

# Understand Africa

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Conflict and poverty continue, but there's good news, too, with sustainable economic growth for some countries.

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# Africa Today

Disease, poverty, corruption and conflict continue to stalk the continent but recent headlines out of Africa are increasingly positive. Long-running dictators have been toppled across North Africa, while in 2011 the continent gained its newest nation, South Sudan. Sustained economic growth for scores of nations is bringing concrete benefits to millions of average Africans, including dramatic falls in child mortality.

## Best in Print

### Searching for Transwonderland

(Noo Saro-Wira) Wry, insightful account of Africa's most populous country, Nigeria.

**Shadow of the Sun** (Ryszard Kapuściński) Illuminating stories from a veteran foreign correspondent.

**Dark Star Safari** (Paul Theroux) The master traveller charts a Cairo to Cape Town journey.

**Africa: a Beginners Guide** (Tom Young) A great introduction to the continent and its politics, which examines the arguments from all sides.

**Disgrace** (JM Coetzee) Booker Prize-winner about post-apartheid South Africa.

## Best on Film

**Tsotsi** (2005) Oscar-winning gangster drama set in Soweto.

**The Constant Gardener** (2005) Based on John le Carré's thriller set in Kenya.

**Hotel Rwanda** (2004) True story of heroism during the Rwandan genocide.

## Best Websites

**All Africa** ([allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com)) News from across the continent.

**Africa Research Institute** ([www.africaresearchinstitute.org](http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org)) Reports from a London-based think tank.

**The Africa Guide** ([www.africaguide.com](http://www.africaguide.com)) All-purpose, all-Africa site.

## After the Arab Spring

Euphoria accompanied the Arab Spring of 2011 and the ousting of long-term leaders in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. But the hard realities of government and politics hit home in 2012. A two-part referendum in Egypt in late 2012 over the new constitution brought thousand of protesters back onto Cairo's streets and left the country, according to the *Economist*, 'ever more starkly divided' than before 2011. Meanwhile, in Libya US Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other American diplomats were killed in September 2012, a brutal reminder that the country is still dangerously unstable.

## France Goes into Mali

The demise of Colonel Qaddafi's regime has sent dangerous ripples across the region. Mali was regarded to be a model of African democracy until a military coup in March 2012. Tuareg rebels and al-Qaeda allies, some of whom who had fought for Qaddafi, took the opportunity to declare the independence of 'Azawad state' in the north, an area of the Sahara as big as Spain. In January 2013 France deployed troops to its former colony, following an appeal from the Malian government, to help counter this threat from Islamist rebels. This was swiftly followed by a hostage crisis at a gas facility in the Algerian desert.

There was more bad news for West Africa in October 2012 when the International Maritime Bureau announced that piracy in the region had reached dangerous proportions. The problem is particularly acute in the waters off Nigeria.

## East African Promise

On the other side of the continent, international efforts to combat piracy began to bear fruit as attacks by Somali pirates dropped sharply. The US also officially recognised Somalia's government, bringing the pariah state

back out of the cold after 20 years and paving the way for international aid.

There was more good news, of sorts, when the *Economist* declared Kabira, the Nairobi shanty town often described as Africa's biggest slum, 'a thriving economic machine' that was possibly the 'most entrepreneurial place on the planet'. Economic growth here was mirrored across the continent and has resulted in dramatic improvements in other areas, such as child mortality; in the five years to 2010, Senegal cut its under-five mortality rate from 12.1 per cent to 7.2 per cent. Rates also tumbled in Rwanda and Kenya.

### Trouble in Congo

Demand for oil and other scarce resources, particularly by China and the US, lies behind the recovery of economies such as Angola, Nigeria and Chad. However the scramble for control of the spoils of this trade continues to plague Africa. Conflict in the resource-rich Democratic Republic of Congo rumbles on with the rebel M23 group gaining the advantage in the eastern part of the country in late 2012.

### Strife in South Africa

The continent's superpower remains South Africa, a member of the emerging global economies known as BRICS (standing for Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, China and South Africa). Bitter memories of the country's apartheid years were rekindled when police opened fire on striking platinum miners in August 2012, killing 34 of them. The incident highlighted persistent deep economic divisions in South African society.

President Jacob Zuma weathered the storm, comfortably securing re-election to lead the African National Congress, the essential stepping stone to a second term as the nation's president in 2014. South Africa has been on tenterhooks, though, as its most famous citizen, 94-year-old Nelson Mandela, has been in and out of hospital three times since December 2012 for treatment for his declining health.

Meanwhile in neighbouring Zimbabwe, elections in 2013 became possible when rival political leaders President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai reached a deal over a new constitution, which was approved in a referendum in March of 2013.

POPULATION: **1,032,532,974**  
(2011)

LIFE EXPECTANCY: **54**

AREA: **30,221,532 SQ KM**

GDP PER CAPITA: **US\$1189**  
(2010)

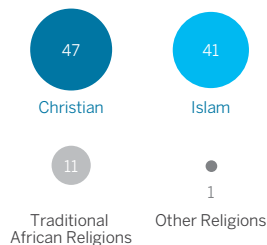
### if Africa were 100 people



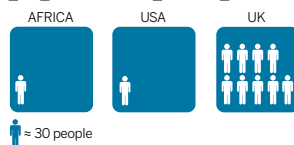
95 would not have HIV  
5 would have HIV

### belief systems

(% of population)



### population per sq km



# History

African history is a vast and epic tale. The continent has seen pretty much everything – from proto-bacteria and dinosaurs to the colonial ‘scramble for Africa’ and the Arab Spring that ousted long-time leaders in North Africa. The first humans walked out of the continent about 100,000 years ago to eventually populate the globe. Since then, African empires have come and gone as have European explorers and colonialists. What follows is a gallop through the pivotal events in the continent’s past. For further details read the history sections of each country chapter.

To find out more information on the history of Africa try the following books: *Africa – A Biography of the Continent* by John Reader, *The Scramble for Africa* by Thomas Pakenham and *The State of Africa* by Martin Meredith.

## Human Origins & Migrations

Around five to 10 million years ago, a special kind of ape called *Australopithecines* branched off (or rather let go of the branch) and walked on two legs down a separate evolutionary track. This radical move led to the development of various hairy, dim-witted hominids (early men) – *Homo habilis* around 2.4 million years ago, *Homo erectus* some 1.8 million years ago and finally *Homo sapiens* (modern humans) around 200,000 years ago. Around 50,000 years later, somewhere in Tanzania or Ethiopia, a woman was born who has become known as ‘mitochondrial Eve’. All humans today descend from her: at a deep genetic level, we’re all Africans.

The first moves away from the nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life came between 14,000 BC and 9500 BC, when rainfall was high and the Sahara and North Africa became verdant. By 2500 BC the rains began to fail and the sandy barrier between North and West Africa became the Sahara we know today. People began to move southwest into the rainforests of Central Africa, most notably a group of people speaking the same family of languages. Known as the Bantu, the group’s population grew as it discovered iron-smelting technology and developed new agricultural techniques. By 100 BC, Bantu peoples had reached East Africa; by AD 300 they were living in Southern Africa, and the age of the African empires had begun.

## African Empires Through the Ages

Victorian missionaries liked to think they were bringing the beacon of ‘civilisation’ to the ‘backward’ Africa, but the truth is that Africans were

### TIMELINE

**200,000  
years ago**

The first ‘humans’ (*Homo sapiens*) begin to definitively diverge from other similar species (such as *Homo erectus*, which persists for millennia), marking Africa as the birthplace of humanity.

**From  
5000 BC**

The Sahara begins the millennia-long process of becoming a desert. The drying climate prompts people to settle around waterholes, to rely on agriculture and to move south.



Camel driver, Sahara

developing various commercial empires and complex urban societies while Europeans were still running after wildlife with clubs.

## Pyramids of Power

Arguably the greatest of the African empires was the first: ancient Egypt. Formed through an amalgamation of already organised states in the Nile Delta around 3100 BC, Egypt achieved an amazing degree of cultural and social sophistication. The Pharaohs, kings imbued with the power of gods, sat at the top of a highly stratified social hierarchy. The annual flooding of the Nile kept the lands of the Pharaohs fertile and fed their legions of slaves and artisans, who in turn worked to produce some of the most amazing public buildings ever constructed. Many of these, like the Pyramids of Giza, are still standing today. Ancient Egypt was eventually overrun by the Nubian Empire, then by the Assyrians, Persians, Alexander the Great and finally the Romans.

## Phoenician & Roman North Africa

Established in Tunisia by the Phoenicians (seafaring people with their origins in Tyre in what is now Lebanon) the city-state of Carthage filled the power vacuum left by the decline of ancient Egypt. By the 6th century BC, Carthage was an empire in its own right and controlled much of the Mediterranean sea trade. Back on land, scholars were busy inventing the Phoenician alphabet, from which Greek, Hebrew and Latin are all thought to derive. It all came to an abrupt end with the arrival of the Romans, who razed Carthage and enslaved its population in 146 BC.

The Romans built some of Africa's most beautiful ancient cities in what are now Libya, Algeria and Morocco, and African-born Septimius Severus (r AD 193–211), went on to become Emperor of Rome. But the Romans, like the Carthaginians before them and the Byzantines who came after, had their control over Africa effectively restricted to the Mediterranean coastal strip. This was swept away by the Arabs who arrived in North Africa, bearing Islam, around AD 670.

## The Kingdom of Sheba

Aksum was the first truly African indigenous state – no conquerors from elsewhere arrived to start this legendary kingdom, which controlled much of Sudan and southern Arabia at the height of its powers between AD 100 and 940. Aksum's heart was the hilly, fertile landscape of northern Ethiopia. The Aksumites traded with Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean and Arabia, developed a written language, produced gold coins and built imposing stone buildings. In the 4th century AD, the Aksumite king converted to Christianity, founding the Ethiopian Orthodox church.

### 3100 BC

Lower Egypt in the Nile's Delta, and Upper Egypt, upstream of the Delta, are unified under Pharaoh Menes. Over the next 3000 years a great African civilization flourishes.

### 146 BC

The city-state of Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia) is destroyed by the Romans. Its people are sold into slavery and the site is symbolically sprinkled with salt and damned forever.

### 100 BC

The Bantu people arrive in East Africa from the west and northwest. By the 11th century they had reached Southern Africa.

### 4th century AD

Christianity is embraced by the East African kingdom of Aksum (in present-day Ethiopia). Three centuries later the trading empire is isolated by the rise of Arabs and Islam in Arabia.

Respected African-American scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr has spent a lifetime refuting perceptions of Africa's precolonial backwardness. The result is the compelling *Wonders of the African World* (1999).

Legend has it that Ethiopia was the home of the fabled Queen of Sheba and the last resting place of the mysterious Ark of the Covenant.

## Swahili Sultans

As early as the 7th century AD, the coastal areas of modern-day Tanzania, Kenya and Mozambique were home to a chain of vibrant, well-organised city-states, whose inhabitants lived in stone houses, wore fine silks and decorated their gravestones with artisanal ceramics and glass. Merchants from as far afield as China and India came to the East African coast, then set off again, their holds groaning with trade goods, spices, slaves and exotic beasts. The rulers of these city-states were the Swahili sultans – kings and queens who kept a hold on their domains via their control over magical objects and knowledge of secret religious ceremonies. The Swahili sultans were eventually defeated by Portuguese and Omani conquerors, but the rich cultural melting pot they presided over gave rise to the Swahili language, a fusion of African, Arabic and Portuguese words that still thrives.

## Golden Kingdoms

The area centred on present-day Mali was home to a hugely wealthy series of West African empires that flourished over the course of more than 800 years. The Empire of Ghana lasted from the 4th to 11th centuries, and was followed by the fabulously wealthy Empire of Mali (around AD 1250 to 1500), which once stretched all the way from the coast of Senegal to Niger.

The Songhai Empire (AD 1000–1591), with its capital at Gao in modern-day Mali, was the last of Africa's golden empires, which, at their peak covered areas larger than Western Europe. Their wealth was founded on the salt from Saharan mines, which was traded ounce for ounce with West African gold. Organised systems of government and Islamic centres of scholarship – the most famous of which was Timbuktu – flourished in the kingdoms of West Africa, but conversely, it was Islam that led to their downfall when the forces of Morocco invaded in 1591.

## The Age of the Explorers

By the 15th century, with gold and tales of limitless wealth making their way across the Sahara and Mediterranean, European royalty became obsessed with Africa.

The Portuguese were first off the block, building a fortified trading post, the earliest European structure in sub-Saharan Africa, along today's Ghanaian coast. By the end of the century their ships had rounded Southern Africa. In the early 16th century, French, British and Dutch ships had joined the Portuguese along the coast, building forts as they

### 670

Islam sweeps across North Africa, where it remains the dominant religion today. A century later the religion had spread down the East African coast.

### 8th century

In search of spices, Arabic, Indian, Persian and Chinese merchants begin arriving along what is now the Kenyan coast. The Swahili trading centres of East Africa start to prosper.

### 9th century

Islam reaches the Sahel via trans-Saharan camel caravans, almost 250 years after it swept across North Africa; it would later become the predominant religion of West Africa.

### Around AD 1000

The city of Timbuktu is founded as a seasonal encampment for Tuareg nomads; by the 15th century it had become a centre of Islamic scholarship and home to 100,000 people.

## THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF SLAVERY

One of the least thoroughly digested of Africa's many traumas was the slave trade. What is striking is how deep in the continent's subconscious this terrible episode has been buried. Some academics estimate that, had it not been for the slave trade, Africa's mid-19th-century population would have been double its 25 million figure. Yet, with the exception of the Swahili coast's old markets, Ghana's castles and Senegal's Goree Island, one rarely stumbles upon its traces.

The complicity of African rulers of the day may explain a reluctance to engage with the issue. As Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade, whose ancestors were slave owners, told African delegates campaigning for reparations: 'If one can claim reparations for slavery, the slaves of my ancestors or their descendants can also claim money from me.' The other complicating factor may be awareness of the time it took many African states to outlaw slavery – Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia for example, only set about it in the 1920s – and embarrassment at the knowledge that it still quietly persists in countries such as Sudan, Mauritania and Niger.

went. But unlike the Carthaginians and Romans, the European powers were never content with mere coastal footholds.

Victorian heroes such as Richard Burton and John Speke captured the public imagination with their hair-raising tales from the East African interior, while Mungo Park and the formidable Mary Wesley battled their way through fever-ridden swamps, and avoided charging animals while 'discovering' various parts of West Africa.

## The European Slave Trade

There has always been slavery in Africa (slaves were common by-products of intertribal warfare, and the Arabs and Shirazis who dominated the East African coast took slaves by the thousands). But the slave trade took on a whole new dimension after the European arrival. The Portuguese in West Africa, the Dutch in South Africa and other Europeans who came after them saw how African slavery worked and, with one eye on their huge American sugar plantations, saw the potential for slavery to fuel agricultural production. They were helped by opportunistic African leaders who used slavery and other trade with Europeans as a means to expand their own power.

Exact figures are impossible to establish, but from the end of the 15th century until around 1870, when the slave trade was fully abolished, up to 20 million Africans were enslaved. Perhaps half died en route to the Americas; millions of others perished in slaving raids. The trans-Atlantic slave trade gave European powers a huge economic boost, while the loss

The extravagant, gold-laden pilgrimage to Mecca by Mali's King Kankan Musa in AD 1324 is often credited with sparking Europe's interest in Africa and its riches.

### 1137–1270

Ethiopia's Zaghe dynasty builds Lalibela's rock-hewn churches. The dynasty was overthrown by Yekuno Amlak, a self-professed descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

### 1498

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama lands at Mozambique Island. Over the next 200 years, the Portuguese establish trading enclaves along the coast and several settlements in the interior.

### 1650s

The Dutch East India Company sets up a permanent supply station at Cape Town and the French set up a permanent trading post at Saint-Louis in modern Senegal.

### 1869

Opening of the Suez Canal. Discovery of the world's largest diamond deposits in Kimberley and gold in the Transvaal around the same time helps keep Cape Town as Africa's premier port.

To understand the horrors of the European slave trade and its ultimate abolition, look no further than Adam Hochschild's definitive 2006 book, *Bury the Chains*.

When Ethiopian rebel forces rolled into Addis Ababa in 1991 they were navigating with photocopies of the Addis Ababa map found in Lonely Planet's *Africa on a Shoestring!*

of farmers and tradespeople, as well as the general chaos, made Africa an easy target for colonialism.

The slave trade was not all in one direction; slaves were also brought to Africa from Asia, in particular by the Dutch in South Africa.

## Colonial Africa

Throughout the 19th century, the region-by-region conquest of the continent by European powers gathered pace and became known as the 'Scramble for Africa'. This was formalised at the Berlin Conference of 1884–5, when Europe's governments divided Africa between them. That Africans had no say in the matter, and that Europeans had never set foot in many of the territories claimed, scarcely seemed to register. France and Britain got the biggest swathes, with Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Belgium picking up the rest. The resulting boundaries, determined more by colonial expediency than the complex realities on the ground, remain largely in place today.

Forced labour, heavy taxation, and vengeful violence for any insurrection were all commonplace in colonial Africa. African territories were essentially organised to extract cheap cash crops and natural resources for use by the colonial powers. To facilitate easy administration, tribal differences and rivalries were exploited to the full, and industrial development, social welfare and education were rarely policy priorities. The effects of the colonial years, which in some cases only ended a few decades ago, continue to leave their mark on the continent.

## Africa for the Africans

African independence movements existed throughout the colonial period, but organised political resistance gained momentum in the 1950s and '60s. Soldiers who had fought in both world wars on behalf of their colonial masters joined forces with African intellectuals who had gained their education through missionary schools and universities; their catchcry became 'Africa for the Africans'.

Many African countries became independent in the 1960s – some peacefully, others only after years of bloodshed and struggle. The Organisation of African Unity was established with 32 members in 1963 to promote solidarity and act as a collective voice for the continent. By the 1970s most African countries had become masters of their own destinies, at least on paper.

It is impossible to overstate the euphoria that gripped Africa in the postindependence period. The speeches of bright young leaders like Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Patrice Lumumba (Congo) had Africans across the continent dreaming of a new African dawn. For the most part, they were disappointed. Most African countries were woefully unprepared for independence, ruled over by an ill-equipped political class. The situation worsened when fledgling African nations be-

### 1884–5

The Berlin Conference gives France almost one-third of the continent (mostly in West and Central Africa), while Britain gets Ghana, Nigeria and much of Southern and East Africa.

### 1931

Apart from Liberia (which became independent in 1847) and Ethiopia (which was never colonised save for an Italian occupation during WWII), South Africa becomes Africa's first independent country.

### 1960

Seventeen African countries gain independence from European colonial rule. Most are former French colonies, but include Congo (from Belgium), Somalia (from Italy and Britain) and Nigeria (from Britain).

### 1975

End of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique; both countries align themselves with the Soviet Union, intensifying the Cold War between the superpowers on the continent.



## CHINA IN AFRICA

Despite there being an American president with a Kenyan father and expectations that the US will source a quarter of its oil from Africa by 2015, Africa's bond with the US is arguably not the one that matters. The key relationship is becoming one with China, an economic behemoth hungry for Africa's minerals, oils and timbers.

Chinese trade with Africa dates back to the 15th century when Admiral Zheng He's fleet arrived on the continent's east coast. Some 60,000 Chinese joined the South African gold rush at the end of the 19th century, while Chairman Mao sent tens of thousands more workers to assist with the glorious revolutions planned across the continent in the 1960s and '70s. In recent decades, though, the scale of Chinese economic involvement in Africa has gone off the scale. Today, more than 900 Chinese companies operate on African soil and nearly a million Chinese live on the continent.

Beijing's readiness to provide much-needed infrastructure, which Western aid doesn't cover and local governments cannot afford, is already having a transformative impact. Such largesse holds out the potential of a Pax Sinica, as African nation states are finally linked together by modern infrastructure. Others warn that Beijing's relationship with Africa often bears a depressing resemblance to those of the colonial era, despite all the talk of fresh paradigms. It's a complex topic: for analysis and thoughts beyond the headlines read the blog *China in Africa* ([www.chinaafricarealstory.com](http://www.chinaafricarealstory.com)) by Professor Deborah Brautigam, author of *The Dragon's Gift: the Real Story of China in Africa*.

came pawns in the Cold War machinations of the US and USSR, and factors such as drought, economic collapse and ethnic resentment led many to spiral down into a mire of corruption, violence and civil war.

## 21st-Century Africa

The first decade in the 21st century is holding out hope for the continent. The Human Security Report Project ([www.hsrgroup.org](http://www.hsrgroup.org)) found that between 1999 and 2006 the number of state-based armed conflicts dropped by 46%, while those between rebel groups fell by 54%. The annual number of deaths in battle actually diminished by two-thirds between 2002 and 2006.

Oil discoveries and lessening conflict resulted in more than 30 African countries growing economically at a rate of 4% or more in 2006 and 2007. Also in 2007, the G8 countries pledged \$25 billion aid for Africa and promised to eliminate the outstanding debts of the poorest countries. However, by the end of the decade, shrinking remittances from the diaspora, cuts in exports and falls in tourism earnings had taken a measurable toll. Above all, the global economic crisis threatens to dry up the generosity of industrialised nations.

Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo's book *Dead Aid* (2009) denounced Western aid to Africa as patronising and counterproductive. Her view counters that of US economist Jeffrey Sachs, who has argued strongly for the role of aid in raising many African countries out of poverty.

### 1990

Nelson Mandela is released after almost three decades in prison. Four years later he is voted South Africa's president after multiracial elections.

### 2001

The African Union is established as successor to the Organisation of African Unity. All 54 African nations, except Morocco, are members; its secretariat is based in Addis Ababa.



CHRIS PAUL / GETTY IMAGES ©

★ Nelson Mandela

### 2011

The 'Arab Spring' series of popular uprisings sees long-time leaders Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Colonel Muammar Qaddafi in Libya ousted from power.

# The Culture

**An estimated one billion people live in Africa, speaking well over 2000 different languages. Together, they make up the most culturally and ethnically diverse group of people on the planet. Many parts of Africa are also home to significant Asian, European and Middle Eastern populations.**

For an exhaustive list of UN socio-economic data (ranging from literacy and life expectancy to income and infant mortality) for African countries, visit the website of the UN Development Programme (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>).

Such is the continent's diversity that it is difficult to speak of Africa as a whole without descending into meaningless generalisations. Life for a villager in remote Central African Republic has little to do with the daily experience of an affluent Moroccan in Casablanca; the latter's daily life will likely have far more in common with that of Europeans than with most of his or her fellow Africans.

That said, for the overwhelming majority of African societies, life has changed beyond recognition in the last 100 years. Colonialism, globalisation, technological advances and foreign influences have all been factors in this social revolution.

## Urbanisation

The key change in African daily life, however, has been the move to the cities. By some estimates, Africa's rate of urbanisation is the fastest in the world and the population of urban centres is growing at twice the rate of rural areas. At the beginning of the 20th century, around 5% of Africans lived in cities. Now, over a third of the continent's one billion population is urbanised with the figure set to rise to over half by 2030 according to a UN report in 2010.

The reasons for this epochal demographic shift are legion: growing populations due to improved health care, environmental degradation leading to shrinking grazing and agricultural land, and poor rural infrastructure are among the most important.

Unfortunately, urban population growth has far outpaced job creation; unemployment in many African cities is rife. One UN study found that in 38 African countries more than 50% of the urban population lives in slums. At the same time, many African cities have a growing and increasingly influential and sophisticated middle class.

Thanks to urbanisation, a whole generation of Africans is growing up with no connection to the countryside and its lores and traditions, and in many cases urbanisation has led to the breakdown of traditional social values such as respect for elders, and the loosening of family structures. Urbanisation has also caused critical labour shortages in rural areas, and has accelerated the spread of HIV.

In spite of these daunting challenges, rural life remains a pillar of African society, a place where the continent's historical memory survives. Family bonds are still much stronger than in many First World societies, with the concepts of community and shared responsibility deeply rooted.

## WHY AFRICA SUFFERS FROM AIDS

In November 2012, Unaid's annual report headlined some very welcome news: between 2005 and 2011 the number of people dying from AIDS-related causes in sub-Saharan Africa had dropped from 18 million to 1.2 million. The number of new HIV infections had also dipped dramatically by 25% over the previous decade to a total of 1.8 million in 2011. That's the good news. The fact is that sub-Saharan Africa still has 23.5 million people living with HIV, or 69% of the global total.

There are many reasons why HIV/AIDS has taken such a hold in Africa. Collective denial of the problem, migration in search of work and to escape wars and famine, a general lack of adequate health care and prevention programs, and social and cultural factors – in particular the low status of women in many African societies – are all believed to have played a role in the rapid spread of the disease.

The personal, social and economic costs associated with the disease are devastating. HIV/AIDS predominantly hits the most productive members of society – young adults. This has a huge impact on family income, food production and local economies in general, and large parts of Africa face the loss of a significant proportion of entire generations. Employers, schools, factories and hospitals have to train other staff to replace those at the workplace who become too ill to work, setting economic and social development back by decades. The numbers of HIV/AIDS orphans (the UN estimates 11 million, with one in four Zambian children said to be without both parents) is at once an enduring human tragedy and a massive societal problem.

Antiretroviral drug treatments, available in the West to increase the life span of AIDS sufferers and reduce the risk of HIV-infected women passing the infection on to their unborn babies, are still out of the reach of most Africans; according to the World Health Organization (WHO), Brazil has managed to halve AIDS deaths by making such drugs free. Although things are improving, fewer than two out of every 10 Africans who need antiretroviral treatment are receiving it.

For all its international prominence, HIV/AIDS is by no means Africa's only killer: WHO reports that malaria kills an African child every minute with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria accounting for 40% of the worldwide total of deaths from the infection.

These values retain a deep hold over many Africans, even those who long ago left for the cities.

## Sport

### Football

Football (soccer) is the most popular of Africa's sports, and you'll never have to go far before you find someone kicking a ball (or a bundle of plastic bags tied together with string) around on a dusty patch of ground.

West African and North African countries are Africa's footballing powerhouses. Ever since Cameroon stormed to the quarter finals of the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy, West Africa has been touted as an emerging world power in the sport. Cameroon built on its success by winning the football gold medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. But apart from Senegal reaching the World Cup quarter finals in 2002, and Ghana's team winning the 2009 U-20 World Cup in Cairo, further success has proved elusive.

At the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the host team was knocked out in the first round; of the other five African nations in the tournament only Ghana made it beyond round one into the quarter finals.

The African Cup of Nations also stirs great passions across the continent. Almost two years of qualifying rounds culminate in the 16 best teams playing for the crown of Africa's champions. North African sides (Tunisia in 2004, and Egypt in 2006, 2008 and 2010) have dominated the event in recent years, but in 2012 Zambia took the trophy. In January

## INTERNET ACCESS

In March 2011, Google's charitable foundation awarded five grants totalling US\$5 million to African projects in support of improving internet access and to enable African countries to participate in and contribute to the global internet.

2013 the tournament switched to being held every odd numbered year so as not to clash with the World Cup.

But the success or otherwise of national teams is only part of the story. West African footballers in particular have enjoyed phenomenal success in European leagues, in the process becoming the focal point for the aspirations of a generation of West African youngsters dreaming of becoming the next Samuel Eto'o (Cameroon and Anzhi Makhachkala, and currently one of the world's highest paid players), Didier Drogba (Côte d'Ivoire, Chelsea and since 2012 Shanghai Shenhua) or Emmanuel Adebayor (Togo and Tottenham Hotspur). And it's not just the kids: every weekend from September to May, Africans crowd around communal TV sets to follow the fortunes of teams in Spain, Italy, the UK and France, especially those games involving African players. There is a sense that the success of Africans in Europe is something in which they can all share with pride, something which reflects well on the continent as a whole.

### Other Sports

Other popular sports in Africa include marathon running (at which Kenya and Ethiopia dominate the world) and boxing. Basketball is becoming increasingly popular with the arrival of American TV channels. In South Africa rugby is massively popular and had benefited from development programs across the colour divide. South African fans adore their beloved 'Boks', ranked third in the world after New Zealand and Australia after the Rugby World Cup in 2011. Cricket is also widely played, particularly in Southern Africa.

### Media

Although no one doubts the potential of mass media such as newspapers, radio stations or TV to be a tool for development in Africa, the media industry on the continent is beset by many problems. Access is one, as many people still live in rural areas, with little or no infrastructure. Many corrupt governments also ruthlessly suppress all but state-controlled media.

A good barometer of press freedom in the region is to be found in the annual Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders ([www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)), which ranks 179 countries according to the freedoms enjoyed by the independent media. In 2011–12, Eritrea came in last, while Sudan (170th), Egypt (166th), Somalia (164th) and Equatorial Guinea also fared badly. Cape Verde (9th), Namibia (joint 20th with Belgium) and Mali (25th) all performed well – and above both the UK (28th) and Australia (30th).

At the same time, many Africans feel that much reporting on the continent by the international media paints an unfair portrait of Africa as a hopeless case, beset by war, famine and corruption.

### Internet

In 2012, Internet World Stats reported that Africa has around 167 million internet users (or 15.6% of the population, less than half the global average). The real figures, however, are probably considerably higher, as many Africans get online via shared PCs in internet cafes or schools.

Africans are now using the internet to bypass the often unreliable reporting of the state-funded media, while groups such as rural women, who have in the past been denied access to information on health care and human rights, are empowered by their access to online education resources. Many such grass-roots cyber-education projects are still in their infancy, but exciting times are ahead.

