



The Great
Canadian
Travel Group
Inc.

1349 Portage Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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South Africa Practical Information



South Africa, officially the Republic of South Africa, is located on the southern tip of the African continent and is the largest, country in Africa. It is the 25th largest country in the world by land area and is the world's 24th most populous nation.

Documentation:



Canadian/US passports are required for visitors to travel to South Africa and must be valid for at least 30 days beyond the date you expect to leave the country. A temporary resident visa (TRV) is issued on arrival, valid for up to 90 days. Visa requirements may change without notice and should be verified approximately 3 months prior to your travel date.

Notes: Ensure you have two consecutive empty pages in your passport for your South African visa stamps, upon arrival to the country.

Airports: Main airports include Tambo International in Johannesburg, Cape Town International and King Shaka International in Durban. There are other regional airports throughout the country.

Location and Geography: South Africa is bordered to the north by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It encompasses the independent mountain kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland. Its long coastline, stretching more than 2,500km (1,553m), is on the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the warm Indian Ocean on the east, providing a spectacular range of biodiversity.

South Africa is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.



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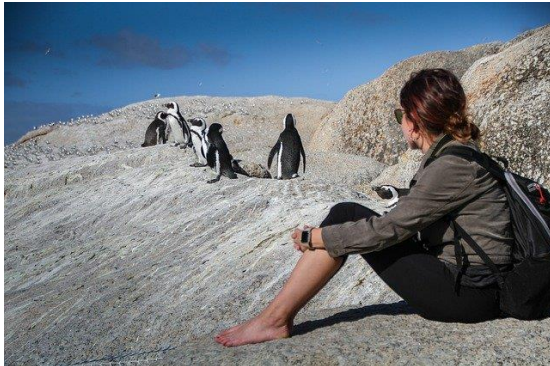


Population, People and Culture: South Africa has close to 58.5 million people (2019). The largest city, Johannesburg, has just over 955,000 people according to the 2011 census.

Ethnicity, social and cultural traditions

Language: There are 11 official languages in South Africa: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Sotho, SiSwati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu. Most South Africans can speak more than one language. Dutch and English were the first two official languages from 1910 to 1925 and Afrikaans was added in 1925. Dutch was dropped in 1984 and was replaced by Afrikaans as an official language.

Economy: South Africa is a very popular tourist destination, and a substantial amount of revenue and employment is derived from tourism. In 2012, it contributed about 102 billion South African Rands to the GDP and supports 10.3% of jobs in the country. It has a mixed economy, second only to that of Nigeria. South Africa has a relatively high GDP per capita compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but despite this is still burdened by a relatively high rate of poverty, unemployment and ranks in the top ten countries in the world for income inequality.



Government: South Africa has three capital cities based on the three levels of government. Pretoria serves as the seat of the executive branch of the government, Bloemfontein is the judicial capital, and Cape Town is the legislative capital. South Africa is a parliamentary republic where the President is both head of state and head of government.

Food: South African culture is diverse therefore the food is also diverse. Foods from many cultures are enjoyed by all. It is heavily meat-based and is based around the South African social gathering known as a braai, or barbecue. They have also developed into a major wine producer.



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Music: There is great diversity in South African music, from the vuvuzelas to Zulu isicathamiya singing to the harmonic mbaqanga. Black musicians have developed a unique style called Kwaito. There have also been a lot of world-famous jazz musicians from South Africa.

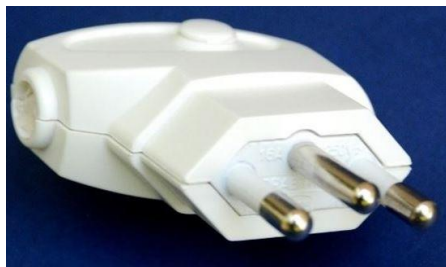
Education: South Africa has a three-tier system of education starting with primary school, followed by high school and tertiary education in the form of universities. As of 2015, the adult literacy rate was at 94.4%

Climate and Weather: South Africa has a generally temperate climate, due to having oceans on three sides and is in the climatically milder Southern Hemisphere. The elevation rises steadily from sea level on the coasts towards the north and further inland, creating a great variety of climatic zones, from extreme deserts in the northwest at the border with Namibia through to lush, subtropical climates on the east coast along the border with Mozambique. Seasons are the opposite to ours, so their summer occurs during our winter, making it a perfect fall, winter and spring getaway for North Americans. During the summer months there is approximately 14 hours of daylight, in winter about 10 hours.

