

On Safari in South Africa – Where Africa’s Wildlife Never Disappoints

In this report we feature going on safari to South Africa. South Africa’s wildlife conservation is very advanced and highly successful. Find out why those who chose to see Africa’s wildlife here will not be disappointed..



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1. On Safari in South Africa – Where Africa’s Wildlife Never Disappoints

South Africa continues to enjoy the tremendous goodwill of holidaymakers worldwide. While travel to most long haul destinations declined last year, this country experienced an enviable 6.5% growth, according to the World Tourism Organization. The growth was jump started by the transformation heralded by the demise of apartheid and onset of democratic rule in 1994. Apartheid policies of racial discrimination protected by law greatly offended enlightened opinion in many parts of the world. And the enemies of these policies launched a very effective campaign against visiting South Africa. So it came to be that South Africa, a truly superior destination by any standards, remained hidden to many until the dark cloud of apartheid blew over.

The wildlife safari is a key item on the South Africa tourist menu. Those who chose to see Africa’s wildlife here will not be disappointed. The game viewing experience is excellent at the top rated Kruger National Park and at other well-regarded game parks in the country. Wildlife is protected in over 300 public and private game and nature reserves. SANParks (South African National Parks) manages 20 national parks spread throughout the country.

Kruger is the place to see big game particularly the “big five” of buffalo, elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros. Most of the other parks have specialised in conserving particular species or are identified with specific animals. The Greater Addo National Park, for example, is the only place you find elephants in the Cape region. Some of the parks along the 3000 km coastline host whales and dolphins.

South Africa’s wildlife conservation policies are advanced and highly successful. An initiative targeting wildlife sanctuaries cutting across international boundaries hopes to replicate this success elsewhere. This is in recognition of the fact that wildlife is no respecter of territorial lines covenanted between men. Transfrontier conservation areas have been identified in six regions along the boundaries with Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique.

In South Africa, the best places to see wildlife is at private game reserves and national parks. Private game reserves are not as expansive as the publicly owned national parks. Their key selling point is the superior accommodation and ranger escorted personalized tours. The national parks on the other hand are popular with self-drive tourists. They offer accommodation in a limited number of

enclosed rest-camps, in thatched rondavels, bungalows and chalets. Tour companies also offer packages, including transport and guide in the national parks. See our [South Africa Tours](#) page to view info and book one of our package safari offers.

South Africa is home to numerous species of land animals, including the celebrated "big five" - rhino, buffalo, lion, leopard and elephant. Most members of the big five league are undoubtedly charismatic. But this is not the reason they are so named - otherwise I would petition that the buffalo be ejected. The reason is that these are the animals the early safari hunters found most challenging. The idea of viewing game without killing had not gained widespread acceptance then. The arrogant practice of killing animals as a sport is very unpopular today with those who value the right to life and dignity of animals as full members of our planet.

In addition to the disagreeable aesthetics, hunting brings about a bad relationship between man and the animals. I will illustrate this with an incident narrated to me by a guide on a recent visit to a country (not South Africa) that allows hunting. The guide recalled an occasion when he was taken by surprise to see an elephant charging at his vehicle. This was contrary to his experience with elephants in that region. This unusual behavior arose because hunters had wounded the elephant. The elephant hereafter dealt with vehicles and humans as enemies. It is regrettable that South Africa's otherwise stellar conservation policies, allow the practice of hunting in certain areas.

Game viewing is usually done from the comfort of a vehicle but walking, horseback, camel and canoeing safaris are increasingly becoming popular. If you wish to view game in any of these modes, it is required that you be accompanied by an armed ranger. Full blood adventure types think that watching game aboard a vehicle is for wimps. Walking safaris are designed for such hardy souls. And it is the reason that the thoughtful folks at SANParks maintain a network of wilderness trails in the parks. The typical walking safari will have a maximum of eight persons with ages ranging from 12 to 60 years and last for 2 nights and 3 days. Participants must obviously be physically fit.

