



# South Africa Pre-Safari Information

## PASSPORT

Your passport should be valid for at least six months after the end of your safari with us, and it's a good idea to bring a few photocopies in case you lose the original. There has recently been cases of South Africa immigration officials denying entrance to some overseas visitors due to a lack of blank pages available in the visitor's passport. Therefore we recommend that your passport has at least two blank pages upon your arrival into South Africa.

## VISAS, IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

Most nationalities do not require a pre-arranged visa for entry into South Africa, however check out Project Visa at [www.projectvisa.com](http://www.projectvisa.com) to be certain. The immigration officers at Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport are usually very courteous, if at times a bit rigid, but sometimes there are not enough of them on duty and long queues ensue. No arrival form is required for immigration - this may change in the future - but you may need to fill in a customs declaration, for perusal by customs officers after you have completed immigration and collected your luggage. They are not concerned with the usual duty-free purchases but are just making sure that you haven't brought in any huge amounts of money, alcohol or cigarettes because it may then appear that you are going to do some business whilst in South Africa.

## VACCINATIONS

No compulsory immunisation is required for entering South Africa, unless you are arriving within six days of leaving a country deemed to be infected with Yellow Fever. Visitors who travel through or disembark in infected countries are advised to be vaccinated against the disease before visiting South Africa. Yellow Fever is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes, and approximately 200,000 cases occur each year worldwide, with the majority of these occurring mainly in the western part of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali etc. The World Health Organisation states that Yellow Fever is not present within South Africa.

A number of tropical diseases are present in southern Africa but provided you have had the recommended immunisations before you travel, the biggest health risk you will face on our safari is usually an upset tummy or a cold. We recommend that you are up-to-date on your immunisation status for tetanus, polio, diphtheria, typhoid, rabies and hepatitis A.

Malaria is prevalent in some areas of Kruger National Park and northern Zululand but the risk is generally minimal and can be reduced further by the usual precautions of using insect repellent and covering up from dusk to dawn. Should you wish to take a course of anti-malarial drugs, ensure you start the course before arriving in South Africa so that you can make sure there are no side-effects. See the website [www.malaria.org](http://www.malaria.org) for more information.

## HEALTH

We recommend that you bring along a small personal medical kit containing elastoplasts or Band-aids, antiseptic cream, anti-histamine cream or tablets, soluble aspirin or Paracetamol, rehydration salts (e.g. Gastrolyte), anti-diarrhoea remedy, and insect repellent. Please advise us at the beginning of our safari of any personal health-related matters that we should be aware of.

The likelihood of drinking contaminated water is highly unlikely as most, if not all, tap water in South Africa is drinkable. Bottled water is also widely available. Keeping up a healthy daily intake of water is imperative whilst on tour. Even on cool days, some people become dehydrated and end up with diarrhoea. Don't worry about drinking too much water as we have plenty of toilet stops on our driving days.

## INSURANCE

Compass Odyssey possesses adequate operator insurance to industry standards including public liability insurance and passenger liability insurance.

It is a condition of our insurance policy that all passengers possess personal travel insurance. Your travel insurance must cover accidents, medical expenses including any related pre-existing medical conditions, emergency repatriation including helicopter rescue and air ambulance, and personal liability. We also recommend that you include cover for loss of luggage and personal effects as well as cancellation and curtailment.

## SAFETY

The government of South Africa is continuously striving to meet its citizens' increasingly vocal expectations for adequate housing, health and employment. Poverty is still the daily reality for the majority of South Africans - indeed, Africans - and is an underlying influence in all the negative aspects of society, such as crime and the HIV/Aids pandemic. Basic personal safety precautions apply in South Africa as they would anywhere in the world, but you should be particularly conscious of petty theft. Leave as much jewellery and valuables - especially those most sentimental - at home as you can, and while on safari with us make sure to use any safes provided by our accommodations, or alternatively lock valuables in your luggage when you are out for the day. We also recommend that you bring along photocopies of your important documents (passport, air tickets, insurance) and keep them separate from the originals. Your personal safety, and that of your travelling companions, comes down to common sense and staying aware of your surroundings and your possessions. Most crime is petty and opportunistic and whilst you are with us this will be countered by travelling in a secure safari vehicle with an experienced guide.