The power of the internet, in particular social media, came strongly to the fore in the Arab Spring uprisings across North Africa. Some repres-

sive African governments have since taken precautionary measures to further censor and control internet usage; in May 2012, Ethiopia passed a law making it illegal to use Skype and other voice over internet protocols, punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

## Newspapers & Magazines

Unesco reports that 38% of African adults are illiterate, a fact which severely limits the usefulness of print media as an information tool across the continent. This said, there is no shortage of newspapers and current-affairs mags available, including the monthly *New African* ([www.newafricanmagazine.com](http://www.newafricanmagazine.com)) and *Africa Today* ([www.africatoday.com](http://www.africatoday.com)).

The *East African* ([www.theeastafrican.co.ke](http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke)) is good for an overview of what's happening in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. South Africa's weekly newspaper the *Mail & Guardian* (<http://mg.co.za>) is highly respected and has a good selection of features on the continent. If you're in West Africa and your French is well oiled, *Jeune Afrique* ([www.jeuneafrique.com](http://www.jeuneafrique.com)) is a highly regarded weekly news magazine.

For links to a range of websites and local newspapers for most countries in Africa, as well as a handful of pan-African sites, head to [www.world-newspapers.com/africa](http://www.world-newspapers.com/africa).

## Radio

Radio remains by far the most popular medium of communication in Africa, with even the most remote rural villagers gathering around a crackling radio to listen to the latest news and music. Innovative projects such as the charity Farm Radio International ([www.farmradio.org](http://www.farmradio.org)) supports rural radio broadcasters in 39 African countries.

For continental coverage, however, locals and travellers tune into international broadcasters; most have dedicated Africa slots. As well as the trusty BBC World Service ([www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)), Voice of America ([www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com)) and Radio France Internationale ([www.rfi.fr](http://www.rfi.fr)) are perennial favourites. If you'd rather hear African news from Africans, try Channel Africa ([www.channelafrica.co.za](http://www.channelafrica.co.za)), the international radio service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

## TV

TV ownership in Africa is much lower than elsewhere in the world and televisions mostly remain luxury items, unavailable to most of Africa's poorer inhabitants. Walk around many African towns and villages after dark, however, and you're likely to come across the dim blue glow of a TV set, often set in a doorway so that an audience of 20 or 30 can gather around it to watch the latest episode of a local soap or a football match.

A sign of some African nations' growing affluence is that in January 2013, Digital TV Research reported that about 14 million homes in sub-Saharan Africa receive digital TV. They also forecast that digital TV penetration across this area of Africa will rocket to 95.5% by 2018 – with household numbers quadrupling to 49.0 million.

## Religion

Most Africans are deeply religious, with religious values informing every aspect of their daily life. Generally speaking, a majority of the population in North Africa, West and Central Africa close to the Sahara, together with much of the East African coast, is Islamic; East and southern Africa, and the rest of the continent, is predominantly Christian.

Accurate figures are hard to come by, but roughly 40% of Africans are Muslim and 40% Christian (including a burgeoning evangelical Christian movement), leaving around 20% who follow traditional African beliefs. These figures should be taken with a pinch of salt, however, as

## News Websites

AllAfrica.com  
([allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com))

A24 ([www.a24media.com](http://www.a24media.com))

Reuters Africa  
([www.reuters.com/places/africa](http://www.reuters.com/places/africa))

Afrol News ([www.afrol.com](http://www.afrol.com))

BBC ([www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa))

IRINNews ([www.irinnews.org/IRIN-Africa.aspx](http://www.irinnews.org/IRIN-Africa.aspx))

West Africa News  
([www.westafricanews.com](http://www.westafricanews.com))

Media Foundation  
for West Africa  
([www.mediafound.org](http://www.mediafound.org))

To find out how to listen to the BBC World Service in Africa, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmeguide](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmeguide) and type in the country where you are. In most countries you'll be given a range of locations from which to choose.

## RELIGION AFRICAN-STYLE

Africa's traditional religions are generally animist, believing that objects such as trees, caves or ritual objects such as gourds or drums are endowed with spiritual powers. Thus a certain natural object may be sacred because it represents, is home to, or simply *is* a spirit or deity. Several traditional religions accept the existence of a supreme being or creator, alongside spirits and deities.

Most African religions centre on ancestor veneration, the idea that the dead remain influential after passing from the physical into the spiritual world. Ancestors must therefore be honoured in order to ensure that they intervene positively with other spiritual beings on behalf of their relatives on earth.

The practice of traditional medicine is closely intertwined with traditional religion. Practitioners (often derogatorily referred to as 'witch doctors' by foreigners) use divinatory implements such as bones, prayers, chanting and dance to facilitate communication with the spirit world. Patients are cured with the use of herbal preparations or by exorcist-style interventions to drive out evil spirits that have inhabited the body. Not all magical practitioners are benign – some are suspected of being paid to place curses on people, causing bad luck, sickness or even death.

Although traditional religious practices can be a force for social good within a community, and herbalists are often very skilled in their craft, there's a flip side: some religious practitioners discourage their patients from seeking conventional medical help at hospitals or clinics, and someone who considers themselves cursed will very often give up the will to live entirely. In some parts of Southern and East Africa, killings occasionally take place, in which children or adults are abducted and murdered in order to gain body parts for use in magic rituals. Albinos in Tanzania and Burundi have come under particular threat in recent years.

many Africans see no contradiction at all in combining their traditional beliefs with Islam or Christianity.

Hindus and Sikhs are found in places where immigrants arrived from Asia during the colonial era, particularly in East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Jewish communities, some centuries old, are found mainly in North and Southern Africa.

## Women in Africa

Women form the bedrock of African society, especially in rural areas where they bear the burden of child-rearing and most agricultural work. Their task is made more difficult by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the absence of men who move to the cities as migrant industrial workers.

In some countries sexual equality is enshrined in law. African women made history in 2005 when a legal protocol came into force that specifically protects women's human rights in the 17 countries that ratified it. These countries have pledged to amend their laws to uphold a raft of women's rights, including the right to property after divorce, the right to abortions after rape or abuse, and the right to equal pay in the workplace, among many others.

The reality is, however, somewhat different, and in many places women are treated as second-class citizens. Families sometimes deny girls schooling, although education is valued highly by most Africans. More serious still are reports of female infanticide, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and honour killings.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), often euphemistically termed 'female circumcision' or 'genital alteration', is widely practised in West and North Africa. The term covers a wide range of procedures, from a small, mainly symbolic, cut, to sewing up a girl's vagina to leave just a tiny hole or the total removal of the external genitalia (known as infibulation).

*Moolade*, the powerful 2004 film by the Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène, is one of the few mass-release artistic endeavours to tackle head-on the taboo issue of female genital mutilation.

Although outsiders often believe that FGM is associated with Islam, it actually predates the religion and has far more to do with longstanding cultural traditions than religious doctrine. The World Health Organization estimates that three million African girls are at risk from the procedure annually. In Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Mali, around 95% of young girls undergo FGM.

## Arts

Traditional African art and craft consist of ceremonial masks, figures related to ancestral worship, fetishes (which protect against certain spirits), weapons, furnishings and everyday utensils. All kinds of materials are used (including bronze casting in some regions) and great skill can also be seen in the production of textiles, basketry and leatherwork. Contemporary African artists often use traditional as well as modern media to express themselves, with many now making an impact on the international art scene. Nowhere is this more evident than with African music.

### Traditional Decorative Arts & Crafts

The creation of many African arts and crafts is often the preserve of distinct castes of blacksmiths and weavers who rely almost exclusively on locally found or produced materials. Tourism has, however, greatly affected African art and craft, with considerable effort now going into producing objects for sale rather than traditional use. Some art forms, such as the Tingatinga paintings of Tanzania, evolved entirely out of demand from tourists. Although it causes a departure from art's role in traditional society, tourism can ensure artisans remain employed in their

*Gogo Mama: A Journey into the Lives of Twelve African Women*, by Sally Sara, includes illuminating chapters on a Liberian former child soldier, a Zanzibari diva, and a HIV/AIDS-fighting grandmother in South Africa.

### FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION – AN INTERVIEW

In January 2009, Lonely Planet author Anthony Ham interviewed Menidiou Kodio who, along with his wife Maryam Dognon, works in Mali's Dogon Country to end the practice of female genital mutilation.

**What proportion of young girls undergo female genital mutilation (FGM)?** In some traditional Dogon villages, it is every girl.

**What made you start this work?** We do it because we have six daughters.

**Do you meet much resistance when trying to stop the practice?** It is very difficult to convert people, so when I visit a village I organise a free concert and the lyrics of the songs speak against FGM, and then I make a speech. I tell people that I respect traditional culture, but that not everything in tradition is good. As one of my songs says, 'You don't have to listen to everything that the Ana Sara [Europeans] say and you shouldn't change all of your traditions for them. But in this case, we should listen to them.'

**What reasons do you give for stopping the practice?** First we explain to them that their daughters run a very high risk of contracting HIV, because the knife use[d] in some places is 40 years old. Tetanus is another risk. Then we tell them that it is a very risky procedure and that if the girls lose too much blood, they can die. We also tell them that childbirth is more difficult for a woman who has been cut. And finally we tell them that they are cutting the bodies of their daughters, the bodies that God gave to them.

**And do people listen?** Many people don't. Many men also still believe that it is bad to marry a woman who has not been cut, because they worry that the woman will be stronger than him. But some people are starting to listen and some villages have promised to stop the practice. The truth is, we won't know whether they have kept their promise until 15 years from now, when these girls start to have children.

**What will it take for this practice to end?** FGM will continue until all the old people, especially the old women, have died.

ART  
SCENE

There's a thriving art scene in South Africa – read more about it at the website Artthrob ([www.artthrob.co.za](http://www.artthrob.co.za)) and the magazine *ArtSouthAfrica* ([www.artsouthafrica.com](http://www.artsouthafrica.com)).

traditional professions, and many pieces retain their power precisely because they still carry meaning for Africa's peoples.

West Africa has arguably Africa's most extraordinary artistic tradition. The mask traditions of Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and elsewhere are world famous, and Picasso, Matisse and others found inspiration in its radical approach to the human form. Nigeria and Benin have long been associated with fine bronze sculptures and carvings, and the Ashanti people of Ghana are renowned for fine textiles and gold sculptures. In Central Africa, Congo is another renowned centre for masks and sculpture.

In North Africa, ancient Arabic and Islamic traditions have produced some beautiful artworks (ceramics and carpets are particularly refined), as well as some phenomenal architecture; in the Sahara, Tuareg silver jewellery is unique and beautiful.

Throughout East and Southern Africa the Makonde people of Mozambique and the Shona of Zimbabwe produce excellent and widely copied sculptures.

### Modern & Contemporary Arts

The art world has its eye on Africa. In March 2011 a painting by South African artist Irma Stern (1894–1966) sold for US\$4.94 million at auction in London. Some contemporary African artists such as Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui, Kenyan ceramicist Magdalene Odunodo and Nigerian sculptor Ben Enwonwu are also securing six-figure sums at auction for their works.

The African Arts Trust ([www.theafricanartstrust.org](http://www.theafricanartstrust.org)) was set up in 2011 to enable artists initially in Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe to buy materials, create works, travel and study.

In recent years, recycled art has become popular, with artists from South Africa to West Africa producing sculpture and textiles created entirely from discarded objects such as tin cans and bottle tops.

### Literature

Sub-Saharan Africa's rich, multilayered literary history was almost entirely oral. Folk tales, poems, proverbs, myths, historical tales and (most importantly) ethnic traditions were passed down through generations by word of mouth. Some societies have specific keepers of history and storytelling, such as the *griots* of West Africa, and in many cases stories are sung or tales performed in a form of theatre. As a result, little of Africa's rich literary history was known to the outside world until relatively recently.

Twentieth and 21st century African literature has been greatly influenced by colonial education and Western trends. Some African authors have nonetheless made an effort to employ traditional structures and folk tales in their work; others write of the contemporary hardships faced by Africans and their fight to shake off the shackles of colonialism, using Western-influenced narrative methods (and penning their works in English, French or Portuguese).

Nigerian authors are prominent on the English-speaking African literature scene and some, like Amos Tutuola, adapt African folklore into their own works. Penned by Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* is a rather grisly tale of a man who enters the spirit world in order to find his palm-wine supplier! Dylan Thomas described the novel as 'brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching' and a 'nightmare of indescribable adventures'.

In March 2013 Chinua Achebe, hailed by Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer as 'the father of African Literature', died. His most famous novel is *Things Fall Apart* is a deeply symbolic tale about a man's rise and fall at the time colonialism arrived in Africa. Another Nigerian writer,



## CONTEMPORARY NOVELS BY AFRICAN WRITERS

- *The Memory of Love* by Aminatta Forna (2010) is a tragic love story set in Freetown in 1969 and the present day that captures the horror of the conflict that engulfed Sierra Leone.
- *Zoo City* by South African writer Lauren Beukes (2010) is a dystopian fantasy thriller set in a near-future Johannesburg that won the 2011 Arthur C Clarke award.
- *Lyrics Alley* by Leila Aboulela (2010) is set in mid-1950s northern Sudan, Egypt and the UK and examines the clash between traditional and modern cultures in a time of political upheaval.
- *The Hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu (2010) is a sometimes comic novel about the daily realities of life in Zimbabwe and what it takes to run a hair salon.
- *Broken Glass* by Alain Mabanckou (2009) is a witty, culturally savvy novel set in a bar in the Congo where the narrator tells the stories of his fellow drinkers and himself.

Ben Okri, found worldwide fame with his novels *The Famished Road* and *Starbook*, which draw heavily on folk traditions.

South Africa has also produced many famous writers including Nobel Prize winners JM Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Alan Paton and Man Booker-prize nominated Damon Galgut.

## Cinema

Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène (1923–2007) is often called the ‘father of African film’; his 1966 movie *La Noire de...* was the first movie released by a sub-Saharan African director. His final film *Moolade* won awards at Cannes and the premier African film festival FESPACO. Pre-dating Sembène is Egyptian film-maker Youssef Chahine who made the musical melodrama *Cairo Station* in 1958.

Sarah Maldoror filmed *Sambizanga* in Congo in the early 1970s, although the movie is set in Angola. *Chronicle of the Year of Embers* won the coveted Palme d’Or at Cannes in 1975 for Algerian director Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina. Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako’s *Waiting for Happiness* gained international attention in 2002.

The continent’s most technically accomplished film makers gather in South Africa – local talent Neill Blomkamp’s sci-fi thriller *District 10* was an international hit in 2009. Several major Hollywood productions have been shot at Cape Town Film Studios, including the Cape Town-set thriller *Safe House* (2012).

## Food & Drink

Whether it’s a group of Kenyans gathering in a *nyama choma* (barbecued meat) shop to consume hunks of grilled meat washed down with cold lager, or Ghanaians dipping balls of *fufu* (pounded yam or cassava with a dough-like consistency) into a steaming communal bowl of stew, there are two things all Africans have in common – they love to eat and it’s almost always a social event. Folk tales and traditions from all over the continent feature stories about cooking and consuming food, a process that is the focus of almost all social and family activities. African food is generally bold and colourful, with its rich, earthy textures and strong, spicy undertones showing influences from Arab traders, European colonists and Asian slaves.

## Staples & Specialities

Each region has its own key staples. In East and southern Africa, the base for many local meals is a stiff dough made from maize flour, called – among other things – *ugali*, *sadza*, *pap* and *nshima*. In West Africa millet

## NOLLYWOOD

Nigeria’s ‘Nollywood’ film industry is the second most prolific in the world (after India), pumping out up to 200 videos for the home market every month.

## TASTES LIKE CHICKEN...

In many parts of Africa you'll find the locals chomping with gusto on some unusual foods. If you're brave in heart and stomach, why not try some of these more adventurous snacks:

**Giant rat** The agouti, a ratlike rodent about the size of a rabbit, frequently turns up in West African stews. Avoid this one though – it's under threat in the wild. Instead try a skewer of baby grasscutters (cane rats) roasted over coals and served up in West African markets.

**Land snails** Described as having a texture like 'stubborn rubber', giant land snails are eaten in parts of Nigeria.

**Mopane worms** These are actually not worms but caterpillars – the emperor moth's green and blue larvae, which make their home in the mopane trees of southern Africa. These protein-rich critters are boiled and then dried in the sun before being eaten.

is also common, and served in a similar way, while staples nearer the coast are root crops such as yam or cassava (*manioc* in French), served as a near-solid glob called *fufu*. In North Africa, bread forms a major part of the meal, while all over Africa rice is an alternative to the local specialities. In some countries, plantain (green banana) is also common, either fried, cooked solid or pounded into *fufu*. A sauce of meat, fish, beans or vegetables is then added to the carbo base. If you're eating local-style, you grab a portion of bread or dough or pancake (with your right hand, please!), dip it in the communal pot of sauce and sit back, beaming contentedly, to eat it.

## Drinks

Tea and coffee are the standard drinks, and countries seem to follow the flavours of their former colonisers. In (formerly British) East Africa, tea and coffee tends to be weak, grey and milky. In much of (formerly French) West Africa, tea is usually served black, while the coffee from roadside stalls contains enough sugar and sweetened condensed milk to keep you fully charged for hours. In North Africa and some Sahel countries (the Sahel is a semi-arid region, which stretches from Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal to Chad), mint tea and strong Arab-style coffee are the local hot beverages of choice. Other variations include chai or coffee spiced up with lemongrass or cardamom in East Africa, or flavoured with a woody leaf called *kinkiliba* in West Africa.

International soft drinks are widely available, while many countries have their own brands that are cheaper and just as good (although often owned by the big multinationals, too). You can also get locally made soft drinks and fruit juices, sold in plastic bags, or frozen into 'ice-sticks', but avoid these if you're worried about your stomach, as the water they're made from is usually unpurified. Alcohol allegedly kills the bugs...

In bars, you can buy local or imported beer in bottles. Excellent wines and liqueurs, from South Africa or further afield, may be available in more upmarket establishments. Traditional beer is made from millet or maize, and drunk from huge communal pots with great ceremony at special events, and with less pomp in everyday situations.

West Africa's most popular brew is palm wine. The tree is tapped and the sap comes out mildly fermented. In other parts of the continent, alcohol is made using bananas, pineapples or other fruit, sometimes fermented overnight. This homemade alcohol is often outrageously strong, can lead to blindness or mental illness, and is often illegal in some places. You have been warned!

## Habits & Customs

In Islamic countries, food is always eaten, passed and touched with the right hand only (the left hand is reserved for washing your bottom, and the two are understandably kept separate). Water in a basin is usually brought to wash your hands before you start eating – hold your hands out and allow the person who brings it to pour it over, then shake your hands dry. It's also customary in some parts of Africa for women and men to eat separately, with the women eating second after they've served the food. In some countries, lunch, rather than dinner, is the main meal of the day, and everything stops for a couple of hours while a hot meal is cooked and prepared.

## Where to Eat & Drink

### Food Stalls & Street Food

Most African towns have a shacklike stall or 10 serving up cheap local staples. Furniture is usually limited to a rough bench and a couple of upturned boxes, and hygiene is rarely a prime concern. However, this is the place to save money and meet the locals. Seek out these no-frills joints at bus stations or markets. Lighter snacks include nuts sold in twists of newspaper, hardboiled eggs (popular for long bus journeys), meat kebabs, or, in some places, more exotic fare like fried caterpillars or baobab fruits. Street food rarely involves plates or knives – it's served on a stick, wrapped in paper, or in a plastic bag.

### Cafes & Restaurants

For something more comfortable, most towns have cheap cafes and restaurants where you can buy traditional meals, as well as smarter restaurants with facilities such as tablecloths, waiters and menus. If you're eating in cheaper places, you can expect to be served the same food as the locals, but more upmarket, tourist-oriented establishments serve up more familiar fare, from the ubiquitous chicken and chips, to pizzas, pasta dishes and toasted sandwiches.

Colonial influences remain important: you can expect croissants for breakfast in Madagascar, and Portuguese custard tarts in the bakeries of Mozambique. Africa also has its share of world-class dining, with the best restaurants brilliantly fusing African culinary traditions with those of the rest of the world. Less impressively, even smaller towns are now succumbing to the fast-food craze, with greasy burger and chicken joints springing up frequently.

### African Cookbooks

*The Africa Cookbook: Tastes of a Continent*, Jessica Harris

*A Flavour of West Africa (Festivals & Food)*, Ali Brownlie Bojang

*The African Kitchen*, Josie Stow and Jan Baldwin

## CELEBRATING WITH FOOD

In much of Africa, a celebration, be it a wedding, coming-of-age ceremony or even a funeral, is an excuse to stuff yourself until your eyes pop out and you beg for mercy. In nonIslamic countries, this eating-fest could well be accompanied by a lot of drinking, followed mostly by falling down. Celebration food of course varies widely from country to country, but vegetarians beware – many feasts involve goats, sheep, cows or chickens being slaughtered and added to the pot.

If you're lucky enough to be invited to a celebration while you're in Africa, it's polite to bring something (litre bottles of fizzy drink often go down well), and be prepared for a lot of hanging around – nothing happens in a hurry. The accepted wisdom is that it's considered very rude to refuse any food you're offered, but in practice it's probably perfectly acceptable to decline something politely if you really don't want to eat it, as long as you eat something else with gusto!

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Troth Wells' *New Internationalist Food Book* is more than just a recipe book – it tells vignettes from a whole host of countries and puts food at the heart of Africans' daily struggle for survival.

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## Vegetarians & Vegans

Many Africans may think a meal is incomplete unless half of it once lived and breathed, but across Africa many cheap restaurants serve rice and beans and other meals suitable for vegans simply because it's all the locals can afford. For vegetarians, eggs are usually easy to find – expect to eat an awful lot of egg and chips – and, for pescetarians, fish is available nearer the coast. Be aware that in many places chicken is usually not regarded as meat, while even the simplest vegetable sauce may have a bit of animal fat thrown in. Expect to meet with bemusement when you announce that you don't eat meat – the idea of voluntarily giving up something that's seen as an aspirational luxury is hard to understand for many people.

# African Music

**They don't call Africa the Motherland for nothing. The continent has a musical history that stretches back further than any other, a history as vast and varied as its range of rhythms, melodies and overlapping sources and influences. Here, music – traditional and contemporary – is as vital to communication and storytelling as the written word. It is the lifeblood of communities, the solace of the nomad, the entertainment of choice.**

It can be a political tool – perceived as a threat (France and South Africa are full of exiled African artists; in December 2012 Islamist extremists banned secular music in Mali's north) or a campaign winner (African leaders are forever trying to cash in on popular musicians, many of whom have their own record labels and charitable foundations). Its biggest acts are treated as celebrities, followed wherever they go. Oh, and despite the world music boom, some are relatively unknown in the West. If in doubt, ask a local.

Artists who are popular in the West, such as Mali's Oumou Sangaré or Senegal's Baaba Maal, work in a double market, making different mixes of the same songs for home and abroad, or recording cassette-only albums for local consumption. (Their home-town performances are wildly different, too: most start late and run all night.) Cassettes, rather than CDs, proliferate across Africa, and government pledges to address the gargantuan problem of cassette piracy have so far remained precisely that. Still, if you're looking for a gig or club *sans* tourists, ask a cassette-stall holder. They might send you to a hotel or a dingy club in the suburbs, but it will be an experience.

## Cross Cultural Influences

Without African music there would be no blues, reggae or – some say – rock, let alone Brazilian samba, Puerto Rican salsa, Trinidadian soca or any of a wide array of genres with roots in Africa's timeless sounds. And it works both ways: colonialism saw European instruments such as saxophone, trumpet and guitars integrated into traditional patterns. Independence ushered in a golden era; a swath of dance bands in 1970s Mali and Guinea spawned West African superstars such as Salif Keita and Mory Kante. Electric guitars fuelled Congolese rumba and soukous and innumerable other African genres (including Swahili rumba). Ghana's guitar-based high-life (urban dance music) blended with American hip-hop to become hip-life; current faves include Tic Tac, Sarkodie and prank-rap duo FOKN Bois. Jazz, soul and even classical music helped form the Afrobeat of late Nigerian legend Fela Kuti (which carries on through his sons, Femi and Seun, and a host of others today).

Africa Hit Music TV ([www.africahit.com](http://www.africahit.com)) is the first internet TV station that plays African music videos 24/7. Each month it features thousands of music videos from a host of artists and genres.

## Online Resources

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Afropop Worldwide  
([www.afropop.org](http://www.afropop.org))  
.....

The African Music  
Encyclopedia  
([www.africanmusic.org](http://www.africanmusic.org))  
.....

AfricMusic ([www.africmusic.com](http://www.africmusic.com))  
.....

Sterns Music  
([www.sternsmusic.com](http://www.sternsmusic.com))  
.....

*Sout el Horreya* (I'm Not Turning Around; search [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) by Amir Eid and Hany Adel became the anthem for anti-government protestors in Egypt's Tahrir Square and beyond in November 2011.

## Music of North Africa

There is no pan-African music. The Motherland is simply way too big for that. But there are distinct musical trends too important to ignore. Looking north: in Algeria it's the oft-controversial trad-rock genre, *rai* (think Khaled, Messaoud Bellemou, the late grand dame Cheikha Rimitti), and the street-style pop known as *chaabi* (Arabic for 'popular'). Many of Algeria's Paris-based musicians are performing at home again: check out rocker Rachid Taha and folk chanteuse Souad Massi. In Egypt the stern presence of late diva Oum Kalthoum, the Arab world's greatest 20th-century singer, is everywhere; scratch the surface for a thrumming industry that includes pop stars Amr Diab and Samira Said, along with the 'Voice of Egypt' Mohammed Mounir and composer and pianist Omar Khairat.

There is also *chaabi* in Egypt and Morocco, along with the Arabic techno pop called *al-jil* and a wealth of other influences. The Berber shepherdess blues of Cherifa, the Maghreb's very own Aretha, have made her a singer-sheika (or popular artist) to be reckoned with. The pentatonic healing music of the Gnaoua – chants, side drums, metal castanets, the throbbing *guimbri*-lute (long-necked lute) – hijacks Essaouira each June during the huge Gnaoua World Music Festival; celebrity faces spotted in the thronging 20,000-strong crowd have included Mick Jagger and Robert Plant.

There's nomad desert blues in exile to be had, from Tuareg guitar bands such as Tinariwen to the so-called 'Jimi Hendrix of Niger' (well, each country's got to have one) Omara 'Bombino' Moctar. In the Côte D'Ivoire, Abidjan remains a hugely influential centre for music production (if you can make it here, you'll probably make it in Paris), while the percussive, melodious and totally vacuous *coupé-décalle* dance music sound fills stadiums. Seek out the likes of reggae legend Alpha Blondy and fusionist Dobet Gnahoré – the latter in charisma and vocal power not unlike Beninese diva Angélique Kidjo.

## TEN AFRICAN ALBUMS

- ➔ Ali Farka Touré, *Savane* (World Circuit) – Desert blues from the late, great Malian guitar maestro.
- ➔ Toumani Diabaté, *The Mande Variations* (World Circuit) – Visionary instrumentals from the Malian kora player.
- ➔ Khaled, *Khaled* (Barclay/Universal) – In which Khaled shows why he's the king of *rai*.
- ➔ Miriam Makeba, *Best of Miriam Makeba and the Skylarks* (BMG) – Vintage stuff from the South African diva and her backing group.
- ➔ Fela Kuti, *The Black President* (Universal) – Nigeria's Afrobeat hero gives his all.
- ➔ Salif Keita, *Soro* (Sterns) – *Mande* music and world beats from a West African superstar.
- ➔ Bassekou Kouyate and Ngoni Ba, *I Speak Fula* (Out Here) – Power-packed *ngoni* riffs from a burgeoning big name.
- ➔ Cesaria Evora, *Miss Perfumado* (Lusafrica) – Classic *morna* (Creole-language form of blues) from the late Cape Verdean treasure.
- ➔ Staff Benda Bilili, *Bouger Le Monde!* (Crammed) – Band of mostly disabled polio victims recapture their early musical charm.
- ➔ Spoek Mathambo, *Father Creeper* (Sub Pop) – Visionary stuff from Soweto-based Afro-futurist singer-rapper-producer.

## BASSEKOU KOUYATÉ

The gloriously upbeat music of Malian *ngoni* ace Bassekou Kouyaté and his band Ngoni Ba has become political, out of necessity. One of Africa's richest musical heartlands, Mali today is riven by conflict, an adverse state of affairs that has served to unite artists from Mali's different musical cultures: '*Jama ko* means a big gathering of people,' says Kouyaté of his third album *Jama ko*, the follow up to the Grammy-nominated *I Speak Fula*.

'There are over 90% Muslims in Mali, but our form of Islam has nothing to do with a radical form of Sharia: that is not our culture. We have been singing praise songs for the Prophet for hundreds of years. If the Islamists stop people music making they will rip the heart out of Mali.'

A call for unity, peace and tolerance in a time of crisis, *Jama ko* was recorded in March 2012 in Mali's capital Bamako, at the same time as the government was being overthrown half a mile away. The coup changed the mood of the country overnight.

'We were getting on with recording when we heard gunfire and went out to see what was going on. To our surprise we were told it was a coup d'état. We struggled to finish the recording in good time.'

Meanwhile the situation in Mali's north was getting progressively worse. Bassekou plugged in his wah-wah pedal, ramped up his amp and let loose. 'Don't wear me out,' sings Amy Sacko, the group's main vocalist, in French, as Kouyaté wigs out on *ngoni* – an ancestor of the banjo – behind her.

