

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

South Africa offers a wide selection of good-value accommodation. Whatever your budget, you'll generally find high standards, often for significantly less than you would pay for the equivalent in Europe or North America.

The main budget options are camping grounds, backpackers hostels, self-catering cottages and indigenous, community-run offerings including homestays and other options. With few exceptions, you can expect clean surroundings and good facilities. The main caveat is that there aren't enough places in this price category; away from

## PRACTICALITIES

- All three countries use the metric system for weights and measures (see the conversion chart inside the front cover).
- Access electricity (220-250V AC, 50Hz) with a three-pin adaptor (South Africa has its own unique version with large, round pins), which is easy enough to find. Upmarket accommodation sometimes has European-style sockets for two circular pins.
- Best weekly: *Mail & Guardian*. Best daily: the *Sowetan*. Others to look for: the *Sunday Independent*; the *Sunday Times*; the *Johannesburg Star*; and *Business Day*. Check out *Getaway* magazine for travel news.
- Tune the TV to SABC for the news (SABC3 is mostly English). M-Net offers US films and series; e-TV carries alternative programs.
- SABC radio broadcasts in 11 languages. BBC World Service is available on shortwave and a number of FM and AM stations and on 90.2FM in Maseru, Lesotho.

tourist areas, sometimes the best budget option is camping.

Midrange accommodation is particularly good value, especially for B&Bs. Expect a private bathroom and a clean, comfortable room. Self-catering accommodation at national parks, usually priced in the midrange category, also tends to be very good value.

At the top end, South Africa boasts some of the best wildlife lodges on the continent, as well as classic guest houses and superb hotels. Places at this level offer all the amenities you would expect for prices that are similar to, or slightly less than, those you would pay in Europe or North America. There are also some not-so-superb hotels and guest houses which can be expensive disappointments, so be selective.

**BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE**

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at <http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com>. Reviews are thorough and independent, giving the lowdown on the best places to stay – and you can book online.

Swaziland's accommodation is priced similarly to that in South Africa. At the budget level, there is a handful of backpacker hostels, and free-camping is possible in most areas. Lesotho is not known for its high-class hotel accommodation, but there are some notable exceptions, such as the lodges in Malealea (p569), Semonkong (p567) and Roma (p559); camping opportunities abound away from major towns.

Accommodation listings in this book are ordered from budget to midrange to top end. Expect to pay somewhat more in major tourist areas such as Cape Town (one of the most expensive places in the region); prices in Lesotho are similar to South Africa, but you get excellent value for money.

There are significant seasonal price variations, with rates rising steeply during the December-January school break, and again around Easter, when room prices often double and minimum stays are imposed. Expect prices during the 2010 World Cup (held in June and July) to be at the same level. Advance bookings are essential during these times. The other school holidays are also often classified as high season, although it's more common to have 'midseason' pricing. Conversely, you can get some excellent deals during the winter low season, which is also the best time for wildlife-watching. Many places offer discounted midweek rates, so always ask. Occasionally, in towns geared towards business travellers rather than tourists, such as mining centres, week rates can be more expensive. To save money during peak holiday periods, the best bets are camping, backpacker hostels or self-catering places.

**Online Booking**

Many regions have B&B organisations and tourist offices that take bookings (see listings in the regional chapters and p620). Another option is to use one of the centralised online

booking services that cover South Africa; some are listed below. Because most booking services charge listing fees, the cheapest places usually aren't included. Camping grounds (including those with self-catering accommodation) are also not listed, and pickings are slim outside major tourist centres.

**www.bookabed.co.za** B&B, self-catering options and game lodges in all provinces.

**www.bookaholiday.co.za** For Cape Town and the Garden Route.

**www.farmstay.co.za** For farmstays.

**www.hostelafrica.com** Hostels across Africa; also takes Baz Bus and Kruger tour bookings.

**www.portfoliocollection.com** For upscale B&Bs and lodges, private wildlife reserve and boutique hotels; also in Swaziland.

**www.sabreakaway.co.za** Mostly upmarket listings; also covers neighbouring countries.

**www.seastay.co.za** For coastal areas.

**www.wheretostay.co.za** Covers South Africa and five adjacent countries, with a section on wheelchair-friendly options.

**B&Bs & Guest Houses**

B&Bs and guest houses (the line between them is often indistinguishable) are two of South Africa's accommodation treats. They're found throughout the country, in cities as well as small towns, while in rural areas you can sometimes stay on farms. Some of the cheapest places aren't terribly exciting, but on the whole standards are high, and rooms are generally excellent value.

Unlike British B&Bs, many South African establishments offer much more than someone's spare room, and unlike motels they are individual and often luxurious. Antique furniture, a private veranda, big gardens and a pool are common. In the Winelands north of Cape Town, and in other rural areas, wonderful settings are often part of the deal. Many have separate guest entrances and private bathrooms. Breakfasts are usually large and delectable. Prices start around R400 per double, including breakfast and private bathroom; exceptions include Johannesburg (Jo'burg) and the south coast, where doubles start at R600 and R500, respectively.

In Soweto (p420), Khayelitsha (p159) and several other areas, you can also stay in township B&Bs, an excellent way to get insights into township life. Many owners offer tours of the township, and unparalleled African hospitality. Expect to pay about R300 per person.