

Q on First Guesthouse - Travel Tips

Clothing

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

Getting Here Johannesburg O.R.Tambo International Airport is the major airport in South Africa and is the hub for 45 airlines from all five continents. Flights from Europe are generally overnight and just a sleep away. The direct flights between the USA and Johannesburg or Cape Town are about 15 hours, and flights between London and Johannesburg take about 12 hours. Driving from the airport to Q on first takes about 45 minutes, if you plan to pick up a rental car, best to get onto the Gautrain and collect your vehicle in Sandton and this journey takes 10 min on the fast train. Not renting a vehicle then get off at Rosebank station, and take a taxi to Q on First Guesthouse.

Passports and Visas

For many 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. Travellers 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, visitors from 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. 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.

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 Bureaux de Changes. Most major international credit cards such as MasterCard, Visa and their affiliates are widely accepted.

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 per receipt. VAT is refunded at the point of departure provided receipts are produced.

Electricity

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

Many foreigners are unaware that South Africa has a well-developed infrastructure, medical facilities equal to the best in the world and high standards of water treatment. 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 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 a tour or safari.

Consult your physician or pharmacist for advice on Malaria.

Personal safety

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 jewellery 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.

Road safety

Our transport infrastructure is excellent and our roads are in good condition. However, the distances between towns are significant, so if you're planning to self-drive, it is a good idea to plan your itinerary to ensure you don't drive long distances as fatigue is a major cause of road accidents. Avoid long car journeys that necessitate driving at night as it always carries more risk. Also, in some of the more remote rural areas, the roads are not fenced so there may be stray animals on the road - which could be very dangerous at night. (Cows don't have headlights.) We have very strict drinking and driving laws - with a maximum allowable alcohol blood content of 0.05%.

Translated that means about one glass of wine for the average woman and perhaps 1.5 or two for the average or large man. Our speed limits are 120kmph on the open road, 100kmph on smaller roads and between 60 and 80kmph in towns. Be aware that even major national roads cut through residential areas so there may be a speed limit of 80 or 60kmph on a road that looks like an autobahn.

This is to protect pedestrians, especially children, so we really do encourage people to comply. Never pay an officer if you got a traffic fine, you pay fines at the police station.

Driving

All visitors intending to drive are required to obtain an international drivers permit, visitors found driving without a permit will be fined and not permitted to continue on their journey. Visitors will also not be able to rent a car without a valid driver's permit. The wearing of seatbelts is compulsory and strictly enforced by law.

Shopping

Most major shopping centres 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.