

Southern Africa Directory

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This chapter describes general aspects of travel, including activities, accommodation and common facilities in the Southern African region. There is also a separate Directory in each country chapter, which provides more detailed and specific information.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Southern Africa encompasses a wide variety of definitions, from a patch of turf to pitch a tent on to opulent lodges that defy any star rating. Options in this book are listed in order of price. Although prices vary immensely from country to country, budget travellers can generally get a night's sleep for under US\$50, or even under US\$40 in South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho. Midrange options cost US\$50 to US\$100, peaking at around US\$125 in some parts of Zimbabwe.

Top-end options charge from US\$100. Check individual directories for the budget breakdown used in that chapter.

B&Bs & Guesthouses

B&Bs and guesthouses are interchangeable terms in much of Southern Africa. They range from a simple room in someone's house to well-established B&Bs with five-star ratings and deluxe accommodation. B&Bs and guesthouses are most prevalent in South Africa, where the standards are high and features such as antique furniture, private verandas, florid gardens and a pool are common. Indeed some of the finest accommodation on the continent is found in B&Bs along the Garden Route. Breakfast is usually included and almost always involves gut-busting quantities of eggs, bacon, toast and other cooked goodies.

Camping

Camping is also popular, especially in national parks, at coastal and lakeshore areas, and in more expensive destinations, such as Botswana. Some camping grounds are quite basic, while others have a range of facilities, including hot showers and security fences. Wild (or free) camping (ie not at an official site) is another option, but security can be a problem and wild animals are always a concern, so choose your tent site with care.

In the national parks and wildlife reserves, there's a wide choice of accommodation, ranging from simple camping grounds to cabins, chalets, bungalows and luxurious camps and lodges. It's important to note that 'camp' doesn't necessarily denote a camp site (although it may). A camp is usually a well-

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- News magazines that cover the continent include *Africa Today*, *Business Africa* and the best, BBC's *Focus on Africa*. All are available from newsagents in South Africa and bookshops in capital cities elsewhere. *Getaway to Africa* magazine covers travel in Southern Africa, with articles ranging from epic 4WD trips to active and not-so-active tours all over the region.
- The beautiful, glossy *Africa Geographic*, published bimonthly, should be considered an essential subscription for every Africa buff. Bird-watchers will also want to read the excellent bimonthly *Africa Birds & Birding*. For subscriptions to these magazines contact **Africa Geographic** (☎ 27-21-686 9001; www.africa-geographic.com; Black Eagle Publishing, PO Box 44223, Claremont 7735, South Africa).
- All the countries covered in this book use the metric system. To convert between metric and imperial units, refer to the conversion chart on the inside front cover of this book.
- Electricity in Southern Africa is generated at 220V to 240V AC. Most plugs have three prongs (or pins), either round or rectangular ('square') in section. In South Africa, round-pin plugs are used. Outside South Africa, British-style square three-pin plugs are common. A voltage adaptor is needed for US appliances.

appointed upmarket option run by a private company. Accommodation is usually in tents or chalets made from natural materials. The contact number for these places will be at their office in a larger town, and are for bookings and inquiries only, not for direct contact with the lodge or camp.

In upmarket lodges and camps, the rates will typically include accommodation plus half board, activities (wildlife drives, boat trips etc) and perhaps even house wine and beer. It may also include laundry and transfers by air or 4WD (although these are usually extra).

Hostels

Many towns and cities on the main tourist trail have at least one hostel, and in some places – such as South Africa's Garden Route and increasingly Mozambique and Namibia – you'll have a wide choice. The hostels generally mirror small hostels anywhere else in the world and offer camping space, dorms and a few private doubles. Many also have a TV room, swimming pool, bar, restaurant, and email and phone service, as well as a travel desk where you can book tours and safaris. Several of the smarter places accept credit cards.

Another budget option, albeit dwindling but still available in Malawi and Zambia, are resthouses run by local governments or district councils. These are peppered throughout the region, and many date from colonial times. Some are very cheap and less than ap-

pealing; others are well kept and good value. In resthouses and other cheap hotels, the definition of single and double rooms is not always consistent. It may be determined by the number of beds rather than the number of people. Therefore it is not unusual for two people to share a single room (which may have a large bed), paying either the single rate or something just a bit higher. If you want to save money, it's always worth asking.

Hotels

In towns and cities, top-end hotels offer clean, air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms, while midrange hotels typically offer fans instead of air-con. At the budget end, rooms aren't always clean (and may be downright filthy), and bathrooms are usually shared and may well be in an appalling state. Often, your only source of air will be a hole in the window. Many cheap hotels double as brothels, so if this is your budget level don't be surprised if there's a lot of coming and going during the night. Some countries, including Malawi and Botswana, offer little in the way of hotels between budget and top end.

Many hotels offer self-catering facilities, which may mean anything from a fridge and a hotplate in the corner to a full kitchen in every unit. In some cases, guests will have to supply their own cooking implements – and perhaps even water and firewood.

Throughout the region you'll probably encounter hotels and lodges that charge in tiers. That is, overseas visitors are charged

international rates (full price), visitors from other Southern African countries pay a regional rate (say around 30% less) and locals get resident rates (often less than half the full rate). Most places also give discounts in the low season. In this book, where possible we've quoted the international high season rates, including the value added tax (VAT), which ranges from 10% to 30%. If you intend staying at mostly top-end hotels and lodges, it's worth scanning the internet beforehand as you may discover some heavily discounted rates.

ACTIVITIES

Southern Africa's climate and landscape make the region ideal for numerous outdoor activities – from peaceful and relaxing to energetic and downright terrifying. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides some tantalising food for thought. For finer detail check the Directory of each country chapter.

Adrenaline Activities

Southern Africa is something of a gathering place for adrenaline nuts, and a range of weird and wonderful activities keep them happily crazed. The top spot for extreme sports is Victoria Falls and Livingstone, where white-water rafting in the Zambezi and bungee jumping off the Victoria Falls bridge are hourly occurrences. The highest bungee jump in the world (allegedly) can be found in South Africa at Bloukrans River Bridge (p468), but if you're only half-nuts you can try any number of smaller ones.

Swakopmund is the adventure capital of Namibia, and sandboarding, skydiving and quad-biking through the dunes are popular pastimes arranged by hostels and hotels. In Malawi waterfall abseils and rope swings around Manchewe Falls (p180) near Livingstonia are all the rage.

Finances and infrastructure make South Africa the easiest destination to scare yourself silly. The latest growing craze is kloofing; a mix of climbing, hiking, swimming and jumping, which is commonly known elsewhere as canyoning. Hot spots include Cape Town and the Drakensberg Escarpment in Mpumalanga. See p580 for more information.

South Africa is also one of the world's top destinations for paragliding, particularly at Cape Town's Table Mountain. Although the flying is good year-round, the strongest ther-

mals are from November to April. See p579 for more information.

There is excellent and challenging climbing on the close-to-sheer faces of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (see p582) in South Africa. Climbing Namibia's Spitzkoppe (p347) is not for beginners and requires technical expertise and proper equipment, though plenty of locals and travellers tackle the summit each year.

Canoeing, Kayaking & White-Water Rafting

The Zambezi River lures white-water rafters from around the globe to tackle its angry churn, and there are plenty of operators in Zimbabwe (see p621) and Livingstone, Zambia (see p620). Canoeing is a less treacherous way to appreciate the river's flora and fauna and equally easy to organise.

In South Africa canoeing and white-water rafting are popular pursuits on the Blyde and Sabie Rivers, both in Mpumalanga province. Other watery avenues include the waterways around Wilderness National Park in the Western Cape; the Orange River, particularly through Au-grabies Falls National Park; and the Tugela. See p580 for more information. There's also some serene canoeing at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513). In Swaziland, the classic rafting destination is the Great Usutu River (see the boxed text, p608).

Rafting is highly rain-dependent, and the best months usually fall between December/January to April.

Sea kayaking is popular in sporadic locations along the coast, but it's best experienced on Lake Malawi. There are outfits in Nkhata Bay (p189) that can oblige.

Diving & Snorkelling

The best diving and snorkelling in the region is along the coast of Mozambique, particularly the Bazaruto Archipelago (p267) and Vilankulo (p265), Ponta D'Ouro (p257), Tofo (p262), Pemba (p285), Nacala (p282) and Inhaca Island (p255). Quality equipment, instruction and certification are readily available at most of these locations. But the country's least explored but arguably finest diving is the Quirimbas Archipelago; see p288 for more information. March to June and November are generally the best months for diving in Mozambique, and February (due to heavy rains) is the worst.

RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Please consider the following tips when diving and help preserve the ecology and beauty of reefs:

- Never use anchors on the reef, and take care not to ground boats on coral.
- Avoid touching or standing on living marine organisms or dragging equipment across the reef. Polyps can be damaged by even the gentlest contact. If you must hold on to the reef, touch only exposed rock or dead coral.
- Be conscious of your fins. Even without contact, the surge from fin strokes near the reef can damage delicate organisms. Take care not to kick up clouds of sand, which can smother organisms.
- Practise and maintain proper buoyancy control. Major damage can be done by divers descending too quickly and colliding with the reef.
- Take great care in underwater caves. Spend as little time within them as possible as your air bubbles may be caught within the roof and thereby leave organisms high and dry. Take turns to inspect the interior of a small cave.
- Resist the temptation to collect or buy corals or shells or to loot marine archaeological sites (mainly shipwrecks).
- Ensure that you take home all your rubbish and any litter you may find as well. Plastics in particular are a serious threat to marine life.
- Do not feed fish.
- Minimise your disturbance of marine animals. *Never* ride on the back of turtles.

In South Africa the Cape Peninsula offers superb wreck diving and giant kelp forests. The east coast is home to good coral formations and there is excellent warm-water diving on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast, particularly around Sodwana Bay (p514). The best visibility here occurs in May to September.

For a freshwater flutter, Lake Malawi offers some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world. There are good outfits in Nkhata Bay (p189) and Cape Maclear (p202).

Fishing

Southern Africa's wild and varied coastline and wealth of rivers and lakes make for profitable fishing expeditions. Cape Maclear is a good launching pad for fishing trips along Lake Malawi (see p202), and you can also fish for trout on the Zomba Plateau and at Nyika National Park (p183).

In Zambia the tigerfish of the Lower Zambezi River give a good fight, but not as good as the vundu, a catfish weighing upwards of 45kg. Most lodges along the river's banks include fishing in rates.

In South Africa anglers fish for introduced trout in many of the country's parks and

reserves; there are some particularly good highland streams in the Drakensberg.

Lesotho is an insider's tip among trout anglers. The season runs from September to May (same in South Africa), and there is a small licence fee, a size limit and a bag limit of 12 fish. The nearest fishing area to Maseru is the Makhaleg River. Other places to fish are the Malibamat'so River near Oxbow; the Mokhotlong River in the northeast; and the Thaba-Tseka main dam. See p152 for more information.

Mozambique's coast is legendary among anglers, particularly in the south between Ponta d'Ouro and Inhassoro, and in the far north around Pemba. Saltwater fly-fishing is also becoming increasingly popular. Inland, the most popular fishing areas are Barragem de Cahora Bassa near Tete, and Barragem de Chicamba Real near Chimoio. Species you are likely to encounter include marlin, kingfish, tuna, sailfish and more. Marlin season is from October/November to February/March. Tag and release is encouraged at many resorts. Officially, no more than 6kg of any one type of catch from sports and deep-sea fishing can be taken out of the country. See p292 for more information.

Football (Soccer)

Football is Africa's most popular participation and spectator sport. If you want to play, the universities and municipal stadiums are the best places to find a good-quality game, but nearly every town in Africa has pitches where informal matches are played most evenings (in coastal areas, the beach works equally well). Foreigners are usually warmly welcomed, and joining in a game is one of the best ways to meet the locals. Bring along your own ball (which could be deflated for travelling), and you'll be the hit of the day.

Otherwise, the ball used may be more suitable for tennis, or it may be half-deflated or

just a round bundle of rags, and each goal a couple of sticks, not necessarily opposite each other. You may have to deal with puddles, ditches and the odd goat or donkey wandering across the pitch, but the game itself is taken very seriously, and play is fast and furious, with the ball played low.

Hiking

Across Southern Africa there are many excellent opportunities for hiking, and this is one of the most popular activities in the region.

Namibia's Fish River Canyon (p385) is one of Africa's most spectacular hikes, but proper gear, food, water and experience are musts. In

Malawi you can trek the scenic peaks of Mt Mulanje (p219), the Zomba Plateau (p210) and the Nyika Plateau (see the boxed text, p182).

Mozambique boasts beautiful vantage points to trek to but little infrastructure so you'll likely be on your own. The country's best mountain climb is up Mt Namúli (see the boxed text, p275), which is relatively accessible and needs no special equipment. Mt Gorongosa (p270) is also good and equally straightforward. The Chimanimani Mountains are beautiful for hiking, but lack any infrastructure other than a handful of basic camp sites. Other areas for hikes include

Penha Longa (see Manica, p271), west of Chimoio, and the verdant hills around Gurùè (p276). Elsewhere, a combination of minimal infrastructure, the risk of land mines, and vast expanses of trackless bush make hiking and trekking the domain of adventurers, well equipped with compasses or a good GPS (global positioning system), camping equipment and provisions.

South Africa's undulating topography offers superb hiking opportunities. The best time to embark on any trek is March to October, outside the heat and wet of summer. Among the best walks are: the Hoerikwaggo hiking trails of Table Mountain National

RESPONSIBLE HIKING

To help preserve the ecology and beauty of Southern Africa, consider the following tips when hiking.

Rubbish

- Carry out *all* your rubbish. Don't overlook easily forgotten items, such as silver paper, orange peel, cigarette butts and plastic wrappers. Empty packaging should be stored in a dedicated rubbish bag. Make an effort to carry out rubbish left by others.
- Never bury your rubbish: Digging disturbs soil and ground cover and encourages erosion. Buried rubbish will likely be dug up by animals, who may be injured or poisoned by it. It may also take years to decompose.
- Minimise waste by taking minimal packaging and no more food than you will need. Take reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- Sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms and toilet paper should be carried out despite the inconvenience. They burn and decompose poorly.

Human Waste Disposal

- Contamination of water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of all sorts of nasties. Where there is a toilet, please use it. Where there is none, bury your waste. Dig a small hole 15cm deep and at least 100m from any watercourse. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. In snow, dig down to the soil.

Washing

- Don't use detergents or toothpaste in or near watercourses, even if they are biodegradable.
- For personal washing, use biodegradable soap and a water container (or even a lightweight, portable basin) at least 50m away from the watercourse. Disperse the waste water widely to allow the soil to filter it fully.
- Wash cooking utensils 50m from watercourses using a scourer, sand or snow instead of detergent.

Erosion

- Hillsides and mountain slopes, especially at high altitudes, are prone to erosion. Stick to existing trails and avoid short cuts.

- If a well-used trail passes through a mud patch, walk through the mud so as not to increase the size of the patch.
- Avoid removing the plant life that keeps topsoils in place.

