

SOUTH AFRICA

COUNTRY INFORMATION

SOUTH AFRICA's rich cultural kaleidoscope of diversity is one of the country's most dynamic components. In the shadow of soaring glass and concrete superstructures, Victorian bungalows rub shoulders with gracious Cape Dutch buildings, mosques, temples, and modern townhouses. Theaters, museums, festivals, and art galleries flourish, and in remote rural villages, tribal people tend their cattle and invoke their ancestors in times of trouble.

Restaurants offer delectable local cuisine and international culinary creations, while South Africa's wines compete with the finest in the world. The entertainment repertoire ranges from classical music, ballet, and theater to ethnic fringe, cross-cultural jazz, African rhythms, and graceful Indian dances.

Few countries rival South Africa's scenic beauty. Tranquil lagoons, sandy shores, fishing harbors and charming seaside resorts dot the coastline. Rolling farmlands and fertile vineyards abound, and indigo mountains and forested valleys can all be found in South Africa.

Passport and Visa Information

- A valid passport is required and must be **valid for at least 30 days after expiry of visit** to South Africa. An onward or return ticket is also required.
- No visa is required for U.S. and Canadian Citizens for a tourist stay up to 90 days. If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with your travel agent or local consulate for specific information.
- We recommend the passports of all travelers to South Africa contain **at least two completely blank (unstamped) visa pages each time entry is sought**. These pages are in addition to the endorsement/amendment pages (as many as four) at the back of the passport. In addition, any **trip to a neighboring country would necessitate another blank page upon return**.
- While South African statutes require one completely blank visa page, this rule has been applied inconsistently by South African immigration officials.
- Travelers lacking adequate blank pages in the passport may be refused entry into South Africa, fined, and returned to their point of origin at the traveler's expense. South African authorities have denied the diplomatic missions access to assist in these cases.
- As a general precaution, all travelers are advised to carry a photocopy of the photo/biographical information page of their passport and keep it in a location separate from the passport.
- **If a father or mother is traveling with his or her underage children (without the other parent)**, a letter of consent needs to be signed by the other parent and certified by the police. If the traveler does not obtain the letter, they travel at their own risk.
- For **grandparents traveling with grandchildren**, you also need to carry a letter giving the parents' consent.

Note: Please be aware that although Ker & Downey will advise you of the current information concerning visas and other requirements, it is your responsibility to reconfirm the information and obtain all necessary documents for entry to countries listed on your itinerary. Visa requirements change frequently.

Health Requirements and Information

Immunizations:

If you are arriving in (or planning to re-enter) South Africa from an area infected with yellow fever or a country where yellow fever is endemic (such as Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, or the Democratic Republic of Congo), you are required to have a yellow fever vaccination. This vaccination must be administered at least (10) days before your arrival (or re-entry) into South Africa. If your travel itinerary requires you to have a yellow fever vaccination, you must ask your doctor to provide you with an "International Certificate of Vaccination," which should be carried with you at all times while traveling to serve as proof that you have fulfilled the vaccination requirement. If proof of vaccination is required and you do not carry it with you, you may be denied entry into South Africa.

Malaria:

While most of South Africa is malaria free, risk exists throughout the year in rural low-altitude areas of Northern (Limpopo) and Mpumalanga provinces, including Kruger National Park and neighboring reserves. Risk also exists in the coastal lowlands of KwaZulu-Natal north of the Tugela River, including Zululand but excluding urban areas of Richards Bay. Malaria prophylaxis is **strongly** recommended when visiting these areas.

Bilharzia:

Bilharzia is found in fresh water in South Africa. Do not swim in fresh water or come in contact with stagnant water.

Other concerns:

- South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa where you can drink the water in major cities and eat salads or unpeeled fresh fruits and assume Western sanitation standards are followed.
- Dengue fever, sleeping sickness, and other insect-borne diseases can be found in the area. Take appropriate precautions against insect bites such as using insect repellent and wearing long sleeves and pants.

