

SOUTH AFRICA - GENERAL INFORMATION

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South Africa has been declared one of the 18 mega-diverse destinations in the world.

South Africa's scenic wonders are legendary. From Table Mountain to God's Window, our mountains, forests, coasts and deserts will feast your eye and lift your spirit...World-class facilities-Whether you opt for Afro-chic or authentic Africa, you'll find it easy to get around, find a comfortable place to stay, have a great meal, connect. Adventure- South Africa is the adventure capital of the world. With over 130 adventures and counting, there is something for everyone from mountain walks to shark cage-diving! Good Weather- In sunny South Africa, our great weather invites you to enjoy the outdoors, play golf year-round and take advantage of the nearly 3000km coastline...Rainbow Nation- The Rainbow Nation celebrates all its African and immigrant cultures. Find out how friendly our people are whilst you try your tongue at 11 official languages! Diverse Experiences- Go almost anywhere in SA and experience the ultimate combo of nature, wildlife, culture, adventure, heritage and vibe – you're spoilt for choice, so pack it in! Wildlife Warning- Watching wildlife is addictive. First you start with the Big Five in so many ways, then whales, penguins, meerkats, wild dogs, birds, dung beetles...Freedom Struggle- Discover a nation's struggle for freedom whilst following the footsteps of Mandela, Hector Pieterse and many other celebrated revolutionaries. It will touch and inspire you. Responsible Tourism- In SA you can travel with care as you explore our protected areas, contribute to social and conservation projects, buy recycle art and stay green.

COUNTRY

- Area:** South Africa covers an area of 1 233 404 km².
- Location:** Situated at the southern tip of Africa, South Africa has a landmass of 1 233 404 km² edged on 3 sides by a nearly 3000km coastline washed by the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. It is bordered in the north by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and also wraps itself around two independent countries, the Lesotho and Swaziland.
- Population:** The South African population of more than 47m people is extremely diverse. Africans are in the majority, approx. 80% of the population, followed by the white population approx. 4,4m; the coloured population approx. 4,2 million and the Indian/Asian population at approx. 1,2m.
- Capital City:** South Africa has 3 capitals: Cape Town (Legislative), Pretoria (Administrative) and Bloemfontein (Judicial)

STATEHOOD

- Official Name:** Republic of South Africa
- Date of Independence:** 1961
- System of Government:** A well-known fact about South Africa is that since 1994 we have enjoyed democratic government, the apartheid policies of the past overthrown. Our constitution is regarded as an example to the world, and enshrines a wide scope of human rights protected by an independent judiciary. The country is headed by a State President, Jacob Zuma, of the African National Congress (ANC).

CULTURAL

- Language:** South Africa is a multi-lingual country and there are 11 official languages including: English, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Composed by Enoch Sontonga in 1899, the Xhosa hymn 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika is South Africa's national anthem
- Literacy:** The functional illiteracy rates – that is, people 15 years old and over with no education or a highest level of education less than grade seven – have dropped from 31.5% in 2001 to 19.1% in 2011. Poorer rural provinces, such as Limpopo and the Northern Cape, have cut their functional illiteracy rates by almost half to around 25% since 1996.



Religion: Almost 80% of South Africa's population is Christian. Other major religious groups include Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. A minority don't belong to any of the major religions. The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship.

PASSPORT / VISA REQUIREMENTS

To enter South Africa you are required to have a passport valid for no less than 30 days after the end of your intended stay, and at least two completely blank pages on which your entry permit can be endorsed. If your passport does not comply with this requirement you will either be prevented from boarding the aircraft at your point of departure, or risk deportation on arrival in South Africa. South African border authorities do not accept provisional travel documents (one page travel document) as a valid document to enter South Africa. *South Africa requires a valid yellow fever certificate from all foreign visitors and citizens over 1 year of age travelling from an infected area or having been in transit through infected areas. For visa requirements, please contact your nearest South African diplomatic mission.*

From 1 June 2015, new immigration regulations apply pertaining to the travel of children. Travellers should make themselves aware of all relevant new requirements through the nearest South African embassy or consulate or visit the [South African Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\) website](#) before travelling.

