



“GOOD TO KNOW FOR A COMFORTABLE TOUR”
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Please read the next few pages first.

Welcome to Your South African Adventure...

Before you set off on your exploration, arm yourself with essential travel information to ensure a seamless and enriching experience. From currency tips to cultural insights, our guide **“GOOD TO KNOW FOR A COMFORTABLE TOUR”** will equip you with the knowledge needed to navigate this diverse and captivating destination with ease.

Prepare to immerse yourself in the wonders of South Africa as you embark on a journey filled with discovery, excitement, and unforgettable memories. Let the adventure begin!

1. Currency:

South Africa's currency is the Rand (ZAR). Carry small bills for convenience, and exchange currency at reputable banks or exchange bureaus for the best rates. **Cash and Cards:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted, but some places still prefer cash. Keep a small stash of notes and coins for corner stores, market purchases, and tipping.

2. Language:

While English is widely spoken, South Africa boasts 11 official languages. Embrace the diversity by learning a few basic phrases in Zulu, Xhosa, or Afrikaans. Locals appreciate the effort!

3. Weather:

South Africa experiences a range of climates, from Mediterranean in the Western Cape to subtropical in the northeast. Pack layers, sunscreen, and a hat for protection against the African sun.

4. Safety:

Exercise caution in urban areas, especially at night. Keep valuables secure, be aware of your surroundings, and use trusted transportation options.

Safety Measures:

- Be mindful of safety.
- Dress modestly and avoid flashy attire.
- Keep valuables secure.
- Explore during daylight hours.
- Choose card payments over cash.
- Withdraw money from ATMs in well-lit areas.

5. Health Precautions:

Check with your healthcare provider for recommended vaccinations before traveling. South Africa is a malaria-risk country in some regions, so take appropriate precautions if visiting affected areas.

6. Wildlife Encounters:

South Africa's wildlife is awe-inspiring, but remember to keep a safe distance. Follow park regulations and avoid approaching or feeding wild animals.

7. Cultural Sensitivity:

Respect local customs and traditions. Ask permission before taking photographs, especially in rural communities. Dress modestly when visiting places of worship or conservative areas.

8. Transportation:

Public transportation options vary by region. In major cities, use metered taxis or ride-sharing apps for convenience and safety. Renting a car provides flexibility for exploring more remote areas.

9. Tipping Etiquette:

Tipping is customary in South Africa. In restaurants, a tip of 10-15% is standard if service was satisfactory. Tip hotel staff, tour guides, and drivers according to the level of service provided.

10. Cuisine:

Indulge in South Africa's diverse culinary scene. Don't miss trying traditional dishes like bobotie, bunny chow, and braai (barbecue). Vegetarian and vegan options are widely available.

11. Electricity:

South Africa uses a 220-240V electrical system with Type M plugs. Bring a universal adapter if your devices use different plug types.

12. Connectivity:

Stay connected with South Africa's reliable cellular networks. Purchase a local SIM card for affordable data and calls during your stay. While public Wi-Fi is available in cities and tourist areas, consider getting a South African SIM card for reliable connectivity

13. Adventure Activities:

From safaris to shark cage diving, South Africa offers a plethora of thrilling experiences. Book tours and activities through reputable companies for safety and peace of mind.

14. Time Zone:

South Africa operates on South African Standard Time (SAST), which is GMT+2. Adjust your schedule accordingly for tours and appointments.

15. Here is a guideline list of important items to bring:

- Casual, comfortable wash and wear clothing is most useful.
- Shorts, capris & Cotton T-shirts
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Long pants & shirts with collars for evenings
- Fleece jacket for early morning and evening game drives
- Swimwear
- Rain ponchos on safari are usually provided by game lodge
- Casual light-weight cotton, khaki or neutral coloured clothes for safari
- Wide brimmed hat, Personal toiletries, sunscreen and lip balm
- Anti-malaria prophylactics and prescribed medication
- Binoculars, camera, batteries and accessories
- Sun hat & Sunglasses

Laundry service is available at most hotels, camps and game lodges. Luggage should be kept at a minimum in order to be compliant with weight restrictions on aircraft within South Africa (one piece of luggage, weight at 23 kg).

16. Water

The water in South Africa is safe to drink. However, bottled water is available for sale. Ensure that you take bottled water with you when traveling to remote rural areas and the bush.

