

# 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 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 from US\$50 to US\$100 (although this can be up to US\$150 in parts of the region, such as Mozambique). Top-end options charge

from around US\$100 (although it varies immensely; in Zambia for example, a top-end lodge in a national park starts at US\$500). Check individual Directories for the budget breakdown used in that chapter.

## B&Bs & Guest Houses

B&Bs and guest houses 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 guest houses are most prevalent in South Africa, where the standards are high and features such as antique furniture, private verandahs, 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, in 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 (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 campsite

### BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider low-down 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. Birdwatchers will also want to read the excellent bimonthly *Africa Birds & Birding*. For subscriptions to these magazines contact **Africa Geographic** (☎ 27-21-762 2180; www.africa-geographic.com).
- 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.

(although it may). A camp is usually a well-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 full 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 appealing; 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