

# General Information and FAQ for travelling to South Africa



## Location

South Africa is located at the southern-most tip of the African Continent which makes for a 12 hour flight time from the United Kingdom.

## Time

Although the travel distance is considerable the time difference is minimal due to the southern direction of travel. GMT + 2 hours means there is no need to worry about jet lag. During our summer here in the UK when the clocks go forward the time difference is cut down to just 1 hour (last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October).

## Climate

South Africa lies in the southern hemisphere meaning the seasons are switched in relation to the United Kingdom. Their summer months run from November to March and winter is May through to September. In general, South Africa has a temperate and extremely pleasant climate with warm sunny days most of the year. The countries rainy season comes during the summer months and the dry season is during winter. This is however reversed in the Western Cape Province, home to Cape Town and the Garden Route, which experiences most of its rainfall during the winter months. South Africa is a year-round destination with average summer high temperatures of 28° and lows of 8° at night. The winter months are still very mild in comparison to what we experience in the UK with day times averaging 18°. Winter nights can get chilly with single figure temperatures.



## Regional Climates

### **Western Cape and Garden Route (Mediterranean Climate)**

#### Summer

- November - December average day time highs of 22° and lows of 13° at night.
- January - February average day time highs of 28° and lows of 15° at night.
- Dry Season - around 6 rainy days per month in the form of afternoon showers.
- 13.5-14.5 hours of day light (Sun rise between 5.45am and 6.30am. Sun set between 7.15pm and 8.00pm.

#### Winter

- Average day time highs of 18° and lows at night of 8°
- Winds pick up and expect up to 15 rainy days per month.
- 10-11 hours of day light (Sun rise between 7.30am and 7.50am. Sun set between 5.45pm and 6.40pm)

### **Upper Eastern Cape & Kwazulu-Natal (Sub Tropical)**

- Temperatures are slightly higher than the Western Cape and increase the further up the coast you go towards Durban.
- Rainfall is spread year-round in the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal provinces but the driest times are during the winter months.

### **Mpumalanga & Limpopo (Sub Tropical)**

- Can get uncomfortably warm during the height of summer with temperatures reaching above 30°.
- December, January, and February are the wettest months of the year with torrential downpours in the afternoons.
- Winters are cooler and extremely dry which makes for a much more pleasant time to visit.
- Winter is also the best time to visit in terms of viewing big game as the dry season encourages animals to congregate at watering holes. The lack of rain fall in winter also means there is less vegetation making animals easier to spot. It's highly recommended to bring a pair of light weight binoculars to make spotting easier.

### **Johannesburg and Pretoria**

- Hot summers with temperatures very similar to that of Cape Town (28° average summer highs)
- Rain storms in the higher areas during the summer afternoons.
- Winter nights and mornings can be very chilly due to the higher altitude with temperatures in the low single figures.

South Africa is a year-round destination, however, in general:

- The Northern Regions are good destinations in the winter months as game viewing is at its best and the temperatures are very mild (maximum 20–23°C (68–73°F). There is very little winter rainfall in the north.
- The Southern Regions are summer destinations with low summer rainfall and temperatures reaching 28–30°C (82– 86°F) or higher on beautiful days.
- Namaqualand in the Western and Northern Cape Provinces becomes a floral masterpiece in spring (mid-August to mid-September), when the desert-like terrain is transformed into a carpet of flowers and draws thousands of visitors.
- The warm waters of the east coast make for almost year-round swimming. Winter is mild, except in the highest parts of the country. South Africans tend to take their annual holidays in summer and this causes tourist destinations to be overcrowded from mid-December to late January, as well as during the other school holidays.
- Whale watching season runs from June to November and can be easily viewed from land in places such as Hermanus.

Please be aware that with global weather patterns continually changing all weather details shown are averages over a long period of time and as such may differ greatly from what you experience.

## General Information and Finances

**Language:** South Africa has 11 official languages but English is spoken throughout the country.

**Currency:** The Rand is the currency of South Africa, denoted by the currency symbol R and the currency code ZAR.

**Passport and Visas:** A valid passport is required and an onward ticket, (not necessary to your home country). Passports must be valid for 6 months after the intended day of return from S.A. You must have two blank pages in your passport. The new immigration rules introduced by South Africa in June 2015 require parents travelling with children under 18 years old to present the child's full unabridged birth certificate

Please note that it is your responsibility to check the latest Passport and Visa information before travelling. For further, and up to date details, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-africa/entry-requirements>

**Credit/Debit Cards:** MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are widely accepted in banks, hotels and most shops. Most hotels have exchange facilities for guests.