Customs

Travelers are allowed free import of: (tobacco and alcohol restricted to those over 18 years of age)

- 200 cigarettes and 50 cigars and 250g of tobacco
- 2 liters of wine and 1 liter of spirits or liquor
- 50ml of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette
- Other goods up to a value of R3000

Jewelry that has been taken abroad and remodeled, processed, repaired, or exchanged must be accompanied by documentary proof of this transaction with all costs included.

Foreigners may have the 14% VAT (Value-Added Tax) refunded when they leave, but only:

- For goods they have with them
- If they have receipts and tax invoices available, (ask the vendor for a VAT 263 form)
- If the total VAT charged is more than R250.00

Visitors require a temporary import permit for firearms, which will only be issued for hunting purposes or sporting events. Visit [www.saps.gov.za] for more information.

You may import up to R5000 in local currency and any amount of foreign currency provided it is declared on arrival. You may export up to R5000 in local currency and any amount of foreign currency up to the amount declared provided departure is within twelve months after entry.

Airport Information

O.R. Tambo International Airport is located 19 miles from Johannesburg and Pretoria. It serves as the primary airport for travel to South Africa. It has 6 terminals which can be combined into 3 areas, international, domestic and transit. There are facilities for money exchange, ATMs, banking, restaurants, luggage storage, car rentals, and shopping at the airport.

O.R. Tambo International Airport has a luggage storage depot on the upper level of the underground parking lot, near the main elevator to the lobby of International Arrivals. You may leave baggage at a cost of Rand 50.00 (about USD \$8) per item for the first day and Rand 40.00 (about USD \$6 dollars) per item every day thereafter. MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Open 24/7.

Cape Town International Airport is located 15 miles east of Cape Town. It has five terminals, two international terminals for departure and arrivals and three domestic terminals, one for arrivals, one for departures on South African Airways and one for departures on all other airlines. The facilities available include ATMs, banks, bureau de change, wireless internet, car rental, shopping, restaurants, and luggage storage.

The common domestic airports in South Africa include Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in Nelspruit, Eastgate Airport in Hoedspruit, and Durban International Airport

- If you are being met by BID air services, you will be met directly off your flight. If you are being met by a Ker & Downey representative, you will be met immediately after you have passed through the secured passenger areas. In either case, they will be holding a sign with your name on it.
- All passengers traveling on international flights from South Africa will be restricted from carrying certain liquids, aerosols and gels in the cabin of aircraft as of June 1, 2007. This comes after the Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) announced the introduction of these restrictions as part of a global precautionary measure to protect aircraft against possible liquid explosive threats. These rules are aligned to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.

NOTE: Passengers connecting to a domestic flight within South Africa immediately after an international arrival in Johannesburg will need to claim their checked baggage in Johannesburg in order to clear it through customs in Johannesburg. It will not be transferred automatically onto domestic flights.

Airport Departure Tax

The airport departure tax is included in the price of your ticket.

Domestic Baggage Limits

- Federal Air: 44 lbs total
- Madikwe Air: 44 lbs total
- General Airways Lowveld Charters: 44 lbs total

Note: Excess baggage can result in an extra charge at your own expense.

Safety

Street crime has increased in all major cities (including daytime muggings). Limit the amount of cash you carry and try to leave valuables at home. Do not leave valuables out in your hotel room; instead, use the safe that is often provided. Also be aware of your surroundings, as criminals tend to target those that appear preoccupied.

Avoid political demonstrations, funerals, and political gatherings. Do not drive into black townships anywhere, until you have sought advice about the local situation. There have been an increased number of attacks on refugees and immigrants from other parts of Africa, which have been difficult to control.

“There is a serious baggage pilferage problem at OR Tambo (Johannesburg) and Cape Town International airports, particularly affecting travelers changing airlines and those flying on smaller airlines—passengers flying on major international carriers may not be affected to the same degree. Travelers are encouraged to secure their luggage with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) approved locks, use an airport plastic wrapping service, and avoid placing electronics, jewelry, cameras, or other valuables in checked luggage. Make an inventory of items in checked baggage to aid in claims processing if theft does occur.” [<http://travel.state.gov>]

Climate

Cape Town, RSA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	77	78	76	72	67	64	62	63	65	69	72	75
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	63	63	60	56	52	48	47	48	51	54	58	61
Ave. Precipitation (in)	.60	.60	.80	1.60	2.70	3.70	3.30	3.00	1.60	.10	0	.70