Fires & Low-Impact Cooking

- Don't depend on open fires for cooking. The cutting of wood for fires in popular trekking areas can cause rapid deforestation. Cook on a light-weight kerosene, alcohol or Shellite (white gas) stove, and avoid those powered by disposable butane gas canisters.
- If you are trekking with a guide and porters, supply stoves for the whole team. In alpine areas, ensure that all members are outfitted with enough clothing so that fires are not a necessity for warmth.
- If you patronise local accommodation, select those places that do not use wood fires to heat water or cook food.
- Fires may be acceptable below the tree line in areas that get very few visitors. If you light a fire, use an existing fireplace. Don't surround fires with rocks. Use only dead, fallen wood. Remember the adage 'the bigger the fool, the bigger the fire'. Use minimal wood, just what you need for cooking. In huts, leave wood for the next person.
- Ensure that you fully extinguish a fire after use. Spread the embers and flood them with water.

Wildlife Conservation

- For information on hunting on Southern Africa, see the boxed text, p68.
- Don't buy items made from endangered species.
- Don't attempt to exterminate animals in huts. In wild places, they are likely to be protected native animals.
- Discourage the presence of wildlife by not leaving food scraps behind you. Place gear out of reach and tie packs to rafters or trees.
- Do not feed the wildlife as this can lead to animals becoming dependent on hand-outs, to unbalanced populations and to diseases.

Camping

- Always seek permission to camp from landowners.

Park (see p427), the five-day Whale Route in De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446) and the celebrated Otter Trail (p468), a five-day journey along the Garden Route that needs to be booked months in advance. Other notable hikes include the Tsitsikamma Trail (p468), which runs parallel to the Otter Trail, Kwa-Zulu-Natal's Giant's Cup Trail (p522) – up to five days in the southern Drakensberg and Mpumalanga's Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail (p536). See the relevant chapters and the South Africa Directory (p580) for more information.

TRAILS

Most hiking trails in Southern Africa are established and maintained by national park authorities, conservation bodies and private landowners. In South Africa, Namibia and sometimes in other countries you must pay a fee to use the trail, which covers the use of camp sites or accommodation (ranging from simple shelters to comfortable cabins) along the route. These trails are sometimes called overnight hikes; routes that take more than

one day. Typically, you can do the route in only one direction (some are traverses while others are circular), and to preserve the condition of the trail, only a limited number of people are allowed to hike on any one day. In fragile areas, departures are permitted only once or twice per week, and even day and time of departure is sometimes stipulated. You must complete the trail in the set number of days and may not link two days together (except perhaps the last two) or stay extra nights at any camp site or hut, so they never become overcrowded.

Some trails have their own regulations. For example, few hikes allow fires (hikers need to carry camping stoves), and most are limited to parties of no fewer than three and no more than 10 people. For some of Namibia's tougher routes, participants must provide a doctor's certificate of health.

In South Africa and Namibia, popular multiday hiking trails typically require a reservation through the national parks office or other relevant authority. Only the popular classics such as the Otter Trail and Fish River

Canyon are likely to be fully booked out. In South Africa, you can sometimes find a slot when someone else has cancelled (this is no longer allowed in Namibia unless it's privately arranged).

Once space has been confirmed, you are issued with a permit. This is sent by post if you have a local address, or is held ready for collection at the national park headquarters. You can pay in advance with a credit card, or on arrival. Included in the price may be an information sheet or map of the route. You must turn up at the start of the trail on the arranged date and report to the 'officer-in-charge'. You'll also have to fill in a register (with details of the number of people in your party, experience, equipment, colour of backpacks), to be used in case of an emergency. Although this sounds like an incredibly complicated way to just take a walk, travellers who have completed the popular routes – especially in South Africa – recommend the hikes highly.

Because of the bureaucracy surrounding the national parks' routes in Namibia, a growing number of private landholders have established their own long-distance routes, and many are just as rewarding as the well-known ones, but tend to cost a bit more. The best of these are outlined on p389.

One last point – in South Africa and Namibia the Afrikaans word *wandelpad* seems to refer to any kind of trail. Therefore, it's best to check the English translation, just to make sure your planned day-walk doesn't turn into a week's expedition.

Horse Riding

One of Malawi's greatest treats is a bout of horse riding in Nyika National Park (p182). Exploring the park on horseback is an excellent way to get up close and personal with the diversity of antelopes on the plateau, and you can opt for an hour, a 10-day safari or anything in between. Also in Malawi, Kande Beach Camp prides itself on its horse-riding expeditions along the Chintheche Strip; see p192 for more information.

In South Africa it's easy to find rides ranging from several hours to several days, and for all experience levels. Particularly good areas include the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513) and Limpopo's Waterberg range (p576). Riding is also offered in several national parks.

Lesotho is horse-riding utopia, with ample possibilities to navigate the mountainous terrain by horseback. The best places to organise rides are through Malealea Lodge (p150), where the rides are operated by locals, with the profits being ploughed back into the local community, and Semonkong Lodge (p148), which has a similar arrangement. You can ride for as many days as you like. Highlights include traditional Basotho villages and the jaw-dropping scenery.

Mountain Biking

It goes without saying that a region so rich in hiking opportunities will have equally rewarding mountain-biking possibilities. Outside South Africa and the main tourist areas in the region, it's relatively difficult to hire bikes, so you'll need to bring your own. For information on bringing your own bike to Southern Africa, see p755.

You can also hire local-style sit-up-and-peg steel roadsters. These are good for getting around towns (especially flat ones) or exploring rural areas at a leisurely pace.

South Africa is littered with excellent biking trails, but among the best are in the De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446), with overnight and day trails, and Citrusdal (p458), with a network of trails. Then there's Cape Town (see p427), which is something of an unofficial national hub. Nearby in Swaziland there are trails in the Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p606).

A series of dirt and gravel roads and a massive network of single-track trails in the hills south and east of Lusaka in Zambia provide hundreds of miles of mountain biking opportunities for those who want to get some exercise while exploring Zambia's rural villages. Many of the trails link together to form loops ranging from pleasant two-hour excursions to epic seven-hour circuits that wander through the rugged terrain at the edge of the Zambezi Escarpment.

In Malawi you can pedal your way through the trails in the Nyika National Park (p181), where you can also hire bikes.

Surfing

Any surfer worth their wax is familiar with the legendary waves at J-Bay, better known to nonconverts as Jeffrey's Bay (p468). Situated on the Garden Route, the town's choppy surf lures experts and amateurs from around the globe. South Africa also offers a myriad

DESERT HIKING

While desert areas of Southern Africa – especially parts of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa – offer a host of hiking opportunities, the conditions are quite different from those to which most visitors are accustomed. Tramping through this lonely countryside is a wonderful experience, but hiking isn't recommended during the heat of the summer months, when temperatures can exceed 40°C. In national parks, summer hiking is officially forbidden, and most hiking trails are closed from November or December to April or May.

In the desert heat, hikers should carry 4L of water per person per day (an excellent way to carry water is in 2L plastic Coke bottles, which are available all over the region). The most effective way to conserve water isn't necessarily to drink sparingly. Before setting off in the morning (assuming that water is available at your overnight stop), flood your body's cells with water. That is, drink more water than you feel you can possibly hold! After a few hours, when you grow thirsty, do the same again from the supply you're carrying. Believe it or not, with this method you'll actually use less water and feel less thirsty than if you drink sparingly all day long.

Another major concern is the desert sun, which can be brutal. Wear light-coloured and light-weight clothing, use a good sunscreen (at least UV Protection Factor 30) and never set off without a hat that shelters your neck and face from the direct sun.

If the heat is a major problem, it's best to rise before the sun and hike until the heat becomes oppressive. You may then want to rest through the heat of midday and begin again after about 3pm. (Note, however, that summer thunderstorms often brew up at around this time and may continue into the night.) During warmer months, it may also be worthwhile timing your hike with the full moon, which will allow you to hike at night.

Because many trails follow canyons and riverbeds, it's important to keep a watch on the weather. Rainy periods can render normally dry kloofs and streambeds impassable, and rivers with large catchment areas can quickly become raging torrents of muddy water, boulders and downed trees. Never camp in canyons or dry riverbeds, and always keep to higher ground whenever there's a risk of flash-flooding.

of less-celebrated alternatives, particularly along the Eastern Cape coast from Port Alfred northwards. The best time of the year for surfing the southern and eastern coasts is autumn and early winter (from about April to July).

Although undeveloped for surfers, Namibia's Skeleton Coast (p354) is famous for rough waves and unspoilt beaches. This stretch is only for the seriously experienced and brave, though; savage rips, icy water temperatures and the odd Great White add new dimensions of difficulty to the task at hand.

Mozambique's best waves are at Ponta d'Ouro (p256) in the far south of the country and (for skilled surfers) at Tofinho – Mozambique's unofficial surfing capital, just south of Tofo (p262). Boards can be rented at both places.

Wildlife Watching

Wildlife and bird-watching are two of the main activities that lure travellers to Southern Africa. Details on the region's fascinating wildlife are provided in the Environment chapter (p59), while visual aid is found in the colour Wildlife Guide (p69). The obvious place to spot the region's furred, feathered and scaled delights is in one of the numerous national parks – see p64 for more information. Individual country chapters also provide specifics about the best spots. For direction on organising wildlife safaris, see Tours in the Transport sections of each country.

In most places in Southern Africa, large animals are confined to national parks (or similar conservation areas), and the only way to see them is by vehicle – this is both by law and by default, as there's rarely any public transport. If you don't have a vehicle (motorcycles and bicycles don't count), your only option is to join an organised safari.

The term 'safari' (which means 'we go' in Swahili) may conjure up the image of a single-file procession of adventurers and porters stalking through the bush behind a large elephant gun, but modern usage is broader and may extend to bushwalking, river rafting, horse riding, canoeing, playing golf or just warming a seat on a train or vehicle. That said, most safaris involve wildlife viewing, which is most often done from a vehicle with open sides, large windows, or a pop-up roof to allow clear views and photographic opportunities. A driver (who doubles as guide) comes with the vehicle.

The range of wildlife-viewing safaris available in Southern Africa is enormous. They can last from a day to a month, and participants may camp outside and cook over an open fire or stay in luxury lodges and be served gourmet meals. You could charter a safari customised for your group's interests or join an already established group or prescheduled safari. You could spend a frantic day ticking species off a list or spend hours by a single water hole watching the comings and goings.

And of course, there's also a range of prices available. The best value will be participation safaris, in which clients muck in to pack and unpack the vehicle, put up their own tents, and help with cooking and washing up. These are typically good value, and are almost always highly rewarding, especially when you get off the beaten track. At the other end of the spectrum, you can pay up to US\$400 per person per day and enjoy all the comforts of home, with a camp staff to take care of all the chores.

Lots of overseas agencies (see p757) cobble together programmes using local operators, but these are typically quite expensive. Packages are generally more economical when organised on site (the exception is for safaris involving upmarket lodges, which are often block-booked by overseas agents who can get deals that are lower than rack rates). Locally, the best places to organise safaris are Cape Town, Windhoek, Harare, and the tourist towns of Livingstone and Vic Falls.

If you're on a real shoestring budget and can't afford even the cheapest of safaris, you'll probably be frustrated by the rules and regulations that appear to be designed specifically to keep you out of the parks. There is no public transport, and hitching is forbidden. Even in parks where walking is permitted, you usually have to start from the park headquarters, which is accessible only by vehicle. Hitching is prohibited *inside* the parks, but hours spent waving your thumb at the entrance gate may result in a lift that takes you where you want to go. Plan on long waits and have plenty of food and water.

BOOKS

This section lists publications covering most of Southern Africa; see also p24. Books on individual countries are listed in the relevant country chapters. Note that many books have different publishers in different countries, and

that a hardcover rarity in one country may be a readily available paperback in another, so we haven't included publishers in this list (unless relevant). In any case, bookshops, libraries and online booksellers allow you to search by title or author.

FIELD GUIDES

Southern Africa's incredible floral and faunal diversity has inspired a large number of field guides for visitors and wildlife enthusiasts. In the UK, an excellent source for wildlife and nature titles is **Subbuteo Natural History Books Ltd** (☎ 0870-0109 700; www.wildlifebooks.com). International mail orders are welcome. In the USA, try the **Adventurous Traveler Bookstore** (☎ 800 282 3963; www.adventuroustraveler.com). In Australia, check out **Andrew Isles Natural History Books** (☎ 03-9510 5750; www.andrewisles.com).

Field Guide to the Snakes and Other Reptiles of Southern Africa by Bill Branch is the one to consult if you want to know what it is that's slithering underfoot – and whether or not it's dangerous.

South African Frogs by Neville Passmore and Vincent Carruthers has all the answers for frogophiles. It concentrates on South Africa, but includes most species found north of the border.

The Field Guide to the Butterflies of Southern Africa by Igor Migdoll isn't totally comprehensive, but you probably won't encounter a butterfly that isn't included in this guide.

Complete Guide to Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa by Paul Skelton is a favourite with anglers.

Medicinal Plants of South Africa provides background information on regional medicinal plants; it's available from **Briza Publications** (☎ 12-329 3896; fax 329 4525; www.briza.co.za) in South Africa.

GENERAL

Raymond Bonner's *At the Hand of Man* discusses conservation issues and the destruction of African wildlife, holding that conservation will work only if African people see real benefits themselves.

Zambezi: Journey of a River by Michael Main is a very readable combination of history, geography, geology, anthropology, careful observation, humour, rumour and myth, following the Zambezi River through Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, with side-tracks into Malawi.

GUIDEBOOKS

If you're looking for more in-depth guidebook coverage, Lonely Planet also publishes *South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland*; *Botswana & Namibia* and *Mozambique* guides. If you're travelling the entire continent, you may want to check out *Africa on a Shoestring*. Lonely Planet also publishes guidebooks to a number of other African countries, as well as *Trekking in East Africa*, which includes routes in Malawi.

Another guidebook is *Hiking Trails of Southern Africa* by Willie and Sandra Olivier, which covers major backpacking routes in South Africa and Namibia. If walking is your game, the *Complete Guide to Hiking Trails in Southern Africa* by Jaynee Levy describes more than 350 trails in South Africa (plus another 50 or so in Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Malawi), from short nature strolls to major expeditions in wild areas.

Pan-continental motorcyclists should grip the *Adventure Motorbiking Handbook* by Chris Scott. It contains lots of information on riding through Africa.

The *Illustrated Guide to Southern Africa* (Readers Digest) and *Secret Southern Africa* (AA of South Africa) are large-format books full of photos, maps and touring descriptions. Both books are recommended for motoring around the region.

HISTORY & POLITICS

Africa by Phyllis Martin and Patrick O'Meara is the nearest you'll get to a pocket library, with scholarly but accessible essays on a wide range of subjects including history, religion, colonialism, sociology, art, popular culture, law, literature, politics, economics and the development crisis.

Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent by Blaine Harden provides provocative and pessimistic reading on several topics, such as the failure of African political leadership. In any case, the author maintains that African values endure and will eventually save the day.

Chris Munion's *Banana Sunday – Datelines from Africa* contains humorous accounts of this journalist's coverage of various African wars.