Automatic teller machines (ATM's) are widely available and operate 24 hours a day. Its recommended to have some Rand in cash for when you arrive before going on to use credit and debit cards for most payments. The South African Rand offers great value for money against major world currencies making

food, drink and other purchases very affordable. You will find that your spending money goes a long way!

**Banking hours:** Monday - Friday 09h00 - 15h30; Saturday 09h00 - 11h00

**Shopping hours:** Monday - Friday 08h30 - 17h00; Saturday 08h30 - 17h00; Sunday - most shops are open from 09h00 - 13h00

**Tipping:** In restaurants, patrons are expected to tip 10% of the bill depending on the standard of service provided.

**Water:** In major cities, towns and most game reserves tap water is purified and safe to drink.

**Weights and measures:** Metric system. "1,6093 kilometres = 1 mile"

**Voltage:** 250 volts AC (Pretoria), 220/230 volts, 50hz elsewhere. In South Africa the sockets used are type D, M and N so you will need a travel adaptor for any UK appliances as we use type G.

**Communications:** Country code is +27 followed by an area code (minus the first 0) and number.

\*Public phones are either coin or card operated.

## Driving Information

Self-driving is an excellent way to explore South Africa during your trip. The main roads, and infrastructure in general, are excellent in South Africa and even the unsurfaced roads in national parks are usually quite smooth. Road signs are clear and plentiful as well to keep you in the right direction. Driving is on the left hand side, as in Britain. Tolls are charged on some major roads. The general speed limit is 120 kph (75 mph) on motorways and marked sections of main roads away from towns where traffic is light. Elsewhere it is 100 kph (62 mph). In populated areas it is 60 kph (37 mph) unless otherwise posted. Radar traps are common and seat belts must be worn. An international driving license is required unless your national license carries your photograph.

Petrol stations are generally open from 7 am to 7 pm and most, but not all, take credit cards for payment. Away from towns, they can be far apart, so it's advisable to fill up whenever you can.

It's recommended to avoid driving at night or alone. Make sure to plan routes in advance and take local advice on safety. In the cities, close car windows and lock doors. This makes air-conditioning essential, and it's useful too in the game parks and on dusty roads where you need to keep windows shut. Park in well-lit places, guarded if possible, and leave nothing on show.

## Security

The best advice for security when you travel: simply stay aware of what's going on around you and take the usual precautions that you would when in any foreign city.

- All valuables, passports and cameras should be locked in the safe of your hotel.
- As with anywhere in the world, when you're in a city err on the side of caution. Don't openly carry valuables. If you must carry your passport and money, keep them in a buttoned-down pocket or well-concealed on your person.
- Avoid deserted areas, particularly at night. If you're in a car, try and park in well-lit populated areas; always keep it locked - even when you're in it; and don't leave valuables where they can be seen.
- Public transport is available in South Africa so there is no need to hitchhike. It is also highly recommended you do not pick up hitchhikers when driving.
- Guides, hosts, and local residents will be able to give you a clear idea of which areas are safe and which areas should be avoided.

## Health & Safety

There are public hospitals throughout South Africa but it's recommended to use private hospitals in the case of an accident or emergency. Please remember to take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel to ensure you receive the best care possible.

Through good control measures malaria is now restricted to certain districts in just three provinces; namely the North-Eastern part of Kwazulu-Natal and parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The malaria risk in these areas is lowered significantly during the dry summer months. In these areas, you may see mosquitos but only certain ones carry the malaria parasite. They are most likely to bite during dusk and dawn and it is recommended that you follow the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- Close windows and doors and remain indoors during this time.
- Use insect repellent on exposed skin. Lotions and spray options are available.
- Spray your accommodation with an aerosol insecticide.
- Wear long-sleeved, light-coloured clothing, long trousers, and socks.
- Sleep under a bed net (preferably used with an approved insecticide) or in a netted tent or use screens to prevent mosquitoes from flying in.
- We are not medical experts so therefore would highly recommended speaking with your GP before travelling in regards to needing any antimalarial medication etc.

## Golf

**Caddies** - Most Golf courses will have caddies although the standards vary substantially. Ask the caddie master to arrange a caddie for you and ensure that you are happy with the selection. Certain caddies are there only to carry your bags where others will assist where required. At present the caddies' fees range from R60 (£5.00) to R80 (£6.70) and this excludes R10 (80p) after 9 holes. You are free to tip the caddie after your round, according to their worth.

**Golf Carts** - Golf Carts can be hired at most golf courses for around R140 (£12.00) for 18 holes. You will be informed in your quotation whether golf carts are included in your round.

**Halfway House** - It is normal for all golfers to stop at the halfway house after nine holes to enjoy a drink and snack for approximately 10 minutes. (Caddies normally receive about R10 (80p) at this stage).