The new regulations stipulate that in addition to a valid travel document (passport), an unabridged (full) birth certificate (one that identifies the parents of the child) must be carried and produced on request for children under the age of 18. Copies of the birth certificate must be certified and be no more than 3 months old. If the birth certificate is not in one of the 11 official languages of South Africa, which includes English, travellers will need to provide an English translation from an [accredited translator](#). In addition to the requirement to produce a valid travel document (passport) and an unabridged birth certificate, children travelling with only one parent will also be required to produce a legal document signed by the non-travelling parent giving approval for the child's travel or where applicable, a death certificate of the other parent registered on the birth certificate of the child, or a court order granting sole custody. A legal document can be a Statutory Declaration or an Affidavit and must contain full names and passport details of both parents registered on the birth certificate and child(ren), with contact details for the non-travelling parent. The document should also specify the travel destinations of the parent and child(ren). These legal documents or certified copies of these documents cannot be more than 3 months old. If there is only one parent registered on the birth certificate, that person has sole responsibility. Non-compliance from 1 July 2015 is likely to result in airline companies refusing to allow travellers to board flights, or being turned back at the border, and possibly fined.

CURRENCY, CREDIT CARDS AND BANKS

Rands and cents

South Africa's unit of currency is the rand, which is divided into 100 cents. Notes come in denominations of R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200; and coins come in 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, R1, R2 and R5. There are two R5 coins in circulation, both of which are legal currency. All transactions are rounded down to the nearest 5c.

How far will my money go? A long way. With a favourable exchange rate for the major international currencies, you'll find South Africa an inexpensive destination.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), linked to all major international networks, are available throughout the country and will generally dispense money in a mixture of denominations between R200 and R10, with about 80% of the value requested being high value notes and the rest in smaller denominations. You can use any Cirrus or Maestro card as well as all major credit and debit cards at the ATMs. South African bank ATMs do not charge any fees above those levied by your own financial institution.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The dates of certain public holidays change from year to year – refer below. If a public holiday falls on a Sunday, then the Monday is also declared a public holiday. Most shops are closed with only some grocery shops that are open for limited hours on these days.



New Year's Day (1 January)

Human Rights Day (21 March)

Easter weekend (4-day long weekend in March/April) - Consisting of "Good Friday", "Easter Saturday", "Easter Sunday", and "Easter Monday", the dates are set according to the Western Christian tradition.

Freedom Day (27 April)

Workers Day (1 May)

Youth Day (16 June)

Woman's Day (9 August)

Heritage Day (24 September)

Day of Reconciliation (16 December) - see Bloodriver.

Christmas Day (25 December)

Day of Goodwill (26 December)

TAX AND CUSTOMS

VAT (Value Added Tax) is levied at 14% on almost all products in South Africa. By law, advertised prices should be inclusive of VAT except when explicitly stated otherwise. Foreign passport holders may claim back the VAT on products that were bought in South Africa and are being taken out of the country, provided that the total value of the goods exceeds R250. Full details of the procedure to follow are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and their new TAX Refund for tourists website. VAT Refund Administrator's offices are available at both Johannesburg (O.R. Tambo) and Cape Town International Airports. Refunds will be credited to a Travelex Visa card that you will be given, denominated in US dollars or Euro, the fees in conversion associated with this card can leave you with up to 10% less than you thought you were getting. The cards can only be used outside of South Africa.

VAT on services rendered or goods consumed cannot be refunded!

