



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: SOUTH AFRICA



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Main roads are in good condition and well maintained. Secondary roads may be in poor condition.
- The road crash rate is high; defensive driving is essential.
- Public transportation is not recommended, except for luxury services; taxis are expensive and may not be reliable; mini-buses are generally not a safe travel option. Rental vehicles (some with drivers) are available.
- In South Africa (SA), it is illegal to use a hand-held cell phone while driving.
- Fatigue is a major contributing factor in road crashes.
- Fraudulent driver's licenses, ill-prepared drivers, unsafe vehicles, badly flood-damaged roads, speeding,



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Drivers tend to travel speed, especially on thoroughfares. The speed limit has been lowered to 100 km/h (60 mph), but 69% of drivers exceed this limit.
- More than 47% of drivers were over the blood alcohol level, and 75% of pedestrians were killed during these road crashes.
- Drivers tend to be aggressive and irresponsible. Tailgating at high speeds or passing on blind curves is not unusual. Many drivers maintain a following distance of less than two seconds.
- On two-lane roads, drivers often pull into the yellow emergency lane to allow other cars to pass. Do this with caution, as the emergency lane is often used by pedestrians and cyclists. If someone pulls over to allow passing, thank him/her by flicking hazard lights. Speeders may expect other drivers to pull over and let them pass, even if pedestrians or slow-moving vehicles are in the emergency lane. Cars overtaking others often rely on oncoming traffic to move into emergency lane.



overloading, bribery, and a lack of consistency in the judicial system have been blamed for the high road crash rate. South Africa has insufficient regulatory control regarding driver's license and vehicle maintenance.

- Economic restraints prevent South Africa from conducting road safety studies, making it difficult to accurately identify and correct traffic black spots.
- There is a serious shortage of traffic police.
- There are 13.7 fatalities per 10,000 vehicles in South Africa compared to 2.0 in the US.

- "Road rage" shootings have occurred.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- Road conditions are generally good, but a four-wheel drive (4WD) vehicle may be required in remote areas.
- 30 percent of the roads are paved. All major roads are paved and well maintained.
- South Africa's roads have the least amount of potholes of all African countries.
- Bad roads are estimated to be key factors in 15% of all road crashes.
- Route prefixes indicate the road type: "N" = national highways, "R" = regional highways and "M" = metropolitan roads. Some sections of "N" routes are toll roads.



- In the former Homelands, be alert for deep potholes, washouts and unsigned hairpins.
- Mini traffic circles are often used in lieu of 4-way stop signs, which are dangerous because many drivers fail to stop.
- Most secondary roads are gravel.
- Be alert for 4-way stop signs on major roads.
- Vehicles overloaded with goods are common on all

major roads, and they cause excessive road surface wear.

- Traffic is often highly congested in the Gauteng Province (has 45% of all registered vehicles in SA), particularly on the Johannesburg-Pretoria (Joburg-Tshwane) road.

URBAN TRAVEL

- Urban roads are generally well maintained.
- Major cities are connected by an extensive rail system.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
CAPE TOWN	<p>M3 Simon Van Der Stel-Freeway: Use caution in wet weather, as surface will be extremely slippery and dangerous.</p> <p>R300, connecting the N1 and N2: Surface is uneven in places. Be alert for pedestrians.</p> <p>The city center is not safe after dark.</p> <p>Parking may be difficult to find.</p>	<p>Minibus taxis are the fastest means of travel, but they often are dangerously overloaded or driven irresponsibly and many are not roadworthy. Fares are high, and drivers do not leave until the taxi is full.</p> <p>Taxis are more expensive than other forms of public transportation, but are safer. Use of taxis is recommended at night.</p> <p>Cape Town International Airport, 22 km (14 miles) from city center. Rental cars are available. Inter-Cape buses provide transport. Some hotels operate courtesy vans. Taxis are available.</p> <p>Trains are the cheapest transport option, but robberies are frequent.</p> <p>Buses are safer than trains and more reliable than mini-bus taxis.</p>
DURBAN (ETHEKWINI)	<p>Jaywalking and running red lights are common, especially in the city center. This holds up traffic, increasing high congestion levels.</p> <p>Traffic jams increase response times for fire/rescue vehicles and ambulances.</p> <p>Police are understaffed, making effective enforcement of traffic laws more difficult.</p> <p>Street vendors in the central business district create problems for pedestrians and contribute to traffic congestion.</p> <p>Traffic signals are outdated and difficult to maintain. Many do not function properly or have been vandalized. Disabled signals cause traffic delays and increased road crash rates.</p>	<p>An extensive system of modern highways enables access to or bypassing of the city easily.</p>