Blood on the Tracks by Miles Bredin chronicles an essentially hopeless journey between Angola and Mozambique. It's a tale of war,

bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency that neatly outlines the problems faced by modern Africa.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

The following suggestions involve several countries in Southern Africa (country-specific titles are mentioned under Books in the directories of individual country chapters).

Grains of Sand by Martin Buckley is a travelogue describing the author's travels through the deserts of the world, including both the Namib and the Kalahari.

In Quest of Livingstone by Colum Wilson and Aisling Irwin tells the story of two British travellers who follow the renowned missionary-explorer through Tanzania and Zambia on mountain bikes. It combines contemporary observations with flashbacks to Livingstone's own journals.

South from the Limpopo by Dervla Murphy chronicles the famously eccentric and beer-swilling author's cycling trip through South Africa. This is a sequel to *The Ukimwi Road*, which describes a cycling trip from Kenya to Zimbabwe.

BUSINESS HOURS

Standard opening hours vary slightly from region to region; specifics can be found in the Directory of each country. However, in general you can expect banks to open their doors on weekdays between 8am and 9am, and to close between 3pm and 3.30pm. On Saturdays banks close sometime between 11am and 1pm. Shops generally open from 8am or 9am until 5pm, and supermarkets in bigger cities tend to stay open a little longer – usually until 7pm or so. In some countries, such as Mozambique, shops often close for an hour over lunch. Cafés open as early as 7.30am and close around 5pm, often daily; however, some are closed on Sunday or Monday. Restaurants serve lunch from 11am until about 3pm and dinner from 6pm to around 10pm.

CHILDREN

Southern Africa presents few problems specific to children, and while health concerns are always an issue, food and lodging are mostly quite familiar and manageable. What's more, foreigners with children are usually treated with great kindness, and a widespread local affection for the younger set opens up all sorts of social interaction for travelling families.

In South Africa, away from the coast, many resorts, hotels and national park lodges and camping grounds have a wide range of facilities for children. Many families hire campervans in South Africa to tour the region. There are fewer child-oriented facilities in the other countries, but here the attractions usually provide entertainment enough: large wild animals in the national parks are a major draw, and even bored teenagers have been known to enjoy Vic Falls and its adrenaline activities. Namibia also lends itself to family travel by campervan, and the attractions – such as the wildlife of Etosha National Park, or the world's biggest sandbox at Sossusvlei – are entertainment in themselves.

In tourist hotels and lodges, family rooms and chalets are normally available for only slightly more than doubles. Otherwise, it's normally easy to arrange more beds in a standard adult double for a minimal extra charge. On public transport children are expected to pay for their seats unless they spend the entire journey on their parents' laps.

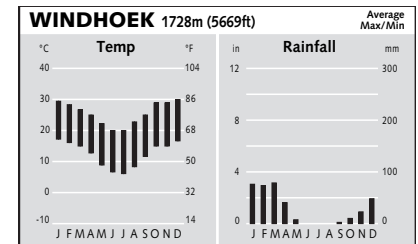
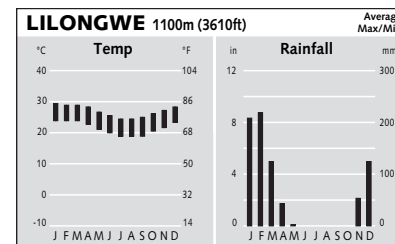
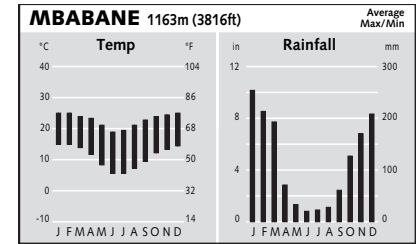
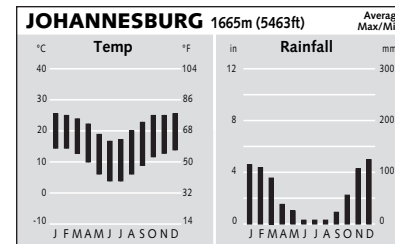
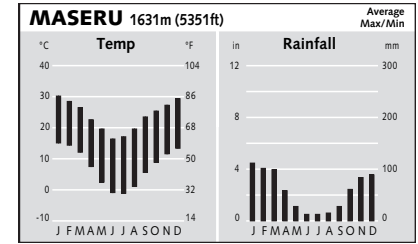
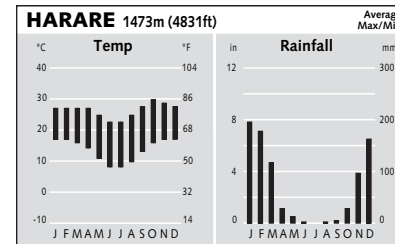
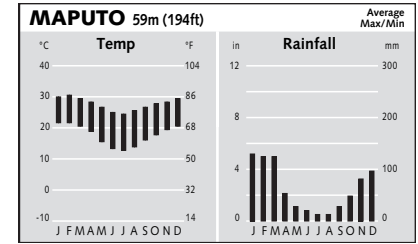
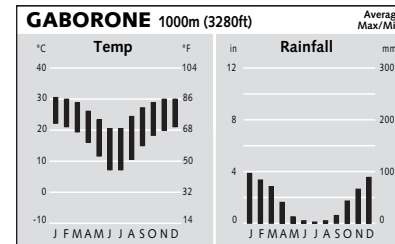
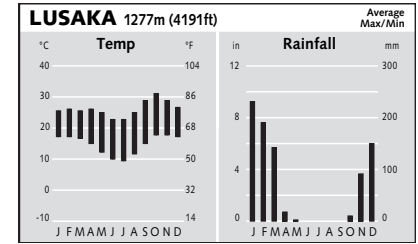
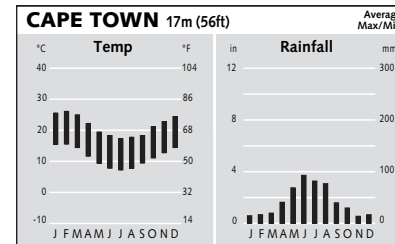
In Southern Africa, compared with some other parts of the world, there are few nasty diseases to worry about, and good (if expensive) medical services are almost always within reach; see p766 for more information on health. On the downside, distances between sites of interest can be long, especially on public transport, so parents may well need to invent creative games or provide supplementary entertainment. Children will normally enjoy having their own small backpacks to carry favourite toys or teddies, books, crayons and paper.

Outside cities and major towns in South Africa, do not plan on finding pasteurised milk, formula, or disposable nappies. They may be available sporadically, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Breast feeding in public is fairly common for locals, but in rural areas it's likely to attract significant unwanted attention for visitors.

For more advice and anecdotes, see Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*. Also see the Directory in country chapters for more specific information.

CLIMATE CHARTS

In Southern Africa, summer runs from about November to March/April, while winter is from May to July/August. By March and April, temperatures and rainfall drop and by May, the



much drier winter season begins (snow may even fall on the highlands of South Africa and Lesotho). Through June and July the weather remains dry: warm on the coast but with a huge temperature range in the interior – from 20°C in the day to below freezing at night.

From August, temperatures begin to rise and by October, most of the region is hot, and the first rains are arriving in the northernmost regions.

In the Western Cape, which is the only part of Southern Africa to experience a Mediterranean (that is, winter rainfall) climate, the pattern is different. Here, summers are warm and sunny, while winter brings typically changeable and often rainy weather.

COURSES

Courses offered in Southern Africa generally focus on activities. South Africa is one of the world's top destinations for paragliding, and there are ample opportunities for beginners to learn the ropes. The **South African Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (☎ 012-668 1219; www.sahpa.co.za) can provide names of operators, and numerous schools offer courses for beginners.

For education of a far less active nature you can ensconce yourself in an atmospheric B&B in South Africa's Winelands and enrol in a wine-tasting course. Useful contacts include: **Cape Wine Academy** (☎ 021-889 8844; www.capewineacademy.co.za), which is based in Stellenbosch and runs courses in both Stellenbosch and Cape Town; and the Nose Wine Bar (p435) in Cape Town.

Scuba diving is also extremely popular throughout the region, and Southern Africa is one of the cheapest places in the world to learn. See the Diving & Snorkelling section (p734) for the best spots to dive in the region; there are usually a good choice of schools littered around the main sites. Schools in Malawi generally win first prize for best value, with the longevity and reputation to match.

CUSTOMS

See this section in Directory under the individual country chapters for customs information, which varies from country to country in the region.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

It is very important not to make sweeping statements about personal safety in Southern Africa. While some areas are undeni-

ably risky, most places are completely safe. Essentially, violent robbery is much more prevalent in cities and towns than in rural or wilderness areas. But even towns can differ; there's more of a danger in those frequented by foreigners than in places off the usual tourist track. Details are provided in the Dangers & Annoyances section of individual country directories.

The main annoyances you'll come across in Southern Africa are the various hustlers, touts, con artists and scam merchants who recognise tourists as easy prey. Although these characters aren't always dangerous, they can part you from your valuables. Awareness, vigilance and suitable precautions are advisable, and should help you deal with them.

Popular scams include young people carrying sign-up sheets, requesting sponsorship for their school, sports team, youth club, grandmother's liver transplant or other apparently worthwhile causes. The sheets will invariably include the names of 'generous' foreigners who have donated US\$100 or more. These are almost invariably a scam; ignore them and politely take your leave. People selling bogus bus tickets in and around bus stations is another scam to look out for. Always purchase your tickets from official sources, even if that's a hole in the wall with a penned sign above it.

In the major cities of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique it's advisable to keep your wits about you when using an ATM. There are dozens of scams that involve stealing your cash, your card or your personal identification number (PIN) – usually all three. The ATM scam you're most likely to encounter involves the thief tampering with the machine so your card becomes jammed. By the time you realise this you've entered your PIN. The thief will have seen this, and when you go inside to report that your card has been swallowed, he will take the card and leave your account significantly lighter.

Exchanging money and avoiding the sting of inflation in Zimbabwe is a particular annoyance to that country. See p684 for the lowdown.

Safety Tips

Some simple precautions will hopefully ensure that you have a trouble-free journey. Travellers who exercise due caution rarely have problems. The precautions suggested

in this section are particularly relevant to Johannesburg and parts of Cape Town, but it's worth reading them if you're travelling in other main urban centres as well.

- Be discreet with your belongings when on the street. Consider leaving your day-pack and camera in your hotel room if the room is safe.
- Don't wear jewellery or watches, however inexpensive they may be. Use a separate wallet for day-to-day purchases, and keep the bulk of your cash out of sight, preferably hidden in a pouch under loose-fitting clothing.
- Walk confidently, but not aggressively. Never look like you're lost (even if you are!). Don't obviously refer to this guidebook. Tear out the pages you need, or duck into a shop to have a look at the map to get your bearings.
- At night get off the streets and take a taxi – a couple of dollars for the fare could save you a lot of pain and trouble.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking all robbers are on the street. Although most hotels are reputable, some travellers have left money in a safe, only to find that less reputable staff members with a spare key have helped themselves. Often this trick involves taking just a few notes, in the hope that you won't notice. To avoid this, store any valuables in a safe inside a pouch with a lockable zip, or in an envelope you can seal.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies of most travellers' home countries (UK, USA etc) in Southern Africa are listed in the individual country chapters. Embassies are most plentiful in South Africa, where whole suburbs of Pretoria are a *Who's Who* of global representation (see p584). Where home countries have no embassy, often a consul is appointed, who is not a full-time diplomat but has certain diplomatic responsibilities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand have few embassies in Southern Africa, but there is limited emergency assistance is available from the British High Commission. Also listed in country chapters are embassies, consulates or high commissions of Southern African countries in a number of home countries.

See p749 for important information regarding visas.

It's important to realise what your own embassy can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help if whatever trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. If you have all your money and documents stolen, your embassy might assist with getting a new passport, but that's about it.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

All the countries covered in this book are conservative in their attitudes towards gay men and lesbians, and homosexuality is rarely discussed in public. In traditional African societies, gay sexual relationships are a cultural taboo. In 2001, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia famously said:

In Namibia we don't allow lesbianism or homosexuality... We will combat this with vigour... Police are ordered to arrest you and deport you and imprison you... Those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation. Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society.

While this may seem both alarming and excluded, observers see it – along with Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe's vociferous diatribes against homosexuals – as just a way of deflecting attention from greater governmental problems.

Officially, homosexual activity is illegal in all the countries in this book, except South Africa and Lesotho. Lesbian activities are ignored in some countries because officials aren't really aware of them.

This said, homosexual activity – especially among younger men – does occur. South Africa's constitution is one of the few in the world that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and there are active gay and lesbian communities and scenes in Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and Durban. Cape Town is without doubt the focal point, and the most openly gay city on the continent. South Africa's longest-running gay newspaper is the monthly **Exit** (www.exit.co.za). The glossy monthly **OUTright** is for

gay males; *Womyn* is its lesbian equivalent. Both are available at CNA and other chain bookstores nationwide. The Gauteng-based magazine *Rush* is also worth looking out for; it's often available at gay venues. There's also a gay and lesbian link on the South Africa tourism website (www.southafrica.net). An excellent website providing accurate and updated information on legalities and cultural issues is www.mask.org.za.

In most places within Southern Africa, open displays of affection are generally frowned upon, whatever your orientation. Please be sensitive to local sensibilities.

INSURANCE

As a rule all travellers need a travel insurance policy, which will provide some sense of security in the case of a medical emergency or the loss or theft of money or belongings. Travel health insurance policies can usually be extended to include baggage, flight departure insurance and a range of other options. See p766 for greater detail about what you should look for in a good travel health insurance plan, and see p761 for information regarding car insurance.

Claims on your travel insurance must be accompanied by proof of the value of any items lost or stolen (purchase receipts are the best, so if you buy a new camera for your trip, for example, hang onto the receipt). In the case of medical claims, you'll need detailed medical reports and receipts. If you're claiming on a trip cancelled by circumstances beyond your control (illness, airline bankruptcy, industrial action etc), you'll have to produce all flight tickets purchased, tour agency receipts and itinerary, and proof of whatever glitch caused your trip to be cancelled.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most capital cities (and some large towns) in the region have at least one internet café, and many hotels and backpackers hostels also offer these services. Speed, reliability and hourly rates vary greatly; cities in Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia have good access at reasonable prices, sometimes less than US\$1 per hour. Other countries are still catching up, and you'll generally find only expensive (up to US\$4 per hour) and slow connections. Rural areas in all countries are essentially devoid of internet access.

MAPS

The Automobile Association (AA) of South Africa produces a useful map of South Africa (as well as numerous South African area maps), plus others covering Botswana and Namibia. The maps are available from any AA shop in South Africa.

MONEY

Details on specific currencies and places to exchange money are given in the individual country chapters. All prices quoted in this book are in US dollars, apart from some prices in the Zambia chapter, which are quoted in Zambian kwacha.

The gap between the government-set exchange rate in Zimbabwe and the accepted exchange rate on the streets can have a huge impact on travellers' expenses in that country. See p684 for more information.

In all countries it's wise to rely on a variety of methods to fund your trip. Local currency, travellers cheques and a credit card will cover all bases.