SAFETY

The majority of visitors to South Africa complete their travel without incident, but South Africa has a very high level of crime and crime is the primary security threat for travelers. Violent crimes, such as armed robbery, rape, carjacking, mugging, and "smash-and-grab" attacks on vehicles, are frequent and affect both visitors and residents alike. However for a safe journey and pleasant stay, we recommend the following precautions:

- When leaving the vehicle, make sure it is locked and the alarm activated. Make sure nothing of value is left in your car. If you cannot take it with you, make sure it is not visible.
- Especially in urban areas, keep track of your valuables and camera when walking about.
- If you have traveler's cheques, always remember to write down the serial number on a separate paper which you should keep somewhere different than the originals.
- Make sure you always have a photocopy of your passport and flight ticket. Keep these in a safe place - separate from the originals.
- Do not accept offers from friendly strangers.
- Do not wear a tummy bag with all your valuables, consider a concealed money belt worn under your shirt instead. Distribute your valuables in inside pockets and other pockets. A decoy wallet may also be worth considering.
- Leave passports and other valuables in a safe or other secure location. Do not carry large sums of money. Do not walk by night in deserted places. Hide that you are a tourist: conceal your camera and binoculars.
- Visiting the townships is possible, but do not do it alone unless you really know where you're going. Go with an experienced guide. Some tour companies offer perfectly safe guided visits to the townships.
- South Africa has very few earthquakes, cyclones, tornadoes, floods, terrorist incidents or contagious diseases (with the notable exception of HIV).
- Note that taking an evening stroll or walking to venues after dark in the larger cities can be very risky. It simply is not part of the culture there, as it is in Europe, North America or Australia. It is best to take a taxi (a metered cab, not a minibus taxi) or private vehicle for an "evening out". The same applies to picking up hitchhikers or offering assistance at broken-down car scenes. It is best to ignore anyone who appears to be in distress at the side of the road as it could be part of a scam. Keep going until you see a Police station and tell them about what you have seen.



TIME

GMT+2

CLIMATE

A subtropical location, moderated by ocean on three sides of the country and the altitude of the interior plateau, account for the warm temperate conditions so typical of South Africa – and so popular with its foreign visitors. South Africa is famous for its sunshine. It's a relatively dry country, with an average annual rainfall of about 464mm (compared to a world average of about 860mm). While the Western Cape gets most of its rainfall in winter, the rest of the country is generally a summer-rainfall region. On the interior plateau, the altitude – Johannesburg lies at 1 694 metres – keeps the average summer temperatures below 30°C. In winter, for the same reason, night- time temperatures can drop to freezing point, and lower in some places. South Africa's coastal regions are therefore warmest in winter. There is, however, a striking contrast between temperatures on the country's east and west coasts, due respectively to the warm Agulhas and cold Benguela Currents that sweep the coastlines. Being in the southern hemisphere, our seasons stand in opposition to those of Europe and North America, so, yes – we spend Christmas on the beach!

Summer

Over much of South Africa, summer (mid-October to mid-February) is characterised by hot, sunny weather – often with afternoon thunderstorms that clear quickly, leaving a warm, earthy, uniquely African smell in the air.

The Western Cape, with its Mediterranean climate, is the exception, getting its rain in winter.

Autumn

Autumn in South Africa (mid-February to April) offers the best weather in some respects. Very little rain falls over the whole country, and it is warm but not too hot, getting colder as the season progresses. In Cape Town, autumn is fantastic, with hot sunny days and warm, balmy nights which many people spend outdoors.

Winter

Winter in South Africa (May to July) is characterised in the higher-lying areas of the interior plateau by dry, sunny, crisp days and cold nights, sometimes with heavy frosts. It's a good idea to bring warm clothes. The hot, humid KwaZulu-Natal coast, as well as the Lowveld (lower-lying areas) of Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, offer fantastic winter weather with sunny, warmish days and virtually no wind or rain. The Western Cape gets most of its rain in winter, with quite a few days of cloudy, rainy weather. However, these are always interspersed with wonderful days to rival the best of a British summer. The high mountains of the Cape and the Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal usually get snow in winter.

