



Country Report

South Africa

Overview

Overview

- **AIG Travel rates South Africa as a HIGH threat destination due to elevated levels of crime and civil unrest in the country.**

South Africa, located on the southernmost tip of the African continent, is a relatively stable constitutional republic; it shares borders with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland, while the country of Lesotho lies completely within its borders. South Africa is diverse, with 11 official languages spoken among the population of approximately 55.9 million. The country has three capital cities: Pretoria, the administrative capital, Cape Town, the legislative capital and Bloemfontein, the judicial capital.

Crime poses a significant risk in South Africa, particularly in major urban centers including Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Both violent and petty crime are prevalent, though violent crimes including incidents of home invasions, carjacking, muggings and sexual assault are more common in low-income townships. South Africa has the highest incidence of rape in the world, and violent sexual assaults may occur virtually anywhere in the country. Petty incidents such as pick-pocketing and robbery also occur regularly in all urban areas. Thieves are frequently armed and will not hesitate to use violence should a victim resist. Armed criminal groups have been known to stage attacks on businesses in urban centers. Financial fraud, identity theft and other scams also occur across the country.

Incidents of civil unrest occur frequently, especially in and around major urban centers. Labor strikes are often accompanied by demonstrations. Strikes and protests occur more frequently in Gauteng Province, where Pretoria and Johannesburg are located; demonstrations are also common in Cape Town, especially near the government offices in the city. Additionally, service delivery protests have increased in the country and generally take place in South Africa's townships. The potential for violence and transportation disruptions is high during demonstrations.

The threat from terrorism is generally low, although a recent series of attacks by Islamist militants suggests the possibility that terrorist incidents may become more frequent in the medium term. Kidnapping occasionally occurs in South Africa, most commonly linked to criminal activities and target wealthy families for ransoms. Although violence has been reported in relation to these incidents, travelers are not usually directly targeted.

Political conditions

Political

- **South Africa is rated as a MODERATE political risk; political conditions in South Africa are stable, though civil unrest may increase during election periods and in relation to political developments.**

South Africa is a multiparty democracy governed by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) political party. President Cyril Ramaphosa serves as both head of state and government, and is elected by the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament. South Africa has a bicameral legislature, with the National Council of Provinces serving as the upper house of parliament. The National Council of Provinces represents the interests of the governments of the various provinces of South Africa, as opposed to the National Assembly which represents the people. The country has maintained a relatively stable political environment, a strong civil society and active opposition political parties, though the ANC has largely dominated the political sphere. The ANC has been South Africa's ruling party since the end of apartheid ushered in democratic elections in 1994. As a member of the Tripartite Alliance, the party is aligned with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which both hold significant political influence as a result.

Although the ANC remains in power, the party has continued to lose ground since national and provincial elections in 2014, facing criticism for its ineffectiveness in addressing South Africa's widespread poverty, high unemployment and struggling education system, among other issues. Former President Jacob Zuma was forced to resign as president on 15 February 2018 amid graft accusations and an ongoing police investigation; he was replaced by former Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa as both president and chairman of the ANC. The same accusations had earlier prompted Zuma's resignation from leadership of the ANC in December 2017. In 2016 provincial elections, the ANC lost Johannesburg, Tswane and Nelson Mandela Bay to the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) after issues such as chronic unemployment, government corruption and political killings in KwaZulu-Natal eroded public support for the ANC.

The removal of Zuma, a widely popular move, and the election of Ramaphosa has raised hopes among ANC supporters that Ramaphosa will rein in corruption and reinvigorate public confidence in the ANC. Ramaphosa has sought to reinvigorate economic optimism for South Africa's long term development. While markets have largely declined and unemployment has surged to 27 percent under the Zuma administration, the government has taken steps to restore investment confidence. Ramaphosa has assured investors that the inefficient public sector would be reorganized and incentives would be given to attract foreign investors. Nevertheless, challenges such as widespread corruption continue to hinder economic growth. The development of a patronage system between public officials and business under Zuma has proven difficult to eliminate, and further efforts to reduce instances of graft have been stymied by the pervasiveness of corruption at all levels of government. The success of the ANC in future elections will heavily depend on the improvement of South Africa's market performance, which is in turn linked to Ramaphosa's ability to motivate ANC politicians to support anti-corruption measures. Reports have indicated that the ANC may receive less than 50 percent of the vote in upcoming 2019 national elections and be forced to form a coalition government to continue as the ruling party.