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CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
JOHANNESBURG	<p>The highway system around the city is confusing.</p> <p>Minibus taxis are often overcrowded. Their drivers often speed and drive irresponsibly.</p> <p>Taxi service is provided by minibuses, which are often unmarked and do not have formal stops or schedules. There is no door-to-door service.</p> <p>Use minibus taxis only for short trips, unless traveling with a local resident. You need to know the routes and hand signals drivers use to travel long distances.</p> <p>The quality of informal minibus services cannot be guaranteed.</p>	<p>Minibus taxis are the least expensive form of public transportation and are used extensively for commuting to work.</p> <p>Queue marshals have absolute control over taxi ranks. Metered taxis must be called and cannot be hailed on the street.</p> <p>Metro railway system provides connections to Soweto, Pretoria and larger towns along the Witwatersrand. The rail system is well developed in the southern section of the city; however, no service is available in the northern section, even in key business districts.</p> <p>Johannesburg International Airport is located one-half hour from the city center. Larger hotels provide shuttle buses. Minibus service is available and should be booked at the commercial service counter. Rental cars are available.</p>
PRETORIA (EPITOLI OR TSHWANE)	<p>Traffic is very congested.</p> <p>Public transport is not well developed.</p>	<p>Johannesburg International Airport is the nearest airport. Transport to Pretoria is available by train, taxi or bus.</p> <p>Tourist info Phone: 012 308 8909, and their website is www.pta-online.co.za.</p> <p>The city center is easily covered by foot.</p> <p>Bus service is available to suburbs and other cities.</p> <p>Minibus taxis can be hailed anywhere.</p>

RURAL TRAVEL

- Rural roads are generally in poor condition.
- Major highways between cities are two lanes with no center barriers.
- Drivers on little used rural roads often speed and assume no other traffic exists.
- Beware of oncoming cars and blind curves on country roads.
- Do not speed on dirt roads; treat the dirt as ice.
- Be alert for pedestrians, cyclists and stray animals, particularly in remote areas.
- Driving on dirt roads: If the surface is dry and in good condition, speeds of 80-100 km/h are safe (Be alert for

random wet stretches.). If wet, drop to 40-60 km/h. Stay alert for pedestrians and livestock.

- Cell phones may not work in more remote areas. Keep track of mileage in case medical or roadside assistance is required.
- Lighting on rural roads tends to be poor.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- Be alert for pedestrians; they rarely wear light-colored or reflective clothing.
- Approximately 7% of all drivers are intoxicated at night.
- Be especially alert for animals crossing the road in rural areas.

**SEASONAL TRAVEL**

- The fatality rate from highway collisions is especially high during national holidays.
- Traffic accidents peak during the Christmas season, at which time a large number of motorists travel to beach areas and particularly to Cape Town and Durban. The volume of traffic, overcrowded minibus taxis, high speed and irresponsible driving and old or poorly maintained vehicles all contribute to South Africa's high fatality rate.
- Thick fog is a problem during the rainy season.
- Fog is a particular problem in the KwaZulu/Natal region. It may be clear on the coast, but visibility in higher elevations will be down to a few meters. Hailstorms in the low veld can damage vehicle.
- Dense smoke from veld and forest fires is a factor in road crashes during regional dry seasons (Western Cape in summer, northeastern provinces in winter). If driving through dense smoke, turn on headlights and hazard lights, lower speed and do not change lanes. If the fire index is high, a small spark can start a fire. In case of fire in KwaZulu-Natal, call toll-free hotline at 0800 33 99 11 or emergency at 10177. Check local media for fire index alerts.
- Smoke from controlled burn-offs may be a problem.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- There is a very high rate—approximately 41%—of pedestrian involvement in road fatalities. It is being reduced through road safety efforts. Nationwide,

approximately 60% of pedestrians who are killed in road crashes are intoxicated.

- Failure of pedestrians to obey basic traffic laws is one of the most significant factors in the high number of road crashes in the Gauteng Province.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

- Vehicle maintenance is not regulated adequately.
- Speeding fines are very high.
- Comprehensive vehicle inspections may be conducted at roadblocks. Both driver and vehicle fitness are checked. Police can access information about drivers who are stopped from an electronic database.
- Johannesburg police are attempting to control irresponsible drivers and those violating basic traffic laws. Speed traps are set up, traffic laws and jaywalking are being enforced and fines are being increased.
- Traffic law enforcement is hampered by understaffing and equipment shortages. Officers are inadequately trained and ill equipped, except for radar guns. Gasoline scarcity limits patrol times.
- Enforcement of laws regarding suspended licenses and impounding non-roadworthy vehicles is inadequate.
- Some police officers and officials receive illegal "gifts" and ignore traffic infractions.

