



Kruger National Park

Includes ➔

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Best Rest Camps

- ➔ Lower Sabie (p391)
- ➔ Olifants (p395)
- ➔ Skukuza (p391)
- ➔ Letaba (p397)
- ➔ Satara (p396)

Best Private Lodges

- ➔ Singita Boulders (p400)
- ➔ Londolozi Varty Camp (p401)
- ➔ Outpost (p394)
- ➔ Rhino Post Safari Lodge (p395)
- ➔ Singita Lebombo (p396)

Why Go?

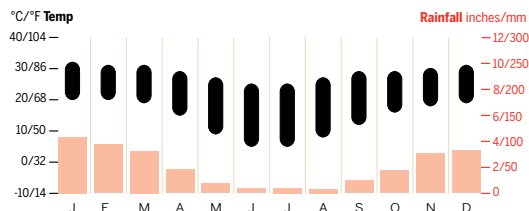
In terms of wildlife alone, Kruger is one of the world's greatest national parks. The diversity, density and sheer number of animals is almost unparalleled, and all of Africa's iconic safari species – elephant, lion, leopard, cheetah, rhino, buffalo, giraffe, hippo and zebra – live out their dramatic days here, along with a supporting cast of 137 other mammals and over 500 varieties of bird.

The landscape is on a grand scale, stretching over 19,485 sq km, and although less in your face than the wildlife, it certainly has the power to charm. Beautiful granite kopjes (hills) pepper the bushveld in the south, the Lebombo Mountains rise from the savannah in the east, and the tropical forests cut across the far north.

But what makes Kruger truly special is the access and opportunities it provides the visitors. A vast network of roads are there to explore on your own (incredibly), guided wildlife activities are everywhere and accommodation is both plentiful and great value.

When to Go

Skukuza



Jun–Sep Wildlife viewing is best in winter when the park is driest and animals meet at waterholes.

Jan–Mar It's hot but quiet as school holidays are over; accommodation's easy to find.

Mar–May Rutting-season spectacles see impala, wildebeest and other species go head to head.

History

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

In 2002, together with Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park and Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, Kruger became part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

Significant portions of the park continue to remain subject to pending land claims. A large claim in the greater Kruger was upheld in late 2013, which saw the government buy the ownership of MalaMala Game Reserve (for a figure thought to be R1 billion) and transfer it to the N'wandlamharhi Community Property Association (CPA).

Sights

Kruger encompasses a variety of landscapes and ecosystems, with each favouring particular species. That said, elephants, impalas, buffaloes, Burchell's zebras, wildebeest, kudus, waterbucks, baboons, vervet monkeys, leopards and smaller predators are widespread, and birdlife is incredible, especially along waterways. Rivers are hubs of activity and the major ones flow from west to east, including the Limpopo, Luvuvhu, Shingwedzi, Letaba, Olifants, Timbavati, Sand and Sabie. All of them are lined with riverine forest (often with enormous fig trees), which supports a wealth of wildlife.

While your drives along the extensive road network will throw up the majority of your animal sightings, there are numerous lookouts that offer great opportunities to see wildlife, or simply enjoy a stunning view.

Southern Kruger

Southern Kruger is perhaps the most physically beautiful section of the park, with numerous granite kopjes climbing above the undulating grasslands and the thick stands of acacias, bushwillows, sycamore figs and

KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Why Go Astounding wildlife, ease of self-drive access and incredible-value safaris. Perhaps Africa's best-run national park.

When to Go Year-round; avoid school holidays.

Practicalities Entry costs R280 per adult, R140 per child. Gate times (p398) for the park and camps are strictly adhered to. Speed limits (50km/h on sealed routes, 40km/h on dirt roads) are also stringently enforced. Don't lose your exit receipt (given to you on entry). And detailed park maps (R60) are worth their weight in gold.

Budget Tips Save 5% on SANParks camping and accommodation by booking online. Book tours at backpackers in Hazyview, Nelspruit or Graskop, or group together to share accommodation and car hire. Buy a Wild Card (p584).

flowering species such as the red-and-orange coral tree. The changes in elevation in the west offer you some staggering views over the wilderness that at times can look like a never-ending sea of green. Its flora is fed by the park's highest amount of rainfall, some 50% more than in the north. This has in turn led to Kruger's highest proportion of wildlife calling the area home. The terrain is particularly favoured by white rhinos, buffaloes and zebras, but the thickness of the bush in some areas can make it harder to spot predators. Lions, hyenas and leopards are still spotted regularly, however, and wild dogs and cheetahs make occasional appearances.

This is the most visited section of Kruger.

Mathekenyane

VIEWPOINT

(Granokop; Map p400) The top of this granite kopje south of Skukuza has an uninterrupted panorama of the surrounding wilderness (best at sunset).

Steilberg Loop

VIEWPOINT

(Map p388) Located near Berg-en-dal, the steep S120 loop drive offers great views of the Malelane Mountain bushveld.

Sunset Dam

VIEWPOINT

(Map p388) On the doorstep of Lower Sabie, the dam is often alive with birdlife, hippos, crocs and more.