Politically motivated violence is not a widespread issue in South Africa, but remains a concern in several locations, most prominently in KwaZulu-Natal province. Assassinations committed by members of the ANC, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) or the National Freedom Party (NFP) occur sporadically and tend to increase during election periods. In recent years, the violence has primarily been a result of intra-party power struggles, though inter-party violence has also transpired. In May 2018 opposition politician Dianne Barnard alleged that former President Jacob Zuma had engaged in a plot to assassinate the commander of the police crime investigation unit, intending to halt corruption investigations. Assassinations and other attacks primarily occur in Durban, the provincial capital, and in townships. Political figures are the primary targets, though bystanders may be affected collaterally.

Background

South Africa first held democratic elections in 1994 following decades of rule by a white minority government that enforced apartheid, or a strict and institutionalized separation of races. The government's displacement of thousands of non-white South Africans in order to segregate residential areas and violence against government opposition groups prompted significant unrest in the country. Eventually, a more organized resistance movement led to the repeal of apartheid in 1991 and the resignation of the government. The 1994 multi-racial elections brought the previously banned African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela, to power. While the nation has made strides in post-apartheid reforms, South Africa continues to struggle with high levels of crime and unrest stemming from socioeconomic inequality.

Corruption

- **Corruption concerns are MODERATE in South Africa, but have increased in recent years.**

Although corruption is present within South Africa's government and business sectors, corruption levels are moderate and do not typically affect daily life when compared to other countries in the region. Traffic officers tend to solicit bribes in urban areas, and municipal police officers occasionally solicit bribes to avoid ticketing. More often, corruption takes the form of government officials diverting public funds for private interests or through the award of government contracts through a system of patronage. There have been instances in which businesses, including hotels, tampered with photocopies of passports for use in identity theft schemes. There are limited protections for whistleblowers, and as such corruption is rarely reported out of fear for potential repercussions.

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2017 gave South Africa a score of 43 out of 100, indicating that the country has moderate levels of perceived corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt countries receiving a maximum score of 100.

Security issues

General crime

- **Elevated petty and violent crime rates contribute to a HIGH risk rating for the country. While crime levels are elevated throughout South Africa, areas called townships experience even greater levels of crime.**

Crime is a major problem in South Africa, with risks of violent and non-violent crime present in every part of the country, including more affluent areas as well as isolated and rural locations. Petty crime, such as bag-snatching, theft at ATMs and pick-pocketing, occurs throughout the country, and victims are targeted regardless of identity or socioeconomic status. Petty criminals are often armed and robbery incidents have the potential to escalate to violence should victims demonstrate any resistance. Although petty crime may occur virtually anywhere, incidents are more prevalent in crowded areas, on isolated beaches, remote areas and in national parks, including Table Mountain National Park and Kruger National Park. Though South Africa does not have a tourist police force, thieves have posed as such in order to rob tourists traveling in buses or on foot. The rate of petty crime is also elevated on public transport and around train and bus stations, including trains between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Identity theft, financial theft and scams are also a serious concern. Criminals may place skimming devices on ATMs in order to steal credit card information; patrons at various businesses, including restaurants and hotels, may also be targeted by credit card thieves.

