

**TRAVEL TIPS SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**(South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar)**

*African Sojourns is looking forward to hosting you on your Sojourn in Southern Africa! In order to ensure that you have the best experience possible, please read this document carefully. It includes general information pertinent to your holiday. For specific information on the country/countries you are visiting please refer to the separate country information document/s. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.*

**Insurance:**

*Please ensure that you have purchased sufficient travel insurance to cover:*

- *Full medical emergency evacuation and repatriation for the period of time you are away. This is a compulsory requirement for all travel.*
- *Loss of luggage, flight delays and camera equipment. Do not pack any valuables, camera equipment or money in your check-in luggage.*
- *Cancellation and Curtailment insurance in case you have to cancel the trip at the last minute or cut your trip short due to unforeseen circumstances. In most cases there is no refund for the portion of your safari that you did not complete but depending on the circumstances insurance may cover you for this.*
- *Credit card travel insurance is not normally adequate for travel in Africa. African Sojourns, its agents and its associates cannot be held responsible or liable for loss, damage, or theft of personal luggage and belongings, nor can they be held liable for personal injury, accident or illness. If you do not possess a policy, African Sojourns can issue insurance, however it is better to purchase your policy at home as this will cover you for repatriation back to your home country.*
- *If you anticipate an insurance claim upon your return, be sure to document as accurately as possible any accident, injury or loss. Doctor's notes and police reports will aid any claim.*

**Travel Documents:**

- *Visitors to Africa must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months beyond your intended departure date.*
- *Ensure that you have sufficient blank visa pages (not endorsement pages) in your passport, with at least 2 blank pages for entry to South Africa. Our recommendation is at least 4 blank pages if you are travelling to more than one country. If there is insufficient space in the passport then entry into a country could be denied.*
- *Any applicable visas, costs and/or relevant documentation are your responsibility. Please verify with African Sojourns, your travel agent or relevant consulate concerning visa entry requirements. African Sojourns, its staff, agents and operators cannot be held liable should entry be denied.*
- *If parents are travelling with a child/ren (aged 18 years or younger) to South Africa and/or Botswana (also applies when passing through) then they must be in possession of the child's full unabridged birth certificate which shows both parents names. If the birth certificate is certified then this cannot be older than 3months. If only one parent is travelling with the child/ren a full police affidavit will also be required giving permission to travel alone. For more information view: [South African Home Affairs – Travelling with Children](#)*

**Customs concessions:**

- *Personal effects including cameras may be imported temporarily without a permit.*
- *When passing through immigration and passport control a smile and friendly “hello” always goes down well in Africa!*

**Gifts:**

*We do our best to have as little impact as possible on the local culture. Furthermore, the best of intentions can unfortunately teach children the demeaning benefits of begging. As a result we generally advise against giving gifts randomly. If you do want to make a contribution then basic educational items are best, but again these are better presented to local schools or elders for appropriate use. The camps can arrange this for you. Alternatively check out <http://www.packforapurpose.org>.*

**Health Precautions:**

*There are a few basic health matters that require care and attention. We are not medical practitioners so please consult with your doctor on what the latest requirements are for travel to Africa.*

• *Malaria:*

*Many places in Southern Africa are classified as having a malaria risk. Malaria is transmitted by a very small percentage of female Anopheles mosquitoes. They are only active in the early evening and throughout the night. If you come down with flu-like symptoms either during, or within four to six weeks after, your visit to a malaria area, seek a doctor's advice immediately. The best insurance against contracting malaria is to try to prevent one from being bitten:*

- *Use mosquito repellents liberally.*
- *Wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers/slacks in the evenings.*
- *You should spray your room prior going to dinner with an insecticide (many camps do provide this service).*
- *Mosquito coils are also effective.*
- *Take the malaria tablets recommended for the region you're travelling to, and keep taking them until the course is complete.*

• *Yellow Fever:*

*Yellow Fever is a viral illness for which there is no cure, however, there is an effective vaccine that will prevent it. It is transmitted by a daytime biting mosquito. The Yellow Fever virus is found in certain areas of Africa, Central and South America. The illness develops within six days of being bitten by an infected mosquito, and the onset is usually sudden: fever develops, with headache, body pains, and most often nausea. Jaundice develops with a bleeding tendency, coma and death. Please check with us if you require a Yellow Fever inoculation certificate prior to travel.*

- *Inoculations must be taken at least 10 days before travel and the vaccine provides immunity against the disease for 10 years.*
- *You will receive a Yellow Card, which you have to carry with you when you travel. Failure to produce the card during travel could result in penalties by immigration or refusal to enter the country.*
- *Pregnant women, very young babies, HIV-positive, anyone undergoing chemotherapy or with a suppressed immune system may be exempt with a letter provided by a certificate medical practitioner.*