'*Jama ko* shows how Mali's traditional instruments can lean towards rock and roll and hold their own with modern instruments and technology,' says Kouyaté. 'Musicians have a special role to play when affairs are generally disorderly in the country,' he adds. 'Now this role is more special, more urgent, than ever.'

## Music of West Africa

Across West Africa the haunting vocals of the *griots* and *jalis*, the region's oral-historians-cum-minstrels, are ubiquitous. In Mali, the *jelimuso* (female *griot*) Babani Koné rules, though *jalis* in the country's north are currently out of work because of Islamic extremism; in Mauritania *griot* Veirouz Mint Seymali is poised to fill the formidable shoes of her late mother, the iconic Dimi Mint Abba.

Mali's Arabic-flavoured *wassoulou* rhythms have their most famous champion in songbird Oumou Sangaré, just as the 21-string kora, one of the traditional instruments of *griot* and *jali*, is closely linked to Toumani Diabaté. Others are making their mark: Guinea's electric *kora* master Ba Cissoko is pushing the envelope. *I Speak Fula*, the 2009 album by *ngoni*-player Bassekou Kouyaté, was nominated for a Grammy.

The mighty Youssou N'Dour kickstarted Senegal's pervasive *mbalax* rhythms when he mixed traditional percussion with plugged-in salsa, reggae and funk – though today it's Wolof-language rap groups that really appeal to the kids (there's a natural rap vibe to the country's ancient rhythmic poetry, *tasso*). Elsewhere, militant artists such as Côte d'Ivoire reggae star Tiken Jah Fakoly, former Sudanese child soldier-turned-rapper Emmanuel Jal, and Somalia's 'Dusty Foot Philosopher', rapper and poet K'Naan are telling it like it is.

With the passing of Ali Farka Touré in 2006, his son Vieux Farka Touré is – along with redoubtable Bambara blues guitarist Boubacar Traore et al – continuing the Malian guitar blues legacy. Guitar heroes abound throughout Africa: the Congo's Dibo Dibala, Malagasy originator Jaobjoby and South African axeman Louis Mhlana among them.

In the islands of Cape Verde they're singing the wistful, Creole-language blues known as *morna*, as delivered by a slew of talent including Lura and Mayra Andrade. Over in Cameroon they're whooping it

*Benda Bilili!*, by French film directors Florent de la Tullaye and Renaud Barret, is the inspirational 2010 feature film about Staff Benda Bilili, the group of paraplegic street musicians from Kinshasa, capital of the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo.

Look out for a regional culture and music strand on new channel TV10 in Rwanda, courtesy of Eric Soul, the DJ-presenter son of Rwandan cultural icon Cecile Kayirebwa.

## KINSHASA COOL: STAFF BENDA BILILI

Trilby tilted backwards, suit jacket flapping, Ricky Likabu comes fanging onstage in his shiny silver wheelchair, then spins around so quickly he draws sparks. Three similarly wheelchairbound musicians power on after him, waving towels above their heads as if they are prizefighters. As former street kid Roger Landu rocks out on a single-string guitar he made from a condensed milk can, and an all-acoustic rhythm section gets into some groove-laden rumba-funk, one-legged 'hype man' Djunana Tanga throws his crutches aside and starts boogying and body popping on the floor. 'I was born a strong man,' sings sixtysomething Likabu, as a frontline that includes cofounder Coco Ngambali strum guitars and contribute high-pitched harmonies. 'But polio crippled me/ Look at me today/ I have become the man with the canes.'

This group of Congolese buskers turned world-music darlings, whose unofficial mantra is that handicaps exist in the mind and not the legs, delivers their show with flair and *joie de vivre*. Staff Benda Bilili (which means 'look beyond appearances') is an unlikely global success story: comprising five middle-aged polio victims and three able-bodied musicians including resident sex symbol Landu, it has garnered international awards and popular praise for its live shows. The band's members no longer live and rehearse around the grounds of the zoo in Kinshasa, the desperately poor capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. They used to sleep rough on cardboard or wedged into unsanitary living quarters with hundreds of other people; their lives have changed dramatically. They have mattresses. Houses. Land. Cars. Likabu has traded in his pimped-up tricycle, which he'd pedal with his hands while being pushed along, for a motorised quadbike. His three children are well dressed and go to school.

'We are still the same,' he says in French. 'It is just that now people recognise us in the street.'

Way before the release of *Tres Tres Fort*, when Staff was a sprawling collective of nearly 20 people, Likabu knew they'd make it somehow. 'We're incredibly persevering people,' says the former cigarette seller. 'Here, you have to be very strong-willed to survive.' The band has so many disabled members simply because no other Kinshasa musicians wanted to work with them. 'We were always told that we couldn't make music,' Likabu says. 'They said we would be late for work. So I decided to create my own band,' he adds with a shrug.

The band's second album, 2012's *Bouger le Monde*, won praise from rock and world critics alike. Having toured everywhere from Amsterdam to Sydney, in September 2012 Staff Benda Bilili played London's Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms.

'We have become ambassadors for handicapped people everywhere, but we just happen to be handicapped. What matters is that our music is strong.' A pause. 'Very, very strong,' he says with a grin.

*Sauti za Busara*  
(Sounds of  
Wisdom; [www.busaramusic.org](http://www.busaramusic.org)) Swahili  
Music Festival  
in Stonetown,  
Zanzibar, is one  
of East Africa's  
finest annual  
events; a four-  
days-in-February  
extravaganza of  
music, theatre  
and dance before  
a horizon dotted  
with dhow boats.

up to the guitar-based *bikutsi* and the brass-heavy sound of *makossa* (a Cameroonian fusion of Highlife and soul) while the polyphonic voices of that country's pygmies have struck a chord with the Western world.

## Music of East Africa

In the often musically overlooked East Africa, *bongo flava* (that's Swahili rap and hip-hop) is thriving; as is *taarab*, Arab- and Indian-influenced music of Zanzibar and the Tanzanian-Kenyan coastal strip.

Hip-hop hybrids are creating musical revivals in countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Angola and Guinea; Rwanda is nodding along to female hip-hop acts such as Knowless and Allioni.

Ethiopian jazz is enjoying an international renaissance thanks to the likes of Mulatu 'Daddy from Addy' Astatke and pianist and rising star Samuel Yirga. Mozambique sways to the sound of *marrabenta* – Ghorwane is a roots-based urban dance band and a national institution – and the marimba (African xylophone) style known as *timbila*.



## Music of Southern Africa

Down in Zimbabwe they're listening to the *tuku* (swinging, rootsy, self-styled) music of Oliver Mutukudzi or, in secret, the *chimurenga* (struggle) music as created by their self-exiled Lion, Thomas Mapfumo.

In South Africa, where the ever-popular *kwaito* rules supreme (think slowed-down, rapped-over house music), the country's giant recording industry continues to rival that of Europe and America, embracing everything from the Zulu *iscathimiya* call-and-response singing as popularised by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, to jazz, funk, gospel, reggae, soul, pop, rap, Afrofuturism and all points in between.

Once exiled artists such as Hugh Masekela and Abdullah Ibrahim have returned to South Africa to inspire a new generation of artists who include the likes of R&B soulstress Simphiwe Dana and Afro-fusion popsters Freshlyground.

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KigaliUp! ([www.kigaliup.tumblr.com](http://www.kigaliup.tumblr.com)) is a two-day music festival that takes place during the second week of July in Kigali, Rwanda and features a range of African styles from traditional music to hip-hop.

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# Environment

**Africa is the oldest and most enduring land mass in the world. When you stand on African soil, 97% of what's under your feet has been in place for more than 300 million years. Atop this foundation sits an astonishing breadth of landscapes, from the world's biggest desert to some of the largest rivers, lakes and tracts of rainforests on the planet, not to mention stirring mountains and the iconic savannah that tells you that you could only be in Africa. Inhabiting these epic landscapes is the world's largest collection of wildlife, extraordinary for its diversity. For these and many more reasons, Africa's natural world will take centre stage wherever you go.**

## Land

*Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* (2008), from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is the definitive study of Africa's environment, with country statistics and before-and-after satellite photos. Available from Earthprint ([www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com)).

Africa is the world's second-largest continent, after Asia, covering 30 million sq km and accounting for 23% of the total land area on earth. From the most northerly point, Cap Blanc (Ra's al Abyad) in Tunisia, to the most southerly point, Cape Agulhas in South Africa, is a distance of approximately 8000km. The distance between Cape Verde, the westernmost point in Africa, and Raas Xaafuun in Somalia, the continent's most easterly point, is 7440km. Such are the specs of this vast continent when taken as a whole. But zoom in a little closer and that's when the story really gets interesting.

## Mountains & the Great Rift Valley

East and Southern Africa is where the continent really soars. It's here that you find the great mountain ranges of the Drakensberg in South Africa and Rwenzori (the fabled Mountains of the Moon) that straddle the borders of Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as classic, stand-alone, dormant volcanoes such as Mt Kenya (5199m) and Mt Kilimanjaro (5895m), Africa's highest peak. And then there's Ethiopia, Africa's highest country, which lies on a plateau between 2000m and 3000m above sea level – in the space of a few hundred kilometres, the country rises to the Simien Mountains and Ras Dashen (4543m), then drops to 120m below sea level in the Danakil Depression.

North and West Africa also have plenty of topographical drama to call their own. In the far northwest of the continent, the Atlas Mountains of Morocco – formed by the collision of the African and Eurasian tectonic plates – run like a spine across the land, scaling the heights of Jebel Toubkal (4167m), North Africa's highest peak. In West Africa, Mt Cameroen (4095m) is the highest point, while other notable high-altitude landmarks include the Fouta Djallon plateau of Guinea and the massifs of the Air (Niger) and Hoggar (Algeria) in the Sahara.

The African earth deep beneath your feet is being slowly pulled apart by the action of hot currents, resulting in a gap, or rift. This action over thousands of years has formed what's known as the Great Rift Valley,

which begins in Syria and winds over 5000km before it peters out in southern Mozambique. The valley is flanked in many places by sheer escarpments and towering cliffs, the most dramatic of which can be seen in Ethiopia, Kenya, and along DRC's border with Uganda and Rwanda. The valley's floor contains the legendary wildlife-watching habitats of the Serengeti and Masai Mara in Tanzania and Kenya, alkaline lakes such as Bogoria and Turkana, and some of Africa's largest freshwater lakes.

## Deserts

Deserts and arid lands cover 60% of Africa. Much of this is the Sahara, the world's largest desert at over 9 million sq km, which is comparable in size to the continental United States. The Sahara occupies 11 countries, including more than half of Mauritania, Mali and Chad, 80% of Niger and Algeria and 95% of Libya. Contrary to popular misconceptions, sand covers just 20% of the Sahara's surface and just one-ninth of the Sahara rises as sand dunes. More typical of the Sahara are the vast gravel plains and plateaus such as the Tanezrouft of northeastern Mali and southwestern Algeria. The Sahara's other signature landform is the desert massif, barren mountain ranges of sandstone, basalt and granite such as the Hoggar (or Ahaggar) Mountains in Algeria, Air Mountains in Niger and Mali's Adrar des Iforas. By one estimate, the Sahara is home to 1400 plant species, 50 mammal species of and 18 bird species.

Another little-known fact about the Sahara is that this is the youngest desert on earth. As recently as 8000 years ago, the Sahara was a fertile land, made up of savannah grasslands, forests and lakes watered by relatively regular rainfall, and home to abundant wildlife. Around 7000 years ago, rains became less frequent and by 400 BC, the Sahara was the desert we know today, albeit on a smaller scale.

If the Sahara is a relatively recent phenomenon, the Namib Desert in Namibia is one of the world's oldest – a staggering 55 million years old. It was created (and is sustained) by cold-air convection that sucks the moisture from the land and creates an arid landscape of rolling sand dunes with its own unique ecosystem. Even larger than the Namib, the Kalahari Desert spans Botswana, Namibia and South Africa and is around the size of France and Germany combined.

## Forests

African forests include dry tropical forests in eastern and Southern Africa, humid tropical rainforests in western and central regions, montane forests and subtropical forests in northern Africa, as well as mangroves in the coastal zones.

Despite the myth of the African 'jungle', Africa actually has one of the lowest percentages of rainforest cover in the world – just one-fifth of Africa is covered by forests, with over 90% of what's left found in the Congo basin. Not surprisingly, the countries of Central Africa have the highest proportion of their territory covered by forest – Gabon (84.5%), Congo (65.6%), DRC (58.9%) and Equatorial Guinea (58.2%) – although Guinea-Bissau (73.7%) is a rare West African exception.

The rainforest of the Congo Basin and Madagascar supports the greatest and most specialised biodiversity on the continent: 80% to 90% of species found in these biomes are endemic. The Congo Basin is also one of the last havens for gorilla, chimpanzee and other endangered primates.

Geologists believe that if the process that created the rift continues, the Horn of Africa may one day break away from the African mainland and become an island, just as Madagascar did in the distant past.

## African Climbs

*Mt Kenya, Kenya*

*Mt Kilimanjaro, Tanzania*

*Mt Cameroon, Cameroon*

*Simien Mountains, Ethiopia*

*Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa*

## Desert Beauties

Namib Desert,  
Namibia

Adar, Mauritania

Kalahari Desert,  
Botswana

M'hamid, Morocco

Grand Erg Oriental,  
Tunisia

## River Trips

White-water raft-  
ing, Zambezi River,  
Zimbabwe

Cruising on the  
Nile, Egypt

Canoe excursions,  
Okavango Delta,  
Botswana

Travelling along the  
Congo River

Beyond their biodiversity mantle, however, forests are essential to the livelihood of many communities, providing food, fuel, livelihood, medicine and spiritual well-being.

## Savannah

The savannah is a quintessentially African landform, covering an estimated two-thirds of the African land mass. Savannah is usually located in a broad swath surrounding tropical rainforest and its sweeping plains are home to some of the richest concentrations of wildlife on earth, especially in East Africa. The term itself refers to a grasslands ecosystem. While trees may be (and usually are) present, such trees do not, under the strict definition of the term, form a closed canopy, while wet and dry seasons (the latter often with regenerating and/or devastating wildfires) are also typical of Africa's savannahs. The Serengeti is probably the continent's most famous savannah region.

## Water Rivers

Africa's waterways are more than stunning natural phenomena. They also serve as the lifeblood for millions of Africans who rely on them for transport, fishing, irrigation and water supplies. The Nile (6650km) and Congo (4700km) Rivers dominate Africa's hydrology, but it's the Niger River (4100km), Africa's third-longest, that is the focus of most environmental concern.

The Niger's volume has fallen by 55% since the 1980s because of climate change, drought, pollution and population growth. Fish stocks have fallen, water hyacinth is a recurring problem and the growth of sand bars has made navigation increasingly difficult. Given that an estimated 110 million people live in the Niger's basin, problems for the Niger could cause a catastrophic ripple well beyond the river's shoreline. In 2008 the alarming signs of a river in distress prompted nine West African countries to agree on a US\$8 billion, 20-year rescue plan to save the river.

## Lakes & Wetlands

Africa has its share of famous lakes. Lake Victoria, which lies across parts of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, is Africa's largest freshwater lake (and the second largest by area in the world after North America's Lake Superior). Lake Tanganyika, with a depth of 1471m, is the world's second-deepest lake after Lake Baikal in Russia, while Lake Malawi, which borders Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, is reportedly home to more fish species (over 1000) than any other lake on earth.

Less a lake than the world's largest inland delta, the Okavango Delta is home to a stunning array of wildlife, with over 2000 plant and 450 bird species. The delta's 130,000-strong elephant population is believed to be close to capacity, with increasing conflict between elephants and farmers around the delta's boundaries.

## Coastal Africa

Along the coast of East Africa and the Red Sea, warm currents provide perfect conditions for coral growth, resulting in spectacular underwater coral reefs. Off the west coast, the Benguela current, which shadows Angola, Namibia and South Africa, consists predominantly of nutrient-rich cold water. Whales, sharks and turtles are common all along the African coastline – South Africa and Madagascar in particular are whale-watching hotspots.

Coral reefs are the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems on earth, rivalled only by tropical rainforests on land. Corals grow over geo-

## SHRINKING LAKE CHAD

Lake Chad straddles the borders of Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon; its waters support the lives of 30 million people. Once the sixth-largest lake in the world and Africa's second-largest wetland, supporting a rich variety of wildlife, Lake Chad has shrunk by 95% since the 1960s because of over-extraction by the ever-expanding local population. Falling rainfall and the lake's notoriously shallow average depth (which makes it very prone to evaporation) have also taken their toll.

Various proposals to replenish the lake by diverting neighbouring rivers have been put forward, but the cost and environmental impact of such a plan mean the project remains on the shelf for the time being.

logic time – that is, over millennia rather than the decades that mammals live – and have been in existence for about 200 million years. The delicately balanced marine environment of the coral reef relies on the interaction of hard and soft corals, sponges, fish, turtles, dolphins and other life forms.

Coral reefs also rely on mangroves, the salt-tolerant trees with submerged roots that form a nursery and breeding ground for birds and most of the marine life that migrates to the reef. Mangroves trap and produce nutrients for food and habitat, stabilise the shoreline, and filter pollutants from the land base.

## Biodiversity

African wildlife accounts for almost a third of global biodiversity and its statistics alone tell the story – a quarter of the world's 4700 mammal species are found in Africa, as are a fifth of the world's bird species and more fish species than on any other continent. Discoveries in the 1990s in Madagascar alone increased the numbers of the world's known amphibian and reptile species by 25% and 18% respectively.

The continent is home to eight of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots, as defined by Conservation International. To qualify, a region must contain at least 1500 species of vascular plants (more than 0.5% of world's total) and have lost at least 70% of its original habitat. Three of these touch on South Africa (where 34% of terrestrial ecosystems and 82% of river ecosystems are considered threatened), with others in West Africa, Madagascar, the Horn of Africa, the coastal forests of East Africa and the Great Rift Valley.

## National Parks

Africa's protected areas range from world-class national parks in eastern and Southern Africa to barely discernible wildlife reserves in West Africa.

Southern African countries lead the way in protected area cover, with Zambia and Botswana the only two countries in Africa having put aside more than 30% of their territory for conservation (36% and 31% respectively). In eastern Africa, Tanzania wins the stakes, with 27% of its surface area registered as protected, against just 12% and 10% in Kenya and Uganda. West Africa is a mixed bag, with countries like Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Senegal all scoring around 25%, while many of their neighbours hover around the 10% mark. All in all, 11.5% of sub-Saharan Africa is protected, but the proportion is much lower in North Africa (4%), which has very few national parks.

Africa has numerous examples of transfrontier national parks that stand out as shining examples of neighbourly cooperation. There are more than a dozen of these spread around the continent; among the ones you're most likely to encounter are the Park Régional du W, which

### Diving Wonders

*Dahab, Red Sea Coast, Egypt*

*Aliwal Shoal, South Africa*

*Ifaty, Madagascar*

*Zanzibar, Tanzania*

*Bazaruto Archipelago, Mozambique*

2050

In 1950 there were, on average, 13.5 hectares of land for every person in Africa. By 2050, that figure will have shrunk to 1.5 hectares.

Africa only accounts for 3% of carbon credits on the market while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per head in Africa are four times lower than the world average.

In 2008 the then UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Conflict, Jan Egeland, described West Africa's Sahel region as the world's 'ground zero' for vulnerable communities struggling to adapt to climate change.

spans Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso; the Masai Mara, which encompasses Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve and Tanzania's Serengeti National Park; and the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which links South Africa's Kruger and Mozambique's Limpopo National Parks.

## Environmental Challenges

Africa is the second-most populous continent after Asia and population growth, although slowing, is still the highest in the world. This, along with poor natural resource management and the increasing effects of climate change, are putting tremendous pressure on the environment.

### Climate change

Africa, like everywhere else in the world, is grappling with climate change. The irony for the continent is that it has historically contributed little to the greenhouse gas emissions responsible for global warming.

### Impacts

Whatever part Africa played in global warming, the effects are likely to be significant. The last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that Africa would experience temperature increases of 1.5°C to 4°C (more than the global average), which will in turn disrupt rainfall patterns. Although forecast models still produce mixed results, it is thought that northern and Southern Africa will become drier, while equatorial parts of the continent will turn wetter and East Africa more unpredictable.

The impact of this climatic upheaval will be broad-ranging, from disruption to agricultural yields and cropping systems to reduced water availability, changes in ecosystem boundaries and an increase in extreme weather events (such as cyclones, drought and flooding).

### Mitigating and adapting

This need not be a doomsday scenario however; while profound changes are unavoidable, policymakers have been working hard on developing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

On the mitigation side, Africa not being a great GHG emitter, efforts have focused on promoting a 'greener' growth on the continent, with emphasis on preventing deforestation (which globally accounts for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions) by paying for the carbon sink potential of forests, and renewable energy. Africa has substantial resources in wind,

## GREEN HEROES

Along with the dozens of well-known conservation organisations, there are many Africans fighting the environment's corner at the grassroots level.

The **Goldman Environmental Prize** is an annual award that honours these green heroes on each continent. The prize has been dubbed the 'green Nobel' and many of its recipients have become role models for a generation. Among the most famous African winners are Kenyan Green Belt Movement founder and Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Wangari Maathai** (1940–2011), Nigerian oil campaigner **Ken Saro-Wiwa** (1941–1995), who was hanged by a military court for his defence of the rights of the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta; and founder of the NGO Brainforest and activist **Marc Ona-Essangui**, from Gabon, whose advocacy led to a change in the country's environmental legislation.

Other winners may not be as well known but they are just as deserving, their work focusing on anything from poaching to conservation and sustainable development. The prize is awarded in April every year; profiles of all laureates can be found on the Goldman Foundation's website ([www.goldmanprize.org](http://www.goldmanprize.org)).

## KILIMANJARO'S MELTING ICE CAP

Glittering white, like a mirage behind its veil of cloud, Mt Kilimanjaro's perfect white cap of ice is one of Africa's most iconic images. It has also become a *cause célèbre* in the debate over global warming. According to the UN, Kilimanjaro's glaciers have shrunk by 80% since the early 20th century and the mountain has lost over a third of its ice in the last 20 years alone. The causes are complex and not solely attributable to rising temperatures, with deforestation also to blame – the upper limit of the mountain's forests has descended significantly and overall forest cover has, thanks to fire, decreased by 15% since 1976. Whatever is to blame, some estimates suggest that Kilimanjaro's ice could disappear completely by 2025.

solar, geothermal and hydro power, yet only a fraction of that potential is being used. Development experts are particularly keen to use solar and micro-hydro power to provide 'off-grid' electricity to remote communities.

As for climate change adaptation, the answer lies in development. More than ever, experts agree that priority must be given to improving food security and drought resilience through better water resource management and agricultural practices: only 5% of Africa's arable land is irrigated for example. Disaster preparedness is also becoming increasingly relevant.

## Deforestation

African forests are under threat: thousands of hectares are being chopped not only for timber, but also for firewood and charcoal, and to be cleared for agriculture.

A 2009 report by international forest-policy group the Rights and Resources Initiative ([www.rightsandresources.org](http://www.rightsandresources.org)) found that African forests are disappearing at a rate four times faster than forests anywhere else in the world. The reason, according to the study, is that less than 2% of the continent's forests are under the control of local communities – over half of the rainforests of the Congo basin are already under commercial-logging leases – compared to around a third in Latin America and Asia.

East and Central Africa have the most to lose and the signs there aren't good – Burundi is losing around 5% of its forest cover every year, with massive deforestation issues in Congo, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. West Africa is faring little better. Over 90% of West Africa's original forest has been lost, while Nigeria and Ghana in particular are losing forest cover at an alarming rate.

Internationally, these figures raise concern over the effect such large-scale deforestation has on global warming. At a local level, soil erosion (with its devastating impact on agriculture), loss of biodiversity and an increase in the amount of wildlife hunted for bushmeat as new roads and accompanying settlements penetrate the forests, rank among the major side effects.

## Water scarcity

Africa has enormous water resources; the trouble is that they are unevenly distributed and often hard to access: the amount of groundwater stored in aquifers is thought to be 100 times the volume available in surface water. This spatial and temporal inequality is what causes scarcity. The continent also faces quality issues: pollution and increased salinity due to over-extraction of coastal aquifers are growing concerns.

African governments also have a poor track record in water resource management. Urban utilities lose 20% to 50% of the water they produce through leaks in their networks and few irrigation systems use modern,

## GREEN ENERGY

The year 2012 was a bumper one for green energy in Africa: Morocco and Ghana each started work on the construction of large-scale solar power plants and South Africa approved 28 renewable energy projects worth \$5.4 billion.

Forty million metric tonnes of Saharan sand reaches the Amazon annually, replenishing mineral nutrients depleted by tropical rains. Half of this dust comes from the Bodele Depression on the Niger–Chad border.

## GREENING NIGER

Forests are considered to be an important buffer against desertification. Take, for example, the case of Niger, which has lost a third of its meagre forest cover since 1990.

Although just 1% of Niger is now forested, it's not all bad news. Satellite images show that three of Niger's southern provinces (especially around Tahoua) now have between 10 and 20 times more trees than they did in the 1970s.

According to UNEP, this is 'a human and environmental success story at a scale not seen before in the Sahel'. The secret to the success has been giving farmers the primary role in regenerating the land.

Faced with arid soil that made agriculture almost impossible, farmers constructed terraces and rock bunds to stem erosion, trap rainfall and enable the planting of trees. Trees planted by the farmers now serve as windbreaks against the desert and, for the first time in a generation, agriculture (millet, sorghum and vegetables) is almost possible year-round, thanks to improved water catchments and soil quality. This has made local populations more resistant to recurrent droughts.

efficient drip-irrigation technology. In Egypt for example, irrigated agriculture uses 90% of the country's water. And in Libya, vast amounts of non-renewable 'fossil' water (from deep aquifers) are piped over hundreds of kilometres along the Great Manmade River to irrigate desert parcels along the coast.

### Learning to Share

One of the unique features of Africa's waterscape is its transboundary nature: 90% of the continent's surface water resources are shared; in some cases, more than 10 countries depend on the same river basin (for example, the Nile or the Niger River).

This has historically been a source of tension between riparian countries, particularly those along the Nile. A 2012 report from global agricultural research partnership CGIAR (formerly Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) concluded that there was enough water in the Nile to go around – it just had to be better managed to ensure that small-holders as well as large-scale infrastructure projects such as dams and irrigation got access to the precious resource. This, the report argued, was key to poverty alleviation in the region.

### Desertification

As forest cover diminishes, all too often the desert moves in. Desertification is one of the most serious forms of land degradation and it's one to which the countries of the West African Sahel and North Africa are particularly vulnerable. Desertification has reached critical levels in Niger, Chad, Mali and Mauritania, each of which some believe could be entirely consumed by the Sahara within a generation; up to 80% of Morocco is also considered to have a high risk of desertification. The Sahara's southward march is by no means a uniform process (and some scientists even doubt its existence), but the Sahel in particular remains critically vulnerable to short-term fluctuations in rainfall.

Desertification is also a problem for countries beyond the Sahelian danger zone: a high to moderate risk of desertification exists in numerous West African countries, as well as Botswana, Namibia, DRC, Central African Republic, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia.

The major causes of desertification are easy to identify – drought, deforestation, overgrazing and agricultural practices (such as cash crops, which require intensive farming) that have led to the over-exploitation of fragile soils on the desert margin – and are the result of both human

## DOCUMENTARIES

Perfect armchair-travel fodder, the BBC's *Wild Africa* series, available on DVD, consists of six stunningly filmed documentaries entitled *Jungle, Coasts, Mountains, Deserts, Savannas and Rivers & Lakes*.



activity and climatic variation. But one of the most significant causes in West Africa is the use of deliberately lit fires. Such fires are sometimes necessary for maintaining soil quality, regenerating savannah grasslands and ecosystems, enabling livestock production and as a form of pest control. But when the interval between fires is insufficient to allow the land to recover, the soil becomes exposed to wind and heavy rains and can be unravelled beyond the point of recovery.

### Community-Based Conservation

While the history of environmental protection in Africa is one that often saw Africans evicted from their land to make way for national parks, the future lies in community-based conservation. This local, as opposed to large-scale, approach is based on the tenet that in order for the African environment to be protected, ordinary Africans must have the primary stake in its preservation.

There are dozens of community-run initiatives across the continent, from conservation areas to lodges and tour companies; look them up during your travels and support their efforts.

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*Sahara: A Natural History*, by Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle, covers the natural and human history of the Sahara like no other recent book, and the lively text makes it a pleasure to read.

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# Africa's Wildlife

Africa is home to more than 1100 mammal species and some 2400 bird species, and throughout the continent, wildlife brings drama and life to the beauty of the African wilds. Your first sight of elephants in the wild, chimpanzees high in the forest canopy, or a lion or cheetah on the hunt will rank among the most unforgettable experiences of your trip. Many national parks and reserves across Africa provide refuges for wildlife under threat from changing land use and wars – but even here poaching is a persistent problem and one that conservationists report is getting worse. For more on safaris and the continent's best national parks and reserves see the planning feature on p35.

## Internet Resources

Sahara Conservation Fund ([www.saharaconservation.org](http://www.saharaconservation.org))

African Conservation Foundation ([www.africanconservation.org](http://www.africanconservation.org))

## Elephant Spotting

Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Kruger National Park, South Africa

Chobe National Park, Botswana

Etosha National Park, Namibia

## Elephants

The African elephant, the largest living land animal, is for many travelers the continent's most charismatic mammal. Elephants are plentiful in many areas of Africa but their survival is not assured.

