

# FAST FACTS WHEN TRAVELLING IN SOUTH AFRICA

## Safety

South Africa is overall a safe destination for international travellers who are following a pre-arranged itinerary and recommended routing, however it is wise to take standard security precautions.

Carry a record of your passport number, credit card numbers and airline tickets in a separate place.

- Do not be flashy with your money, cameras, and jewellery.
- Keep your possessions in sight at all times.
- Don't leave bags unattended, especially at airports, shops and restaurants.
- Never leave items on the seat in parked cars or touring vehicles.
- Don't walk in deserted areas, especially after dark.
- Keep car doors locked. Don't drive in deserted areas after dark.
- Use your hotel safe.
- Be aware at ATMs

## Water

Tap water is safe to drink in South Africa's cities and major towns, however, for sensitive travellers, drinking tap water in rural areas isn't recommended. All hotels, safari camps and lodges supply fresh, clean (bottled or filtered) water. Check with the camp/lodge staff if it safe to brush your teeth with the tap water.

## The Weather in South Africa

South Africa's climate is typical for the Southern Hemisphere, with the winter months being in June, July and August, and the summer months being December, January and February.

Winter in the Cape (including Hermanus, the Winelands, and along the Garden Route) can be rainy but often sunny and mild.

Winter in the north of the country (Johannesburg, Kruger and Madikwe regions), is cool but dry. Early morning and night-time temperatures are cold (4°C/39°F and 7°C/45°F) but it is often sunny and clear during the day with temperatures reaching 16°C/61°F to 20°C/68°F.

In winter, it is warmest on the Indian Ocean coastline (Durban, and the KwaZulu Natal North coast).

The Eastern Cape Game Reserves get very cold with some light snow on the higher mountains.

Summer in the Cape and along the Garden Route is hot and often quite windy. Temperatures in summer reach 28°C/82°F to 29°C/84°F.

Summer in the north (Johannesburg, Kruger, and Madikwe) is hot and humid with regular thundershowers; this is the rainy 'green season', with temperatures easily reaching 25°C/77°F or 26°C/79°F

## Luggage Specifications & Restrictions

For most intra-Africa safari travel in light aircraft, there are stringent luggage restrictions which vary depending on your destination.

Passengers flying between camps in South Africa may be restricted to just 20kg/44lbs of total luggage weight (INCLUDING carry-on hand luggage).

In addition to these strict weight restrictions, and so that it can be packed into the hold of a small plane, your bags must be SOFT-sided with NO wheels or rigid frames. Should you need to bring additional luggage in excess of your allowance, you may have the option of buying an extra seat, which will allow you a further 70kg/154lbs.

The additional cost of this varies depending on your flight schedule.

If utilizing one of the bigger airline carriers into the country, your allowance may be higher; currently South African Airways offers each passenger 23kgs (one bag).

***NOTE: should you have a multi-country or multi-camp itinerary, please check your total luggage weight complies with restrictions for ALL of your destinations pre-South Africa, as well as for onward travel.***

## What to pack for South Africa

Whilst muted colors are recommended on safari there is no need to purchase serious safari gear for your visit to South Africa. It is quite acceptable to wear jeans with a neutral-colored shirt with the emphasis on comfort and ease. For dinner, a pretty scarf is the perfect accessory!

### Must Haves

- A good wide-brimmed sun hat – for the intense African sun
- A bandana /buff if going on safari, for the dusty, dry regions
- Comfortable sneakers, tennis shoes, or boat shoes - you do not require specialized hiking shoes for bush walks
- Sandals/ flip-flops for around the camp/lodge.
- Golf shirts or T-shirts
- Long-sleeved cotton shirts – to provide protection from sun, as well as from mosquitos in the summer evenings
- Shorts or skirt - note that short skirts are not practical on safari
- Sport bra - for bumpy game drives
- Micro-fibre zippered jacket and light rain gear - for rainy summer months
- Bathing suit
- One better dress, or trousers and shirt for dining out in Cape Town or

Johannesburg.

- Warm fleece, anorak, scarf, gloves and beanie - for morning and evening game drives, for the winter months, and for higher altitudes, where it can be cool even in summer
- For Luxury Train Travel - Formal wear for the ladies, jacket and tie for the gents (ONLY for travelers on Rovos Rail or The Blue Train).

