

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

TIME DIFFERENCES

South Africa operates two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time throughout the year. Therefore, during daylight savings (US summer) 12:00 EST (midday) makes it 18:00 (6pm) South African time. During the US winter, 12:00 EST (midday) makes it 19:00 (7pm) South African time.

GETTING THERE

Johannesburg International Airport is one of the major airports in Southern and South Africa and is the hub for 45 airlines from all five continents.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

For the majority of foreign nationals who travel to South Africa for vacation, entry is straightforward and hassle-free. All visitors to South Africa must be in possession of a valid passport in order to enter the country, and in some cases, a visa. However, it is important to note that under South Africa's Immigration Act of 2002 (Act. 13 of 2002) in force since 7 April 2003, (a) Immigration Act, 2002 a passport shall contain at least **THREE** unused pages when presenting the passport for endorsements. This requirement reflects the requirements of many of the world's top travel destinations, in line with the majority of global destinations' requirements and failure to have a clear page can result in entry being refused.

Ensure that your passport is valid for a minimum of 6 months **after** the date you return from your visit to South Africa.

Travelers from certain regions of the world (Scandinavia, Japan, the USA, and most Western European and Commonwealth countries) do not need to formally apply for a visa. Upon arrival in South Africa, countries falling into this category will automatically be given a free entry permit stamp that outlines how long they may remain in the country. This automatic entry permit is usually for a maximum of 90 days, though the immigration officer may tailor the time period according to the airline tickets held. Foreign nationals from some other countries are offered this service, but for a maximum of 30 days. If visitors want to stay for a longer period, they will have to apply formally for a visa, as opposed to relying on the automatic entry permit.

SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM SOUTH AFRICA

New requirements, introduced by the South African Department of Home Affairs from 1 June 2015, specify that all minors (children under 18 years) are required to produce, in addition to their passport, an Unabridged Birth Certificate which shows the details of both parents for all international travel to and from South Africa. Further documentation may be required. For full details please visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](#). Travelers will be asked to produce the required documentation at check-in for each flight.

BANKS AND MONEY

The currency unit is the Rand, denoted by the symbol R, with 100 cents making up R1 (one Rand). Foreign currency can be exchanged at local banks and Bureau de Changes. Most major international credit cards such as American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa and their affiliates are widely accepted, however MasterCard and Visa are preferred.

TIPPING

Most restaurants do not add a service charge to bills - thus it is customary to leave a 10-15% tip. Parking and petrol station attendants should be given whatever small change you have available. This is always appreciated, even though it may seem a small amount.

TAX

Value-added-tax (VAT) is charged on most items. Foreign tourists to South Africa can have their 14% VAT refunded provided that the value of the items purchased exceeds R250.00. VAT is refunded at the point of departure provided receipts are produced.

CLOTHING

The seasons in the Southern Hemisphere are directly opposite to those of the Northern Hemisphere. Umbrellas and raincoats are essential for the summers and the Western Cape winters. Warmer clothes are needed for the winter months. For summer months, lightweight (cottons and linens), short-sleeved clothes are best, although a light jersey/jumper might be needed for the cooler evenings. Best rule of thumb is to plan on layering.

ELECTRICITY

South Africa's electricity supply: 220/230 volts AC 50 Hz

Exceptions: Pretoria (230 V) and Port Elizabeth (200/250 V)

Most plugs have three round pins but some plugs with two smaller pins are also found on appliances. Adaptors can be purchased but may be in short supply. US-made appliances may need a transformer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Many foreigners are unaware that South Africa has a well-developed infrastructure, high standards of water treatment and medical facilities equal to the best in the world. Here we address any health and safety questions you may have.

HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CARE

In a great many medical disciplines, South Africa is a global leader. In fact, South African trained doctors are sought after all over the world, so this should give an indication of the standard of medical care available. There is a large network of public and private hospitals countrywide, offering excellent service. However, clients must have adequate health insurance to cover the fees private hospitals charge.

