AFRICA SAFARI TRIPS

TANZANIA SPECIALIST

Part of Africa Safari Trips

WELCOME TO SOUTH AFRICA



Short travel guide

The best preparation for your safari!

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Introduction

You are about to embark on a wonderful journey to South Africa, where breathtaking landscapes, fascinating wildlife both on land and in the ocean and vibrant cultures await your exploration. From the majestic peaks of Table Mountain to the untamed beauty of Kruger National Park, every chapter promises unforgettable experiences. Whether you're savouring world-class wines in Stellenbosch or encountering the iconic wildlife of the African savannah, a trip to South Africa offers endless adventures and memories to cherish. This booklet contains tips and information to help you prepare for your trip!

Background

Being the southernmost country on the African continent, South Africa is bordered by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Eswatini (with the last two being entirely landlocked within South Africa). The country has a 3000-kilometre-long coastline, bordering both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. There are 3 capitals in South Africa: Pretoria (administrative), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial). The currency is the South African Rand (ZAR).



The country has a population of 60 million people and recognises **eleven** official languages: English, Afrikaans, and nine ethnic languages, of which Zulu and Xhosa are the most widely spoken. While most South Africans can communicate in more than one language, English is the most commonly spoken and the language of official business and commerce.

The South African Republic was established in May 1961. The two European countries that occupied the land were the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Although South Africa became a Union with an independent government in 1910, the country was still regarded as a British colony until 1961.
Apartheid, the harsh, institutionalised system of racial segregation that was installed by the white-ruled South Africa's Nationalist Party in 1948, came to an end in the early 1990s in a series of steps that led to the formation of a democratic government in 1994.

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Cities

South Africa has three major metropolises: Johannesburg, Cape Town (image below), and Durban. The most visited city is Cape Town, the gateway to the Cape Peninsula and its vineyards. It's a gorgeous, heartwarming place located in the far southwest of the country.



The second favourite destination is Johannesburg, also commonly referred to as Joburg or Jozi, and the business hub of South Africa. And, of course, the traditional first stop for safari lovers on their way to the iconic Kruger National Park. Durban is less popular, but still a bustling, multicultural city with lots of history to explore.

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Putting some facts together

- Capital: Pretoria (administrative), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial)
- Currency: South African Rand
- Population: 60 million
- Language: 11 official languages (the main ones being Zulu, Xhosa, and English)
- Area: 1,220,813 km^2
- Neighbouring countries: Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Eswatini, and Lesotho
- Highest point: The Drakensberg Mountains are the main mountain range of Southern Africa, rising to more than 3,475 metres.
- Time difference: South African Time (SAT) is **ahead of Central European Time (CET) by 1 hour in winter** (and 2 hours ahead of the UK), from the last Sunday of October to the last Sunday of March. During the rest of the year, when daylight saving time is applicable in Europe, there is no time difference whatsoever!
- Most popular places: Cape Town (Table Mountain, the V&A Waterfront, Robben Island), Cape Winelands, Garden Route, Drakensberg Mountains, Johannesburg (image below), Kruger National Park, Addo National Park.



Going on a road trip in South Africa

South Africa has some of the most beautiful road trip routes on the planet, think the legendary Garden Route, the wine-soaked Route 62, and the dramatic Panorama Route - all ranking among the most beautiful drives on the planet. Therefore, it's no wonder you'll encounter a solid, mostly tarred road network when going on a road trip in South Africa, and driving is usually a smooth sail. With some differences, mind you, as driving in South Africa does come with a twist! First of all, you drive on the *left* side of the road. Especially on turns, this might take some getting used to (make sure to end up on the right side of the road!).



The speed limits are easy enough: 60 km/h in towns, 100 km/h on secondary roads, and 120 km/h on highways. The challenge lies in the details: overtaking is always on the right, and your indicator is suddenly where your wipers used to live (luckily, your pedals are still in the same place, just on the other side of the car). At intersections, South Africans follow the legendary four-way stop: whoever arrives first goes first. If you and another driver reach it simultaneously, a friendly wave generally settles the matter.