Spring

Nowhere in South Africa is spring (August to mid-October) more spectacular than in the Cape provinces. Here the grey winter is forgotten as thousands of small, otherwise insignificant plants cover the plains in an iridescent carpet of flowers. The journey to see the flowers of the Namaqualand in the Western and Northern Cape is an annual pilgrimage for many South Africans.

WATER

The water is safe to drink throughout the majority of South Africa. When visiting the remote areas purification tablets should be used, or bottled mineral water bought en-route. Plenty of water must be drunk to prevent dehydration. We recommend 2-3 liters minimum, excluding beverages such as tea, coffee, juice and alcohol. Dehydration is responsible for many emergency evacuations and can cause very serious problems, it is totally avoidable, so don't let this spoil your holiday!

VOLTAGE

220/240 volts AC. 3-Pin Plugs are used.

The main supply of electrical current in Southern Africa is 220 volts using both three and two round pin plugs. We recommend bringing an adapter with you as these are not always available at all lodges. Adapters are widely available for purchase in the UK



before travel. Some camps use either solar panels, generators or mains electricity depending on their remoteness but all are used to charging camera batteries and phones.

LAUNDRY

Most camps/lodges/hotels in South Africa provide laundry service (although some may charge a nominal fee). Please keep this in mind when packing so that you can keep your luggage down to the basics.

CHECK-IN/OUT TIMES

Hotels in the South African towns and cities generally have a check in time of 14h00 and a check out time of 10h00, though many lodges and hotels will try to be accommodating and flexible if they are not too fully booked the preceding night. Otherwise we recommend you book a day room in advance to secure a longer stay in your room.

DRIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is not necessary to have an international driving license to rent a vehicle and drive in South Africa, the license from your country will be valid (however the license needs to be in English). Please do not forget to bring this with should you be hiring a vehicle and self-driving. In South Africa we drive on the left side of the road. Speed limits are usually 80km/h on dirt/gravel roads, 120 km/h on long distance tarred roads, and 60km/h in residential areas. However please take careful note of road signs as they may indicate otherwise in certain areas. **The law requires that all drivers and passengers wear their seat belts.**

Avoid driving at night and before dawn. If absolutely necessary because of an emergency, make sure your headlights are on (as well as the brights, unless there is an oncoming vehicle – the brights help you to see further, in case of obstacles or animals).

Roads are generally quiet although they can get very busy on weekends and around public holidays. It is an unfortunate fact that some vehicles you encounter on the road may not be in a good condition. Please be cautious of other drivers.

COMMUNICATION

Mobile telephoned roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone operators. There is good coverage in most areas, except for the Game Reserves.

INTERNET

There are internet cafes stated throughout the country. Some lodges and hotels do have Wi-Fi available or internet connection, for guests use

POST

Good postal service. Airmail to Europe takes approximately four days to two weeks. Postal service affiliated with Universal Postal Union.

HEALTH TIPS

Medicines and Pharmacies

South African pharmacies are more like a traditional chemist's shop. The pharmacy section is usually limited to an area behind a counter in the back of the premises. Most pharmacists are available to give sound advice. Many types of medicines are available without prescription and cost less than in Europe or North America. *However, travelers taking specific medications should bring an adequate supply for their entire stay and a prescription with them.* Some pharmacies have extended hours and some run emergency services. Pharmacies are listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. Contact the local hospital in emergencies during weekends and after hours.

Doctors and Hospitals

South Africa is well-known for its medical skill since Professor Christiaan Barnard performed the first successful heart transplant in 1967. There are many world-class private hospitals and medical centres around the country, especially in the urban centres. Most of



South Africa is malaria-free, but always check with the game reserves you're planning to visit and take precautions if necessary. Make sure you have the latest safety tips from the establishment where you will be staying and take common sense precautions as you would when travelling.

