

SOUTH AFRICAN FAQ'S

What is the best time to visit South Africa?

South Africa has a lovely climate, with sunshine almost all year round. There is excellent game-viewing throughout the year but it is best during winter (May – August) in the northern regions and during summer (September – April) in the south.

Is South Africa a good family destination?

South Africa offers wonderful value for families, although some establishments are more child friendly than others. As we have children ourselves, we can advise you on the best options for you and your family according to the ages and interests of your children.

What is the best way to travel around South Africa ?

South Africa boasts an excellent infrastructure and travel by road, air and luxury train are all recommended. The country is well suited for those wishing to self-drive, and this method offers a great way to see the country (especially for families) at your own pace. There are also regular scheduled flights, charter flights, trains and a range of guided private and scheduled tours for groups from 2 people or more.

Can you tell me about my passport and visa requirements ?

If travelling to South Africa then you must please ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your entry date and that you have a minimum of 2 blank pages (if there is insufficient space in the passport then entry will be denied) in your passport to enable the entry visa to be issued. Please ensure that you have all the necessary visas prior to departure (unless available on entry) as we cannot be held liable for any errors on your side.

What is the weather like in South Africa ?

South Africa enjoys a high number of clear, sunny days. Summer in South Africa lasts from October until March. 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 502mm.

Can I use my credit card ?

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted throughout the country. American Express and Diners are less widely accepted, however more acceptable in the main city centres. Please check in advance with any safari lodges you may be visiting.

What currency must I bring with ?

The currency unit is Rands and Cents. 1 rand = 100 cents. Major credit cards are accepted at most hotels, restaurants and stores. In line with the legislative changes in Europe, most establishments and banks will unfortunately not accept euro legacy currency notes and coins as legal tender including Austrian Schilling, Belgian Franc, Deutsche Mark, Spanish Peseta, Finnish Mark, French Franc, Irish Punt, Italian Lira, Netherlands Guilder and Portuguese Escudo. We recommend you bring travelers cheques with you.

What are South Africa's banks opening hours ?

Most banks are open Monday to Friday 09h00 to 15h30 and Saturday from 08h30 to 11h00. The following banks offer foreign exchange services: First National, Nedbank, Standard Bank, and ABSA. Various teller machines (ATM's) and foreign exchanges (Rennies and Thomas Cook) are found in every large town. Several international banks have branches in the main cities. The banks and the Bureau de change offer the best exchange rates, but it is also possible to change money at most hotel receptions.

Can I use my electric hairdryer and shaver whilst in South Africa ?

All electrical appliances run on 220 volts. Outlets are round 3 pin, 15 amp plugs. Special adapters for video cameras, chargers and hairdryers are needed and can sometimes be supplied by some hotel receptions. Various safari camps and lodges may not have 220 volts and may operate on solar powered 12-volt electricity. Remember to bring spare batteries to have charged at the lodge while out on safari.

Are there any health precautions I need to be aware of ?

Medical facilities in the major cities are of international standard. There are a few basic health matters that require care and attention. Malaria within South Africa's borders is only prevalent in a few areas. It is encountered mainly in northern and eastern Mpumalanga, northern Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the border areas of the Northern and North West Provinces. Malaria is also common in the lower lying areas of Swaziland. Should you be visiting these areas malaria precautions are advised. Malaria transmission is at its highest during the warmer and wetter months of November through to April. From May through to October the risks of acquiring malaria are reduced.

Do the local people speak English in South Africa?

Although the new 'South Africa' boasts 11 official languages, the major languages spoken are still English and Afrikaans. The other 9 languages are African, the most common being Zulu and Xhosa.

What can I look out for when shopping ?

A variety of shopping centres, local handicrafts markets and roadside stalls are found. Quality gold and diamond jewellery is high on the list of the most popular purchases. Leather goods, wooden carvings, sculptures, paintings and local handicrafts including pottery, beadwork and woven articles are also available for purchase.

Can I claim back sales tax on departure from South Africa ?