In 1989 when the trade in ivory was banned under the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), elephant population numbers began to climb again from dangerously low levels. However, illegal poaching continues to feed demand in Asia, particularly in China. In September 2012, the *New York Times* reported that Africa was, once again, 'in the midst of an epic elephant slaughter'. In 2011 poaching levels in Africa were at their highest since detailed records started being kept in 2002. In the same year, a record-breaking 38.8 tons (equaling the tusks from more than 4000 dead elephants) was seized worldwide.

The WWF notes that most countries do not have adequate capacity to protect and manage their herds and, if conservation action is not forthcoming, elephants may become locally extinct in some parts of Africa within 50 years.

## Primates

They may not be part of the 'Big Five', but the chance to see Africa's primates in their natural environment is alone worth the trip. Our obvious kinship with these always engaging animals has spawned various forms of 'primate tourism', whereby troops of monkeys or apes are habituated to human presence so visitors can observe them in their natural habitat.

Central Africa's rainforests are particularly rich in primate species, although West and East Africa also have considerable populations. Although gorillas and chimpanzees get most of the attention (and rightfully so), you'll also come across colobus monkeys, mangabeys, drills, beautiful and strikingly marked guenons and forest baboons, among others.

## WILDLIFE-WATCHING – THE BASICS

- Most animals are naturally wary of people, so to minimise their distress (or aggression) keep as quiet as possible, avoid sudden movements and wear subdued colours when in the field.
- Avoid direct eye contact, particularly with primates, as this is seen as a challenge and may provoke aggressive behaviour.
- Good binoculars are an invaluable aid to observing wildlife at a distance and are essential for birdwatching.
- When on foot, stay downwind of animals wherever possible – they'll smell you long before they see or hear you.
- Never get out of your vehicle unless it's safe to do so.
- Always obey park regulations, including traffic speed limits; thousands of animals are needlessly killed on African roads every year.
- Follow your guide's instructions at all times – it may mean the difference between life and death on a walking safari.
- Never get between a mother and her calves or cubs.
- Exercise care when boating or swimming, and be particularly aware of the dangers posed by crocodiles and hippos.
- Never feed wild animals – it encourages scavenging, may adversely affect their health and can cause animals to become aggressive towards each other and humans.

## Gorillas

The last refuges in Central Africa of the world's largest living primate have too often occupied war zones. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the gorilla's forest habitat has often come under the control of rebel armies; in the first half of 2007, seven gorillas were shot in DRC's Parc National des Virunga. Poaching, the Ebola and Marburg viruses and even the trade in bushmeat have all contributed to the vulnerability of gorillas. The most endangered subspecies is the Cross River gorilla living in the highland forests of Cameroon and Nigeria and numbering no more than 300.

It's not all bad news. In November 2012, the Ugandan Wildlife Authority announced that the world's population of critically endangered mountain gorillas has risen to a total of 880 (400 in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and 480 in the Virunga Masiff), which is up from the estimate of 786 animals in 2010. Across the other side of Africa, a staggering 125,000 western lowland gorillas were discovered in 2008 in the swamps of northern Congo, almost doubling previous projections; the WWF puts the current population at 100,000.

## Chimpanzees & Other Primates

Chimpanzees are the animal world's closest living relative to humans, with whom they share 99% of their genetic make-up. You'll find these sometimes playful, sometimes cranky creatures throughout Africa and they're usually more accessible (and cheaper to see) than gorillas.

Tanzania is terrific for chimp tracking, especially the Mahale Mountains and Gombe Stream National Parks. Every bit as good is Uganda's Kibale Forest National Park, home to Africa's highest density of primates, and Murchison Falls National Park. In Rwanda, the Parc National de Nyungwe is the best place for chimpanzees, and you may also see colobus monkeys. Ethiopia's Simien Mountains National Park is home to a small population of gelada baboons.

### Gorilla Spotting

*Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda*

*Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda*

*Dzanga-Sangha Reserve, Central African Republic*

*Parc National Nouabalé-Ndoki, Congo*

*Takamanda National Park, Cameroon*

## MADAGASCAR – A WORLD APART

In any discussion of African wildlife, Madagascar rates a separate mention for its unique treasure trove of endemic wildlife that has remained virtually unchanged since the island split from the mainland 165 million years ago. Most of Madagascar's wildlife exists nowhere else on earth, including 98% of its land mammals, 92% of its reptiles, and 41% of bird species. Most famous are its lemurs, a group of primates that have followed a separate evolutionary path. Lemurs have adapted to nearly every feeding niche, and range in size from tiny pygmy mouse lemurs (at 85g, the world's smallest primate) to the 2.5kg ring-tailed lemur. Perhaps the most curious, however, is the indri, which looks like a cross between a koala and a giant panda, and has a voice like a police siren. The best wildlife-watching in Madagascar is to be found at Réserve Spécial d'Analamazaotra, Parc National de l'Isalo and Parc National de Ranomafana.

In Central Africa, you'll find the primate-rich national parks of Gabon, including Réserve de la Lopé, home to some of the world's largest mandrill troupes, and Ivindo National Park.

Sierra Leone's Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary probably offers the best primate-viewing in West Africa. Other highlights include chimpanzees in Côte d'Ivoire's Parc National de Taï and Guinea-Bissau's Parque Nacional do Catanzê. For other primate species, Nigeria's Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Cameroon's Parc National de Campo-Ma'an and Ghana's Kakum National Park are excellent.

## Cats

Some of Africa's most memorable wildlife-watching moments come from the great cats – lions, leopards and cheetahs – hunting prey, although these can be among the most elusive of Africa's megafauna. Spotting one of the smaller cat species, such as the caracal, serval, African wild cat or sand cat of the Sahara, is even more difficult.

### Lions

Despite having been anointed as the 'king of the jungle', lions inhabit not forests but the savannah. Probably the easiest to spot of the big cats, lions are found predominantly in East Africa and parts of Southern Africa, with isolated populations dotted around West Africa. In Kenya, Masai Mara National Reserve, Amboseli National Park and Hell's Gate National Park offer the best chances for sighting lions. In Tanzania, it's Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Lake Manyara National Park. Uganda's Murchison Falls National Park and Toro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve are also possibilities. Elsewhere, you might encounter lions in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia.

### Leopards

Leopards are present throughout sub-Saharan Africa and, unlike lions, are at home in most African landscapes, from the semidesert to tropical rainforest. In addition to places where lions are found, leopards can be spotted in East Africa in Kenya's Lake Nakuru and Tsavo West National Parks. In southern Africa, try Zambia's South Luangwa National Park, South Africa's Kruger National Park, Malawi's Nyika National Park and Namibia's Namib-Naukluft National Park. In West Africa, leopards are found in Niger's Parc Régional du W.

### Cheetahs

The fastest land animal on earth (it can reach speeds of 75km/h in the first two seconds of its pursuit and at full speed may reach 115km/h),

the cheetah in full flight is one of the most thrilling sights in the African wild. They inhabit mostly open country, from the savannah to the desert, and they're most easily spotted in the major national parks of Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia. A small number of cheetahs are also believed to survive in the Sahara.

## Hoofed Animals

Africa has the most diverse range of hoofed animals (also known as ungulates) on earth and, given their numbers, they're often the easiest of all large mammals to spot. Counted within their ranks are numerous signature African species such as the hippo, rhino, giraffe, wildebeest, zebra and numerous antelope species.

### Rhinoceros

Rhinos rank among Africa's most endangered large mammals. These inoffensive vegetarians are armed with impressive horns that have made them the target of both white hunters and poachers – rhino numbers plummeted to the brink of extinction during the 20th century.

There are two species of rhino, black and white, both of which are predominantly found in savannah regions. White rhinos aren't white at all – the name comes from the Dutch word *wijd*, which means wide and refers to the white rhino's wide lip (the black rhino has a pointed lip).

The survival of the white rhino is an environmental-conservation success story, having been brought back from the brink of extinction in South Africa through captive breeding. As a result, it is now off the endangered list. Black rhinos are thought to now number around 3600, with small but encouraging gains made in recent years. The West African black rhino was declared extinct in 2006.

### Hippopotamus

Hippopotamuses, the third-heaviest land mammal on earth (after the elephant and white rhino), are found throughout sub-Saharan Africa, with the largest numbers in Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana. They're usually seen wallowing in shallow water in lakes, ponds and rivers, although the wave-surfing hippos in Gabon's Loango National Park are international celebrities. They're also one of the most dangerous animals in Africa, thanks to their aggression towards humans and propensity for attacking boats.

### Zebras & Giraffes

Zebras (of which Burchell's zebra is the most widespread) and giraffes may be found in small populations elsewhere, but they are especially plentiful in the open and lightly wooded savannah of East Africa, where you'll see them in most of the major national parks and reserves. Africa's most remarkable giraffes are perhaps those of Kouré in Niger, which are making a stirring comeback after coming close to extinction.

### Wildebeest

The annual migration of more than a million wildebeest, the largest single movement of herd animals on earth, is one of the grandest wildlife spectacles you could imagine. It all takes place in Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve and Tanzania's Serengeti National Park from June to October.

### Antelope

Antelope range from the tiny, knee-high dik-dik and duiker, through to the graceful gazelle, impala and springbok, to giants such as the buffalo, eland and kudu. Many of these will be seen on a typical East or Southern African safari.

### Rhino Spotting

Ngorongoro Crater,  
Tanzania

Liwonde National  
Park, Malawi

Ziwa Rhino Sanctu-  
ary, Uganda

Etosha National  
Park, Namibia

Khama Rhino  
Sanctuary,  
Botswana

## Wildlife Books

.....  
*Field Guide to  
 African Mammals,  
 Jonathan Kingdon*  
 .....

*Cats of Africa, Luke  
 Hunter*  
 .....

*Secrets of the  
 Savanna, Mark and  
 Delia Owens*

West Africa also has its share of antelope species, including bushbucks, reedbucks, waterbucks, kobs, roans, elands, oribis and various gazelles and duikers. The Sahel-dwelling dama gazelle is the largest gazelle species in Africa, but is now close to extinction, and the red-fronted gazelle may still survive in Mali's remote far east. Buffalos in West Africa inhabit forest regions, and are smaller and redder than the East African version.

## Birds

Even if you're not into birdwatching, Africa's abundant and incredibly varied birdlife could turn you into an avid birder. In most sub-Saharan countries, you're likely to see hundreds of different species without looking too hard, and a bit of preparation – there are some excellent field guides – before you set out can greatly enhance your visit. Birds reach their highest profusion in the Congo rainforests, but are easier to see in habitats such as rainforest, savannah and wetland. Several bird families, such as the ostrich, secretary bird, touracos, shoebill, hamerkop and mousebird are unique to Africa. Apart from endemic species, hundreds more species flood into the continent on migration during the northern winter.

## Bird Spotting

Any of East Africa's major national parks are good for birdwatching. Kenya has recorded 1200 bird species and, in particular, Kakamega Forest Reserve, Lake Naivasha and the flamingos of Lake Nakuru National Park stand out. Tanzania, with over 1000 species, isn't far behind – Lake Manyara National Park is a good choice. Southern Ethiopia is also prime birding country, especially the Rift Valley Lakes and Bale Mountains National Park.

In Southern Africa, Malawi's Nyika National Park, Liwonde National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve are prime birders' destinations. Madagascar, too, has plenty of interest, especially in Parc National Ranomafana and Réserve Spécial d'Analamazaotra, as does Namibia at Swakopmund and Etosha National Park. Elsewhere, Botswana's Okavango Delta and Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park won't disappoint.

West Africa lies along one of the busiest bird migratory routes between Europe and Africa, and more than 1000 species have been recorded in the region. Tiny Gambia has a devoted following in the birding community. Good places include Abuko Nature Reserve, Tanji Bird Reserve and Kiang West National Park. Senegal also offers excellent birding, particularly in Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj and Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie; both are famous for vast pelican and flamingo flocks. Sierra Leone is also good; most notably, Outamba-Kilimi National Park supports more than 250 species, including the spectacular great blue turaco.

# Survival Guide

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# Directory A-Z

Pan-continental information of a practical nature is briefly outlined in this Africa Directory.

## Accommodation

In many rural areas you'll find budget homestays only, while in certain national parks there's little available besides expensive luxury lodges.

Prices provided in reviews are given for accommodation with a private bathroom, unless otherwise stated. If you're staying somewhere for a few nights, or at a quiet time, consider asking for discounts.

## Camping

A tent usually saves you money, and can be vital in some national parks or wilderness areas. However, it's not essential for travel in Africa, as many campsites have simple cabins, with or without bedding and cooking utensils. Official campsites, of varying quality and security, allow you to pitch a tent, as do most backpackers' hostels.

Be cautious about 'wild camping' – you may be trespassing on private land or putting yourself at risk from attack by animals. In rural areas, if there's no campsite,

you're usually better off pitching your tent near a village. Seek permission from the village chief first, and you'll probably be treated as an honoured guest and really get under the skin of Africa.

## Homestays

In rural areas you can sometimes arrange informal 'homestays' simply by politely asking for somewhere to bed down and get a dish of local food, in return for a payment. Do not get carried away with bargaining – pay a fair fee, normally the cost of a cheap hotel.

## Hostels

Lodges and hostels aimed squarely at backpackers line the popular routes from Nairobi to Cape Town, although elsewhere in Africa they're less common. Most have beds in a dorm, as well as double or twin rooms. Backpackers' hostels are good places to get information on stuff to do or onward transport, and they also offer a range of cheap safaris and tours. A potential downside is that you'll be surrounded by fellow travellers, rather than the Africans you came to meet.

## Hotels

Africa's hotels range from no-frills establishments to sky's-the-limit dens of luxury. Under the 'hotel' category you could also be bedding down at a guesthouse, B&B,

## LATEST TRAVEL ADVICE

Lonely Planet's website ([lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com)) contains information on what's new, and any new safety reports, as well as reports from other travellers recounting their experiences while on the road.

Most governments have travel advisory services detailing terrorism updates, potential pitfalls and areas to avoid. Remember, however, that most government travel advisories can overstate the risks somewhat, and you should read carefully through the reports to see when actual incidents occurred.

**Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade**  
(☎1300 139 281; [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au))

**French Ministère des Affaires Étrangères**  
**Européennes** ([www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en))

**British Foreign & Commonwealth Office**  
(☎0845-850 2829; [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk))

**US Department of State** (☎202-647-4000; [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov))



rest house, *pensao* (in Mozambique) or *campement* (in West Africa). The latter is a simple rural hotel, often with a campsite attached. In West Africa (especially Burkina Faso), B&Bs can go by the names of '*chambres d'hôtes*' or '*maisons d'hôtes*'. A cheap local hotel in East Africa is called a *gesti* or lodgings, while *hoteli* is Swahili for basic eating place.

In cheaper local hotels, it's rare to get a private bathroom and you can forget air-conditioning. Other 'extras' like a fan or mosquito net usually increase the price. Africa has a huge choice of midrange hotels, and standards can be high, especially in privately run (as opposed to government-run) places.

## Children

Approached sensibly, many families find an African holiday a rewarding and thrilling experience. While some posh hotels and camps ban kids under a certain age, some higher-end safari lodges run special wildlife-watching programs for kids, and baby-sitting services are pretty widely available in midrange and top-end hotels.

On the whole, Africans adore children, and wherever your kids go they will be assured of a warm reception and a host of instant new friends.

Outside the main cities, you can pretty safely assume that disposable nappies won't be available, so bring everything you need with you. Child car seats, high chairs in restaurants and cots in hotels are rare except in top-end hotels in tourist areas.

## Courses

Africa doesn't have a whole lot of courses to plan your trip around, but West Africa in particular has a range of intriguing possibilities, from learning the *kora* (21-string

harp/lute from West Africa) from master musician Toumani Diabaté in Mali to Fon-language classes in Benin, to surf classes in Senegal, drumming and dancing classes in Ghana, or percussion and cooking courses in Burkina Faso. You can also learn to cook local dishes in popular tourist cities such as Marrakesh and Cape Town.

## Customs Regulations

➔ At some borders you may have your bag searched, but serious searches are rare.

➔ Anything made from an endangered animal is likely to land you in trouble. You'll also need a permit from the Ministry of Antiquities or a similar office in the relevant country if you are exporting valuable cultural artefacts (no, not that 'ebony' hippo carving you bought on the beach with the shoe polish that comes off on your hands). It usually applies to artefacts that are more than 100 years old.

➔ Some countries limit the local currency you can take in or out, although a small amount (say, US\$20 worth) is unlikely to be a problem. You can carry CFA francs between countries in the CFA zones.

➔ A few countries have restrictive exchange regulations, and occasionally you may need to fill in a declaration form with details of your dollars or other 'hard' currencies.

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

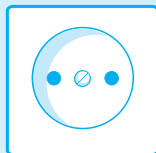
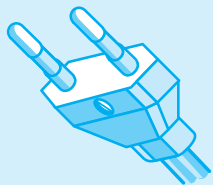
For more accommodation reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out <http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com>. You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.

## Electricity

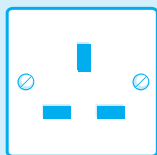
Most countries use a 220/240V current, but some mix 110V and 240V. Some (eg Liberia) still use mostly 110V. Generally, in English-speaking countries, sockets are the British type. In Francophone parts of Africa they're the Continental European two-pin variety. South Africa has yet another system. In some countries you'll find whatever people can get hold of.

While the below plugs are the most common among African countries, major destinations including Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland use a three-pin plug (two small pins and one larger pin). If applicable, purchase plug adaptors before travelling.

Beware: power cuts and surges are part of life in many African countries.



220V/230V/50Hz



24V/50Hz

## Embassies & Consulates

In this guide, the term 'embassy' often includes consulates and high commissions; for practical purposes they're pretty much the same thing.

It's easy to find an embassy of an African country in your own country (to obtain visas before you go) on the web.

## Gay & Lesbian Travellers

➤ African societies are conservative towards gays

and lesbians; same-sex relationships are a cultural taboo, and there are very few openly gay communities. Officially, homosexuality (male, female or both) is illegal in many African countries, even attracting the death penalty in Mauritania, Nigeria, Sudan and a few other areas.

- Although prosecutions rarely occur, discretion is key and public displays of affection should generally be avoided, advice which applies to both homosexual and heterosexual couples.
- Cape Town is Africa's most gay-friendly city, with a lively club scene and a welcoming vibe.
- Useful general web links include **Global Gayz** ([www.globalgayz.com](http://www.globalgayz.com)) and **Afriboyz** ([www.afriboyz.com/Homosexuality-in-Africa.html](http://www.afriboyz.com/Homosexuality-in-Africa.html)).

## Insurance

Travel insurance to cover theft and illness is essential. Although having your camera stolen by monkeys or your music player eaten by a goat can be a problem, the medical cover is by far the most important aspect because hospitals in Africa are not free, and the good ones aren't cheap. Simply getting to a hospital can be expensive, so ensure you're cov-

ered for ambulances (land and air) and flights home.

Some insurance policies forbid unscheduled boat or plane rides, or exclude dangerous activities such as white-water rafting, canoeing, or even hiking. Others also don't cover people in countries subject to foreign office warnings. Others are more sensible and understand the realities of travel in Africa. Ask your travel agent or search on the web, but shop around and read the small print to make sure you're fully covered.

## Internet Access

- There are cybercafes in most capitals and major towns.
- Many hotels and hostels also offer internet access; midrange and top-end hotels increasingly offer wi-fi access for those carrying their own laptops.
- Expect to pay anything from US\$1 to US\$5 per hour, although wi-fi access is often free.
- Although things are improving, many connections are excruciatingly slow, with ancient PCs that are prone to crash (tip: write emails first in a word-processing program, then copy them across when you're ready to go online). Uploading photos

## WHAT EMBASSIES CAN & CAN'T DO FOR YOU

If you get into trouble on your travels, it's important to realise what your embassy can and can't do to help. Remember that you're bound by the laws of the country you are in, and diplomatic staff won't be sympathetic if you're jailed after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal at home.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, to get home urgently, a free ticket is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If all your money and documents are stolen, staff might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is way out of the question.

On the more positive side, some embassies (especially US embassies) have notice boards with 'travel advisories' about security or local epidemics. If you're heading for remote or potentially volatile areas, it might be worth registering with your embassy, and 'checking in' when you come back.

to your blog site or emailing attachments can prove arduous, not to mention expensive.

## Legal Matters

The buying, selling, possession and use of all recreational drugs is illegal in every country in Africa.

## Maps

Buy Michelin maps of Africa (No 741 *North & West*, No 745 *North-East* and No 746 *Central & South*) before you leave home. Expect a few discrepancies, particularly with regard to roads, as rough tracks get upgraded and smooth highways become potholed disasters. For these and other African maps in the UK, try **Stanfords** ([www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)). In France, **IGN** ([www.ign.fr](http://www.ign.fr)) sells its sheet maps at stores in Paris.

## Money

This guide quotes prices in local currencies in those countries where the currency and inflation are stable. For everywhere else, prices are quoted in US dollars. However, it's important to remember that prices invariably increase – whatever prices are quoted, they should always be regarded as guidelines, not guaranteed costs.

### ATMs

➔ In many (but by no means all) African countries you can draw local cash as you go with a credit or debit card. Visa is the most widely accepted card. Charges can be low and exchange rates are usually good, but check with your home bank or card provider before leaving.

➔ Although ATM numbers are on the rise, most are still located in capitals and major towns, plus there are usually daily withdrawal limits. What's more, due to dodgy

## EMERGENCIES

Generally speaking, emergency services in most African countries are not what you'd be used to at home. For example, if you're robbed or attacked, don't count on the police to respond quickly (or at all) when you dial an emergency number. However, you'll have to visit the police to report the offence – otherwise your insurance won't be valid – so expect an all-day form-filling process. Likewise, if you're sick or injured, don't waste time phoning an ambulance – get a taxi straight to a hospital or clinic. And if you want a private medical service or an English-speaking doctor, ask for directions at an embassy or a top-end hotel.

phone lines, they frequently malfunction, so you'll still need a pile of hard cash as backup.

➔ Always keep your wits about you when drawing money out, as ATMs are often targeted by thieves. Try to visit them in busy areas during daylight hours, and stash your money securely before you move away.

### Black Market

In countries with controlled exchange rates, you can get more local money for your hard currency by dealing with unofficial moneychangers on the so-called black market, instead of going to a bank or bureau. This helps with costs, but it's illegal and sometimes dangerous – think twice before you do it.

However, you may have to resort to unofficial methods if you're stuck with no local cash when banks and exchange offices are closed. Hotels or tour companies may help, although rates are lousy. Try shops selling imported items. Be discreet though: 'The banks are closed, do you know anyone who can help?' is better than a blunt 'D'you wanna change money?'

Even in countries with free exchange rates (and therefore no black market), moneychangers often lurk at borders where there's no bank. Although illegal, they operate in full view of

customs officers, so trouble from this angle is unlikely.

There's more chance of trouble from the money-changers themselves, so make sure you know the exchange rates, and count all local cash carefully, *before* you hand over your money. Watch out for old or folded notes. A calculator ensures you don't miss a zero or two on the transaction. And beware of 'Quick, it's the police' tricks, where you're panicked into handing over money too soon. Use common sense and you'll have no problem, but it's best to change only small amounts to cover what you'll need until you reach a reliable bank or exchange office.

### Credit Cards

➔ Credit or debit cards are handy for expensive items such as tours and flights, but most agents add a hefty 10% surcharge. It's therefore usually cheaper to use your card to draw cash from an ATM, if one is available.

➔ If there's no ATM, another option is to withdraw money from a local bank using your card, but be warned – this also incurs a charge of around 5%, and can be an all-day process, so go early.

➔ Before leaving home, check with your own bank to see which banks in Africa accept your card (and find out about charges). Cards with the Visa logo are most

## THE FINE ART OF BARGAINING

In many parts of Africa items are often worth whatever the seller can get. Once you get the hang of bargaining, it's all part of the fun. Hagglers are rarely trying to rip you off, so there's no point getting all hot and bothered about it. Decide what price you're prepared to pay and if you can't get it, simply decline politely and move on.

The following tips will help you hone your bargaining skills, but try to keep a sense of proportion – have you just wasted half an hour of your time arguing over a price difference that is worth a packet of chewing gum back home? By the same token, paying the first price asked may make it that much more difficult for the next person who comes along.

### Everyday Goods

Market traders selling basic items such as fruit and vegetables may raise their prices when they see a wealthy foreigner (that's you), so some minor bargaining could be called for, as long as you know the price that locals pay. But away from cities or tourist areas, many sellers will quote you the local price.

After a couple of days in a new country (when you'll inevitably pay too much a few times), you'll soon learn the standard prices for basic items. But don't forget that these can change from place to place – a soft drink in a remote village can cost significantly more than what you'll pay in a city.

### Souvenirs

At craft and curio stalls, where items are specifically for tourists, bargaining is very much expected. Some vendors may ask a price four (or more) times higher than what they're prepared to accept. You decide what you want to pay, and your first offer might be half this or even less. The vendor may feign outrage, while you plead abject poverty. Then the vendor's price starts to drop, and you make better offers until you arrive at a mutually agreeable price.

### And Finally...

Something to remember when bargaining is your own self-respect. Souvenir sellers normally give as good as they get, but if their 'final' price is close to what you're prepared to pay, consider accepting it. You'll avoid stress, and most locals need that money more than you do.

readily recognised, although MasterCard is accepted in many places.

➤ Whatever card you use, don't rely totally on plastic, as computer or telephone breakdowns can leave you stranded. Always have cash or (less helpful) travellers cheques too.

➤ To avoid credit-card fraud, always make sure that you watch the transaction closely and destroy any additional transaction slips that are produced, whether innocently or otherwise.

### Currencies

Whether you're carrying cash or travellers cheques, or both, give some thought to the currency you take before you leave home. This

will depend on the countries you visit.

Wherever you go, remember to carry a mix of large and small denominations. In many countries US\$100 bills get you better rates, but note that the US changed the design of the US\$100 bill in the mid-1990s and old-style US\$100 notes, and sometimes other denominations, are not accepted at many places that don't have a light machine for checking watermarks; they'll often ask for the dollars with the 'big head'. Smaller denominations (cash or travellers cheques) can be handy if you need to change money to last just a few days before leaving a country.

#### East and southern Africa

By far the most readily

recognised international currency is the US dollar (US\$). Also accepted are euros (€), UK pounds (UK£) and South African rand (R). Currencies from other European countries or Canadian dollars may occasionally be accepted, but don't count on it.

#### West and Central Africa

Many countries in these regions use a common currency called the Communauté Financière Africaine franc (usually shortened to CFA – pronounced 'say-eff-ah' in French), and here the euro is much more readily recognised by banks and bureaux. US dollars or other currencies are often not accepted at all. There are actually two CFA zones: the West

African (or Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest) zone, which includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo; and the Central African (or Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale) zone, which includes Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

The CFA is pegged at exactly 655.957 to one euro. If you're changing cash euros into CFA that's usually the rate you'll get (although there will be charges for travellers cheques); however, some out-of-the-way places may offer a little less.

Technically, you should be able to exchange West African CFA for Central Africa CFA and vice versa at a rate of one-to-one, but in reality you'll pay a bit over or under the odds, depending on the rates – and especially if you're dealing with traders at remote border posts a very long way from the nearest bank.

In nonCFA West African countries, the handiest currencies for travellers are euros and US dollars.

**North Africa** Euros and US dollars are most common; UK pounds are also accepted in some places.

## Money Changers

You can exchange your hard cash or travellers cheques into local currency at banks or foreign-exchange bureaux in cities and tourist areas. For cash, bureaux normally offer the best rates, low (or no) charges and the fastest service, but what you get for travellers cheques can be pitiful – if they're accepted at all. Travellers cheques are more readily accepted at banks, but while rates may be OK, the charges can be as high as 10% or 20% – plus you'll often spend a lot of time queuing.

## Travellers Cheques

- ➔ Never make travellers cheques your sole source of money.
- ➔ The pros are that they're secure – ATMs sometimes don't work and cash, unlike travellers cheques, cannot usually be replaced if lost.
- ➔ The cons are that many countries don't accept travellers cheques, and in those that do it's rare to find a bank that will change them outside major cities, commissions can be prohibitive and they're often a pain to deal with.
- ➔ When exchanging travellers cheques, most banks also check the purchase receipt (the paper you're supposed to keep separate) and your passport, so make sure you have these with you.
- ➔ You can sometimes pay for items such as safaris and activities directly with travellers cheques, but most operators add a surcharge – usually 10%, but sometimes up to 20%, because that's what banks charge them.

## Opening Hours

- ➔ This guide does not list main opening hours for every place listed unless it has 'unusual' habits – such as a restaurant that opens for lunchtime only, or a bar that doesn't serve drinks until midnight.
- ➔ Tourist offices, shops and travel agencies tend to open from around 8am or 9am to around 4pm or 5pm, Monday to Friday, and sometimes on Saturday mornings as well. Embassies are generally open to the public during the morning – so that's when you need to apply for visas. In Islamic countries, most offices (including banks and shops) close on Fridays, but may open on Saturdays and/or Sundays.
- ➔ Smaller shops and market stalls rarely keep strict

business hours. When there are customers around, the shopkeepers are behind their counters ready to serve, and when everyone is asleep in the heat of afternoon, they're snoring round the back. In most cities, many shops and supermarkets stay open until late in the evening and on Saturdays too, although only the largest are open on Sundays.

