**dmAFRICA Fact File for South Africa**

## When to Go There

* The weather in South Africa is generally pleasant throughout the year – warm to hot days, and cool to warm nights.
* The months May to September are considered winter, and it can get very cold at night and in the early morning, particularly when on safari. You should pack accordingly.
* The months of January to March are considered summer, and also the rainy season in much of the country. Days are normally warm with afternoon cloud build up, and possible showers, although these are usually short-lived. Wildlife can migrate during this time in search of new grazing.
* 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.
* 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 there are 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.
* The Cape Town area has its rainfall in the months May to September so it can be wet and windy at this time.
* Despite regional differences, South Africa’s climate is generally mild throughout the year. Snowfall is rare, and limited to the highest mountain peaks.
* South Africa is a relatively dry country with a mean annual rainfall of 502 millimetres.

## What to Wear

* **What you eventually pack is a very personal choice; the suggestions below may help**
* Informality is the keynote, although more formal attire is expected for your stay in prestigious city hotels or on the luxury trains.
* Be prepared for cool evenings at higher altitudes, and everywhere between May and September, where early morning and late afternoon game drives can become quite chilly.
* On safari try to wear neutral colours as much as possible; green, beige and khaki are best not to startle the game.
* A hat and a pair of sunglasses are advisable for protection against the sun.
* Laundry services are available at most safari lodges and camps.
* Light comfortable shoes are important.
* A flashlight is also very useful, even though many lodges now provide them
* Remember also you need three prong adapter plugs, and do not forget all your back up Ipad, mobile phone and other electrical charges etc.

## Baggage

* Light aircraft travel has a strict luggage restriction of *20 kg per person in soft bags, similar to the ones shown below,* including hand luggage, depending on your destination.
* Recommended size of bags: 40 cm (16 inches) wide x 30 cm (20 inches) high x 60 cm (20 inches) long.
* It is strongly recommended that you use a soft carry bag style or duffel bag plus a small piece of hand luggage such as a handbag or small rucksack (which is also convenient for use on game drives to contain your camera gear, binoculars, sunscreen and hat particularly if on an all day game drive).  The weight allowance is a requirement of all light air travel for space and safety reasons.

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## Communications

* Generally speaking, communications in South Africa are good.
* Mobile phones can be costly and may have intermittent reception when on safari.
* The internet and wifi is also erratic, but is normally available in international hotels in the main towns and in many wildlife lodges.
* In case of emergency our offices can always pass a message to the vehicle by HF radio.

## Dress code and Social Convention

* The dress code is casual, although most international hotels and restaurants prefer gentlemen to wear long trousers for dinner.
* Bright, light colours and white clothing is not advisable for safari particularly for walking safaris as animals see mostly in black and white. Safari clothing should be in neutral or bush colours (please note that army camouflage or military uniform is not permitted in almost all African countries)
* Good manners and respect come naturally to South Africans, charming national traits which they look upon visitors to reciprocate.
* Topless bathing is not allowed.

## Electricity

* 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 recommend that you carry your own adaptors.
* Various safari camps and lodges may not have 220V and may operate on solar powered 12V electricity. Remember to bring spare batteries that can be charged at the camp/lodge while out on safari activities.
* Power cuts can be common in the rainy season, though most hotels and businesses have back-up generators.
* In some safari lodges electricity is not available during the night.

## Food and Wine

* In general, the food served in hotels and lodges is European food. A full breakfast and lunch will be buffet style and dinner is usually a set menu. A few top of the range lodges offer limited *a la carte* menus.
* In the resorts and cities it is possible to find international food to suit all tastes. In fact, the dining experience is a highlight of most people’s visit to South Africa.
* Agriculturally, South Africa is virtually self sufficient with staple crops, and fine quality beef and other livestock.
* Pineapple, mango, papaya, banana, avocado and coconut are all plentiful, and inexpensive when in season.
* Freshwater fish from the abundant rivers and lakes is plentiful.
* Of course, at the coast the seafood is included on all menus, with a variety and quality which is now legendary.
* South African wine is famous now the world over, and many people include a visit to the Winelands as an important part of their visit.
* Local beers are of the lager type, and are good.
* **We recommend drinking only bottled water throughout your stay, although tap water is generally safe to drink in the cities.**
* Most medical and religious dietary requirements can be met providing that sufficient notice is given

