

South Africa:

South Africa is one of the most diverse and enchanting countries in the world, teeming with natural beauty, fascinating cultures and an interesting history that will keep you spell bound.

South Africa's hugely varied terrain is home to a rich diversity of animals, birds, and plant-life. Sun, wind, rain, rivers and the opposing influences of two currents, one cold, the other warm, have sculpted vistas of awe-inspiring landscapes and the most diverse game sanctuaries in the world, offering you an incomparable range of experiences – an African masterpiece.

Whether you opt for Afro-chic or authentic Africa, you'll find it easy to get around and with the welcoming hospitality awaiting you everywhere a holiday to South Africa is guaranteed to be an unforgettable one.



Climate

Although South Africa falls under a subtropical location, it displays many climate characteristics. Summer in South Africa is from November through to February and most of the country, except the Cape, experiences summer rain.

In the following table:

CPT: Cape Town

DBN: Durban

JHB: Johannesburg

Tx: Average Daily Max. Temp (Celsius)

Tn: Average Daily Min. Temp (Celsius)

R: Average Monthly Rainfall (mm)

D: Average Number of Days With Rain

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CPT	Tx:	26	26	25	23	20	18	17	18	19	21	24	25
	Tn:	16	15	14	12	9	8	7	7	9	10	13	15
	R:	14	17	19	39	74	92	70	75	39	37	15	17
	D:	5	4	5	8	12	12	11	13	10	8	5	5
DBN	Tx:	28	28	28	26	24	23	23	23	23	24	25	27
	Tn:	21	21	20	17	13	10	10	12	15	17	18	20
	R:	135	114	124	87	64	26	44	58	65	89	104	108
	D:	15	12	12	9	7	5	5	7	10	14	16	15
JHB	Tx:	25	25	24	21	19	16	16	19	22	24	24	25
	Tn:	15	15	13	11	8	5	5	7	10	12	13	14
	R:	146	114	88	66	23	8	8	9	26	76	124	123
	D:	14	11	11	7	3	2	2	2	3	9	13	13

The dry winter season is generally the best time for game viewing and visiting the eastern half of the country. However the Cape is at its best from November through to the end of March.

Distances & Driving

Although there are long distances involved when travelling in South Africa, the road network is generally well maintained and well signposted in English. It is therefore possible to cover long distances while on holiday.

Distance Chart (Kms)

Cape Town		1660	1495	756	821
Durban	1660		598	927	1243
Johannesburg	1495	598		1062	827
Port Elizabeth	756	927	1062		912
Upington	821	1243	875	912	
	CapeTown	Durban	Jo'burg	P.E.	Upington

In South Africa we drive on the left, safety belts must be used at all times and the use of hand-held cell phones when driving is prohibited.

Cars, minibuses and 4x4 vehicles can be hired at all major towns.

Currency

South Africa's currency is the 'Rand,' and each Rand is further divided into 100 cents. (See currency converter on left menu for current exchange rates). Foreign currency travellers cheques can be exchanged at most banks. Major credit cards are accepted in most lodges, hotels, restaurants, shops and airlines.

VAT

VAT is charged at 14% on many goods and commodities but can be reclaimed by non residents on departure at the international airports.

Health

Malaria is present in the northern and eastern areas of South Africa and we strongly recommend you seek medical advice before visiting these areas. Bilharzia is endemic in the east and so swimming in untreated water can be dangerous. Tick bite fever can be a problem when walking in grass and travellers should be aware that the incidence of AIDS is high throughout Southern Africa.

Private medical services in South Africa are of a very high standard, however the availability of the services is restricted to the main towns and emergency evacuation from remote areas may attract high costs. An insurance service for tourists is available from rescue companies providing coverage for emergency transport.

Water

Tap water is 100% purified and safe to drink in major cities, towns and in most game reserves.

Electricity

220/230 volts AC.

Visas

Visitors from the EU, most Commonwealth countries and the USA do not require visas. Visitors from other countries should check with their local South African consulate.

Local Time

GMT + 2 hours

Communications

South Africa has a widespread and reliable network for both mobile phones and landlines, though some lodges may be beyond the range of the network. The international dialling code is +27 followed by the regional code and the desired number.

Email is used extensively and is available in most hotels and lodges; there are internet cafés in all the major towns

Cape Town

Cape Town, at the southern tip of Africa, is a city like no other on earth. Strikingly beautiful and separated by a barrier of mountains, Cape Town is completely unique in looks and feel to the rest of the country. The city has an interesting energy, vibe and multicultural mix that defines it, and combined with the great variety of activities on offer your Cape Town visit promises to be an unforgettable one.