ATMs

ATMs are readily available throughout South Africa and in cities and main urban centres in the rest of the region. If you're planning to travel for lengthy periods of time in rural areas, however, plan ahead as ATMs are still a foreign concept. There are a few ATM scams to be aware of, operating particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe. See p744 for more information.

Black Market

In some parts of the world, artificially fixed exchange rates in the bank mean you can get more local money for your hard currency by changing on the so-called black market. Not only is this illegal, it's also potentially dangerous. In most of the region, currency deregulation has eliminated the black market, and Zimbabwe is the only country that still has artificial controls. If someone approaches you anywhere in the region offering substantially more than the bank rate, they almost certainly have a well-formulated plan for separating you from your money. In Zimbabwe, where a thriving – and very risky – black market still exists, you'll also have to beware of police stings aimed at foreigners attempting to circumvent their disastrous system. See p684 for more information.

Cash

Most travellers carry a mix of cash and travellers cheques, although cash is more convenient. The best currencies to bring are US dollars, euros or British pounds, preferably in a mixture. The South African rand is also widely recognised throughout the region, but it's not worth changing your currency into rand before converting it to kwacha, pula or whatever.

It's always wise to have at least an emergency US\$20 note tucked somewhere safe in case you find yourself suddenly devoid of all other possessions. Due to counterfeiting, few places accept US\$100 notes unless they have a light machine to check validity.

Credit Cards

Most credit and debit cards can be used in ATMs, which are found all over South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. In other countries, they're found only in capital cities and larger towns, and may not be reliable.

Credit cards work for purchases all over South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, and in tourist establishments in other countries. You can also use credit cards to draw cash advances (but even in South Africa this can take several hours).

Whatever card you use, it's not wise to rely totally on plastic, as computer or telephone breakdowns can leave you stranded. Always have some cash or travellers cheques as backup.

Moneychangers

Throughout the region, you can exchange currency at banks and foreign exchange bureaux, which are normally found near borders, in larger cities and in tourist areas. You can also change money at some shops and hotels (which almost always give very poor rates).

The easiest currencies to exchange are US dollars, euros or British pounds. At border crossings where there is no bank, unofficial moneychangers are usually tolerated by the authorities. It's always important to be alert, though, as these guys can pull all sorts of stunts with poor exchange rates, folded notes and clipped newspaper sandwiched between legitimate notes.

Tipping

When it comes to tipping, every country is different. Generally, it isn't necessary in

small local establishments, midrange restaurants, backpackers lodges, hotels or fast-food places, but in any upmarket restaurant that doesn't automatically include a service charge (which isn't obligatory if the service has been poor), it may be appropriate. There is a grey area between midrange and upmarket restaurants, because tipping is rarely expected from locals but may be expected of foreigners. On the other hand, wealthier Africans may sometimes tip even at smaller restaurants, not because it's expected, but as a show of status.

At safari lodges and on tours, everyone is expected to leave a blanket tip to be divided among the staff. Safari guides are typically tipped separately.

Taxi drivers aren't normally tipped, but may expect about 10% from well-heeled travellers; in larger cities, even backpackers may be expected to fork over a bit extra.

If you're driving – especially in cities – you are expected to tip parking guards, who'll watch your car while you're away (in a few cases, this is a protection racket, but they're mostly legitimate). However, there's no need to tip the guys who wave you into the parking space you were going to take anyway.

Travellers Cheques

It's wise to purchase a range of travellers cheque denominations so you don't have to exchange US\$100 in a country where you need only half that. When exchanging travellers cheques, many places want to check your purchase receipts (the ones the travellers cheque company told you to always keep separate), but carry them with you only when you want to change money. Just be sure to have photocopies of them, along with the international numbers to call in case of loss or theft.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

In South Africa, film (slide and print), cameras and accessories are readily available in large towns, and processing, including slide processing, is generally of a high standard. In Namibia, you'll find slide film in Windhoek and Swakopmund, but in other countries, availability of any sort of film is restricted to cities and tourist centres, and prices are higher. The best advice is to carry a supply of film and any special requirements from home.

The sunlight in Africa is intense, so most people find Fujichrome Velvia 50, Kodachrome 64 or any 100ISO (ASA) film perfectly adequate, with a 200ISO film suitable for long-lens or evening shots. Useful photographic accessories might include a small flash, a cable or remote shutter release, filters and a cleaning kit. Also, remember to take spare camera batteries.

Some African airports may have old X-ray machines, so it's always wise to request a hand check of your film and camera equipment. Even newer film-safe models can affect high-speed film (1000ISO and higher), especially if it passes through several checks during your trip (the effects are cumulative). Travellers coming from the US should carry all film and camera equipment in their hand luggage, as anti-terrorism X-ray machines for checked baggage are not film safe.

In all countries, be careful about taking photos of soldiers, police, airports, defence installations and government buildings. It goes without saying that you should always ask permission before taking a photo of anyone, but particularly so if you're in a tribal village.

Blank video tapes are available in capital cities and large towns, but qualities and formats vary, and African tapes won't work on North American machines. You can recharge batteries in hotels and lodges as you go, but you'll need a charger, plug adaptors and applicable transformers for the countries you're visiting. For more information, check out Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*.

Transfer of digital images to CD is becoming increasingly popular in South African cities, particularly in internet cafés.

Wildlife Photography

To score some excellent wildlife photos, a good lightweight 35mm SLR automatic camera with a lens between 210mm and 300mm – and a modicum of skill – should do the trick. Video cameras with zoom facility may be able to get closer and digital cameras will perform all sorts of magic. If your subject is nothing but a speck in the distance, resist wasting film but keep the camera ready. An early start is advisable because most wildlife is active during the cooler hours. When photographing animals, take light readings on the subject and not the brilliant African background or your shots will be underexposed. The best

times to take photos on sunny days are the first two hours after sunrise and the last two before sunset, both of which take advantage of the low sun's colour-enhancing rays. Filters (eg ultraviolet, polarising or skylight) can also produce good results; ask for advice in a good camera shop.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Solo travel in Southern Africa, whether you're male or female, is straightforward. While you may be a minor curiosity in rural areas, especially solo women travellers, it's likely that in most places nobody will even bat an eye. Times when you'd likely want to find a group to join would be for a safari (to cut costs), on hiking trails (many in South Africa have a three-person minimum for safety reasons) and at night. Solo women should always exercise extreme caution at night and avoid isolating situations. If you're hitting the pubs and bars in a major city it's much wiser and safer to go with a group. For more safety tips for women, see p750.

TELEPHONE

South Africa in general, and major cities elsewhere in the region, has good telephone facilities. Although local calls are relatively inexpensive, long-distance calls and international calls can be pricey. Aside from public phones, there are also private phone centres where you can pay cash for your call, but at double the rate of public phones. International dialling codes for the countries in this book are given in the inside front cover. For information on areas codes within countries, see each chapter's Directory.

Mobile Phones

In Southern Africa, mobile phones are very popular, due in no small part to the often dismal state of national landline service providers. Reception varies from country to country; see the Directory of individual countries for more information. Airports often have a counter where you can rent a mobile phone for the duration of your stay.

TIME

In the southern summer, Southern Africa is two hours ahead of UTC (Universal Time Coordinate, formerly called GMT, or Greenwich Mean Time). The only Southern African country with daylight-saving time is Namibia,

which turns its clocks forward one hour in September, and back one hour in April.

In the southern winter, however, the region is on the same time as British Summer Time (daylight-saving time).

TOILETS

There are two main types of toilet in Africa: the Western style, with a toilet bowl and seat; and the African style, which is a squat toilet with a hole in the floor. Standards of both types vary tremendously, from pristine to nauseating.

In rural areas, long-drop squat toilets are built over a deep hole in the ground, where waste matter decomposes naturally as long as people avoid depositing rubbish (including tampons or sanitary pads, which should be disposed of separately).

There's also a bizarre hybrid, in which an unplumbed Western toilet is perched over a long-drop hole. As you can imagine, the lack of running water can turn these into an unspeakable horror.

TOURIST INFORMATION

All countries in Southern Africa have national tourist boards, but their efficiency and benefit range from excellent to little more than a friendly smile. South Africa's tourist information centres are prolific and fabulous. Usually staffed by devoted locals, they are a great source of microscopic information for travellers. In Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia the tourist boards' websites are useful for preplanning, but the offices themselves don't provide very much enlightenment. See Tourist Information in the Directory of individual country chapters for more information.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

People with mobility limitations will not have an easy time in Southern Africa. Even though there are more disabled people per head of population here than in the West, facilities are few. South Africa stands out from its neighbours by the weight of disabled organisations it boasts; see p587. In South Africa and the capitals of some other countries, some official buildings have ramps and lifts, but these are probably not the sort of places you want to visit!

For the imaginative, Zambezi raft trips, mokoro (dugout canoe) trips in the Okavango

Delta (where at least one mobility-disabled person works as a mokoro poler), wildlife drives and cruises, lie-down sandboarding in the Namib Dunes (if you can reach the top on a quad bike), and other activities won't be inaccessible. In almost all cases, safari companies – including budget operators – are happy to accommodate travellers with special needs, so it never hurts to ask!

Most wheelchair users find travel easier with an able-bodied companion, and happily, travel in Southern Africa does offer a few advantages compared with other parts of the developing world: footpaths and public areas are often surfaced with tar or concrete, rather than with sand, mud or gravel; many buildings (including safari lodges and national park cabins) are single storey, and assistance is usually available on domestic and regional flights. Car hire is easy in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana and, with permission, vehicles can be taken to neighbouring countries.

Organisations

In the US, **Mobility International** (☎ 541-343 1284; www.miusa.org; 132 E Broadway, Suite 343, Eugene OR 97401) advises disabled travellers on mobility issues. It primarily runs educational exchange programmes, and some include African travel. Also in the US, assistance and advice are available from the **Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality** (☎ 212-447-7284; www.sath.org; 347 Fifth Ave, Suite 610, New York NY 10016).

In the UK, a useful contact is the **Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (☎ 020 7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk; 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London EC1V 8AF).

Access-Able Travel Source (www.access-able.com) is a US-based site providing information on disabled-friendly tours and hotels in South Africa.

VISAS

Visa requirements change according to your nationality. More details about who needs what are given in the individual country chapters and on Lonely Planet's website (www.lonelyplanet.com), which also has links to other visa sites.

In general, travellers from North America, Commonwealth countries and most of Western Europe don't require visas for much of the region. To visit Mozambique, however, almost everyone needs a visa, either purchased at most points of entry or pre-issued from a

Mozambican embassy or consulate. The other exceptions are Zimbabwe and Zambia, where just about everyone requires a visa, but these can be purchased at most points of entry. Zambian visas are free if you're 'introduced' to the country by a Zambian safari company or accommodation option.

If you're from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe or Latin America, you should check with the local embassies of the countries you intend to visit, as some may accept only visas issued in your home country. This may also apply to travellers of Asian descent (even those with a Western passport), who may require visas even though their black or white compatriots don't. Note also that some visas have limited validity – that is, in some cases you're required to enter the country in question within a specified time period.

Please note that by the time this book is printed there's a good chance visa conditions will have changed. In February 2006, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) announced a univisa system, to be theoretically introduced by the end of 2006, which will enable tourists to obtain a single visa for all countries within Southern Africa. Bureaucratic progress tends to move slowly in this part of the world, but at the very least residents of Southern African countries should enjoy bilateral visa agreements that were implemented in anticipation of the univisa, and allow citizens to move freely between states without a visa.

Other Documents

Depending on which countries you're visiting, you may need the following: a vaccination certificate to show you have had all the right jabs (see p766); a driving licence, and perhaps an International Driving Permit (for the rare occasions when it may be required to hire a vehicle, or for insurance purposes if you're buying a vehicle); as well as a youth hostel card and a student or youth identity card (such as ISIC), which may be good for discounts on flights, long-distance buses and visits to sites of interest (especially museums).

VOLUNTEERING

Unemployment in Southern Africa is high and finding work is difficult. Volunteer work is a more likely possibility, especially if you're interested in teaching or wildlife conservation. A good initial contact is Volunteer Abroad

(www.volunteerabroad.com), which has extensive listings of volunteer opportunities in the region.

The following agencies are also useful for long-term paid or volunteer work:

Australian Volunteers International (☎ 03-9279 1788; www.ovol.org.au) Places qualified Australian residents on one- to two-year contracts.

Earthwatch (☎ 1 800 776 0188; www.earthwatch.org) Places paying volunteers in short-term environmental projects around the globe.

United Nations Volunteers (☎ 228-815 2000; www.unv.org; Postfach 260 111 D-53153 Bonn, Germany) Places volunteers with qualifications and experience in a range of fields.

Volunteer Service Abroad (☎ 04 472 5759; www.vsa.org.nz) Organises professional contracts for New Zealanders.

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Canada (☎ 1-888-876-2911; www.vsocanada.org); Netherlands (☎ 030 23 20 620; www.vso.nl); UK (☎ 020-8780 7200; www.vso.org.uk) Places qualified and experienced volunteers for up to two years.

There are some excellent local, grassroots opportunities for travellers wanting to volunteer in Malawi. See Nkhata Bay (p189), the Chintheche Strip (p191), Monkey Bay (p200) and Cape Maclear (p203) for details.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Generally speaking, women travellers in Southern Africa will not encounter serious gender-related problems. In fact, compared with North Africa and the Middle East (especially Morocco, Egypt and Turkey), South America and many Western countries, the region is relatively safe and unthreatening for women travellers.

Southern Africa is one of the few places in the developing world where women can meet and communicate with local men – of any race – without automatically being misconstrued. That's not to say that sexual harassment against travellers never happens, but local white women (mostly South Africans, Namibians, Zambians and Zimbabweans) have done much to refute the idea that women of European descent are willing to hop into bed with the first taker.

That said, it's still rare to find local women travelling alone for no apparent purpose, and lone foreign women seen to be idly wandering around the country may be viewed as something of a curiosity, especially in remote areas.

Aside from this, attitudes towards foreign women travelling alone tend to be fairly liberal. Although you'll still get questions about what you are doing, and where your husband and children are, reactions are usually matter-of-fact.

When it comes to evening entertainment, both black and white societies in Southern Africa are very much conservative, traditional and male-dominated. Therefore, women travellers may face a few glass walls and ceilings. Many bars are male only (by law of the establishment, or by law of tradition), and even where women are 'allowed', cultural conventions often dictate that women don't enter without a male companion. If you ignore these conventions, be aware that accepting a drink from a local man is usually construed as a come-on (much as it would be in many other parts of the world). However distasteful that may seem to liberated Westerners, trying to buck the system may lead to an uncomfortable situation – or worse. The best maxim is, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' Prevention in the form of common-sense precautions is well worth heeding: don't wander around alone anywhere at night, and during the daytime, avoid anywhere that's isolated, including streets, beaches and parks. To avoid attracting unwanted attention, it's best to solicit and follow local female advice on which places are acceptable. Additionally, many budget hotels double as brothels, and are best avoided if you're travelling solo. See the Accommodation section of country directories for more specific information.