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- **Tick Bite Fever:**

*Ticks are found throughout Southern Africa and tick bite fever is an infection caused by bacteria from the Rickettsia family, transmitted by infected ticks to humans in their saliva when they bite. Tick bites most often occur when hiking, walking or camping in wilderness areas, particularly where there is long grass. The incubation period is 5-11 days. Symptoms vary but typical features include the presence of a black mark at the site of the bite, a fever, severe headache, swollen lymph nodes near the bite site and sometimes a rash. Treatment is with the antibiotic doxycycline. Try to avoid tick bites by wearing long sleeved shirts, long pants and shoes when you walk in the bush; apply insect repellent to exposed skin and always check yourself after you have walked in the bush.*

- **Tsetse Flies:**

*Tsetse flies do occur in some parts of northern Botswana, Zambia and Mana Pools in Zimbabwe. Some of them are the carriers of trypanosomiasis, causing sleeping sickness in humans that can be fatal, however, is easily treated and cured. In many areas great strides have been made in their eradication. They are regarded more as an irritation (the bites are sharp) than as a serious threat. Symptoms can present a few weeks to months after a visit and begin with fever, headaches and pains in the joints followed by dramatic swelling of the lymph nodes. Dark coloured clothing is generally more attractive to tsetse flies since the majority of their host species are dark coloured large mammals such as buffalo. Wearing long-sleeved neutral coloured clothing is probably the best approach.*

- **AIDS:**

*The HIV virus and AIDS are serious health issues in many African countries. Use the same precautions while in Africa as in your home country to protect against contracting this virus.*

**Sun:**

*Always take precautions against the persistent overhead sun. Proximity to the equator makes the African sun particularly strong so ensure you use a high level of protection.*

**Water:**

*It is very important that you drink plenty of water especially during the warmer months. Dehydration is possibly the single biggest cause of ill health on safari. It is generally recommended that guests drink at least 2 to 3 litres of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration. This excludes tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages, which act as diuretics and can, actually contribute to dehydration.*

**Food:**

*Please do inform us if you have any special dietary requirements. Use common sense when it comes to food and beverages. If you're unsure of their origin, don't touch them.*

**Drinks policy:**

*Many Southern African camps include all local drinks in the fully inclusive rate, while premium imported brands are excluded, in which case you are required to settle your drinks bill prior to departure. Drinks policies do differ from camp to camp so please check with us if you are unsure of what is included.*

**Electric current:**

*Electric current in Southern African camps is 220/240V 15/13-amp plug sockets. Plugs are either 2 / 3 pin, round and flat or square. Most camps carry international adapters. Remember that many bush camps do not have electricity, but run on generators, that runs for about 6 hours per day (3 hours in the morning and 3 in the afternoon when guests are out on activities). These generators then charge batteries located at each tented room, which provide good 12v lights all night (if used sensibly). South Africa uses round plugs!*

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*There are no 220v or 110v power points in most of the individual tents. If you need to have your camera/laptops charged this can be done while you are out on an activity. Therefore, please bring a spare battery for use while the other is being charged. These systems are simple but perfectly functional. Electrical plug outlets are mostly not available in individual tented rooms and therefore it is not possible to use such appliances such as hairdryers or electric shavers during your stay there. However, there are some camps, which are an exception, and African Sojourns will advise you accordingly.*

## **Communications:**

*Generally speaking, communications in Africa are not what you are accustomed to at home. Telephone, cell phone and internet connections can be poor to non-existent, in addition to being costly and most camps only communicate by radio with their head office. If you need to have guaranteed communication we highly recommend that you rent (pre-book) a satellite phone, which can be collected at either O.R. Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg) or Cape Town International Airport.*

## **Photography:**

- *To best capture the essence of Africa, a SLR (single lens reflex) camera with at least a 200-300mm lens is recommended.*
- *Popular lens choices include:*
  - *Canon 100 - 400 IS 4.5 - 5.6 lens*
  - *Nikon 80 – 400 VR f4.5 - 5.6 lens*
  - *Canon 70 mm - 300mm f/4 - 5.6L IS USM lens.*
  - *Canon or Nikon 300 f2.8 or f4 fixed lenses. Fast fixed prime lenses have an edge when it comes to sharpness and low-light performance; however, one loses some versatility being confined to a fixed focal range.*
  - *A more cost-effective way to obtain further reach (without the bulk of a fixed 500 or 600) is to use a teleconverter, particularly on f2.8 lenses – the 1.4X being ideal. The Nikon 200 - 400 f4 VR II or the Canon 200 - 400 f4 IS (with built-in 1.4X teleconverter) are the ultimate wildlife lenses in terms of versatility, however, they do come with a hefty price tag!*
- *Bring a spare camera as a back up to your main camera.*
- *Bring spare batteries as these are expensive and can be difficult to obtain. Camps have facilities for recharging batteries. Strips for charging more than one device are suggested for more serious photographers.*
- *Make certain you have enough card storage, as most people take more photographs than they expect to. Compact flash cards 16 GB and 8 GB cards are the norm these days. Also try investing in the newer generation UDMA cards as they write data much faster so you can catch that split-second lion kill!*
- *A monopod is a compact, lightweight solution for providing additional stability for larger lenses.*
- *Camera bags like the Lowepro or Tamrac range are ideal to transport all your camera gear. Out on game drives remember to pack something to cover your camera gear and minimise dust or rain.*
- *A Giotto Rocket Blower is excellent to remove unwanted dust from a camera sensor.*
- *Out of respect for the local cultures, seek the advice of your driver before photographing people.*
- *Note that certain Government, military and police buildings may not be photographed. Always check with your guide.*