- ➔ In East and southern Africa, shops and offices close for an hour or so around noon. In North, West and Central Africa, the noon break can be two to four hours long, and businesses may stay open until 7pm or 8pm, sometimes later. Places like phone and internet cafes keep much longer hours.
- ➔ Banks in most countries are open from Monday to Friday from 8am or 9am to around 2pm or 3pm. Some banks will even shut at noon.
- ➔ In Islamic countries, many businesses shut up shop at lunchtime and don't reopen during the Islamic fasting period of Ramadan.
- ➔ Most cafes and smaller restaurants offer lunch from around noon to 2pm (for locals it's the main meal of the day) and dinner in the evening from around 5pm to 7pm. Larger restaurants catering for more affluent locals and tourists keep the same lunch hours, but open later in the evening, usually from around 7pm to 10pm or later. Many restaurants open all day.

## Photography

A simple point-and-shoot is fine for mementos of people, landscapes, market scenes and so on, but for better-quality shots, especially of animals, you'll need a zoom lens, and maybe an SLR camera with changeable lenses. It's also worth taking a couple of spare batteries with you and charging them

whenever you have a reliable electricity source for those times when you're travelling in remote areas. For the same reasons, take extra memory cards and a cleaning kit. Africa's extremes of climate, especially heat, humidity and very fine sand can also take their toll on your camera, so always take appropriate precautions; changing lenses in a dust-laden wind is, for example, a recipe for disaster.

Other useful photographic accessories might include a small flash, a cable or remote shutter release and a tripod. Absolutely essential is a good padded bag, containing at least one desiccation sac, and sealed to protect your camera from dust and humidity. Avoid leaving your camera on the floor of buses or cars, as the jolting could well destroy the delicate inner workings of the lens.

Many internet cafes now offer to put your pictures on CD for you – a good idea is to get the CD copied at the same time, perhaps posting one home, to avoid the risks of files corrupting or the disc being damaged. Count on taking more photos than you expect to.

For more advice, Lonely Planet's *Guide to Travel Photography* is an excellent resource, full of helpful tips for photography while on the road. For more specific advice, Lonely Planet also publishes *Wildlife Photography* and *People Photography*.

## Post

If you do want to send a letter, parcel or postcard, it's always better doing this from a capital city. From some countries, the service is remarkably quick (just two or three days to Europe, a week to the USA or Australia). From others it really earns the snail-mail tag, but it's still more reliable than sending stuff from really remote areas.

You can use the post-restante service at any post office where mail is held for collection. Letters should be addressed clearly with surname underlined and in capitals, to '(Your Name), Poste Restante, General Post Office, Lusaka, Zambia', for example. In French-speaking countries, send it to 'Poste Restante, PTT', then the name of the city.

To collect mail, you need your passport, and to pay about US\$0.50 per item. Letters sometimes take a few weeks to arrive, so have them sent to a town where you'll be for a while, or will be passing through more than once – although in some places mail is only held for a month, then returned to the sender.

The price, quality and speed for parcel post varies massively from place to place; courier companies can sometimes be more reliable than government postal services and not always a lot more expensive.

## Public Holidays

The main holidays are Christmas and Easter in the largely Christian countries, while in Muslim countries the main events are Eid al-Moulid, the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed; Eid-al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan; and Eid al-Adha (also called Eid al-Haj, Eid al-Kebir or Tabaski), which commemorates Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son on God's command, and coincides with the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Spellings may vary from country to country. Since the Islamic year has 354 or 355 days, these holidays fall about 11 days earlier each year in the Western calendar. During public holidays you can expect most businesses (apart from hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions) to close.

To check the dates of Islamic holidays, go to [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?muslim](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?muslim).

[bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?muslim](http://bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?muslim).

## Safe Travel

It's worth remembering that the overwhelming majority of travellers to Africa return home without encountering any of the following problems. That said, be aware of potential problems and keep your wits about you.

## Crime

The vast majority of Africans are decent, hard-working people who want from you only respect and the chance to make an honest living; given the extreme poverty levels, robbery rates are incredibly low. Even so, you need to be alert on the streets of some cities. Nairobi (Kenya) is often called 'Nairobi robbery'; Lagos (Nigeria) is not for the faint-hearted, while Dakar (Senegal), Abidjan (Côte D'Ivoire) and parts of Johannesburg (South Africa) all have edgy reputations. Snatch-theft and pickpocketing are the most common crimes, but violent muggings can occur, so it pays to heed the warnings in country chapters and the following dos and don'ts:

- ➔ Don't make yourself a target on the streets. Carry as little as possible.
- ➔ Don't wear jewellery or watches, however cheap. Strutting with a camera or iPod is asking for trouble.
- ➔ Don't walk the backstreets, or even some main streets, at night. Take a taxi.
- ➔ Do use a separate wallet for day-to-day purchases. Keep the bulk of your cash hidden under loose-fitting clothing.
- ➔ Do walk purposefully and confidently. Never look like you are lost (even if you are!).
- ➔ Do be discreet with your possessions, especially in dorms. Keep your gear in your bag.

## SURVIVING SCAMS

### Dud Sounds

You buy CDs from the market, but back at the hotel you open the box and it's got a blank CD inside, or music by a different artist. The solution: always listen to the CDs first.

### Phone Home

You give your address to a local kid who says he wants to write. He asks for your phone number too, and you think 'no harm in that'. Until the folks back home start getting collect calls in the middle of the night. And when it's the kid's big brother making false ransom demands to your worried ma and pa, things can get serious. Stick to addresses, and even then be circumspect.

### Police & Thieves

Local drug salesmen are often in cahoots with the police, who then apprehend you and conveniently find you 'in possession', or just tell you they've seen you talking to a known dealer. Large bribes will be required to avoid arrest or imprisonment. To complicate things further, many con artists pose as policemen to extort money. Insist on being taken to the police station, and get written receipts for any fines you pay.

### Take a Tour

A tout offers to sell you a tour such as a safari or a visit to a local attraction, and says he can do it cheaper if you buy onward travel with him too. You cough up for bus/ferry/plane tickets, plus another tour in your next destination, only to find yourself several days later with your cash gone and your reservations nonexistent. Best to pay only small amounts in advance, and deal with recommended companies or touts only.

### Welcome, Friend

You're invited to stay for free in someone's house, if you buy meals and drinks for a few days. Sounds good, but your new friend's appetite for food and beer makes the deal more expensive than staying at a hotel. More seriously, while you're out entertaining, someone else will be back at the house of your 'friend' going through your bag. This scam is only likely in tourist zones – in remote or rural areas you'll more often than not come across genuine hospitality.

## Scams

The main annoyance you'll come across in Africa is the various hustlers, touts, con men and scam merchants who always see tourists as easy prey. Although these guys are not necessarily dangerous, some awareness and suitable precautions are advisable, and should help you deal with them without getting stung.

### War Zones

Going to a war zone as a tourist is, to put it bluntly, bloody stupid. Unless you're there to help out with a recognised aid agency and are qualified to do so, you'll be no help to anyone, and you'll quite likely get yourself kidnapped or killed.

## Telephone

In most capital cities and major towns, phone connections are good. Thanks to satellite technology, it's often easier to make an international call than to dial someone 20km up the road. Rates vary from country to country, ranging from US\$5 to US\$15 for a three-minute call to Europe, the USA or Australia. Many cybercafes now offer dirt-cheap internet-connected phone calls, but the quality of the line depends on the quality of the internet connection – if it's a dial-up connection as opposed to ADSL, it's unlikely to be worth the effort.

## Bureaus

To call long distance or even locally, you're usually better off at a public-phone bureau than a booth in the street. In each city, there's normally a bureau at the main post office, plus numerous privately run bureaus where rates can be cheaper and the service faster. At most bureaus you can also send or receive faxes.

### Mobile Phones

Mobile (cell) phones are almost universal in Africa, with connection rates, call rates and coverage becoming better at a galloping rate, although you're unlikely to have coverage in remote rural areas. You can buy local SIM cards just about



everywhere where there's mobile coverage. Some local companies also offer rates for international calls that work out cheaper than using landlines.

To check whether your phone will work in the African countries you plan to visit, contact your network provider. Ask about charges as well – and don't forget that if anyone rings you while you're overseas, the bulk of the cost goes on your bill.

## Phonecards

In some countries you can buy phonecards that let you dial a local number, enter a PIN, and then make cheap international calls. You can also buy scratchcards to top up mobile phones, and phonecards to use in public booths instead of coins.

## Time

Africa is covered by four time zones, from UTC (formerly GMT) in the west to UTC +3 in the east. Crossing from Chad to Sudan there's a two-hour difference, but elsewhere it's one hour or none at all. At borders where there's a one-hour time difference (eg Malawi–Tanzania), some have their opening and closing hours coordinated to avoid problems, but others don't – try to plan your travels at these crossings to avoid getting caught in no-man's land after you've been stamped out of one side, only to discover that the other side is already closed.

## Toilets

There are two types of toilet in Africa: the Western style, with a bowl and seat (common in most midrange or top-end hotels and restaurants); and the African style, a hole in the floor that you squat over. You might even find a combination of the two, with a Western-style

toilet bowl propped over a hole in the floor. Standards vary tremendously, from pristine to those that leave little to the imagination as to the health or otherwise of the previous occupant. In our experience, a non-contact hole in the ground is better than a filthy bowl any day.

In rural areas, squat toilets are built over a deep hole in the ground and called 'long-drops'; the crap just fades away naturally, as long as the hole isn't filled with too much other material (such as tampons – these should be disposed of separately). Toilet paper is OK – although you'll need to carry your own. In Muslim countries, a jug of water or hosepipe arrangement is provided for the same task – use your left hand to wipe, then use the water to wash your hand. This is why it's a breach of etiquette in many countries to shake hands or pass food with the left hand.

Some travellers complain that African toilets are difficult to use, but it only takes a little practice to accomplish a comfortable squatting technique, and you'll soon become adept at assuming the position in one swift move, while nimbly hoiking your trouser hems up at the same time so they don't touch the floor.

## Tourist Information

Much of Africa isn't geared for tourism, and decent tourist offices are rare. Some countries have a tourist-information office in the capital, but apart from a few tatty leaflets and vague advice from the remarkably little-travelled staff, you're unlikely to get much. Tour companies, hotels and hostels are often better sources of information.

## Travellers with Disabilities

There are more people with disabilities per head of population in Africa than in the West, but wheelchair facilities are virtually nonexistent. Don't expect things like wheelchair ramps, signs in Braille, or any other facilities that are available in tourist areas in other parts of the world. Most travellers with disabilities find travel much easier with the assistance of an able-bodied companion, or with an organised tour through an operator that specialises in arranging travel for those with disabilities. Safaris in South Africa and diving holidays in Egypt are both easily arranged with companies like these.

A final factor to remember, which goes some way to making up for the lack of facilities, is the friendliness and accommodating attitude of the African people. In the majority of situations, they will be more than happy to help if you explain to them exactly what you need.

Before setting out for Africa, travellers with disabilities should consider contacting any of the following organisations, which may be able to help you with advice and assistance:

### Access-able Travel

**Source** (☎303-232 2979; [www.access-able.com](http://www.access-able.com); PO Box 1796, Wheatridge, CO, USA) Has lists of tour operators offering tours for travellers with disabilities.

### Accessible Travel & Leisure

(☎01452-729739; [www.accessibletravel.co.uk](http://www.accessibletravel.co.uk)) UK travel agent; encourages disabled people to travel independently.

**Disability Online** ([www.disabilityonline.com](http://www.disabilityonline.com)) A large database of links and resources for disabled travellers.

**Endeavour Safaris** ([www.endeavour-safaris.com](http://www.endeavour-safaris.com)) Focuses on southern Africa.



**Epic Enabled** ([www.epic-enabled.com](http://www.epic-enabled.com)) Trips in southern Africa for people with disabilities.

**Mobility International** (☎541-343 1284; [www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org); 132 E Broadway, suite 343, Eugene, USA) Advises disabled travelers on mobility issues and runs an educational exchange program.

**Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (RADAR; ☎020-7250 3222; [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk); 250 City Rd, 12 City Forum, London, UK, EC1V 8AF)

**Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality** (SATH; ☎212-447-7284; [www.sath.org](http://www.sath.org); 347 Fifth Ave at 34th St, New York, USA; ☉9am-5pm; ☑M34 to 5th Ave, M1 to 34th St, ☞6 to 33rd St) An excellent resource, which gives advice on how to travel with a wheelchair, kidney disease, sight impairment or deafness.

**Tourism for All** (☎0845 124 9971; [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk); 7A Pixel Mill, 44 Appleby Rd, Kendal, Cumbria, UK)

## Visas

For a short trip through Africa you might get all your visas before you leave home. For a longer trip, it's easier to get them as you go along. Most countries have an embassy in each neighbouring country, but not all, so careful planning is required. Some visas are valid from when they are issued, so you may have to enter the country pretty soon after getting them. On other visas you say when you plan to enter the country and arrive within a month of that date. Sometimes it's convenient (and relatively cheap) to get several visas in one place – South Africa or Kenya, for example.

Prices vary widely, but you can expect to pay US\$10 to US\$50 for standard one-month single-entry visas, and up to US\$200 for three-month multiple-entry visas.

## EXTRA VISA REQUIREMENTS

A few countries demand a *note verbale* (letter of recommendation) from your own embassy before they issue a visa. This is generally no problem as your embassy will be aware of this, but be prepared to fork out yet more cash. It'll say: 'This letter is to introduce Mr/Ms [name], carrying [British/French] passport No [1234]. He/she is a tourist travelling to [Chad]. Please issue him/her with a tourist visa. All assistance you can give would be most appreciated.' Or: 'Par la présente, nous attestons que Mr/Ms [Name] est titulaire de passeport [Britannique/Française] No [1234]. Il doit se rendre au [Tchad] pour faire le tourisme. Toute assistance que pourrait lui être accordée serait appréciée.'

Australians travelling in Africa have only 10 of their own embassies or consulates on the entire continent, so it's handy to obtain a letter of introduction from the Passports section of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade before you leave home.

Some countries have other arcane requirements. For Libya, you'll only get a visa if you have a prior booking with a Libyan tour operator, and a paper confirming this in Arabic.

If you want to stay longer, extensions are usually available for an extra fee.

Rules vary for different nationalities: for example, British and Aussie citizens don't need advance visas for some southern African countries; French citizens don't need them in much of West Africa; Americans need them nearly everywhere. The price of a visa also varies according to nationality (lucky Irish-passport holders seem to be able to get free visas in dozens of countries!), and where you buy it. In some of Africa's more, ahem, *informal* countries, you'll also be factoring in the mood/corruption level of the person you're buying it from.

Most visas are issued in 24 or 48 hours – and it always helps to go to embassies in the morning – but occasionally the process can take a week or longer (such as for Sudan or Angola). You may have to show you have enough funds to cover the visit, or prove that you intend to leave the country rather than settle down and build a

hut somewhere. (This could be an air ticket home, or a letter from your employer stating you're expected to return to work on a specified date.) For most visas you also need two or three passport photos, so take what you'll need, although you can get new supplies from photo booths in most capitals. Some embassies ask for a photocopy of your passport data page, so it's always worth carrying a few spare copies.

A final note: if you have Israeli stamps in your passport, they may prove problematic when you enter Algeria, Libya and Sudan. Israeli border officials may stamp a piece of paper, which you can then remove, but if you're travelling overland your Egyptian entry-point can still be a giveaway.

Regulations can change, so it's always worth checking before you enter the country. For general details see [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com), which also has links to other visa sites.

## Regional Visas

### WEST AFRICA

If you're travelling in West Africa, ask about a Visa des Pays de l'Entente, a multi-country visa that covers travel in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo. Before you rush off to your nearest West African embassy to ask for this visa, be aware that it's presently only obtainable within Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, which means that first you must obtain a visa for these countries and, once there, apply at the immigration or visa extension office in the capital city. To get the Visa des Pays de l'Entente, which is valid for two months, you'll need to take along CFA25,000 and two passport photos. It can take up to three days for the visa to be issued.

The Visa des Pays de l'Entente is only valid for one entry into each country, which makes it ideal for overlanders, but less so for those who plan to visit countries more than once. To further complicate matters, Benin and Togo border guards have been known to refuse to recognise the visa.

### EAST AFRICA

For several years there's been talk about an East African tourist visa covering Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda; to our knowledge this has yet to come into practice. However, a single-entry visa for Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda allows you to visit either of the other two countries (assuming you've met their visa requirements and have been issued a visa) and then return to the original country without having to apply for a second visa.

## Volunteering

There are very few openings for ad-hoc volunteer work in Africa. Unless you've got some expertise, and are prepared to stay for at least

a year, you're unlikely to be much use anyway. What Africa needs is people with skills. Just 'wanting to help' isn't enough. In fact, your presence may be disruptive for local staff and management, prevent locals from gaining employment, or cause a drain on resources.

For formal volunteer work, which must be arranged in your home country, organisations such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO; in the UK) and the Peace Corps (in the US) have programs throughout Africa where people, usually with genuine training (eg teachers, health workers, environmentalists), do two-year stints. Similar schemes for 'gap-year' students (between school and university) tend to be for shorter periods, and focus on community-building projects, teaching or scientific research. Almost all these projects require an additional financial donation, which may be raised by sponsorship and fundraising in your home country.

If you've got a genuine interest in volunteering in Africa, the following websites can provide more information:

**Australian Volunteers International** ([www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com))

**Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service** ([ccivs.org/](http://ccivs.org/))

**Earthwatch** ([www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org))

**Frontier** ([www.frontier.ac.uk](http://www.frontier.ac.uk))

**Global Volunteers** ([www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org))

**Idealist** ([www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org))

**International Volunteer Programs Association** ([www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org))

**Intervol** ([www.intervol.org.uk](http://www.intervol.org.uk))

**Lattitude** ([www.lattitude.org.uk](http://www.lattitude.org.uk))

**Peace Corps** ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov))

**Project Trust** ([www.projecttrust.org.uk](http://www.projecttrust.org.uk)) Schoolteaching near Maun.

**Raleigh** ([www.raleighinternational.org](http://www.raleighinternational.org))

**Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)** ([www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk))

**Working Abroad** ([www.workingabroad.com](http://www.workingabroad.com))

**Worldwide Experience** ([www.worldwideexperience.com](http://www.worldwideexperience.com))

**Worldwide Volunteering** ([www.www.org.uk](http://www.www.org.uk))

## Women Travellers

It's no use pretending otherwise – women travelling in Africa (alone or with other women) will occasionally encounter specific problems, most often harassment from men. North Africa can be particularly tiresome from this perspective, although Libya is generally better than Tunisia or Egypt. And in places where an attack or mugging is a real possibility, women are seen as easy targets, so it pays to keep away from these areas (talk to people on the ground to get the latest situation).

But don't panic! On a day-to-day basis, compared to many places, travel in Africa is relatively safe and unthreatening, and you'll meet friendliness and generosity – not to mention pure old-fashioned gallantry – far more often than hostility or predatory behaviour. Many men are simply genuinely curious as to why on earth a woman is out travelling the world rather than staying at home with the babies, so keep an open mind and try not to be too hostile in the face of endless questions. Remember also that half of the authors who worked on this book are women and many of them travelled alone and lived to tell the tale.

Having said that, when it comes to evening entertainment, Africa is a conservative society and in many countries 'respectable' women don't go to bars, clubs or restaurants without a male companion. However dis-

## PHOTOS FROM HOME

Female backpackers may be regarded with a mixture of bewilderment and suspicion in places unused to tourists, especially if alone. You should be at home rearing families or tending the crops, not engaged in frivolous pastimes like travel, the thoughts sometimes go. To show you do have a home life, you could carry photographs of family or friends, or even a mythical husband (unless you've got a real one, of course). Photos of yourself at work sometimes do the same trick.

tasteful this may be to post-feminist Westerners, acting as if this isn't the reality may lead to trouble.

Meeting and talking with local women can be problematic. It may require being invited into a home, although since many women have received little education, unless you have learnt some of the local language, communication could be tricky. However, this is changing to some extent because a surprising number of girls go to school while boys are sent away to work. This means that many of the staff in tourist offices, hotels or government departments are educated women, and this can be as good a place as any to try and strike up a conversation. In rural areas, a good starting point might be teachers at local schools, or staff at health centres.

Some expatriates you meet may be appalled at the idea of a female travelling alone and will do their best to discourage you with horror stories, often of dubious accuracy. Others will have a far more realistic attitude. When you are on the road, the best advice on what can and can't be undertaken safely will come from local women. Use your common sense and

things should go well. It's also worth remembering that, as a solo female traveller, you might be best to pay a little extra for midrange hotels where the surroundings may make you feel more comfortable – many of the cheapest hotels in African towns rent rooms by the hour.

## Sexual Harassment

Unwanted interest from male 'admirers' is an inevitable aspect of travel in Africa, especially for lone women. This is always unpleasant, but it's worth remembering that although you may encounter a lewd border official, or a persistent suitor who won't go away, real harm or rape is very unlikely. If you're alone in an uneasy situation, act cold or uninterested, rather than threatened. Stick your nose in a book, or invent an imaginary husband who will be arriving shortly. If none of this works and you can't shake off a hanger-on, going to the nearest public place, such as the lobby of a hotel, usually works well, or you could try asking for help from local women in a public place. If the problem still persists, asking the receptionist to call the police usually frightens them off.

Part of the reason for the interest is that local women rarely travel long distances alone, and a single foreign female is an unusual sight. And, thanks to imported TV and Hollywood films (and the behaviour of some tourists), Western women are frequently viewed as 'easy'.

What you wear may greatly influence how you're treated. African women dress conservatively, in traditional or Western clothes, so when a visitor wears something different from the norm, she will draw attention. In the minds of some men this is provocative. In general, look at what other women are wearing and follow suit. Keep your upper arms, midriff and legs covered.

## Sanitary Protection

You can buy tampons and pads in most cities and major towns from pharmacies or supermarkets. Prices are about the same as in Europe (from where they're imported), but you seldom have choice of type or brand. They're rarely found in shops away from the main towns, so you might want to bring supplies if you're spending a lot of time in remote areas.

## Work

It's hard for outsiders to find work in most African countries, as high unemployment means a huge number of local people chase every job vacancy. You will also need a work permit, and these are usually hard to get as priority is rightly given to qualified locals over travellers. You're unlikely to see many jobs advertised, so the best way to find out about them is by asking around among the expatriate community.

# Transport in Africa

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Getting yourself into Africa can be as simple as booking a direct-flight ticket from a major European hub, or as adventurous as hitching a lift on a car ferry then jumping onto a cargo truck. However you choose to do it, it pays to do advance research to make sure you don't blow unnecessary bucks or time. Flights and tours can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

### Air

#### Airports & Airlines

The bulk of air traffic with Africa is to and from Europe, but there are a handful of direct flights between Africa and North and South America, the Middle East and Asia. Many North American travellers pass through a European 'hub' en route to Africa. For

Australasian travellers it's often cheaper to pass through a Middle Eastern and/or Asian hub before arriving.

Wherever you're coming from, the main thing to remember is that flying into one of Africa's main hubs is going to be your cheapest option; once you're there the national carriers of the various countries can easily transport you to other destinations across Africa. These extra flights are known as 'add-ons' and are often best booked in conjunction with your main international ticket through a decent travel agent at home (tip:

flights with add-ons or multiple stops are still almost always best booked with a real live reservations agent rather than through a website).

The main gateway into East Africa is Nairobi (Kenya), although Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) is also busy. Johannesburg (South Africa) is the southern African hub offering the most options (flights arrive from

the Americas, Asia and Australasia as well as Europe) and the biggest bargains; also look out for cheap deals into Cape Town (South Africa). In West Africa, Dakar (Senegal), Accra (Ghana) and Lagos (Nigeria) are the busiest gateways. In North Africa, flying into Casablanca (Morocco) or Cairo (Egypt) is the cheapest option. If you're travelling from Europe, Tunis (Tunisia) is often the cheapest African city in which to arrive. However, it's surrounded by Algeria and Libya, which can make for tricky onward overland travel.

#### Tickets

Wild climatic variations across Africa, and differing holiday seasons in the northern and southern hemispheres, mean that it's tricky to pin down the cheapest times to fly to Africa – get the low-down on costs from a travel agent well in advance. Using mile-wide brushstrokes, it could be argued that flying from June to September or around Christmas (a 'peak season' that can last from November to March if you're coming from Australasia) is going to hit your budget hardest.

If you're planning a big trip, consider open-jaw tickets, which allow you to fly into one city, then out of another, and can save you cash, time and hassle. All manner of combinations are available, enabling some great overland journeys:

### ONE WAY, NO WAY

One-way tickets to Africa are rarely a good idea. For the most part, immigration regulations forbid (or at least discourage) entry to people with one-way tickets; you need to show that you have a ticket out of Africa, although this seems a little perverse considering you can get a ferry to Africa and travel overland through the continent before picking up a one-way flight back home (these tickets tend to cost about half of the usual return fare).

think about a ticket into Cairo, Nairobi or Dakar and out of Cape Town. Even if you're not travelling so far, it can be helpful – flying into Dakar and out of Bamako, for example.

Stopovers are another handy way of flitting around the continent. Many flights to Africa stop at least once before arriving at the main destination, and on some tickets (but not always those at the cheapest end of the spectrum) you'll have the chance to get off; on some happy occasions taking advantage of these stopovers can effectively save the cost of an internal flight. For example, a Kenya Airways flight from London to Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) goes via Nairobi, allowing you to explore Kenya first. If you're coming from North America or Australia, a stopover in Europe can be handy if you need to pick up an obscure visa in Paris.

Jumping on a charter flight can sometimes save you a bundle if you're travelling from or via Europe, especially if you pick something up at the last minute. The main drawback is that short-date returns are common, but there is sometimes some flexibility.

It's not rocket science, but take your time, shop around, double-check all restrictions and date- or route-change penalties on your ticket, look out for credit-card surcharges and book well in advance. A couple of hours on the internet should give you an idea of the most useful travel agents; talk to as many as possible. Remember that although websites are great for straightforward return tickets, they cannot tell you about little add-ons and short cuts or custom-build itineraries from a cluster of domestic and regional flights.

If you're under 26 or a student you'll occasionally be able to turn up some juicy deals. There are many specialist student travel agents, but many 'normal' travel agents offer student fares, just as student travel agents

## MASTER THE SAHARA

Chris Scott's **Sahara Overland** ([www.sahara-overland.com](http://www.sahara-overland.com)) is an excellent place to start planning any trans-African routes, and his books *Sahara Overland* and *Adventure Motorcycling Handbook* are highly recommended reading. *Sahara Handbook*, by Simon Glen, is also worth reading although it dates back to 1990. All these books will give you a better background than we can do here.

can serve older travellers. Travel agents that recognise the **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)) scheme are another possibility – the contact details of thousands of agents are available on its website.

## INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

On the cheapest round-the-world (RTW) tickets Nairobi and Johannesburg are the usual stops, but stopping in these major hubs will cut down your options once you leave the continent. If you want more stops within Africa, look at the Global Explorer or oneworld Explorer RTW tickets offered by **oneworld alliance** ([www.oneworldalliance.com](http://www.oneworldalliance.com)). Coming from Europe with British Airways and Air France can get you to a variety of interesting African destinations, but flights within Africa are limited.

The trick with RTW tickets is to decide where you want to go first and then talk to a travel agent, who will know the best deals, cunning little routes and the pitfalls of the various packages. If you're departing from the UK, you could also try the handy interactive route planner at [www.roundtheworldflights.com](http://www.roundtheworldflights.com).

## Land

Africa's only land border divides Israel and Egypt in the Sinai – the continuing troubles in Israel and the Palestinian Territories mean that the direct route via Rafah is often closed to foreigners, so

make your way via the Eilat–Taba border crossing on the Gulf of Aqaba. However, note that if your passport has an Israeli stamp in it you won't get into countries such as Libya; if this is going to be a problem, take the (car and passenger) ferry from Jordan.

## Sea

### Egypt

There are daily ferries between Nuweiba in Sinai (Egypt) and Aqaba (Jordan), which is a stone's throw from Eilat (Israel). There are also four sailings per week from Port Said to Iskenderun in Turkey.

### Morocco

Two main companies sail the Spain to Morocco route: **Acciona Trasmediterránea** ([www.trasmediterranea.es](http://www.trasmediterranea.es)) and **FRS** ([www.frs.es](http://www.frs.es)). The main routes run to Melilla (one of Spain's North African enclaves) from Almería and Málaga; to Nador from Almería; to Tangier from Gibraltar, Tarifa and Algeciras; and to Ceuta (another Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast) from Algeciras. All routes usually take vehicles as well as passengers, and most services increase in frequency during the summer months, when other routes are sometimes added.

Longer-haul ferries that operate as part of the **Cemar** ([www.cemar.it](http://www.cemar.it)) network also sail to Tangier from Genoa (Italy) and Sète (France).

## Tunisia & Algeria

**Compagnie Tunisienne de Navigation** (CTN; Map p168; ☎71 322 802; [www.ctn.com.tn](http://www.ctn.com.tn)) runs ferries from Marseille (France) and Genoa (Italy) to Tunis (Tunisia). A host of other companies also offer services from Italy to Tunis (Genoa is a year-round departure point; summer services leave from La Spezia, Napoli and Trapani).