It may be difficult to connect with some local women – especially older women, who may have received very little education and therefore speak little English. Similarly, women with young children are normally expected to stay home and attend to domestic duties, which leave them little time to socialise with outsiders. On the other hand,

in recent years an increasing number of girls have been permitted to stay in school while boys are sent away to work. Although there is a wide gap between male and female literacy rates, female literacy is becoming more prevalent all over the region and, as a result, many of the employees in government offices – including tourist offices – are educated, young to middle-aged women. In rural areas, most of the teachers and healthcare workers are women.

For women who do meet someone they like, or who wish to sample local hospitality, never forget that in Africa, HIV/AIDS presents a threat that's unimaginable in the West. Throughout the region, local sex workers are almost always infected, and men may see a foreign woman as a safe alternative. Don't be naive, don't do anything stupid and, at the very least, always use a condom.

There's also a very high level of sexual assault and other violence against women in South Africa specifically, the majority of which occurs in townships and rural areas.

While the countries in this region are considerably safer than some other parts of the world, hitching is not recommended and hitching alone is foolish. If you decide to thumb it, you should refuse a lift if the driver is drunk (a sadly common condition) or the car is chock-a-block with men (eg a military vehicle). Use common sense and things should go well.

Tampons and sanitary napkins are sold in pharmacies and supermarkets in major towns. They may also be available from shops at hotels and upmarket safari lodges.

Female travellers may like to contact the global organisation called **Women Welcome Women World Wide** (☎ /fax 01494-465441; www.womenwelcomewomen.org.uk; 88 Easton St, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 1LT, UK), which fosters international friendship by enabling women of different countries to visit one another.

Transport in Southern Africa

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THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section describes access possibilities to Southern Africa from other parts of the world. Regional access is described in the Getting Around section (p758). Details on travel between and around individual countries are provided in their respective chapters.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Visitors require a valid passport to enter every country covered in this book. To accommodate visas and border stamps, you'll need at least one or two empty pages per country you intend to visit, especially if your itinerary calls for multiple border crossings. If your passport is close to full, get a new one or pick up an insert – but apply for it well in advance. If your passport is due to expire, replace it before you leave home, as some officials won't admit you unless your passport is valid at least three (or even six) months beyond the end of your stay.

For information on visas, see p749.

AIR

Most flights into Southern Africa arrive at Jo'burg (South Africa) and this is usually the cheapest access point for the region. Although not the most salubrious city to kick-start your travels, it is the heart of the new South Africa and change – be it good or bad – is in your face. The airport itself is in between Jo'burg and Pretoria, so it's easy enough to catch a bus in the other direction and stay in a more relaxing city.

Airports & Airlines

AIRPORTS

You can fly to any major city in Southern Africa from anywhere in the world, but some routes are more popular (and therefore usually cheaper) than others.

From Europe most flights go through London, from where you can fly into most major Southern African cities; most other European capitals also fly to the region, but the main continental hubs are Amsterdam and Frankfurt. From America, Atlanta and New York have direct flights to Jo'burg. From Australia, Sydney and Perth are hubs for flights to Jo'burg and Cape Town, and there are also direct flights from Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in Asia. From Africa there are good links between major cities such as Nairobi (Kenya) and Jo'burg; other easy links include Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Lilongwe (Malawi), and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Lilongwe, or Lusaka (Zambia).

The major air hub for Southern Africa is **OTR Tambo International Airport** (formerly Johannesburg International; code JIA or JNB; ☎ 011-921 6262; www.worldairportguides.com/johannesburg-jnb). It has a full range of shops, restaurants, internet access, ATMs, foreign exchange bureaus, and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets. Other useful airports for visitors are Cape Town, Windhoek (Namibia), Lusaka and Lilongwe. Gaborone (Botswana) is a pricey access point.

Victoria Falls (p618) is best accessed via Lusaka or Johannesburg and, although still accessible by air, it's likely that the frequency of flights and number of carriers will decrease dramatically within the next few years. It's possible flight traffic will pick up to Livingstone (Zambia) instead, especially if a rumoured airport expansion comes about.

Remember that your access point need not necessarily be the nearest point to your intended destination. For example, it's often cheaper to fly into South Africa, from where you can take a short hop to Harare, Windhoek or Lusaka for less than the price of a direct flight. On the other hand, bargain deals to Namibia, Zimbabwe or Zambia may be cheaper than a direct flight to South Africa. Advance research will greatly improve your chances of finding an economical airfare, so start looking early.

AIRLINES

Most major European airlines serve Southern Africa, including British Airways, KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines, Lufthansa Airlines, Swiss, Air France, Virgin and TAP Air Portugal. Additionally, Emirates, Kenya Airways, South African Airways, Air Namibia and LAM (Linhas Aereas de Moçambique) fly between Europe and the region, and unlikely sounding carriers such as Ethiopian Airlines often offer good-value services between Europe and many parts of Africa.

Although several airlines fly between the USA (Atlanta) and Southern Africa, many prospective visitors find it less convenient, but considerably cheaper, to fly via Europe. From Australia, Qantas and other airlines have regular services from Sydney and Perth to Johannesburg and Cape Town. Note that there has been a reduction in the number of airlines servicing Zimbabwe – Qantas and Singapore Airlines no longer offer a route to Harare.

See the Transport sections in individual country chapters for the list of the main airlines flying to and from that country.

Tickets

When buying your air ticket, you may want to check out 'open-jaw' deals – ie flying into one

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorized travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the USA will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon-Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable-travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon-offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

country and out of another. Sometimes though, even if you want to do a linear trip (starting in Cape Town and finishing in Lusaka, for example), it may be easier and cheaper to get a standard return (eg in and out of Cape Town) and a one-way regional flight (Lusaka to Cape Town) at the end of your trip.

Note that fares quoted in this book for international flights are full-fare economy. Always ask about seasonal and advance purchase discounts, and other special rates, and always check the airline websites for online deals. Some useful online ticket sellers:

www.cheaptickets.com
www.flightcentre.com
www.lowestfare.com
www.onetravel.com
www.priceline.com
www.travel.yahoo.com
www.travelocity.com

Jo'burg and Cape Town are the most popular Southern African stops on a Round The World (RTW) itinerary, and this usually means flying into one city and out of the other. Travel agents can also put together 'alternative' RTW tickets, which are more expensive, but more flexible, than standard RTW itineraries.

Africa

Many travellers on trans-Africa trips fly some sections, either because time is short or simply because the routes are virtually impassable.

The overland route between East Africa and Southern Africa is extremely popular, but it's also easy to find a flight between Nairobi and Jo'burg. Alternatively, it's a short hop between Dar es Salaam and Lilongwe, which avoids a gruelling overland stretch. Coming from Cairo (Egypt) or Ethiopia, most flights to Southern Africa go via Nairobi.

If you're travelling from West Africa, you have to fly as the overland route is blocked by turmoil in Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). Travellers also tend to avoid Nigeria and Congo-Brazzaville. Options include flying from Accra (Ghana) or Dakar (Senegal) to Jo'burg. Flying from Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) to Jo'burg is also possible but less popular since the troubles in that strife-torn country.

Australia & New Zealand

Airlines flying from Australia to Southern Africa include Qantas and South African Air-

ways (SAA). There are direct flights from Sydney and Perth on Qantas, and from Perth on SAA, to Jo'burg and Cape Town (flying time about 14 hours from Sydney, 10½ hours from Perth). If flying between New Zealand and Southern Africa you must go via Australia. The best place to start looking for cheap deals are the ads in major weekend newspapers.

Two well-known agencies for cheap fares in Australia:

Flight Centre (☎ 131 600; www.flightcentre.com.au) This agency has offices throughout Australia.

STA Travel (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au) Offices are in all major cities and on many university campuses.

These agencies are also represented in New Zealand:

Flight Centre (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) This agency has many branches throughout the country.

STA Travel (☎ 0508-782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) STA Travel has a main office in Auckland, and has offices in Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

In addition, the following agencies specialise in Africa travel:

Africa Travel Company (☎ 02-9264 7661; Level 1, 69 Liverpool St, Sydney 2000, NSW)

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Cobbles together custom tours to Namibia and the entire region.

Continental Europe

You can fly to Southern Africa from any European capital, but the main hubs are Amsterdam and Frankfurt, and to a lesser extent Zurich and Lisbon (for Maputo, Mozambique). The most popular routes are generally the cheapest, which means that Jo'burg or Cape Town will normally be destinations of choice. Specialist travel agencies advertise in newspapers and travel magazines, so check there for advertisements before ringing around.

There are bucket shops by the dozen in cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels and Frankfurt. Many travel agents in Europe have ties with STA Travel, where you'll find cheap tickets. STA Travel and other discount outlets in major transport hubs include the following:

Airfair (☎ 0900-7717 717; www.airfair.nl) Netherlands.

Alternativ Tours (☎ 030 21 23 41 90; www.alternativ-tours.de) Germany.

Anyway (☎ 0892 302 301; www.anyway.fr) France.

Barcelo Viajes (☎ 902 116 226; www.barceloviajes.com) Spain.

CTS Viaggi (☎ 06 462 0431; www.cts.it) Italy; specialising in student and youth travel.

Just Travel (☎ 089 747 3330; www.justtravel.de) Germany.

OTU Voyages (☎ 01 55 82 32 32; www.otu.fr) France.

STA Travel Germany (☎ 01805-456 422; www.statravel.de); Switzerland (☎ 0900-450 402; www.statravel.ch)

UK & Ireland

Numerous airlines fly between Britain and Southern Africa, and you'll occasionally find excellent rates. The least expensive point of arrival will probably be Jo'burg, although an increasing number of flights arrive in Cape Town, which is a safer introduction to Africa.

London is normally the best place to buy a ticket, but specialist agencies elsewhere in the UK can provide comparable value. Also check ads in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard*, in the free online magazine *TNT* (www.tntmagazine.com) and in the free *SA Times*, which is aimed at South Africans in the UK.

Some companies listed under Tours (p758) also sell flights, and some of the agents listed here also sell tours and safaris:

Africa Travel Centre (☎ 0845-450 1520; www.africa-travel.co.uk)

North-South Travel (☎ 01245-608291; www.north-southtravel.co.uk) Profits at this experienced agency support development projects overseas.

Quest Travel (☎ 0871-423 0135; www.questtravel.com)

STA Travel (☎ 0870-163 0026; www.statravel.co.uk)

STA Travel has branches in London, Manchester, Bristol and most large university towns.

Trailfinders (☎ 0845-0585 858; www.trailfinders.co.uk) This popular company has several offices in London, as well as Manchester, Bristol and several other cities.

Travel Bag (☎ 0870-814 4441; www.travelbag.co.uk)

Travel Mood (☎ 0870-0660 004; www.travelmood.com)

USA & Canada

SAA flies direct from New York and Atlanta to Jo'burg (17½ hours), and this is generally one of the least expensive routings. To reach one of the other capitals, such as Lusaka, Lilongwe or Maputo, you can get a connection from Jo'burg. It may be cheaper to fly on an economy hop from the USA to London (on

British Airways or Virgin Atlantic) or Amsterdam (on KLM), and then buy a discount ticket from there to Southern Africa. Canadians also will probably find the best deals travelling via Atlanta or London.

North Americans won't get the great deals that are available in London, but discount agencies to watch out for include the following:

Air Brokers (☎ 800-883 3273, 415-836 8718; www.airbrokers.com) A consolidator that can come up with good rates on complicated itineraries.

High Adventure Travel/Airtreks (☎ 877-247 8735, 415-912 5600; www.airtreks.com) Specialises in round-the-world travel including Southern Africa stops.

Premier Tours & Travel (☎ 800-545 1910; www.premiertours.com)

Spector Travel (☎ 617 351 0111; www.spectortravel.com) Combines tours with discounted airfares.

STA Travel (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com) This organisation, which isn't limited to students, has offices all over the USA.

Travel Cuts (☎ 866-246 9762; www.travelcuts.com) The Canadian student travel association.

LAND

However you travel (by car, bike or public transport), if you're planning to reach Southern Africa overland, your first decision should be which of the main routes through Africa you want to take.

Bicycle

Cycling is a cheap, convenient, healthy, environmentally sound and, above all, fun way to travel. It can also be addictive. It's quite straightforward to take your bike onto a plane and use the bike to get around on the ground. For air travel, you can dismantle the bike and box it up. Bike boxes are available at airports and most bike shops. If you're willing to risk damage to your bike, it's also possible to deflate the tyres, remove the pedals and turn the handlebars sideways, then just wheel the bike up to the check-in desk (if your bike doesn't hold up to baggage handlers, it probably won't survive Africa!). Some airlines don't charge to carry a bike, and don't even include it in the weight allowance. Others charge an extra handling fee of around US\$50.

Outside South Africa, you'll have difficulty buying hi-tech European or American spares, so bring anything essential along with you, and know how to make your own repairs. Plan for frequent punctures, and take lots of spare inner tubes. Because automobile tyres

are constantly being repaired, patches and glue are available almost everywhere. However, it may be worth carrying a spare tyre, in case of a really devastating blow-out. For more on cycling, see p759.

Border Crossings

For information on specific border crossings between countries in Southern Africa, see the Transport section in country chapters.

The most frequented routes into Southern Africa are from Tanzania into Malawi at Songwe (see p233 for details) and from Tanzania into Zambia at Nakonde (see p676). If you're heading the other way, from Malawi you can buy visas at the border, but we've heard from travellers who have experienced some hassle from the Tanzania border authorities, so try getting your visa in advance.

The rarely used crossing points from Tanzania into Mozambique provide an excellent introduction to the region, but it's definitely more off the beaten track. From Tanzania, the main border post is at Namiranga. It's also possible to get your passport stamped further upriver at the remote village of Moçimboa do Rovuma, and there are border and customs officials at Palma and Moçimboa da Praia for those arriving from Tanzania by boat. It's also reportedly possible to get stamped in at the Rio Rovuma crossing between Lichinga and Songea (Tanzania).

Other countries bordering the Southern African region include Angola and the troubled Congo (Zaire). From Congo, the main border crossing is at Chilabombwe into Zambia. Due to safety issues, though, few travellers use this option.

The situation has improved in Angola with the end of the 27-year war in 2002. More travellers are crossing in from Namibia, and things have apparently stabilised, though you need to arrange your visa in advance before entering. See p392 for information on securing the visa. From Angola, the main border crossings into Namibia are at Ruacana, Oshikango and Rundu. A few intrepid travellers are also crossing the border between Angola and Zambia, but seek local advice about this.

Car & Motorcycle

Driving from Europe to Southern Africa is a major undertaking. The main points to emphasise include the incredibly long distances,

the appalling nature of most roads and the constant challenge of dealing with police and/or border officials. Overland drivers will have to be mechanically competent and carry a good collection of spares. You'll also need vehicle registration papers, liability insurance, a driving licence and international drivers' permit, as well as a *carnet de passage*, effectively a passport for the vehicle and temporary waiver of import duty, designed to prevent car import rackets. Your local automobile association can provide details.

Your home liability insurance won't be valid in many countries, and some require international drivers to purchase expensive (and effectively useless) insurance when crossing borders. In most cases, this is just a racket, and no matter what you spend on local insurance, you'll effectively be travelling uninsured.

You might want to check the website www.sahara-overland.com for information about crossing the Sahara.

