



# Covid Planning & Contingency

For HE Mobility Projects to Fiji 2022

*The Highest Standards of Support...*

# Our Approach To Health & Safety

## **Purpose**

*To ensure that comprehensive planning is in place to meet Fiji's Covid requirements and provide support and contingencies, should a student test positive for COVID before, during or upon departure from their project in Fiji.*

## **Think Pacific: Background Health and Safety Measures**

Think Pacific takes a highly personal approach to international students' health, safety and support. By the very nature of its projects, international students are guided to rural locations to live in very back-to-basic conditions. The responsibility for the health and safety of its international students is of the highest priority for Think Pacific. Think Pacific focuses exclusively on Fiji as it is the only country in which it operates, and takes a personalized approach, where students feel welcomed to Fiji and supported like a member of the Think Pacific family. Each village project is capped at a number of students that allows for Think Pacific to maintain this personal approach. As Fiji is the only country where Think Pacific operates, Think Pacific views it as their home.

Think Pacific has an annual staff team of 40+ there to offer support, guidance, and supervision of international students engaged in Think Pacific projects. Before students arrive on site in a village, Think Pacific has conducted village checks, arranged accommodation for students and briefed village homestay families, planned medical support, briefed teachers and local community representatives, planned logistics, and conducted risk assessments. Think Pacific undertakes risk assessments for all projects involving international students. These are updated and monitored regularly to ensure that students are fully supported from arrival until departure in the Fiji Islands. During orientation, students are encouraged to play an active part in assessing potential risks and understand why prevention measures are taken. Think Pacific adopts the highest standards of Industry

practice using the BSI 8848 code of regulations for leading these type of student experiences/activities and fieldwork outside of the UK. Copies of Think Pacific risk assessments and formal processes are available to view upon request.

Think Pacific advocates that a Think Pacific experience is not for everyone. Students are challenged to get themselves out of their comfort zone, embrace a new culture and immerse themselves into daily Fijian life. This has been reinforced when students are interviewed for a Fiji program and within the preparation course that students are enrolled in. It is critical that expectations are shaped for what this experience is all about and that students must be up to the rigors that village life will impose.

Think Pacific provides comprehensive pre-departure support that includes an online information portal, student handbook, information about Fiji's culture and village life, health, safety, logistics and a check-list for departure, as well as ideas to plan and prepare for working in the village setting and with youth. Online sessions allow for students, and their families, to be briefed and prepared as Think Pacific staff presents live from their office. Think Pacific is prepared to help students prepare at every step of the way.

Every project begins with a comprehensive briefing in Fiji. Health and safety issues is a major topic of the briefing, as is cultural awareness, local language, local orientation, and skills workshops to help ready students for the projects they will soon be engaging. Students meet staff and often government partners.

Each project is led by at least two Think Pacific Leaders to ensure that projects have constant personal support and direction. Most of these leaders are students that have completed a previous Think Pacific program. These leaders live alongside the international students throughout the experience; from staying at the resorts to living with local families in the students' Fijian village. The leaders work with locals to ensure that project objectives are met and they lead daily briefings with the students.

The Think Pacific team members are accessible 24 hours a day during every project, to provide constant back-up for students and peace of mind to family back home. The management team in Fiji is available as a constant back up and provides assistance with any issue or emergency. The management team keeps accessible records of the students including flight details, insurance policies, medical conditions, and family contact information. Think Pacific officers and team members located in the U.K. keep in close contact with Think Pacific staff and team members in Fiji with daily updates.

Think Pacific is committed to responsible travel and a code of conduct for all students that contributes to achieving project aims in Fiji in a safe manner. Students must understand that participation in a Think Pacific project means that they are not only representing Think Pacific, but they are seen as a representative of local partners at the Fijian Ministry. A code of conduct is provided to each participant during pre-departure training.