Staying safe on the road

Tourist areas such as Cape Town, the Winelands, the Garden Route, and the big-name safari areas are considered safe to explore while driving your own car. Still, it pays to travel with common sense in your suitcase. Keep car doors locked even when driving, roll up your windows when strangers approach, and don't advertise your valuables on the back seat. Petty theft and carjackings, although rare, do exist - so better be safe than sorry, and keep all your belongings in the boot.

When parking, there is usually a parking attendant in a bright jacket who you'll hand a few coins (or notes). This is a common and trustworthy way to park and pay for it, and should give you no problems. In cities with multi-storey car parks, it's common to pay by card at special machines.

Anyone suggesting you pay through an ATM is trying to scam you - just shake your head, and move along!

The same goes when you reach your hotel, as it's better to be safe than sorry. To summarise:

- Keep car doors locked when driving and roll up your windows when strangers approach.
- Do not leave important items (such as money or your bag) visible in your car, even for a short time and even when driving. On the road, it's best to store everything in the boot space.
- Once in the hotel, never leave passports, money or valuables visible in the hotel room. Put them in a safe or leave them in special lockers at the reception.
- Leave valuable jewellery at home. Wear a (simple) necklace, watch, or wedding ring, but avoid flashy jewellery (that also monkeys might steal).
- Watch out for pickpockets in busy areas.
- Avoid walking alone at night, especially in urban areas. Use your own car, or even better: have your hotel call you a taxi.

Food and fuel

While on the road, people usually use the famous *padstal* (farm stall) for their sustenance. These treasure troves of local flavour sell everything from biltong to fresh fruit, bread still warm from the oven, and pies to die for.

As for fuel: along the country's main arteries, petrol stations are as common as vineyards in Stellenbosch. But once you stray into the quieter corners, it's smart to top up whenever you can, even if the tank looks reassuringly half full. With a little planning (and a quick check on Google Maps), running out of petrol is a challenge you'll rarely face.

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Your rental car

Your car will be waiting for you at the AVIS rental office at the airport upon arrival. The AVIS offices are located close to the arrivals terminal in both Cape Town International Airport and O.R Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. Depending on where you land, please find your directions here:

Cape Town

The AVIS office at Cape Town International Airport (CPT) is located in the Car Rental Facility, directly across from the central Terminal Building. From the arrivals hall, it's accessible via designated pedestrian walkways:

- Exit the main arrivals hall.
- Follow the signs for Car Rentals, using the pedestrian walkways to cross to the facility.
- Find the AVIS counter in front of Transport Plaza, right inside the Car Rental Facility (see map).



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Johannesburg

The AVIS office at O.R. Tambo International Airport (JNB) is easy to find. It's located in the Car Rental Facility, directly opposite the International Terminal Building, where you'll be arriving:

- Exit the arrivals area.
- Follow the signs for Car Rentals.
- Find the Avis counter in the Car Rental Facility (in front of an escalator and next to Europcar).

Visit their website to experience a virtual walkthrough.

Extras in your car

Baby seats, WiFi, or other extras can be arranged when picking up your car, and you will pay for them on the spot. Keep in mind to respect the speed limits (tickets are on you!) and that you pay additional charges if your route ends in a different town from where you started (usually upon delivering the car).

License

An international driving license is not necessary, as long as your national license has a picture and you've had your license for one year or more. And you can share the distance, as two people are allowed to drive the car on this trip.

On our website, we explain in more detail what the terms & conditions and regulations of renting a car in South Africa are.



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A day of safari - dos and don’ts

A trip to South Africa is not complete without visiting at least one wildlife-filled national park. In most countries, the Big Five (lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo, and leopard) are the animals to look out for, but South Africa actually boasts the Big Seven! These are regular Big Five, with two ocean giants added to the list: the southern right whale and the great white shark.

There are currently 19 official national parks in South Africa run by SANParks (South African National Parks). They are located in seven of South Africa's nine provinces, covering over 4 million hectares in total. Kruger National Park and Addo Elephant National Park are the two most visited parks in South Africa, with Addo offering the Big Seven and world-renowned Kruger offering a wildlife experience that ranks with the best in Africa. Besides, there are plenty of nature reserves offering beautiful nature, wildlife, and all sorts of activities.