East Africa

From Nairobi, the most popular route runs via Mombasa (Kenya) or Arusha (Tanzania) to Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). From here, drivers follow the Great North Rd, and those without wheels take the Tanzania-Zambia railway (Tazara; p676); both lead to Kapiri Mposhi (Zambia), which is within easy reach of Lusaka, Livingstone and Victoria Falls. Alternatively, get off at Mbeya (in southern Tanzania) and enter northern Malawi at Songwe (p233). Another option from Dar es Salaam takes you across the country to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, then by steamer to Mpulungu (Zambia), from where you can continue overland to Lusaka and beyond.

Other possibilities from Nairobi include travelling through Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (currently not recommended, due to unrest), catching the Lake Tanganyika steamer from Bujumbura (Burundi; if it's running), and connecting with the previously outlined route at Mpulungu (Zambia). When the troubles have ended, this route will be a rewarding option.

North & West Africa

Although tensions are easing in urban centres, rural and remote areas remain dangerous in Algeria, and most trans-Sahara travellers still use the Morocco and Mauritania route into Senegal and the rest of West Africa. Due to

unrest, the route from Algeria into Mali and Niger is still not recommended. Once through West Africa, your route to Southern Africa will next be blocked by more unrest in Congo (Zaire). This means a flight – probably from Accra (Ghana) or Lagos (Nigeria) to Nairobi (Kenya), from where you can follow the route outlined under East Africa.

Northeast Africa

The Nile Route through northeast Africa starts in Egypt, and goes into Sudan (either via Lake Nasser or via the Red Sea from Suez or Hurghada); note, however, that these days travel through Sudan is not advised, especially southern Sudan, including the region bordering Uganda, anywhere around the border with Eritrea, and definitely not in the Darfur region in the west of the country, which has ongoing civil unrest. Most people fly from Cairo (Egypt) or Khartoum (Sudan) to Kampala (Uganda) or Nairobi, where again you can follow the route outlined under East Africa.

SEA

For most people, reaching Southern Africa by sea is not a viable option. The days of working your passage on commercial boats have vanished, although a few travellers do manage to hitch rides on private yachts along the east coast of Africa from Mombasa (Kenya) to Mozambique or South Africa.

Alternatively, several cargo shipping companies sail between Europe and South Africa, with comfortable cabins for public passengers. The voyage between London and Cape Town takes about 16 days. Contact **Strand Voyages** (☎ 020-7766 8220; www.strandtravel.co.uk) for details.

TOURS Overlanding

Although overlanding across Africa from Europe or the Middle East has become quite difficult due to the various 'roadblocks' imposed by unrest, some overland tour operators still take up the challenge. Some begin in Morocco and head down through Mauritania, Mali, Niger and onward as far as possible. Others take the easier option and begin in Kenya. While these trips are popular, they're designed mainly for inexperienced travellers who feel uncomfortable striking out on their own or for those who prefer guaranteed social interaction to the uncertainties of the road. If you have the slightest inclination towards

independence or would feel confined travelling with the same group of 25 or so people for most of the trip (although quite a few normally drop out along the way), think twice before booking an overland trip.

Around Southern Africa

When deciding upon your preferred method of travel, the same thing about overland tours can very much be applied to tours around Southern Africa. If you feel inexperienced, are unsure of travelling by yourself or just a sucker for constant company, then tours can be a very good option. However, many find the experience quite suffocating and restrictive. Our advice, to hedge your bets, is to take a shorter tour and see how you like it – this gives you the option of either taking another tour or striking out on your own with the benefit of having visited some of the places you may like to spend more time in.

Literally hundreds of tour and safari companies now organise package tours to Southern Africa, but it always pays to shop around for details and deals. Especially in Europe, it's becoming increasingly popular to look for late bookings, which may be advertised in travel sections of weekend newspapers, or even at special late-bookings counters in some international airports. If you prefer a more independent approach, you can prebook flights and hotels for the first few nights, then join tours locally (see p764).

The best place to begin looking for reputable agencies are weekend newspapers or travel magazines, such as *Wanderlust* in the UK and *Outside* or *National Geographic Adventure* in the US. It's also useful to attend travel fairs or ask around discount travel agencies.

Speciality magazines for flower, bird-watching, wildlife-viewing, railway and other buffs may also include advertising for tours focusing on their own areas of interest.

Following is a list of possibilities:

AUSTRALIA

Adventure World (☎ 02-8913 0755; www.adventureworld.com.au) Organises tours, safaris, car hire and hotel packages all over Southern Africa.

African Wildlife Safaris (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Designs customised wildlife safaris around Southern Africa.

Peregrine Travel (☎ 1300 854 444, 03-8601 4444; www.peregrine.net.au) This Africa specialist cobblers together all types of adventures, for all budgets.

FRANCE

Makila Voyages (☎ 01-42 96 80 00; www.makila.fr)

This upmarket company organises tours and safaris all over East and Southern Africa.

UK

Discover the World (☎ 01737-218800; www.discover-the-world.co.uk) Exclusive wildlife-oriented tours to various sites worldwide, including a number of Southern African itineraries.

Explore Worldwide Ltd (☎ 0870 333 4001; www.exploreworldwide.com) Organises group tours through Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia, focusing on adventure and hands-on activities.

In the Saddle (☎ 01299-272 997; www.inthesaddle.com) Appeals specifically to horse aficionados, including a range of adventurous horseback routes.

Naturetrek (☎ 01962-733051; www.naturetrek.co.uk) This company's aim is to get you to where the animals are. It offers specialised wildlife-viewing itineraries.

Temple World (☎ 020-8940 4114; www.templeworld.co.uk) This sophisticated and recommended company organises middle to upper-range tours to the best of the region.

USA

Adventure Center (☎ 010-654 1879, 800 228 8747; www.adventurecenter.com) A travel specialist that organises budget to midrange tours and is the US agent for several overland operators, including Guerba, Dragoman and Karibu.

Africa Adventure Company (☎ 800 882 9453, 954-491 8877; www.africa-adventure.com) These top safari specialists can organise any sort of Southern Africa itinerary.

Born Free Safaris (☎ 800 472 3274; www.bornfree-safaris.com) Safaris, trekking cultural tours and flights.

Bushtracks (☎ 800 995 8689; www.bushtracks.com) Private air luxury safari operator cobbling together a variety of unforgettable experiences.

Mountain Travel Sobek (☎ 888-687 6235; www.mtsobek.com) Offers package trips to Lower Zambezi and South Luangwa National Parks in Zambia, as well as trips to other countries in the region, like Botswana and Namibia.

Premier Tours & Travel (☎ 800 545 1910; www.premiertours.com) Premier sells discount tickets and organises inexpensive participation camping safaris all over Southern Africa.

Voyagers (☎ 800 633 4734; www.voyagers.com) Specialises in photographic and wildlife-viewing safaris.

Wilderness Travel (☎ 800 368 2794, 510-558 2488; www.wildernesstravel.com) Offers guided group tours with an emphasis on down-to-earth touring, including hikes, treks and other hands-on pursuits.

GETTING AROUND

This section briefly outlines the various ways of travelling around Southern Africa. For specifics, see the Getting Around section in each of the individual country chapters.

AIR

Distances are great in Africa, and if time is short, regional flights can considerably widen your options. For example, after touring South Africa for a while you could fly from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and then tour Zimbabwe or southern Zambia. Alternatively, fly to Lilongwe, which is a good staging point for trips around Malawi or eastern Zambia, or to Windhoek, which opens up all the wonders of Namibia.

Even within a country, tight schedules can be accommodated with short hops by air. Both domestic and regional flights are usually operated by both state airlines and private carriers, and except in Botswana, the competition generally keeps prices down to reasonable levels.

Sometimes the only practical way into remote parks and reserves is by air, and charter flights provide easy access to national park or remote lodge airstrips. Although these are normally for travellers on less restrictive budgets, access to the best of the Okavango Delta is possible only by charter flight.

Airlines in Southern Africa

The following list includes regional airlines with domestic and intra-Southern Africa routes. Note that many locals are extremely wary of using Zimbabwe's national carrier, Air Zimbabwe, because of a combination of fuel problems and the lack of foreign exchange to buy and maintain critical parts. For more information on airline safety records see the Transport section in the individual country chapters.

Air Botswana (☎ 267-390 5500; www.airbotswana.co.bw)

Air Malawi (☎ 265-1-620811; www.airmalawi.net) Connects Lusaka to Lilongwe and Blantyre.

Air Namibia (☎ 264-61-299 6000; www.airnamibia.com.na)

Air Zimbabwe (☎ 263-4575 111 www.airzim.co.zw)

British Airways Comair (☎ 27-11-921 0111; www.comair.co.za)

Linhas Aereas de Moçambique (☎ 258-1-426001, 465810; www.lam.co.mz/english)

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 0861 737 737, 011-344 7200; www.nationwideair.co.za) Useful Jo'burg to Livingstone service.

Pelican Air (☎ 011 973 3649; www.pelicanair.co.za) Useful service between Jo'burg and Vilankulo/Bazaruto Archipelago, some flights via Nelspruit.

South African Airways (☎ 27-11-978 1111, 0861-359722; www.flysaa.com) An excellent airline with many reliable routes around the region and beyond.

South African Express (☎ 27-11-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za)

Swazi Express Airways (☎ 518 6840, 031-408 1115; www.swaziexpress.com) Connecting Manzini with Durban, and with Maputo and Vilankulo (Mozambique); charter service in Swaziland and surrounding region.

Swaziland Airlink (☎ 518 6155; www.saairlink.co.za) Flights between Jo'burg and Manzini/Matsapha.

Zambian Airways (☎ 260-1-271177; www.zambianairways.com) Zambian Airways has partnered with the no-frills KuluLa.com (a South African airline) and offers cheaper flights from Lusaka to Jo'burg and Cape Town.

Air Passes

The Star Alliance African Airpass allows flexible travel around sub-Saharan Africa including all the countries in this book except Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana. It covers 25 airports in 17 different countries, and you can buy between four and 10 coupons (each coupon representing a single trip, ie Jo'burg to Windhoek). The Airpass allows for substantial savings, and flights are operated by South African Airways – see www.staralliance.com for more.

BICYCLE

On a bicycle, travellers will often be on an equal footing with locals, and will have plenty of opportunities to meet and visit people in small towns and villages along the way. Pointers on bringing a bike on the plane are found on p755.

For getting around, traditional touring bikes will cope with most sealed roads (and some good dirt roads) with little trouble, but narrow tyres are normally unsuitable and to get off the main routes, you'll need a mountain bike with fat tyres. On sandy roads, however, even balloon tyres won't help, and you'll wind up pushing the bike.

A cyclist's greatest cause for alarm will be motorists. Cyclists are usually regarded as second-class road users, so make sure you know what's coming up behind you and always be prepared to make an evasive swerve

onto the verges. For this purpose, a rearview mirror (handlebar or helmet mounted) will prove invaluable.

Other factors to consider are the heat, the long distances and finding places to stay. Aim to travel in cool, dry periods, and carry at least 4L of drinking water. If you get tired, or simply want to cut out the boring bits, bikes can easily be carried on buses or trucks – although you'll need to pay an extra luggage fee, and be prepared for some rough handling as your beloved machine is loaded onto a roof rack.

A good source of information may be your national cycling organisation. In Britain, the **Cyclists' Touring Club** (☎ 0870 873 0060; www.ctc.org.uk) provides cycling advice and also organises group cycling tours. In the USA, the **International Bicycle Fund** (☎ /fax 206-767 0848; www.ibike.org) organises socially conscious tours and provides information.

If you don't have a bike but fancy a few days' cycling, you'll normally be able to hire a bike locally, especially in tourist areas. Otherwise, local people in villages and towns are often willing to rent their bikes for the day. Ask at your hotel or track down a bicycle repair shop (every town market has one).

BOAT

Boat types and services in the region vary greatly from large ferries and cargo ships to traditional dhows plying the coastline of Mozambique and mokoros (dugout canoes) skimming along the Okavango Delta.

Based in South Africa, **Tall Ships** (www.tallships.co.za) has cargo ships between Durban and various Mozambican ports that sometimes take passengers; and **Starlight Lines** (www.starlight.co.za) is a good contact for connections to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius.

The **Ilala Ferry** (☎ 01-587311; ilala@malawi.net) chugs passengers and cargo up and down Lake Malawi. Stops include Monkey Bay, Nkhota-kota, Nkhata Bay and Likoma Island in Malawi (see p234); and Metangula and Cóbue on the Mozambique side of the lake (see p298).

There is a ferry crossing between Zambia and Botswana (see p128), departing from Kazungula, Botswana, which takes vehicles. If you're on foot or with a bicycle, it's free.

BUS

Long-distance buses operate regularly between most Southern African countries. Keep in mind that prices quoted in this book are

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE BUS – OVERLAND TRUCKS

Lots of companies run overland camping tours in trucks converted to carry passengers. Sometimes the trucks finish a tour, then run straight back to base to start the next one. Often, drivers are happy to carry 'transit' passengers on their way back to base. This is not a tour, as such, but can be a comfortable way of transiting between Vic Falls and Jo'burg, or Harare and Nairobi (Kenya), for around US\$20 per day, plus food kitty contributions. Those looking for rides should check around truck stops in well-known tourist areas, such as Cape Town, Jo'burg, Harare, Victoria Falls, Windhoek or Lilongwe or visit backpackers' hostels (where these companies invariably leave stacks of brochures).

for single fares, unless indicated otherwise. Most routes are covered by fairly basic, cheap and often slow services; major links include between Francistown (Botswana) and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Gaborone (Botswana) and Johannesburg (Jo'burg; South Africa), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Jo'burg, Lilongwe (Malawi) and Lusaka (Zambia), Blantyre (Malawi) and Harare. From Cape Town and Jo'burg, larger and more comfortable buses run to many destinations in the region including Maseru (Lesotho), Mbabane (Swaziland), Maputo (Mozambique) and Windhoek (Namibia).

The following are major bus companies operating throughout the region. They are generally safe and reliable, and standard facilities usually include air-con, video, sound system, reclining seats and an on-board toilet:

Greyhound (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) Jo'burg, Cape Town, Harare, Bulawayo and Maputo.

Intercap Mainliner (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) Extensive services with destinations including Jo'burg, Cape Town, Maputo, Windhoek, Victoria Falls and Gaborone.

Panthera Azul (☎ 011-618 8811, Maputo 021-302 077, 302 083; www.pantherazul.com) Jo'burg, Durban, Nelspruit, Maputo.

Translux (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za) Jo'burg, Pretoria, Maputo, Blantyre, Lusaka.

Keep in mind that for Zimbabwe, the long-distance buses suffer the same problems as other modes of transport – irregular supply

of fuel and spare parts. Breakdowns are on the increase and the number of buses and routes is decreasing.

For bus travellers, border crossings can be tedious while customs officials search through huge amounts of luggage. Minibus services may be more efficient, as fewer passengers will mean less time at the border.