Think Pacific has comprehensive plans for student safety for extreme situations, which have been designed by the in-country management team, approved to national standards and updated regularly, with staff being briefed for such scenarios. Think Pacific provides health advice and information before departure and ensures that volunteers are briefed for living in rural villages with basic sanitation facilities, drinking rain water, and challenges of the heat and humidity of the tropics. Leaders are available 24/7 to discuss any medical complaint, are equipped with reliable communication, and carry extensive first aid supplies. Projects are usually less than 1 hour from the nearest medical facility and Think Pacific staff are on hand to arrange road or boat transportation if required. Think Pacific has excellent knowledge of local medical practitioners across Fiji – from clinics, local doctors, dentists, and personal contacts with the best hospital in Fiji, who can arrange helicopter emergency response for serious conditions. For any cases of illness, however small, Think Pacific personnel provide personal guidance and will be with an ill or injured student.

# Meeting Fiji's COVID Guidelines

## Planning with Fijian Partners

Think Pacific works in partnership with Tourism Fiji and The Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport and maintains regular communication to ensure programs follow all necessary guidelines. This includes the Care Fiji Commitment (CFC). <https://www.fiji.travel/saferthanever>

Fiji has been reopened for international tourism since 1 December 2021, with the USA being one of Fiji's major travel partner countries. Fiji has had a very good vaccination program, with 92% of Fiji's adult population now fully vaccinated according to the latest government advice.

All Think Pacific program itineraries meet (or exceed) Fiji's COVID guidelines easily and simply under latest covid rules, which are:

- **Briefing:** Students will be taken to a CFC resort on arrival for 6 days and the required testing will take place before day 2.
- **Community:** The students will then travel up to the rural village and stay there for 18 days *(the program will only be delivered in villages highlighted as high vaccination areas and covid safe:*  
<https://fiji.geospatial.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c0649fde77df4958944b03d8caa99be1>)
- **De-brief & Departure:** For the final 4 days, the students will be taken to another CFC resort where depending on the return requirements (including rules for Transiting countries), they will need to be tested for COVID-19 before they fly home. Costs for a Rapid Antigen test starts from approximately \$30 FJD . Some countries require a PCR test which starts from approximately \$200 FJD.

## **What are entry requirements for Fiji related to COVID-19?**

Fiji offers quarantine free travel to fully vaccinated travellers to 'travel partner countries', which includes UK, Australia, USA and Canada. (As of 6th April 2022 is expanded to include all countries).

### ***Before Travelling***

A traveller is asked to produce proof of the following at the airport before your departure for Fiji:

#### **1) Vaccinations**

- Travellers (18yrs+) must produce a digital/paper certification of full-vaccination at least 14 days before travel.
- Fiji currently recognizes AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, Nuvaxovid (Novavax), Coronavac (Sinovac), Covishield, BBIBP-CorV (Sinopharm), Covaxin and Sputnik V. vaccines only.

#### **2 ) COVID-19 Tests**

Travellers can now submit either a PCR or RAT negative test result to enter Fiji. All tests must be supervised and verified by a medical professional (for more info see below) with a written record provided either digitally or on paper. This should be presented at check in.

##### **RAT Tests:**

- Travelers (12yrs+) will need to produce a negative RAT test taken within 24hrs prior to commencement of a journey of continuous flight(s) if applicable.
- Negative test must indicate a specimen collection date no more than 24 hours before the flight's departure (or first flight in a series of connections booked on the same itinerary).

- RAT must be performed using nasopharyngeal, nasal, nasal mid-turbinate, or oropharyngeal specimen collection methods. Serology (antibody) tests will not be accepted.

#### **PCR Tests:**

- Travellers (12yrs+) will need to take a PCR test within 2 days prior to departure and test negative.
- Negative test must have a specimen collection date no more than 2 calendar days before the flight's departure (or first flight in a series of connections booked on the same itinerary).
- PCR tests must be taken by a travel test provider (hospital, doctor, lab)
- PCR tests must be performed by nasopharyngeal, nasal or mid-turbinate, oropharyngeal and saliva specimen collection methods. Drive through tests and SMS text results will not be accepted.

