

SOUTH AFRICA

As a guest of Wilderness Safaris, the following information has been compiled to provide you with guidelines and interesting facts about the country you will be visiting. Further information is available to you on our website www.wilderness-safaris.com or the official South African Tourism Authority website www.southafrica.net.



South Africa attracts millions of travellers to its shores with its unique blend of old and modern Africa. It has an abundance of wildlife and scenery – from the sandy beaches, forest-covered cliffs, and amazing marine life of its coastline to arid deserts, peak-filled mountain ranges and open bushveld savannah. Historical landmarks and interaction with local cultures and communities provide an insight into the “Rainbow Nation”. Train journeys, award-winning wine estates and a large variety of shopping opportunities are just some of the other facets to be experienced.

INTERESTING FACTS



The national flag was designed by a former South African State Herald, Mr Fred Brownell, and was first used on 27 April 1994. The design and colours are a synopsis of principal elements of the country's flag history. Individual colours, or colour combinations represent different meanings for different people, however, there is no official or universal symbolism attached to any of the colours. The central design of the flag, beginning at the flag post in a 'V' form and flowing into a single horizontal band to the outer edge of the fly, can be interpreted as the convergence of diverse elements within South African society, taking the road ahead in unity. The red is always at the top when flying the flag.

Government

The Republic of South Africa is a constitutional democracy with a three-tier system of government and an independent judiciary, operating in a nearly unique system that combines aspects of parliamentary and presidential systems. Legislative authority is held by the Parliament of South Africa. Executive authority is vested in the President of South Africa who is head of state and head of government, and his or her Cabinet. The president is elected from the Parliament to serve a fixed term. South Africa's government differs greatly from those of other Commonwealth nations. The national, provincial and local levels of government all have legislative and executive authority in their own spheres, and are defined in the South African Constitution as "distinctive, interdependent and interrelated". Operating at both national and provincial levels are advisory bodies drawn from South Africa's traditional leaders. It is a stated intention in the Constitution that the country be run on a system of co-operative governance. All bodies of the South African government are subject to the rule of the Constitution, which is the supreme law in South Africa.

Economy

The economy of South Africa is ranked as an upper-middle income economy by the World Bank, which makes the country one of only four countries in Africa represented in this category (the others being Botswana, Gabon and Mauritius). Advanced development is significantly localised around four areas: Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban, and Pretoria–Johannesburg. Beyond these four economic centres, development is marginal and poverty is still prevalent. The South African Rand is the most actively traded emerging market currency in the world. Mining has been the main driving force behind the history and development of Africa's most advanced and richest economy. Diamond and gold production may now be well down from their peaks, however, remain key commodities along with other mineral riches such as chrome, manganese, platinum and coal.

South Africa has a large agricultural sector and is a net exporter of farming products, contributing to formal employment. However, due to the aridity of the land, only 13.5% can be used for crop production, and only 3% is considered high potential land. Although the commercial farming sector is relatively well developed, people in some rural areas still survive on subsistence agriculture. It is the eighth largest wine producer in the world, and is a net exporter of agricultural products and foodstuffs, including sugar, grapes, citrus, nectarines, wine and deciduous fruit. Manufacturing is relatively small, with the South African automotive industry accounting for about 10% of exports – BMW, Ford, Volkswagen, Daimler-Chrysler and Toyota all have production plants in South Africa. South Africa is also a popular tourist destination, providing employment and income in the hospitality industry.

Currency

The currency unit in South Africa is the Rand (ZAR), denoted by the symbol R, with 100 Cents making up ZAR 1.00 (one Rand).

Language

There are 11 officially recognised languages in South Africa, most of them indigenous to the country. English is one of these and is widely spoken in most hotels and lodges by the service staff. It is the language of government and official documents, commerce, banking and road signs.

Time

South Africa is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time – (GMT) + 2 hours.

Climate

The weather in South Africa is generally pleasant throughout the year – warm to hot days, and cool to warm nights. During our winter months however (May to September), it can get very cold at night and in the early morning, particularly when on safari, so we would like to suggest that you pack accordingly – very warm clothing including an anorak/winter jacket, a beanie (woollen hat), scarf and gloves are recommended. Please also refer to our packing suggestions list.