Rescue Services:

From a fixed line

107 - Emergency (in Cape Town only from fixed lines)

10111 - Police

10177 - Ambulance

082911 - Netcare911 and The National Sea Rescue Institute

From a mobile phone

112 - All Emergencies

082911 - Netcare911 and The National Sea Rescue Institute (You only need to dial 911 from Vodacom mobile phones)

Stored Blood

South Africa's Blood Transfusion Service only uses blood donations by unpaid volunteers. Donations are thoroughly tested for transmittable diseases, including HIV. Tests are carried out according to internationally recognized standard methods and are regularly submitted to strict quality controls.

Snakes & Scorpions

Just to put you at ease: most visitors never see a snake or scorpion during their stay in South Africa. In any event, about 75% of South Africa's snakes are not venomous. Most snakes beat a hasty retreat when humans approach and therefore are never spotted – they pick up the tremors caused by footsteps. The lazy puff adder may become dangerous, as it is not able to disappear fast enough and you might unwittingly get too close. When walking in the "wild" you should always wear sturdy shoes, preferably covering the ankle. Watch your step and listen to sounds – snakes usually warn you before they attack. Refrain from picking up or turning pieces of rock, and do not put your hand into holes in the ground or into rock crevices, as these are favourite hiding places for snakes and scorpions. Always carry a torch in the dark. When camping, zip your tent completely and shake out your shoes before putting them on in the morning.

WHAT TO PACK

In general we recommend practical clothing such as sportswear, shorts, t-shirts etc, long sleeved shirts and long pants for evenings and early mornings, comfortable shoes, sandals, walking shoes, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen with a high SPF. Do not forget a sweater and jacket, especially for any open vehicle drives and along the coast where there may be fog and wind.

In the summer, the weather can be very hot in certain regions, about 35 degrees Celsius in the day. The temperature at night is usually pleasant throughout most of the country; however the Deserts and coast can get cold at night. In winter, the days are usually warm; however the temperature at night can go below 0 degrees Celsius on occasion. It is advisable therefore to be prepared for hot and cold weather.

Many of the hotels / lodges have swimming pools.

Suggested Clothing:

1. Sun hat/bush hat.
2. Headscarf/bandana – particularly for dusty dry regions.
3. Golf-shirts and/or T-shirts – preferably with sleeves to protect your shoulders from the sun.
4. Long-sleeved cotton shirts.
5. Shorts and/or skirts – (short skirts are not practical for getting in and out of game drive vehicles)
6. Long trousers/slacks.
7. Track suit.
8. Pajamas – Lighter set for summer and a warmer set for cooler nights.



9. Underwear (sports bra recommended for game drives as the roads can be bumpy and uneven) and socks.
10. Good closed walking shoes (running/tennis shoes are fine).
11. Sandals – preferably low heeled or flat if you are going on safari.
12. Swimming costume.
13. Warm winter jersey.
14. Warm anorak or parka and scarf / gloves for cold winter months (May to September).
15. Light rain gear for summer months (late November to April).
16. More formal attire for your stay at prestigious city hotels or on one of the luxury trains.

Equipment/Other:

1. Good quality sunglasses - preferably polarised. Tinted fashion glasses are not good in strong light.
2. Flashlight with batteries.
3. If you wear contact lenses, we recommend that you bring along a pair of glasses in case you get irritation from the dust
4. Southern African bird guide if you are a keen birder, e.g. Newman's or Sasol
5. Personal toiletries (basic amenities supplied by most establishments).
6. Malaria tablets (if applicable). *Please note that South Africa is a very low-risk malaria area, and that the best defense against malaria is to avoid mosquito bites. To avoid being bitten, pack long-sleeved shirts, trousers, socks and shoes (in addition to your insect repellent), to wear in the evening when mosquitoes are most active.*
7. Antihistamine tablets if you suffer from any allergies.
8. Anti nausea tablets if you suffer from motion sickness.
9. Moisturising cream and suntan lotion – SPF 20 or higher recommended.
10. Insect repellent for body application, e.g. Tabard, Rid, Jungle Juice, etc.
11. Basic medical kit (aspirins, plasters, Imodium, antiseptic cream and Anti-histamine cream, etc.)
12. Tissues/"Wet Ones"
13. Visas, tickets, passports, money, etc.
14. Camera equipment and plenty of film/memory sticks – refer to photo tips
15. Waterproof/dustproof bag/cover for your camera.
16. BINOCULARS ARE ESSENTIAL (night vision binoculars are not essential, but highly recommended if your safari includes night activities)

Note 1: Bright colours and white are not advised while on safari. Camouflage clothing is not recommended for travel in southern African countries.