Johannesburg, RSA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	77	75	74	69	66	60	61	65	71	73	74	76
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	60	59	58	53	48	42	42	46	51	54	56	59
Ave. Precipitation (in)	4.90	3.80	3.30	2.10	.70	.30	.20	.20	1.10	2.90	4.70	4.30

Durban, RSA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	81	81	81	75	75	73	72	72	72	74	76	79
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	72	72	71	67	61	55	55	58	62	64	67	70
Ave. Precipitation (in)	4.70	5.00	5.20	3.30	2.20	1.30	1.40	1.90	2.90	4.30	4.60	4.70

Knysna, RSA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	78	80	77	74	72	69	68	68	68	71	74	77
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	63	65	62	58	54	49	48	50	52	56	59	63
Ave. Precipitation (in)	2.88	1.99	4.56	2.83	2.49	1.77	2.63	3.29	2.39	2.83	3.12	4.31

Weather conditions may vary depending on location in South Africa.

- The climate is mild throughout South Africa. The seasons are reversed from the Northern Hemisphere. It can snow between **June and August** in the mountain areas, but there is only one ski facility, which is outside Rhodes in the Eastern Cape.
- It generally rains in the afternoon during the austral summer (winter in the northern hemisphere) everywhere in the country, except in the Western Cape Province, where it rains during winter.

- **September through March** is best for Cape Town. During the rest of the year, it is usually quite cool, often with rain/wind/fog conditions (too cold to lie on the beach). In the coastal belt of the Easter Cape (including the Cape Peninsula and Garden Route), summer days are dry and sunny with most of the rain falling in winter.
- Johannesburg (at 5700 feet above sea level) can be quite cool in the winter. Coats are needed for Johannesburg, as well as for other high elevations. Sweaters are advisable for evenings everywhere else (windbreakers for evening game-reserve drives in the winter).

Clothing

Please see our "Packing Checklist" for specific clothing suggestions

- South Africa's climate is varied both geographically and by season. You must plan accordingly. Also, certain elements of your tour might require a specific type of clothing, or dictate a dress code.
- Laundry service is available at nearly every camp lodge and hotel. Please check upon arrival about the services offered, time involved and cost.
- In the **summer months**, lightweight clothing made of natural fabrics is recommended with one warm sweater or jacket for cooler evening temperatures. In **winter**, warmer clothing is suggested, especially for evenings. During the months of **June, July, and August**, gloves, a scarf, and a hooded warm-up jacket may be necessary at higher elevations.
- In major South African cities, hotels and restaurants require "smart casual" or "business casual" dress. This is generally defined as jacket and optional tie with slacks for men and better (though not formal) dress for ladies. Denim is not acceptable in better establishments in the evening.
- Those traveling on *Rovos Rail* should expect to wear smart casual in the day and a jacket and tie in the evening for men or a dress or similar attire for dinner. On the *Blue Train* the day attire is smart casual, but the preferred evening attire is elegant eveningwear or traditional dress.

Currency

- The unit of currency is the Rand (ZAR) which is divided into 100 cents.
- Coins are available in R5, R2, R1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, and 1c.
- Bank notes are available in denominations of R200, R100, R50, R20, and R10.
- All commercial banks, hotels, shops, etc. accept credit cards and travelers checks.

Gratuities

In South Africa, tips are acceptable in USD.

- Transfers to airport or hotel: \$5.00 per transfer
- Restaurants: 10-15% of bill if no service charge is added.
- Hotel Porters: \$1.00 per bag
- Camp or Lodge staff: \$12- \$14 per person per night
- Game guide: \$10.00 per person per day
- Game tracker: \$5.00 per person per day
- Sightseeing guide: \$5.00 per person per half day tour; \$10 per person for a full day tour
- Rovos Rail: \$10.00 per person per night
- Blue Train: \$10.00 per person per night

Note: Tipping is a personal decision based on the service received. Please remember, there is no obligation to tip and American standards for tipping are some of the highest in the world. The above is only a suggestion for your convenience.

