KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Kruger National Park



Almost as much as Nelson Mandela and the Springboks, Kruger is one of South Africa's national symbols, and for many visitors, it is *the* 'must-see' wildlife destination in the country. Little wonder: in an area the size of Wales, enough elephants wander around to populate a major city, giraffes nibble on acacia trees, hippos wallow in the rivers, leopards prowl through the night and a multitude of birds sing, fly and roost.

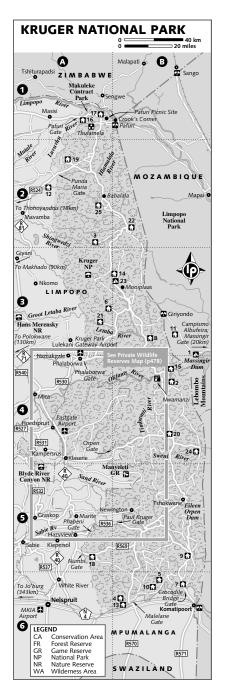
Kruger is one of the world's most famed protected areas – known for its size, conservation history, wildlife diversity and ease of access. It's a place where the drama of life and death plays out daily, with up-close, action-packed sightings of wildlife almost guaranteed. One morning you may spot lions feasting on a kill, and the next a newborn impala struggling to take its first steps.

Kruger is also South Africa's most visited park, with over one million visitors annually and an extensive network of sealed roads and comfortable camps. For those who prefer roughing it, there are 4WD tracks and hiking trails. Yet, even when you stick to the tarmac, the sounds and scents of the bush are never far away. And, if you avoid weekends and holidays, or stay in the north and on gravel roads, it's easy to travel for an hour or more without seeing another vehicle.

Southern Kruger is the most popular section, with the highest animal concentrations and easiest access. Further north, mopane (mopani) takes over as the dominant vegetation. This is a favoured food of elephants, and you'll see these creatures in abundance, especially around Letaba. In the far north, around Punda Maria and Pafuri, wildlife concentrations are somewhat lower, but the bush setting is stunning and the wilderness atmosphere all-enveloping.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Setting off into the bush on one of Kruger's excellent wilderness trails (p471)
- Sleeping in an overnight hide (p476) or bushveld camp (p475) and dropping off to the sound of lions roaring in the distance
- Spending time in northern Kruger (p469), visiting the ruins of the ancient kingdom of Thulamela, taking in the panorama at Crook's Corner, and appreciating the wilderness
- Exploring Kruger from south to north (p467), taking in the changing topography and nature's rhythms
- Pampering yourself with a few nights at a luxurious private wildlife reserve (p478)



HISTORY

The San first set foot on Kruger's savannahs, and they left their mark in rock paintings at numerous sites in and around the park. Prior to the San, various hominid species wandered the lowveld as much as 500,000 years ago.

From around AD 500, various Bantuspeaking peoples had settled in – part of the great migration of West African peoples who had begun making their way across the continent about 1500 years earlier. Their most famous settlement in the park was at Thulamela, which flourished between the 16th and mid-17th centuries.

The area that is now Kruger first came under government protection in 1898, when Paul Kruger (president of the Transvaal Republic and an avid hunter) established the Sabie Game Reserve, between the Sabie and Crocodile Rivers, as a controlled hunting area. In 1902, following the second Anglo-Boer War, James Stevenson Hamilton became the reserve's first warden. Hamilton was also the first to see the tourism potential of wildlife, and to bring a conservation vision to the area. In 1926 Sabie Game Reserve was joined with neighbouring Shingwedzi Game Reserve and various private farms to become Kruger National Park, and in 1927 the park was opened to the public.

As with most official institutions in South Africa prior to 1994, Kruger was a pawn of the apartheid government, and its history contains many reminders of this. During the park's early years, there were numerous instances of eviction of local populations, with the most prominent case that of the Makuleke

SLEEPING \Lambda 🞧	
Aguia Pesqueira Campsite	1 B3
Balule Satellite Camp	2 B4
Bateleur Bushveld Camp	3 A2
Berg-en-dal Rest Camp	
Biyamiti Bushveld Camp	5 B6
Boulders Bush Lodge	
Crocodile Bridge Rest Camp	7 B6
Letaba Rest Camp	
Lower Sabie Rest Camp	
Lukimbi Safari Lodge	10 B6
Machampane Wilderness Camp	11 B3
Makuleke Community Centre & Homestay	
Malelane Satellite Camp	13 B6
Mopani Rest Camp	14 B3
Olifants Rest Camp	15 B4
Outpost	16 A1
Pafuri Camp	17 A1
Pretoriuskop Rest Camp	18 A5
Punda Maria Rest Camp	19 A2
Satara Rest Camp	20 B4
Shimuwini Bushveld Camp	21 A3
Shingwedzi Rest Camp	
Shipandani Overnight Hide	23 B3
Singita Lebombo Lodge	24 B4
Sirheni Bushveld Camp	