

EXPAT GUIDE: **SOUTH AFRICA**

INCLUDES CAPE TOWN CITY GUIDE

This expat guide offers information and advice if you are moving to South Africa. Click on the different tabs to find out about anything from tax rules and banking to education and cultural highlights.

You can also read our city guide for [Johannesburg](#).



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Moving to South Africa

Expats move to South Africa for its outdoor lifestyle, high standard of living and a business environment with plenty of opportunity. Retirees are drawn by the wonderful climate, relatively cheap cost of living and access to beachfront homes for affordable prices. The most popular cities for expats moving to South Africa are Cape Town and Johannesburg.

The economy is fairly stable and the policies of the left-leaning ANC-led government are tempered by a constitution that enshrines minority rights and private property rights. Crime is perceived as a major problem affecting both private citizens and businesses. Private security is therefore essential and can easily be contracted for affordable rates.

Moving to South Africa gives many advantages to the expat. Within its borders there is considerable diversity and splendid natural beauty. From the 24-hour bustle of Johannesburg's business centre to the beach and mountain framed vistas of Cape Town, South Africa offers the prospect of space, clean air, and abundant opportunities for business and leisure. You have an idiosyncratic combination of first and third world elements here that many find exciting, despite the problems such a mixture presents.

So many cultures competing for resources against an historical background of apartheid leads to tensions and true national reconciliation is some way off yet.

Shipping and removals

Many reputable companies offer shipping and air freight services to South Africa. Cost usually depends on volume of goods, as well as length of time involved in shipping.

Note that the postal service is unreliable and packages must be insured against theft and delay.

Shipping pets to South Africa requires a Veterinary Health Certificate, or equivalent, and may involve a quarantine period of three to six months.

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Working in South Africa

Below you will find information about:

- [Work permits](#)
- [General skills permit](#)
- [Exceptional skills permit](#)
- [Primary documents required](#)
- [Supporting documents required](#)
- [Taxes](#)
- [Public holidays](#)
- [Business culture](#)
- [Banking and money](#)

South Africa's thriving economy presents many opportunities for expats, particularly those in the fields of engineering, IT and finance. The working week follows a five-day, 9am to 5pm pattern, with three to four weeks leave per year. Johannesburg is renowned for its 'play hard, work hard' culture, while coastal cities such as Durban and Cape Town have a more balance and relaxed lifestyle.

Work permits

Obtaining a work permit as an expat in South Africa is necessary for all occupations, although it can be a test of patience. While it is possible to organise documentation if already in the country, it is highly recommended that paperwork be arranged prior to arrival as many South African consulates in western countries tend to be more efficient than South Africa's Department of Home Affairs.

There are two main types of work permits available – a *general skills permit* and an *exceptional skills permit*. The main consideration in dealing with both types is that a South African citizen must not be qualified to perform the task in question at the same capacity as the applicant. Work permits are therefore only issued to foreigners where South African citizens with the relevant skills are not available for appointment.

The documentation required to prove this fact is a grey area that tends to fall to the personal discretion of the official involved in reviewing each individual application. Patience, persistence and a smile are highly advised if you do not have the support of an employer/sponsor organising your permits.

Companies may decide to transfer existing personnel from a foreign branch to a branch in South Africa. As these will be key employees, they must apply for Intra-company transfer work permits.

General skills permit

A general skills permit is granted to an individual applying for a specific position in a specific place of employment. The employer/sponsor offering the job must prove that no other South African citizen can fill the position in question – there is usually an amount of time required during which the position must be advertised with no suitable local candidate materialising. This is largely at the discretion of the employer and is thus less difficult to obtain.

This permit will need to be amended if an expat wishes to change place of employment.

Exceptional skills permit

An exceptional skills permit is granted to an individual who has a unique skills set in a particular discipline. This permit is not limited to a specific place of employment or a single position, but rather a general field. The difficulty in attaining this permit relates to the applicant proving that they are indeed in position of "exceptional" skills, and that the skill set is unique to the applicant and will not be possessed by any other local/South African citizen. In order to ensure that the Department of Home Affairs approves the application it is best to include as many supporting documents as possible attesting to your value.

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Primary documents required

- 2 x passport photographs.
- Passport valid for no less than 30 days after expiry of the intended visit.
- Radiological report (Chest X-ray dated within one year of application proving the applicant does not have tuberculosis).
- Full birth certificate.
- Police clearance certificates in respect of applicants 18 years and older, in respect of all countries where person resided one year or longer.
- Completed application form.

Supporting documents required

- Letter of motivation from the employer why a citizen/resident could not fill the position, accompanied by documentary proof of efforts made to obtain the services of a citizen or resident.
- Particulars of unsuccessful candidates.
- Proof of qualifications evaluated by the South African Qualification Authority.
- Proof of registration with professional body, board or council, if applicable.
- Proof of experience and skills in line with the job offer.

Taxes

For taxation purposes it is usually more favourable for expats to remain as non-residents in South Africa. Due to the introduction of capital gains tax in 2001, any capital assets can be taxed as long as an expat is regarded as a resident, even if the assets are situated overseas and remain unsold. Residents are taxed on their worldwide income, whereas non-residents are only taxed on their South African based income. This includes taxation on rent from property assets in South Africa, interest from loans used or applied in South Africa, salaries and any compensation for services rendered within the country.