Some of the city's most popular attractions include **Table Mountain**, from where you can enjoy spectacular views of Cape Town and surroundings and the **V&A Waterfront**, the essence of African chic, alluring visitors with its unique shopping, entertaining and dining possibilities. Wander through **Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens**, where indigenous flora provides the backdrop to summer concerts or hop on a ferry to the **Robben Island Museum**, a world heritage site which serves as a reminder of the country's struggles.

Best time to visit

October to April

Accommodation

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Garden Route

The Garden Route has become one of the country's most popular tourist destinations after Cape Town and beckons its visitors with its freshwater lakes, indigenous forests, hidden coves, and white sandy beaches. The area is home to one of world's greatest coastal drives with the Indian Ocean offering magnificent cliffs and beaches, while inland ruggedly majestic mountains clad in dense forest and fynbos dominate the scenery. A wide range of leisure options, spectacular scenery and a mild climate guarantee an unforgettable holiday experience when visiting the Garden Route in South Africa.

Highlights of this region include the **Wilderness National Parks Lakes District**, ideal for hiking and horse riding, the town of **Knysna** with its quaint character and charming lagoon and **Plettenberg Bay**, known for its white sandy beaches and interesting activities. The real garden of the Garden Route, however, is the **Tsitsikamma National Park**, where dense indigenous forests, interrupted only by streams and tumbling waterfalls, drop off to a beautiful coastline.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year

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Eastern Cape Game reserves

The Eastern Cape boasts a wealth of flora and fauna, including the Big Five (elephant, lion, leopard, rhino and buffalo), in a malaria free environment. In this area Addo Elephant National Park, a finely tuned ecosystem and sanctuary to over 450 elephants, is undoubtedly the biggest attraction. Other animals to

be found in the park include buffalo, black rhino, warthog, eland, kudu, a variety of buck species as well as the flightless dungbeetle which is exclusively found at Addo. (Elsewhere in Africa, dungbeetles have to migrate with the herds but this is not the case at Addo). The Eastern Cape game reserves include an outstanding selection of private concessions and award winning private game reserves and lodges promising you an unforgettable African game experience.

The immediate area surrounding the National park offers numerous recreational activities ranging from hiking, 4x4 and horse trails, elephant back safaris and river cruises.

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Throughout the year

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Durban

Durban, a vibrant seaside city has long been a favourite destination for local holidaymakers, with **soft** sandy beaches stretching as far as the eye can see. The city is blessed with balmy weather all year round, making it a perfect holiday paradise. Five star hotels and luxury apartments, all of which have an idyllic view of the Indian Ocean, border the beachfront – ideally located with access to the beaches and attractions in the area. With a wonderful blend of Indian, African and European culture, this is probably one of the best places in South Africa to purchase Zulu crafts, which can be found all along the beachfront promenade. Zulu men wearing flamboyantly feathered head-dresses offer rides in brightly painted rickshaws, adding to the unique atmosphere Durban is known for.

Leisure facilities abound in Durban and could include a visit to **uShaka Marine World, Wilson's Wharf** on the Victoria Embankment and the Golden Mile with its beautiful beaches. Enjoy fine and traditional dining, entertainment and shopping in scenic surroundings. If it's peace and sheer beauty you are after, make for Durban's nature sanctuaries or parks.

Best time to visit

April to October

Accommodation

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Drakensberg Mountains

The Drakensberg range (Mountain of Dragons) simply called The Berg by many, is the dominant element of the great escarpment which edges the interior plateau of the country like the rim of an upturned saucer. Its majestic mountain peaks soar up to 3000m into the sky, and host some of the most spectacular South African Nature Reserves. The Drakensberg is a massive and strikingly beautiful rampart of deep gorges, pinnacles and saw-edged ridges, caves, overhangs and balancing rocks containing lush yellowwood forests and cascading waterfalls. Well-known names, such as Mount-aux-Sources and the Natal Royal National Park, draw the attention of local as well as overseas tourists to enjoy the unique, majestic and breathtaking views.

The Drakensberg mountain range is one of South Africa's prime ecotourists destinations. Savour the ultimate freedom of great open spaces in a world of gigantic peaks and buttresses, towering cliffs and hidden valleys. Enjoy the **fresh, clean mountain air**; the walks, **climbs** and drives; trout fishing, golf, bowls and **horseback riding**. The more adventurous may try rock or **ice-climbing**, **abseiling**, **white water rafting** or taking a helicopter ride to view the mountains from above.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year, with possible snow in winter and extreme heat in Summer.

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Battlefields

The Battlefields region, in the north-eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal, has an historical past, where many of the epic Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer battles of the 19th century were fought - an enduring story of courage and self-sacrifice, bloodshed and tragedy. This site is a concentration of historical battles that shaped the history of both South African and British history. Today this beautiful and somewhat fragile region forms the heart of a Battlefields Route that enthral visitors with the stories and recollections of these turbulent times.