There are also several international bus services especially designed for backpackers and other tourists. These companies normally use comfortable 16-seat buses and have helpful drivers, on-board music and pick-ups/drop-offs at main tourist centres and backpackers' hostels. Among these is the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), which links Jo'burg, Pretoria, Nelspruit and Durban with Manzini (Swaziland), from where you can get a minibus taxi to Maputo (Mozambique).

For more information on bus travel between countries, see the Getting There & Away sections under Transport in the individual country chapters, or seek out the latest information at backpackers' hostels and budget travel agents throughout Southern Africa.

Buying Tickets

In general it's always better to buy tickets in advance, over the phone, or by dropping into an office in person (you can also book online with some companies), although sometimes it may not be necessary. Contact the bus operator before your trip to see if advance purchase is advised. Sample fares include approximately US\$25 for Jo'burg to Gaborone, and about US\$75 for Cape Town to Windhoek; both one way. See the destinations in individual country chapters for detailed fare information.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Information on bringing your own wheels to Southern Africa is found on p756. More information on getting around, and other matters related to car and motorcycle travel, is provided under the Getting Around heading in the Transport section of individual country chapters.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Fuel and spare parts are available across the region, although both can be scarce in Zimbabwe at the moment. If you're driving in remote areas, such as Zambia, careful planning

is required to ensure you have enough fuel until you reach the next petrol station.

Hire

Car rental isn't cheap, but can be a very convenient way to travel, especially if you're short of time or want to visit national parks and other out-of-the-way places. Costs can be mitigated by mustering a group to share the rental and petrol, and will open up all sorts of opportunities. In all the countries covered by this book, to hire a vehicle you must be at least 21 years old (in some cases as old as 25).

A list of local car-rental firms is included in the Getting Around sections of country chapters. Firms are usually accessible via email, and it pays to book before you leave home. If you're visiting more than one country, check whether you're able to cross borders with a rental vehicle. This is usually allowed by South African companies, which will let you take vehicles into Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as Zimbabwe, with payment of an additional cross-border fee (usually around US\$100).

Companies advertising the lowest daily rates will typically also require payment of a per-kilometre fee, so if you're doing a lot of driving, you'd do better to pay extra for an unlimited mileage deal. Also, check on the fees for other items such as tax, damage and insurance, all of which can add considerably to the final bill.

Generally, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are the cheapest places to hire cars (around US\$40 to US\$50 per day) and Malawi isn't too bad. Zimbabwe is ridiculously expensive and in Zambia and Mozambique you're looking at a minimum of US\$100 per day for a 2WD.

In South Africa and Namibia you can hire campervans (RVs) that accommodate two to

six people. With additional payment, these come with as much equipment as you may need for demanding safaris. In most countries, you can also opt for a 4WD vehicle, which will typically cost around US\$150 per day with unlimited mileage.

Insurance

When hiring a car always check the insurance provisions and any excess that you may be liable to pay in the event of an accident. It's also worth checking if the insurance covers driving into other Southern African countries (depending on where you intend going) and driving on dirt roads for 2WDs. If you need insurance for your own car, see information about the AA on p763.

Purchase

An increasing number of travellers opt to buy a car, tour the region, then sell it at the end of their trip. Although you need a relatively large amount of money up front, you can expect to get at least some of it back, and travelling this way can work out a lot cheaper than car rental – especially if costs are split among several people.

For visitors, South Africa is the best place to buy a car (other countries place restrictions on foreign ownership, have stiff tax laws, or simply don't have the choice of vehicles). Also, South African-registered vehicles don't need a *carnet de passage* to visit any of the countries covered by this book. Travelling through Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland is easy, while for Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia you'll easily get temporary import permits at the border.

It's usually cheaper to buy privately, but for tourists it is often more convenient to go to a dealer. The weekly **Cape Ads** (www.capeads.com) is the best place to look for a private

TO GO OR NOT TO GO?

A dangerous traffic quirk in Southern Africa concerns the use and significance of indicator lights. When a car comes up behind a slow vehicle, wanting to overtake, the driver of the slower vehicle will often flash one indicator to let the other driver know whether or not it's safe to overtake. Logically, the left indicator would mean 'go' (that is, it may potentially be turning left, and the way is clear) and the right would mean 'don't go' (it may potentially be turning right, indicating that the way is not clear). Unfortunately, quite a few confused drivers get this backwards, creating a potentially disastrous situation for a trusting driver in the vehicle behind. The moral is: ignore the well-intentioned signals and never overtake unless you can see that the road ahead is completely clear.

BUSH DRIVING

While Southern Africa has a good network of sealed roads, driving on unsealed roads requires special techniques and appropriate vehicle preparation.

- For rough road conditions, you'll need a robust, high-clearance vehicle, but you'll have to engage the 4WD only when driving in sand or mud, or over boulder-sized rocks.
- In especially rocky conditions, have someone get out and direct the driver over the route of least resistance.
- At river crossings, always check the water depth and bottom conditions before starting across. It will be obvious that sand, stones and gravel are preferable to mud and muck!
- Make sure your vehicle is in good running order before you start. Carry tools, spares and equipment, including towrope, torch, shovel, fan belts, vehicle fluids, spark plugs, wire, jump leads, fuses, hoses, a good jack and a wooden plank to act as a base in sand. A second spare tyre is highly advised, and even a third if you've got room. You could also carry tyre levers, a tyre pump, spare tubes and repair kit, but mending punctures in the bush is much harder than the manuals imply, and should be avoided if possible. And of course you'll need the expertise to handle and install all this stuff...
- Wrap tools and heavy objects in blankets or padding. Pack supplies likely to be pitched around in strong plastic or metal containers, and strap everything down tightly on the roof or in the back. Keep breakable items in the cab. Once you're on unsealed roads, dust permeates everything – so tightly wrap food, clothing and camera equipment in strong dust-proof containers.
- When calculating fuel requirements, estimate your intended distance and then double it to allow for getting lost and emergencies. For serious off-roading, remember to allow for petrol consumption up to four times higher than in normal conditions – especially on sandy tracks.
- Carry at least 5L of water per person per day in indestructible container to allow for delays and breakdowns. Extra petrol should be carried in strong, leak-proof jerry cans.
- Take the best maps you can find, plus a GPS or compass that you know how to use. Take readings periodically to make sure you're still travelling in the right direction. To get an accurate compass reading, stand at least 3m from the vehicle.

Bush Tracks

Bush tracks rarely make an appearance on maps, and their ever-changing routes can utterly confound drivers. Some bush tracks will provide access to remote cattle posts or small villages

sale. Also try **Auto Trader** (www.autotrader.co.za), which advertises thousands of cars around the country.

Although prices tend to be cheaper in Jo'burg, most people do their buying in Cape Town – a much nicer place to spend the week or two that it will likely take for the process. Cape Town's main congregation of used-car dealers is on Voortrekker Rd between Maitland and Belleville Sts.

Some dealers might agree to a buy-back arrangement – if you don't trash the car, you can reasonably expect to get about 60% of your purchase price back after a three-month trip, but you need to check all aspects of the contract to be sure this deal will stick. **Wayne Motors** (☎ 021-465 2222) will guarantee a buy-back price in advance. **Drive Africa** (☎ 021-447

1144; www.driveafrica.co.za) specialises in buy-back sales for tourists.

A recommended contact in Cape Town is **Graham Duncan Smith** (☎ 021-797 3048), who's a Land Rover expert and has helped people buy a 4WD in the past; he charges a US\$20 consultation fee and US\$25 per hour for engineering work.

No matter who you buy from, make sure that the car details correspond accurately with the ownership (registration) papers, that there is a current licence disc on the windscreen and that the vehicle has been checked by the **police clearance department** (Cape Town ☎ 021-945 3891; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri). Check the owner's name against their identity document, and check the car's engine and chassis numbers. Consider getting the car tested – in Cape

and then disappear, often to re-emerge somewhere else. Some tracks never re-emerge, leaving you stranded.

- Take care driving through high grass – seeds can block radiators and cause overheating. Dry grass next to the exhaust pipe can also catch fire. Stop regularly and remove plant material from the grille or exhaust.

Sand

In sandy conditions you may be following a faint track – often just the wheel marks of previous vehicles – or driving across completely bare wilderness. Either way, driving is easier if the air is cool (usually mornings), as the sand is more compact at these times.

- Tyre pressure should be low – around half that required for normal road conditions. To prevent bogging or stalling, move as quickly as possible and keep the revs up, but avoid sudden acceleration. Shift down a gear before you reach deep sandy patches, not when you're in them.
- Allow the vehicle to wander along the path of least resistance when negotiating a straight course through rutted sand. Anticipate corners and turn the wheel slightly earlier than you would on a solid surface – this will allow the vehicle to slide smoothly around.

Pans

Many of the rules for bush-track or sand driving apply here, but some extra points are worth making.

- First, never drive on a pan unless you know exactly what you're doing. If you do venture onto a pan, stick to the edges until you're sure it's dry.
- Even if the pan *seems* dry, it can still be wet underneath – vehicles can break through the crust and become irretrievably bogged. Foul-smelling salt can mean the pan is wet and potentially dangerous. If in doubt, follow the tracks of other drivers (unless, of course, you see bits of vehicle poking above the surface).
- If you do get bogged and have a winch, anchor the spare wheel or the jack – anything to which the winch may be attached – by digging a hole and planting it firmly in the muck. Hopefully you'll be able to anchor it better than the pan has anchored the vehicle.

Town, try **Same Garage** (☎ 021-434 1058; 309 Main Rd, Sea Point). A full test can cost up to US\$45; less detailed tests are around US\$25.

Cheap cars will often be sold without a roadworthy certificate. This certificate is required when you register the change-of-ownership form and pay tax for a licence disc. A roadworthy used to be difficult to obtain, but some private garages are now allowed to issue them (US\$30), and some will overlook minor faults.

You'll be lucky to find a decent vehicle for much less than US\$3000, and realistically, you should expect to pay around US\$3500 for a 10-year-old Toyota Corolla or VW Golf in reasonable condition. If you want to go off-road, a decent Land Rover will cost anything from US\$5000 to US\$10,000. Alternatively,

look for a 'bakkie', such as a 2WD Toyota Hilux, which should cost around \$8000.

To register your car, present yourself along with the roadworthy, a current licence, an accurate ownership certificate, a completed change-of-ownership form (signed by the seller), a clear photocopy of your ID (passport) along with the original, and your money to the **City Treasurer's Department, Motor Vehicle Registration Division** (☎ 021-400 4900; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) in the Civic Centre on the foreshore in Cape Town. Call ahead to check how much cash you'll need, but it will be under US\$70. You can also get blank change-of-ownership forms here.

Insurance against theft or damage is highly recommended. The **Automobile Association** (☎ 086-101 0203; www.aa.co.za) will provide the

best advice. To purchase insurance, foreigners will normally need a South African driving licence (and in order to get that, you'll need an international driving permit).

Road Conditions

The good news is that most main roads in Southern Africa are in fair to excellent condition, and are passable for even small compact cars. In Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, however, you may be slowed down considerably by sealed roads that haven't seen any maintenance for many years and are plagued with bone-crunching and tyre-bursting potholes. On lesser roads, standards vary considerably, from relatively smooth highways to dirt tracks (see the boxed text, p762).

Road Hazards

Whatever vehicle you drive, prepare to deal with some of the world's worst, fastest and most arrogant and aggressive drivers.

Tree branches on the road are the local version of warning triangles, and usually indicate a broken-down vehicle ahead. If you come up behind someone on a bicycle, hoot the horn as a warning and offer a friendly wave as you pass. This isn't considered offensive, and the cyclist will appreciate the heads-up.

On rural highways, always be on the lookout for children playing, people selling goods, seeds drying or animals wandering around on the loose. Livestock is always a concern, and hitting even a small animal can cause vehicle damage, while hitting something large – like a cow or a kudu – can be fatal (for both the driver and the animal). If you see kids with red flags on the road, it means they're leading a herd of cows. Slow down, even if you can't see any cows (especially if you can't see any cows).

These things become much harder to deal with in the dark. Additionally, many vehicles have faulty lights – or none at all – so avoid driving at night if at all possible.

Road Rules

In all the countries covered in this book, traffic officially drives on the left – but that may not always be obvious, so be especially prepared on blind corners and hills.

HITCHING

Hitching is a way of life in Southern Africa, and visitors may well have the opportunity

to join the throng of locals looking for lifts. While this is a good way to get around places without public transport (or even with public transport), there is a protocol involved. As a visitor, you're likely to take precedence over locals (especially with white drivers), but if other people are hitching, it's still polite to stand further along the road so they'll have the first crack (that is, unless there's a designated hitching spot where everyone waits).

Another option is to wait around petrol stations and try to arrange lifts from drivers who may be going your way. If you do get a lift, be sure to determine what sort of payment is expected before you climb aboard. In most cases, plan on paying just a bit less than the equivalent bus fare.

As in any other part of the world, hitching is never entirely safe, and we therefore don't recommend it. Travellers who hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Within individual countries, public bus services range from basic to luxurious. In addition to the typically spluttering big buses, many countries also have minibuses, which are faster, run more frequently and perhaps are even more dangerous due to their speed. See the individual country chapters for more details.

In Southern Africa, there's a notable lack of long-distance shared service taxis (such as the seven-seat Peugeots that are so popular in other parts of Africa). Some travellers occasionally get a group together and hire a city taxi for a long trip, but this is rare.

In rural areas, the frequency of bus services drops dramatically. In such cases, public transport may be limited to the back of a pick-up truck (ute). Everyone pays a fare to the driver, which is normally comparable to the bus fare for a similar distance. This can be great fun – however uncomfortable – and it's often your only option.

TOURS

Travellers are faced with a boggling array of organised tour options in Southern Africa, and the only problem will be making your selection. In addition to the very convenient hop-on, hop-off bus services in South Africa, there are plenty of budget tours and safaris available to take you to the regional highlights.

You'll have the most options in Cape Town, Jo'burg, Victoria Falls, Livingstone, Maun, Windhoek and other places frequented by tourists. As with all tours, the range of options is enormous: they can last from two days to three weeks and can involve camping and mucking-in to luxury shuttles between five-star lodges. Vehicles may be private aircraft, Kombi vans, no-frills safari trucks or comfortable buses with air-con and chilled wine in the fridge.

For countries with a choice of locally based tour companies, a selection is listed under Tours in the Getting Around sections of those country chapters, with further choices also under some specific destinations. Some countries may have only a limited selection of operators, which are often attached to local travel agencies or budget hotels. For details, see specific destinations in the individual country chapters.

Local operators that arrange tours around Southern Africa include the following:

Barefoot safaris (☎ 265-01-707346; www.barefoot-safaris.com) Small group safaris, self-drive, trekking and sailing; covers Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia.

Dana Tours (☎ 258-21-497 483; www.danatours.net) Combined Mozambique–South Africa–Swaziland itineraries. Offices in Maputo and Nelspruit.

Kiboko Safaris (☎ 265-01-751226; www.kiboko-safaris.com) Excellent budget camping and lodge safaris in Malawi and South Luangwa, Zambia; also luxury safaris in Malawi and Mozambique.

Oceans, Islands, Safaris (☎ 021-702 0643; www.oceansislandsafaris.com) This company and its sister company Wildlife Adventures – both Cape Town-based – are

good for upscale South Africa–Mozambique–Quirimbas Archipelago itineraries.