Wildlife

Most visitors to South Africa enjoy the wildlife and its magnificent unspoiled wilderness areas. The country's terrestrial mammals are among the best on earth, numbering over 300 species that range in size from the tiny pigmy shrew to the imposing elephant. The "Big Five" (elephant, rhino, leopard, buffalo and lion) and birdlife of more than 900 species can be seen. Check the Reading List at the end of this information for books offering more detail.

Driving

- Any valid driver's license is accepted in South Africa provided it bears the photograph and signature of the holder and is printed in English.
- Driving is on the **left**.
- Road signs and speed limits are posted in **kilometers**.
- It is compulsory to wear your seat belt.
- Gasoline (petrol) is expensive and **cannot be purchased with a credit card**. Be prepared and carry adequate Rand to accommodate your journey.

Food

There are some excellent lamb, beef and seafood dishes that are offered in South Africa as well as many Chinese, Italian, French, Portuguese and Indian restaurants, in addition to those serving South African cuisine. In the local restaurants, try *sosaties*, West Coast rock lobster (known locally as crayfish), and *bobotie* (curried meat dish). The private game reserves offer wild game meat in their restaurants. Some rank South African wines and beers with the best. As a bonus, they are less expensive than imports.

Shopping

A Value Added Tax (VAT) of 14% is levied on everything you buy, including hotel accommodations, food and car rentals. Be sure to find out if it is included in prepaid services. If you buy gifts for export, VAT is charged but is refundable on production of receipts when departing South Africa.

Precious and semiprecious stones are very reasonable, as are African beadwork, woodcarvings, gold and diamond products, snakeskin items, leather goods, shields, masks, copperware, and local art. If time permits, buy Safari clothes; they are cheaper and easier to find than in North America.

Time Zone

GMT + 2

Language

There are eleven (11) official languages, but English and Afrikaans are the main spoken languages.

Voltage

220/230V, 50Hz

Contact

U.S. Embassy and Consulates are in:

- **CAPE TOWN** – PostNet Suite 50, Private Bag x26, Tokai 7966, 2 reddam Ave, Westlake 7945. Tel: (27 21) 702 – 7300, Fax: (27 21) 702-7493
- **DURBAN** – Old Mutual Building, 303 West Street, Durban 4001, Tel: (27 31) 305-7600

- **JOHANNESBURG** – PO Box 1762, Houghton 2041, 1 river St., Killarney (opposite Killarney Mall) Tel: (27 11) 644-8000, Fax: (27 11) 646-6916
- **PRETORIA** – PO Box 9536, Pretoria 0001, 877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia, Pretoria Tel: (27 12) 431 – 4000, Fax: 011 (27 12) 342 – 2299,
- <http://southafrica.usembassy.state.gov>

Emergency Numbers

From a fixed line:

In Cape Town: 107

Police: 10111

Ambulance: 10177

Netcare911 and the National Sea Rescue Institute: 082911

From a mobile phone:

All Emergencies: 112

Netcare911 and the National Sea Rescue Institute: 082911 (You only need to dial 911 from a Vodacom mobile phone.)

International Calling

To call South Africa from the U.S. or Canada, dial (011 + 27) before the number.

To call the U.S. or Canada from South Africa, dial (00 + 1) before the number.

Suggested Reading

Behr, Mark. *The Smell of Apples*: A moving tale of the young son of a major-general in 1970's South Africa.

Coetzee, J.M. *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*: A third-person account of the Nobel Prize-winning author's childhood.

De Villiers, Melissa. *Insight Guide South Africa*. Includes a section on South Africa's history, a region by region guide, and comprehensive travel tips.

Gordimer, Nadine. *The Conservationist*: A Nobel Prize-winning work about South Africa's trouble past.

Fitzpatrick, Mary. *Lonely Planet: South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. Lonely Planet guide to the countries of the southern tip of Africa.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela, much of which was written during his twenty-seven-year imprisonment.

Michener, James A. *The Covenant*. An all-encompassing account of South Africa's history told from the perspective of three families: African, Afrikaans, and English.

Paton, Alan. *Cry, the Beloved Country*: Set in the troublesome era of the 1940's, this is a classic work about a Zulu pastor and his son.