The South African tax year begins on 1 March, and you will be deemed a temporary resident of South Africa for tax purposes once you spend 183 days in the country in one tax year. You become a full resident for tax purposes after around three years, when you are liable to pay tax on your worldwide income, not just South African income. Remember that even non-South African residents are taxed on their South African income. South African residents are taxed on their worldwide income, but there are double taxation agreements with the UK and other governments. If you pay tax on a rental property in London you will not pay tax on this in South Africa as well as to UK customs.

Potential expats are strongly advised to take tax advice from an accountant before moving to South Africa. Offshore investments will be tax-free while you are not liable for tax on your worldwide income, and if you are also offshore for tax purposes from the UK (or your home country).

Once you become a full tax resident of South Africa, you are likely to remain domiciled in the UK (or other home country) and Inheritance tax would therefore still be paid there in the event of your death.

Income tax is calculated on a progressive scale from 18% for under R1 32 000 per year to 40% of the amount above R525 000 per year. Capital gains tax is 10% and will need to be paid on sale of a South African property should a gain have been made.

An expat living in South Africa for more than 549 days over the preceding three tax years will be taxed on their worldwide income. For the latest advice consult with both a UK and South African accountant.

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- South African Revenue Service: www.sars.gov.za
- Tax advice from HSBC: www.offshore.hsbc.com
- Investec Private Bank: www.investecprivatebank.co.za
- Absa bank: www.absa.co.za
- Rand Merchant Bank: www.randmerchantbank.com

If I am paying tax in my home country am I being taxed twice? No. South Africa has income tax treaties that exempt you from statutory tax rates for certain types of income. You may also be able to claim foreign tax credits when you submit your home country tax return if you have already paid tax in South Africa.

Public holidays

	2011	2012
New Year's Day	1 Jan	1-2 Jan
Human Rights Day	21 Mar	21 Mar
Good Friday	22 Apr	6 Apr
Easter Monday	25 Apr	9 Apr
Freedom Day	27 Apr	27 Apr
Worker's Day	1 May	1 May
Youth Day	16 Jun	16 Jun
Women's Day	9 Aug	9 Aug
Heritage Day	24 Sep	24 Sep
Day of Reconciliation	16 Dec	16 Dec
Christmas Day	25 Dec	25 Dec
Day of Goodwill (Boxing Day)	26 Dec	26 Dec

Business culture

South Africa's multicultural status means that there is not a uniform standard of behaviour and etiquette in the business world. Though professionalism mimics Europe and the US in the larger urban centres, it can vary depending on the parties involved and geographic location.

English is the primary language of business.

It is recommended to dress formally, though attire is generally more relaxed than the western world. South Africans are thought to be relaxed with regards to introductions and the handling of business cards.

Shaking hands is common for both men and women. Gifts are rare and not necessary.

Business hours are generally 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with an hour's lunch break.

Banking and money

The banking system is sophisticated and online banking is standard. Major banks include ABSA (owned by Barclays Bank), First National Bank, Standard Bank and Nedbank. Private banks generally offer a slicker service and more professional advice. These include Investec and Rand Merchant Bank (RMB). It is relatively easy to open a bank account if you are over 18 and have a proof of ID (usually a passport) and proof of address in South Africa.

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in South Africa and ATMs are plentiful. Many foreigners living in South Africa keep their money in a foreign account and use their debit or credit cards. South Africa has currency control restrictions which your bank should explain. All money transferred into South Africa can be repatriated, so it is important to keep a record of transactions.

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Living and culture

Below you will find information about:

- [Culture shock](#)
- [Transport and driving](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Domestic staff](#)
- [Cost of living](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

Culture shock

South Africa has enormous wealth disparities, hugely diverse cultures and 11 official languages. However, since most expats live in major urban areas, the culture they encounter is a familiar mélange of western capitalism and middle class values.

Local South Africans are fairly inclusive and welcoming, and there are many expat clubs and groupings to ease the transition from home. English is the language of business and most locals will speak it to some degree. South Africans of all cultures tend to enjoy a braai, which entails cooking meat on an open fire. Sports is avidly followed and participated in, especially cricket, rugby and football.

Shopping malls offer many of the same products and services you will find in a western country. However, the scope of haute couture is limited compared with London, New York and Singapore.

Those moving to Johannesburg will encounter an obsession with personal safety; homes are surrounded with electrified fences and guarded by private security firms, and walking outside in parks is unheard of.

Transport and driving

The lack of public transport infrastructure is one of the most obvious reminders to expats that South Africa is still in a state of development. It's absolutely necessary to have a car in the country as there are few other options to get from point A to point B.

Driving in South Africa

South Africans drive on the left-hand side of the road. The country has a very high road fatality rate even though it has a relatively low ratio of cars per capita. This is largely due to an exceptional number of unlicensed drivers and un-roadworthy vehicles. Always drive defensively and be aware of what's happening around you.

Public transport in South Africa

The South African government has recently introduced an initiative to improve the public transport sector. For those feeling brave, or rather brazen, the minibus taxis, trains and buses are the preferred methods of public transportation by the masses.

Trains and buses are recognised as formal methods of transportation, but they are organised and owned by private companies. The trains, though much quicker, only provide access to/from choice destinations, and timetables aren't necessarily adhered to.

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The minibus taxi is an informal method of transportation owned and organised by corrupt collectives who are constantly at odds with the government. Though these are by far the most efficient and the cheapest method of transportation across South Africa, the vehicles are often unsafe, the drivers unlicensed and uninsured, and those involved have little respect for traffic safety.

Meter taxis are also available, but can become expensive if travelling more than five miles (roughly 8km) in distance.

