



DAVID B. MCKINLEY, P.E.

Proudly Serving West Virginia's 1st District

COVID-19 – AMERICANS TRAVELING ABROAD

ADVISORY: The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel at this time due to the global impact of COVID-19. Many areas throughout the world are now experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and taking action that may limit traveler mobility, including quarantines and border restrictions.

Even countries, jurisdictions, or areas where cases have not been reported may restrict travel without notice. Government officials cannot guarantee how long flights will continue. Once countries close their border, the commercial flights will not be available.

The US government is working to take advantage of existing commercial flights and repatriate US Citizens home.

In countries where commercial departure options remain available, **U.S. citizens who live abroad should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period.** U.S. citizens who live abroad should avoid all international travel. Many countries are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens from entry with little advance notice.

The Department of State authorized the departure of U.S. personnel and family members from any diplomatic or consular post in the world who have determined they are at higher risk if exposed to COVID-19 or who have requested departure based on a commensurate justification. These departures have limited the ability of U.S. Embassies and consulates to provide services to U.S. citizens. Limited personnel have also limited how Embassy officials can respond to phone calls from stranded travelers.

For any questions or guidance regarding stranded travelers seeking to return to the United States, follow the suggested steps outlined below. **For additional questions or concerns, please contact our office by calling (202) 225-4172 or (304) 284-2506 or contact Linda Wooldridge at linda.wooldridge@mail.house.gov.**

STEP – Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

STEP is the most efficient means of receiving and sending information. This is a free service provided by the Bureau of Consular Affairs that allows US Citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to register their trip with the nearest US Embassy. **Travelers are urged to immediately enroll in STEP by going to <https://step.state.gov>.** Enrollment will enable access to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate travelers in an emergency.

Once enrolled in **STEP** the US Embassy is then able to provide travel alerts and helps families get in touch stay in touch. Enrollment enables the State Department to use the traveler's email or text-messaging to convey alerts about terrorist threats, security incidents, planned demonstrations, natural disasters, etc. Officials are also conversing with the traveler to alert them of available commercial flights, scheduled repatriation flights, chartered flight, and ICE or military flights.



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IF the traveler does not have internet access, a family member or friend can enroll for them, using the traveler's identifying information. **NOTE:** Specific travel dates must be included; once that date expires, the program will no longer send alerts.

Emergency Hotline

A 24-Hour Consular Affairs Worldwide Emergency number has been established. If you have concerns about a family member who is overseas, please contact the **American Citizens Services and Crisis Management** by calling 1(888) 407-4747 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or 1- (202) 501-4444 from other countries.

Stay in touch with your Airline or Cruise line

Travelers must remain in touch with their airlines, cruise line or travel coordinators. As countries close their borders and restrict travel, flights are being rescheduled or cancelled.

Additional Suggestions

- American Citizens should contact the nearest US Embassy or Consulate by going to www.usembassy.gov. Again, response may be limited due to staffing.
- Travelers are encouraged to visit www.travel.state.gov to view in-country travel advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security. the website has information relevant to the U.S. embassy, entry/exit restrictions, foreign quarantine policies, and urgent health information provided by local governments.
- **Replacement Passport:** No one can travel internationally or return to the U.S. from a foreign country, without presenting an original passport at the point of entry. Travelers should only report a U.S. passport lost or stolen if the original, physical version of the passport book or passport card has been lost or stolen. Once you report a U.S. passport lost or stolen, it is invalid and cannot be used for international travel. Travelers should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy for further directions. A list can be found at www.travel.state.gov. All U.S. embassies and consulates have after-hours duty officers available to assist with life or death emergencies of U.S. citizens abroad. Contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate after-hours duty officer for assistance if you have an emergency need to travel or have been the victim of a serious crime.
- To slow the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) into the United States, CDC is working with public health partners to implement travel procedures announced in several Presidential proclamations on novel coronavirus. American citizens, lawful permanent residents, and their families who have been in foreign countries in the past 14 days will be allowed to enter the United States, however, they will be redirected to one of 13 airports. Returning travelers should self-quarantine for 14-days by staying home and monitoring symptoms. There is a wealth of information available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>.