#### **Accepted COVID-19 Results:**

Either paper-based or electronic and must meet the following mandatory requirements:

- travelers name and date of birth;
- test result (such as 'negative' or 'not detected');
- method of test conducted e.g., PCR/nucleic acid amplification test (NAA) or RAT;
- type of specimen collected;
- brand and manufacturer of the test (for RAT tests);
- date of specimen collection for the accepted COVID-19 test; and
- date of test that the specimen for the test was collected, and the test was carried out by or under the supervision of and, signed by an authorized person (e.g., pharmacist general practitioner, nurse, pathologist, pathology collector or trained personnel at airport-based testing stations).

### **3) CFC Hotel Booking & Travel Insurance**

- A confirmed minimum 3-night booking with a CFC (Care Fiji Commitment) certified accommodation and confirmed approved transfer from the airport **(This is removed as of the 6th April 2022)**
- For travellers entering Fiji: medical travel insurance, with international coverage that covers COVID-19 before travelling.

During the minimum 3-night stay at a CFC-certified accommodation, in-country Rapid Antigen testing will take place 2 days after your arrival in Fiji. Day of arrival is considered Day 0. Within the first 2 days in Fiji, individuals are allowed to travel around Fiji quarantine-free provided they exclusively use CFC approved partners. This means individuals can enjoy a resort's facilities, use restaurants, etc. CFC approved businesses (e.g., restaurants) may ask for proof of vaccination.



# Contingencies For COVID Scenarios

*Below are the answers to frequently asked questions regarding COVID in Fiji and Think Pacific's planned response:*

## ***How will students meet entry requirements for Fiji related to COVID-19?***

- *Students travelling to Fiji will need to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and will carry proof of vaccination with them.*
- *Students will be required to obtain a valid COVID test, meeting the requirements for Fiji entry within 24 hours of departure if they select a rapid antigen test or within 2 days if they select PCR testing.*
- *Students are required to pay for those tests and required to ensure that the testing they receive meets the specifics outlined for a valid test for Fiji.*
- *Students testing positive will not be able to fly to Fiji, until such a time as they test negative for COVID-19.*

## ***What must students agree to before travelling to Fiji?***

- *Students participating in the program must agree that they will: 1) obtain and test report immediately prior to travelling to Fiji as specified in the Fiji entry requirements, 2) confirm full vaccination status and carry their certificate to Fiji, 3) be prepared to pay for a rapid antigen test on day 2 at the resort in Fiji, 4) pay for their own COVID testing required for re-entry to the USA (or home country of the student), and 5) state that they are willing and able to pay any necessary COVID incurred expenses (treatment, care, isolation) up front until such time as they will be reimbursed by their travel insurance.*

***What happens if a student tests positive for Covid shortly before the start of the programme, and therefore can't travel?***

- *In the first instance, we will work with the student and their university to see if there are opportunities to join a later project date that summer, once the student has been cleared to fly. We have 35 x projects taking place between May and August and may have availability to join a later date.*
- ***Where this is not possible:***
- *The student would be able to transfer their place in full to the following year, paying only the difference that may exist in project cost (if applicable)*
- *If the student cannot commit to travel the following summer and would like a refund, we shall reimburse **50% of their total fee.***

#### ***What happens if a student tests positive for Covid during the programme?***

- *Students are required to take a COVID test (Rapid Antigen Test) within 72 hours of arrival. If the student tests positive at this time, they will need to be isolated within a hotel room for 3-7 days. The student would be required to pay for this additional cost, or use insurance to cover (unless a separate arrangement is in place with their university)*
- ***How would the volunteer then digest their briefing information?***
- *Think Pacific also requests that volunteers take a home kit test on the day of departure from the briefing resort to the village. If they test positive on this test the same process as stated above would be applicable.*
- *Think Pacific provides 24/7 support, including team leaders, Senior Management and a dedicated Covid health coordinator to oversee and support students.*
- *Think Pacific can coordinate all arrangements for hotel bookings for students, with protocols for this already in place with a range of suppliers.*