For Algeria, **Acciona Transmediterránea** ([www.transmediterranea.es](http://www.transmediterranea.es)) runs ferries from Almería in southern Spain to Ghazaouet (Algeria), and you might also find services to Oran (Algeria) from Almería or southern France.

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

Africa's internal air network is comprehensive; certainly, flying over the Sahara, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the often difficult Chad and South Sudan can be a good idea. Always check flight details carefully (many tickets are flexible), but be prepared for delays and cancellations especially when travelling on state-owned enterprises. Don't expect to be put up in a four-star hotel should your flight get canned.

If you're serious about taking a few African flights, consider sorting it out when booking your main ticket. Any half-decent travel agent should be able to book a host of 'add-on' African flights and possibly find fares that allow a little flexibility. These add-ons are often sold at a discount overseas, so forward planning can save you a small fortune.

Airlines with extensive African networks from their hub cities include:

**Ethiopian Airlines** ([www.flyethiopian.com](http://www.flyethiopian.com); Addis Ababa)

**Kenya Airways** ([www.kenya-airways.com](http://www.kenya-airways.com); Nairobi)

**Royal Air Maroc** ([www.royalairmaroc.com](http://www.royalairmaroc.com); Casablanca)

**South African Airways** ([www.flysaa.com](http://www.flysaa.com); Johannesburg)

**Afriqiyah** ([www.afriqiyah.aero](http://www.afriqiyah.aero); Tripoli)

**Senegal Airlines** ([www.senegalairlines.aero](http://www.senegalairlines.aero))

**Interair** ([www.interair.co.za](http://www.interair.co.za))

### Air Passes

Air passes are something of a misnomer. All products purporting to be Africa air passes are just cheapo deals on domestic and transcontinental flights available to travellers flying into Africa with certain airlines. These schemes operate on a tailor-made basis – routes are usually divided into price bands or sectors and you pick 'n' mix to make an itinerary.

Most schemes are fairly limited and usually dictate that your flights include an arrival or departure at one or two hubs. However, if you're planning to take a few African flights, some 'air pass' schemes offer great value in the long run – the best offer savings of well over 50% on domestic and continental fares.

The 'Africa Airpass' scheme run by **Star Alliance** ([www.staralliance.com](http://www.staralliance.com)) allows flights to 30 destina-

tions across Africa if you fly in on a member carrier. **Skyteam** ([www.skyteam.com](http://www.skyteam.com)) also have a 'Go Africa' pass that allows a minimum of three, and a maximum of 16, flights across the continent, with fully flexible dates

## Bicycle

Cycling around Africa is predictably tough but rewarding. Long, hot, gruelling journeys are pretty standard, but you'll be in constant close contact with the peoples and environments of the continent and will get to visit small towns and villages that most people just shoot through. In general, the more remote the areas, the better the experience, but you've got to be fully prepared. A tent is standard issue, but remember to ask the village headman where you can pitch a tent when camping near settlements in rural areas.

Touring bikes aren't the best choice for Africa, a continent not exactly blessed with smooth tarmac roads. Adapted mountain bikes are your best bet – their smaller 660mm (26in) wheel rims are less likely to be misshaped by rough roads than the 700mm rims of touring bikes, and mountain-bike frames are better suited to the rigours of

## BRINGING YOUR BIKE

You could cycle all the way into Africa or you could save your legs for Africa's rough roads and stick your wheels in the hold of a plane. There are two ways of doing this: you could partially dismantle your bike and stuff it into a large box, or just simply wheel your bike to the check-in desk, where it should be treated as a piece of baggage (although you might need to take the pedals off, turn the handlebars sideways and wrap it in cardboard and/or foam). Don't lose too much sleep about the feather touch of baggage handlers – if your bike doesn't stand up to air travel, it won't last long in Africa.

Some airlines don't include sports equipment in the baggage allowance; others may charge around US\$50 extra because your bike is not standard luggage size; others, however, will take it without hassles.

## BORDER CROSSINGS

There are a lot of borders in Africa, and a whole lot more border posts. Sometimes the process is quick and straightforward, but at other times it can take several hours to get through the queues at immigration or customs desks (even assuming that your visas and paperwork are in order), not to mention possible checks of medical certificates, or a detailed search of your luggage. At all times remember that patience and politeness will see you through. Getting shirty with a person in uniform is one sure-fire way for 'discrepancies' to be discovered, and delays to be even longer.

Country chapters in this guide list the main border-crossing points – usually those on more-frequented roads and transit routes. Smaller or less formal border crossings are often used by locals, but may not be able to process your papers, may have little public transport and could involve a long and pointless detour.

There's usually a border post on each side of the border crossing (ie one belonging to each country). Sometimes the border posts are just 100m apart, such as at the Namanga crossing between Kenya and Tanzania; sometimes they can be 100km apart, with a 'no-man's land' in between, such as those on the route between Algeria and Niger. If you're catching a bus 'to the border', check exactly how far it goes. Does it take you just to the first border post, from where you have to walk or take a taxi to the second one? Or does the bus go across the border all the way to the second border post, before you have to change to onward transport?

Although they're rare, it's also worth watching out for new border crossings. For example, the 'Unity Bridge' over the Rovuma River opened in 2010 becoming the main border crossing between Tanzania and Mozambique.

African travel. Multipurpose hybrid tyres with knobsles on their edges for off-road routes and a smooth central band for on-road cruising are useful in Africa, but your tyre choices (along with the types of components, number of spares and the like) should depend on the terrain you want to tackle.

You may encounter the odd antelope or zebra while cycling, but motorists are more of a threat to cyclists than rampaging wildlife. Cyclists lie just below donkeys on the transport food chain, so if you hear a vehicle coming up from behind, be prepared to bail out onto the verges. That said, many of Africa's roads are fairly quiet. Be very cautious about cycling in busy towns and cities.

The heat can be a killer so carry at least 4L of water and don't discount the possibility of taking a bus, truck or boat across some sections (bikes can easily be transported).

The **International Bicycle Fund** (IBF; [www.ibike.org/africaguide](http://www.ibike.org/africaguide)) has a handy guide to cycling in Africa by

country, although information for some countries is limited and out of date.

## Boat

Lakes Malawi, Tanganyika, Kariba and Victoria in southern and East Africa all have ferries operating on them. There are even more fantastic river journeys to be had along the Niger, Congo and Nile. Boat trips may also be possible on the Senegal, Gambia and Zambezi Rivers.

On simple riverboats you'll be sat on mountains of cargo, the bows of the craft sitting just above the water line, but on some major river routes large ferries and barges are used. Generally speaking, 3rd class on all ferries is crammed with people, goods and livestock, making it hot and uncomfortable. Happily there's usually a better way: at a price, cabins (semiluxurious and otherwise) with bar and restaurant access can be yours.

The most important coastal ferry service is that

between Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. There are also some services along the West African coast, especially in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. There are also ferries between Limbe (Cameroon) and Calabar (Nigeria).

A more romantic alternative is to travel by small Arabic-style dhow sailing vessels that ply the Indian Ocean coast. The easiest place to organise this is in Mozambique, where you can sail to and around the Quirimbas Archipelago. Similar to dhows are feluccas, the ancient sailing boats of the Nile.

*Pirogues* (traditional canoes) and *pinasses* (motorised canoes) are staples of travel on remote waterways where the small, diesel-powered (and often unreliable) pontoon-style car ferries are not available. They're especially common in the rivers of West Africa. Not many ferries or boats take vehicles, but you can get a motorbike onto some.

Seafaring travellers might be able to hitch a lift on cargo boats down the West African



## ROAD TIPS

- ➔ Watch out for kamikaze cyclists, pedestrians and livestock – and massive potholes.
- ➔ Night-time road travel isn't recommended because daytime hazards won't be illuminated.
- ➔ Driving skills are generally nerve-shatteringly poor, especially in rural areas; moderate your speed.
- ➔ Tree branches placed in the roadway signal a stopped vehicle or other problem ahead.
- ➔ Reckless overtaking on blind bends, hills and other areas with poor visibility is standard operating procedure; head-on collisions are common.
- ➔ Keep your fuel tank full and carry a jerry can. Fuel sold on the roadside is unreliable (it's often diluted), and some types of fuel (including diesel) aren't always available in remote areas.
- ➔ Expect frequent stops at checkpoints; police, customs and border officials will want to see all your documentation. The time taken at these checkpoints is one of the biggest variables of African overland travel. Sometimes it can take two minutes, sometimes hours.
- ➔ Mechanical knowledge and a collection of spares are essential. A winch and a set of planks can get you out of muddy trouble in the rainy season.
- ➔ Most trips off the beaten track require a 4WD.
- ➔ Motorcycles generally aren't permitted in national parks.

coast, up the east coast of Madagascar and on the Red Sea, but this will take some work.

A word of warning: travelling by boat can sometimes be hazardous. For the most part you can forget about safety regulations, lifeboats or life-jackets, and overload-ing is very common. To make matters worse, on some ferries the 3rd-class passengers are effectively jammed into the hold with little opportunity for escape.

## Car & Motorcycle

Exploring Africa with your own wheels takes some doing, but is a wonderful way to see the continent. The easiest way to enter Africa with your own car or motorcycle is to cross from southern Europe to Morocco or Tunisia aboard a car ferry and then take it from there. The obvious main barrier to travelling this way is the Sahara, but it can be crossed with careful planning.

At the time of writing, most trans-Saharan routes were off limits to travellers due to

simmering rebellion and banditry, although the Western Sahara route (from Morocco to Mauritania via Dakhla) was considered safe, while the Route du Hoggar (from Algeria to Niger) remains open if not always recommended. Other potential barriers to getting around Africa by car or motorcycle include the cost of hiring a barge to transport your vehicle from Egypt into Sudan; and either war or the nonexistent roads of the DRC (or both). For a multitude of other options and inspiring tales from those who've made overland trips present, future and past, check out the website of the **Africa Overland Network** ([www.africa-overland.net](http://www.africa-overland.net)) or, for motorcyclists, **Horizons Unlimited** ([www.horizonsunlimited.com](http://www.horizonsunlimited.com)).

If you're keen to begin in East or South Africa, it can be expensive to ship your vehicle all the way to Mombasa or Cape Town – it may work out cheaper to fly there and purchase something once you arrive. South Africa in particular is a pretty easy place to purchase a car –

either from a dealership or from a fellow traveller who has finished with it. Handily, cars registered in South Africa don't need a carnet de passage for travel around southern Africa, but you will need to have an international driving licence, your home licence, vehicle insurance and registration, and you will have to get a new set of plates made. The **AA of South Africa** ([www.aa.co.za](http://www.aa.co.za)) offers vehicle check-ups, insurance and travel advice.

Travelling around Africa by motorcycle is popular among hard-core motorcyclists, but road conditions vary greatly. Remember also that many drivers (particularly truck drivers) are either unaccustomed or disinclined to taking two-wheeled transport into consideration. Motorcyclists, especially those with newer model bikes, should also, where possible, be self-sufficient in parts.

## Carnets

A *carnet de passage* (sometimes known as a *triptique*) is required for many countries in Africa, with the nota-



ble exceptions of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. A *carnet* guarantees that if you take a vehicle into a country, but don't take it out again, then the organisation that issued the *carnet* will accept responsibility for payment of import duties (up to 150% of its value). *Carnets* can only be issued by national motoring organisations; they're only issued if it's certain that if ever duties arose you, would reimburse them. This means you have to deposit a bond with a bank or insure yourself against the potential collection of import duties before getting a *carnet*.

You don't need to prearrange a *carnet* for many West and Southern African countries (most Southern African countries will issue a Temporary Import Permit at the border, which you must buy), but if you're driving through Africa, you're going to need a *carnet*, which sadly doesn't exempt you from the bureaucratic shenanigans encountered at numerous borders. If you're starting in South Africa, you can get one from **AA of South Africa** ([www.aa.co.za](http://www.aa.co.za)) pretty easily. In the UK, try the **RAC** ([www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)).

Also consider the following:

- ➔ Motoring organisations' insurance companies can be a little paranoid in their designation of 'war zones' in Africa so watch out; none will insure against the risks of war, thus denying you a *carnet*.
- ➔ If you intend to sell the vehicle at some point, arrangements have to be made with the customs people in the country in which you plan to sell the car for the *carnet* entry to be cancelled.
- ➔ If you abandon a vehicle in the Algerian desert, you'll be up for import duties that are twice the value of your car when it was new.

## Hire

Hiring a vehicle is usually only an option to travellers aged over 25 years. For the most part, vehicle hire is a

fairly expensive option (2WD vehicles commonly cost over US\$75 a day in sub-Saharan Africa; you're looking at over US\$100 a day for a 4WD) and rental can come with high insurance excesses and bundles of strings.

On a brighter note, car hire in South Africa can be a real bargain (if you hire for a longer period, it can be less than US\$30 a day), especially if booked from overseas; have a look on internet sites such as **Travelocity** ([www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)), **Expedia** ([www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)) and **Holiday Autos** ([www.holidayautos.com](http://www.holidayautos.com)). Some vehicles can then be taken into Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana. Also consider hiring a car for exploring southern Morocco and taking a 4WD (possibly with driver) to explore Kenya's wildlife parks at your leisure. In some places, it's not possible to rent a car without a local driver being part of the deal.

## Insurance

Legislation covering third-party insurance varies considerably from one country to another – in some places it isn't even compulsory. Where it is, you generally have to buy insurance at the border (a process fraught with corruption), but the liability limits on these policies are often absurdly low by Western standards; this means if you have any bad accidents, you'll be in deep shit, so it's a smart plan to insure yourself before heading out. If you're starting from the UK, one company highly recommended for

insurance policies and for detailed information on *carnets* is **Campbell Irvine** ([020-7937 6981](tel:020-79376981); [www.campbellirvine.com](http://www.campbellirvine.com)).

## Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country, and we don't recommend it. But in some parts of Africa, there is often simply no other option than grabbing lifts on trucks, 4WDs, lorries or whatever vehicle happens to come down the road first. Whatever vehicle you jump on to, you'll generally have to pay. In more developed countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, where there are plenty of private cars on the road, it may be possible to hitch for free.

Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs. Remember that sticking out your thumb in many African countries is an obscene gesture; wave your hand vertically up and down instead.

## Local Transport

### Bus

This is the way to go where there's a good network of sealed roads. International bus services are pretty common across the continent, and in the wealthier African states you may get a choice between

## OVERLANDING ON THE CHEAP

Because most people prefer to travel north to south, overland truck companies sometimes drive empty trucks back from South Africa's Cape Town, Victoria Falls and Harare, and will sometimes transport travellers back up to Arusha (Tanzania) or Nairobi (Kenya) for negotiable knock-down prices, with a pleasant two-day stop by Lake Malawi sometimes thrown in. Ask around in backpacker hang-outs in the departure towns for tips on when these trucks may be leaving.

## BUS SURVIVAL TIPS

- Bus station touts are there to drum up business and work on commission; they're occasionally a pain but they can be very helpful.
- When using bush taxis keep your options open; hold on to your money until departure.
- Sitting on a camping mat or towel can ease the pain of African roads.
- Drinking more means peeing more – balance hydration with bladder control.
- When travelling on dirt roads use a scarf to keep dust from your nose and mouth.
- That baby may look cute – but let it onto your lap and it WILL pee...
- Carry your passport at all times – getting through roadblocks without it can be expensive and complicated.
- Try to book your bus or minibus ticket in advance.
- Addressing questions to the driver directly is a social no-no – the conductor is the social hub of the journey, while the driver is the quiet achiever.
- If you have a choice as to your seat (more likely on buses), opt for what will be the shady side.

'luxury' air-con buses, with movies (the trashy Hollywood/Bollywood variety) on tap, and rough old European rejects with nonfunctioning air-con and questionable engineering. In some countries you just get the latter. Out in the sticks, where there are very few or no sealed roads, ancient buses tend to be very crowded with people, livestock and goods; these buses tend to stop frequently, either for passengers or because something is broken.

### Minibus

Small minibuses take up the slack in many African transport systems. All too often they are driven at breakneck speed and crammed with close to 30 people when they were designed for 18 (there's always room for one more), with a tout or conductor leaning out the side door. The front seat is the most comfortable, but thanks to the high number of head-on collisions in Africa, this seat is called the 'death seat': how many old bus-drivers have you seen? (If you do see one, be sure to choose his bus!) These minibuses are known by different names across the continent (*mata-tus* in Kenya, *dalla-dallas* in Tanzania, *tro-tros* in Ghana,

*poda-podas* in Sierra Leone), names that are, confusingly, fairly interchangeable for shared taxis and bush taxis. Minibuses usually only leave when very full (a process that may take hours), and will stop frequently en route to pick up and set down passengers. Minibuses are also the favourite prey of roadblock police, who are not averse to unloading every passenger while they enter into lengthy discussions about paperwork and 'fines' that may need paying.

### Shared Taxi

Shared taxis are usually Peugeot 504s or 505s or old spacious Mercedes saloons (common in North Africa). They should definitely be considered, where available (which is not everywhere). Your average shared taxi is certainly quicker, more comfortable (if a little crowded) and less of a palaver than taking a bus or minibus, although many shared taxis are driven by lunatic speed freaks. They cost a little more than the corresponding bus fare, but in most cases once the vehicle has filled up (usually with nine to 12 people, packed in like sardines) it heads more or less directly to the destination, without

constant stops for passengers. You should expect to pay an additional fee for your baggage in West Africa, but usually not elsewhere. Motorcycle taxis can also be convenient, if dangerous.

'Bush taxi' is something of a catch-all term and is used slightly differently across the continent. Basically, a bush taxi is any multiperson mode of public transport that isn't a bus.

## Tours

Overland truck tours did much to open up cheap travel in Africa, blazing trails where no tourist had boldly gone before. Today there are a huge number of overland trucks chugging around East and Southern Africa (Arusha in Tanzania and Nairobi in Kenya are common starting points), but fewer range across West Africa. There are a number of trucks heading all the way from London or Istanbul to Cape Town, a trip that can last seven months.

Truck tours don't suit everyone, but a truck and its staff can take away many of the hassles of travelling in Africa (something you'll appreciate if you're crossing through tricky areas such as

Nigeria, Chad and Sudan), and if you get on well with your fellow travellers it can be a real laugh.

There are, of course, downsides: you don't always get time to explore a place in depth, and sightseeing can end up being a terrible rush; cliquy and racist attitudes can mean it's much harder to meet locals or even other travellers; getting stuck with a bunch of drunken morons or anal retentive types for weeks on end might send you crazy; many campsites won't let overland trucks in; if you're used to travelling independently, having to leave decisions to someone else can be very hard; some trucks take up to 30 passengers; and group chores and vehicle security can be a pain. Remember also that once you've committed money to the communal food kitty, you won't get it back, even if you want to leave the tour before the end.

Whatever you decide, go through company brochures with a fine-tooth comb and always ask what you're required to do (on most tours you'll have to do the washing up at least), how many people are on the truck (loads of people equals cheaper prices) and how much flexibility there is. It's probably best to start with a shorter trip to see how truck life suits you before you commit to a six-month trip.

The truck tour business is dominated by British companies, but they often have representatives in North America and Australasia (check out the websites for more information).

**Acacia Expeditions** (☎020-7706 4700; [www.acacia-africa.com](http://www.acacia-africa.com)) Concentrates on East and Southern Africa.

**African Trails** (☎01524-419909; [www.africantrails.co.uk](http://www.africantrails.co.uk))

Truck tours through much of Africa, including West and North Africa.

**Dragoman** (☎01728-885103; [www.dragoman.com](http://www.dragoman.com)) West Africa, plus the Cairo to Cape Town route.

**Keystone Journeys** ([www.keystonejourneys.com](http://www.keystonejourneys.com))

**Oasis Overland** (☎01963-363400; [www.oasisoverland.com](http://www.oasisoverland.com)) Runs overland truck tours through Africa and the Middle East.

## Train

Where available, travelling by train is a wonderful way to get around Africa. Even the shortest rail journey can be a classic experience, full of cultural exchange, amazing landscapes and crazy stations where all kinds of food, drinks and goods are hawked at train windows. Train travel is safer and usually more comfortable than travelling by road, although outside Southern and North Africa the trains are often very slow. Long delays aren't uncommon. Second-class fares weigh in about the same as, or less than, the corresponding bus fare.

More expensive (but still negligible by Western standards) are sleeping compartments and 1st- or 2nd-class carriages, which take the strain out of long journeys and occasionally allow you to travel in style – some high-class train carriages are like little wood-panelled museums of colonialism. It's worth noting that in many countries male and female passengers can only sleep in the same compartment if they buy the tickets for the whole compartment (four or six bunks), and even then you might be asked for evidence that you're married!

The flip side of train travel is that security and sanitation facilities on trains can be poor, especially in 3rd class, which, although novel and entertaining at first, soon becomes simply crowded and uncomfortable. Keep an eye on your baggage at all times and lock carriage doors and windows at night.

## Truck

In many out-of-the-way places, trucks are the only reliable form of transport. They may primarily carry goods, but drivers are always keen to supplement their income, so there's usually room for paying passengers. Most folks are stuck up on top of the cargo, but a few more expensive spots are often available in the cab.

Sitting high and exposed on top of a truck chugging through the African landscape can be a great experience; just take heavy precautions against the sun, wrap up against dust and bring a carry mat or similar to cushion yourself against uncomfortable cargo – you could find yourself sitting on top of a car engine for hours on end! Also, remember that trucks are even slower than buses.

On many routes you'll be able to wave down a truck, but lifts can often be arranged the night before departure at the 'truck park' – a compound or dust patch that you'll find in almost every African town of note. 'Fares' are pretty much fixed – expect to pay a little less than an equivalent bus fare, and make sure you agree on the price before climbing aboard. If the journey is going to take more than one night or one day, bring your own food and water.

# Health

As long as you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take some basic preventive measures, you'd have to be pretty unlucky to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in this chapter. Africa certainly has an impressive selection of tropical diseases on offer, but you're much more likely to get a bout of diarrhoea (in fact, you should bank on it), a cold or an infected mosquito bite than an exotic disease such as Rift Valley or West Nile fever. When it comes to injuries (as opposed to illness), the most likely reason for needing medical help in Africa is as a result of road accidents – vehicles are rarely well maintained, the roads are potholed and poorly lit, and drink driving is common.

## Before You Go

- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you)
- ♦ Assemble a first-aid and medical kit
- ♦ Arrange necessary vaccinations. Don't leave this until the last minute. Many vaccines don't take effect until two weeks after you've been immunised, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This is mandatory for the African countries that require proof of yellow fever vaccination upon entry, but it's a good idea to carry it anyway wherever you travel.
- ♦ Become a member of the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers (IAMAT; [www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org))**, which lists trusted English-speaking doctors.
- ♦ If you'll be spending time in remote areas, you might like to do a first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John's Ambulance) or attend a remote medicine first-aid course, such as that offered by the **Royal Geographical Society ([www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk](http://www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk))** or the **American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org))**.
- ♦ Bring medications 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 many countries doctors expect payment in cash). It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover the emergency transport to get you to a hospital in a major city, to better medical facilities elsewhere in Africa, 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 help, 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 ([www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith))** recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. Planning to travel is a great time to ensure that all routine vaccination cover is complete. The consequences of these particular diseases can be severe, and outbreaks do occur.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)), the following vaccinations are recommended for all parts of Africa: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningococcal meningitis, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. A yellow-fever vaccination is not necessarily recommended for all parts of Africa, although the certificate is an entry requirement for a number of countries.

## Medical Checklist

Consider packing.

- ➔ Acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- ➔ Acetazolamide (Diamox) for altitude sickness (prescription only)
- ➔ Adhesive or paper tape
- ➔ Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- ➔ Antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions (prescription only)
- ➔ Antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- ➔ Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- ➔ Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- ➔ Antimalaria pills
- ➔ Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- ➔ DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- ➔ Iodine tablets (for water purification)
- ➔ Oral rehydration salts
- ➔ Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- ➔ Pocket knife
- ➔ Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- ➔ Sterile needles, syringes and fluids if travelling to remote areas
- ➔ Steroid cream or hydrocortisone cream (for allergic rashes)

- ➔ Sunblock
- ➔ Thermometer

If you are travelling through a malarial area – particularly an area in which falciparum malaria predominates – consider taking a self-diagnostic kit that can identify malaria in the blood from a finger prick.

## Websites

There is a wealth of travel health advice online; the Lonely Planet website at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. The World Health Organization publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, revised annually and available online at no cost at [www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith). Other websites of general interest are MD Travel Health at [www.mdtravel-health.com](http://www.mdtravel-health.com), which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov); and Fit for Travel at [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk), which has up-to-date information about outbreaks and is very user-friendly.

It's also a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available:

**Australia** ([www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html))

**Canada** ([www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php))

**UK** ([www.nhs.uk/nhs.uk/healthcareabroad/pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs.uk/healthcareabroad/pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx))

**USA** ([www.nc.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.nc.cdc.gov/travel))

## Further Reading

- ➔ *A Comprehensive Guide to Wilderness and Travel Medicine* by Eric A Weiss (1998)
- ➔ *How to Stay Healthy Abroad* by Richard Dawood (2002)
- ➔ *Lonely Planet's Healthy Travel Africa* by Isabelle Young & Tony Gherardin (2008)
- ➔ *Lonely Planet's Travel with Children* by Brigitte Barta et al (2009)

- ➔ *The Essential Guide to Travel Health* by Jane Wilson-Howarth (2009)

- ➔ *Travel in Health* by Graham Fry (1994)

## In Africa

### Availability & Cost of Health Care

Health care in Africa is varied: it can be excellent in the major cities, which generally have well-trained doctors and nurses, but it is often patchy off the beaten track.

Most drugs can be purchased over the counter throughout Africa, without a prescription. Many drugs for sale within Africa might be ineffective – they might be counterfeit or might not have been stored under the right conditions. The most common examples of counterfeit drugs are malaria tablets and expensive antibiotics, such as ciprofloxacin. Most drugs are available in capital cities, but in remote villages you will be lucky to find a couple of paracetamol tablets. It is strongly recommended that all drugs for chronic diseases be brought with you from home. Also, the availability and efficacy of condoms cannot be relied upon – bring all the contraception you'll need. Condoms bought in Africa might not be of the same quality as in Europe, North America or Australia, and they might have been stored in too hot an environment. Keep all condoms as cool as you can.

There is a high risk of contracting HIV from infected blood if you receive a blood transfusion in Africa.

The **BloodCare Foundation** ([www.bloodcare.org.uk](http://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.

The cost of health care might seem very cheap compared to first-world countries, but good care and drugs might not be available. Evacuation to good

medical care (within Africa or to your own country) can be very expensive indeed. Unfortunately, adequate – let alone good – health care is available only to very few residents of Africa.

## Infectious Diseases

### CHOLERA

Cholera is usually only a problem during natural or artificial disasters, eg war, floods or earthquakes, although small outbreaks can also occur at other times. Travellers are rarely affected.

**Spread through** Contaminated drinking water.

### Symptoms and effects

Profuse watery diarrhoea, which causes collapse if fluids are not replaced quickly.

### Prevention and treatment

Most cases could be avoided by close attention to good 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)

**Present** Sudan, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Senegal, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Madagascar, Mozambique and South Africa.

**Spread through** Mosquito bites.

### Symptoms & effects

A feverish illness with headache and muscle pains similar to those experienced with a bad, prolonged attack of influenza. There might be a rash.

### Prevention and treatment

Mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible. Self-treatment: paracetamol and rest.

In rare cases in Africa this becomes Severe Dengue Fever, with worsening symptoms including vomiting, rapid breathing and abdominal pain. Seek medical help, as this can be fatal.

### DIPHTHERIA

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Close respiratory contact.

### Symptoms and effects

Usually causes a temperature and a severe sore throat. Sometimes a membrane forms across the throat, and a tracheostomy is needed to prevent suffocation.

### Prevention and treatment

Vaccination is recommended for all travellers, particularly those likely to be in close contact with the local population in infected areas. More important for long stays than for short-term trips. The vaccine is given as an injection alone or with tetanus, and lasts 10 years. Self-treatment: none.

### FILARIASIS

**Present** Most parts of West, Central, East and southern Africa, and in Sudan in North Africa.

**Spread through** Mosquito bites, then tiny worms migrating in the lymphatic system.

### Symptoms and effects

Can include localised itching and swelling of the legs and or genitalia.

### Prevention and treatment

Avoid mosquito bites. Treatment is available, but self-treatments are not.

### HEPATITIS A

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water.

### Symptoms and effects

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.

### Prevention and treatment

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

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It can also be spread from an infected mother to the baby during childbirth.

**Symptoms and effects** Attacks 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.

### Prevention and treatment

Those visiting high-risk areas for long periods or at social or occupational risk should be immunised. Many countries now give hepatitis B as part of the routine childhood vaccination. It is given singly or can be given at the same time as hepatitis A. A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks or six months. Self-treatment: none.

### HIV

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**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.

### Prevention and treatment

At present there is no cure;

medication that might keep the disease under control is available, but many countries in Africa do not have access to it for their own citizens, let alone for travellers. If you think you might have put yourself at risk of HIV infection, a blood test is necessary; a three-month gap after the exposure and before testing is required to allow antibodies to appear in the blood. Self-treatment: none.

### LEISHMANIASIS

**Present** North Africa.

**Spread through** Bite of an infected sandfly.

#### Symptoms and effects

Can cause a slowly growing skin lump or ulcer (the cutaneous form) and sometimes develop into a serious life-threatening fever with anaemia and weight loss. Dogs can also be carriers of Leishmaniasis.

