

📍 South Africa

Trip Notes: South Africa

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Travelers arriving in South Africa are required to have passports that will be valid for at least six months from the date of departure and contain at least two blank pages per country to be visited for affixing entry and exit stamps.

Parents travelling with children under 19 years of age may be asked to show the child's unabridged (full) birth certificate, and where only one parent is accompanying, parental or legal consent for the child to travel (e.g. an affidavit from the other parent, a court order or, if applicable, a death certificate). Parents should travel with these documents in case asked to provide them. There are further requirements for children travelling unaccompanied or with adults who are not their parents; for more information on this, contact the South African Embassy at 3051 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008. Telephone (202) 232-4400 or (202) 390-5930. Africa Answers is not responsible for expenses incurred by travelers who are denied boarding for lack of this documentation.

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

As of 1 July 2026, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) requires all travelers entering or departing South Africa to complete a mandatory online Traveller Declaration before travelling.

This declaration forms part of the Customs process and allows travelers to meet their legal obligation to declare goods, currency, and any other relevant items being brought into or taken out of South Africa.

VACCINATIONS

All travelers to South Africa should consult a travel clinic at least 6 weeks before departure for advice as to the recommended medications and vaccinations for their safari, based on their itinerary, personal health profile and current policies in the destination.

South Africa is a low- to no- risk Malaria destination, however malaria is present in some parts of South Africa, especially from September to May. Although malaria medication is not required for entry to South Africa, your travel clinician may recommend it.



📍 Kruger National Park



📍 Cape Town



📍 Bo Kaap, Cape Town

Yellow fever vaccination is not required for travelers arriving directly from the US into South Africa.

Travelers entering South Africa from countries where yellow fever is present, including but not limited to, Zambia and Kenya, must have certification of yellow fever vaccination, or a waiver document provided by their physician citing the waiver reason. Airport transit travelers are not required to have yellow fever vaccinations.

CURRENCY

The currency of South Africa is the Rand. ATMs are readily available and accept major debit cards. Rand can also be obtained at airport currency concessions. Some restaurants and shops in tourist areas may accept payment in USD.

When using USD bills, they must be clean and in excellent shape, and issued after 2008. Your bank will be familiar with this request if you explain that the notes are for use overseas. Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, American Express less so.

TIPPING

Service staff in Africa depend on tips as part of their livelihood. As a guideline, hotel porters get \$1.50 per bag carried each way. City restaurant and bar servers should be tipped 15% - 20%. Airport transfer drivers at \$3 - 10 per person per transfer, depending on distance. Camp and lodge staff at \$10 per person per day to be split between the entire camp crew - there is often a Tips box for this group tip in the main area of the camp or lodge. Driver- guides are with you the most and should receive \$10 - \$15 per person per day. If you have both a tracker and a guide, the tracker should receive \$5 per person per day.

SHOPPING & VAT

South Africa applies a standard 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) to most goods and services. Tourists and foreign visitors can claim this VAT back on physical items taken out of the country. To qualify, you must spend at least R250 at participating stores and present the goods and receipts to customs before leaving.

Retail prices in South Africa already include 15% VAT. You do not pay it as an extra fee at checkout.

When shopping in South Africa, your top purchases should include world-class local wines, Rooibos tea, Amarula liqueur, and authentic artisan crafts like Ndebele beadwork or ostrich leather goods. Diamonds, gold and local gemstones from officially licensed manufacturers.

MONEY

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📍 Johannesburg



📍 Warthog



📍 Hermanus

BAGGAGE

Airlines in South Africa routinely weigh both checked and carry-on bags. To avoid paying excess baggage fees, please adhere to the airline's restrictions.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

During the game drive, the driver-guide will offer instructions concerning safety. This includes advising tour members when it is safe to exit the vehicle. At lodges and camps, the staff will often escort guests to and from the rooms to ensure safety. In National Parks, guests must be back in the lodge or camp by 6pm; this Park rule will be enforced by your driver/guide.

Always use the safe in your room to store cash, important documents and other valuables. Larger items can be left in the lodge or camp safe at the front desk.

LANGUAGE

South Africa has 12 official languages, with the majority speaking isiZulu. English is widely spoken in tourist areas

TIME DIFFERENCE

South Africa is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and 9 hours ahead of Pacific Standard time.

PHONES

To dial South Africa from the US: 011 + 27 + number

To dial the US from South Africa: 00 + 1 + area code + number.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Dial 10111 for Police and 10177 for Ambulance.

POWER

Africa uses 240 volt electric current. Outlets are round 3 pin, 15 amp plugs (type M) or 2 pin (type C). Some remote lodges and camps generate their own electricity and may not generate 24 hours per day, which will impact CPAP machine users. The electric current is subject to voltage fluctuation and power cuts are possible, even in larger cities. For detailed information, images and links to purchase adaptors, please consult <https://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>

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CLIMATE

South Africa has a diverse climate, ranging from Mediterranean in the southwestern Cape to subtropical in the east, and arid desert in the northwest. Because it is in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are reversed from those in North America or Europe. Summer runs from December to February, and winter from June to August



📍 Zebra

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Pack neutral-colored, breathable layers for game drives, a warm jacket for chilly mornings, and comfortable city walking shoes. Bring a Type M power adapter, bug spray, and strong sunscreen. Ensure you carry a passport with at least two blank pages.

ETIQUETTE

South African etiquette centers on warmth, respect, and inclusivity. Always greet everyone present before conducting business or socializing, maintain direct eye contact, and respect elders. Avoid discussing sensitive topics like apartheid or politics unless invited, and embrace social invitations like a traditional braai.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

1 January – **New Year's Day**
31 March – **Human Rights Day**
3 April – **Good Friday**
6 April – **Family Day**
27 April – **Freedom Day**
1 May – **Worker's Day**
16 June – **Youth Day**
9 August – **National Women's Day, observed 10 August**
24 September – **Heritage Day**
16 December – **Day of Reconciliation**
25 December – **Christmas Day**
26 December – **Day of Goodwill**

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

[US State Department Travel Advisories](#)

[U.S. Embassy and Consulates in South Africa](#)

[Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

[US Passports](#)

[International Travel Guidance](#)

This information is provided by Travel Answers as a guideline to the country you will be visiting. Further information is available to you at <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/south-africa.html>. While Travel Answers endeavors to provide current information, regulations and requirements can change without notice and we are not responsible for travelers whose trips are interrupted due to documentary or medical non-compliance.