#### ***Developing Symptoms and Testing positive whilst in the community:***

- *If a student in a Fijian village develops symptoms indicative of COVID-19, Think Pacific leaders or other staff will facilitate that the student receive*

*COVID-19 testing. Students requiring this testing will be responsible for paying for any needed tests. In the event that a student tests positive while on the program, Think Pacific will contact and alert the program representative at the university (if applicable)*

- *If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the Think Pacific team will transport and relocate the student to a predetermined location for isolation to include a clean, private room and bathroom with Wi-Fi and/or mobile service available. Think Pacific will coordinate delivery of 3 meals per day, daily well-check, regular room cleaning, and 24/7 nursing care if needed. All of the above will require payment at the time by the individual student with personal credit card or cash. It is the student's responsibility to obtain itemised receipts and necessary documentation in order to receive reimbursement from their insurance. Think Pacific is not responsible for any of the costs related to necessary COVID isolation.*
- *The individual in isolation should closely monitor their symptoms, perform temperature checks daily, and immediately report any changes to the Think Pacific local team. They will remain in the isolation location until they meet the criteria to end isolation. Following local guidelines, participants in close contact with a COVID-19 positive case will be asked to get tested 3-5 days after exposure but do not need to quarantine.*
  - *Leader teams will be taking home testing kits into every village for a precautionary measure in case this step is required.*
- *Think Pacific will coordinate all COVID-19 tests and medical care as needed for the individual. Think Pacific Central Leadership in the UK will give support to the local team and notify the participant's emergency contact. If the student feels well enough to engage in virtual activities and Wi-Fi is available, Think Pacific will attempt to keep the student in contact with the project in the village and other students in the village (if feasible).*

- *If a student requires medical care or treatment for COVID, Think Pacific will coordinate that students obtain care from their recommended providers and facilities at the students' cost or insurance cost.*
  - *Which facilities would take covid-19 positive students for treatment?*
- *After the student tests negative for COVID-19 and meets Think Pacific requirements for returning to the village, the student may return to the village for internship activities.*

***What happens if a student gets Covid towards the end of the programme, and can't travel home as a result?***

- *If the student tests positive just prior to their return flight, they will be required to isolate in a resort for 7 days until deemed 'fit to fly'.*
- *Think Pacific will assist to source suitable accommodation and help change their flights*
- *The student will need to ensure that they have funds to pay for the additional cost of accommodation and food or appropriate insurance that will cover these costs.*
- *The student will have a 24-hour number to contact our team, offering pastoral support and logistical support (booking transfers to airport, ensuring student has contact with home and is in contact with airline etc)*
- *The key aspect for a student testing positive within Fiji would be understanding the payment process for hotels. **Generally, although many travel insurance policies cover for covid related expenses, this is often on a 'pay and claim basis' and students would need to ensure they have funds to cover hotel costs and then be reimbursed by their insurance company.***

## Costs, Cancellations & Refunds

### ***Who will pay for COVID testing, treatment or isolation?***

*Think Pacific does not cover the cost of testing, treatment, or isolation including meals, well-checks, nursing care, or any additional expense related to COVID-19. The student's insurance would bear the cost of isolation. Think Pacific staff will support the student to open insurance case files and help with any requirement from insurance companies. Yet, students should be prepared to pay for all related costs upfront while expecting that these costs will be reimbursed through the coverage that they have through the traveller's insurance policy. Students will be responsible for paying for any required COVID testing that may be required in Fiji and for travelling to Fiji.*

*See further info here:*

 [Payment Process - Volunteer Costs - Covid Isolation / Health Visit](#)

### ***What happens if a project is cancelled by Think Pacific due to COVID or other reasons?***

*If the programme is cancelled by Think Pacific, full refunds will be provided (or students can choose to fully transfer to any future project date)*

***What is Think Pacific's refund/cancellation policy If a student or university cancels a project?***

*If the programme is cancelled by the student, the following cancellation policy will be applied:*

- *If the student wishes to cancel a Project, they must do so in writing by email to Think Pacific and they may do so at any time. Cancellation takes effect when Think Pacific receives the written notice of cancellation from the student. Since Think Pacific incur costs in cancelling Projects, the student will have to pay cancellation charges to Think Pacific as follows:*