Buying a car

Buying a car is a straightforward process in South Africa provided you buy from a reputed dealer, who will arrange for the compulsory road test and registration. Required documents include a current driver's license, proof of address in South Africa and passport. Cars are relatively expensive in South Africa. However, some Toyota, Volkswagen and BMW vehicles are manufactured in the country and are therefore better value and cheaper to maintain.

Language

South Africa has 11 official languages, though English is the standard form of communication. Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho are also spoken and vary in prevalence depending on geographic location.

Although you don't need to learn Afrikaans, Xhosa or Zulu to get by, making the effort to do so will deepen your experience of the country given that 70% of the population speak one of these three languages as a mother tongue.

Domestic staff

Many expats find the affordability of domestic staff and nannies to be a big advantage of living in South Africa. There are numerous agencies to assist with screening and recruiting. Expect to pay in the region of R3,000 per month for a full-time domestic helper and around R4,000 for a trained nanny.

Cost of living

Most expats will find the cost of living in South Africa to be relatively cheap. Foreigners can expect particularly good value for money when it comes to rented accommodation, eating out and domestic staff. Imported goods, especially cars, tend to be more costly, while alcohol is relatively inexpensive and groceries are on a par with the UK or US. The cost of living is decidedly more expensive in Johannesburg than in Cape Town.

The property boom has seen house prices double over the past few years meaning that property is no longer particularly good value for those wanting to buy. However, this means that rented accommodation is quite affordable for expats. The cost of living in South Africa is around one third of that of London.

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Education

South Africa has a wide range of colleges and universities in its big cities, with two in particular - UCT in Cape Town and Wits in Johannesburg – being internationally regarded. Tuition is good value compared to US or European institutions, and the quality of education generally very high.

There are some good universities outside of the country's two main urban centres, notably Rhodes University in Grahamstown, University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth.

Cape Town has four main universities, UCT being the most popular with expat students.

Factors to consider before registering as an expat student in South Africa are the cost, culture and educational structure of the local colleges.

Read the guides for Cape Town and Johannesburg for more information about education and schools.

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Useful information

Time: In South Africa the local time is GMT + 2 hours.

Currency: The rand (ZAR, sign: R) is the official currency of South Africa. It is divided into 100 cents (sign: c). You can check the latest exchange rates [here](#).

Electricity: The electrical current in the country is 230 volts, 50Hz. Typically, three-pin round plugs are standard.

Safety: Expats moving to South Africa should note the country's high crime rate. Opportunistic crime is often targeted at foreigners, thus expats should be aware of the risks and consequences associated with certain places and actions.

Make sure to lock the car doors when driving and don't walk alone after dark or in isolated areas.

In Johannesburg, the areas of Berea and Hillbrow are known to be extremely dangerous, and recent incidents of petty theft have been cited in Cape Town's national parks. However, the crime statistics for affluent areas are similar to those for any international city. Expats living in the South African suburbs can greatly improve their personal safety by contracting an armed response security provider, and ensuring their homes have electric fencing. Many suburbs have controlled access, a measure that comes close to eliminating crime in those areas. A far bigger safety threat is presented by public transport: you should drive defensively and avoid using public transport, especially the ubiquitous minibus taxis.

Be aware of your surroundings when using ATMs, and always ask that members of the service industry swipe your credit card at the table with wireless credit card machines to avoid instances of fraud.

How much will affirmative action effect me? It depends on whether you are seeking a job or moving to take up a job. Companies with over 50 employees are penalised if they do not hire a certain proportion of previously disadvantaged staff. This can limit white job seekers, but should not impact expats with essential skills as they are exempt from such regulations.

Communications: The international access code for South Africa is +27. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (eg 0044 for the United Kingdom). As of 8 January 2007, South Africa has changed to 10-digit dialling (so city codes must be included, eg 021 for Cape Town) and international dialling has changed from 09 to 00. GSM mobile phone networks providing 900 and 1800 frequencies serve the country. Mobile service providers offer very cheap 'pay-as-you-go' Sim cards, which are a good option for visitors staying for some time. Internet cafes are widespread, as are coin operated pay phones.

Internet: South Africa lags behind the US and Europe in terms of fast, affordable internet access. Broadband is a recent phenomenon and is comparatively expensive.

- main telecoms provider: www.telkom.co.za
- reliable internet provider: www.mweb.co.za
- wireless internet access: www.iburst.co.za

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Embassy contact details

South Africa Embassies

- Washington, United States: +1 202 232 4400
- London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7451 7299
- Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 744 0330
- Canberra, Australia (also responsible for New Zealand): +61 (0)2 6272 7300
- Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 661 5553

Foreign Embassies in South Africa

- United States Embassy, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 431 4000
- British High Commission, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 421 7733
- Canadian High Commission, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 422 3000
- Australian High Commission, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 423 6000
- Irish Embassy, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 342 5062
- New Zealand High Commission, Pretoria: +27 (0)12 342 8656/7/8/9

Useful links

Wordtravels has an extensive travel guide to South Africa:

- <http://wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/South+Africa>

Banking, Money and Taxes in South Africa:

- South African Revenue Service: www.sars.gov.za
- Tax advice from HSBC: www.offshore.hsbc.com
- Investec Private Bank: www.investecprivatebank.co.za
- Absa bank: www.absa.co.za
- Rand Merchant Bank: www.randmerchantbank.com

Safety in South Africa:

- Security provider: www.adt.co.za

Visa and work permits for South Africa:

- Julian Pokroy immigration lawyers: www.immigration-sa.co.za
- Eisenberg immigration agency: www.migratesa.com

Shipping and removals in South Africa:

- Air and sea freight: www.excessbaggage.com
- Sea freight: www.shipit.co.uk and www.seawing.co.uk
- Pet shipping: www.petrelocation.com

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EXPAT GUIDE: CAPE TOWN

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Moving to Cape Town

Cape Town's considerable popularity as an expat destination rests on its celebrated natural beauty and many outdoor attractions coupled with a fairly relaxed lifestyle, easily accessible culture and mild climate.