**ROAD REGULATIONS**

- Drive on the left side of the road.
- Seat belts are required.
- As a result of many accidents, the speed limit has been lowered to 100 km/h (60 mph).
- Speed limits are 120 km/h (75 mph) on national highways, urban freeways and other major routes; 100 km/h (60 mph) on secondary/rural roads; and 60 km/h (35 mph) in urban areas, unless otherwise posted.
- A national driver's license is valid if it has a picture and

signature. If the license is not in English, a certificate of authenticity written in English from an embassy is required.

- An international driving permit (IDP) is strongly suggested. An IDP is a legal identification document that translates driving license information into 11 languages, including English, and can only be used as a supplement to a valid driving license. IDPs are available through AAA. Call 1-800-222-4357 or visit www.aaa.com.



- The legal blood alcohol level is 0.05%.
- Road rules are conventional with the notable exception of 4-way stop signs, which can occur even on major highways.
- A *carnet de passage* (also known as a *triptyque*) is required to take a vehicle into South Africa. Consult with the South African Embassy for current requirements.
- Carnets can only be issued by national motoring

organizations. AAA does not issue carnets. Contact the UK, Royal Automobile Club, RAC House, PO Box 100, Bartlett St., South Croydon, Surrey, CR26XW United Kingdom. Phone: 0181 686 2525. Or contact the Automobile Club de France, 14 de la Grande Armee, 75017, Paris. Phone: 01 40 55 43 00.

- Transporting gasoline in anything other than built-in gas tanks is illegal.



ROAD WATCH

SOME DANGEROUS ROADS

ROAD	CONDITIONS
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE (CONTAINS KRUGER NATIONAL PARK)	Has some of the country's worst roads—single carriageways with short passing zones; weather very changeable
N1, LINKING CAPE TOWN WITH WORCHESTER, LAINGSBURG AND BEAUFORT WEST N2 BETWEEN CAPE TOWN AND CALEDON AND R60 BETWEEN SWELLENDAM AND WORCESTER	High road fatality rates
BETWEEN ELLIOT AND ENGCOBO (SATAN'S NECK) IN EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE	Steep curves, and high road crash rate
N2 BETWEEN KING WILLIAMSTOWN AND EAST LONDON	High road crash fatality rate
N14 BETWEEN VRYBURG AND KURUMAN IN NORTHWEST PROVINCE	High road crash fatality rate
N3 BETWEEN JOHANNESBURG AND VILLIERS	High road crash fatality rate
N2 BETWEEN KOKSTAD AND EMPANGENI, N11 BETWEEN LADYSMITH AND VOLKSRUST, AND N3 BETWEEN DURBAN AND HOWICK	High road crash fatality rate
N3 BETWEEN ESTCOURT AND VAN REENEN'S PASS	High road crash fatality rate
N4 BETWEEN BRONKHORSTSPRUIT AND NELSPRUIT, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN WITBANK AND BELFAST	High road crash fatality rate
N1 BETWEEN KROONSTAD AND VANDERBIJLPARK, R44 BETWEEN BOTRIVIER AND DE HOEK AND R707 BETWEEN FRANKFORT AND MARQUARD	High road crash fatality rate

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SOME DANGEROUS ROADS (CONTINUED)

ROAD	CONDITIONS
N1 BETWEEN PRETORIA AND BEIT BRIDGE, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN PRETORIA AND WARMBATHS	High road crash fatality rate
GAUTENG PROVINCE	Has a high number of road crashes and fatalities; many aggressive and irresponsible drivers

TOP ROAD CRASH ZONES AS RATED BY SOUTH AFRICA'S "ARRIVE ALIVE" COORDINATORS

ROAD	CONDITIONS
N3 BETWEEN WARDEN IN FREE STATE PROVINCE AND BOTTOM OF VAN REENEN'S PASS IN KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE	Driver fatigue, fog and rain, crosswinds and winding stretch through mountain pass common
N1 NORTH BETWEEN NABOOMSPRUIT AND BELA-BELA (WARMBATHS) INTERCHANGE	Driver fatigue, speeding and drunk driving common
N1 BETWEEN WINBURG AND BLOEMFONTEIN IN FREE STATE	Driver fatigue and numerous road construction sites common
N1 BETWEEN COLESBERG AND RICHMOND IN NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE	High traffic volume, driver fatigue, heat waves and tire blowouts due to overheating common
N1 BETWEEN THREE SISTERS AND TOUWS RIVER IN WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE	Driver fatigue and tire blow outs common
N2 BETWEEN "SPAGHETTI JUNCTION" IN WESTVILLE, DURBAN, AND UMKOMAAS IN KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE	Heavy pedestrian traffic
N9 BETWEEN GRAAFF-REINET AND ABERDEEN IN EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE	Driver fatigue and mechanical failure common
N4 BETWEEN WONDERFONTEIN AND BELFAST IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE	Driver fatigue and heavy trucks common
N14 BETWEEN VRYBURG AND KURUMAN IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE	Driver fatigue, speeding, trucks, heat waves and blowouts common
N10 BETWEEN UPINGTON AND GROBLERSHOOP IN NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE	Drunk pedestrians common