17. Metric Conversion

- To convert Celsius into Fahrenheit = double then add 32
- 0.62 miles = 1 kilometer
- 3.3 feet = 1 meter
- 1 acre = .405 hectare
- 1.05 quarts = 1 liter
- 2.2 pounds = 1 kilogram

18. Souvenirs & VAT

A range of South African souvenirs are available. As you would expect from a country rich in gold and diamonds, there is an excellent selection of jewellery and the rare opportunity to watch goldsmiths in action. Golfing equipment and clothing is reasonably priced.

Overseas visitors taking goods out of South Africa can reclaim the VAT (value added tax) which they paid on these goods.

You can reclaim the VAT at the airport if you have the receipts and the merchandise you purchased with you. You will have to go through customs again. Reclaiming VAT is only applicable for goods that you can produce at the airport and not for any services whatsoever.

When purchasing your products, you must inform the shop attendant that you are a visitor to South Africa and request a tax invoice from him/her. The shop's VAT number must appear on this invoice. As you are checking in at the airport ready to depart from South Africa, you need to approach the customs official who will compare your invoices with the goods purchased. When the customs official has approved and stamped your invoices, the VAT Reclaim Office will refund you the appropriate amount. VAT Reclaim Offices are found at Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town Airports.

19. Emergency Contacts:

Save emergency numbers, including local police, ambulance, and your country's embassy or consulate, in your phone and keep a printed copy with you.

Remember, South Africa is a land of contrasts, waiting to captivate you with its beauty and vibrancy. Enjoy your journey!

MORE INFORMATION

Best time to visit

South Africa is a fabulous, year-round destination; so, when you visit depends on what you would like to do. The best time for game watching, for instance, is early spring (August to October). The southern right whales can be seen off the coasts from about mid-June to the end of October, and the humpback whales from August to December.

The diving is generally best from April to September, and so is the surfing, but such activities are not limited to these time periods. Flowers are at their best in August and September. River rafting is better at the end of winter in the Cape, and in summer (late November to February) in KwaZulu-Natal.

In Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, activities are not quite as time-dependent, but spring and autumn are best for hiking because summer can be very hot. If you want to lounge on the beaches, midsummer is the best time to do so, though bear in mind that everyone else will be there too. The beaches of KwaZulu-Natal are warm and sunny, even in midwinter.

- Game Viewing: June to October when the vegetation isn't as thick and game viewing is easier but good all year round at private reserves.
- Whale Watching: Mid-June to October (Southern Right Whales) and August to December (Humpback Whales).
- Diving (Scuba & Shark Cage diving): April to September

- Flowers: August to September
- Birding: The paleo-arctic migrants arrive in November and the intra-Africa migrants usually by mid-October

Passports & Visas

As for all international travel, the visitor to South Africa is required to be in possession of a valid passport. U.S. citizens (US passport holders) traveling to the Republic of South Africa for 90 days or less for tourism or business purposes do not need visas. U.S. green card holders (non-US passport holders) require visas to visit South Africa. Nationals of other countries must check the list of visa exempt countries to see if they need to apply for visas.

Please note that all foreigners who wish to visit South Africa must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months after his/her intended return date. The passport must have a minimum of four blank (unstamped) visa pages in the passport to enter the country. It is preferred these are facing pages. Your international carrier can deny boarding if you do not have the blank (unstamped) visa pages. Travellers should make sure there are enough pages for visas and immigration stamps to enter South Africa and other countries to be visited. These blank pages cannot be endorsement or amendment pages.

As a general precaution, all travellers are advised to carry a photocopy of the photo/bio information page of their passport and keep it in a location separate from their passport.

Traveling with Minors

The South African Government has scrapped the requirement of producing an unabridged birth certificate for tourists entering the country.

Malaria Prophylaxis

Many of the main tourist areas are malaria-free, so you need not worry at all. However, the Kruger National Park, the Lowveld of Mpumalanga and Limpopo, and the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal do pose a malaria risk in the summer months.

Many local people and some travelers do not take anti-malaria prophylaxis, but most health professionals recommend that you do. All guests must consult their own medical doctor or health authorities regarding the use of anti-malarial tablets prior to departure.

Whether you take oral prophylaxis or not, always use mosquito repellent, wear long pants, closed shoes, light long-sleeved shirts at night, and sleep under a mosquito net in endemic areas (the anopheles' mosquito, which carries malaria, operates almost exclusively after dark). Mosquito repellent containing "deet" is best. It is advisable to avoid malarial areas if you are pregnant.

Medical Care

Medical services in South Africa are readily available. Visitors are advised to secure medical cover on their medical insurance before arriving in the country. Major hotels have contracts with physicians and dentists. Visitors are however advised to bring along supplies of specialised medication they may require. Otherwise, medicine may be purchased at pharmacies and emergency pharmacies.