Note 2: Space in vehicles and aircrafts is limited and therefore we recommend that you adhere to the 20kg luggage limit (unless specified otherwise). Please ensure that you use soft bags and not hard suitcases – please ensure that you have the details from your agent according to your itinerary and that you ask your agent ahead of time if you would like details regarding the feasibility and cost of taking excess luggage with you on any of these restricted luggage safaris.

USEFUL TIPS:

- Do not go on any walks without drinking water
- Take snacks and water along in the vehicle as the routes are often long without places to stop and eat
- Don't walk away from lodge / resort at night. Most predators and dangerous animals are nocturnal.
- Be aware even at the lodge / resort. Wildlife can enter the lodge areas, especially at night.
- Do not approach wild animals, even if they appear relaxed. Their feelings about our presence can change quickly.
- Do not sleep with parts of your body exposed or on the ground without protection around you. Sleep in your tent when camping.
- Do not disturb wildlife in anyway. Excessive noise can irritate and scare the animals. A sudden gesture could be viewed as a threat to the animals.
- Do not drive off road. You may damage vegetation and soil especially in a delicate and fragile eco-system as you will find in South Africa. Damaged areas are also unsightly. Avoid night drives as it can upset animals and the light can damage their eyes.



- Do not offer food to wild animals. Even small, cute animals can give a nasty bite and may carry diseases harmful to humans.
- Monkeys and Baboons can cause havoc and steal food. Always make sure vehicles / tents are closed properly and food is packed away safely.
- Do not leave any rubbish. Take it with you and discard of it into a rubbish bin.
- Be courteous and respectful of people of other cultures and races.

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT PARKS AND RESERVES

This below is a brief summary of the main rules of the park. Please read your permit carefully for further details.

- Gates open after sunrise and close before sunset. You must return to your resort before sunset. At the entrance of the park, take note of the opening and closing times of the gates
- At the entrance to each park / reserve, you must report to the office nearest you and pay the park entrance fee
- You must follow the paths already marked – it is forbidden to drive off the roads
- It is forbidden to enter any areas with No Entry signs
- The speed limit within the parks is 40 km/h. Costly fines will be charged to visitors who exceed the speed limits. The speed limits are in place to ensure the safety of visitors and animals
- It is forbidden to throw any object from the window of his vehicle, including rubbish and cigarette butts. All waste must be stored in your car and placed in rubbish bins which can be found at the resorts.
- Do not disturb, harm or kill any animals
- Do not shout or make any noise which can be a nuisance to other visitors and animals
- Do not exit your vehicle while in National Parks. You may have windows open but it is advisable to not make any sudden movement with hands and arms, as cats hiding in the bushes may be attracted by a simple movement. Do not let any part of your body lean out of the window.
- Do not get too close to the animals to take a photo, or make noises to get their attention.
- Do not feed the animals
- If an animal happens to get too close to your vehicle, do not panic and make a noise. If possible you can drive away slowly, otherwise just remain calm and still until the animal moves away.
- Do not camp outside of the resorts
- Do not drive around at night
- When you are a waterhole, please turn off your vehicle's engine and park in a way that does not obstruct other visitors view. Please also talk quietly.
- Visitors enter the park / reserve at their own risk
- The park staff may at any time request the proof of payment of the park fees, so keep this with you at all times
- All visitors have permission to travel in the park provided that you adhere to the rules and conditions stipulated on the permit. Therefore please read the permit carefully.

TIPS

Although a long standing tradition, staff tips are at the **GUEST'S** discretion.