Urban areas face elevated risks of crime, including high incidences of violent offenses such as murder, sexual assault, carjacking and robbery. The worst rates of violent crime tend to be recorded in township and informal settlement areas, which exist in or near all of South Africa's main urban centers. Townships, which were originally designated as residential areas for non-white South Africans during apartheid, are typically

located on the outskirts of major cities. Crime and violence levels in these areas are elevated due to higher levels of poverty and lack of basic infrastructure. Tours to townships are on the rise; however, such tours as well as unaccompanied visits should be avoided due to the associated risks, which may be particularly heightened for foreigners or those perceived to be affluent. Home invasion robberies occur frequently in lower income areas, while carjacking and smash-and-grab theft from vehicles are more common in Northern KwaZulu-Natal and the Zululand region, particularly at night and while traveling on secondary roads. Criminals may also pose as police officers, block roads or stage fake accidents or vehicle breakdowns in order to stop vehicles in transit. Sexual assault is also a significant concern in the country and attacks are indiscriminate, affecting both men and women and occurring both day and night. Instances of sexual violence are highest in the townships and informal settlements, though may occur anywhere. Attackers may operate alone or in groups, and though groups of individuals have been targeted, these occurrences are relatively less frequent; as such, likelihood of being targeted is elevated if the individual is walking alone.

Given the lack of training and resources of the South African police force and widespread economic difficulties in the country, numerous well-organized criminal gangs are active nationwide. Armed groups have been known to target restaurants, shops and other business premises, and there is often a risk of innocent bystanders getting caught in an attack. Cash-in-transit heists, which involve armed robbers targeting armored vehicles that are collecting or delivering cash to banks and other businesses, are a significant problem and pose a serious concern to authorities. Criminals also frequently bomb ATMs in attempts to obtain the cash. These bombings primarily occur overnight in isolated areas. Organized groups of armed robbers have also been known to target individuals that withdraw large sums of money from ATMs upon arriving at South African airports. The assailants will follow the victim's vehicle from the airport, using a false police light to pull the victim over and rob the vehicle. Although the primary motivation of these criminal gangs is financial, robbers will not hesitate to use force against their targets.

Terrorism

- **Transnational terrorism concerns are rated as LOW in South Africa, although low levels of domestic terrorism do exist.**

The risk from terrorism is LOW in South Africa as the country has not closely aligned itself in the regional fight against terrorist groups and seemingly has not attracted the attention of international terrorist groups as a target. Nevertheless, terrorism related incidents do appear to be on the rise. The country remains susceptible to terrorist attacks, particularly those perpetrated by domestically self-radicalized lone actors and small groups. In May 2018 a group of three individuals attacked a Shi'a mosque in Durban, killing one individual and injuring three others. While no arrests were made and no motive confirmed, the incident was treated as an act of terrorism by authorities. An additional incident occurred in February 2018 in KwaZulu-Natal province where two British citizens were abducted from a park, then subsequently pronounced dead when the first body was discovered on 17 February and the last discovered on 15 June. Two individuals, claiming allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group and found in possession of IS recruiting literature, were arrested in for the incident. The United States has alleged that IS has established limited networks in South Africa for recruitment, logistics and financing purposes, and that a number of foreign and South African nationals affiliated with such groups have attempted to enter the country after fighting in conflict zones throughout the Middle East.

The U.S. and other countries have periodically issued warnings about the potential for indiscriminate terror attacks in South Africa. The British FCO updated its travel advice for South Africa in February 2018 to state that terrorist attacks were likely, and that the greatest threat came from Islamic State sympathizers.

Civil unrest

- **South Africa is rated as HIGH risk for civil unrest; strikes and protests are common throughout the country, especially in Gauteng province, and have the potential to result in violence and disruptions.**

Protests and strikes stemming from social and political issues and labor disputes are common in South Africa. While the country's economy is one of the strongest in the region, issues such as widespread poverty, high unemployment and government ineffectiveness in addressing such concerns continue to sow unrest. Protests are generally peaceful; however, violent protests do occur and may disrupt traffic, business and service delivery. Participants in violent protests generally establish roadblocks with burning tires and other debris, and throw stones at passing vehicles. Clashes with police occur periodically, but typically police monitor the protests and only intervene when there is a sign of public endangerment, such as targeting of bystanders.

