providers, as well as inbound and outbound operators, apply the same principles to the “emergency system” in terms of cancellation fees and deposits.

HAN has collated the different scenarios from information gathered from members and operators and we would like to present our members and industry partners with the various options and different scenarios.

While it should be clear, that there cannot be a “one-size fits all” approach to this, - the following **guidelines** should be considered to approach the next travel season: (March-July), and a further consideration for the rest of 2020 and going into 2021:

In an effort to encourage travelers to book their travels, the industry is advised to sound out a positive message about Namibia as a relatively safe travel destination, with our long warm summers, generally dry climate, our low population density and our fairly advanced medical services, both private and public, and government’s preparedness to deal with the situation. **Namibia is open for business and stands ready to welcome its guests!**

Secondly we should sound out at general willingness to waive cancellation fees until 14 days before the travel for the time between March and October **in case such cancellations are directly Covid-19 related**. (Travel bans, quarantines, illness, i.e.

- An official travel ban is issued for Namibia (e.g. COVID-19 outbreak), and / or
- An official travel ban occurs in guest’s home country and outbound travel is banned (e.g. COVID-19 outbreak))

There are currently three possible scenarios under consideration concerning possible cancellations as a result of concerns about the Corona Virus.

1. the clients decide, on their own initiative, that they do not feel comfortable to travel and incur any risk of contracting the virus, but there is nothing official saying they shouldn’t travel. In this case, normal cancellation fees would apply, and travel insurance companies are unlikely to pay those. However, the client should be encouraged to postpone his/her booking for up to 15 months, at 2020 rates, subject to availability. Postponement of bookings will naturally not involve cancellation fees, but a small administrative fee may be involved. If postponement is not an option, some may try to minimise the cancellation fees as far as possible, but the ability to do so will depend on the circumstances and the amount of notice given
2. The clients get sick with the virus, or have to go into quarantine, when there is no pandemic and there are no Government travel advisory notices recommending against travel. In this case, we would expect that their travel insurance would cover cancellation fees in the same way as for any other illness, and normal cancellation fees would therefore apply. (See latest offer from Hollard). However, we could also look at postponement in this case if that is an option to consider.

H·A·N

Philadelphia House, 6 Newton St.

Box 86078, Windhoek, Namibia

Tel.: +264 61 222904, Fax: +264 088617807

email: gittap@HANnamibia.com

www.HANnamibia.com





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3. This becomes a global pandemic and Governments put out formal travel advisory notices recommending that clients do not travel to Namibia at all. In this case, the guests would not have much choice but to cancel, and their travel insurance would almost certainly not cover any cancellation fees involved. We would then have to cancel all the arrangements made and refund as much of any moneys that have already been paid as possible. Postponement is less likely to be an option in these circumstances, but it would still be an option to consider that was preferable to outright cancellation.

In practice, this may look as follows:

CURRENT BOOKINGS: 01 March 2020 – July 2020

- Should clients wish to cancel we shall give them the option to re-book their holiday, up to a year in advance, without cancellation fees applying
- If there is a change in pricing/seasonality then the clients will have to pay the higher price
- Should the amended dates cancel at a later stage the penalties will apply as per original date of travel and penalties that was applicable.
- Should clients wish to cancel their bookings outright - the normal cancellation policy may apply
- Come end of July and this is still continuing one may consider extending the booking period
- In general, deposit payments should still be made, - to secure the flexible bookings

BUT IF:

FUTURE BOOKINGS: New Bookings coming in for later in the year or 2021

- The WHO declares a travel ban in the client's country of origin (like in China) **OR** should Namibia become "an infected destination with a travel ban" and clients then need to cancel due to these two reasons then they will not be subjected to cancellation fees if clients cancel their booking 20 days or more prior to travel date.
- Should clients cancel 14 days or less prior to travel date, the actual cancellation terms are applicable.

We obviously need to encourage people to continue to book Namibia by giving them reassurance that should their country of origin or Namibia be declared a no travel zone that they will get their money back if they are forced to cancel.

We are also giving them the opportunity to re-book within a 12 month period in order to work around the "I am afraid of confined spaces" perception, and provide our guests with a 'peace of mind' policy, which allows them to continue booking and paying deposits, knowing that if this goes horribly wrong it won't cost them financially. Let's remove the risk for the guest and keep them booking!

Summary: **Cancellations:**

* From unaffected areas, no change to your existing booking policy

* From affected areas: review on a case by case basis. No refund but booking can be deferred for 15 months

– Usual deposits will be required at time of booking to make a booking, but these will be **100% refundable up until the cancellation period as mentioned above applies.**

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