While in the park

Most safari game drives are self-drives, which gives you a lot of freedom. National park gates usually open at 6:00 AM and close at 6:00 PM. In high season, it pays to arrive early in the morning; queues at the gates can be as long as a giraffe’s neck. And keep in mind: driving after dark is a no-go, both for safety and because lions don’t stop for traffic lights.

Between the mentioned hours, you are free to spend your day as you like. It can be rewarding to sleep inside the park rather than in a lodge outside its boundaries, as savannah animals are most active at sunrise and sunset. Around that time, temperatures are pleasant, and most of these animals look for food. But usually, there is plenty of wildlife to see throughout the day.

Food… and tips!

When it comes to eating in the park, you are allowed to take picnic lunches and eat them in designated areas in the park. But most lodges inside the park boundaries are accessible to day guests, and boast restaurants, small supermarkets, and petrol stations. When entering the park, you receive a map with routes and rest stops, which makes it easy to find them.

We advise always making a stop at these rest camps - not just for a coffee break or lunch, but also for a chat. Fellow travellers are often the best source of real-time information on where the elephants, lions or herds have been spotted that day. Think of them as your bush telegraph!

Official safari rules

It's good to be aware of some of the national parks' official rules when going on a safari.

1. The opening times of national parks depend slightly on the park and the season, but usually they are open from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and game drives are allowed only within this period. Even when your accommodation is situated inside the park, you can only do game drives between these hours. This is to ensure the animals can keep their natural rhythm. There are some exceptions; night game drives (arranged by lodges, and only allowed in some parks) come with special permissions to be in the park after 6:30 PM, and sometimes balloon safari operators are allowed to be in the park a bit earlier than standard opening time.



2. Parks only issue 24-hour permits. When spending two nights in, for example, Kruger National Park, you will need two permits that allow you to stay 48 hours in the park. If you reach the gate on your way out after your permit has expired, you will have to pay a fine.
3. A permit allows you to enter the park only once. This means it's not possible to leave the park during the day and come back later, and you will have lunch in the park in one of the designated picnic areas.
4. Speed limits within the national parks are 50 km/h on tarmac roads and 40 km/h on gravel roads.

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Unofficial safari rules

There are a few unofficial rules that we ask our guests to adhere to during their safari, to make sure dangerous situations are avoided at all times and things run smoothly.:

1. Never leave your car outside designated picnic areas or parking spots.
2. Don't feed the animals, as it upsets their diet and leads to human dependence.
3. Try to be as quiet as possible when getting close to animals. Avoid unexpected movements and whisper as softly as possible. Don’t move and switch off the engine if you are taking a picture.
4. Don’t litter, not even a cigarette butt. Keep your trash separate inside the car, and throw it away once you are back in the lodge.



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Before you fly

Before you fly to South Africa, there are a few things you need to take care of. You need to book your flights, get your malaria pills if you're travelling to malaria-prone areas in summer (we'll talk about that later), and arrange your (travel) insurance. Read on for all the practical information that can help you prepare.

International flight tickets

Book your tickets to and from Johannesburg (OR Tambo International Airport) or Cape Town International Airport, depending on where you start your tour. Both are situated close to the city centre. Please note that most flights from Europe will include a stopover.

Visa

If you're travelling with a European Union, American, British or Canadian passport, you do not need a visa to visit South Africa as long as your trip is for tourism and doesn't last more than 90 days.

South African Customs Declaration
All travellers entering South Africa must complete a customs declaration before or upon arrival. This declaration is part of the South African customs process and helps travellers meet their legal obligation to declare goods, currency, and other relevant items in their possession. It can be submitted online one day before departure or completed upon arrival, but travellers with normal holiday luggage have nothing to worry about.

The declarations can be submitted through the online portal of the South African Traveller Management System (SARS). Please note that ordinary personal belongings don't need to be declared, but cash exceeding ZAR 25,000 (1500 USD), commercial goods, or duty-free items (i.e. cigarettes, wines and spirits) must be reported.

Travelling with children
Families travelling with children under the age of 18 will need to show valid passports AND a copy of the birth certificates of all children. If only one of the parents is travelling, a parental consent letter from the other parent is also needed. Make sure you download and fill out a parental permission form if this applies to you.

