

Dear ABOTA Travelers:

Routine vaccinations (diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A and B), and influenza are strongly encouraged. Because of the altitude of our destinations, travelers with lung and heart disease need to discuss the trip with their physician.

EVERYTHING else gets complex, so consult a trusted travel clinic/physician who understands all medication you take. Certain medications make live virus vaccines (yellow fever) UNACCEPTABLE.

FACTS: You are in Africa and will be exposed to mosquitoes. Only certain breeds of mosquitoes transmit malaria, yellow fever, and multiple viral diseases that make the news. Elevations above 5900 feet carry minimal risk of mosquito borne illness. There is yellow fever in Rwanda and select parts of Tanzania. We are staying at higher elevations, but only 2 stops are above 5900 feet: the Rwanda gorilla lodges (pre/post-trips) and Ngorongoro Crater (Main Safari).

Malaria prophylaxis pills are recommended but, again, CONSULT a travel clinic. Most physicians are not up-to-date on travel meds. There are several options for malaria medications and side effects vary.

If you are going to Rwanda BEFORE going to Tanzania for the Main Safari, you will need to get the yellow fever vaccine if you are not current. You will need to show your immunization card with your passport upon entry into Tanzania. If you are going to Kenya or other parts of East Africa on your own prior to joining ABOTA in Tanzania, you will need the yellow fever vaccine as well. **The yellow fever vaccine in the US is currently limited. Please consult a travel clinic now to be sure the vaccine is available for you.**

It gets more complex; contraindications to the yellow fever vaccine are "immune impaired" status and "caution in elderly patients." No one defines "elderly," particularly for this group, but it usually means 60+ years old and each travel clinic decides. Yellow fever is a viral disease and no direct treatment of the infection is available (thus makes risk/benefit decisions tougher).

If you are entering countries that do not have a yellow fever problem from a country that is known to have a yellow fever problem, proof of vaccination is required for entry. This is why currently proof of vaccination is required for entry into Tanzania from Rwanda. Age, per se, is generally not an exemption.

-Dr. Tom McHorse