Explore the original site of the heroic defence at **Rorke's Drift** where an unprecedented 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded; marvel at the raw, haunting beauty of **Isandlwana** where history is perhaps not quite dead, or learn about the **battle of Blood River** - when the Ncome river ran red with the blood of the Zulus.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year, with possible snow in winter and extreme heat in Summer.

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Isimangaliso Wetlands Park (St Lucia Wetlands)

This piece of paradise was recently renamed the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Covering about 240,000ha, with a further 84,000ha in, on or under the sea, this is a large chunk of sub-tropical paradise stretching 220km along the East Coast from St Lucia to the Mozambique border. The park, an internationally recognised World Heritage Site, incorporates Lake St Lucia - a unique, 38 000 ha expanse of lake, islands and estuary – as well as an astonishing variety of habitats ranging from the Ubombo mountains to grasslands, forests, wetlands, mangroves and vegetated dunes, with magnificent beaches and coral reefs.

The Wetlands Park is a popular destination and offers a wide range of activities: dive on coral reefs or walk for miles along golden beaches; explore great dunes and wander through magical coastal forests; roam across grassy plains as the wind carries the whistling calls of reedbuck on the alert, go fishing or take a boat cruise on Lake St Lucia.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year

Accommodation

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Kwa Zulu Natal game reserves

Some of South Africa's most famous nature and game reserves are situated in Kwa Zulu Natal, one of the few places where game viewing can be enjoyed in close proximity to snorkelling, scuba diving and deep sea fishing. An extensive network of Nature Reserves and Game Parks ensure abundant flora and fauna

while these sanctuaries also give refuge to several hundred bird species - 60% of South Africa's total. Set in the heart of Zululand, the area surrounding Hluhluwe not only hosts the oldest game reserve in Africa - the **Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park** - but also a number of private game reserves and lodges, home to many antelope variants as well as the Big Five - lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year

Accommodation

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Swaziland

The Kingdom of Swaziland, one of Africa's last remaining monarchies, is a landlocked country in Southern Africa and among the smallest countries on the continent. Discover and connect with the Swazi people and experience the amazing spirit, rich cultural heritage and history that this small country has to offer. Though Swaziland can be done as a stand-alone, it is ideally combined with an itinerary that takes in the Kruger National Park and Kwazulu Natal.

Enjoy game viewing and scenic walks in the local reserves, join the locals at the yearly Reed Festival (October) where the King chooses his wives, browse goods and negotiate prices at the market place in Mbabane or other local craft markets, or visit the Swazi candle and Ngwenya glassworks.

Best time to visit

April to October

Accommodation

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Kruger National Park

The world-renowned Kruger National Park offers a wildlife experience that ranks with the best in Africa. Situated in the heart of the Lowveld, Kruger National Park is the flagship of the country's national parks and can certainly be rated as the ultimate safari experience. Nearly 2 million hectares of land that stretch for 352 kilometres (20 000 square kilometres) from north to south along the Mozambique border, is given over to an almost indescribable wildlife experience. Kruger is home to an impressive number of species: 336 trees, 49 fish, 34 amphibians, 114 reptiles, 507 birds and 147 mammals.

Huge, wild and full of wildlife, the Kruger National Park offers visitors a classic African safari experience - a dramatic production rich in lion prides, elephant herds and thousands of other animals, played out against shifting backdrops of savannah, forest, river and mountain.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year – though game viewing best in the dry months from May to September

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Escarpment

The Panorama Route is one of the most beautiful and popular travel destinations in South Africa, known for its exceptional scenic beauty few parts of the subcontinent can compare with. It abounds with breathtaking views from natural wonders along the eastern slopes of the escarpment and only the most insensitive will fail to be awed by the majesty of this place. The quiet tranquillity of the area with its brilliant colours of flowering shrubs, the sound of gurgling mountain streams, waterfalls and bird song along with the many breathtaking attractions along the Panoramic Route make it an ideal way to extend your stay in the region before or after visiting Kruger National Park.

Attractions in the area include **God's Window** and the world's third largest canyon and biggest green canyon, **the Blyde River Canyon**. **Pilgrims Rest**, a living museum, is a romantic gold-rush town and the **Bourke's Luck Potholes** are impressive rock formations that were shaped millions of years ago by erosion. **The 'Three Rondavels'** (also called the **'Three Sisters'**), are three huge spirals of dolomite rock rising out of the far wall of the Blyde River Canyon and there are a great number of waterfalls that are well worth a visit.

Best time to visit

Throughout the year

Accommodation

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Madikwe

Waterberg Mountains An authentic and traditional, malaria free big game safari destination on the border with Botswana, known for its spectacular game sightings, especially African wild dog.

Best time to visit

May through to October

Accommodation

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