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Addresses of South African embassies

United Kingdom
South Africa House
9 Duncannon Street
Trafalgar Square
London WC2N 5DP
+44 20 7451 7299
E-mail: london.sahc@dirco.gov.za
Website: https://www.dirco.gov.za/uk

United States
Embassy of South Africa
3051 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008
+1 240-937-5760
E-mail: info.saembassydc@dirco.gov.za
Website: https://www.saembassy.org/

Addresses of embassies in South Africa

United Kingdom
British High Commission Pretoria
255 Hill Street, Arcadia
0002
Pretoria, South Africa
+27 12 421 7500
E-mail: SA.assistance@fco.gov.uk
Website:
https://www.gov.uk/british-high-commission-pretoria

United States
U.S. Embassy Pretoria
877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia
0083
Pretoria 0083, South Africa
+27 12 431 4000
E-mail: ACSPretoria@state.gov
Website:https://za.usembassy.gov/

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Healthcare and Insurance

Healthcare in South Africa is well-established. All major cities in South Africa have good-quality hospitals (and often more than one), but it's always better to prevent getting sick and to come with good health and travel insurance.

Useful insurance

As said, you need to be in good health when travelling to South Africa. Additionally, we recommend a few other insurance options.

Travel Insurance
We obligate our clients to have proper travel insurance. Travel insurance usually covers medical costs, as well as damage to or loss of luggage. We gladly recommend Chapka Travel Insurance (for EU citizens only). It covers any travel and your travel consultant can easily take out the policy for you. This needs to be done within 48 hours of finalising your booking with us (when your travel dates are fixed). Please also note that Chapka focuses on travel and/or cancellation insurance only, and does NOT facilitate swift evacuation from remote areas during medical emergencies. Please check if the coverage of your own medical insurance is sufficient in case of extreme emergencies.

Travel cancellation insurance
Travel cancellation insurance is also recommended. Be aware that some insurances only partly reimburse the amount in the event of a cancellation, so be sure to check this carefully!

Vaccinations and malaria

South Africa is a tropical country, and some vaccinations are recommended (but not mandatory) when visiting. We advise you to be on time by asking your physician or local health centre for up-to-date advice on vaccinations (at least two months before your trip, to be on the safe side). Some health insurance plans cover the cost of various vaccinations, so it's wise to check with your insurer.

Make sure all your vaccinations are recorded in your yellow vaccination certificate. If you don't have one, you can get it with your first vaccination. Don't forget to take your vaccination certificate with you on your trip. It contains important information a doctor might need in case of an emergency.

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Malaria

There is a risk of contracting malaria from October to May in the northeast and east of Mpumalanga Province (including Kruger and neighbouring parks) and the north and northeast of Limpopo Province. Other areas, including the cities, have a lower risk. To be on the safe side, however, most lodges are equipped with mosquito nets, and most visitors take malaria medication and protect themselves at night with mosquito repellent, long-sleeved tops and trousers.

Overview

Below you can find the recommendations of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) webpage regarding vaccinations for South Africa. However, we are not doctors, and we are **not**, in any way, encouraging or forcing you to follow these instructions. You can use this information to go to your family doctor and see what his/her specific recommendations are for your case.

Routine vaccines Chickenpox, tetanus, pertussis, flu, measles, polio, shingles, etc.	**Recommended** To be up-to-date on all of them
COVID-19	Travellers can enter without any restrictions.
Cholera	**Recommended** If you travel to an area with active cholera transmission. Not needed for: Cape Town, Durban, Kruger National Park, and Port Elizabeth.
Hepatitis A	**Recommended**
Hepatitis B	**Recommended**
Malaria	No need for a vaccine, but malaria medication is recommended
Rabies	**Recommended**
Typhoid	**Recommended**
Yellow Fever[1]	**Required** Only if you arrive from an endemic area.

[1] **Yellow Fever**

No vaccination requirements for travellers arriving directly from Europe (direct flight). Anyone arriving from a country affected by yellow fever (endemic area) must provide proof of a yellow fever vaccination (yellow fever vaccination certificate). This also applies to travellers who have previously spent more than 12 hours at a transit airport in an endemic area. Children up to the age of 1 year do not require a yellow fever vaccination.

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Luggage and travel essentials

We advise leaving your hard-case suitcases at home and travelling with soft-case bags that are easy to stow away in the sometimes limited boot space of our cars. As a bonus, soft-case bags are less likely to get damaged.



