

La Marina Tranquille

Suite 003 - Penrith - Marina Residential - V&A Waterfront - Cape Town - South Africa

Cape Town Travel Fact Sheet

Essential, “can’t-do-without-it” traveller information about visiting Cape Town and the Western Cape and advice on everything from passports and visas to public holidays. Quite simply everything you’ll need to know about making your trip as memorable and effortless as possible.

History

Cape Town, commonly referred to as “The Mother City” is located at the foot of Africa on the peninsula that divides the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Africa's most beautiful metropolis nestles alongside Table Bay, cradled by the crescent of hills that flank the iconic Table Mountain. It is the seat of South African Parliament, and its second largest city. Its reputation as one of the world’s most popular holiday destinations makes it a highly cosmopolitan city. As a result of its history, it is also arguably the country’s most ethnically diverse city. Following its discovery by European explorers in the late 15th century, it became increasingly important as the gateway to the East, prompting the Dutch to establish a permanent settlement in 1652.

Language

While Afrikaans and isiXhosa are the main home languages, English is almost universally understood as is the chosen language for communication throughout the service industry.

English	Afrikaans	Xhosa
Good Day	Goeie Dag [G (as in "loch") Goy-uh duG]	Molo [mor – lor]
How are you?	Hoe gaan dit met jou? [Hoo Garn ... Yo]	Unjani? [oon-jar-nee]
I am fine	Ek is goed [G-oot]	Ndiyaphila [ndee-ya-pee-la]
Thank You	Dankie [dung-key]	Enkosi [en-core-see]
Please	Asseblief [usser-bleef]	Nceda [c is a click sound like tch]
Yes	Ja [yar]	Ewe [air wear]
No	Nee [near]	Hayi [high-ee]
Goodbye	Totsiens [tort see-nce]	Hamba Kakuhle [hum-buh kuh-koo-shl-air]

Public Holidays

South Africa has 12 public holidays: New Year's Day [1 January] – Human Rights Day [21 March] – Good Friday & Family Day (Easter Monday) – Freedom Day [27 April] – Worker's Day [1 May] – Youth Day [16 June] – National Women's Day [9 August] – Heritage Day [24 September] – Day of Reconciliation [16 December] – Christmas [25 December] – Day of Goodwill [26 December].

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Visas

Before departing for South Africa, check with the nearest South African Consulate or Embassy for any possible changes regarding the visa requirements. Planning a visit to Cape Town and the Western Cape? Then be sure to read the basic information below on South Africa's entry requirements. For detailed visa info, visit the South African Department of Home Affairs and the South African Department of Foreign Affairs. Also visit South African Tourism for an easy breakdown.

What are the requirements for visiting South Africa? A valid passport for the duration of your stay and six months thereafter; your passport must have at least two blank pages (left & right pages facing each other); a valid visa, if required; a return or onward ticket; sufficient funds; yellow fever certificates (if the journey starts or entails passing through the yellow fever belt of Africa or South America).

Do I need a visa to visit South Africa? Depending on your nationality, and the purpose and duration of your visit, you may not need a visa to visit South Africa at all.

How do I apply for a visa? If you are subject to visa requirements, you will need to apply for your visa at least 4 (four) weeks before you depart. You will have to await the outcome of your visa application before you depart. You can apply for your visa at your nearest South African Embassy or High Commission or Consulate.

For more general visa information, online forms and to confirm which categories do not need visas, please visit the Department of Home Affairs.