## Getting Around

* Compared with other Western Countries, the Public Transport facilities are mediocre.
* We recommend you pre book your journeys with dmAFRICA as much as possible.
* Taxis operate only from special ranks and/or through agencies, which are listed in the telephone directories.
* We suggest however that the concierge at the hotel arranges your transport requirements in cases where you have not pre booked with dmAFRICA.
* Getting around on safari has three options, all of which can be booked with dmAFRICA
* By organised safari vehicles.
* By light aircraft. There are charter and regular flights to all the main wildlife areas in Southern Africa.
* By private jet; most lodge/camp airstrips are not equipped to handle many of the more sophisticated private jets. It is normal to access South Africa through Johannesburg or one of the other international airports and travel onwards by light aircraft. Night flying in game parks is not normally permitted.

## Gratuities & Tipping

* Tipping is NOT compulsory; these are simply guidelines and suggestions for a ‘thank you’ if the service is good.
* Work on approximately 10% of the bill for restaurant meals and hotel services (but check the bill, some add it anyway).
* For porterage allow ZAR 15 or U$1 per bag.
* Taxi drivers generally do not expect tips, but a small tip can be given at discretion.
* For your transfer driver allow ZAR 20 or US$ 2 per person
* Most safari camps have a general tip box or you can consult the manager for the best procedure.
* Most guests seem to find a tip of ZAR 50 or US$ 5 per person per day appropriate for the box for general camp or lodge staff.
* For guides and driver guides allow ZAR 120 or U$12-15 per person per day if on a guided safari.
* If you have a specialist guide in addition to the driver guide (eg because of language requirement) allow ZAR 120 or U$12-15 per person per day
* If you have a tracker in addition to a driver guide , then ZAR 80 or US$ 8-10 per person per day is appropriate
* For half day excursions you should allow ZAR50 or US$6 per person, and for a full day tour allow ZAR100 or US$10-12 per person.

## Health

* **Malaria is endemic in some parts of South Africa and many of its neighbouring countries. You must consult your doctor before you travel to ensure that you are prescribed the correct type of tablet protection.**
* **You must have a yellow fever certificate issued at least 10 days before arrival in South Africa if you have travelled from a**[**country with yellow fever**](http://www.who.int/ith/ITH_Annex_I.pdf?ua=1) **and/or from Eritrea, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Tanzania or if you have transited more than 12 hours through the airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. This includes when entry is solely to transit through a South African airport. If you don’t have a valid certificate, you will be denied entry to South Africa.**
* Immunization against hepatitis, cholera and meningitis is recommended.

***Please check the latest information with your medical practitioner***

* South Africa does not have a national welfare scheme. Although public hospitals tend to be overcrowded and the medical staff usually overworked, the standard of patient care is very high. Private hospitals in general offer a lot more comfort and individual attention, although they are considerably more expensive. It is advisable to obtain medical insurance prior to travel.
* Pharmacies are open until at least 18.00 on weekdays and 13.00 on Saturdays. Emergency pharmacies remain open until 22.00. A few provide 24 hour service.
* A few wildlife lodges and camps have a private nurse on duty and almost all have camp staff trained in basic first aid.

## 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.
* Your driver/guide and all people in tourism related activities will speak reasonable to good English.
* dmAFRICA can provide French, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian or Hebrew speaking guides, sometimes at an extra cost.

## Local costs

* Generally visitors comment that South Africa offers good value compared to Europe and the USA

## Money

* The unit of currency is the South African Rand. Visitors may import an unlimited amount of foreign exchange.
* We recommend you change money at official bureaux de change, although some lodges and hotels may offer facilities which would often offer a less attractive rate of exchange.
* Take cash, not Travellers Cheques! Change some money into South African Rand soon after your arrival, as you may need some for tips or taxis, for example.
* Credit Cards can usually be used in the international hotels and in many safari lodges and in restaurants and shops of the main towns and tourist related businesses.
* MasterCard and Visa are widely, whereas American Express and diners Club are accepted to a lesser extent.
* If you are hiring a car, it is worth noting that garages do not normally accept Credit Cards.
* However, it is always advisable to have some cash, because sometimes credit card machines do not work, or are down without connection.
* There are **ATM** cash machines in most towns and shopping centres, and at airports.
* If you are taking US$ please be aware that large notes (US$50-US$100) prior to 2000 are not normally accepted. Best make sure you have smaller denomination and notes which have been issued after 1999.