To protect your luggage from dust and/or moisture, we recommend bringing suitcase- or laundry bags as additional covers. Most lodges and tented camps offer a laundry service for your (outer) clothing, but only for a minimum stay of two nights.

Baggage during your flights

Please check with your airline to know the size, weight and number of pieces of baggage permitted on your international flight. Also, make sure you carry essential items in your hand luggage during the international flight, in case your suitcases are delayed or get lost during the flight.

Domestic and regional flights (for example, Cape Town to Johannesburg) have a baggage limitation of 20 kilograms per person. If your luggage exceeds this limit, the flight company can charge between 3 and 5 EUR for each extra kilo or an overall 20 EUR penalty for excess weight (depending on the airline), which you can pay directly at the check-in desk.

As a guideline, the total combined dimensions of each piece of standard checked luggage should not exceed 157 centimetres or 62 inches. The maximum dimensions for hand luggage (LxWxH) are 22 inches (56 centimetres) x 14 inches (36 centimetres) x 9 inches (23 centimetres), and the maximum weight for hand luggage is 7 kilograms.

Africa Safari Trips cannot be held liable in case your suitcases get damaged during your trip or if the airline blocks or charges you when the above luggage regulations are not followed.

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What to wear during your trip

Casual clothes are the rule in South Africa. You will feel completely comfortable in regular casual clothes, even in the fine dining establishments of the Western Cape. And luckily, in view of the high temperatures in summer, shorts and skirts are totally appropriate. South Africa is the most Western country on the African continent - also when it comes to dress codes.



Safari clothing

During the safari, it's best to wear casual clothing, preferably cotton clothing in safari colours (examples in the image). We advise against wearing dark or bright colours during the safari (black, blue, red) - these will attract flies and insects. Colours that don't stand out, like khaki or olive green, are best.

Keep in mind that the sun can be very hot. It is therefore advisable to wear long sleeves, a hat, dark sunglasses and/or put on sunscreen. Too much sun can lead to dehydration, nausea, dizziness, or headaches. After sunset, it is advisable to wear long trousers (and possibly long sleeves) because of the mosquitoes. Bring a sweater or jacket for the early mornings and cooler evenings, since, especially in the Western Cape, it can get chilly at night. We also recommend comfortable sports and or hiking shoes.

First Aid Kit

It is advisable to bring your own First Aid kit. This should include plasters, (sterile) gauze, anti-blistering agents, iodine, and medicines for common ailments such as headaches and bowel problems. It is also good to bring sanitary towels and tampons since these can be difficult to obtain in some remote areas.

Medical equipment and special needs

If you use (electrical) medical equipment, it’s important to inform us in advance. We, in our turn, will inform the lodges where you will be staying. The power supply is not consistent everywhere, so it’s advisable to take extra chargers or batteries.

Be aware that for some medication or medical equipment, you need a medical certificate from your doctor stipulating that these are for your personal need only and that the amount is adequate for the duration of your stay. Furthermore, we advise you to **carry important medication in your hand luggage** and not in your check-in baggage. This way, you won't miss your medication if your baggage is late or gets lost.

If you have allergies or other special needs, please inform us in advance so we can let the lodges know.

Photography and video

If you are passionate about photography and intend to take some amazing shots of South African animals and landscapes, we have some tips to help you prepare:

- Bring enough memory cards and extra batteries. It's possible to buy them in South Africa, but it's best to avoid the hassle of going into town and finding them.
- Bring lens caps, cleaning cloths, and a tight-fitting camera bag to protect the camera from dust.
- Bring a UV or light filter for the highlands and to protect the lens.
- A zoom lens (e.g. 300 mm) is recommended for photographing wild animals.
- Note that in safari parks, tented camps use solar power or a generator and offer limited power. Usually, it's a restricted number of hours per day, and voltages (220 - 240V) may fluctuate. We advise taking a plug adapter (South Africa uses 3-pin sockets) and a voltage converter.
- When taking pictures of locals, always ask for permission. Not everyone likes to have their picture taken. Especially in remote areas, it shows respect to ask for permission first.
- Non-commercial drone use is allowed in South Africa. However, the use of drones inside (and over) the national parks is strictly prohibited!