As always, don't forget to use sunscreen and drink plenty of water while out in the African sun.

Insurance

Travel insurance is highly recommended and can be purchased through South African Airways Vacations or your travel agent. It can be used to cover baggage & personal item loss as well as trip cancellations. Tour operators will not be held responsible for any loss or damage to passenger's belongings. Travel Guard is the (travel) insurance carrier that is offered through South African Airways

Clothing & Necessities

Here is a guideline list of important items to bring:

- Casual, comfortable wash and wear clothing is most useful.
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Mobile phones, Land lines & Internet access

South Africa's mobile phone operators utilize the GSM system; if your phone is GSM compatible, set up international roaming with your service provider before you leave home. Alternatively, you can rent a phone at the airport on arrival and use a "pay-as-you-go" (which means exactly what it says) card during your stay.

Fixed line telephones are reliable and dial abroad. The country's telecommunications operator Telkom is the 28th largest in the world, and accounts for 39% of the phone lines on the African continent. Both local and long-distance calls are metered on a time basis and every second counts in terms of cost. Major hotels offer fax and internet service, but lodges that are in remote areas do not necessarily offer these amenities.

Internet and wireless capability are available in most areas within South Africa. However, the more remote location the less accessible it becomes.

Most game lodges have Wi-Fi capability and computer access in the main areas of the lodges. Download data speeds are not always to North American standards.

Credit Cards

Visa, American Express, and Master Card are honoured by most restaurants, stores, hotels, car rental firms, and other points of sale and service. Proof of identity may be requested in some instances and it is therefore advisable to carry a passport or some form of photo identification, always. Credit cards are not accepted at petrol stations (gas stations), however, ATM's are available everywhere.

It is advisable to notify your credit card company that you are traveling out of the country.

Banks

Banking hours at most commercial banks are:

Mon – Fri 09h00 – 15h30

Sat 08h00 – 11h00

Major hotels and shopping malls have foreign exchange facilities and most shops, lodges and travel agencies take travellers cheques. Automated teller machines (ATM's) are readily available in cities and towns.

Tipping

All tips are paid in Rand within South Africa which is why we recommend you converting some US dollars upon arrival at the airport. Currency exchange kiosks are readily available at OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg and Cape Town International Airport.

The following service providers expect a tip: luggage porters, taxi drivers, tour guides, guides, coach drivers, restaurant waiters and waitresses. It is customary to tip 10 to 15% of the bill at hotels and restaurants and 10% of the fare to taxi drivers. These tips are given at the time the service is provided. On safari, a tip is expected for lodge staff (10% of room stay), your safari ranger and tracker. Tips for game lodge stay are paid upon check out. The lodge will provide envelopes for your use.

How much to tip is a matter of personal discretion and below is just a suggestion. Tip Guidelines are provided in Rand, the local currency. Of course, if exceptional service is provided, please tip accordingly.

Service	Tip Guideline
Meet & Greet	R15 per person
Transfers	R20 per person
Porterage	R15 per person
Wait Staff at Restaurants	R15 per person (buffet breakfast) or 10-20% of bill
Guides (seat in coach)	½ day – coach driver (R15), guide (R20), full day – coach driver, R30, guide (R50), per person
Guides (private)	½ day – driver/guide (R150), full day – driver/guide (R300), per vehicle
Hotel Housekeeper	Discretionary

Delivery by Housekeeping	Discretionary
The Safari Team (Safari)	R350 per room, per day
Lodge Staff (Safari)	R100 per room, per day

Water

The water in South Africa is safe to drink. However, bottled water is available for sale. Ensure that you take bottled water with you when traveling to remote rural areas and the bush.

Languages

There are 11 official languages in South Africa: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu. The English-speaking visitor will have no problem communicating while traveling through the country.

Wildlife

There is a variety of wildlife that can be seen in South Africa.

- THE BIG FIVE – Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Rhino, Buffalo
- THE BIG CATS
- LESSER KNOWN WILDLIFE
- OVER 200 MAMMAL SPECIES
- MARINE MAMMALS AND FISH
- THE CROCODILE...AND OTHER REPTILES
- BIRDLIFE

Electricity

The South African electricity supply is 220/230 volts AC 50 HZ. With a few exceptions (in deep rural areas) electricity is available almost everywhere. However, you will need to purchase or bring adapters for the outlets. You can purchase the adapters in many US stores, online, or from a store while in South Africa. Adapters are usually available on loan at major hotels in South Africa. Three to five-star hotels usually have 110-volt outlets for electric shavers in bathrooms and often provide hair dryers and irons. An NW 4 plug with two prongs, 0.19 inches in diameter is required for compatibility. The following table shows the proper adapters for South Africa and neighboring countries, as well as the voltage and other necessary information.