MALARIA

Malaria is found only in the Lowveld of Mpumalanga and Limpopo and on the Maputaland coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Malaria is not much of a risk in the winter months. Although the incidence of malaria is rare, it would be best to take adequate precautions if you choose to visit these areas. The South African government has embarked on an extensive anti-malaria program (in co-operation with Swaziland and Mozambique) and the incidence of malaria is decreasing. One reassuring thing about malaria is that there is absolutely no way at all that you can contract it unless you are bitten by an infected mosquito. And with modern insect repellents and some common sense one can reduce the chances of being bitten to close to zero.

The cheapest, safest and most effective measures against malaria are physical barriers such as a mosquito net, and the use of a good insect repellent. If you decide to take malaria prophylaxis, it is essential that you take the drugs according to the directions on the package insert. It is advisable to consult a medical professional before embarking on a course of malaria prophylaxis.

PERSONAL SAFETY

For tourists, South Africa is as safe as any other destination in the world. South Africa boasts a vast array of cultures, communities, sites and attractions. Most parts of the country can be safely visited by tourists provided they take basic common-sense precautions (for example not walking alone in deserted areas at night and being circumspect about how much photographic equipment or flashy jewelry you carry. Most of the crime that takes place in South Africa is between people who know each other and random acts of violence are the minority of cases. Most major cities run organized crime prevention programs. Basic Safety Tip guidelines will be available at hotels and tourism information offices.

If you are in doubt as to the safety of a particular area or attraction, contact the National Tourism Information and Safety Line on +27 (0) 83 123 2345. This number may also be used for practical assistance in replacing lost documents or reporting incidents.

FOOD AND WATER

As a rule, tap water in South Africa is safe to drink as it is treated and is free of harmful microorganisms. In hotels, restaurants and nightspots, the standards of hygiene and food preparation are top-notch. It is safe to eat fresh fruit and salads and to put as much ice as you like in your drinks - a good thing, too, after a day on the beach or in the bush.

VACCINATIONS

Immunization against cholera and small pox are not required and no other vaccinations are required when visiting South Africa. It is however always best to check on current travel requirements through the CDC Website.

www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/southafrica

SHOPPING

Most major shopping centers and malls operate 7 days a week, but you will find that in the smaller towns and rural areas that shops are closed on a Sunday.

Monday - Saturday: 09:00 to 17:00

Sunday: 09:00 - 14:00

ESSENTIALS

STUFF

- *Camera and spare memory disc and if you can manage it, your laptop to download your pictures on a daily basis.*
- *Binoculars*
- *Malaria Tablets*
- *Insect repellent (which you can purchase in Namibia)*
- *Sunscreen (High factor)*
- *Protective Lip Sunblock*
- *Sunglasses*
- *Driver's License (US and International)*
- *Sweatshirt / fleece*
- *Windcheater*
- *Concealable Fanny Pack*
- *Plug adaptors*

PRECAUTIONS

- *Handbag that clasps tightly closed and is difficult to open*
- *Minimal Jewelry*
- *Keep a copy of your passport photo page and cover separately in your suitcase (off your person) or accessible secure online vault*

LAUNDRY SERVICES

Laundry services are available at most establishments



THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT NAMIBIA

TIME DIFFERENCES

As with South Africa, Namibia operates two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time throughout the year. Therefore, during daylight savings (US summer) 12:00 EST (midday) makes it 18:00 (6pm) Namibian time. During the US winter, 12:00 EST (midday) makes it 19:00 (7pm) Namibian time.