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Smart Packing List

- [ ] (Copy of your) passport
- [ ] Money belt for money and papers
- [ ] Vaccine passport
- [ ] Warm sweater and long trousers
- [ ] Memory card, spare batteries and charger for your camera
- [ ] Swimsuit
- [ ] Hiking shoes
- [ ] Headgear
- [ ] Body lotion
- [ ] Wetties for hands and face
- [ ] Sanitizer
- [ ] Sunglasses and, if needed spare glasses or contact lenses
- [ ] Mosquito repellent (preferably with DEET)
- [ ] First Aid kit
- [ ] (Phone with) flashlight and alarm clock
- [ ] Linen bags for laundry or as protection from dust and moisture
- [ ] Binoculars
- [ ] Travel adapter

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When in South Africa…

You will feel at home immediately! Don’t expect a culture shock. We help you by providing the most important information about how things are done, but South Africans are very accommodating and open-minded, so don’t worry about making a mistake.

Food & drinks

South Africans eat twice the recommended amount of meat and three times less vegetables than recommended. Although most restaurants have very nice vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free alternatives, prepare yourself for lots of meat when you want to eat like the locals do. Food and drinks in the lodges, hotels and camps are mostly European style, but with a (spicy) South African twist.



Braaiing (BBQing) is South Africa's premier social occasion. South Africans will organise a braai at the drop of a hat, and they go to great lengths to do it. It usually takes quite a long time before they get the fires to perfection, and by the time the first meat hits the flames, they have usually emptied a few bottles of wine.
Chakalaka and pap are mainstays on every South African dinner table. Chakalaka is a vegetable dish made of onions, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, beans and spices, and is often served cold. Pap, meaning 'porridge', is similar to American grits and is a starchy dish made from white corn maize.

Drinks
The most popular beers in South Africa are the locally brewed Black Label and Castle. There are some very nice imported beers from Namibia - Tafel and Windhoek - and these have a lower alcohol percentage. Stella Artois and Heineken are widely available as well, and Stella Artois is now even produced locally, since InBev bought one of the biggest beer companies in South Africa.

But do try the South African wines while you have the opportunity… They are absolutely delicious and extremely well-priced. You will find a great selection of wines in any supermarket and liquor store, but the best ones can be found at the wine estates. Most of the worldwide-renowned wineries are located in the Cape Winelands (check our activity list for valuable tips if you get lost in the huge amount of tasting rooms), but you will even find some in the north of the country. If you like what you tasted, don’t be shy and stock up for your trip! In South Africa, wine is always a good idea. Most of the popular estates have a distributing agent in Europe, and you can choose to have the wines delivered at your doorstep when you get back home, for a relatively small transport fee.
Although tap water is suitable for consumption in many regions, we don’t recommend drinking it. The quality is not consistent, and it doesn't smell nice. It’s best to use bottled water, and usually you’ll find a bottle or jug of purified drinking water in the rooms to top up your own water bottle. It’s also possible to buy bottled drinking water at lodges and shops along the way, of course. Make sure you drink enough water!

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Money



The South African Rand (ZAR) is the official currency in South Africa. Dollars are not accepted. To convert to dollars or euros, you can divide by 20 for an approximate conversion. But check the conversion rate before you leave because the currency is very volatile.

Card payments are widely accepted and even preferred. You can use your normal bank debit card, just inform your bank to activate world coverage. It's advised to carry some Rand in cash for small purchases and tipping. ATMs allow you to draw cash with your foreign debit or credit card. Bank notes exist in 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 ZAR. You can order ZAR in the bank before you go on holiday (it usually takes a week because they need to order it) or just draw money when you arrive. There are ATMs in the airport.

How much cash to take?

How much cash you should have in your pocket depends, of course, on your personal needs and wishes. It might be good to realise that the prices in the tourist areas are comparable to those in Europe. Then again, your accommodation, your car and part of the excursions are already paid for, and hotels and most places along the way accept card payments. Cash will mostly be spent on souvenirs and tips (see below to know how much to tip), and it might be of use in emergencies. Make sure you have enough cash on you to last for a couple of days because ATMs are not always close by.