- ***More than 42 days***

***No cancelation charge***

- ***Less than 42 days***

***50% of the Total Project cost.***

# Further Information

## **Official Guidelines**

- For the latest information from [Tourism Fiji](#)
- Here a link to our preparation portal regarding COVID and the information we provide to students  
<https://thinkpacific.online/sections/covid-updates-process/>
- **The Preparation Portal:** The above is a link within our recently launched portal for students – this covers both ‘Travel Preparation’ modules and also a ‘Global Skills Programme’ where students can access over 100 hours of Fijian culture, Global Awareness, Leadership and Career Skills content. We are also running a 10-part live webinar series on Fijian culture and traditions before departure. If you (or colleague) would like to access and view all content within our portal, please email [simon@thinkpacific.com](mailto:simon@thinkpacific.com) and we would be delighted to register your email and provide full access.

*If you require any further information for the above, or you would like to arrange a call to discuss, do not hesitate to contact the Think Pacific team.*

## Contact Information

### ***Think Pacific Contacts:***

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Other Key Staff and Local Contacts are listed at

<https://thinkpacific.com/about-think-pacific/meet-our-team/>



### *Other things to consider:*

- Test to enter village the day before - ensure time to organise isolation if necessary? If positive then everyone would need to evacuate the dorm. Maybe easier to take tests on the day.
- Supporting students in isolation
- Positive result = 3 day isolation and retest - if negative released, if positive remains until full 7 day isolation is complete.
- Pay & Claim for Volunteers
  - How to make this clear to volunteers - need £500 available for medical/covid emergencies - prep them so funds are available for isolation.
  - TP staff present - who would this be?
    - What happens if not enough rooms are available? Backup resorts nearby?
  - Isolation location - Supporting resort with isolating students
    - Staff might be nervous - provide support to maintain partnership
    - What is your covid policy (for day 3 RAT)
  - Transport to the project.
  - PCR - pay yourself? Not sure insurance will cover this \$200 at your own cost.
- Village/Community Prep
  - What happens if the community doesn't want the group in with covid positive results? How do we find a new location, where would we put up volunteers? Expense to TP - contingency plan needed.
  - Mitigating risks if volunteers who have been exposed to COVID positive volunteers are entering village
    - Checking in with TNK - if approved to come to village, take hand sanitiser for families, cleaning products, bilos, masks, tests & ensure clean plan of action if someone does come down with symptoms - nearby isolation facilities and process if someone does test positive on project

- Ensure FPC is able to prep village for reasons for such measures and ensure this is done in a culturally sensitive manner
  - Leaders to sanitize equipment used on project
  - Community to be reassured and prepped by FPC
- What happens to a person in a village who tests positive
  - "Covid - positive person removed during a 12 hour period removed safely. MoH advises on this - might go to hospital if from the community.
  - Volunteer - find approved accommodation from the MoH where they could go.
  - Minor contacts - isolate in the village (ie. family) "
  - Official RAT test - isolate in hotel nearby (required for insurance)
  - Train leaders around this
  - Process if villager says they feel ill with covid. Not our responsibility would be worth having this back up to provide support to community health workers.
  - Reassuring volunteers and community: Only going to villages that are 99% vaccinated or more, Fiji wouldn't have this as a legislation - how do we language things to volunteers
- What happens when our staff get covid? Back up staff? Process?Office outbreak?"
  - Leaders - reallocation of leaders from 4 per project to 2
  - FJ Leaders - contracted for 3 months but with gaps in case they need to be called in
- Manuals with clear processes/advise for:
  - H&S
  - Leaders
  - Volunteers
  - Community members
- Contingency plans for communities if someone is removed for covid - hotels, contacts, staff to support
- Consolidating list of test providers
  - For debrief - fit to fly certs for end of project

- For insurance purposes Suva, CC & PH if we need a certificate for anyone isolating in hotels so they can claim on their insurance.