As the political and economic center of the country, strikes and protests are common in Gauteng Province, where Pretoria and Johannesburg are located. Demonstrations are also prevalent near government offices in Cape Town. KwaZulu-Natal province is often the site of large ANC political rallies and other gatherings, particularly in provincial capital Durban. A large number of political protests occurred from late 2017 through February 2018 to demand the resignation of former President Jacob Zuma. Student protests also occur with some frequency and can become violent and cause localized disruptions. Service delivery protests, which occur in response to utility outages, are frequent throughout South Africa and generally take place in South Africa's lower-income townships and informal settlements. The townships, which were designated residential areas for non-whites during the apartheid, continue to experience a lack of sewage, water and electrical services. Informal settlements, which are often established by migrants on the outskirts of townships, exacerbate the issue, as the government has not been proactive in meeting the service delivery needs of inhabitants. Residents of informal communities frequently form squatter settlements in private land developments, prompting occasionally violent mass evictions. The evictions tend to cause large protest actions where protesters demand that the land be used for low income housing projects. Participants in demonstrations often block roads with burning debris and attack vehicles with stones during such events. Although protests in South Africa are typically peaceful, violence and disruptions are possible.

South Africa's powerful trade unions are a primary factor in the frequent labor actions and protests in the country. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the country's largest trade federation, regularly organizes strikes and protests in response to various political, economic and social issues as well as labor-related grievances. Although COSATU is in alliance with the ruling ANC, the trade federation does not hesitate to stage labor and social actions in response to differences between the organizations.

Civil unrest against migrants and refugees, who are seen as competition for employment in the country, has affected South Africa in the past. Notably, in April 2015, violence primarily targeting foreign nationals from other countries on the African continent occurred in the cities of Durban and Johannesburg. Protesters looted foreign-owned businesses, attacked vehicles and, in some cases, attacked and killed nationals of African countries in the streets. The violence prompted a number of governments, including Malawi and Zimbabwe, to repatriate their nationals amid security concerns. Although the situation has since calmed, underlying issues that contributed to the violence remain, and future outbreaks of xenophobic attacks cannot be discounted.

Kidnapping

- **South Africa is rated as a MODERATE kidnap risk location. Sporadic incidents of kidnapping occur in South Africa, with wealthy locals generally targeted for abduction.**

Kidnapping linked to criminal activity does occur in South Africa, with victims often held for ransom by opportunistic gangs seeking financial gain. The local population is most commonly targeted, particularly members of more wealthy families that can seemingly afford to pay larger ransoms. Foreign nationals, however, also face a risk of kidnap for ransom, as businessmen have been targeted by criminals

misrepresenting themselves as legitimate. There have been reports of kidnap victims being physically harmed and female victims being raped. In most cases, the victims were returned for a ransom.

Express kidnapping, where an individual is abducted and coerced into making the maximum withdrawal from an ATM, is less common in South Africa; however, reports indicate that instances of express kidnapping are increasing. Notably, criminals have been conducting abductions using fake Uber credentials, particularly in Johannesburg.

Travel logistics

Entering the country

Entry Requirements

- All travelers require a passport, with at least two blank pages, valid for a minimum of 30 days beyond their intended date of departure from South Africa.
- All European Union citizens and most other nationals of non-EU countries in Europe may enter South Africa without a visa for stays of up to 90 days.
- Travelers require a return or onward ticket.
- All visitors require a yellow fever vaccination certificate issued at least ten days before arrival if entering from, or having traveled through, a recognized yellow fever-infected area.
- If traveling to South Africa or transiting through a South African airport with a child, travelers must present an official unabridged birth certificate for the child. An adoption certificate must be provided for adopted children. Photocopies will not be accepted. There are additional requirements, including legal documentation of parental consent and/or legal guardianship consent, if the child is traveling alone or with only one parent. As the rules are extensive, individuals are advised to contact their nearest South African Embassy or consulate for more information.
- As entry requirements are subject to change, travelers are advised to consult their nearest South African Embassy or consulate to confirm the current requirements.