Currency, Foreign Exchange, Credit Cards and Travellers Cheques

Local currency is the Rand or ZAR (100 cents) with the largest denomination banknote being R200. Bureau de change are plentiful and well regulated. All international credit cards (American Express, Diners, MasterCard and Visa) are readily accepted throughout South Africa. One notable exception is payment for petrol, for which the locals use either special petrol/garage cards or cash – so remember to keep spare cash handy when filling up. You can, however, pay road tolls with MasterCard or Visa credit cards. Travellers Cheques are widely accepted at banks, hotels, restaurants and shops. Cape Town International Airport has 24-hour foreign exchange facilities. All six regions in Cape Town and Western Cape have a variety of foreign exchange options to choose from. Rennie's Travel is the agent for Thomas Cook but will also change other cheques. American Express has foreign exchange branches in Cape Town and other major towns. Most banks also do foreign exchange transactions. Point to note; generally, banks offer the most competitive rates. Many hotels and backpacker's hostels also offer foreign exchange services. Coin denominations are: 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, R1, R2 and R5. Notes are R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200. With a rand that exchanges favourably with all major international currencies, South Africa is a really affordable destination where five-star luxury and many items, such as food, wine and lager, can be purchased for far less than in other global cities.

Banking Services

South Africa's banking system is extensive, efficient and easily accessible. Banks offer a wide range of services, including cash withdrawals, foreign exchange, electronic transfers (wiring), cashing of traveller's cheques and PIN withdrawals. You'll find that using your card poses no problem provided that it belongs to the worldwide Cirrus network. Worried about laying your hands on your cash? Don't be, branches of all major banks, and Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) can be found in most South African towns and cities. Some rural towns do not have ATM's so please keep cash at hand when travelling to the smaller towns and villages in the Cape. If you need to go into the bank, withdrawals can be done over the counter using your passport. Many banks provide foreign exchange facilities. International electronic transfers are also available at most banks – enabling you to send or receive money from overseas. Banks also provide guidance, support and assistance with any banking questions you may have as well as convenient and secure Internet banking services.

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Hours of Business

Banking hours vary but are generally from 09h00 to 15h30 on weekdays. On Saturdays banks open at 09h00 and close at 11h00. Banks are closed on Sundays and Public Holidays. Some smaller branches have limited operating hours – if you're going to a small village or rural area, check the local banks' operating hours. The majority of the province's hundreds of ATM's are 24-hour facilities, enabling you to do your banking whenever you choose. However, there are ATM's that close after 17h00 on week days and 13h00 on weekends. Also do bear in mind that ATM's may not be available in all small villages.

Climate

Favoured with a Mediterranean climate, the weather is generally mild with relatively long days throughout the year. One of Cape Town's most noted weather features is the existence of distinct micro-climates. Its geography allows for certain areas to be windy and unpleasant while others are idyllic. Local advice is recommended when planning your activities. Summer temperatures in December to February range from around 15 to 27 degrees Celsius (60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit), while in the winter months of June to August average temperatures are between 7 to 20 degrees Celsius (45 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit). Rainfall is confined largely to the Winter months.

Transport

A large number of professional and reliable car hire operators are available, and we recommend this choice for most visitors. Metered taxis are readily available, and we will happily recommend specific services based on their current reputation.

Road Travel & Public Transport

Driving is on the left-hand side. Requirements for driving in South Africa are a valid national license provided that it carries a recent photograph and signature of the holder and is in English or an International Driving License. In general, road conditions are good. Along the main highways, petrol is available 24 hours a day. While driving, do not pick up hitch-hikers and ensure that your car doors are locked at all times. As driving in South Africa is an adventurous affair, travellers are advised to drive defensively. On the toll-roads, there are telephones available in case of breakdown or in case of an accident. Along these roads, petrol stations operate on a 24 hour basis. Some of these petrol stations include a workshop. Always wear seatbelts. It is a law in South Africa that back-seat passengers should wear their seatbelts as well. Cellular telephones are not allowed to be used in a car without a hands-free kit. Cellular telephone rental services are available at all international airports.

Fauna & Flora

Cape Town boasts a unique floral kingdom, one of six distinct kingdoms in the world. This consists of bulbs, grasses, heathers and proteas that are collectively called fynbos. Over 8 500 species have been identified, many of them exquisitely beautiful. Large parts of the city are demarcated as nature reserves, particularly around Table Mountain, and a wide variety of hiking trails are available. There are several wildlife reserves near the city, many offering all of the "Big 5" and a host of other indigenous animals. Whales are a regular feature of local waters, with the Southern Right Whales choosing these waters as their annual breeding ground. Penguins are another abundant local tourist attraction, with colonies on Robben, Dassen and Dyer Islands and at Betty's Bay. At Boulders beach, which is a public access swimming area, Jackass penguins mingle with humans on the beach and in the water. Please note that many flora and fauna species are endangered, and that local environmental laws offer heavy penalties for offences, especially regarding open fires.

