

GENERAL INFORMATION

Position, size and provinces

The Republic of South Africa is situated at the tip of the African continent. It covers an area of 1,27,200sq km – approximately one eighth the size of the United States of America and nearly five times the size of the United Kingdom.

South Africa is divided into nine provinces, namely: Gauteng, Northern Transvaal, North-West, Mpumalanga, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape.

Major Cities and Towns

Johannesburg is the financial, industrial and cultural centre of South Africa. Cape Town and Durban are widely considered the entertainment capitals of South Africa – they are often referred to as 'holiday playgrounds'. Pietermaritzburg, Grahamstown, Graaff-Reinet, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and Stellenbosch are particularly noteworthy from a historical and cultural point of view.

Climate

In general, a perennially sunny climate makes it a pleasure to visit South Africa all year round. Midwinter occurs in June and July and midsummer in December and January. The climate ranges from Mediterranean in the Cape Peninsula to subtropical on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and in the North-Eastern Transvaal, while temperate conditions prevail inland. In KwaZulu-Natal average day temperatures in July reach 23 degrees and you can swim in the sea all year round.

Population and Language

The population numbers some 42 700 000. South Africa has eleven official languages. English, however, is generally spoken throughout the country. French, Italian and German are spoken by staff in some of the larger hotels, restaurants and stores.

Access

The national carrier, South African Airways, together with many international air and shipping lines link South Africa with the rest of the world.

International Airports

South Africa has three international airports: Johannesburg International Airport, Durban International Airport and Cape Town International Airport.

Facilities for the Disabled

South African Airways provides passenger aid units at all major airports while many hotels offer facilities for the disabled. Wheelchairs and other aids can be hired in most cities.

Communication Services

A direct dialling service connects all centres. Communication in remote rural areas, however, is not as reliable. The international telephone service links South Africa with countries around the world. Three GSM cellular networks cater for the widespread use of cellular phones, which are available for hire on arrival at major airports.

Medical Services

South Africa does not have a national health scheme. The patient is individually responsible for settling accounts for medical treatment and hospitalisation. Travel insurance covering accidents, illness or hospitalisation during your stay is strongly recommended. Doctors are listed under 'Medical Practitioners' in local telephone directories.

Electricity

City power systems are 220/230 volts AC. Adapters for electric shavers and hair dryers are available locally.

Radio and Television

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) broadcasts 22 radio programme services in 11 languages, and three television services in seven languages (including English). Programmes include news, actuality, interviews, sport, documentaries and movies. The M-Net cable and Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) networks broadcast mainly in English and focus on entertainment, international news (CNN, BBC) and sport.

Newspapers and Magazines

Hundreds of periodicals and journals are published in South Africa. Daily newspapers are published in all major cities.

Currency

The South African currency unit is the Rand, denoted by the symbol R. R1 = 100 cents. Most businesses, tour operators, airlines and hotels accept international credit cards, including Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Diners Club cards. Travellers cheques in all major currencies can be exchanged in all banks. Many hotels, stores, restaurants etc. accept travellers cheques.

VAT (Value Added Tax)

Value Added Tax, currently at 14%, is included in the marked/quoted price of most goods and services.

International tourists may claim refunds of VAT paid on goods which they take out of South Africa. Information leaflets on VAT Refund procedures are available from VAT Refund Administration offices at Johannesburg International Airport, Durban International Airport and Cape Town International Airport.

Tipping/Gratuities

A 10% assessment usually applies, depending on the standard of service provided. Restaurants do not include the tip in the bill. The suggested tip for porters is between R1.00 and R2.00 per piece of luggage. The currency exchange rate is in your favour! In addition to shopping bargains, an upmarket hotel will generally cost you less than the tariff charged by similar establishments elsewhere. The same applies for fine cuisine and wine, entertainment and transport.

Time Differences

Throughout the year, Standard Time in South Africa is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, one hour ahead of Central European Winter Time, and seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Winter Time, USA.