January to March is the peak of summer and the rainfall season in most of the country. Days are normally warm with afternoon cloud build up and possible showers although these are usually short-lived. Wildlife can disperse during this time in search of new grazing. The Cape Province has its rainfall in the winter months so it can be hot, dry and windy at this time.

During April to May morning temperatures start to drop and the evenings are cooler. Rainfall is limited and as the free-standing waters dry out, wildlife start to congregate more at perennial water sources.

The early part of June is very cold in the mornings and evenings, occasionally even dropping below zero, and winter lasts until August. Days are normally sunny and pleasant with occasional cold snaps, and windy spells towards the end of this period. Game viewing can be excellent in the dry winter months in some areas. The Cape can experience lovely sunny but cool weather during this period. It is also the rainy season in the Cape so some days can be quite wet and windy.

Spring starts in September with all the vegetation coming into leaf and days are much warmer with the occasional cool evening and morning. From October we experience very warm sunny days with warm evenings. Some rains are experienced sporadically, though larger showers can be expected usually only around December. Wildlife sightings can vary depending how early the rains have started.

Despite regional differences, South Africa's climate is generally mild throughout the year. Snowfall is limited to the highest mountain peaks and it is a relatively dry country with a mean annual rainfall of 502 millimetres.

Temperature (°C) – These are the average lows and highs:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
JNB	15/26	14/25	13/24	11/22	8/19	5/16	9/22	12/24	13/25	12/24	13/25	14/25
DBN	21/28	21/28	20/28	17/26	13/24	10/23	10/23	12/23	15/23	17/24	18/25	20/27
CPT	16/26	15/26	14/25	12/23	10/20	8/18	7/17	7/18	8/19	10/21	13/24	15/25

Temperature (°F) – These are the average lows and highs:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
JNB	52/86	51/84	47/82	41/78	35/73	29/69	29/70	31/76	35/83	41/85	45/85	49/86
DBN	72/81	73/82	72/81	67/77	61/73	61/74	59/73	61/73	63/73	66/74	70/78	71/79
CPT	60/82	60/84	57/80	53/77	49/71	45/67	43/65	46/67	47/69	51/74	55/76	59/80

Average Rainfall (mm) – This varies according to the year and location:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
JNB	125	94	90	54	13	9	4	6	27	7	11	103
DBN	134	113	126	73	59	28	39	62	73	9	10	102
CPT	14	16	21	41	68	93	83	77	41	3	1	17

Average Rainfall (inches) – This varies according to the year and location:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
JNB	5.1	3.9	3.7	2.2	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2	1.1	0.3	0.5	4.2
DBN	5.5	4.6	5.2	3.0	2.4	1.1	1.6	2.5	3.0	0.4	0.4	4.2
CPT	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.7	2.8	3.8	3.4	3.2	1.7	0.1	0.0	0.7

JNB = Johannesburg

DBN = Durban

CPT = Cape Town

Public Holidays

The dates of certain public holidays change from year to year – please refer to the below. If a public holiday falls on a Sunday, then the Monday is also declared a public holiday.

01 January	New Year's Day
21 March	Human Rights Day
Varies	Good Friday
Varies	Family Day
27 April	Freedom Day
01 May	Workers Day
16 June	Youth Day
09 August	National Women's Day
24 September	Heritage Day

16 December	Day of Reconciliation
25 December	Christmas Day
26 December	Day of Goodwill

USEFUL INFORMATION

Visas

Any applicable visas and/or relevant documentation are your responsibility. You must also be in possession of outward travel documents and have sufficient funds for the duration of your stay. Further visa information is available on the following website www.home-affairs.gov.za. Word of caution – we are not responsible for the content.

Banks

Most banks are open Mondays to Fridays 09:00 – 15:30 and Saturdays 08:30 – 11:00. Various automated teller machines (ATMs) are found in every large town. Several international banks have branches in the main cities.

Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted throughout the country, whereas Diners Club and American Express are accepted to a lesser extent.