Without doubt, the best place to see wildlife, especially the "big five" is **Kruger National Park**. This is the flagship of South Africa's national parks. The Kruger was created in 1898 and owes its existence to the vision of Paul Kruger at one time president of the Transvaal Republic that later became part of the Union of South Africa. He was ahead of his time in recognizing the need to create a sanctuary to preserve and protect wildlife. Even at that time it was clear that the hunter with his rifle would soon annihilate all the animals.

Kruger offers a diversity of animals unrivalled anywhere else in South Africa. In addition to the big five, some of the interesting game you find here include - hippo, jackal, giraffe, zebra, buffalo, warthog, numerous antelope species, cheetah, wild dog and spotted hyena. The park is home to more than 140 mammal and 500 bird species. Kruger spreads over nearly 20, 000 sq km of unspoilt scrubland punctuated by acacia and mopane trees. The botanic biodiversity is vast and over 336 tree species are found here.

Accommodation within Kruger is provided at self-catering rest camps that offer good but basic lodging. There are also some smaller bush lodges and bushveld camps offering more luxurious stay. Accommodation ranges from rondavel huts and safari tents to family bungalows and cottages and luxury guesthouses. In addition, there are caravan and tent camping sites at some of the rest camps. Most of the camps are supplied with electric power and telephone. Other facilities include shops, kitchen facilities, restaurants and petrol stations.

Kruger has 3,000 kilometers of a well-maintained road network and is ideal for those seeking a self-drive experience. The park is relatively inexpensive and easily accessible. It is therefore hugely popular and draws over 600,000 visitors annually. It in particular gets very crowded over the school holidays in July and December. Since there are a maximum number of vehicles allowed into the park daily, you are well advised to make advance arrangements if you plan to visit then. Game viewing is good year round, but the best time will be from April to September when the bush is sparse.

Kruger is located 330 km to the northeast of Johannesburg. If you have no stomach for a long drive, take one of the daily flights from Johannesburg to Phalaborwa Airport, Hoedspruit Airport or Kruger/Mpumalanga International Airport. If you wish to rent a car at either Durban or Johannesburg, visit our [South Africa Car Rental](#) page for your reservation. Towards the western and southern sides of Kruger National Park, there are a number of highly rated private game reserves. This includes Sabi Sand, Mala Mala, Londolozi and Timbavati game reserves. Here you will find some of the finest game lodges in Africa.

The **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park** is another unique game sanctuary. This huge park is a combination of the two parks –the former Gemsbok National Park in Botswana and Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa. Covering over 36,000 sq km, it is one of the biggest wildlife conservation areas anywhere in the world. The landscape is marked by red sand dunes and sparse thornbush vegetation. The environment of this park provides outstanding opportunities for unforgettable wildlife photos.

This park is host to the famous black-maned Kalahari lions. You will also see gemsbok, springbok, eland, blue wildebeest, cheetahs, wild dogs, jackals, bat-eared foxes and leopards. Birding is also excellent and of 297 species recorded, 96 are resident. The Kgalagadi is not for the fainthearted –it is far from anywhere and getting there is a slog. It is located 904 km to the west of Johannesburg. All accommodation in the park is managed by SANParks. You will get the best experience if you visit between June and July when the weather is coolest.

On safari, remember to carry a pair of binoculars to help you spot animals. Also carry a camera and other equipment as a means of recording your safari. It is the only way to shut up those who doubt the story of your encounter with the African wildlife. Carry along a decent pair sunglasses to shield you from glare, especially if you travel to the semi desert Kgalagadi. Dressing well means cool clothing (such as light cottons and linen) for summer and warm for winter.

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2. Destination Facts: South Africa

Full Country Name: Republic of South Africa

Area: 1,233,404 sq km

Population: 45 million (2001)

Capital City: Pretoria (Administrative), Cape Town (Legislative), Bloemfontein (Judicial)

Other Major Towns: Johannesburg, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth

People: 79% Black, 10% White, 9% Mixed Race, 3% Indian descent

Language: 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga

Religion: Christian (80%), Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and traditional religions

Government: Republic

Time: GMT + 2

Currency: South African Rand (ZAR)

Electricity: 220 V/240 V AC (250 V in Pretoria), 50 Hz

Weights and Measures: Metric

Economy: Mining (gold, diamonds), finance, food processing, manufacturing, agriculture

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3. Travel Basics: South Africa

Health

Visitors entering South Africa from yellow fever infected areas require yellow fever international certificate of vaccination. Certain low altitude regions in Northern Province, Eastern Transvaal (including the Kruger National Park) and north east of KwaZulu-Natal are prone to malaria. Visitors to these areas are strongly advised to take anti-malaria medication before traveling. Tap water is generally considered safe in urban areas but not so elsewhere. Bilharzia occurs in the north and east of the country where you are advised not to swim in fresh water. HIV-AIDS is prevalent in the country and due care is called for.