The majority of people in South Africa are immensely strong in character and though they may wish for a better lot in life, they go about their daily grind in an inspiring manner and with dignity and purpose. On occasion throughout our safari however, you may be confronted by locals (including street children) begging for "small change". Through our experience from travelling around Africa for the past 12 years, we believe that giving money to beggars only exasperates the problem. We do understand that not giving money may mean this person is denied his/her only source of income, but we often see this income used to purchase alcohol, glue, thinners, drugs or on something comparatively frivolous, such as a video game. We've also seen fights break out when beggars squabble over the money, food, sweets, or gifts that have been offered by well-meaning travellers. We suggest a third option: treat him/her as an equal and as a fellow human being to afford them at least a hint of personal dignity, and rather support and encourage initiative and effort - many people on the streets make a living by selling things, often made from recycled goods. Should you wish to involve yourself further with the plight of South Africa's underprivileged - you may be planning to bring along some small gifts, or pens and pencils for example, or you might want to donate to a worthy cause once you are on safari with us - then we will be very happy to advise you and recommend particular projects and organisations.

## MOBILE PHONE

Mobile phone, called "cell phone" in South Africa, coverage is almost everywhere during our tour. It is one area of technology that definitely hasn't bypassed Africa. Organise international roaming with your local network and most days you shouldn't have any problems keeping in touch with home. However, be especially vigilant with your phone as cell phone theft is rampant. This is due to the majority of users being on 'pay-as-you-go' and therefore not having the luxury of a free upgrade to a new phone every year or so.

## MONEY

The unit of currency in South Africa is the “Rand”. U.S. dollars, Australian dollars, Euros, and British pounds can all be exchanged at banks and foreign exchange bureaux throughout South Africa. Bank, foreign exchange and ATM access is varied whilst we are on tour and we will inform you as to when and where you can access or exchange your money. Most shops and businesses will accept credit cards, like Visa and MasterCard, but not all will accept debit or EFTPOS cards so we will advise you as to how much Rand to have in your wallet at any given time.

There is no great need to purchase any Rand before you arrive in South Africa, as there are foreign exchange bureaux and ATM’s located at Jo’burg airport and we will be there to assist you with exchanging your money upon arrival. It is best not to rely totally on ATM and credit card access by bringing perhaps a third of your spending money in either cash or traveller’s cheques. Traveller’s cheques can sometimes be difficult to exchange and consequently are often given a lesser exchange rate, although they do give you added security in comparison to cash.

How much spending money to bring? Our spending habits all vary i.e. whether you smoke or drink, what souvenirs you wish to buy, or any extra activities you may want to do. Most of your daily meals are included whilst you are on safari with us, and many of our past clients have commented on the amount of spending money that they have leftover. Keeping this in mind, we would recommend that you allow, in addition to any planned optional activities, a figure of around US\$20 (AU\$25) per day.

## LOCAL COSTS

Local costs in South Africa are generally considered “good value” for foreign visitors.

Here’s some generalised costs to give you an idea:

375ml bottle of beer:	US\$2 (AU\$3)
750ml bottle of wine:	US\$6-20(AU\$8-25)
Snacks (crisps, nuts, chocolates):	US\$2 (AU\$3)
Evening restaurant meal with drinks:	US\$20+ (AU\$25+)
Souvenirs:	US\$5-10 (AU\$6-13) for small curio/carving. US\$10-20(AU\$13-25) for medium curio/carving. US\$20-30+ (AU\$25-50+) for a coffee table-style book.

## TIPPING/GRATUITIES

Wages in the services industry are generally very low throughout South Africa, and many workers – waitstaff, domestics, cleaners – appreciate a small gratuity for the services they have provided. Already budgeted into the cost of your safari are tips and gratuities for the staff at the various accommodations and restaurants that we frequent as a group. This allows us to ensure that our offering is distributed fairly and openly, and creates a positive relationship between Compass Odyssey and our chosen service providers, manifesting itself into friendly and efficient service offered to each of our travellers.

## CLIMATE

Although Africa's weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable, we can still be generally sure of the climate we will experience whilst on this safari.