**SOME GOOD ROADS**

ROAD	CONDITIONS
N7 FROM CAPE TOWN TO VIOOLSDRIFT	Good condition
N17 CONNECTS RUSTENBURG, JOHANNESBURG AND OSHOEK (IN SWAZILAND); PASSES THROUGH MIDDLEBURG, DE AAR, PRIESKA AND UPINTON TO ARIMASVLEI (IN NAMIBIA)	Generally good condition
N10 FROM CRADOCK TO ARIAMSVLEI (IN NAMIBIA)	Generally good condition
N9 FROM GEORGE TO COLESBERG	Generally good condition
N4 FROM PRETORIA TO RUSTENBURG; FOLLOWS N4, R512 AND R27 AND IS A TOLL ROAD BETWEEN PRETORIA AND PELINDABA	Good condition but not complete

**ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS****TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS****BUSES**

- South Africa's public transport system is poorly developed. The development of all-inclusive transport/economic corridors is beginning to facilitate travel within and among cities.
- Inter-city express buses provide service on air-conditioned vehicles.
- Public bus service is limited or non-existent in the eastern Transvaal.
- Long-haul commuter buses have poor safety records. Many buses and minibus taxis are not well maintained. Roadworthiness tests and commercial driver's license tests are often bypassed with a bribe.
- Fatal bus accidents are common. The causes range from driver fatigue to poor driver training, lack of highway policing and poor equipment maintenance.
- In Durban, minibuses and combi-taxis (both legal and illegal) compete with buses. Use them with caution.

TAXIS

- One-quarter of road fatalities are taxi-related.
- Taxi drivers tend to speed and overload their vehicles to cut costs.
- Minibus taxis tend to be old and in poor repair.
- Taxis do not cruise for passengers; they must be contacted.

- Minibus taxis can carry 16 passengers, but they often cram in many more. They tend to travel at high speeds and stop suddenly to pick up or drop off passengers.
- Minibus drivers may work for hours without rest, because they are afraid of stopping to sleep along roads where they may encounter bandits.
- Minibus drivers may swerve in and out of traffic without warning to pick up customers.
- Some mini-buses are not legally licensed.
- Agree on fare for a long-distance journey before departing.
- Combi taxis (mini-buses) provide transport along main roads in major cities.
- Large VW Combi taxis are not recommended. Travel Creek, <http://www.travelcreek.com/franschoek.htm>
- Faulty brakes and tires are factors in many road crashes involving mini-buses.

RENTAL CARS

- Rental cars are widely available.
- Self-drive and cars with drivers are available in major cities and at most airports.



MOTORCYCLES & BICYCLES

- Most paved mountain roads have wide passing lanes in the steepest sections. Be alert for broken bottles at the edges of roads, especially near intersections or any place where people are waiting for buses. Repair shops and spare parts are hard to find. Bring vital spare parts.

TRAIN TRAVEL

- The U.S. State Department indicates that non-luxury rail service is not recommended. Luxury train services are provided by Blue Train and Rovos Rail; make reservations well in advance

CRIME & SECURITY

- Most visitors have no problems, but crime is common and sometimes violent.
- “Travel Buddy” information system, called eBlockwatch, was developed to minimize tourist concerns about crime and operates via SMS and e-mail. The system tracks tourists during their stay and sends out alerts of danger zones or criminal incidents in the areas the traveler is visiting. In an emergency, the traveler can message for help and someone (police included) will

respond. For info, check their website at www.satrabuddy.co.za/.

