


AFRICA MIDDLE EAST

Operators try to ease concerns over S. Africa's new immigration laws

By [Dorine Reinstein](#) / May 28, 2015

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U.S.-based tour operators have reassured travelers that South Africa's new immigration regulations should not be seen as a reason not to travel to South Africa. The new regulations require all travelers under age 18 to carry an "unabridged" birth certificate beginning on June 1.

"The things that make South Africa a great family destination vastly outweigh the inconvenience of these new regulations," says **Marcia Gordon**, owner of Extraordinary Journeys. She explains she has emphasized to her clients that the regulations are in fact not that difficult to comply with.

Says Gordon: "What South Africa calls an 'unabridged' birth certificate is the standard U.S. birth certificate. If you are two parents traveling with your child/children, and you bring their birth certificates, that's it, you are done, you have complied with the regulations."

Gordon adds that if travelers are grandparents with grandkids or one parent traveling with kids, then a letter of permission from the parents or the other parent and the birth certificates are all that is required. She explains that because there is international travel involved, Extraordinary Journeys recommends its clients obtain

an apostille instead of just a seal from a local notary public. She says: “You can get an apostille easily at your local courthouse or city hall.”

For divorced parents or blended families, South Africa will insist on a letter of permission. According to Gordon however, these letters of permission are standard when traveling with kids. She says: “Clients likely already have them and are used to following this procedure when traveling.”

Also **Jeanie Fundora**, safari consultant for Travel Beyond, says the operator has provided all clients with the necessary requirements to ensure they don't have any hassles. She adds: “Some of my clients have also been extremely proactive in informing themselves of the new requirements and have easily obtained all the necessary info online.”

The Southern African tourism industry, however, is bracing itself for a drastic drop in family travel, with some tour operators reporting they have already seen cancellations from families who feel ‘unsure’ about the new regulations.

Ton de Rooy, managing director for Robin Pope Safaris, foresees the new requirements for underage travelers have a negative impact on family travel. He explains that although child trafficking needs to be prevented, it seems that the South African government is trying to “kill a mouse with a bazooka” not realizing that the mouse could be too fast for this to be effective. “Is it really difficult to fake an unabridged birth certificate?” he asks.

Also **Michele Abraham**, marketing and communications manager for the Minor Hotel Group in Mozambique, feels the new regulations will affect tourism as travelers will opt for easier-to-access destinations with less restrictions. She says: “Mozambique is an add-on destination for U.S. travelers coming to southern Africa and will enter the country from South Africa, thereby affecting family travel into Mozambique.”

For exact details and standard operating procedures of the new regulations, please visit: www.asata.co.za/downloads2015/150518_SummaryImmigrationMinors.pdf