Political/Security Risks

AIG Travel rates South Africa as a HIGH threat destination due to elevated levels of crime and civil unrest in the country.

- South Africa is rated as a MODERATE political risk; political conditions in South Africa are stable, though civil unrest may increase during election periods and in relation to political developments.
- Corruption concerns are MODERATE in South Africa, but have increased in recent years.
- Elevated petty and violent crime rates contribute to a HIGH risk rating for the country. While crime levels are elevated throughout South Africa, areas called townships experience even greater levels of crime.
- Transnational terrorism concerns are rated as LOW in South Africa, although low levels of domestic terrorism do exist.
- South Africa is rated as HIGH risk for civil unrest; strikes and protests are common throughout the country, especially in Gauteng province, and have the potential to result in violence and disruptions.
- South Africa is rated as a MODERATE kidnap risk location. Sporadic incidents of kidnapping occur in South Africa, with wealthy locals generally targeted for abduction.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure concerns in South Africa are MODERATE. Although road, telecommunications and medical infrastructure are adequate, the country struggles with the delivery of utility services.

- South Africa has an extensive and well-developed road network.

- Telecommunications and internet services are generally good in urban areas as well as in rural villages; however, travelers may encounter service interruptions away from well traversed highways and roads in rural areas.
- The country also has an adequate medical infrastructure.
- Power outages occur on a frequent basis in all areas of South Africa due to an inadequate system.
- Water shortages occasionally occur, particularly in Cape Town which is prone to drought.
- Utility services may be even more limited in South Africa's township areas, which are located on the outskirts of major cities.

Air travel

O.R. Tambo International Airport (FAOR/JNB), previously Johannesburg International Airport, is located 13 mi (22 km) from the city center of Johannesburg and has acquired the status of sub-Saharan Africa's leading air transport center. Facilities at the airport include ATMs, banks, exchange bureaus, a post office, conference and business facilities, food outlets, shops, a 24-hour medical clinic and car rental agencies. Luggage storage facilities are available in the domestic arrivals and international departures terminals, and a free shuttle bus operates between terminals.

Cape Town International Airport (FACT/CPT), South Africa's second largest airport, is located 20 minutes from the city center of Cape Town. Facilities at the airport include banks, exchange bureaus, ATMs, a post office, food, duty-free shops and car rental agencies. Luggage storage facilities are available in the domestic arrivals and international departures terminals.

King Shaka International Airport (FALE/DUR) in Durban offers ATMs, exchange bureaus, a banking hall, a post office, a pharmacy, food outlets, shops, conference and business facilities and car rental agencies.

Getting around

South Africa has an extensive and well-developed road network, though rural road conditions vary. However, road accidents and fatalities are high with drunk driving, speeding and poorly-maintained vehicles contributing to the country's poor road safety record. Additionally, criminal activity on public transportation, particularly around train and bus stations, and on South African roadways poses a significant concern. Individuals should utilize private transportation with an experienced local driver arranged through a trusted provider. Travel should only be conducted during the day.

- **Road** - Road conditions in South Africa are generally good, but erratic local driving practices, crime concerns and poorly maintained vehicles present significant security and safety risks for travelers. Ground travel at night should be avoided if possible due to significant crime risks, including robbery, carjacking and abduction, in addition to poor road conditions and the presence of large numbers of pedestrians and animals on or near roads in some locations.
 - *Self-Driving* - Vehicles drive on the left in South Africa, though steering wheels are on the right. Major international car rental companies are represented at the international airports. Self-driving is not recommended, however, due to security concerns associated with erratic drivers and criminal activity on roadways.
 - *Bus* - Buses are available for travel within and between cities in South Africa. However, bus travel is hazardous given erratic driving practices, poor maintenance and overcrowding. Additionally, criminals have targeted buses in armed robberies.
 - *Taxi* - Taxis can either be contacted directly through phone booking or can be found at taxi ranks. Ranks are less common outside of major metropolitan areas, and it is generally advisable to pre-book in advance to prevent fare gouging. Taxi ranks are also havens for criminals, who use meter taxis to scam travelers. Minibus taxis are another form of cheap transport; however, they have a reputation for being dangerous mainly due to poor vehicular maintenance and irresponsible drivers who travel at high speeds and seldom adhere to the rules of the road. South

Africa has experienced an ongoing, so-called taxi war between meter taxis and minibus drivers since the 1980s and clashes between rival taxi associations have turned violent in the past.