GETTING THERE

Johannesburg International Airport is one of the major airports in South Africa and is the hub for 45 airlines from all five continents. Connections from Johannesburg International Airport can be made for further travel into other countries of Southern and Central Africa.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

For the majority of foreign nationals who travel to South Africa and Namibia for vacation, entry is straightforward and hassle-free. All visitors to Namibia must be in possession of a valid passport in order to enter the country, and in some cases, a visa. However, it is important to note that your passport shall contain at least **THREE** unused pages when presenting the passport for endorsements. This requirement reflects the requirements of many of the world's top travel destinations, in line with the majority of global destinations' requirements and failure to have a clear page can result in entry being refused.

Travelers from certain regions of the world (Scandinavia, Japan, the USA, and most Western European and Commonwealth countries) do not need to formally apply for a visa. Upon arrival in South Africa and Namibia, countries falling into this category will automatically be given a free entry permit sticker that outlines how long they may remain in the country. This automatic entry permit is usually for a maximum of 90 days, though the immigration officer may tailor the time period according to the airline tickets held.

To determine whether you require a visa to enter South Africa and Namibia, visit appropriate Consular websites.

SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM SOUTH AFRICA

New requirements, introduced by the South African Department of Home Affairs from 1 June 2015, specify that all minors (children under 18 years) are required to produce, in addition to their passport, an Unabridged Birth Certificate which shows the details of both parents for all international travel to and from South Africa. Further documentation may be required. For full details please visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](#). Travelers will be asked to produce the required documentation at check-in for each flight.

BANKS AND MONEY

Namibia uses the Namibian Dollar (N\$) and this is linked on a one to one exchange with the South African Rand. The Rand is legal tender in Namibia. But the N\$ cannot be used in South Africa. N\$ can also be changed to Rand without commission in Namibia, however the same transaction in South Africa will attract a fairly hefty commission (about 25%). If you are wishing to purchase currency before arriving in Namibia it is easiest to buy Rand as the Namibian Dollar is seldom available in banks outside of Namibia.

BANKS AND MONEY (Cont)

Credit cards are accepted at most supermarkets, restaurants and accommodation establishments in urban Namibia (Visa and MasterCard are most commonly accepted) but outlets in rural areas are more likely to only accept cash payment. Banks can exchange travelers' checks into N\$ but this will attract commission, only a few establishments accept travelers' checks, so it's best to cash some travelers' checks whenever you find a bank. Larger Namibian Hotels will exchange money, but rates are generally not favorable. Banks are open from 9am-3.30pm on weekdays and from 9am-11am on Saturdays.

To summarize, visit Namibia with Rand in your pocket, and make sure you exchange any N\$ you have back to Rand before you leave the country.

TIPPING

A 10% tip is customary in restaurants - and if the waiter has smiled and attempted to communicate this should readily be increased.

Tippling in bars is uncommon but appreciated. Porters and anyone who packs & carries your bags at a supermarket should be rewarded with a good solid fistful of loose change. It's worth remembering that a few dollars does not mean a whole lot to you but can actually enhance a local's day.

In Windhoek look for the car guards who will look after your vehicle in most parking lots (this is not a scam!) and is well worth the investment, give them around five Namibian dollars per hour.

TAX

Value-added-tax (VAT) is charged at the rate of 15% on services and goods in Namibia..

ELECTRICITY

Namibia's electricity supply is 220 volts

As with South Africa, most plugs have three round pins but some plugs with two smaller pins are also found on appliances. Adaptors can be purchased but may be in short supply. US-made appliances may need a transformer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Namibia's major private hospitals are of a good standard with clean and safe facilities. However, serious medical cases will be evacuated by air to South Africa where further facilities are available. For this reason you must make sure that comprehensive travel insurance is taken out before you travel, this insurance should cover any medical expenses, air evacuation and repatriation if necessary.

MALARIA

Malaria is found only in the Etosha area. Although the incidence of malaria is rare, it would be best to take adequate precautions if you choose to visit these areas. One reassuring thing about malaria is that there is absolutely no way at all that you can contract it unless you are bitten by an infected mosquito. And with modern insect repellents and some common sense one can reduce the chances of being bitten to close to zero.