## **Binoculars:**

*Everyone should bring their own pair of binoculars in order to get the most out of the safari and to enhance your overall safari experience, particularly with regards to smaller mammals and birds. There are many types that one can buy but to allow for good bird watching and game viewing, the roof prism 10x42 / 8x42 is the recommended general purpose binocular specification for both birding and mammal viewing.*

## **Recommended Reading:**

*Depending on your interests, we have recommended the following books and field guides for all travellers to Southern Africa. For literature on the countries you are visiting please refer to the separate country specific information.*

- *Africa's Top Wildlife Countries; Mark Nolting*
- *African Safaris - From Budget to Big Spending; David Bristow and Julian Harrison*
- *National Parks and Other Wild Places of southern Africa; Nigel Dennis*
- *Behaviour Guide to African Mammals; Richard Estes*
- *The Wildlife of Southern Africa: A Field Guide to the Animals and Plants of the region; Carruthers*
- *Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa; Chris & Tilde Stuart*
- *Mammals of Southern Africa – Field Guide; Smithers*
- *Pocket Guide to African Mammals; Kingdon*
- *Safari Companion: Guide to Watching African Mammals; Richard Estes*
- *Photographic Guide to Tracks & Tracking in Southern Africa; Louis Liebenberg*
- *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa; Ken Newman*
- *Sasol Birds of Prey of Africa; Kemp*
- *Birds of Prey of Southern, Central, and East Africa; David Allan*
- *Field Guide to the Trees of Southern Africa; Van Wyk*
- *Photographic Guide to the Wild Flowers of Southern Africa; Braam van Wyk*
- *Field Guide to the Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa; Bill Branch*
- *Frogs and Frogging in Southern Africa (Includes CD Frog Calls); Vincent Carruthers*
- *Field Guide to Butterflies of Southern Africa; Woodhall*
- *Field Guide to Insects of South Africa; Picker; Griffiths & Weaving*
- *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of South Africa; Warwick Tarboton*
- *Pocket Guide to the Night Skies of southern Africa; Peter Mack*
- *Starwatching: Southern Hemisphere Guide; Tony Fairall*

## **Security:**

*Safety and security is a matter of common sense. 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 public areas or entrances to hotels.*
- *Deposit your valuables in the safety deposit box.*
- *Do not walk around the city looking like a tourist and keep your camera concealed.*
- *Be aware of who is around you, even in busy areas and when drawing cash at ATM's.*

## **Clothing:**

*The most important thing is to dress comfortably on your trip. More formal attire is usually required only when staying in the more prestigious city hotel establishments or on any of the luxury trains. Please refer to our separate suggested packing list as a guideline.*

## **Luggage restrictions:**

*Your luggage should be locked with no items of high value inside and it should contain personal identification. While every precaution will be taken with your luggage, African Sojourns cannot be held responsible for any lost or damaged luggage. We strongly recommend that you purchase adequate luggage insurance.*

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*For all light aircraft flights luggage is restricted to a total of 15kgs to 20kgs(44lbs) per person in soft-sided bags (no hard framed suitcases, wheels or frames). If you have to bring more luggage we may be able to store it for you (additional charge) or charge you for an additional seat (depending on availability of seats). The maximum dimensions of the soft bags are as follows: 25 cm (10 inches) wide x 30 cm (12 inches) high and 62 cm (24 inches) long. Please keep in mind that the baggage compartments on the light aircraft are only 25 cm high (10 inches), so the pilots must have the ability to manipulate the bag into the compartment.*

***Passengers travelling on light aircraft:***

*Due to Aviation regulations and aircraft safety we need to be advised if any passengers are over 100kg (220lb). We may ask for all passengers' weights in order that charter companies can plan in advance prior to your arrival.*

***Finally:***

*All the information contained herein is given in good faith and has been carefully compiled. However no responsibility can be taken for errors or omissions. Many things in Africa unfortunately do not run as efficiently as we would like. Whilst we will do our best to ensure that any unforeseen changes to your itinerary or unexpected events are minimised, such changes can occasionally happen. This is all part of the African travel experience!*

***African Sojourns wishes you a wonderful holiday!***