Visas

All visitors to South Africa require passports valid for at least 30 days after planned date of exit. For those visiting for upto 90 days no visas are required from citizens of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, United States, Switzerland and the European Union. There is also visa waiver for between 30-90 days for a few other selected countries. But visa requirements vary from time to time and you are advised to check on prevailing status well ahead of travel. Visas are not issued at South Africa border points.

People & Culture

South Africa is such a vibrant country due to the diversity of its people. There is a lot to be said for the wildlife and natural attractions of this land but you will have missed much if you have no encounters with its people. The Khoi-San (bushmen) are entitled to claim of having the deepest roots and some of their ancestors' rock and cave paintings date back 26,000 years ago. Other prominent members of this "rainbow nation" include Zulu, Tswana, Ndebele, Xhosa, Sotho, Indian, Afrikaans and those of British origin. The Zulu is one of the more vibrant of traditional black cultures and their dance and dress is quite striking.

In historic terms, apartheid has just recently been dethroned and it is not surprising that colour is still such an important part of peoples identity. Some knowledge of English will help you get by in urban areas and almost elsewhere in the country. Beer and brandy are the popular routes to getting tipsy though many are increasingly finding South Africa's excellent wines tempting. The music scene is vibrant and groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo are now well known in the west. The country has so many stories to be told as the grandees who award the Nobel Prize for literature have recognized. The 2003 winner was Cape Town born J.M Coetzee, who follows in the footsteps of Nadine Gordimer winner of the prize in 1991.

Communications

Telephone, fax, telegram, post and Internet services are available. Direct dialing to many countries is available at most hotels. The country code for South Africa is 27. Mobile phones are based on GSM 900 network and coverage extends to most urban areas. You can obtain a GSM card that will allow you to make international calls to any country. E-mail is accessible at Internet cafes around the country.

Accommodation

The accommodation available in the popular tourist routes is equal to the needs of most. From the discerning traveler who accepts none else than 5-star luxury to the cost conscious who is happy to wake up in a plain and cosy guesthouse. Accommodation options encompass hotels, game lodges and camps, resorts, health spas, motels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, holiday farms, beach cottages, holiday flats and bungalows. There are also over 800 camp and caravan sites in the country. Our [South Africa Hotels](#) page allows you to make an online reservation for accommodation at some selected locations in the country.

Money

The local currency is the South African Rand (ZAR). Foreign currency can be exchanged at bureaux de change, some hotels, and larger shops and restaurants. Automated foreign exchange machines and ATMs are also available at limited locations. Travelers cheques (i.e checks) are valid at banks, hotels, shops and restaurants. You get the most reasonable exchange rates for US dollar, Euro and Pound Sterling. Visa and Mastercard credit cards have the widest acceptance. American Express and Diners Club have slightly less acceptability.

Climate

In general South Africa has a warm temperate climate to the delight of many sunshine-seekers. The country experiences about seven months of sunshine. The colder part of the year falls between May and August. But for such a large country there are of course variations. The coast of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Northern Province are generally hot and humid and June and July are the preferred holiday months.

Winters are generally mild except at the higher altitudes where there are occasional snowfalls to the consternation of those visitors with fixed ideas about climatic conditions in Africa. Summer can be uncomfortably hot in the Low Veld. The hotter areas include the lower Orange River valley and the Mpumalanga Lowveld. Regions in the north east of the country can get quite humid. In Cape Town region rainfall is highest in winter. Most of the rest of the country experiences the highest rainfall in the summer. Those who have come to view

game are advised to travel in winter when the grass is short and the animals are much easier to sight.