**Soft Spikes** - These are compulsory on many courses. If you do not have soft spikes you should inform the pro shop and they will fit you a set of soft spikes before your round.

**Proof of Handicap** - This may be required when playing in a club competition. If you have we suggest you carry it with you whenever you are playing Golf.

**Sand Bags** - It is compulsory to carry a filled sandbag when playing golf courses in the Cape Region. Fill up divots with sand.

**Rate of Play** - A round of Golf in SA should not take more than 4.5 hours. It is expected for a four ball to allow a two ball to play through when the two ball is consistently waiting to play, unless the field is full, always keep up with the players ahead of you.

**Enjoyment** - Playing Golf in South Africa you will never experience the game in such unique surroundings. From the Cape Town with Table Mountain as a constant backdrop, to Sun City where the antelope wander the course, you are in for a golfing experience of a lifetime. After your game, enjoy the facilities of the club, have a drink and a local beer and enjoy the views.

### Golf Club Dress Code

#### **Men**

- Long pants or golf shorts. No jeans or tracksuit bottoms.
- Shirts must have collars as well as sleeves and remain tucked in at all times.
- Long socks or ankle socks (white) with shorts are acceptable.
- Soft spiked golf shoes.
- Traditional golf hats or peaks to be worn with the peak forward

## **Ladies**

- Tailored trousers, skirt or golf shorts. (Skirt to be no shorter than 15cm above the knee when kneeling).
- Golf shirt with collar.
- Long socks or ankle socks (white) are acceptable.
- Soft spiked golf shoes.
- Traditional golf hats or peaks to be worn with the peak forward

## **Strictly Not Accepted**

Shirts hanging out of trousers, footwear worn without socks, denim material or tracksuits, beachwear, running shoes or sports team kit.

## **Club House**

Club houses tend to have a smart casual dress code, generally requiring similar attire to on the course. However long trousers are usually required after 6pm. Hats are not to be worn in many club houses and spiked golf shoes are a definite no.

Please bear in mind that individual clubs may have specific requirements that vary from others but use the above as a general overall guide.

If you have any further questions regarding your travels, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## FAQ when travelling to South Africa



### How much luggage can I bring?

The general allowance is 23kg for one piece of luggage per person. The additional cost of bringing your golf clubs will be built into your airfare if necessary. If flying with Emirates you are entitled to two pieces of luggage totaling 30kg, which should be sufficient for your luggage and golf bag.

It should be noted that if you are taking any internal flights within South Africa you will still be allowed your 23kg piece of luggage but will be required to pay approximately £20 per golf bag when at the airport. This cannot be pre-paid in advance.

If flying on a through ticket with Emirates you will still be entitled to two pieces of luggage totaling 30kg for your internal flights at no extra cost.

The above is only a rough guide and your exact luggage allowance will be clearly outlined in your quote. Please note this information can be subject to change at any time, please always ensure you check with your specific airline for the most up to date information

### How do we travel around the country?

Being such a large country we would generally recommend the option of self-driving. We can organize hire cars to be picked up straight from the airport, or if you would prefer to not drive straight away we can have them delivered to your accommodation and a transfer organized.

The infrastructure in South Africa is excellent and all roads and destinations are well sign posted. They drive on the left hand side as well which makes self-driving simple as well as giving you the freedom to travel at your own pace.

It should be noted that there is a one way fee charged to your credit card if you are leaving the car off at a different location to where you collected it. It is your responsibility to return the hire car in a suitable condition.

If you aren't keen on the idea of driving yourself then transfers between airports, accommodation and golf courses can all be organized.

## What happens when I arrive?

Here at Chaka we have a meet and greet system where you will be introduced to our ground handlers upon arrival in South Africa. They will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall with personalized name boards once you have received your luggage and gone through immigration. From there they will assist you with onward travel information, whether that be organizing an airport transfer or a hire car. They are experts in South African travel and will be able to answer any questions you may have and get your trip of a life time under way. If any issues arise during your trip then please don't hesitate to contact our ground handlers on their 24 hour emergency contact number +270833008634.

## When is the best time to visit South Africa?

South Africa is a year-round destination with one of the most pleasant year-round climates in the world. Being in the southern hemisphere their seasons are reversed in relation to ours. Summer runs from November to March and winter from the end of May to September but warm sunny days can be experienced all year round. The wet season in South Africa comes during the summer months, except for in the Western Cape Province which experiences most of its rainfall during the winter months. During the mid-winter months temperatures can drop quite drastically at night in the interior areas due to the higher altitude.