Clothing and Footwear: During the summer months (November to March), pack clothes that are cool, light weight and comfortable, as temperatures typically reach 30-40C (86–104F) in some areas. South Africans are generally casual so opt for dresses, shorts, T-shirts and light trousers. Bring a sweater or jacket for cooler evenings, an umbrella for summer thunder showers (especially in Johannesburg) and for beach holidays pack a bathing suit, beach towel and a cover-up. If you're going on a safari please refer to our [What to Pack for Your Safari](#) page.

Electricity: Voltage is 230V 50Hz. You can use your electric appliances in South Africa if you have a 220 – 240V – UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa. Starting in 2015 South Africa began converting plugs from the old format into the new one, but you may still find both in use.

New plug



Old plug





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Currency: The local currency is the South African Rand (ZAR). It is possible to purchase ZAR in advance of your trip or on arrival at one of the major airports.

Credit Cards: American Express, MasterCard and Visa are accepted generally in bigger hotels/restaurants in major tourist areas. You should ask what service fee they charge before using your card, as the fees are sometimes quite substantial.



Business and Banking Hours: For the most part, businesses are open on weekdays from 8:00am-1:00pm. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Offices are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. On Saturdays, shops are open until 1.00 p.m. and banks until 11.00 a.m. General shopping hours are 0:00am-0:00pm, days of the week. Bank hours are 0:00am-0:00pm days of the week.

Shopping, Tax & Duty Free: In a country boasting exquisite wine regions, craft markets and galleries, you'll still want some extra room in your luggage—in addition to the extra room on your memory cards. Some unique items are adorned with exquisite Zulu beadwork; check out the Shweshwe fabrics and dresses and Spedi shirts (the dyed, geometric-patterned cotton fabric is hugely popular in traditional South African clothing design) or take home some of the excellent wine or rooibos tea.

Tipping: Tipping is generally offered unless your bill already has a service charge added to your total. Generally, tip 10-15% of the service you have paid for.

Telephone and Emergency: The International Dialing Code is 27 followed by the area code of the region you are dialing. To dial to Canada or the United States, you dial 00 1 (area code) (phone number)

The emergency number is not standard throughout the country. For a police emergency dial 10111, for an ambulance dial 10177.

Wi-Fi/Internet: Wi-Fi is usually provided by specific places such as restaurants, shops or hotels. Sometimes it is free, sometimes you'll have to pay. Relying on Wi-Fi provided is not recommended as sometimes it can be slow or not work properly.

Healthcare: According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, the life expectancy in 2009 was 71 years for a white South African and 48 years for a black South African. The healthcare spending in the country is about 9% of the GDP and only about 16% of the population is covered by medical insurance. The UNAIDS Report in 2015 estimated that 7 million people live with HIV in South Africa, which is more than any other country in the world. South Africa is home to the third largest hospital in the world, the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg.

Health Information: The healthcare system is below Canadian and US standards except for facilities in the larger centers. Only about 16% of the South African population is covered by medical insurance and the country has the highest number of people living with HIV in the world. South Africa is home to the



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third largest hospital in the world, the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of medical treatment, emergency evacuation by air ambulance and repatriation. It is also imperative to bring all prescription medications (always pack in your carry-on luggage) and any over-the-counter medications you may need during your travel. Basic first aid supplies may also come in handy.

Public Holidays and Events: Holidays with dates that vary year to year are marked with an *

January 01 – New Year's Day

March, April, May – Easter including Good Friday and Easter Monday, referred to as Family Day*

March 21 – Human Rights Day

April 27 – Freedom Day

May 01 – Worker's Day

June 16 – Youth Day

August 09 – National Women's Day

September 24 – Heritage Day

December 07 – Day of Reconciliation

December 25 – Christmas Day

December 26 – Day of Goodwill