## Passports and Visas

###### Government regulations change without notice, it is important to check regulations with the relevant authority prior to travel.  This is a guideline only.

* “All international travellers are required to travel with a valid passport and we suggest a minimum of three (3) full open "Visa" pages. The page must say Visa at the top of the page.
* There are blank pages at the back of an International passport without "Visa" printed on it; these pages are not acceptable for travel to South Africa”.
* Our recommendation is 3 pages (or even 4 if you are travelling through more than one country on your journey). If there is insufficient space in the passport then entry into a country could be denied.
* Passports should be valid for at least six months.
* Any applicable visas and/or relevant documentation are the responsibility of the traveller.
* Visitors must also be in possession of outward travel documents and have sufficient funds for the duration of their stay.
* Travellers from those countries that require a visa can obtain a bio-metric visa on arrival

## Photography

* Please do not photograph the president, police, soldiers, military installations, prisons, prisoners and airports.
* Please always enlist the co-operation of your subject before photographing strangers as people do not like to be regarded as exhibits and many may not understand that your photos are merely a personal record of your trip. Your driver/guide will be able to advise you on this.
* Fast, reliable processing services are available in the major centres and some resorts.
* For game and bird photography a telephoto lens of between 200 and 300 mm is strongly recommended. Larger lenses which require a tripod are generally impractical for game photography from vehicles, as are double lens reflex cameras. A lens hood and ultra violet filter are advisable, also dust cover (plastic bag). Spare batteries for reflex cameras are essential as these are seldom available on safari. Binoculars are invaluable for game and bird viewing.

## Security

* Unfortunately petty theft and more serious crime is a factor in South Africa. Take the same precautions as you would in any major city.
* Avoid walking alone in apparently deserted areas, especially in and around the cities.
* Avoid displaying expensive items, especially jewellery, in public areas.
* Use the safe boxes, and other security accessories, made available to you in hotels and lodges/camps.
* It is preferable and usually more enjoyable to walk with company or in groups.

## Shopping

* You will find many fascinating curio shops, clothes stores and shops specializing in *Africana*.
* Quality gold and diamond jewellery is high on the list of the most popular purchases.
* Leather goods, sculptures and paintings are also popular.
* **There is a worldwide embargo on items made from ivory, and you should refuse any offer made to assist you in such purchases.**
* There are excellent shopping malls of international standard in the main tourist areas of Johannesburg (Sandton and Rosebank) and Cape Town (Waterfront).
* 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
* Most hotels and wildlife lodges will have a curio and gift shop.
* Most shops with tourist appeal in the city centres and in hotels/lodges will accept major credit cards.
* Some shops will give you a tourist discount if buying jewellery or large purchases. They may require your passport and air tickets before doing so.
* 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 used/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.](http://www.taxrefunds.co.za/)

## Time Difference

* South Africa is on GMT +2.

## dmAFRICA in South Africa

* We have sales offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg, but these are not open to the public.
* Elsewhere we provide representation throughout Southern Africa
* We can provide VIP meet and greet staff on arrival at your first port of entry who will assist you with immigration and custom procedures as well as help you claim your luggage.
* Please contact us on [sales@dmafrica.com](mailto:sales@dmafrica.com)

## May we also suggest:-

Here are just three little extras we recommend you include when planning any holiday to South Africa:-

* Read Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, *“Long Walk to Freedom”.*
* Watch “*City Freedom”* Richard Attenborough’s powerful film detailing the moving story of the black activist, Steve Biko
* Listen to the South Africa National Anthem , a united chant including the words of the eleven official languages
* Drink some of the best wines in the world from the Cape Winelands, or the local brew, Castle Lager
* Eat a *braai (*BBQ). Local meats including *boerewors* (a hearty farmers’ sausage). *Biltong*(dried and cured meat)is also a favourite throughout the country
* Finally, it is good to remember that South Africa in its present form is a developing country and it is important to understand and accept that even the most meticulously planned arrangements can go wrong due to natural conditions.