Credit cards

Mastercard and Visa are always accepted by ATMs, as well as in lodges and hotels. American Express is not always accepted, and you might be asked to pay an extra 3 to 5% on your total amount in view of higher bank charges. Some remote camps might have difficulty processing your credit cards due to their remote location and poor internet connection.

Tipping

It is common to tip 10 to 12% on bills in South Africa, and tips are usually not included in the overall bill. The tip is included if you have negotiated payment beforehand (like for a taxi fare). In all other cases, add the tip (or ‘gratuity’) to your bill. Some (more fancy) restaurants will include the tip in the total amount, but if so, it’s explicitly stated on your bill, so check your slip!
It’s also customary to tip people who keep an eye on your car in parking areas. They usually wear an easy-to-spot bright yellow or orange vest and stay close to your car while you shop or dine. A small tip of about R5 to R10 is the norm - just whatever change you have on hand.

General wages are very low in South Africa, so all staff really appreciate any extras you can offer.

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The weather

South Africa's weather brings variety to any trip, offering a range of conditions depending on where you go. From November to March, the summer heat takes over, especially in places like Kruger National Park and the Kgalagadi, where temperatures soar to around 31°C (88°F). Occasional rain provides a quick break from the heat, while Cape Town stays sunny with temperatures around 26°C (79°F). Durban and Pretoria also see warm days above 28°C (82°F), which is ideal for outdoor activities like beach outings or safaris.

Winter, from May to August, brings a mix of cooler temperatures and rain, particularly in Cape Town. The city experiences heavy rainfall, peaking at 153 mm in June, with temperatures around 17°C (63°F). Johannesburg stays dry with only light showers and cooler days, averaging 20°C (68°F) in May.

Temperatures in South Africa

Average Temperatures in South Africa

Destination	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cape Town	26°C (79°F)	26°C (79°F)	25°C (77°F)	23°C (73°F)	20°C (68°F)	18°C (64°F)	17°C (63°F)	17°C (63°F)	19°C (66°F)	21°C (70°F)	23°C (73°F)	24°C (75°F)
Kruger National Park	33°C (91°F)	32°C (90°F)	31°C (88°F)	29°C (84°F)	27°C (81°F)	25°C (77°F)	24°C (75°F)	26°C (79°F)	29°C (84°F)	30°C (86°F)	30°C (86°F)	32°C (90°F)
Johannesburg	26°C (79°F)	25°C (77°F)	25°C (77°F)	22°C (72°F)	20°C (68°F)	17°C (63°F)	17°C (63°F)	20°C (68°F)	23°C (73°F)	25°C (77°F)	25°C (77°F)	25°C (77°F)
Durban	28°C (82°F)	28°C (82°F)	28°C (82°F)	26°C (79°F)	24°C (75°F)	23°C (73°F)	22°C (72°F)	23°C (73°F)	24°C (75°F)	24°C (75°F)	25°C (77°F)	27°C (81°F)
Knysna	24°C (75°F)	25°C (77°F)	23°C (73°F)	22°C (72°F)	20°C (68°F)	19°C (66°F)	18°C (64°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	20°C (68°F)	22°C (72°F)	24°C (75°F)
The Kalahari	33°C (91°F)	32°C (90°F)	29°C (84°F)	26°C (79°F)	22°C (72°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	22°C (72°F)	26°C (79°F)	29°C (84°F)	31°C (88°F)	32°C (90°F)
The Drakensberg	24°C (75°F)	23°C (73°F)	22°C (72°F)	19°C (66°F)	17°C (63°F)	15°C (59°F)	15°C (59°F)	17°C (63°F)	20°C (68°F)	21°C (70°F)	21°C (70°F)	23°C (73°F)
The Battlefields	27°C (81°F)	27°C (81°F)	26°C (79°F)	24°C (75°F)	22°C (72°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	22°C (72°F)	24°C (75°F)	25°C (77°F)	26°C (79°F)	27°C (81°F)
Stellenbosch	28°C (82°F)	28°C (82°F)	26°C (79°F)	23°C (73°F)	20°C (68°F)	18°C (64°F)	17°C (63°F)	17°C (63°F)	19°C (66°F)	22°C (72°F)	25°C (77°F)	26°C (79°F)
Plettenberg Bay	24°C (75°F)	25°C (77°F)	23°C (73°F)	22°C (72°F)	20°C (68°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	19°C (66°F)	20°C (68°F)	22°C (72°F)	24°C (75°F)

Taxis and other forms of transport

You have your own rental car, so all transport is included in your journey. But if you need to hire a taxi, please ask your hotel to call a reliable company. In some areas, you can even order a tuk-tuk nowadays - these are relatively cheap and can carry up to three people. Uber is also available in the cities and won't let you wait long.