- **Rail** - A rail network is available in South Africa, connecting major cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town. Many overnight trains offer sleeping berths in two bed or four bed groups, showers and higher security to tourist class guests. Economy class rail travel poses a high risk, as foreign tourists have been robbed on trains. Rail travel should be avoided if possible.

Culture

- South Africa is a multicultural country. In addition to the indigenous African peoples, who represent more than two-thirds of the total population, a history of slavery, colonialism and continuing immigration have brought waves of Europeans, Indians, Malays, Chinese and many others to the country.
- South Africa has 11 official languages. English is the most commonly used in government, business and the media, and is generally understood throughout the country. Other official languages are Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.
- Smoking is prohibited in public buildings and on public transport. Most restaurants provide enclosed or outdoor sections where smoking is permitted.
- Homosexuality is legal, but is not well-tolerated by all sections of society. Discretion is advised.

Important Dates 2018

- 1 January – New Year’s Day
- 21 March – Human Rights Day
- 30 March – Good Friday
- 1 April – Easter
- 2 April – Family Day
- 27 April – Freedom Day
- 1 May – Labor Day
- 16 June – Youth Day
- 9 August – National Women’s Day
- 24 September – Heritage Day
- 16 - 17 December – Day of Reconciliation
- 25 December – Christmas Day
- 26 December – Day of Goodwill

Health concerns

South Africa's major cities, such as Cape Town, Pretoria and Durban, have numerous high-quality medical facilities that are well equipped to deal with medical emergencies. Smaller cities and larger towns have private and public clinics; however, rural areas may have inadequate resources and public clinics can provide only a basic level of medical care. Pharmacies are widely available in urban areas of the country, but rural areas may lack adequate medical supplies. Although travel health insurance is recommended when traveling to South Africa, doctors and hospitals may require patients to pay cash for services. English is widely spoken in the country and at most medical establishments. Comprehensive medical insurance, which includes the provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers are also advised to take an appropriate supply of any prescription medication; this should be accompanied by a written doctor's instruction, explaining the need for the medication and justifying the quantities required.

The risk from malaria exists throughout the year in the low-altitude areas of the Limpopo province, Mpumalanga (including the Kruger National Park) and north eastern KwaZulu-Natal (as far south as the Tugela River). The risk is highest between October and May. Resistance to chloroquine has been reported. Bilharzia is endemic in the north and east of the country and may be present elsewhere; travelers should

avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water. Hepatitis A occurs and hepatitis B is hyperendemic. South Africa has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world. Travelers should exercise normal safety precautions and should urgently seek medical attention in the event of possible exposure. Authorities in South Africa have discovered a new, virtually untreatable form of tuberculosis (TB). This drug-resistant strain of the disease, referred to as extreme drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB), was first reported in the KwaZulu-Natal province and has subsequently been reported in the Gauteng province.

Recommended vaccinations for South Africa include those against hepatitis A and B, rabies, typhoid and yellow fever. It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. Travelers are advised to visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This should allow the necessary time for any vaccinations prescribed by the doctor to take effect. If travel is to be undertaken in less than four weeks, a visit to a medical professional is still recommended.

Although water in most urban areas is sterilized and safe to drink, tap water in the rural areas is generally unsafe; travelers are advised to consume only sterilized or bottled water. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods. In addition, it is not recommended to bathe or swim in rivers. Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts. Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative. Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked. Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed. Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing infection.

Natural hazards

Most of South Africa experiences its rainy season during the summer months, which generally runs from December to February; however, the Western Cape province experiences its rainy season during winter, from June to August. During this time, flash flooding is possible, particularly in low-lying areas surrounding rivers and dams. Visitors are advised to monitor local weather reports prior to and during travel.