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Newspapers and Magazines

The Cape Argus, an afternoon newspaper, and Die Burger, an Afrikaans-language morning newspaper, are the most widely-read daily papers, and provide general-interest news with a dash of politics and an emphasis on human-interest stories. The Cape Times, a morning newspaper, carries more international news and provides readers with greater detail on South African and international political developments. The Sunday Times, Weekend Argus and Rapport, the three major Sunday newspapers, include an addictive mix of sensation, summary and detailed analyses of political developments. The Mail & Guardian is an excellent weekly read, published on a Friday, it focuses on South African, African and international politics, and is read by leaders and decision-makers throughout Southern Africa. All these newspapers are available at stores throughout the Western Cape. You can pick up a copy of the Big Issue magazine at most traffic intersections. Proceeds of the sale of the magazine, goes to the vendor. Vendors are usually homeless people in need of an income. Recently the Cape Town newspaper route raised a few eyebrows with its addition of three daily tabloid papers, i.e. The Daily Voice, The Daily Sun and Die Kaapse Son (The Cape Sun).

Radio Stations

Airwaves in the Western Cape are alive with local, regional and national radio stations. While most radio stations broadcast in English (e.g. 5FM), some radio stations broadcast in other South African languages. KFM (94.5FM) is the most popular radio station in the Western Cape, playing a mix of 70s, 80s, 90s and 00s "Hits and Memories". Good Hope FM and Heart Radio are two of the most popular radio stations in Cape Town. Community radio stations are aimed at serving the Western Cape's diverse population.

Television

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) provides three television channels: SABC1, 2 and 3. SABC 1 and SABC2 broadcast programmes in all the languages of South Africa, including English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. SABC3 broadcasts only in English, and includes many current award-winning American and British shows. Privately owned free-to-air E-TV broadcasts a bright and entertaining mix of local and international programming. M-Net, a pay station, broadcasts movies and chat shows while satellite channels are provided by DSTV throughout South Africa. DSTV hosts channels including BBC, CNN, MTV, Discovery and National Geographic. Most hotels, guest lodges and backpacker's hostels provide DSTV.

Telephones

Telephones are fully automatic with direct dialing to most parts of the world. Public phones are widely available. Public phones are painted either bright blue or green. The blue public phones take coins while the green public phones work with phone cards. You can purchase these at a variety of shops and at post offices – most public phones advertise the closest sale point. Phone cards are available in denominations from R 10,00 to R 200,00. To make an international call from South Africa dial 00, drop the first 0 of the number and dial the rest of the number. To make an international call to South Africa, dial 27 followed by the area code (drop the 0 of the area code) and number. Should you wish to make a collect call nationally, dial 0020. To make a collect call internationally, dial 0900. To make local and national enquiries or to find a number, you may call 1023. For international enquiries dial 0903.

South African Time Zone

South Africa is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2) and does not operate on daylight saving time.

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Cellular/ Mobile Phones

South Africa is the fourth-fastest growing mobile communications market in the world. The country's three cellular network operators – Vodacom, MTN and Cell C – provide telephony to over 80% of the population. All three networks operate on GSM digital. If your phone is compatible, you may want to speak to your network operator about international roaming. Hire a cell-phone at the airport or other centres. It is relatively inexpensive to purchase a local sim card. Most international cell-phones will work here if you purchase a local sim card. The South African networks cover the whole country and provide excellent service – enabling you to call or exchange text messages at any time.

Post

Most post offices are open from 08h30 to 16h30, Mondays to Fridays and from 08h00 to 12h00 on Saturdays. Postal rates are reasonable and delivery times are usually between 5 and 14 days to any international destination via airmail. Heavier items can be posted via surface mail, though the goods do take longer to reach their destination. Post offices also sell cell-phone airtime, phone cards and provide additional services including registered mail, speed mail and insurance of valuable articles.

