



THE DONGOLA

GUESTHOUSE

Some tips and tricks for traveling in South Africa

Safety

The fear of being robbed is high among many tourists visiting South Africa. The main targets are usually shy, fearful and disoriented tourists who are visibly equipped with money bags, expensive cameras and flashy jewellery. You do yourself the biggest favour if you do not act completely scared. It is helpful to find out in advance where to find what and not to wander around haphazardly forever. Look at the people around you. Move confidently and purposefully. Only get into cabs that are registered with a cab company and equipped with a taximeter. Another safe transportation option is Uber.

Any South African will advise you to behave streetwise to avoid falling victim to criminals. This means to be attentive and cautious as soon as you move outside your own four walls. Daydreaming through the streets is not possible in a country like South Africa. A little attention is enough to reduce the dangers to a minimum. You should move only in safe areas and in case of doubt ask locals, hosts and hotel owners, in which parts of the city / suburbs you should rather not be on the road. In addition, there are parts of the city that are considered safe during the day but should be avoided in the evening/at night. Valuables should be kept in the hotel safe. Mobile phones, wallets and anything else you carry around with you should be put in a bag. Whether in the room, in the car or on the road, nothing of value should be visible. If you park your car, you should put everything (including sweaters and supermarket bags) in the trunk.

If you are actually robbed, keep calm and hand over EVERYTHING without resistance, no matter what and how much it is. To risk your life because of a camera is completely insane. You should be aware that most criminals are unpredictable and will not hesitate to pull a knife on you if you resist (even for very little money).

Time

The saying "Europeans have the clock, Africans have the time" is not without reason. The African Time is much more imprecise in its concept than the South African Time. The African Time describes a culturally determined relaxed relationship to time. This is expressed mainly in slowness, impreciseness and unreliability. So there is a completely different attitude to time among Africans than among Europeans. While the European adapts himself strictly to the time, the African sees the time rather as an elastic and subjective matter. It is best to adjust to the slowness of the country from the beginning so that you do not spend your vacation frustrated. If you get an invitation to a private dinner or braai (barbeque of the South Africans) you should be 10-15min late. This is part of the courtesy. Only at business meetings it is different. There it is



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expected that you arrive punctually at the agreed time. If something has to be done urgently, the word 'now' is not enough. This stands for soon or as soon as I have time. Use 'now now now' instead. This is the closest to the European 'right now'. South Africans often put an '-ish' after a time. For example: 'let's meet around ten-ish'. The abbreviation means 'so around that time' and the time always goes in the direction of later. If the '-ish' is attached to a specific time, you should add 5 to 30 minutes to the time.

Culture

South Africa is literally a rainbow nation. People of different shades, culture, religion and origin are native South Africans. In South Africa, people always address each other by their first names and introduce themselves in the same way. It doesn't matter if you already know the other party, the other person is older, you are talking on the phone or you have a business meeting. Black South Africans address their peers as Sisi, sister, or Bhuti, brother, regardless of whether they are Xhosa or not. If the conversation partner is older, i.e. around the age of the parents, a woman is addressed as Mama and a man as Tata. These four terms are part of the South African slang and create a friendly atmosphere of togetherness in the South African everyday life.

No matter how annoyed you are, you should always remain polite and respectful. South Africans usually respond with a friendly 'No, thank you', 'Sorry brother' or 'Next time sister' when they don't want to give anything to pushy hawkers or beggars. With these phrases one is usually left alone the fastest. Some tourists are conspicuous because they react grumpily to the beggars or even ignore them. This usually leads to longer discussions than a short friendly refusal. An unfriendly tone does not go down well in a country where a disproportionate number of people are struggling for their livelihood and at the same time a lot of value is placed on friendliness.

In South Africa, a distinction is made between coloured and black inhabitants. The main differentiating factor is the mother tongue and the cultural circle from which one comes. Coloured South Africans usually speak Afrikaans and have a very different cultural background than, say, a black African Xhosa. Sometimes, however, the distinction between black and coloured may seem a bit absurd to a European.

Describing someone by the colour of their skin or classifying people by the colour of their skin is not necessarily racist. As a European, one often does not realize that the main colour in South Africa not only gives information about the appearance, but also about the place of origin, the language, the religion and the tradition of the people. This helps to narrow down the cultural background of the person you are talking to. South Africans have no fear of the words black, white and coloured, unlike Europeans. Black people have no problem saying they are black and the people are proud to be Zulu, Cape Coloured or white.