- Be alert in heavy traffic or when stopped at traffic lights. Criminals may break or reach in windows and grab any valuables in sight.
- Car hijackings are increasing. If hijacked, stay calm and do not resist the hijackers.
- Political violence is still a problem in the province of Kwazulu/Natal, particularly near Richmond in the Midlands. Townships near major cities have had violent demonstrations and factional conflicts, especially near Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town.
- Crime levels are high in the Cape Flats, Guguletu, Nyanga and Khayalitsha suburbs of Cape Town.
- If possible, avoid local commuter trains, especially between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Several Americans have been the victims of muggings and violent attacks.
- Violent attacks on foreign tourists in the Mpumalanga Province west of Kruger National Park are increasing.
- Credit card fraud, counterfeit US currency and an assortment of check-cashing frauds are reported frequently.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- National emergency numbers are ambulance 10 177 and police 10 111.
- Roadside assistance is good.
- See www.weathersa.co.za/forecasts/forecast.html for The South African Weather Service's forecasts for each Province.
- See www.shellgeostar.co.za/ for Shell Geostar's route planner and city maps.
- The Automobile Association of South Africa, P.O. Box 596, 2000 Johannesburg, Afrique Du Sud. Phone: 0027117991000, fax: 0027117991010, e-mail is ejkok@aasa.co.za and website is www.aasa.co.za.
- The South African Automobile Association (www.aasa.co.za) provides detailed information on road construction sites and road conditions.
- Adequate tourist facilities are available in all urban centers, game parks and tourist areas.

- The South Africa National Tourist Organization can be contacted via phone at 1 800 822 5368 or website at www.travel.co.za/travel.
- The South African Tourism Board, SATOUR, has offices in most major cities and at the Johannesburg International Airport. Phone: 27 11 970 1669. In Pretoria, Private Bag X164, 442 Rigel Avenue South, Erasmusrand, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa . Phone: 27 12 482 6200 and fax: 27 12 347 6199.
- Tourist offices have a sign with a white 'T' against a green background.
- Gas stations are open 24 hours on major motorways.
- Extensive information on Durban is available from the city's “Pocket Guide” (www.durban.gov.za/visitors/).

MEDICAL CARE

- Medical facilities are good in urban areas and near game parks but may be limited elsewhere.



- Doctors and hospitals often require immediate cash payment for health services. Often they will accept major credit cards.
- The public health system is overcrowded and extremely under-funded.
- Private hospitals are very good but expensive.
- Ambulances are often privately run. Service is very good but expensive.
- Pharmacists are highly trained. They will give advice on mild illnesses and can prescribe some medications. Other medications can only be prescribed by a doctor.
- A wide variety of pharmaceuticals are readily available, especially in urban areas.
- Major hotels have contracts with doctors and dentists. The name of a doctor can be obtained from the nearest Consulate or police station.
- In Johannesburg, public hospitals are readily available but tend to be very busy. There are many private hospitals, especially in the northern section of the city. Most private hospitals have 24-hour emergency room service and excellent medical care.
- U.S. medical insurance is not always valid in other countries. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical expenses rendered outside the U.S. Medigap policies (plans C through J) cover 80 percent of what Medicare would cover in the U.S. for the first 60 days of each trip; a \$250 deductible applies. Maximum lifetime limit of \$50,000. Medicare Advantage may offer coverage for care abroad. Phone: 800-633-4227; website: www.medicare.gov/publications/pubs/pdf/11037.pdf.
- U.S. Embassy, 877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia in Pretoria. Phone: 27-12-431-4000 (from South Africa 012-431-4000), fax 27-12-431-5504, (from South Africa 012-431-5504,) and website: <http://usembassy.state.gov/pretoria/>.
- US. Consulate Generals are as follows:
 - Johannesburg: No. 1 River Street (corner of River and Riviera Rd.), Killarney, Johannesburg. Phone: 27 11 646 8000, fax: 27 11 646 6916 (from South Africa, Phone: 001 644 8000, fax: 011-646-6916.). Consular jurisdiction: Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northern, North West, and Free State provinces. Provide most Consular services for Americans in the Pretoria area.
 - Cape Town: Monte Carlo Building, 7th Floor, Heerengracht Street, Foreshore. Phone: 27-21-421-4280, fax: 27-21-425-3014 (From South Africa, Phone: 021-421-4280; fax 021-425-3014). Consular jurisdiction: Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape Provinces
 - Durban: Old Mutual Building, 31st floor, 303 West Street. Phone: 27 31 305 7600, fax: 27-31-305-7691 (From South Africa, Phone: 031-305-7600, fax: 27-31-305-7691). Consular jurisdiction: Kwazulu/Natal Province.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT)
11769 Gainsborough Road, Potomac MD 20854, USA
Telephone: (301) 983-5252
Fax: (301) 983-3663
Website: <http://www.asirt.org>
E-mail: asirt@asirt.org

EMBASSY INFORMATION

- Embassy of South Africa, 3051 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008. Phone: 202 232 4400 and website: www.saembassy.org.

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2005

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This report is intended to represent general road conditions, driving environment, quality of public transportation, medical care and emergency response. It may not be totally accurate in a specific location or circumstance.