Money

- **Currency** - South Africa's currency is the South African rand (ZAR). One rand is divided into 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 rand. Coins are in denominations of 1, 2 and 5 rand, and 5, 10, 20 and 50 cents.
- **Foreign exchange** - The rand is the only currency accepted in the country. Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, exchange bureaus, authorized hotels and larger shops, which can be found throughout the country.
- **ATMs / Credit Cards** - ATMs are widely available in South Africa and all can handle foreign transactions. ATMs are available at banks, in shopping centers, gas stations and at popular tourist spots, and operate on a 24-hour basis. ATMs should be used with caution, particularly at night, as there are frequent reports of pick-pocketing and robbery of people using such facilities. There have also been reports of ATMs being blown up by criminals, and attacks on cash-in-transit vehicles have become a common occurrence. Credit cards, including MasterCard and Visa, are widely accepted throughout the country. American Express is not as widely accepted.
- **Tipping** - A service charge is not usually included in the bill at restaurants; however, a ten percent tip is generally expected. Tipping of taxi drivers, gas attendants and hotel porters is also expected. Car guards, offering to watch your car, operate in most outdoor city parking lots and tourist spots, and usually expect payment.
- **Business hours** - Business hours are Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 17:00. Shopping hours are generally Monday to Saturday from 09:00 to 17:00, and on Sunday from 09:00 to 13:00. Banks are open Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 15:30, and on Saturday from 08:30 to 11:00.

Contact Information

International dialing code: +27

International dialing prefix: 00

Police: 10111 or 112

Ambulance: 10177 or 112

Fire: 10111 or 112

Cultural factors

General

South Africa is a multicultural country. In addition to the indigenous African peoples, who represent more than two-thirds of the total population, a history of slavery, colonialism and continuing immigration have brought waves of Europeans, Indians, Malays, Chinese and many others to the country. South Africa has 11 official languages. English is the most commonly used in government, business and the media, and is generally understood throughout the country. Other official languages are Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

Dos and donts

- Smoking is prohibited in public buildings and on public transport. Most restaurants provide enclosed or outdoor sections where smoking is permitted.
- Homosexuality is legal, but is not well-tolerated by all sections of society. Discretion is advised.
- Theft from hotel rooms occurs frequently, and travelers should place valuables in hotel safes.
- Travelers should only use ATMs in secure areas due to criminal threats.
- Travel along isolated beaches, hiking trails and picnic spots should be avoided due to the risk from crime.
- Tours to townships are on the rise; however, such tours as well as unaccompanied travel should be avoided due to extremely high crime levels in these locations. Furthermore, foreign nationals may be targeted by criminals due to their perceived affluence.

Useful information

Useful information

- [Public holidays](#)
- [Weather forecast](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [South Africa Tourism](#)
- [South African Government Information](#)
- [Electricity](#): 220/230 volts, 50 Hz; for the most commonly used plug types, please [click here](#).

Contact details

Important contact details

- International dialing code: +27
- International dialing prefix: 00

Emergency numbers

- Police: 10111
- Ambulance: 10177
- Fire: 10111
- General emergency number: 112

Embassies

Australian High Commission in South Africa

292 Orient Street
Arcadia
Pretoria 0083 South Africa
Tel: +27 12 423 6000
Fax: +27 12 342 8442
Email: pretoria.info@dfat.gov.au

British High Commission

255 Hill Street
Arcadia
Pretoria
Tel: +2712 421 7500
Fax: +27 86 535 5422
Email: SA.assistance@fco.gov.uk

French Embassy

250 Melk Street
Nieuw Muckleneuk
Pretoria
Tel: +27 (0)12 425 1600
Fax: +27 (0)12 425 1609
Email: france@ambafrance-rsa.org

Germany Embassy

201 Florence Ribeiro Avenue
Groenkloof
Pretoria
Tel: +27 (0)12 427 8900
Fax: +27 (0)12 427 8969
Email: info@pretoria.diplo.de