Wayfarer Adventures (☎ /fax 021-715 0875; www.allworld-vacation.com/wayfarer-adventures) Wilderness adventure travel throughout Southern Africa, including Land Rover tours around Namibia.

Wilderness Safaris (☎ 011-807 1800; www.wilderness-safaris.com) This company offers a range of tours in all Southern African countries. In addition to the standard luxury lodge-based tours in remote areas, it offers fly-in safaris and activity-based trips.

TRAIN

Rail travel around Southern Africa focuses on the South African network and its offshoots into Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Zambia. For example for train service between Mozambique and South Africa, the only current route is Maputo–Komatipoort, where you need to disembark at the border and change trains. Trains on the Mozambique side, however, are very bad and slow. It's much better to travel via train on the South Africa side, and then bus or chapa for the Mozambique stretch (Ressano Garcia to Maputo).

Currently the only cross-border railway services are the Tazara line between Zambia and Tanzania (see p676) and the **Trans-Namib** (☎ Namibia 061-298 2175; www.transnamib.com.na) 'Star-Line' between Windhoek and Upington (25 hours).

Travelling by train within the various countries is still a decent option – and it's almost always fun – but can be a slow way to go. For details, see under Train in the Getting Around sections of individual country chapters.

Health

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As long as you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take basic preventive measures, you're unlikely to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in this chapter. While countries in Southern Africa have an impressive selection of tropical diseases on offer, it's more likely you'll get a bout of diarrhoea or a cold than a more exotic malady. The main exception to this is malaria, which is a widespread risk in Southern Africa, and precautions should be taken.

BEFORE YOU GO

A little predeparture planning will save you trouble later. Get a check-up from your dentist and from your doctor if you have any regular medication or chronic illness, eg high blood pressure and asthma. You should also organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you); get a first-aid and medical kit together; and arrange necessary vaccinations.

Travellers can register with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers** (IAMAT; www.iamat.org), which provides directories of certified doctors. If you'll be spending much time in remote areas, consider doing a first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance), or attending a remote medicine

first-aid course, such as that offered by **Wilderness Medical Training** (WMT; www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk).

If you are bringing medications with you, carry them in their original containers, clearly labelled. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

Find out in advance whether your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers, or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. In most countries in Southern Africa, doctors expect payment upfront in cash. It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover any emergency transport required to get you to a hospital in a major city, or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant if necessary. Not all insurance covers this, so check the contract carefully. If you need medical assistance, your insurance company might be able to help locate the nearest hospital or clinic, or you can ask at your hotel. In an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The **World Health Organization** (WHO; www.who.int/en) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. The consequences of these diseases can be severe, and outbreaks do occur.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov), the following vaccinations may be recommended for travel in Southern African countries: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. Yellow fever is not a risk in the region, but the certificate is an entry requirement if you're travelling from an infected region (see p770). Consult your medical practitioner for the most up-to-date information.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

It's a very good idea to carry a medical and first-aid kit with you, to help yourself in the case of minor illness or injury. Following is a list of items to consider packing.

- antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions (prescription only)
- antimalaria pills, if you'll be in malarial areas
- bandages, gauze
- scissors, safety pins, tweezers, pocket knife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents, and bed nets
- sun block
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- sterile needles, syringes and fluids if travelling to remote areas

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. The Lonely Planet website at www.lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start. The World Health Organization (WHO) publishes the helpful *International Travel and Health*, available free at www.who.int/ith. Other useful websites include **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com) and **Fit for Travel** (www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk).

Some official government travel health websites:

- Australia** www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html
- Canada** www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html
- UK** www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceForTravellers/fs/en
- USA** www.cdc.gov/travel

FURTHER READING

- *A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine* (1998) Eric A Weiss
- *Healthy Travel* (1999) Jane Wilson-Howarth

- *Healthy Travel Africa* (2000) Isabelle Young
- *How to Stay Healthy Abroad* (2002) Richard Dawood
- *Travel in Health* (1994) Graham Fry
- *Travel with Children* (2004) Cathy Lanigan

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

Prolonged immobility during flights can cause deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – the formation of blood clots in the legs. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Although most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some might break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulty. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention. To prevent DVT, walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG

If you're crossing more than five time zones you could suffer jet lag, resulting in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (nonalcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good-quality health care is available in the urban areas of many countries in Southern Africa, and private hospitals are generally of a good standard. Public hospitals by contrast are often underfunded and overcrowded; in off-the-beaten-track areas, reliable medical facilities are rare.

Prescriptions are required in most countries in Southern Africa. Drugs for chronic

diseases should be brought from home. In many countries there is a high risk of contracting HIV from infected blood transfusions. The **BloodCare Foundation** (www.bloodcare.org.uk) is a useful source of safe, screened blood, which can be transported to any part of the world within 24 hours.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Following are some of the diseases that are found in Southern Africa, though with a few basic preventive measures, it's unlikely that you'll succumb to any of these.

Cholera

Cholera is caused by a bacteria, and spread via contaminated drinking water. In South Africa, the risk to travellers is very low; you're likely to encounter it only in eastern rural areas, where you should avoid tap water and unpeeled or uncooked fruits and vegetables. The main symptom is profuse watery diarrhoea, which causes debilitation if fluids are not replaced quickly. An oral cholera vaccine is available in the USA, but it is not particularly effective. Most cases of cholera can be avoided by close attention to drinking water and by avoiding potentially contaminated food. Treatment is by fluid replacement (orally or via a drip), but sometimes antibiotics are needed. Self-treatment is not advised.

Dengue Fever (Break-bone Fever)

Dengue fever, spread through the bite of mosquitos, causes a feverish illness with headache and muscle pains similar to those experienced with a bad, prolonged attack of influenza. There might be a rash. Mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible. Self-treatment: paracetamol and rest.

Filariasis

Filariasis is caused by tiny worms migrating in the lymphatic system, and is spread by the bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms include localised itching and swelling of the legs and/or genitalia. Treatment is available. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice and, although it is rarely fatal, it can cause prolonged lethargy and delayed recovery. If you've had hepatitis A, you

shouldn't drink alcohol for up to six months afterwards, but once you've recovered, there won't be any long-term problems. The first symptoms include dark urine and a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes. Sometimes a fever and abdominal pain might be present. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection: a single dose will give protection for up to a year, and a booster after a year gives 10-year protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single dose vaccine, hepatyrix or viatim. Self-treatment: none.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread through infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It can also be spread from an infected mother to the baby during childbirth. It affects the liver, causing jaundice and occasionally liver failure. Most people recover completely, but some people might be chronic carriers of the virus, which could lead eventually to cirrhosis or liver cancer. Those visiting high-risk areas for long periods or those with increased social or occupational risk should be immunised. Many countries now routinely give hepatitis B as part of the childhood vaccination programme. It is given singly or can be given at the same time as hepatitis A (hepatyrix).

A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks or six months. Self-treatment: none.

HIV

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is an enormous problem across Southern Africa, with a devastating impact on local health systems and community structures. The virus is spread through infected blood and blood products, by sexual intercourse with an infected partner, and from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth and breastfeeding. It can be spread through 'blood to blood' contacts, such as with contaminated instruments during medical, dental, acupuncture and other body-piercing procedures, and through sharing used intravenous needles. At present there is no cure; medication that might keep the disease under control is available, but these drugs are too expensive, or unavailable, for the overwhelming majority of those living in Southern Africa. If you think you might have been infected with HIV, a blood test is necessary; a three-month gap after exposure and

before testing is required to allow antibodies to appear in the blood. Self-treatment: none.

Malaria

Malaria is a widespread risk in Southern Africa. Apart from road accidents, it's probably the only major health risk that you face travelling in this area, and precautions should be taken. The disease is caused by a parasite in the bloodstream spread via the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito. There are several types of malaria; falciparum malaria is the most dangerous type and the predominant form in South Africa. Infection rates vary with season and climate, so check out the situation before departure. Several different drugs are used to prevent malaria, and new ones are in the pipeline. Up-to-date advice from a travel health clinic is essential as some medication is more suitable for some travellers than others (eg people with epilepsy should avoid mefloquine, and doxycycline should not be taken by pregnant women or children aged under 12).

The early stages of malaria include headaches, fevers, generalised aches and pains, and malaise, which could be mistaken for flu. Other symptoms can include abdominal pain, diarrhoea and a cough. Anyone who develops a fever in a malarial area should assume malarial infection until a blood test proves negative, even if you have been taking antimalarial medication. If not treated, the next stage could develop within 24 hours, particularly if falciparum malaria is the parasite: jaundice, then reduced consciousness and coma (also known as cerebral malaria) followed by death. Treat-

ment in hospital is essential, and the death rate might still be as high as 10% even in the best intensive-care facilities.

Many travellers think that malaria is a mild illness, and that taking antimalarial drugs causes more illness through side effects than actually getting malaria. This is unfortunately not true. If you decide against antimalarial drugs, you must understand the risks, and be obsessive about avoiding mosquito bites. Use nets and insect repellent, and report any fever or flulike symptoms to a doctor as soon as possible. Some people advocate homeopathic preparations against malaria, such as Demal200, but as yet there is no conclusive evidence that this is effective, and many homeopaths do not recommend their use.

Malaria in pregnancy frequently results in miscarriage or premature labour, and the risks to both mother and foetus during pregnancy are considerable. Travel throughout the region when pregnant should be carefully considered. Adults who have survived childhood malaria have developed immunity and usually only develop mild cases of malaria; most Western travellers have no immunity at all. Immunity wanes after 18 months of nonexposure, so even if you have had malaria in the past and used to live in a malaria-prone area, you might no longer be immune.

Rabies

Rabies is spread by receiving bites or licks from an infected animal on broken skin. Few human cases are reported in Southern Africa, with the risks highest in rural areas. It

ANTIMALARIAL A TO D

- A – Awareness of the risk. No medication is totally effective, but protection of up to 95% is achievable with most drugs, as long as other measures have been taken.
- B – Bites, to be avoided at all costs. Sleep in a screened room, use a mosquito spray or coils, sleep under a permethrin-impregnated net at night. Cover up at night with long trousers and long sleeves, preferably with permethrin-treated clothing. Apply appropriate repellent to all areas of exposed skin in the evenings.
- C – Chemical prevention (ie antimalarial drugs) is usually needed in malarial areas. Expert advice is needed as resistance patterns can change, and new drugs are in development. Not all antimalarial drugs are suitable for everyone. Most antimalarial drugs need to be started at least a week before and continued for four weeks after the last possible exposure to malaria.
- D – Diagnosis. If you have a fever or flulike illness within a year of travel to a malarial area, malaria is a possibility, and immediate medical attention is necessary.

is always fatal once the clinical symptoms start (which might be up to several months after an infected bite), so postbite vaccination should be given as soon as possible. Postbite vaccination (whether or not you've been vaccinated before the bite) prevents the virus from spreading to the central nervous system. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of postbite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three preventive injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated you'll need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vaccinated, you'll need fewer postbite injections, and have more time to seek medical help. Self-treatment: none.

Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia)

This disease is a risk when swimming in freshwater lakes and slow-running rivers – always seek local advice before venturing in. It's spread by flukes (minute worms) that are carried by a species of freshwater snail, which then sheds them into slow-moving or still water. The parasites penetrate human skin during swimming and then migrate to the bladder or bowel. They are excreted via stool or urine and could contaminate fresh water, where the cycle starts again. Swimming in suspect freshwater lakes or slow-running rivers should be avoided. Symptoms range from none to transient fever and rash, and advanced cases might have blood in the stool or in the urine. A blood test can detect antibodies if you might have been exposed, and treatment is readily available. If not treated, the infection can cause kidney failure or permanent bowel damage. It's not possible for you to infect others. Self-treatment: none.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products. BCG vaccination is recommended if you'll be mixing closely with the local population, especially on long-term stays, although it gives only moderate protection against the disease. TB can be asymptomatic, being picked up only on a routine chest X-ray. Alternatively, it can cause a cough, weight loss or fever, sometimes months or even years after exposure. Self-treatment: none.

Typhoid

This is spread through food or water contaminated by infected human faeces. The first symptom is usually a fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Sometimes septicaemia (blood poisoning) can occur. A typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available. Antibiotics are usually given as treatment, and death is rare unless septicaemia occurs. Self-treatment: none.

Yellow Fever

Although not a problem within Southern Africa, you'll need to carry a certificate of vaccination if you'll be arriving from an infected country. For a list of infected countries see the websites of WHO (www.who.int/wer/) or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm).

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

This is a common travel-related illness, sometimes simply due to dietary changes. It's possible that you'll succumb, especially if you're spending a lot of time in rural areas or eating at inexpensive local food stalls. To avoid diarrhoea, eat only fresh fruits or vegetables that have been cooked or peeled, and be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Although freshly cooked food can often be a safe option, plates or serving utensils might be dirty, so be selective when eating food from street vendors (make sure that cooked food is piping hot all the way through). If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of water and some salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinoline drug, such as ciprofloxacin or norfloxacin) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide) if you're not within easy reach of a toilet. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

Amoebic Dysentery

Contracted by eating contaminated food and water, amoebic dysentery causes blood and mucus in the faeces. It can be relatively mild and tends to come on gradually, but seek medical advice if you think you have the illness as

it won't clear up without treatment (which is with specific antibiotics).

Giardiasis

This, like amoebic dysentery, is also caused by ingesting contaminated food or water. The illness usually appears a week or more after you have been exposed to the offending parasite. Giardiasis might cause only a short-lived bout of typical travellers' diarrhoea, but it can also cause persistent diarrhoea. Ideally, seek medical advice if you suspect you have giardiasis, but if you are in a remote area you could start a course of antibiotics.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Heat Exhaustion

This condition occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt, and is primarily a risk in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. Self-treatment: fluid replacement with water and/or fruit juice, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt-loss component consists of consuming salty fluids as in soup, and adding a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heatstroke

Heat exhaustion is a precursor to the much more serious condition of heatstroke. In this case there is damage to the sweating mechanism, with an excessive rise in body temperature, irrational and hyperactive behaviour, and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement is usually also required by intravenous drip.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes might not always carry malaria or dengue fever, but they (and other insects) can cause irritation and infected bites. To avoid these, take the same precautions as you would for avoiding malaria (see p769). Bee and wasp stings cause real problems only to those who have a severe allergy to the stings (anaphylaxis), in which case, carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) injection.

Scorpions are found in arid areas. They can cause a painful bite that is sometimes life-threatening. If bitten by a scorpion, take a painkiller. Medical treatment should be sought if collapse occurs.

Ticks are always a risk away from urban areas. If you get bitten, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Smearing chemicals on the tick will not make it let go and is not recommended.

Snake Bites

Basically, avoid getting bitten! Don't walk barefoot, or stick your hand into holes or cracks. However, 50% of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (such as a stick) and apply a bandage over the site with firm pressure, similar to bandaging a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get medical help as soon as possible.

Water

In most areas of Southern Africa you should stick to bottled water rather than drinking water from the tap, and purify stream water before drinking it.

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