South Africa is blessed with one of the most temperate climates in Africa. The seasons in South Africa are the same as in other southern hemisphere countries, with spring/summer generally from October to April, and winter/autumn from May to September. However it also depends on your location as to the specific weather you can expect in the region you are travelling. Around Johannesburg and down in the *lowveld* around Kruger National Park, spring/summer is characterised by hot humid days and afternoon thunderstorms. Daytime temperatures can get very high, followed by cooler, comfortable nights. Vegetation in Kruger is at its highest and thickest during these months and although this makes game-spotting difficult, the park's birdlife is at its most prolific during this period. This is also when you'll get to see many baby animals, as most animals calve at the beginning of the rainy season to take advantage of the fresh shoots of grass and plants. Travelling in this same area during the autumn/winter brings clear and warm days with cool to chilly evenings. Known as the dry season, this is possibly the best game-viewing period as permanent waterholes attract animals, the vegetation becomes thinned out, and trees don't have so many leaves to obstruct the view. During this time the temperature after sunset can get quite chilly, however. The Cape Town region experiences its rainfall and colder weather during winter, while spring heralds the onset of the warm winds blowing in from the south-east.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Naturally, there are many opportunities for still and video photography on our tour. Print film is available everywhere but the quality, speed and cost can vary. Memory cards and video tapes are becoming more available but you would be best served to bring all of your digital and video supplies with you. Batteries can be recharged each night but remember to bring along an international adaptor plus a spare camera battery for those times you can't get to a power point. It is also a good idea to bring a re-sealable plastic bag to keep dust from infiltrating your equipment and to store any film or tapes. Wherever we travel in South Africa, it is NOT a good idea to photograph police, military personnel or any government official unless they have made it obvious that they are ok with it. If in doubt, ask.

## LUGGAGE AND WHAT TO BRING

As a guide we recommend you keep to your airline's luggage restriction of 20 kilograms or less, in a **medium-sized** suitcase. Ourselves and our crew will be more than happy to assist with the loading and unloading of your luggage from our safari vehicle, however for your own comfort we strongly suggest your luggage be as light as possible. There may be instances where the distance between the safari vehicle and our accommodation necessitates a short walk (up to 100m) that can also be on hilly or uneven ground.

On our travel days it can often be inconvenient to access your main bag during the day, so we suggest you bring a day bag/backpack, which can be kept with you. Most people make the mistake of bringing too much clothing. Your clothes should be easy to wash, dry and pack, as well as being warm and comfortable. All of our accommodations provide your bedding and a bath towel.

Our suggested list of clothing and accessories is:

2 long sleeved shirts/blouses	Money and traveller's cheques
3-4 short sleeved shirts or t-shirts	Vaccination certificates (plus photocopy)
2 pairs of trousers or 1 pair and 1 skirt	Passport (plus photocopy)
1-2 pairs shorts	Camera, including digital needs
Tracksuit pants	Binoculars
Light sweater/jumper	Water bottle
Water/windproof jacket	Watch or alarm clock
Hat, beanie and warm gloves	Sunscreen and lip balm
Swimsuit	Torch ( <b>a head-torch is especially recommended</b> )
Boots or trainers	Washing soap or powder
Sandals or thongs/flip-flops	Peg-less clothes line
	International power plug adaptor
	Personal medical kit

If you wear glasses or contact lens, it is advisable to bring a spare pair. Contact lens solution is available but only in the cities and major towns.

Most supermarket items that you can buy at home are available throughout South Africa. Therefore you don't have to stock up prior to your departure on items like regular batteries, clothes washing powder and personal toiletries unless you so desire. Ask us at any time for advice on when and what to purchase along the way.



## More Information and Reading

### LANGUAGES

No matter what their native tongue, generally everyone in South Africa will revert immediately to English when conversing with you. There are 11 official languages in South Africa, all of which are granted equal status although in practice English is the language of government and most day-to-day business. Afrikaans is still widely spoken, especially in inland rural areas and the Northern Cape and Western Cape provinces. IsiZulu, isiXhosa and seSotho are also widely spoken, especially in regional urban areas. The remaining languages of siSwata, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, Sepedi and isiNdebele are mainly spoken in their respective tribal areas.