PERSONAL SAFETY

For tourists, Namibia is as safe as any other destination in the world. Most parts of the country can be safely visited by tourists provided they take basic common-sense precautions (for example not walking alone in deserted areas at night and being circumspect about how much photographic equipment or flashy jewelry you carry.) Be careful in major centers and never leave anything in an unattended vehicle in any city or town. Pick pocketing occurs in the towns and cities but if you exercise some caution and do not carry huge day packs or camera bags around with you the risk is minimized. In national parks such as Etosha or Sossusvlei crime is rare, it is generally safe to leave your luggage in your car, accommodation establishment or even tent.

WATER

Namibia is a desert county containing not one but two deserts, the Kalahari and Namib Desert. It goes without saying that water is in short supply in Namibia. Please remember that water is scarce so do your best to take a short shower!

Although tap water is pretty much always drinkable in larger town and cities such as Windhoek it is often recycled and so can taste quite chlorinated. Most lodges and guest farms in rural areas use borehole water which is clean and fine to drink. That said many people choose to drink bottled water which is easily obtainable at supermarkets around the country.

DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY

See the separate "Driving in Namibia" information under the "Flights & Cars" section of your pack.

All visitors intending to drive are required to obtain an international driver's license. The wearing of seatbelts is compulsory and strictly enforced by law.

Credit cards can NOT be used to buy petrol, be sure to have enough cash available. A good general rule is to re-fuel when you have the chance. The next petrol station will probably come along way before you need it, but occasionally they may be out of fuel.

BUSINESS HOURS AND SHOPPING

Normal office hours are from 8am-1pm and 2-5pm. Most offices take an hour lunch break.

Shops are only open on Saturday mornings (8am-1pm) and everything closes on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Larger supermarkets are open all day on Saturdays and Sundays and generally remain open until 7pm on weekdays. Most petrol stations offer 24 hour service.

There are several grocery stores on the main arterial roads within Windhoek.

ESSENTIALS

STUFF

- *Sun hat (better with tie for windy weather or open game drives).*
- *Selection of comfortable, casual, durable clothes. Layering is your best bet for the Namibian climate whether summer or winter. Namibia tends towards more casual dress especially when out in the bush. It is not necessary to pack every khaki item of clothing you own, just possibly give the garish ones a miss when on safari. White is not that practical for most of Namibia as it won't stay very white for long.*
- *For ladies, a Sports bra - useful for some gravel roads and bumpy game drives.*
- *Light colored, long-sleeved shirt or top is useful to keep the sun off and to some extent mosquitoes in the evening.*
- *Warm jersey*
- *Comfortable walking shoes & sandals. Remember that if climbing a sand dune in summer, sandals are not a good idea.*
- *Swimming costume (for the very brave if travelling in winter time).*
- *Camera equipment and plenty of film /memory cards (batteries and chargers).*
- *Waterproof/dustproof bags/cover for your cameras.*
- *Good quality sunglasses*
- *If you wear contact lenses, we recommend that you bring along a pair of glasses in case you get irritation from the dust. Good idea to bring your eye prescription in case you lose your glasses or need additional contacts.*
- *Personal toiletries*
- *High SPF suntan lotion, moisturizing cream & lip-salve.*
- *Insect repellent*
- *Binoculars*
- *Bird book if you're a keen birder. See our reading list suggestions.*
- *Water bottle*
- *Torch*
- *Small hold-all bag or rucksack to use on game drives.*
- *Personal medication if required with a copy of your prescription.*
- *Malarial medication if required. Check with your local doctor.*
- *Basic medical kit*

PRECAUTIONS

- *Handbag that clasps tightly closed and is difficult to open*
- *Minimal Jewelry*
- *Keep a copy of your passport photo page and cover separately in your suitcase (off your person) or accessible secure online vault*

LAUNDRY SERVICES

- *Laundry services are available at most establishments*