Despite its size, Cape Town has all the trappings of an international city with excellent restaurants and cafes, world-class shopping, and top quality private healthcare.

The laid-back atmosphere of the city appeals to expats looking for a healthy, balanced alternative to the high stress work environment of other international cities. Rush-hour traffic is benign compared with that of Johannesburg, especially if you reside in the city bowl, which is close to the central business district.

Cape Town is South Africa's most efficiently run metropolis and crime levels are lower than any of the country's other large cities. However, public transport is poor and it's often necessary to rent or purchase your own vehicle.

Working in Cape Town

Cape Town follows an eight-hour, five-day working week. The city does not have the aggressive work culture of Johannesburg, and many expats enjoy the more balanced lifestyle afforded here.

A work visa is required before taking up employment. You can apply for this at the South African consulate in your country of origin. You are at a big advantage if you are being relocated to Cape Town by your company as it will demonstrate that you have key skills – a prime requisite for being granted a work visa.

Commercially, Cape Town is small compared with Johannesburg and other international cities, but the media industry, IT sector and asset management businesses are well represented here, and a relatively high-proportion of expats work in these sectors. Cape Town is also becoming a hub for the west African oil industry and hosts big employers such as BAT and De Beers.

For more information about work permits, banking and more read the [South Africa guide](#).

Shipping and removals

Shipping costs depend on volume and length of shipping time. Air freight is the quickest but also the most expensive. A cost-effective shipping solution from Europe will take approximately four weeks.

Customs clearance may add further time. Note that left-hand vehicles cannot be imported into the country.

To ship pets to South Africa you will need a Veterinary Health Certificate, or equivalent, and your animals may need to undergo quarantine period of up to six months.

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Accommodation and domestic help

Below you will find information about:

- [Accommodation](#)
- [Areas and suburbs](#)
- [Renting property](#)
- [Domestic help](#)

Accommodation

Cape Town is a fairly compact city and the most convenient and safe neighbourhoods are clustered in the city bowl, or around the coast within ten kilometres of the city centre.

House prices are among the highest in the country but rental prices are good value. It is recommended to rent a serviced apartment before arrival while researching which area to live in. Note that furnished accommodation in Cape Town is difficult to find and more expensive to rent during the summer tourist season. A big advantage to accommodation in Cape Town is the affordability of domestic help.

Favourite expat areas in the city bowl are Tamboerskloof, Oranjezicht, Higgovale, and Gardens, while Sea Point, Green Point, Clifton, and Camps Bay on the Atlantic seaboard are also popular. In the suburbs, some 30 minutes from the city, the leafy areas of Rondebosch, Claremont, Newlands are also popular with families due to larger property sizes and their proximity to good schools.

Areas and suburbs

Chief among the many advantages to expat life in Cape Town is the opportunity to live in the heart of the city without experiencing the urban rush. The most popular areas for expats living in the City Bowl are *Gardens* and *Vredehoek*, which offer good value property and rental in exchange for a barrelling wind off the the mountain.

Closer to the heart of the city and lapping the slopes of Lion's Head are the attractive and affluent suburbs of *Oranjezicht* and *Tamboerskloof*, known for Victorian double-volume houses in close proximity. Across the Kloof Nek Road, *Higgovale* offers more modern properties on large, secluded plots.

It is also possible to live in the heart of the city, as office blocks are repurposed into apartments and residential lifestyle centres; a good example of such a development is the Rhodes-Mandela Place building opposite St George's Cathedral.

Southern suburbs

Long-term expats often drift away from the city centre to the leafy idylls of the southern suburbs. Many families choose to live in the Southern Suburbs as houses and gardens are larger and many of the better schools are here. Additionally, the beaches of False bay are not far away. The areas around UCT, such as *Mowbray*, *Rosebank*, and *Observatory* are bohemian and inexpensive, although chiefly colonised by students.

A little further away are middle-class bastions of *Rondebosch*, *Claremont*, *Newlands* and *Kenilworth* with free-standing homes, and with good schools and parks nearby. Further around the mountain you will find the affluent suburbs of *Constantia* and *Bishopscourt* – the embassy district – both with a quasi-rural feel thanks to enormous properties and frequent sightings of horses trotting about. The key disadvantage to living in the Southern Suburbs is the traffic to town during rush hour.

False Bay

The False Bay seaboard encompasses *Muizenberg*, *Fish Hoek* and *Simonstown*, quiet, historic towns linked by a scenic

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drive and railway line winding along the coast. These areas are becoming increasingly popular with first-time home buyers, although will only appeal to the expat with either an aversion to city life or an addiction to surfing.

Atlantic seaboard

To the east of the City Bowl, folding along the seaboard around Lion's Head, are the suburbs of Greenpoint, Seapoint, Clifton and Camps Bay. *Greenpoint*, now centred around the recently completed World Cup Stadium and close to the V&A Waterfront, is a vibrant mix of trendy apartments and bars, and well established old timers. Properties tend to be densely packed and mostly flats and apartments.

Seapoint, its neighbour, is a mix of high-rise apartments facing the sea, and housing dotting the slopes of Lion's Head. The area is centre of Cape Town's Jewish community and is popular too with the young and trendy. Further along the coast is *Clifton*, home to South Africa's most expensive real estate. This area overlooks Clifton's picturesque four beaches, which are framed by granite boulders, and feels removed from the city despite being only a short drive away.