### WEBSITES

South Africa:	<a href="http://www.southafrica.info">www.southafrica.info</a>
Hector Pieterse & Soweto:	<a href="http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/hector-pieterse.htm">www.southafrica.info/about/history/hector-pieterse.htm</a>
Mpumalanga Drakensberg:	<a href="http://www.mpumalanga.com">www.mpumalanga.com</a>
South Africa National Parks: (Kruger N.P. & West Coast N.P.)	<a href="http://www.sanparks.org">www.sanparks.org</a>
The <i>Lowveld</i> :	<a href="http://www.Kruger2Canyons.com">www.Kruger2Canyons.com</a>
Hoedspruit E.S.C.:	<a href="http://www.wildlifecentre.co.za">www.wildlifecentre.co.za</a>
Cape Town:	<a href="http://www.tourismcapetown.co.za">www.tourismcapetown.co.za</a>

## BOOKS

*Cry, The Beloved Country* by Alan Paton

A classic of South African literature, this is a beautifully told and compassionate story of Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in troubled and changing 1940s South Africa .

*Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela

A personal recount by the great, dignified Madiba of the beginning, rise and eventual victory of the resistance to South Africa's apartheid regime.

*My Traitor's Heart* by Rian Malan

An autobiography from an outcast descendant of DF Malan, the architect of apartheid. The author fled South Africa after coming face to face with the atrocities of the undeclared civil war between the races and this book is a profound account of his return after eight years of restless exile and affords the reader a profound insight into the psyches of both black and white South Africans.

*The Covenant* by James Michener

A fantastic epic novel following the history of southern Africa from the days of the nomadic San right up to the apartheid dominated late 1970s. An historical saga interwoven with stories of individuals, families and complete generations.

## GUIDE BOOKS

*Note: We will have a small but informative selection of field guides and wildlife-based magazines on-board our safari vehicle for your use during our safari.*

*Footprint Travel Guide To South Africa* by Lizzie Williams

If you want to bring along a guidebook for South Africa, then this is the one to have. Written by our good friend, Lizzie, the book caters for all types of traveller and budgets.

*Newman's Birds of Southern Africa* by Kenneth Newman, or

*Roberts' Birds Of Southern Africa* by Gordon Lindsay Maclean.

If you're an avid birder, one of these books is for you (or both if you're really keen).

*Southern Africa's Mammals, A Field Guide* by Robin Frandsen

This is the best general guide book on southern Africa's mammals that we've seen. It has just the right mix of pictures and maps with easy to read text and identification information. If you can't find it in your local bookshop, Chris and Tilde Stuart's *Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa* is also recommended.

*The Safari Companion: Guide to Watching African Mammals* by Richard D Estes

More than a simple identification guide, this book dedicates itself to educating the wildlife viewer in the characteristics of each of Africa's mammals, with detailed writings on behaviour, aggression, offspring, mating, feeding, distribution and detailed identification. What this book lacks in glossy colour pictures, it more than makes up with an easy-to-read and in-depth analysis of each mammal.

*Field Guide To Trees Of Southern Africa* by Braam van Wyk and Piet van Wyk

Written and designed with the non-specialist in mind, over 1,000 species are logically arranged in 43 groups based on easy-to-observe leaf and stem characters. Each species account is illustrated by at least one full-colour photograph of the plant's most readily identifiable part or parts. The text also touches on the practical uses of plants.

## MOVIES

*Cry Freedom* starring Denzil Washington, Kevin Kline and directed by Richard Attenborough  
The real life story of newspaper editor Donald Woods and political activist Stephen Biko in apartheid-ravaged 1970s South Africa. The 1987 film is from Woods' perspective and centres around the lives of both men leading up to Biko's death whilst in police custody and Woods' campaign to bring the perpetrators to justice, along with publicising the injustices of the apartheid regime, before and after his exile from the country.

*Cry, The Beloved Country* starring James Earl Jones and Richard Harris  
This moving 1995 adaptation of Alan Paton's celebrated novel was widely hailed as one of the best films of the year.

*Sarafina!* starring Whoopi Goldberg, Miriam Makeba  
1992 adaptation of a Broadway musical by Mbongeni Ngema, a major force in South African political theatre. The film was made in part to commemorate student resistance to the State of Emergency declared by the South African government in 1976.