Courier & Freight Services

The post office and other local courier companies can help you ship your purchases home and deal with the formalities. Post offices provide courier services, including insurance, but there are also major service providers who deal exclusively with courier services. In smaller towns, ask at the post office for help with courier services. In major cities, there is a wide choice of courier options available. There are many freighting companies in Cape Town that will gladly assist you with the freighting of goods back to your home country. These companies provide a comprehensive service including assistance with the completion of the administrative documents. Whether your purchases are large or very large, there is readily available assistance and advice for visitors on the easiest and cheapest ways of shipping items to your home country. Ask your local tourism bureau for more information on courier services.

Email and Internet Access

Access to the Internet is widely available throughout Cape Town and the Western Cape. All major towns have Internet café's. You'll find internet access at most public libraries and plenty of coffee shops and restaurants. Most backpacker's hostels, guest lodges and hotels are equipped to provide guests with access to the Internet. South African companies are well represented on the Internet, with most retail stores providing an internet-shopping alternative. Cape Town has a first rate communication infrastructure which includes quick and reliable internet access.

Electricity

South Africa's electricity supply is 220/230 volts AC 50 HZ, with the exception of Pretoria (230 V) and Port Elizabeth (200/250 V). Most plugs have 3-pin or 2-pin. Adaptors can be purchased, but may be in short supply. US-made appliances may need a transformer. Most hotel rooms have 110 volt outlets for electric shavers and appliances.

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Information Centres

What to do? Where to find it? When to do it? With 86 Visitor Information Offices throughout the Cape, you are never far from friendly local service. Throughout the Western Cape, in most towns and villages, there is a Local Tourism Office. In total there are 86 Local Tourism Offices which form part of the Cape Visitor Information Network. The network aims to provide efficient and friendly service to visitors on all products and services, focusing on the local area. When entering a town or village, look for the Official Local Tourism Information sign. The sign is the letter "I" sign on a brown road sign. You will see this sign with direction arrows from the main entrance points to the town. Should you not see the sign, ask the locals or the police for directions. In a number of the villages and towns like Swellendam in the Cape Overberg and Darling on the Cape West Coast, the Local Tourism Office is situated in a historical building. In other towns and villages, the Office is located inside the municipal buildings or the library. In the bigger towns and in Cape Town, the Local Tourism Office is situated in the central business district. The tourism offices differ in size and level of service they offer, however, there is a minimum standard of service you can expect. All tourism offices are able to provide visitors with maps, brochures, lists of local events, listings of local accommodation, activities, restaurants and quality information on the local area. In the larger towns, visitors may be able to purchase some of the local crafts and enjoy tasty local food and drink at the Tourism Cafe. At the Cape Town city centre tourism office, visitors may also be able to access the internet via the in-house internet café, find more information on the Cape Nature Conservation and the South African National Parks and claim VAT back. Bookings of accommodation may be made for you at most tourism offices. The staff at the tourism offices is helpful and can provide you with useful travel tips and local information. Visitors can expect to be greeted with a smile and friendly local service. This is Cape hospitality at its best.

Taxes and Duty (subject to change)

You can bring all your personal effects duty free to the value of R3'000. For additional goods of up to R12'000, a flat rate of 20% duty is charged. Thereafter, normal custom duties apply. You are also allowed to bring limited quantities of luxury items into South Africa, duty free. These items include: Wine – up to 2 litres per person; Spirits and other alcoholic beverages – up to one litre per person; Cigarettes – up to 200 per person; Cigars – up to 20 per person; Perfume – up to 50ml per person; Eau de toilette – up to 250ml per person. The alcohol and tobacco allowance only apply to people over 18 years of age. Persons younger than 18 years of age will not be permitted with any tobacco or alcohol products. When leaving South Africa, you are permitted to take up to R500 in South African Reserve Bank notes. A 20% levy is applicable on amounts above R 500.