Sightseeing

In many areas of South Africa (e.g. Johannesburg, Cape Winelands, KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields, Mpumalanga), there are optional tours available. Please contact your travel consultant for further details, however, we do recommend that these are pre-booked to avoid disappointment.

Shopping

There are a variety of shopping centres, local handicraft markets and roadside stalls. Quality gold and diamond jewellery is high on the list of the most popular purchases. Leather goods, wooden carvings, sculptures, paintings, bead work and woven articles are also available for purchase. Most major shopping centres and malls operate 7 days a week, however, in smaller towns and rural areas you will find that shops are closed on a Sunday. Trading hours from Monday to Saturday are normally: 09:00 – 17:00, and on Sunday: 09:00 – 14:00, while suggested shopping complexes are:

Cape Town

Cavendish Square	Claremont (15 minutes from the city centre)
Victoria Wharf	Victoria & Alfred Waterfront
Canal Walk	Century City

Durban

La Lucia Mall	La Lucia (near Umhlanga)
The Pavilion	Westville
Gateway Centre	Umhlanga Rocks turnoff from the N2

Johannesburg

Sandton City and Sandton Square	Adjacent to the Sandton Sun Hotel
Village Walk	Sandton
Rosebank Mall	Adjacent to the Hyatt Hotel
Melrose Arch	Adjacent to the Melrose Arch Hotel
Hyde Park Shopping Centre	Hyde Park

Value Added Tax (VAT)

The VAT rate is 14% and is levied on most products and services. To qualify for a VAT refund, visitors must be in possession of a valid passport, valid tax invoices and must produce the goods purchased. Please note that a receipt stating “for information only” is not accepted by the VAT authorities. The document must stipulate that it is a VAT invoice and show the amount charged. Goods are also not to be utilised/consumed whilst in South Africa and must be in original packaging.

Only claims where the value of the goods exported at one time exceed ZAR 250.00 or more will be considered for a VAT refund. The ZAR 250.00 relates to the total value of all the invoices submitted and is not a minimum value per invoice. Additional and more detailed information can be obtained on the tax refund website www.taxrefunds.co.za.

Driving in South Africa

Whilst conducting your own self-drive itinerary, there are many factors beyond our control. Wilderness Safaris or Wilderness Adventures will therefore not accept any liability, responsibility or claim for compensation for any incident or accident involving you (the client), your vehicle and/or any third party. We strongly recommend hiring a GPS unit with your rental car.

General Driving Information / Toll Roads:

- Road infrastructure is mostly excellent.
- Many of the national roads between the major centres are toll roads. One can pay either with credit card or cash (ZAR) at the toll points.
- While most national roads are tarred and in good condition, the more rural the road, the more likely it is to be pot-holed and poorly surfaced.
- Driving is a viable option, with careful planning advised, as South Africa is a huge country, not easily traversed in a day.
- If you're not used to driving long distances, rather break the journey, as fatigue is a major contributing factor in motor vehicle accidents.
- All signposts are written in English.
- When asking for directions, you may be surprised to get the response "turn left at the next robot ..." – a 'robot' is the South African term for traffic lights.
- Petrol/filling stations are mostly open 24 hours and spread along all the routes. They are not self-help and are manned by attendants who can also check oil, water and tyre pressure if required. Gratuities for this service are at your own discretion.
- Many of these petrol stations have restaurants and restrooms – useful to freshen-up on the long drives.
- There are three types of fuel available: lead replacement petrol, unleaded and Diesel. The car rental agent will be able to advise which fuel to use for the applicable hired vehicle.
- Petrol/fuel prices are fixed and controlled by the government – **payable in cash (ZAR), credit and debit cards or South African Petrol Cards – however, these are available to local citizens only. Caution: payment by card is available at certain petrol stations only.**
- When travelling through South Africa's neighbouring countries, filling stations can be few and far between, so plan your journey accordingly.