## How can I get the best safari experience?

The most popular areas to safari are located in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces. The best time to visit these national parks for safari is during the winter months from May to September. During summer it can be uncomfortably hot with temperatures above 30° so the winter temperatures are much more pleasant. The winter months are also the driest which means animals can be easily found congregating at watering holes. The lack of rain also means there is less vegetation so animals can be spotted easier. It's highly recommended to invest in a pair of lightweight binoculars to give you the best possible view of the wildlife, as well as going on the guided game drives that we will organize for you to get the experts knowledge and advice.

## What should I wear on safari?

The best way to get close to the wildlife is to blend in with your surroundings as much as possible by wearing neutral colored clothes. In South Africa the best recommended colour is khaki. Temperatures can vary greatly with morning game drives being particularly chilly during winter, so be prepared with extra layers. Lightweight breathable fabrics will keep you the most comfortable as well as reducing noise whilst you are moving. Plain khaki trousers or shorts are the perfect choice with plenty of pockets to store items like your camera, binoculars and sunscreen. Hats and sunglasses are ideal for blocking out harmful rays as well as reducing glare for better game viewing.

Light colour's are ideal for evening dining as they won't attract mosquitos; long trousers and sleeves are also recommended to cover as much skin as possible. There's no need for formal attire as most lodges have a relaxed dress code.

## What clothes should you take to South Africa?

During summer, take light summer clothes (shorts, dresses, light trousers, T shirts and sandals) and an umbrella for summer thunder showers. The evenings can be cooler so bring a sweater or light jacket along. During winter, long sleeves, jerseys, jackets, shoes, and socks are needed. An umbrella is needed if you're visiting the western Cape during South Africa's winter months - May through September.

\*Please note dress codes can vary between areas, hotels and restaurants. We do recommend gentlemen always pack long trousers for dinner as some hotels/restaurants insist on this.

Guidebooks will outline local laws, religion and customs. Please remember rules tend to be stricter in churches, mosques and other holy places.

For the latest advice always check the Foreign Office Travel advice on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and if you have any queries about a specific hotel or restaurant it is your responsibility to clarify their dress code rules so that you can ensure you pack the appropriate clothing before you travel.

## Who should I call if I have a problem?

If you have a problem during your holiday, please inform immediately the relevant supplier whose service is involved (for example, your hotelier) and our local ground handlers who have a 24 hour dedicated helpline should any problems occur, to give them a reasonable opportunity to resolve the problem whilst you are on holiday.

Please do not hesitate to email us also regarding any issues you may need assistance with.

## Is there a malaria risk I need to be aware of?

Malaria is now restricted to certain districts in just three provinces; namely the North-Eastern part of Kwazulu-Natal and parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The malaria risk in these areas is lowered significantly during the dry summer months. In these areas, you may see mosquitos but only certain ones carry the malaria parasite. They are most likely to bite during dusk and dawn and it is recommended that you follow the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites such as covering wrists and ankles, using insect repellent, spraying accommodation with aerosol insecticide and sleeping under a bed net to keep mosquitos out. Please note that some countries require certificates for mandatory vaccinations. As a tour operator, we are not qualified to provide recommendations on health or vaccinations beyond advising the mandatory requirements of the countries that you will be visiting, therefore it is advisable to speak to your GP six weeks before travel regarding anti-malarial medication.

## Can I drink the tap water?

Yes, the tap water in South Africa is generally safe to drink and cook with when taking from taps in urban areas. Not all tap water in rural areas is drinkable so take precaution and check with guides, hosts, or locals beforehand.

## Advice regarding money and tipping?

The South African Rand offers great value for money against major world currencies. Therefore, you will find your money goes a long way regarding food and drink. You will be amazed at just how well you can eat and drink with about £20-£25 per day. Petrol prices are notably cheaper than here in the UK and you will find you can completely fill your tank for about £45.

Credit and debit cards are widely accepted and 24 hour ATM's are plentiful.

Tipping is common in South Africa and the usual 10% is recommended in restaurants depending on service. Don't forget to tip the likes of your golf caddies, safari hosts and drivers.

## Is South Africa a safe destination?

South Africa has been given a reputation as a dangerous destination to travel to when it is actually a safe place with extremely kind and friendly locals. The high crime rates and dangerous areas are in the poor township areas which are seldom frequented by tourists. By sticking to the right areas and following the same precautions you would in any foreign city you are sure to have a safe and enjoyable visit.

## Important Note:

**Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the information we provide you is accurate, the information stated is for general guidance and is subject to change at any time. We accept no liability for any fluctuation in descriptions, pricing or currency.**

**For the latest travel advice on South Africa, please visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**