What to pack

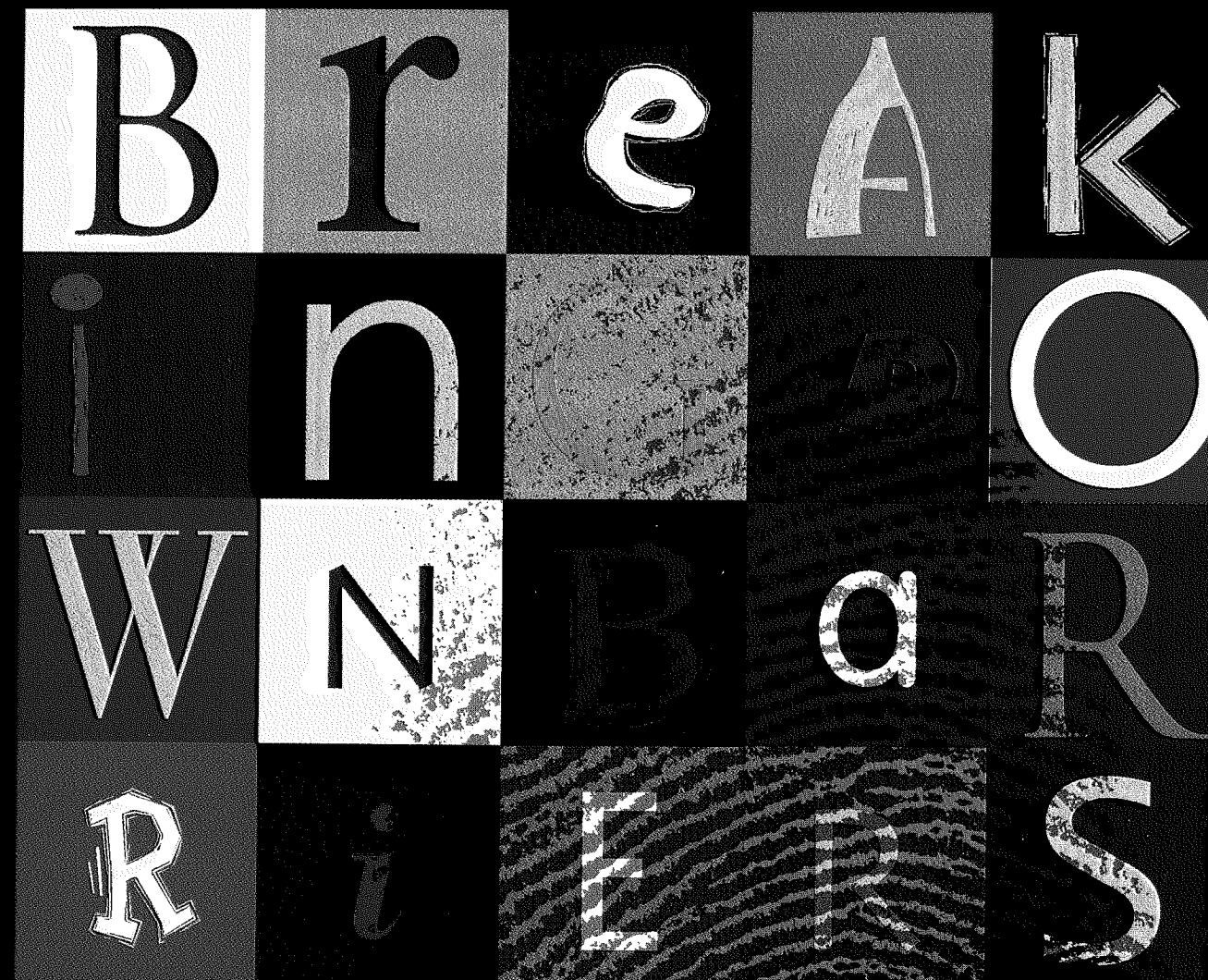
Dress is generally casual, especially at holiday resorts and game reserves. Beachwear, however, is not acceptable in restaurants. During winter, warm clothing is necessary, although daytime temperatures are generally mild. Don't forget to pack your camera and binoculars for game viewing.

Drinking water

Tap water is purified and safe to drink.

Entry and Accessibility Requirements

As for all international travel, visitors to South Africa must be in possession of a valid passport. Travellers from certain countries also require visas.



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