This information was retrieved from www.europlugs.com. Feel free to visit the website to get further information, or to see pictures of the listed items.

Country	Voltage	Frequency	Plug and Socket Type	Universal Plug Adapters	Country-Specific Power Cord
South Africa	220/230 V	50 Hz	M, D	WA-10L, WA-10	WE-110L, WE-110

Namibia	220 V	50HZ	M	WA-10L	WA-10L
Mozambique	220 V	50HZ	C, F, M	WA-9, WA-10L, WA-9C	WE-109, WE-110L, WE-109C
Botswana	231 V	50 HZ	M, D, G	WA-10L, WA-10, WA-7	WE-110L, WE-110, WE-107
Zambia	230 V	50HZ	C, G, D	WA-9C, WA-7, WA-10	WE-109C, WE-107, WE-110
Zimbabwe	220V	50HZ	G, D	WA-7, WA-10	WE-107, WE-110

Metric Conversion

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.62 miles = 1 kilometer

3.3 feet = 1 meter

1 acre = .405 hectare

1.05 quarts = 1 liter

2.2 pounds = 1 kilogram

Driving

South Africans drive on the left-hand side and give way to the right. Drivers must have a valid driver's license, with photo, or international drivers permit. Seatbelts are mandatory. Speed limits are set at 120 kilometers on highways; 100 kilometers on secondary roads and 60 kilometers in urban areas.

Driving in South Africa is easy to adapt to, with sign postings written in English. Americans feel comfortable in driving in Cape Town area, the Winelands and along the Garden Route. Car rentals with GPS rentals are recommended. Credit cards are not accepted at petrol stations (gas stations).

Souvenirs & VAT

A range of South African souvenirs are available. As you would expect from a country rich in gold and diamonds, there is an excellent selection of jewellery and the rare opportunity to watch goldsmiths in action. Golfing equipment and clothing is reasonably priced. Overseas visitors taking goods out of South Africa can reclaim the VAT (value added tax) which they paid on these goods.

You can reclaim the VAT at the airport if you have the receipts and the merchandise you purchased with you. You will have to go through customs again. Reclaiming VAT is only applicable for goods that you can produce at the airport and not for any services whatsoever. When purchasing your products, you must inform the shop attendant that you are a visitor to South Africa and request a tax invoice from him/her. The shop's VAT number must appear on this invoice. As you are checking in at the airport ready to depart from South Africa, you need to approach the customs official who will compare your invoices with the goods purchased. When the customs official has approved and stamped your invoices, the VAT Reclaim Office will refund you the appropriate amount. VAT Reclaim Offices are found at Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town Airports.

Public Holidays

01 January – New Year's Day

21 March – Human Rights Day

March/April – Good Friday

March/April – Family Day

27 April – Freedom Day

01 May – Workers Day

16 June – Youth Day

09 August – National Woman's Day

24 September – Heritage Day

16 December – Day of Reconciliation

25 December – Christmas Day

26 December – Day of Goodwill

Public Transport

South Africa has a good network of railway and roads, but public transport can sometimes be a problem especially away from major centers. Transnet and Spoornet train and bus services are good but finding taxi services in smaller places can be difficult. Local bus service in smaller towns is also unreliable and it is advisable for a visitor to decide for car hire. **Embrace South Africa Tours** can assist you with car hire, also with driver/guides. Taxis are available at airports/hotels and restaurants and on call. Trains and buses run between towns and cities. The major cities have regular bus services. Tourists can make use of one of the many luxury coach tours to see the country. Please contact **Embrace South Africa Tours** for advice.

Safety and Security

Valuables, including traveller's cheques, should be locked up when away from your hotel or lodge. All hotel/lodges have safe deposits. Use traveller's cheques or credit cards rather than carrying large amounts of cash on your person. The streets in the cities are not dangerous but it is unwise to walk alone after dark or away from well-lit streets, especially carrying bags and cameras. Use taxis at night and only use those, which are booked through a reputable taxi company. Always keep your car doors locked. It is not advisable to resist if confronted. When in the cities, take the same precautions that you would anywhere in the world.

Travel Emergencies

If you have lost your passport or wallet, please contact the local police department and file a report. Once you have done this, contact one of your country's Embassies or Consulates in South Africa.