#### Prevention and treatment

Sandfly and dog bites should be avoided whenever possible. Self-treatment: none.

### LEPTOSPIROSIS

**Present** West and southern Africa; in Chad, Congo and DRC in Central Africa; in Algeria, Morocco and Sudan in North Africa; and in Ethiopia and Somalia in East Africa.

**Spread through** The excreta of infected rodents, especially rats.

**Symptoms and effects** A fever, sometimes jaundice, hepatitis and renal failure.

#### Prevention and treatment

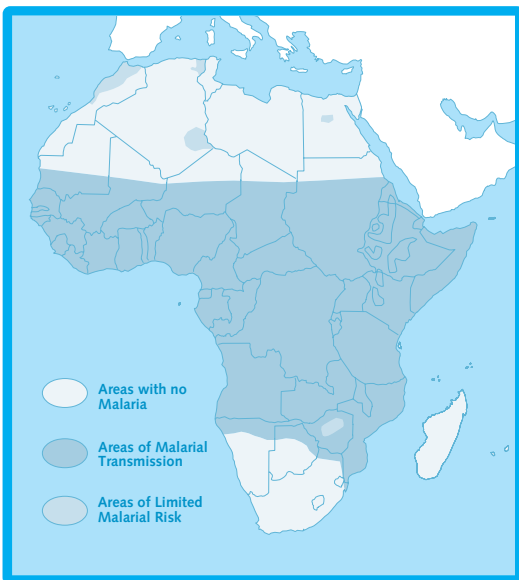
It is unusual for travellers to be affected unless living in poor sanitary conditions. Self-treatment: none.

### MALARIA

**Present** Endemic in Central, East, West and southern Africa; slight risk in North Africa (except for Sudan, where the risk is significant). The risk of malarial transmission at altitudes higher than 2000m is rare.

**Spread through** The bite of the female Anopheles

## Malarial Risk in Africa



mosquito. There are several types of malaria; falciparum malaria is the most dangerous type and the predominant form in Africa. Infection rates vary with season and climate, so check out the situation before departure. Unlike most other diseases regularly encountered by travellers, there is no vaccination against malaria (yet). However, 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. The pattern of drug-resistant malaria is changing rapidly, so what was advised several years ago might no longer be the case.

#### Symptoms and effects

The early stages 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.

#### Prevention and treatment

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

Many travellers are under the impression that malaria is a mild illness, that treatment is always easy and successful, and that taking antimalarial drugs causes more illness through side effects than actually getting malaria. In Africa, this is unfortunately not true. Side effects depend on the drug being taken. Doxycycline can cause heartburn and indigestion; mefloquine (Lariam) can cause anxiety attacks, insomnia and nightmares,



and (rarely) severe psychiatric disorders; chloroquine can cause nausea and hair loss; and proguanil can cause mouth ulcers. Side effects are not universal, and can be minimised by taking medication correctly, eg with food. Also, some people should not take a particular antimalarial drug, eg people with epilepsy should avoid mefloquine, and doxycycline should not be taken by pregnant women or children younger than 12.

People of all ages can contract malaria, and falciparum malaria causes the most severe illness. Repeated infections might result eventually in less serious illness. Malaria in pregnancy frequently results in miscarriage or premature labour. 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. One million children die annually from malaria in Africa.

If you decide that you really do not wish to take antimalarial drugs, you must understand the risks, and be obsessive about avoiding mosquito bites. Use nets and insect repellent, and report any fever or flu-like 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 they are effective, and many homeopaths do not recommend their use.

If you are planning a journey through a malarial area, particularly where falciparum malaria predominates, consider taking stand-by treatment. Emergency stand-by treatment should be seen as emergency treatment aimed at saving the patient's life and not as routine self-medication. It should be advised only if

you will be remote from medical facilities and have been advised about the symptoms of malaria and how to use the medication. Medical advice should be sought as soon as possible to confirm whether the treatment has been successful. The type of stand-by treatment used will depend on local conditions, such as drug resistance, and on what antimalarial drugs are being used before stand-by treatment. This is worthwhile because you want to avoid contracting a particularly serious form such as cerebral malaria, which affects the brain and central nervous system and can be fatal in 24 hours. Self-diagnostic kits, which can identify malaria in the blood from a finger prick, are also available in the West.

The risks from malaria to both mother and foetus during pregnancy are considerable. Unless good medical care can be absolutely guaranteed, travel throughout Africa when pregnant – particularly to malarial areas – should be discouraged unless essential. Self-treatment: see stand-by treatment if you are more than 24 hours away from medical help.

### **MENINGOCOCCAL MENINGITIS**

**Present** Central, West and East Africa; only in Sudan in North Africa; and only in Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia in southern Africa.

**Spread through** Close respiratory contact and is more likely in crowded situations, such as dormitories, buses and clubs. Infection is uncommon in travellers. Vaccination is recommended for long stays and especially towards the end of the dry season, which is normally from June to November.

**Symptoms and effects** Fever, severe headache, neck stiffness and a red rash.

**Prevention and treatment** Immediate medical treatment is necessary. The ACWY

vaccine is recommended for all travellers in sub-Saharan Africa. This vaccine is different from the meningococcal meningitis C vaccine given to children and adolescents in some countries, and it is safe to be given both types of vaccine. Self-treatment: none.

### **POLIOMYELITIS**

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Contaminated food and water.

#### **Symptoms and effects**

Polio can be carried asymptotically (ie showing no symptoms) and can cause a transient fever. In rare cases it causes weakness or paralysis of one or more muscles, which might be permanent.

#### **Prevention and treatment**

It is one of the vaccines given in childhood and should be boosted every 10 years, either orally (a drop on the tongue) or as an injection. Self-treatment: none.

### **RABIES**

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** The bites or licks of an infected animal on broken skin.

**Symptoms and effects** It 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.

#### **Prevention and treatment**

Avoid contact with animals, particularly dogs. 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 will need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vac-



## THE 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 are taken.

**B** Bites – avoid 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, particularly for children, pregnant women or people with depression or epilepsy. Most antimalarial drugs need to be started at least a week in advance 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.

cinated, you will need fewer postbite injections, and have more time to seek medical help. Self-treatment: none.

### BILHARZIA (SCHISTOSOMIASIS)

**Present** Throughout Africa with possible exception of Morocco, Algeria and Libya.

**Spread through** Flukes (minute worms) that are carried by a species of freshwater snail. The flukes are carried inside the snail, which sheds them into slow-moving or still water. The parasites penetrate human skin during paddling or swimming and then migrate to the bladder or bowel. They are passed out via stool or urine and could contaminate fresh water, where the cycle starts again.

#### Symptoms and effects

There might be no symptoms. There might be a transient fever and rash, and advanced cases might have blood in the stool or in the urine.

#### Prevention and treatment

Avoid paddling or swimming in freshwater lakes or slow-running rivers anywhere. A blood test can detect antibodies if you might have been exposed, and treatment is then possible in specialist travel or infectious disease clinics. If left untreated the

infection could cause kidney failure or permanent bowel damage. It is not possible for you to infect others. Self-treatment: none.

### TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products.

**Symptoms and effects** Can be asymptomatic, only being picked up on a routine chest X-ray. Alternatively, it can cause a cough, weight loss or fever, sometimes months or even years after exposure.

#### Prevention and treatment

BCG vaccination is recommended for those likely to be mixing closely with the local population. It is more important for long stays than for short-term stays. Inoculation with the BCG vaccine is not available in all countries. It is given routinely to many children in developing countries. In some countries, for example the UK, it is given to babies if they will be travelling with their families to areas with a high-risk of TB, and to previously unvaccinated school-age children if they live in areas of higher TB risk (eg multiethnic immigrant populations). The BCG gives a moderate degree of protection against TB. It causes

a small permanent scar at the site of injection, and is usually given in a specialised chest clinic. It is a live vaccine and should not be given to pregnant women or immunocompromised individuals. Self-treatment: none.

### TYPHOID

**Present** Throughout Africa.

**Spread through** Food or water contaminated by infected human faeces.

#### Symptoms and effects

Starts usually with a fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Sometimes septicaemia (blood poisoning) can occur.

#### Prevention and treatment

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

**Present** West Africa, parts of Central and Eastern Africa. Travellers should carry a certificate as evidence of vaccination if they have recently been in an infected country, to avoid any possible difficulties with immigration. For a full list of these countries visit the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention website ([www.cdc.gov/travel.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel.htm)). There is always the possibility that a traveller without a legally required, up-to-date certificate will be vaccinated and detained in isolation at the port of arrival for up to 10 days or possibly repatriated.

**Spread through** Infected mosquitoes.

**Symptoms and effects**

Range from a flu-like illness to severe hepatitis (liver inflammation), jaundice and death.

**Prevention and treatment**

The yellow fever vaccination must be given at a designated clinic and is valid for 10 years. It is a live vaccine and must not be given to immunocompromised or pregnant travellers. Self-treatment: none.

**Travellers' Diarrhoea**

**Present** Throughout Africa. Although it's not inevitable that you will get diarrhoea, it's certainly very likely. Diarrhoea is the most common travel-related illness – figures suggest that at least half of all travellers to Africa

will get diarrhoea at some stage.

**Spread through** Sometimes caused by dietary changes, such as increased spices or oils.

**Symptoms and effects**

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 quinolone drug, such as ciprofloxacin or norfloxacin) and an antidiarrheal agent (such as loperamide) if you are not within easy reach of a toilet.

**Prevention and treatment**

To help prevent diarrhoea, avoid tap water unless you're sure it's safe to drink. You should also only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if 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 you should be highly 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 water, and salt and sugar. 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.

**AMOEBC DYSENTERY & GIARDIASIS**

**Present** Throughout Africa

**Spread through** Eating contaminated food and water

**Symptoms and effects**

Amoebic dysentery causes blood and mucus in the faeces. It can be relatively mild and tends to come on gradually. Giardiasis usually appears a week or more after you have been exposed to the offending parasite. It causes only a short-lived bout of typical travellers' diarrhoea, but it can also cause persistent diarrhoea.

**Prevention and treatment**

Seek medical advice as soon as possible if you think you have either illness as they won't clear up without treatment (which is with specific antibiotics).

**Environmental Hazards**

**HEAT EXHAUSTION**

**Causes** Occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt, and is particularly common in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation.

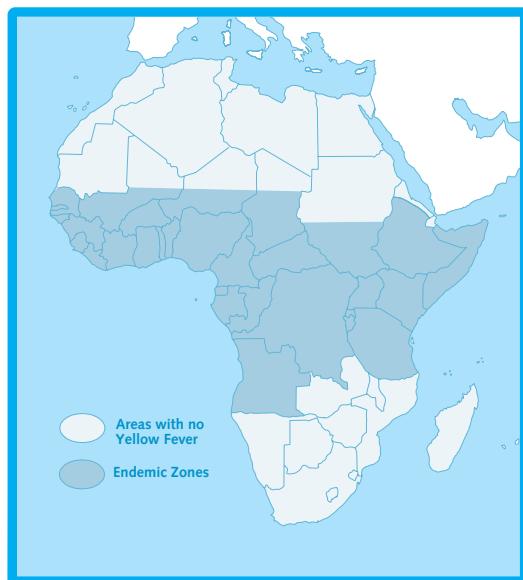
**Symptoms and effects**

Headache, dizziness and tiredness.

**Prevention** Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine.

**Treatment** Fluid replacement with water and/or fruit juice, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treat-

**Yellow Fever Risk in Africa**



## MANDATORY YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION

The following list is a guide only. Please check with your doctor and the embassy of the country to which you are travelling for the most recent requirements.

**Central Africa** Mandatory in Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and recommended in Chad.

**East Africa** Mandatory in Rwanda and Uganda; it is advised for Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania.

**North Africa** Not mandatory for any areas of North Africa, but Algeria, Libya and Tunisia require evidence of yellow fever vaccination if entering from an infected country. It is recommended for travellers to Sudan, and might be given to unvaccinated travellers leaving the country.

**Southern Africa** Not mandatory for entry into any countries of southern Africa, although it is necessary if entering from an infected country.

**West Africa** Mandatory in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, São Tomé & Príncipe and Togo, and recommended for The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

ment 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

**Causes** Heat exhaustion is a precursor to the much more serious condition of heatstroke.

#### Symptoms and effects

Damage to the sweating mechanism, with an excessive rise in body temperature; irrational and hyperactive behaviour; and eventually loss of consciousness and death.

**Treatment** Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is ideal. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement is often 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 you would for avoiding malaria. Use DEET-based insect repellents, although these are not the only effective repellents. Excellent clothing treatments are also available; mosquitoes that land on treated clothing will die.

Bee and wasp stings cause real problems only to those who have a severe allergy to the stings (anaphylaxis.) If you are one of these people, make sure you carry an 'epipen' – an adrenalin (epinephrine) injection, which you can give yourself. This could save your life.

Sandflies are found around the Mediterranean beaches. They usually only cause a nasty itchy bite but can carry a rare skin disorder called cutaneous Leishmaniasis. Prevention of bites with DEET-based repellents is sensible.

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

Bed bugs are often found in hostels and cheap hotels. They lead to very itchy, lumpy bites. Spraying the mattress with crawling insect killer after changing bedding will get rid of them.

Scabies is also frequently found in cheap accommodation. These tiny mites live in the skin, particularly between the fingers. They cause an intensely itchy rash. The itch is easily treated with malathion and permethrin lotion from a pharmacy; other members of the household also need treating to avoid spreading scabies, even if they do not show any symptoms.

### SNAKE BITES

Basically, avoid getting bitten! Do not 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 the victim to medical help as soon as possible, where antivenom can be given if needed.

### WATER

➔ Except in South Africa, never drink tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (such as with iodine tablets)

➔ Never drink from streams, rivers and lakes.

➔ Avoid drinking from pumps and wells – some do bring pure water to the surface, but the presence of animals can still contaminate supplies.

# Language

Africa's myriad ethnic groups speak several hundred local languages, many subdivided into numerous distinct dialects. The people of Nigeria, for example, speak around 500 languages and dialects according to the Ethnologue report, while even tiny Guinea-Bissau has around 20 languages. Consequently, common languages are essential, and several are used. These may be the language of the largest group in a particular area or country, such as Hausa, or a language that has spread beyond its original geographical boundaries due to trade, such as Swahili. The former colonial languages (English, French and Portuguese) also serve as common languages and have official status in many African countries. In some areas, the common tongue is a creole – a combination of African and European languages.

This chapter provides the basics in several European and African languages that you'll find most useful when travelling across the continent, as they are either in official use or spoken as regional lingua francas. See also the relevant destination chapter for a list of languages spoken in each country.

## AMHARIC

Amharic is Ethiopia's national language, and it is also widely spoken in Eritrea.

If you read our pronunciation guides as if they were English, you'll be understood. The apostrophe (') before a vowel indicates a glottal stop, which sounds the pause in the middle of 'uh-oh'. Amharic's 'glottalised' consonants

(**ch**', **k**', **p**', **s**' and **t**' in our pronunciation guides), are pronounced by tightening and releasing the vocal cords, a bit like combining the sound with the glottal stop. Note also that the sound **r** is trilled.

Amharic word endings vary according to the gender of people you're speaking to, which is indicated in this chapter where relevant by the abbreviations 'm' (for speaking to a male) and 'f' (for addressing a female).

Arabic numerals (ie those used in English) are commonly used in writing. Amharic words are used to refer to numbers in speech.

Hello.	ሰላም	suh-lam
Goodbye.	ደህና ሁን ደህና ሁኝ	duh-na hun (m) duh-na hun-yee (f)
Yes.	አዎ	'a-wo
No.	አይደለም.	'ai-duh-luhm
Please.	እባክህ እባክሽ	'i-ba-kih (m) 'i-ba-kish (f)
Thank you.	አመሰግናለሁ.	'a-muh-suh-gi-na-luh-hu
Sorry.	ይቅር	yi-k'ir-ta
Help!	እርዳታ እርዳታ!	'ir-da-ta 'ir-da-ta

### Do you speak English?

እንግሊዘኛ	'in-gee-zuh-nya
ትችላለህ/	ti-chi-la-luh-hi/
ትችያለሽ?	ti-chia-luhsh (m/f)

### I don't understand.

አልገባኝም	'al-guh-bany-mi
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### How much is it?

ዋጋው ስንት ነው?	wa-gow sint nuhw
-------------	------------------

### Where are the toilets?

ሽንት ቤት የት ነው?	shint bet yuht nuhw
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## WANT MORE?

For in-depth language information and handy phrases, check out Lonely Planet's *Africa Phrasebook*. You'll find it at [shop.lonelyplanet.com](http://shop.lonelyplanet.com), or you can buy Lonely Planet's iPhone phrasebooks at the Apple App Store.

1	አንድ	and
2	ሁለት	hu-luht
3	ሶስት	sost
4	አራት	'ar-at
5	አምስት	'am-mist
6	ስድስት	si-dist
7	ሰባት	suh-bat
8	ስምንት	si-mint
9	ሀገር	zuh-t'uhny
10	አስር	a-sir

## AFRIKAANS

Afrikaans is one of the official languages of South Africa. It has about six million speakers and is also spoken in Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and Zambia.

Read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English and you'll be understood. The stressed syllables are in italics. Note that **kh** is pronounced as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch* and **r** is trilled.

<b>Hello.</b>	Hallo.	ha-loh
<b>Goodbye.</b>	Totsiens.	tot-seens
<b>Yes.</b>	Ja.	yaa
<b>No.</b>	Nee.	ney
<b>Please.</b>	Asseblief.	a-si-bleef
<b>Thank you.</b>	Dankie.	dang-kee
<b>Sorry.</b>	Jammer.	ya-min
<b>Help!</b>	Help!	help

**Do you speak English?**  
Praat jy Engels? praat yay eng-ils

**I don't understand.**  
Ek verstaan nie. ek vir-staan nee

**How much is it?**  
Hoeveel kos dit? hu-fil kos dit

**Where are the toilets?**  
Waar is die toilette? vaar is dee toy-le-ti

1	een	eyn
2	twee	twey
3	drie	dree
4	vier	feer
5	vyf	fayf
6	ses	ses
7	sewe	see-vi
8	agt	akht
9	nege	ney-khi
10	tien	teen

## ARABIC

The following phrases are in MSA (Modern Standard Arabic), which is the official language of the Arab world, used in schools, administration and the media. Note, though, that there are significant differences between MSA and the colloquial Arabic from different countries. Egyptian, Gulf, Levantine, Moroccan and Tunisian Arabic are the most common spoken varieties, sometimes mutually unintelligible and with no official written form.

Arabic is written from right to left in Arabic script. Read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English and you should be understood. Note that **a** is pronounced as in 'act', **aa** as the 'a' in 'father', **aw** as in 'law', **ay** as in 'say', **ee** as in 'see', **i** as in 'hit', **oo** as in 'zoo', **u** as in 'put', **gh** is a throaty sound, **r** is rolled, **dh** is pronounced as in 'that', **th** as in 'thin' and **kh** as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch*. The apostrophe ( ' ) indicates the glottal stop (like the pause in the middle of 'uh-oh'). The stressed syllables are indicated with italics. Masculine and feminine options are indicated with 'm' and 'f' respectively.

## Basics

<b>Hello.</b>	السلام عليكم.	as-sa-laa-mu 'a-lay-kum
<b>Goodbye.</b>	إلى اللقاء.	'i-laa al-li-kaa'
<b>Yes.</b>	نعم.	na-'am
<b>No.</b>	لا.	laa
<b>Excuse me.</b>	عفوًا.	'af-wan
<b>Sorry.</b>	أسف.	'aa-sif (m)
	أسفة.	'aa-si-fa (f)
<b>Please.</b>	لو سمحت.	law sa-mah-ta (m)
	لو سمحت.	law sa-mah-ti (f)
<b>Thank you.</b>	شكراً.	shuk-ran

## What's your name?

ما اسمك؟ maa 'is-mu-ka (m)  
ما اسمك؟ maa 'is-mu-ki (f)

## My name is ...

اسمي ... 'is-mee ...

## Do you speak English?

هل تتكلم؟ hal ta-ta-kal-la-mu/

تتكلمين ta-ta-kal-la-mee-na

الإنجليزية؟ al-'inj-lee-zee-ya (m/f)

## I don't understand.

أنا لا أفهم. 'a-naa laa 'af-ham

## Accommodation

Where's a ...?	أين أجدُ ...؟	'ay-na 'a-ji-du ...
campsite	مخيم	mu-khay-yam
guesthouse	بيت للضيوف	bayt li-du-yoof
hotel	فندق	fun-duk
youth hostel	فندق شباب	fun-duk sha-baab

Do you have	هل عندكم	hal 'in-da-kum
a ... room?	غرفة ...؟	ghur-fa-tun ...
single	بسرير	bi-sa-ree-rin
	منفرد	mun-fa-rid
double	بسرير	bi-sa-ree-rin
	مزدوج	muz-daw-waj

How much is	كم ثمنه	kam tha-ma-nu-hu
it per ...?	لـ ...؟	li ...
night	ليلة واحدة	lay-la-tin waa-hid
person	شخص واحدة	shakh-sin waa-hid

## Eating & Drinking

What would you recommend?

ماذا توصي؟	maa-dhaa too-see (m)
ماذا توصين؟	maa-dhaa too-see-na (f)

What's the local speciality?

ما الوجبة الخاصة	maa al-waj-ba-tul khaa-sa
لهذه المنطقة؟	li-haa-dhi-hil man-ta-ka

Do you have vegetarian food?

هل لديكم	hal la-day-ku-mu
طعام نباتي؟	ta-'aa-mun na-baa-tee

I'd like the	أريد ...	'u-ree-du ...
..., please.	لو سمحتُ.	law sa-mah-ta
bill	الحساب	hi-saab
menu	قائمة	kaa-'i-ma-tu
	الطعام	at-ta-'aam

beer	بيرة	bee-ra
bottle	زجاجة	zu-jaa-ja
breakfast	فطور	fu-toor
cafe	مقهى	mak-han
coffee	قهوة	kah-wa
cold	بارد	baa-rid (m)
	باردة	baa-ri-da (f)
cup	فجان	fin-jaan
dinner	عشاء	'a-shaa'
drink	مشروب	mash-roob

fish	سمك	sa-mak
food	طعام	ta-'aam
fork	شوكة	shaw-ka
fruit	فاكهة	faa-ki-ha
glass	كأس	ka's
hot	حار	haar (m)
	حارة	haa-ra (f)
juice	عصير	'a-see-ru
knife	سكين	sik-keen
lunch	غداء	gha-daa'
market	سوق	sook
meat	لحم	lahm
milk	حليب	ha-leeb
mineral water	مياه معدنية	mi-yaah ma-'da-nee-ya
plate	صحن	sahn
restaurant	مطعم	mat-'am
spoon	ملعقة	mal-'a-ka
vegetable	خضراوات	khud-raa-waat
water	ماء	maa'
wine	نبيذ	na-beedh

## Emergencies

Help! ساعدني! saa-'i-du-nee (m)

ساعديني! saa-'i-dee-nee (f)

Go away! اتركني! 'it-ruk-nee (m)

اتركيني! 'it-ru-kee-nee (f)

Call ...! اتصل بـ ...! 'it-ta-sil bi ... (m)

اتصلي بـ ...! 'it-ta-si-lee bi ... (f)

a doctor طبيب ta-beeb

the police الشرطة ash-shur-ta

## Numbers – Arabic

1	١	واحد	waa-hid
2	٢	اثنان	'ith-naan
3	٣	ثلاثة	tha-laa-tha
4	٤	أربعة	'ar-ba-'a
5	٥	خمسة	kham-sa
6	٦	سنة	sit-ta
7	٧	سبعة	sab-'a
8	٨	ثمانية	tha-maa-ni-ya
9	٩	تسعة	tis-'a
10	١٠	عشرة	'a-sha-ra

Note that Arabic numerals, unlike letters, are written from left to right.

**Where are the toilets?**

أين دورات المياه؟ 'ay-na daw-raa-tul mee-yaah

**I'm lost.**

أنا ضائع. 'a-naa daa-'i' (m)

أنا ضائعة. 'a-naa daa-'i'-a (f)

**I'm sick.**

أنا مريض. 'a-naa ma-reed

**Shopping & Services****I'm looking for ...**

أبحث عن ... 'ab-ha-thu 'an ...

**Can I look at it?**

هل يمكنني أن hal yum-ki-nu-nee 'an

أراه؟ 'a-raa-hu

**Do you have any others?**

هل عندك غيره؟ hal 'in-da-kum ghay-ru-hu

**How much is it?**

كم سعره؟ kam si' ru-hu

**That's too expensive.**

هذا غالٍ جدًا. haa-dhaa ghaa-lin jid-dan

**Where's an ATM?**

أين جهاز الصرافة؟ 'ay-na ji-haaz as-sar-raa-fa

**Time & Dates****What time is it?**

كم الساعة الآن؟ kam as-saa-'a-tul 'aan

**It's (two) o'clock.**

الساعة (الثانية). as-saa-'a tu (ath-thaa-nee-ya)

**morning**

صباح sa-baah

**afternoon**

بعد الظهر ba'-da adh-dhuh-ri

**evening**

مساء ma-saa'

**yesterday**

أمس 'am-si

**today**

اليوم al-yawm

**tomorrow**

غدا gha-dan

**Transport & Directions**

Is this the ... هل هذا الـ ... hal haa-dhaa al ...

to (Dubai)? إلى (دبي)؟ 'i-laa (du-ba-yee)

boat سفينة sa-fee-na

bus باص baas

plane طائرة taa-'i-ra

train قطار ki-taar

What time's في أي ساعة fee 'ay-yee saa-'a-tin

the ... bus? يغادر الباص yu-ghaa-di-ru al-baas

الـ ... al ...

first أول 'aw-wal

last آخر 'aa-khir

One ... ticket, تذكرة ... tadh-ka-ra-tu ...

please. واحدة لو سمحت. waa-hi-da law sa-mah-ta

one-way ذهاب فقط dha-haa-bu fa-ka-t

return ذهاب dha-haa-bu

وإياب wa-'ee-yaab

**How much is it to ...?**

كم الأجرة إلى ...؟ kam al-'uj-ra-ti 'i-laa ...

**Please take me to ...**

أوصلني عند ... 'aw-sal-nee 'ind ...

لو سمحت. law sa-mah-ta

**Where's the (market)?**

أين الـ (سوق)؟ 'ay-na al (sook)

**What's the address?**

ما هو العنوان؟ maa hu-wa al-'un-waan

**FRENCH**

The sounds used in spoken French can almost all be found in English. There are a couple of exceptions: nasal vowels (represented in our pronunciation guides by **o** or **u** followed by an almost inaudible nasal consonant sound **m**, **n** or **ng**), the 'funny' **u** (ew in our guides) and the deep-in-the-throat **r**. Bearing these few points in mind and reading our pronunciation guides below as if they were English, you won't have problems being understood. Note that syllables are for the most part equally stressed in French.

Masculine and feminine forms of words are provided in the following phrases where relevant, indicated with 'm' and 'f' respectively.

**Basics**

Hello. Bonjour. bon-zhoor

Goodbye. Au revoir. o-rer-vwa

Excuse me. Excusez-moi. ek-skew-zay-mwa

Sorry. Pardon. par-don

Yes. Oui. wee

No. Non. non

Please. S'il vous plaît. seel voo play

Thank you. Merci. mair-see

You're welcome. De rien. der ree-en

**How are you?***Comment allez-vous?* ko-mon ta-lay-voo**Fine, and you?***Bien, merci. Et vous?* byun mair-see ay voo**My name is ...***Je m'appelle ...* zher ma-pel ...**What's your name?***Comment vous appelez-vous?* ko-mon voo-  
za-play voo**Do you speak English?***Parlez-vous anglais?* par-lay-voo ong-glai**I don't understand.***Je ne comprends pas.* zher ner kom-pron pa**Accommodation****campsite** *camping* kom-peeng**guesthouse** *pension* pon-syon**hotel** *hôtel* o-tel**youth hostel** *auberge de jeunesse* o-berzh  
der zher-nes**a ... room** *une chambre ...* ewn shom-brer ...**double** *avec un grand lit* a-vek un  
gron lee**single** *à un lit* a un lee**How much is it per night/person?***Quel est le prix par nuit/personne?* kel ay ler pree  
par nwee/per-son**Is breakfast included?***Est-ce que le petit déjeuner est inclus?* es-ker ler per-tee  
day-zher-nay ayt en-klew**Eating & Drinking****Can I see the menu, please?***Est-ce que je peux voir la carte, s'il vous plaît?* es-ker zher per vwar  
la kart seel voo play**What would you recommend?***Qu'est-ce que vous conseillez?* kes-ker voo  
kon-say-yay**I'm a vegetarian.***Je suis végétarien/végétarienne. (m/f)* zher swee vay-zhay-ta-ryun/  
vay-zhay-ta-ryen**I don't eat ...***Je ne mange pas ...* zher ner monzh pa ...**Cheers!***Santé!* son-tay**Please bring the bill.***Apportez-moi l'addition, s'il vous plaît.* a-por-tay-mwa  
la-dee-son  
seel voo play**Numbers – French**

1	un	un
2	deux	der
3	trois	trwa
4	quatre	ka-trer
5	cinq	sungk
6	six	sees
7	sept	set
8	huit	weet
9	neuf	nerf
10	dix	dees

beer	bière	bee-yair
bottle	bouteille	boo-tay
bread	pain	pun
breakfast	petit déjeuner	per-tee day-zher-nay
cheese	fromage	fro-mazh
coffee	café	ka-fay
cold	froid	frwa
dinner	dîner	dee-nay
dish	plat	pla
egg	œuf	erf
food	nourriture	noo-ree-tewr
fork	fourchette	foor-shet
glass	verre	vair
grocery store	épicerie	ay-pees-ree
hot	chaud	sho
(orange) juice	jus (d'orange)	zhew (do-ronzh)
knife	couteau	koo-to
local	spécialité	spay-sya-lee-tay
speciality	locale	lo-kal
lunch	déjeuner	day-zher-nay
main course	plat principal	pla prun-see-pal
market	marché	mar-shay
milk	lait	lay
plate	assiette	a-syet
red wine	vin rouge	vun roozh
rice	riz	ree
salt	sel	sel
spoon	cuillère	kwee-yair
sugar	sucré	sew-krer
tea	thé	tay
vegetable	légume	lay-gewm
(mineral) water	eau (minérale)	o (mee-nay-ral)
white wine	vin blanc	vun blong
with/without	avec/sans	a-vek/son



## Emergencies

### Help!

*Au secours!* o skoor

### I'm lost.

*Je suis perdu/perdue.* zhe swee-pair-dew (m/f)

### Leave me alone!

*Fichez-moi la paix!* fee-shay-mwa la pay

### Call a doctor.

*Appelez un médecin.* a-play un mayd-sun

### Call the police.

*Appelez la police.* a-play la po-lees

### I'm ill.

*Je suis malade.* zher swee ma-lad

### Where are the toilets?

*Où sont les toilettes?* oo son lay twa-let

## Shopping & Services

### I'd like to buy ...

*Je voudrais acheter ...* zher voo-dray ash-tay ...