Camps Bay

The drive over Kloof Nek takes one into *Camps Bay*, the sloping area positioned between the 12 Apostles of Table Mountain and the beach below.

Ever popular with expats due to the dramatic scenery and close proximity to both sea and city, there is a wide range of accommodation available from free-standing homes to upmarket bachelor flats. Other advantages are that the commute into town is benign even in rush hour, and that Camps Bay receives the last of the city's sunshine each day. On the other hand the strong south-eastern winds in summer can be unpleasant.

Hout Bay

One of the more popular areas for those expats wishing to live outside the city is *Hout Bay*, starting point for Chapman's Peak drive. Hout Bay has its own beach and a charming little harbour, reinforcing the village-like atmosphere that residents enjoy. On the downside is a rapidly growing informal settlement that encroaches on the established properties.

Northern suburbs

Durbanville and its surrounding conurbation rivals Cape Town for size, and is popular with expats seeking to live outside the city centre, closer to the Winelands. The area has a reputation for both safety and urban mundanity. The morning commute into the city centre along the N1 frequently exceeds one hour.

Table Bay

The areas of *Table View* and *Bloubergstrand* sit across the bay from the city centre and have magnificent views of Table Mountain. This area is popular because of the close proximity to the beach and moderate property values when compared to the city bowl. The area is a globally renowned water sports centre during the summer months. The downside of living here is the traffic congestion experienced if commuting to the City Bowl.

Renting property

Most expats will rent a property initially. In many cases a rented property may be provided through your employer.

Renting in Cape Town is a simple process. All that is generally required is one month's deposit, proof of income and, in some cases, a letter of introduction from your employer.

There is wide range of accommodation available to suit every budget and taste, including both furnished and unfurnished accommodation. Depending on season furnished accommodation can be harder to come by. Townhouses and clusters are normally located inside a secure development, with access security and electrified perimeters.

Property agents

Provide the agent a list of your requirements, but give only a broad budget as rentals are negotiable within a 10-20% range. Tenants pay no fees for the agent's services and they will additionally provide and expedite any paperwork required

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when signing the lease. Note that tenants are liable for the utilities bills, although rates are included in the rental.

Other sources for finding rental accommodation in Cape Town include the classifieds section of the Argus newspaper (Saturday edition) and the Cape Times property section on Wednesdays. A popular online resource is Gumtree (www.gumtree.co.za) where you will find useful list of estate agents.

Timing

The best time to look for rentals is between May and September; during the summer months apartments are often reserved for lucrative short-term holiday lets.

Domestic help

It is very normal in South Africa to employ domestic staff such as cleaners/maids, nannies and gardeners. For many expats in Cape Town, particularly those with small children, the availability of cheap staff is a major bonus. You should not consider employing domestic staff as exploitation, this industry is a major employer in South Africa and the prospect of relatively well paid work also attracts many Malawians and Zimbabweans to Cape Town.

How much should I pay?

The minimum wage is R1066 per month for staff in urban areas, but this is hardly enough to live on and will not attract good quality staff, or inspire reliability or honesty. R1 600 should be regarded as a minimum for domestic help (laundry and cleaning) and R1 800 where they are also required to look after children. Staff with experience and good references will expect R2500 to R3000. Good cooks and competent drivers can also expect more. Live-in staff will expect food and accommodation as part of the package, and live-out staff may expect additional pay to compensate them for travel costs. Daily rates are between R100 - R150.

Au-pairs (which confusingly is what better qualified, usually white, nannies are called) will generally not expect to do housework, but will collect children from school and do the shopping etc. They can expect pay of anything up to R10,000 per month.

What is a thirteenth cheque?

This is a payment of an additional month's pay in December; it is a bonus, but is still expected by domestic staff.

Annual leave

The annual leave entitlement is 21 days, which works out as 15 working days. Staff often want to take leave over Christmas, when South African staff often head back to the Eastern Cape and Malawi and Zimbabwe staff take the long trip home to see their families. Try to agree dates well in advance.

New mothers are entitled to four months unpaid maternity leave, and the job must be kept open for them.

South African staff can often request to take leave to attend a funeral of one of their extended family. The entitlement for compassionate leave is five days a year, but flexibility is usually given.

HIV / Aids

With the high rate of Aids in South Africa, new expats to Cape Town often ask if they can get nannies tested for HIV. Note that you cannot demand that they get tested and nor can their employment depend on this. The chances of infection are very low, but it is often sensible to send new employees on a first aid course, where precautions are explained.

See the [Marvellous Maids website](#) for more detail on employing domestic help in South Africa.

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See and do

Below you will find information about:

- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Cost of living](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [See and do](#)
- [Where can I meet other expats?](#)
- [Child-friendly activities](#)

For information about Bupa International healthcare [click here](#).

Lifestyle

Life in Cape Town is a lesson in the art of leisure. Capetonians are self-proclaimed hedonists and expats moving to the Mother City will be hard pressed to turn a blind eye to the intricacies of indulgence for too long.

The city is a naturalist's playground with a cosmopolitan heartbeat. Those relocating can enjoy a lifestyle that balances an emphasis on the great outdoors and an appreciation for arts, culture and entertainment.

It's possible to climb Table Mountain in the morning, go wine tasting in the afternoon and enjoy a 12-course dinner in one of the world's top 100 restaurants in the evening.