Driver's Licence:

- An International Driver's Permit carried in conjunction with your national driving licence is recommended and must be printed or authenticated in English.
- If your licence does not have a photograph on it, then you must also carry your passport with you so that you can be identified as the legal holder of the driving licence.
- Always make sure documentation is carried with you at all times when driving.
- Traffic officers will expect to see documentation if they stop you for any reason.
- Please liaise with your travel consultant regarding minimum age requirements and additional drivers if hiring a vehicle.

Rules of the Road:

- In South Africa we drive on the left-hand side of the road, and cars are right-hand drive vehicles.
- Keep to the left and pass right.
- All distances, speed limits (and speedometers) are in kilometres.
- There are strict drinking and driving laws – with a maximum allowable alcohol blood content of 0.05%. Translated that means about one glass of wine for the average woman and perhaps 1.5 or 2 for the average or large man.
- Four-way-stops are commonly found at the quieter intersections – the first vehicle to arrive has priority. On roundabouts, give way to the right, although this is often overlooked and it is wise to proceed with caution.
- Wearing of seat belts is compulsory. All occupants of a vehicle are required to wear seatbelts whilst travelling – if you are caught without you will be subject to a fine.
- Using hand-held phones while driving is against the law – use a vehicle phone attachment or hands-free kit if you want to speak on your mobile phone.

Speed Limit:

- The general speed limit on national highways, urban freeways and other major routes is 120 km/h (75 mph).
- On secondary (rural) roads it is 100 km/h (60 mph).
- In built-up areas it is usually 60 km/h (35 mph) unless otherwise indicated.
- Check the road signs and obey the speed limit at all times
- Speed limits are maximum speeds. If it is raining, misty or the road is congested, reduce speed.
- Reduce speed near areas where there is pedestrian activity.

Safety – when driving anywhere in South Africa, try to apply the following safety precautions:

- Always drive with your doors locked and windows wound up, especially when stopped at traffic lights.
- Don't ever stop to pick up hitchhikers, however innocent, lost or appealing they look. If you are worried about someone's plight, stop at the next town and report it to someone there.
- Do not leave anything valuable on show in your car when you leave it unattended, and always lock your car when you leave it, even if you are only going to be gone for a few minutes.
- Try to always park in a busy, well-lit area.
- Take advice from your hosts where you are staying, and ask if there are any areas that tourists should avoid driving through.
- Do not confront aggressive or abusive road users.
- If possible avoid travelling at night or in remote areas.

National Emergency Numbers

Department of Home Affairs	+ 27 12 810 8911
Medical Rescue Netcare 911	082 911
ER 24	084 124 / 011 803 7707
Automobile Association	083 843 22 (Toll Free – select options 1 or 2)
Life Line	13 11 14
Police	10111
Ambulance	10117

If you are calling from a mobile you are able to contact emergency services by dialling 112.

Excess Luggage & Airport Services

Requirements and costs for excess luggage on any light aircraft transfers will vary depending on the charter company, aircraft used and routing – please contact your agent for further details.

Wilderness Safaris has an airport support team at O.R. Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg) operated by Wilderness Air. They can provide you with a Meet and Assist service, plus general airport support, assistance with and storage of excess luggage, pre-departure briefing and/or itinerary reviewing.

Wilderness Safaris, Wilderness Adventures, Wilderness Explorations, Wilderness Collection and/or Wilderness Air and their staff will not accept responsibility for luggage kept in any lock up facilities at any of the South African airports. Guests must ensure that they are in possession of full travel insurance including luggage cover. We do not anticipate any problems with stored luggage being damaged or stolen, however, guests must ensure that they are in possession of full travel insurance including luggage cover. Wilderness Holdings and its subsidiary companies, and any person or agent acting for, through or on behalf of said companies, will not be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever arising from any cause whatsoever.

Power Supply

All electrical appliances run on 220V. Outlets are round 3-pin, 15-amp plugs. Special adaptors for video cameras, chargers and hairdryers are needed and can sometimes be supplied by some hotel receptions. We do, however, recommend that you carry your own adaptors.

Municipal power is supplied by way of 220V alternating current (AC).

Various safari camps/lodges may not have 220V (alternating current – AC) and may operate on solar powered 12V electricity (direct current – DC). Remember to bring spare batteries that can be charged at the camp/lodge while out on safari activities.