Health

Cape Town and the Western Cape have very few health issues to be concerned about. No inoculations are needed and the health infrastructure is of a good standard. As in the case of the rest of Africa, South Africa is also facing a crisis with HIV/AIDS and visitors are advised to take precautions.

Water

High quality water is available everywhere in Cape Town and the Western Cape and unlike many places worldwide, tap water is safe to drink, however bottled water would be the safest option. Many local manufacturers produce bottled water from sources around the Western Cape's mountain ranges. Hikers drinking water from streams maybe at risk of waterborne diseases and though the water in most mountain streams is safe to drink, it is advisable to purify it first or to drink bottled water.

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Health Tips

Cape Town and the Western Cape are malaria-free, and no vaccinations are required for cholera or smallpox. If you are on chronic medication, please keep a prescription or part of the packaging showing the generic name. If you wear spectacles, ensure you have a copy of your lens prescriptions. You can have spectacles replaced by any optician. Opticians offer great service at value for money prices.

Medical Services

South Africa has world class facilities for all aspects of medicine, while boasting leadership in several areas. Cape Town specifically is noted as the location of the world's first heart transport, performed by Christiaan Barnard. No inoculations are required in the Western Cape, and it lies far removed from the malaria belt. Medical services are of a very high standard in Cape Town and the surrounding areas. In the event of an emergency, use one of the major private clinics. You may contact the police on 10111 for directions to the nearest hospital. You may also contact the ambulance services on 10177. Many doctors do house calls and are listed under Medical in the telephone directory. We strongly recommend the use of sun protection with very high SPF rating.

Safety Tips

When you visit Cape Town and the Western Cape, there are basic travel safety measures to follow to ensure your visit is a fantastic experience. As a visitor to and guest of our beautiful province, your enjoyment and wellbeing are of utmost importance to us. As in other countries, there are a few basic precautions you should take during your visit to ensure that your stay is as pleasant and safe as possible.

- Separate your cash and credit cards and don't carry all your cash with you
- Store parcels out of sight in the boot of the car
- Never leave your luggage unattended
- Do not allow strangers to assist you in your transactions at automated teller machines
- Try to obtain a route map before you set out and plan your route beforehand
- Try to explore in groups and stick to well-lit streets especially at night
- Park in well-lit areas at night
- Always drive with your doors locked and your windows closed and never pick up strangers

If unsure of any area, approach the local police station or tourism office for further advice and guidance. Although incidents against tourists in South Africa are rare, it is advisable for you to be aware of basic emergency procedures in the unlikely event that you are a victim of crime. If you have been victimised, call the police emergency number (10111) and briefly explain what happened. If you are using a cell phone dial 112 for emergency services. Separate safety tips and considerations while visiting Table Mountain National Park are available.

- National Police emergency number (Toll-free from landlines/ payphones) 10111
- National Ambulance and Fire 10177
- National Police emergency number from a mobile phone (Free on all mobile networks) 112 and Cape Town all emergency services 107
- Cape Town all emergency services from mobile phone +27 21 480 7700

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VAT Refunds

South Africa has a Value Added Tax system of 14% on purchases and services. If you are a foreign visitor to the Cape, you can reclaim your VAT on purchases over R 250 that are taken out of the country unused. There are a number of VAT refund offices. You may find it convenient to use Airport offices or the VAT Refund kiosk at the V&A Waterfront or at Cape Town Tourism in Burg Street, Cape Town. Leave yourself enough time to do this – you'll need your original tax invoice and your passport and will need to fill in a form and have the goods you bought available for inspection. For more information see www.taxrefunds.co.za.

Tipping and Bargaining

Tipping? Yes please. Set your mind at ease, tipping is an accepted practice in Cape Town and Western Cape. Tipping in bars and restaurants is normally between 10% and 15%. Tipping taxi drivers and petrol attendants is also a common practice at about 10%. "Car guards" or "parking assistants" normally get a few rand for their services. Bargaining, unfortunately is not a South African habit, but it is worth asking about "special deals" and "cash discounts" that may apply.

THE END