Shopping

Cape Town has an abundance of locally inspired and uniquely creative shopping options. The city has a strong counterculture movement that makes for a fertile ground of young designers, stylists, artisans and craftspeople. In many cases, each individual or collective has their own shop or studio. There are also plenty of standard department stores to satisfy every consumerist need.

The Old Biscuit Mill outdoor organic market has gone global and is a great way to spend a Saturday morning.

For a more standard mall experience, the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront houses all the main stores in South Africa as well as some very high-end international names.

Cost of living

Expats find Cape Town to be very good value in terms of accommodation, entertainment, clothing and staff. Vehicles are comparatively expensive as are international flights. Credit is expensive with a prime lending rate of around 14%.

Language

English is widely spoken and is the lingua franca for business and government. Afrikaans, closely related to Dutch, and Xhosa are technically the two most popular languages.

Weather

Cape Town has a mild Mediterranean climate with dry, windy winters (Jul - Oct), and rainy, hot summer months (Dec - Apr). Atlantic currents ensure the sea water is very cold.

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See and do

Cape Town might have less business opportunities than its big brother city in Gauteng but it has far more going for it in terms of world-class attractions and things to see and do.

Whether you're into historic sites and moving museums, or scenic cruises and gorgeous beaches, Cape Town has plenty to keep its expat residents occupied on weekends and in the latter half of the short work days.

Unusually for a South African city, Cape Town centre is safe and suitable for exploring on foot. Maps and self-directed itineraries are available from the tourist office on Long Street. Some of the key sites include Robben Island, former prison to Nelson Mandela; Table Mountain which can be accessed by walking path or cable car; and the Winelands, a short drive or bus tour away.

Castle of Good Hope: By some margin the oldest building in the country, the pentagonal Castle was built in 1679 to replace the first mud fort built by Jan van Riebeck. The stone walls were previously lapped by waves before a land reclamation project in the 19th century. www.castleofgoodhope.co.za / Tel: 021 787 1249

Greenmarket Square: From slave market to flea market, Greenmarket Square has undergone many transformations. Today it is the vibrant centre of the city, lined with hotels, chic stores, coffee shops while the centre is packed with African craft vendors.

Table Mountain: Named for the tablecloth of cloud that regularly covers its plateau, this mountain is the most popular tourist attraction and worldwide symbol of the city. There are numerous walking routes up, but the rotating cable car is the most popular way to access the stunning views from the top. www.tablemountain.net / Tel: 021 424 8181

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens: Famous for its astounding collection of plantlife, rolling lawns and sculptures, Kirstenbosch enjoys a magnificent setting on the slopes of Table Mountain, a short drive from the city centre. The Sunday sunset concerts held in summer are a great – though busy – time to visit. Tel: 021 799 8783

Clifton and Camps Bay beaches: The Atlantic seafront has the closest beaches to the city centre and some of its best. Clifton beaches 1 to 4 are known for privacy and granite boulders; Camps Bay for its pristine stretch of golden sand and cosmopolitan vibe.

District Six Museum: District Six was until the 1960s a vibrant area near the city centre before the forced removal of its residents by the Apartheid government. Visit this excellent museum to understand the experiences of its residents and subsequent repercussions, still being felt today. www.districtsix.co.za / Tel: 021 466 7200

Victoria & Alfred (V&A) Waterfront: The Waterfront is popular with expats, locals and tourists for its variety and safe surrounds. After all, it is a busy harbour, richly historical site and the city's busiest shopping and restaurant centre. www.waterfront.co.za / Tel: 021 408 7600

Bo-Kaap: The Bo-Kaap is the historical Malay Quarter of the city, known for its brightly coloured houses and proud Muslim heritage. Less of a tourist site, rather a colourful and resilient reminder of the multi-cultural heritage at the heart of Cape Town's history.

Two Oceans Aquarium: This world-class aquarium is based at the V&A Waterfront and houses over 3,000 sea animals from both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Educational and hugely entertaining. www.aquarium.co.za / Tel: 021 418 3823

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Where can I meet other expats?

There are substantial populations of British, German, French and American expats in Cape Town. Each community has vibrant sporting and social clubs to help recent arrivals get connected. Examples include the Swiss Social and Sports Club, Alliance Française, and the local branch of Hash House Harriers running club.

Attractions for kids

If you're moving to Cape Town with kids you will be mercifully free of the drastic adjustments required for other expat destinations. Cultural adjustments are few, and provided they speak English your children have the advantage of being understood by the locals.

Child-friendly activities

Around Table Mountain, areas such as Kirstenbosch, False Bay, Silvermine and Cape Point are perfect for a day out in splendid nature with long walks and plenty of wildlife to appreciate. There are also lots of gentle bike tracks on the mountain and at Cape Point.

There are also the beaches, which are scenic, clean and free. Watch out for the water, though, as it is normally very cold. Another way to enjoy a hot day with the family is to head off to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens which has safe and expansive lawns for children to run around on and lots of gorgeous scenery and splendid greenery.

If it's windy (summer months) or cold and wet (winter) go to the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront where craft markets, boat rides and restaurants will keep the kids entertained. The Two Oceans Aquarium is also found here and provides a fascinating and educational experience for children.