International Travel

Johannesburg is fast becoming a regional hub for air travel. The country's national carrier is South African Airways (SAA). There are numerous direct and indirect flights for those traveling from Europe and North America. There are also flights from other parts of Africa, the Far East and South America. International airports in the country are: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth. As Cape Town's stature as a destination grows, there is an increasing number of direct international flights.

Local Travel

The road infrastructure is good and it is easy and convenient to get around the country by car. Self-drive and chauffeur-driven rental cars are widely available. Visitors must be in possession of an international driving license. South Africa has taken after the British and driving is on the left. See our [South Africa Car Rental](#) page should you wish to hire a car.

The principal cities of Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria are serviced by daily flights. South African Airways among other domestic carriers operates on the principal routes. Cruises offer links between the country's major ports such as Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and East London.

Rail services of varying quality link the main cities. The luxury and very pricey Blue Train offers an express service between Pretoria, Victoria Falls, Hoedspruit, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. Long-distance trains are equipped with sleeping compartments. You should reserve ahead of travel especially for overnight journeys. A number of bus operators run intercity express links using modern air-conditioned coaches.

Travel Insurance

There are world-class medical facilities in South Africa. Health and the usual travel insurance are recommended.

What to Wear

If you travel in summer you should pack light cottons, linens and rainwear. For winter you need warmer clothes and rainwear if you travel to the Cape region. Casual wear will be adequate for most occasions. On formal social functions however men should turn out in dinner jackets and black ties and women in full-length dresses.

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4. About Africa Point

Africapoint.com is an Africa specialist travel agent, offering travel services through the company website -Africapoint.com and also offline. This pioneering Africa travel website has been assisting travelers make bookings online since early 1999.

The company was started in 1997 has its central reservations office strategically located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The company is supported by a network of partner offices in the leading destinations in Africa. This includes Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo (Egypt), Kampala (Uganda), Victoria (Seychelles), Harare (Zimbabwe). We are members of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

What services do we offer?

We provide reservation services for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars, tours and safaris to the top destinations in Africa. Among the countries we are currently covering are Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mauritius.

We have special discounts for most of the services we offer and some of our prices are upto 50% off standard rates. Please visit our website to view the links of all the services we offer.

How do we make your Africa travel planning easier?

Ours is one of very few websites offering one-stop travel booking and information service to a number of different African countries. In addition:

- We know our destinations and our products **very well**. We are in a position to give you good advice on the best hotel, rental car, tour or safari to suit your particular requirements.
- We are committed to working to the highest industry standards. We have many our past clients who are happy to share their experiences with you. Please visit the [Client Profile & Testimonials](#) page and see what some of our clients have to say.
- Our patience is the stuff of legend! We will patiently seek to answer all your queries until you are ready to pick what is most suitable for your

needs. For high value items such as safaris we have communicated with our clients for 6 months and even longer before they are ready to buy.

Others have come back to and said: "Do you remember that tour we discussed 2 years ago? I am now ready to travel." And of course we remember. We always remember!

- Together with our partners, we are based in the African destination whose travel services we are selling. For this reason we are usually able to get you very good prices. For some products our prices are **40-50%** below standard rates.
- As members of **ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents)** we are committed to upholding **ASTA's** motto of "Integrity in Travel" and operate to those same standards you would expect from an ASTA member anywhere in the world.

One of our North American clients for whose 36 person missionary group we provided an air charter, hotel booking, safari and road transport to 2 African countries had this to say.

"My experience with Africapoint.com was good as any service that I've received any where in the USA. Not only were they helpful before and during, but they went out of their way to also be helpful afterwards.

I'm using them again for an upcoming trip in November and will look forward to using them for years to come."

In addition our membership of ASTA assures you of a **neutral and trusted** arbitrator in the event that a disagreement occurs between us.

What is the experience of other travelers with us?

We continue to serve the many needs of travelers who seek our services. From straight forward single night hotel bookings to short and long term **car rental, tours and safaris** for individuals and groups, international conferences.

5. Forward This Report

If you've found this report to be informative and useful please forward it to your family and friends. We're sure they will like it as much as you did!