## Laundry

Laundry can be done at most hotels, camps and lodges. This service is often complimentary, but there may be a nominal charge. Owing to prevailing local traditions in the country, at certain camps, the staff may not or will not wash underwear or intimate apparel. It is totally acceptable to wear the same outfit more than once while on safari, there is no need to be a fashionista in the bush!

## Binoculars (& Birding)

Most safari camps and lodges carry a set of reference material and the guide will have binoculars to share. However, if you are a keen birder, we recommend you bring your OWN bird book or iPad birding app (we like the Sasol Birding app). To get the most out of your safari, bring your own binoculars.

## Languages of South Africa

There are 11 official languages in South Africa (amongst other, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Afrikaans), however English is widely spoken.

# Time in South Africa

South Africa is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) all year round.

# Currency - Credit Cards, ATMs & Foreign Exchange

The currency in South African is the South African Rand (ZAR), which is made up of 100 Cents.

## Credit Cards

As in most African countries, Visa and MasterCard are usually accepted throughout South Africa, American Express and Diners Club less so, and commonly NOT accepted at some venues at all.

Be sure to ask your bank about a Visa or MasterCard with no foreign transaction fees! Smaller vendors do not accept credit cards; please ensure you have adequate cash to cover purchases not able to be made on credit.

## ATMs

ATMs are relatively easily found in all towns, cities and shopping malls as well as most petrol stations, and accept international cards. Be alert when using ATMs, and do not accept help from anybody as conmen are adept at switching cards. Be aware of who is hanging around and don't withdraw money if your instinct tells you not to.

## Foreign Exchange

Travelers' cheques may be exchanged at any of the commercial banks, most large hotels, or at bureau de change offices.

To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers' cheques in US Dollars or South African Rand.

# Tipping

Although not compulsory, if you are happy with the level of service provided, it is customary to tip guides, drivers, and support staff, and it is appropriate to do so in South African Rand (ZAR), or US Dollars (US\$).

## General Guidelines for Tipping

- Ranger/Field Guide: US\$20 (±R260) per couple per day
- Tracker: US\$11 (±R165) per couple per day
- Butler: US\$15 (±R200) per couple per day
- Hotel/Camp/Lodge Staff : US\$15 – US\$20 (±R200 – ±R260) per couple per day
- Private Tour Guides: US\$40 – US\$60 (±R500 - ±R800) per couple per day
- Scheduled Tour Guide: US\$20 (±R260) per couple per day
- Transfer Drivers: US\$5 (±R65) per transfer
- Porters : US\$1 (±R13) per bag, more if the bag is heavy
- Restaurants: 10-15% of the bill
- Luxury Train Travel (Rovos Rail & The Blue Train) -  
Cabin Attendant: US\$30 (±R390) per couple per journey  
Waiter on Dining Car: US\$24 (±R315) per couple per journey  
OR  
Train Staff: US\$20 - US\$40 (±R260 - ±R500) per couple per night (for longer journeys).

While it is not encouraged to carry quantities of cash, be aware that facilities for exchanging or drawing cash are restricted to cities, towns and villages; there are NO ATMs in the wilderness/bush areas. Many camps do allow tipping by credit card.

Tipping in Africa is customary and usually makes up a significant part of staff members' income. The above guidelines are a suggestion only and the amount you tip is completely at your discretion. Although it is not mandatory or obligatory to leave tips, it is usually a small token of appreciation and recognition. Some lodges have a communal tip box whereas others prefer tips to be handed over to individual staff members at the end of your stay or to the lodge manager.

## Power in South Africa

Most safari camps and lodges are situated in remote areas and generate their own electricity - either by solar power or by generator. These power sources in turn charge banks of batteries known as an inverter system, which then provides 220Volt power in each tented room for lighting and ceiling fans.

### **Hairdryers & Electric Shavers**

It is often not possible to use hairdryers or electric shavers in tented rooms at the camps/lodges, as they have low-wattage fuses. You will be able to charge your equipment either in your room, or in a central charging station in the common areas.

Most camps and lodges have adapters for your use, but if you would like to purchase one at home prior to departure, the most commonly found plug/socket type in South Africa is the 'M' (shown below).



## E-Connectivity in South Africa

Mobile services in South Africa are generally good, coverage extends to most of the country except the very remote areas.

Internet and Wi-Fi capability is available country-wide, however there are some isolated areas where it may be less accessible.

The large majority of hotels and safari lodges do have Internet access, however there is always the odd exception.

*Bon Voyage!*