Attraction suggestions:

- **Boulders Beach - Simonstown**
Share the boulder strewn beach with a giant colony of curious Jackass penguins.
- **Ratanga Junction - Milnerton**
Cape Town's only theme park has some exciting rides headlined by the Cobra, and some water themed shoots that provide a welcome dousing in summer.
- **Butterfly World - Klapmuts**
This enormous tropical greenhouse is home to thousands of exotic featured butterflies flying freely in the humid interior. Tread carefully; There is also a spider room, a collection of anacondas and a reptile room.
- **Scratch Patch - Kalk Bay**
Let the kids loose to search for precious stones, minerals and gems - they get to keep what they find.
- **World of Birds and Monkey Park - Hout Bay**
Africa's biggest (and loudest) collection of bird and primates proves a reliable delight for young children. A well-equipped play area and good tearoom rounds out the experience.
- **Seal Island - Hout Bay**
Head out to Duiker Island for astounding views and close-up experience of a large seal colony; also popular with Great White sharks which patrol the waters

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Education

Below you will find information about:

- [Pre-school and childcare](#)
- [International schools](#)
- [Private schools](#)
- [Universities](#)
- [School dates](#)

Cape Town has a range of public schools (government run), private schools (independent) and international schools. Education standards vary considerably at government schools, while private schools offer consistently high levels of education – with a price to match.

There is an American International School in Constantia, a German school in the city bowl, and four International Schools scattered in the suburbs. The International School of Cape Town in Wynberg follows the English curriculum. The best domestic private schools include Bishops (Diocesan College) in Rondebosch, Redham House near the US Embassy in Tokai, and the Waldorf School in Constantia. The best known private girls schools are Herschel and St Cyprians.

The school year runs from mid January to early December, across three or four equal terms, with short holidays over Easter, June, September and December. Applications must be made well in advance of arrival at the school concerned and you may need to apply to Home Affairs for a study permit.

Pre-school and childcare

Pre-school facilities are run privately and can be found in most suburbs catering to toddlers and young children. Classes run from around 8am to 12.30pm, with late hours available for an additional fee.

Some of the best resources, apart from word-of-mouth, for sourcing the right pre-school are:

- Cape Town's Child: free-monthly magazine with useful listings
- Kiddicare: www.kiddicare.co.za
- Kidzworld: www.kidzworld.co.za

Certain pre-schools operate on a franchise model, such as:

- Montessori (branches in Hour Bay, Cape Town, Sea Point) www.mariamontessori.biz
- Moms & Tots (branches in Bergvliet, Claremont, Cape Town) www.momsandtots.co.za

Long-term expats should consider that certain pre-schools are feeders for some of the city's best schools and it may help the admission process to have attended the right facilities.

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International schools

International schools are a popular choice for expat parents looking to ensure continuity in their children's education. Standards are generally high with teaching staff often made of expatriates experienced in delivering the core curriculum of their home system.

A further advantage for expat children is the opportunity to form connections with children from diverse countries and backgrounds who nevertheless share the complex experience of being an expat child. Fees naturally vary, yet are generally on a par with domestic private schools in Cape Town.

- International School of Cape Town, Wynberg: www.isct.co.za. Ages: 4 to 19, curriculum: British
- Co-Ed Deutsche Schule Kapstadt, Gardens: www.dsk.co.za. Ages: 5 to 18, curriculum: German
- French School, Gardens: www.ecolefrancaiseducap.org. Ages: 4 to 18, curriculum: French
- American International School of Cape Town, Constantia: www.aisct.org.za. Ages: 4 to 19, curriculum: International
- International School of Hout Bay: www.houtbay.iesedu.com. Ages: 3 to 18, curriculum: British
- Chester House: www.chesterhouse.co.za. Ages: 4 to 18, curriculum: Cambridge International Examinations

Private school

Cape Town has excellent private schools, ranging from pedigreed unisex institutions to alternative education models. Fees can be very high, but in return students enjoy high-quality teaching, excellent facilities from cutting-edge science labs to top notch sports fields, cultural activities, and support services that maximise pupils' chances of excelling.

Anglican

Most private schools are nominally Anglican, with daily chapel periods and gentle encouragement towards Christian values. The best of these are:

- Bishops Dicesan College, Rondebosch: www.bishops.org.za
- St Cyprian's School, Oranjezicht: www.stcyprians.co.za
- Reddam House, Tokai and Sea Point: www.reddamhouse.org.za
- Abbots College, Claremont: www.abbotts.co.za

International

There are some excellent international schools in Cape Town, increasingly popular with locals due to the high standard of education and internationally recognised curricula.

Jewish

There are 10 United Kerzlia schools in Cape Town (www.herzlia.com) from pre-primary to senior level. Standards of education are high, with plenty of emphasis on religious instruction, Hebrew, and life skills training. Sport is typically not a priority.

Catholic

There are many Catholic and convent schools, the best of which are St Mary's and St Agnes in the inner city, Springfield Convent in Wynberg, St Johns in Parklands, and St Joseph's.

Islamic

Islamia College in Rondebosch is an independent school that integrates academic education with Islamic instruction and study of the Koran. The school is known for a strong work ethic and some of the best academic performers in the province.

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Waldorf

There are nine Waldorf schools (www.waldorf.org.za) in the province from pre-primary to senior. The Waldorf system aims to nurture each learner as a unique human being and to graduate balanced, integrated pupils from its schools.

Universities

Apart from being significant employers of expats, Cape Town's four universities offer internationally accredited degree and courses.

- **University of Cape Town**

The country's oldest university was founded in 1829 on the picturesque slopes of Table Mountain. Today it has both the highest number of A-rated scientists in Africa and the most foreign students.

- **University of the Western Cape**

Founded in 1959 as a separate college for non-white students, UWC has evolved into an internationally respected university with over 12 000 students in 68 departments, institutes and research centres.