When visiting South Africa, foreign tourists can have sales tax (known as Value Added Tax - VAT) refunded at a port of exit provided the value of each invoice for goods purchased exceeds R50.00 and the total value of all items purchased exceeds ZAR250.00. To qualify for a 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 refunders. It has to say VAT invoice and show the amount. The VAT rate is 14 percent and is levied on most products. Goods are also not to be utilized/consumed whilst in South Africa and must be in original packaging.

How much should I tip my guide ?

If not included, it is customary to tip 10% to taxi drivers, waitresses, waiters, stewards and delivery persons. On safari, approximately US\$ 5.00 - 25.00 per person per day, or more if service is above average (see safari primer for more details)

Are petrol stations open all day ?

Filling stations are conveniently situated throughout the country. Unleaded petrol is available. Most filling stations are open 24 hours a day. Please bear in mind that you are only able to pay for petrol with cash money.

What telephone code do I use for dialing out ?

Phoning from any hotel room can be very expensive. There are phone booths at some of the hotels. Inquire at the reception desk. The international code for South Africa when dialling from abroad is 27. Do not dial 0 before the city code, e.g. Johannesburg would be +27 11. To call overseas from your hotel room, dial 0 to get a line and then 09 (from S.A) then the international country code e.g. 44 (U.K) and the local number, once again omitting the "0" from the area code.

Do you have any safety tips for me ?

It's sensible to take the same precautions in major cities as you would in any of the world's metropolitan areas. Never leave luggage unattended in front of the hotel or in the lobby. Deposit your valuables in the hotel's safety deposit box. Don't stroll around the streets after dark. Always lock your car doors and keep the windows closed. Do not walk around the city looking like a tourist and keep your camera concealed. Do not walk around with large amounts of cash and with cameras around your neck. Please carry a record of your passport number, airline tickets and travellers cheques.

Do you have a list of South Africa's public holidays ?

New Years Day: 01 January
Human Rights Day: 21 March
Good Friday: 29 March
Freedom Day: 27 April
Workers Day: 01 May
Youth Day: 16 June
National Women's 09 August
Heritage Day 24 September
Day of Reconciliation 16 December
Christmas Day 25 December
Day of Goodwill 26 December

Please note that should a public holiday fall on a Sunday, then the Monday is considered a public holiday too. Generally all service orientated shops and all banks are closed on a public holiday.

Is there a list of emergency numbers you can give me ?

Department of Home Affairs
(012) 314-8911/ (012) 324-1860

Medical Rescue
(011) 403-7080

Automobile Association
0800-010101 (Toll free)

Life Line
0800-012322 (Toll free)

Police
10111

Temperature (°C) - These are the average lows and highs for **Johannesburg**

January	February	March	April	May	June
15 / 26	14 / 25	13 / 24	11 / 22	8 / 19	5 / 16
July	August	September	October	November	December
5 / 16	7 / 19	9 / 22	12 / 24	13 / 25	14 / 25

Rainfall (mm). – **Johannesburg**. This varies according to the year and where you are.

January	February	March	April	May	June
112	96	74	61	23	8
July	August	September	October	November	December
8	5	3	69	117	109

Temperature (°C) - These are the average lows and highs for **Durban**

January	February	March	April	May	June
21 / 28	21 / 28	20 / 28	17 / 26	13 / 24	10 / 23
July	August	September	October	November	December
10 / 23	12 / 23	15 / 23	17 / 24	18 / 25	20 / 27

Rainfall (mm). – **Durban**. This varies according to the year and where you are.

January	February	March	April	May	June
130	114	135	107	54	31
July	August	September	October	November	December
36	43	61	99	114	117

Temperature (°C) - These are the average lows and highs for **Cape Town**

January	February	March	April	May	June
16 / 26	15 / 26	14 / 25	12 / 23	10 / 20	8 / 18
July	August	September	October	November	December
7 / 17	7 / 18	8 / 19	10 / 21	13 / 24	15 / 25

Rainfall (mm). – **Cape Town**. This varies according to the year and where you are.

January	February	March	April	May	June
15	18	18	50	90	85
July	August	September	October	November	December
90	80	50	36	13	15