Embassy of Mexico in South Africa

570 Fehrsen Street, Brooklyn Bridge,
Parkdev Building ground floor, Brooklyn,
Pretoria 0181, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 12 460-1004
Fax: +27 (0) 12 460-0973
Email: info@mexico.org.za

United States Embassy

877 Pretorius Street
Arcadia

Pretoria
Tel: +27 (0)12 431 4000
Fax: +27 (0)12 342 2299

Health advisory

Health infrastructure

South Africa's major cities, such as Cape Town, Pretoria and Durban, have numerous high-quality medical facilities that are well equipped to deal with medical emergencies. Smaller cities and larger towns have private and public clinics; however, rural areas may have inadequate resources and public clinics can provide only a basic level of medical care. Pharmacies are widely available in urban areas of the country, but rural areas may lack adequate medical supplies. Although travel health insurance is recommended when traveling to South Africa, doctors and hospitals may require patients to pay cash for services. English is widely spoken in the country and at most medical establishments.

Pre-travel recommendations

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to South Africa:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)
- Yellow fever (required for travelers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present or arriving from Tanzania, Zambia, Somalia, Eritrea, or Sao Tome and Principe specifically)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Travelers are advised to visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This should allow the necessary time for any vaccinations prescribed by the doctor to take effect. If travel is to be undertaken in less than four weeks, a visit to a medical professional is still recommended.

Comprehensive medical insurance, which includes the provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers are also advised to take an appropriate supply of any prescription medication; this should be accompanied by a written doctor's instruction, explaining the need for the medication and justifying the quantities required.

Significant diseases

The following are some of the more significant diseases that might affect travelers to the country:

- Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. The malaria risk is particularly high in the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces, and in Kruger National Park in the Mpumalanga province.
- Cholera is an infection which is contracted through drinking water or eating food contaminated by the cholera bacterium. Outbreaks of the disease occur in the poorer communities, particularly in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, and in the rural parts of northern KwaZulu-Natal.
- Diarrhea is common among travelers to the country and can be caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E.coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.

- Rift Valley fever is a viral disease that is transmitted to humans through contact with blood or tissue of infected animals or through mosquito bites. Cases of the disease have been reported in the Mpumalanga, North West, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces.
- Tuberculosis is an airborne disease which is a risk to travelers throughout South Africa.
- Schistosomiasis, also referred to as bilharzia, is a parasitic infection which is contracted through contact with infected fresh water. Bilharzia infections are prevalent in Kruger National Park and other smaller game reserves. The parasites are also found in dams and rivers in the country, particularly in rural areas.
- Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever mostly affects livestock; however, humans can contract the disease through tick bites or contact with infected blood or tissue. South Africa has a high risk of the disease and cases have been reported in Oudtshoorn in the Western Cape province, the Karoo region, and farming areas in the Free State, Northern Cape and North West provinces.
- Anthrax is a bacterium which mostly affects animals and is transmitted to humans through contact with infected animals. There have been reports of anthrax cases in rural areas of the Northern Cape and North West provinces, mostly among farming communities.
- Rabies is a disease mainly carried by dogs and bats and can be spread to humans through animal bites. Fatal human cases of rabies have been recorded in the Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.
- HIV/AIDS is a life-threatening sexually transmitted disease. A large portion of the South Africa population is believed to be infected with either HIV or AIDS.

Recent outbreaks

- A listeriosis outbreak has been ongoing since January 2017. Cases of infection have primarily come from Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Approximately 700 cases have been reported, and 183 fatalities have occurred.

Food and water safety

Although water in most urban areas is sterilized and safe to drink, tap water in the rural areas is generally unsafe; travelers are advised to consume only sterilized or bottled water. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods. In addition, it is not recommended to bathe or swim in rivers. Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts. Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative. Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked. Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed. Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing infection.

Emergency response

The emergency number for an ambulance is 10177. Private ambulance services are also available, although these can be expensive. Services in rural areas are limited.

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