*The Power Of One* starring Stephen Dorff, Nomadlozi Kubheka and directed by John G Avildsen  
Inspiring 1992 movie based on Bryce Courtney's novel revolving around Peekay, a young English orphan torn by his deep love for his native South Africa and the temptation of a better life overseas. The scenery and music of South Africa have both been beautifully captured in the film.

*Tsotsi* - 2006 Academy Award Winner for Best Foreign Language Film  
Set amidst the sprawling Johannesburg township of Soweto, *Tsotsi* traces six days in the life of a ruthless young gang leader who ends up caring for a baby accidentally kidnapped during a car-jacking, compelling him to confront his own brutal nature and face the consequences of his actions. This is a gritty and moving portrait of an angry young man living in a state of extreme urban deprivation and puts a human face on both the victims and the perpetrators of violent crime. It is ultimately a story of hope and a triumph of love over rage. The movie soundtrack pumps with the raw energy of Kwaito music, the modern beat of the ghetto that reflects *Tsotsi's* state of mind.

*Yesterday* - 2004 Academy Award Nominee for Best Foreign Language Film  
Shot on location in the visually stunning central Drakensberg Region and the first major film in the isiZulu language, *Yesterday* tells the tragic tale of a young HIV positive mother whose husband, a migrant mineworker, refuses to accept her illness and leaves her to fend for herself and her daughter.

## MUSIC

*'South Africa is distinguished by the most complex musical history, the greatest profusion of styles and the most intensely developed recording industry anywhere in Africa. Despite many regional and stylistic variations, its music – vocal-based and long and deeply influenced by Europe and America – is different from what you'll hear anywhere else on the continent, even from nearby parts of central Africa'* from *The Rough Guide* compilation album *The Music of South Africa*

Abdullah Ibrahim – was originally known as “Dollar Brand”, earning his nickname from American sailors passing through Cape Town from who he constantly tried to buy the latest jazz records. Since 1960 he has been known as The Man...as soon as his fingers hit the keyboard, his powerful ‘voice’ is unmistakable. Ibrahim’s music encompasses both religious and social storytelling whilst staying true to his jazz origins. *Cape Town Flowers* is a recent release.

Johnny Clegg – the “White Zulu” has been around for ages and is still a popular live act in South Africa and Europe due to his fusion of African and European styles. Clegg, through his early bands Juluka (with good friend Sipho Mchunu) and Savuka, was one of the first local acts to publicly protest against apartheid and numerous songs were banned from radio airplay because of Clegg’s mixing of Zulu and English lyrics – a no-no because “apartheid” stood for a complete separation of cultures including song lyrics. His *Best Of* album would be a good introduction.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo – the “Black Axe” from Ladysmith is one of the country’s most acclaimed and loved groups, singing a traditional style of mainly a cappella music, called isicathamiya, that was born in the mine camps of South Africa. They gained international recognition when they recorded two tracks with Paul Simon on his career-reviving *Graceland* album and have recorded over 40 albums themselves, including *Shaka Zulu* which won a Grammy award for “Best World Music Recording”. *In Harmony* is one of their more recent albums.

Lucky Dube (1964 – 2007) – Reggae is everywhere in Africa and the most famous African reggae comes from South Africa’s Lucky Dube. *Slave* and *Prisoner* were his most prominent releases and have sold over 1½ million copies worldwide, making him South Africa’s most successful recording artist.

Miriam Makeba (1932 – 2008) – affectionally known as “Mama Africa”, Miriam Makeba was the most significant singing star to come out of the great ‘Age of Jazz’ in South Africa between WWII and the late 1950s. After a sharp rise in popularity in South Africa, she moved to the United States where she became South Africa’s first successful international act with the hits “The Click Song” and “Pata Pata”. She was also prominent in the beginning of the international, external battle against apartheid when she gave an impassioned testimonial before the United Nations in 1963. *Welela* is her greatest hits compilation.

Yvonne Chaka Chaka – the pretender to Miriam Makeba’s throne, Yvonne Chaka Chaka has for the past 20 years carved herself a niche within both Afrobeat and dance music. Her success comes from a combination of her powerful alto voice, a high standard of well crafted and arranged material and meaningful, catchy lyrics. Look for the albums *Yvonne And Friends* and *The Best Of Yvonne Chaka Chaka*.