### Can I look at it?

*Est-ce que je peux le voir?* es-ker zher per ler vwar

### How much is it?

*C'est combien?* say kom-byun

### It's too expensive.

*C'est trop cher.* say tro shair

### Can you lower the price?

*Vous pouvez baisser le prix?* voo poo-vay bay-say ler pree

### ATM

*guichet automatique de banque* gee-shay o-to-ma-teek der bonk

### internet cafe

*cybercafé* see-bair-ka-fay

### post office

*bureau de poste* bew-ro der post

### tourist office

*office de tourisme* o-fees der too-rees-mer

## Time & Dates

### What time is it?

*Quelle heure est-il?* kel er ay til

### It's (eight) o'clock.

*Il est (huit) heures.* il ay (weet) er

### It's half past (10).

*Il est (dix) heures et demie.* il ay (deez) er ay day-mee

### morning

*matin* ma-tun

### afternoon

*après-midi* a-pray-mee-dee

### evening

*soir* swar

### yesterday

*hier*

*yair*

### today

*aujourd'hui*

*o-zhoor-dwee*

### tomorrow

*demain*

*der-mun*

## Transport & Directions

### boat

*bateau*

*ba-to*

### bus

*bus*

*bews*

### plane

*avion*

*a-vyon*

### train

*train*

*trun*

### a ... ticket

*un billet ...*

*un bee-yay ...*

### one-way

*simple*

*sum-pler*

### return

*aller et retour*

*a-lay ay rer-toor*

### I want to go to ...

*Je voudrais aller à ...* zher voo-dray a-lay a ...

### At what time does it leave/arrive?

*À quelle heure est-ce qu'il part/arrive?* a kel er es kil par/a-reev

### Does it stop at ...?

*Est-ce qu'il s'arrête à ...?* es-kil sa-ret a ...

### Can you tell me when we get to ...?

*Pouvez-vous me dire quand nous arrivons à ...?* poo-vay-voo mer deer kon noo za-ree-von a ...

### I want to get off here.

*Je veux descendre ici.* zher ver day-son-drer ee-see

### Where's ...?

*Où est ...?* oo ay ...

### What's the address?

*Quelle est l'adresse?* kel ay la-dres

### Can you show me (on the map)?

*Pouvez-vous m'indiquer (sur la carte)?* poo-vay-voo mun-dee-kay (sewr la kart)

## HAUSA

Hausa is spoken by around 40 million people. Most native speakers live in northern Nigeria and southern Niger. It's also spoken in parts of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Hausa's glottalized consonants ('b', 'd', 'k', 'ts' and 'y'), indicated here by an apostrophe after the letter, are produced by tightening and releasing the space between the vocal cords; for the sounds 'b' and 'd', instead of breathing out, you breathe in. The apostrophe before a vowel indicates a glottal stop (like the pause in 'uh-oh').

### Hello.

*Sannu.*

*san-nu*

### Goodbye.

*Sai wani lokaci.*

*say wa-ni law-ka-chee*

<b>Yes.</b>	<i>I.</i>	<i>ee</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>A'a.</i>	<i>a'a</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Don Allah.</i>	<i>don al-laa</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Na gode.</i>	<i>naa gaw-dey</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Yi hak'uri.</i>	<i>yi ha-k'u-ree</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Taimake ni!</i>	<i>tai-ma-kyey ni</i>

**Do you speak English?**

<i>Kana/Kina jin turanci? (m/f)</i>	<i>ka-naa/ki-naa jin too-ran-chee</i>
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**I don't understand.**

<i>Ban gane ba.</i>	<i>ban gaa-ney ba</i>
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**How much is it?**

<i>Kud'insa nawa ne?</i>	<i>ku-d'in-sa na-wa ney</i>
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**Where are the toilets?**

<i>Ina ban d'aki yake?</i>	<i>i-naa ban d'aa-kee yak-yey</i>
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<b>1</b>	<i>d'aya</i>	<i>d'a-ya</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>biyu</i>	<i>bi-yu</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>uku</i>	<i>u-ku</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>hud'u</i>	<i>hu-d'u</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>biyar</i>	<i>bi-yar</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>shida</i>	<i>shi-da</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>bakwai</i>	<i>bak-wai</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>takwas</i>	<i>tak-was</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>tara</i>	<i>ta-ra</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>goma</i>	<i>gaw-ma</i>

**MALAGASY**

Malagasy has around 18 million speakers and is the official language of Madagascar.

The pronunciation of Malagasy words is not always obvious from their written form. Unstressed syllables can be dropped and words pronounced in different ways depending on where they fall in a sentence. If you read our pronunciation guides as if they were English, you'll be understood. Note that *dz* is pronounced as the 'ds' in 'adds'. The stressed syllables are indicated with *italics*.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Manao ahoana.</i>	<i>maa-now aa-hon</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Veloma.</i>	<i>ve-lum</i>
<b>Yes./No.</b>	<i>Eny./Tsia.</i>	<i>e-ni/tsi-aa</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Azafady.</i>	<i>aa-zaa-faad</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Misaotra.</i>	<i>mi-sotr</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Miala tsiny.</i>	<i>mi-aa-laa tsin</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Vonjeo!</i>	<i>vun-dze-u</i>

**Do you speak English?**

<i>Miteny anglisy ve ianao?</i>	<i>mi-ten aan-gi-lis ve i-aa-now</i>
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**I don't understand.**

<i>Tsy azoko.</i>	<i>tsi aa-zuk</i>
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**How much is it?**

<i>Ohatrinona?</i>	<i>o-trin</i>
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**Where are the toilets?**

<i>Aiza ny trano fivoahana?</i>	<i>ai-zaa ni traa-nu fi-vu-aa-haan</i>
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<b>1</b>	<i>isa/iray</i>	<i>i-saa/i-rai</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>roa</i>	<i>ru</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>telo</i>	<i>tel</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>efatra</i>	<i>e-faatr</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>dimy</i>	<i>dim</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>enina</i>	<i>e-nin</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>fito</i>	<i>fit</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>valo</i>	<i>vaal</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>sivy</i>	<i>siv</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>folo</i>	<i>ful</i>

**PORTUGUESE**

Most sounds in Portuguese are also found in English. The exceptions are the nasal vowels (represented in our pronunciation guides by *ng* after the vowel), which are pronounced as if you're trying to make the sound through your nose; and the strongly rolled *r* (represented by *rr* in our pronunciation guides). Also note that the symbol *zh* sounds like the 's' in 'pleasure'. The stressed syllables are indicated with *italics*.

Masculine and feminine forms of words are provided in the following phrases where relevant, indicated with 'm' and 'f' respectively.

**Basics**

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Olá.</i>	<i>o-laa</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Adeus.</i>	<i>a-de-oosh</i>
<b>Excuse me.</b>	<i>Faz favor.</i>	<i>faash fa-vor</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Desculpe.</i>	<i>desh-kool-pe</i>
<b>Yes./No.</b>	<i>Sim./Não.</i>	<i>seeng/nowng</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Por favor.</i>	<i>poor fa-vor</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Obrigado. Obrigada.</i>	<i>o-bree-gaa-doo (m) o-bree-gaa-da (f)</i>
<b>You're welcome.</b>	<i>De nada.</i>	<i>de naa-da</i>

**How are you?**

<i>Como está?</i>	<i>ko-moo shtaa</i>
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**Fine, and you?**

<i>Bem, e você?</i>	<i>bing e vo-se</i>
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**What's your name?**

<i>Qual é o seu nome?</i>	<i>kwaal e oo se-oo no-me</i>
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**My name is ...**

*O meu nome é ...* oo me-oo no-me e ...

**Do you speak English?**

*Fala inglês?* faa-la eeng-glesh

**I don't understand.**

*Não entendo.* nowng eng-teng-doo

## Accommodation

<b>campsite</b>	<i>parque de campismo</i>	paar-ke de kang-pee-zh-moo
<b>guesthouse</b>	<i>casa de hóspedes</i>	kaa-za de osh-pe-desh
<b>hotel</b>	<i>hotel</i>	o-tel
<b>youth hostel</b>	<i>pousada de juventude</i>	poh-zaa-da de zhoo-veng-too-de

**Do you have a single/double room?**

*Tem um quarto de solteiro/casal?* teng oong kwaar-too de sol-tay-roo/ka-zal

**How much is it per night/person?**

*Quanto custa por noite/pessoa?* kwang-too koosh-ta poor noy-te/pe-so-a

**Is breakfast included?**

*Inclui o pequeno almoço?* eeng-kloo-ee oo pe-ke-noo aal-mo-soo

## Eating & Drinking

**I'd like (the menu).**

*Queria (um menu).* ke-ree-a (oong me-noo)

**What would you recommend?**

*O que é que recomenda?* oo ke e ke rre-koo-meng-da

**I don't eat ...**

*Eu não como ...* e-oo nowng ko-moo ...

**Cheers!**

*Saúde!* sa-oo-de

**Please bring the bill.**

*Pode-me trazer a conta.* po-de-me tra-zer a kong-ta

<b>beer</b>	<i>cerveja</i>	ser-ve-zha
<b>bottle</b>	<i>garrafa</i>	ga-rraa-fa
<b>bread</b>	<i>pão</i>	powng
<b>breakfast</b>	<i>pequeno almoço</i>	pe-ke-noo aal-mo-soo
<b>cheese</b>	<i>queijo</i>	kay-zhoo
<b>coffee</b>	<i>café</i>	ka-fe
<b>cold</b>	<i>frio</i>	free-oo
<b>dinner</b>	<i>jantar</i>	zhang-taar
<b>egg</b>	<i>ovo</i>	o-voo
<b>food</b>	<i>comida</i>	koo-mee-da
<b>fork</b>	<i>garfo</i>	gar-foo

## Numbers – Portuguese

<b>1</b>	<i>um</i>	oong
<b>2</b>	<i>dois</i>	doysh
<b>3</b>	<i>três</i>	tresh
<b>4</b>	<i>quatro</i>	kwa-troo
<b>5</b>	<i>cinco</i>	seeng-koo
<b>6</b>	<i>seis</i>	saysh
<b>7</b>	<i>sete</i>	se-te
<b>8</b>	<i>oito</i>	oy-too
<b>9</b>	<i>nove</i>	no-ve
<b>10</b>	<i>dez</i>	desh

<b>fruit</b>	<i>fruta</i>	froo-ta
<b>glass</b>	<i>copo</i>	ko-poo
<b>hot (warm)</b>	<i>quente</i>	keng-te
<b>juice</b>	<i>sumo</i>	soo-moo
<b>knife</b>	<i>faca</i>	faa-ka
<b>lunch</b>	<i>almoço</i>	aal-mo-soo
<b>main course</b>	<i>prato principal</i>	praa-too preeng-see-paal
<b>market</b>	<i>mercado</i>	mer-kaa-doo
<b>milk</b>	<i>leite</i>	lay-te
<b>plate</b>	<i>prato</i>	praa-too
<b>red wine</b>	<i>vinho tinto</i>	vee-nyoo teeng-too
<b>restaurant</b>	<i>restaurante</i>	rresh-tow-rang-te
<b>rice</b>	<i>arroz</i>	a-rrosh
<b>salt</b>	<i>sal</i>	saal
<b>spicy</b>	<i>picante</i>	pee-kang-te
<b>spoon</b>	<i>colher</i>	koo-lyer
<b>sugar</b>	<i>açúcar</i>	a-soo-kar
<b>tea</b>	<i>chá</i>	shaa
<b>vegetable</b>	<i>hortaliça</i>	or-ta-lee-sa
<b>vegetarian food</b>	<i>comida vegetariana</i>	koo-mee-da ve-zhe-ta-ree-aa-na
<b>(mineral) water</b>	<i>água (mineral)</i>	aa-gwa (mee-ne-raal)
<b>white wine</b>	<i>vinho branco</i>	vee-nyoo brang-koo
<b>with/without</b>	<i>com/sem</i>	kong/seng

## Emergencies

<b>Help!</b>	<i>Socorro!</i>	soo-ko-rroo
<b>Go away!</b>	<i>Vá-se embora!</i>	vaa-se eng-bo-ra
<b>Call ...!</b>	<i>Chame ...!</i>	shaa-me ...
<b>a doctor</b>	<i>um médico</i>	oong-me-dee-koo
<b>the police</b>	<i>a polícia</i>	a poo-lee-sya

<b>I'm lost.</b> <i>Estou perdido.</i> <i>Estou perdida.</i>	<i>shtoh per-dee-doo (m)</i> <i>shtoh per-dee-da (f)</i>
<b>I'm ill.</b> <i>Estou doente.</i>	<i>shtoh doo-eng-te</i>
<b>Where is the toilet?</b> <i>Onde é a casa de banho?</i>	<i>ong-de e a kaa-za de ba-nyoo</i>

## Shopping & Services

<b>I'd like to buy ...</b> <i>Queria comprar ...</i>	<i>ke-ree-a kong-praar ...</i>
<b>Can I look at it?</b> <i>Posso ver?</i>	<i>po-soo ver</i>
<b>How much is it?</b> <i>Quanto custa?</i>	<i>kwang-too koosh-ta</i>
<b>It's too expensive.</b> <i>Está muito caro.</i>	<i>shtaa mweeng-too kaa-roo</i>
<b>Can you lower the price?</b> <i>Pode baixar o preço?</i>	<i>po-de bai-shaar oo pre-soo</i>

<b>ATM</b>	<i>caixa automático</i>	<i>kai-sha ow-too- maa-tee-koo</i>
<b>internet cafe</b>	<i>café da internet</i>	<i>ka-fe da eeng-ter-ne-te</i>
<b>post office</b>	<i>correio</i>	<i>koo-rray-oo</i>
<b>tourist office</b>	<i>escritório de turismo</i>	<i>shkree-to-ryoo de too-reezh-moo</i>

## Time & Dates

<b>What time is it?</b> <i>Que horas são?</i>	<i>kee o-rash sowng</i>
<b>It's (10) o'clock.</b> <i>São (dez) horas.</i>	<i>sowng (desh) o-rash</i>
<b>Half past (10).</b> <i>(Dez) e meia.</i>	<i>(desh) e may-a</i>

<b>morning</b>	<i>manhã</i>	<i>ma-nyang</i>
<b>afternoon</b>	<i>tarde</i>	<i>taar-de</i>
<b>evening</b>	<i>noite</i>	<i>noy-te</i>
<b>yesterday</b>	<i>ontem</i>	<i>ong-teng</i>
<b>today</b>	<i>hoje</i>	<i>o-zhe</i>
<b>tomorrow</b>	<i>amanhã</i>	<i>aa-ma-nyang</i>

## Transport & Directions

<b>boat</b>	<i>barco</i>	<i>baar-koo</i>
<b>bus</b>	<i>autocarro</i>	<i>ow-to-kaa-roo</i>
<b>plane</b>	<i>avião</i>	<i>a-vee-owng</i>
<b>train</b>	<i>comboio</i>	<i>kong-boy-oo</i>

<b>... ticket</b>	<i>um bilhete</i>	<i>oong bee-lye-te</i>
	<i>de ...</i>	<i>de ...</i>
<b>one-way</b>	<i>ida</i>	<i>ee-da</i>
<b>return</b>	<i>ida e volta</i>	<i>ee-da ee vol-ta</i>

<b>I want to go to ...</b> <i>Queria ir a ...</i>	<i>ke-ree-a eer a ...</i>
<b>What time does it leave/arrive?</b> <i>A que horas sai/chega?</i>	<i>a ke o-rash sai/she-ga</i>
<b>Does it stop at ...?</b> <i>Pára em ...?</i>	<i>paa-ra eng ...</i>
<b>Please tell me when we get to ...</b> <i>Por favor avise-me quando chegarmos</i>	<i>poor fa-vor a-vee-ze-me kwang-doo she-gaar-moosh</i>
<b>Please stop here.</b> <i>Por favor pare aqui.</i>	<i>poor fa-vor paa-re a-kee</i>
<b>Where's (the station)?</b> <i>Onde é (a estação)?</i>	<i>ong-de e (a shta-sowng)</i>
<b>What's the address?</b> <i>Qual é o endereço?</i>	<i>kwaal e oo eng-de-re-soo</i>
<b>Can you show me (on the map)?</b> <i>Pode-me mostrar (no mapa)?</i>	<i>po-de-me moosh-traar (noo maa-pa)</i>

## SHONA

Shona is spoken by about 11 million people. The vast majority of its speakers are in Zimbabwe, but it's also used in the southern African countries of Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia.

Shona's glottalised consonants, represented as **b'** and **d'** in our pronunciation guides, are made by tightening and releasing the space between the vocal cords when you pronounce them. Both sounds are 'implosive', meaning that instead of breathing out to make the sound, you breathe in. Note also that the **r** is trilled.

<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Hongu.</i>	<i>ho-ngoo</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Kwete.</i>	<i>kwe-te</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>-wo.</i>	<i>-wo</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Mazviita.</i>	<i>maa-zvee-ta</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Ndapota.</i>	<i>nd'aa-po-ta</i>

### Do you speak English?

<i>Munotaura</i>	<i>moo-no-taa-oo-raa</i>
<i>chiNgezi here?</i>	<i>chee-nge-zee he-re</i>

### I don't understand.

<i>Handinzvisisi.</i>	<i>haa-ndee-nzvee-see-see</i>
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### How much is it?

<i>Inoita marii?</i>	<i>ee-o-ee-taa maa-ree-ee</i>
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**Where are the toilets?**

Zvimbudzi zviri  
kupi?

zvee-mboo-dzee zvee-ree  
koo-pee

**Could you help me, please?**

Mungandibatsirawo  
here?

moo-ngaa-ndee-b'aa-  
tsee-raa-wo he-re

1	-mwe	-mwe
2	-viri	-vee-ree
3	-tatu	-taa-too
4	-na	-naa
5	-shanu	-shaa-noo
6	-tanhatu	-taa-nhaa-too
7	-nomwe	-no-mwe
8	-sere	-se-re
9	-pfumbamwe	-pfoo-mbaa-mwe
10	gumi	goo-mee

**SWAHILI**

Swahili, the national language of Tanzania and Kenya, is also the key language of communication in the East African region. Although the number of speakers of Swahili throughout East Africa is estimated to be over 50 million, it's the mother tongue of only about 5 million people.

Most sounds in Swahili have equivalents in English. In our pronunciation guides, **dh** should be read as the 'th' in 'this'. Note also that in Swahili the sound **ng** can be found at the start of words, and that Swahili speakers make only a slight distinction between the sounds **r** and **l** – instead of the hard 'r', try pronouncing a light 'd'. The stressed syllables are indicated with italics.

<b>Hello. (general)</b>	<i>Habari?</i>	<i>ha-ba-ree</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Tutaonana.</i>	<i>too-ta-oh-na-na</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Ndiyo.</i>	<i>n-dee-yoh</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Hapana.</i>	<i>ha-pa-na</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Tafadhali.</i>	<i>ta-fa-dha-lee</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Asante.</i>	<i>a-san-tay</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Pole.</i>	<i>poh-lay</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Saidia!</i>	<i>sa-ee-dee-a</i>

**Do you speak English?**

Unasema  
Kiingereza?

oo-na-say-ma  
kee-eeen-gay-ray-za

**I don't understand.**

*Sielewi.*

see-ay-lay-wee

**How much is it?**

*Ni bei gani?*

ni bay ga-nee

**Where's the toilet?**

*Choo kiko wapi?*

choh kee-koh wa-pee

1	<i>moja</i>	<i>moh-ja</i>
2	<i>mbili</i>	<i>m-bee-lee</i>
3	<i>tatu</i>	<i>ta-too</i>
4	<i>nne</i>	<i>n-nay</i>
5	<i>tano</i>	<i>ta-noh</i>
6	<i>sita</i>	<i>see-ta</i>
7	<i>saba</i>	<i>sa-ba</i>
8	<i>nane</i>	<i>na-nay</i>
9	<i>tisa</i>	<i>tee-sa</i>
10	<i>kumi</i>	<i>koo-mee</i>

**WOLOF**

Wolof is the lingua franca of Senegal and Gambia, where it's spoken by about eight million people. It's also spoken in the neighbouring countries of Mauritania, Mali and Guinea.

Note that in our pronunciation guides, the stressed syllables are in italics. Also, **uh** is pronounced as the 'a' in 'ago', **kh** as the 'ch' in the Scottish *loch* and **r** is trilled.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Salaam</i> <i>aleekum.</i>	<i>sa-laam</i> <i>a-ley-kum</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Mangi dem.</i>	<i>maan-gee dem</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Waaw.</i>	<i>waaw</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Déedéet.</i>	<i>dey-deyt</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Bu la neexee.</i>	<i>boo la ney-khey</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Jêrejêf.</i>	<i>je-re-jef</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Baal ma.</i>	<i>baal ma</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Wóoy!</i>	<i>wohy</i>

**Do you speak English?**

*Ndax dégg nga angale?* *ndakh deg nguh an-ga-ley*

**I don't understand.**

*Dégguma.* *deg-goo-ma*

**How much is it?**

*Naata lay jar?* *nyaa-ta lai jar*

**Where are the toilets?**

*Ana wanag wi?* *a-na wa-nak wee*

1	<i>benn</i>	<i>ben</i>
2	<i>ñaar</i>	<i>nyaar</i>
3	<i>ñett</i>	<i>nyet</i>
4	<i>ñeent</i>	<i>nyeynt</i>
5	<i>juróom</i>	<i>joo-rohm</i>
6	<i>juróom benn</i>	<i>joo-rohm ben</i>
7	<i>juróom ñaar</i>	<i>joo-rohm nyaar</i>
8	<i>juróom ñett</i>	<i>joo-rohm nyet</i>
9	<i>juróom</i>	<i>joo-rohm</i>
	<i>ñeent</i>	<i>nyeynt</i>
10	<i>fukk</i>	<i>fuk</i>

## XHOSA

Xhosa is the most widely distributed indigenous language in South Africa. About six and a half million people speak Xhosa.

In our pronunciation guides, the apostrophe after the consonant (eg *k'*) indicates that the sound is 'spat out' (in Xhosa, only in case of *b'* the air is sucked in), a bit like combining it with the sound heard in the middle of 'uh-oh'. Xhosa has a series of 'click' sounds as well; they are not distinguished in the following phrases.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Molo.</i>	<i>maw-law</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Usale ngoxolo.</i>	<i>u-saa-le ngaw-kaw-law</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Ewe.</i>	<i>e-we</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Hayi.</i>	<i>haa-yee</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Cela.</i>	<i>ke-laa</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Enkosi.</i>	<i>e-nk'aw-see</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Uxolo.</i>	<i>u-aw-law</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Uncedo!</i>	<i>u-ne-daw</i>

### Do you speak English?

*Uyasithetha isingesi?* *u-yaa-see-te-taa ee-see-nge-see*

### I don't understand.

*Andiqondi.* *aa-ndee-kaw-ndee*

### How much is it?

*Yimalini?* *yee-maa-li-nee*

### Where are the toilets?

*Ziphi itoyilethi?* *zee-pee ee-taw-yee-le-tee*

In Xhosa, numbers borrowed from English are commonly used and will be understood.

<b>1</b>	<i>wani</i>	<i>waa-nee</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>thu</i>	<i>tu</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>thri</i>	<i>tree</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>fo</i>	<i>faw</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>fayifu</i>	<i>faa-yee-fu</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>siksi</i>	<i>seek'-see</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>seveni</i>	<i>se-ve-nee</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>eyithi</i>	<i>e-yee-tee</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>nayini</i>	<i>naa-yee-nee</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>teni</i>	<i>t'e-nee</i>

## YORUBA

Yoruba is spoken by around 25 million people. It is primarily used as a first language in southwestern Nigeria. There are also Yoruba speakers in Benin, eastern Togo and in Sierra Leone.

Yoruba's nasal vowels, indicated in our pronunciation guides with *ng* after the vowel, are pronounced as if you're trying to force the sound through the nose.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Pẹlẹ o.</i>	<i>kpe-le o</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Ọ dàbò.</i>	<i>oh da-bo</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Bẹẹni.</i>	<i>be-e-ni</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Bẹẹkọ.</i>	<i>be-e-ko</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Jòwọ.</i>	<i>jo-wo</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Ọsẹ.</i>	<i>oh-shay</i>
<b>Sorry.</b>	<i>Má bíńú.</i>	<i>ma bi-i-nu</i>
<b>Help!</b>	<i>Ẹ ràn mí lówó ọ!</i>	<i>e rang mi lo-wo o</i>

### Do you speak English?

*Ẹ ọ ní sọ gẹẹsì?* *shay o ní sọ ge-e-si*

### I don't understand.

*Ẹ mi kò gbọ.* *ay-mi koh gbo*

### How much is it?

*Ẹlọ ní?* *ay-loh ni*

### Where are the toilets?

*Ibo ni ilé ìgbànsẹ wà?* *i-boh ni i-lay i-gbong-se wa*

<b>1</b>	<i>òkan</i>	<i>o-kang</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>èjì</i>	<i>ay-ji</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>èta</i>	<i>e-ta</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>èrin</i>	<i>e-ring</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>àrun</i>	<i>a-rung</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>èfà</i>	<i>e-fa</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>èjẹ</i>	<i>ay-jay</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>èjo</i>	<i>e-jo</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>ẹsàn</i>	<i>e-sang</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>èwá</i>	<i>e-wa</i>

## ZULU

About 10 million Africans speak Zulu as a first language, most of them in South Africa. It is also spoken in Lesotho and Swaziland.

In our pronunciation guides, *b'* indicates that the air is sucked in when you pronounce this sound (in Zulu, some other consonants are 'spat out'), a bit like combining it with the sound in the middle of 'uh-oh'. Note also that *hl* is pronounced as in the Welsh *llewellyn* and *dl* is like *hl* but with the vocal cords vibrating. Xhosa has a series of 'click' sounds as well; they are not distinguished in this section.

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Sawubona. (sg)</i>	<i>saa-wu-b'aw-naa</i>
	<i>Sanibonani. (pl)</i>	<i>saa-nee-b'aw-naa-nee</i>
<b>Goodbye. (if leaving)</b>		
<i>Sala kahle. (sg)</i>		<i>saa-laa gaa-hle</i>
<i>Salani kahle. (pl)</i>		<i>saa-laa-nee gaa-hle</i>

**Goodbye.** (if staying)*Hamba kahle.* (sg)

haa-mbaa gaa-hle

*Hambani kahle.* (pl)

haa-mbaa-nee gaa-hle

**Yes./No.***Yebo./Cha.*

ye-b'aw/kaa

**Thank you.***Ngiyabonga.*

ngee-yaa-b'aw-ngaa

**Sorry.***Uxolo.*

u-kaw-law

**Do you speak English?***Uyasikhuluma**isiNgesi?*

u-yaa-see-ku-lu-maa

ee-see-ngee-see

**I don't understand.***Angizwa.*

aa-ngee-zwaa

**How much is it?***Yimalini?*

yee-maa-lee-nee

**Where are the toilets?***Ziphi izindlu**zangasese?*

zee-pee ee-zee-ndlu

zaa-ngaa-se-se

**Could you help me, please?***Ake ungisize/**ningisize.* (sg/pl)

aa-ge u-ngee-see-ze/

nee-ngee-see-ze

In Zulu, numbers borrowed from English are commonly used and will be understood.

**1***uwani*

u-waa-nee

**2***uthu*

u-tu

**3***uthri*

u-three

**4***ufo*

u-faw

**5***ufayifi*

u-faa-yee-fee

**6***usiksi*

u-seek-see

**7***usevene*

u-se-ve-nee

**8***u-eyithi*

u-e-yeet

**9***unayini*

u-naa-yee-nee

**10***utheni*

u-the-nee

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