250.000 local mini-buses are driving around in South Africa, and they all look the same (white Toyota Hiace vans with the Sesfikile ribbon stickered around). Don't confuse these with a general taxi service. Although adventurous, we would advise against using these buses, as they tend to get into more accidents than regular cars.

Phone calls and SIM cards

South Africa's country code is +27, and usually, there is no problem getting cell phone coverage. However, signals might not be very strong in the national parks, and some camps offer Wi-Fi in designated areas only. For emergencies, lodges and camps in the national parks typically have a hand radio.

Local SIM cards

We advise you to purchase a local SIM card upon arrival at the airport or an e-SIM for South Africa online. It's a fairly easy process, and it helps you to avoid roaming charges when calling home. Also, it allows you to be online on the road and share your moments with the world instantly. And, when travelling with multiple people (kids!), using your phone as a hotspot will take care of your WiFi (if you don't book it with your rental car).

Electricity

The voltage in South Africa is not the same as in Europe or the United States. Hotels in South Africa offer a voltage of 230V with 50 Hz that fluctuates regularly. The sockets are type D, M or N. It's advisable to bring an adapter for the sockets and a voltage converter for sensitive equipment.



Many camps in the national parks run on solar power and generators and don't offer power 24/7. Often, power is available from 5:00 to 9:30 AM and from 7:00 to 11:00 PM (when guests are using facilities at the camp).

Load shedding

When travelling, you might hear the term "load shedding" - South Africa's polite term for scheduled power cuts. The idea is simple: to prevent the entire grid from collapsing, the electricity supply is "shed" in certain areas for a couple of hours at a time. These outages are far less frequent than they used to be, but it's useful to know what's happening if the lights suddenly go out during your dinner. Larger hotels usually have generators, so you might not notice a thing, while in smaller guesthouses, you might sit in the dark for a while. If you're curious, you can check the local schedule online. And, of course, don't forget to take a (solar-powered) torch with you!

Souvenirs

In South Africa, there are a multitude of beautiful, mostly handmade, souvenirs. In shopping malls and supermarkets, prices are fixed, but stalls along the road are used to bargaining. Typical souvenirs are jewellery with beads, wood carvings, paintings and fabrics. Buy some wine, rooibos tea or the famous 'Biltong' dried meat to enjoy the taste of South Africa a bit longer when you return home. And if you are contemplating something bigger than a regular souvenir, you might want to consider a gold coin or a diamond. Please don't buy anything made of skin, shells or coral – exporting these is not allowed.

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National holidays

South African public holidays are mainly Catholic. Here is the list of the most important days:

- 1 January: New Year’s Day
- 21 March: Human Rights Day
- April: Good Friday *
- April: Easter Sunday *
- 21 April: Family Day
- 27 April: Freedom Day
- 1 May: Workers' Day
- 16 June: Youth Day
- 9 August: National Women’s Day
- 24 September: Heritage Day
- 16 December: Day of Reconciliation
- 25 December: Christmas Day
- 26 December: Day of Goodwill

* The dates on which Good Friday and Easter Sunday fall are determined according to the ecclesiastical moon. That varies each year, but usually it’s between late March and late April.

Even on public holidays and on Sundays, supermarkets and shops in South Africa will remain open. There are only 2 official closing days in a whole year, and those are Good Friday and Christmas Day.

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Preserve South Africa's nature with us!

Africa Safari Trips invests in and depends on the beautiful nature that South Africa offers. This is why we do everything in our power to preserve the environment to the best of our ability. We ask you, as our guest, not to leave waste in the cities or national parks. Instead, please hold on to it until you can dispose of it properly in the hotel. It's just a small gesture, but it will help future generations to enjoy this beautiful country just as we do!



We wish you 'yibanohambo olukhuselekile' (safe travels) and warmly welcome you: 'Baie welkom in Suid Afrika!'

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