- **Stellenbosch University**

Located in the heart of the Winelands in historic Stellenbosch, this predominantly Afrikaans language instruction university is highly regarded for its research institutions.

- **Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

The former Cape and Peninsula technikons have now been amalgamated into the largest university in the Western Cape, with over 25,000 students on two main campuses. Their IT centre is the largest on the continent.

- **University of South Africa**

Officially the largest correspondence university in the world, Pretoria-based University of South Africa (UNISA) offers distance education to over 300,000 students in South Africa and abroad. Many of their degrees are recognised in the US, a rarity among South African universities.

School dates

Normally public and private schools have different term times, with private school operating on a three-term system and public school four terms. Additionally coastal and inland public schools have slightly different vacation timetables.

Public school dates (2011) in Cape Town

Term 1	17 Jan - 1 Apr
Term 2	11 Apr - 24 Jun
Term 3	18 Jul - 30 Sept
Term 4	10 Oct - 9 Dec

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Useful information

Time: The local time in Cape Town is GMT + 2 hours. No daylight savings adjustments are made.

Electricity: Cape Town's electrical current is 230 volts, 50Hz. Round, three-pin plugs are used, however European and US adaptors are easily available in supermarkets, luggage shops and hardware stores.

Money: The Rand (ZAR), divided into 100 cents, is the South African currency. It is easy to change money at banks, bureau de change and any of the big hotels. There are abundant ATMs around the city and major international credit cards are commonly accepted, although not in petrol stations. American Express is increasingly hard to use. Be careful when drawing money from ATMs as scams and snatch and grab crimes are common.

Language: South Africa has 11 official languages, the majority being Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho. English is spoken by most Capetonians, although statistically Afrikaans is the most common language.

Health: Expats flying into Cape Town from infected areas must have a yellow fever vaccination certificate. Cape Town has good quality tap water and it is safe to drink, possessed of a zesty tang of which expats grown quite fond.

Tipping: Waitering is the very lifeblood of the many Cape Town communities. A 10% tip is standard for good service. One should also tip a few rands for petrol attendants and newspaper vendors. Golf caddies should be tipped accordingly. Informal 'car guards' work the parking lots and open bays of the city and will presume to look after your parked car. You are expected to tip a few rands on your return.

Safety: Cape Town might be the safest of South Africa's big cities but remains a dangerous place compared to most popular international destinations. Opportunistic crime is the biggest threat so expats should take appropriate precautions by locking doors when driving and walking along on isolated beaches or remote areas. Expats should contract private security and armed response for their homes as the police service is unreliable though improving.

The biggest security providers are ADT and Chubb. Larger apartment blocks will have their own front-desk security, but smaller units will only have security if provided by the body corporate.

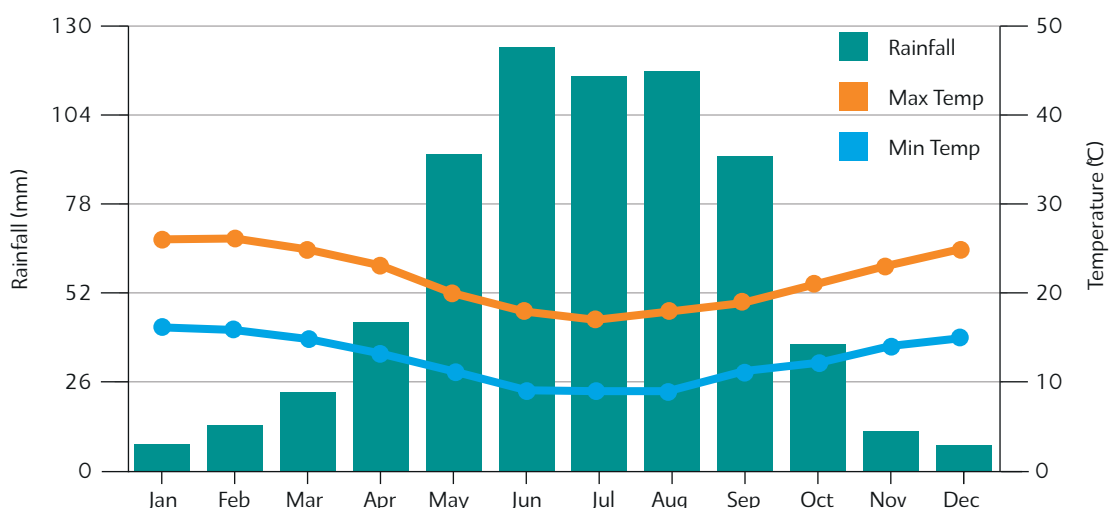
Emergency Numbers: 10111 (Police); 10177 (Ambulance)

Communications: The international dialling code for South Africa is +27, followed by 21 for Cape Town. The outgoing code is 00. GSM mobile phone networks providing 900 and 1800 frequencies are available in Cape Town and throughout the country. Mobile phone uptake is massive here and service providers offer very cheap 'pay-as-you-go' SIM cards, and good value contracts. Under the new RICA law all SIM cards must be registered with the authorities. Internet service is widespread though relatively expensive and slow.

Climate: Cape Town is located close to the tip of the African continent on the Cape Peninsula, and has a largely Mediterranean climate, but with warm, dry summers and chilly, wet winters. Cape Town's weather is strongly affected by winds and pressure systems from the Atlantic Ocean.

Summer weather is frequently characterised by strong south-easterly winds known as the Cape Doctor. Winters, on the other hand, get plenty of cold fronts, storms with lashing rain and powerful north-westerly winds. The mountains of the Winelands are dusted with snow in mid-winter.

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