



# Kruger National Park

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## Best Places to See Wildlife

- » For lions: Satara (p386), Sabi Sands (p393)
- » For elephants: Olifants (p386), Letaba (p387)
- » For birds: northern Kruger (p381)
- » For wild dogs: Skukuza (p386)
- » For impala: parkwide

## Best Rest Camps

- » Olifants (p386)
- » Shingwedzi (p384)
- » Pretoriuskop (p384)
- » Letaba (p384)
- » Crocodile Bridge (p384)

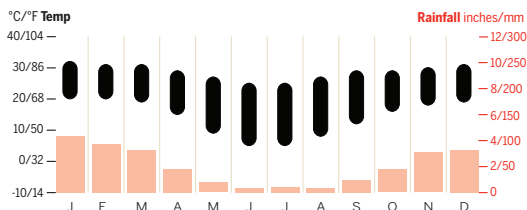
## Why Go?

If you enjoy watching wildlife, this is arguably one of the greatest places on earth to do it. If you're new to watching wildlife then you've chosen well. Kruger is one of the world's most famed protected areas – known for its size, conservation history, wildlife diversity and ease of access. It's a place where the drama of life and death plays out daily, with up-close, action-packed sightings of wildlife almost guaranteed. One morning you may spot lions feasting on a kill, and the next, a newborn impala struggling to take its first steps.

Perhaps one of Kruger's most underrated features is its landscape. Wilderness – be it bushveld, woodland or grassland – surrounds you, with numerous places, such as Olifants Rest Camp, providing the perfect opportunity to really drink it in. Appreciating the landscape is vital to successful wildlife spotting; the animals might not always be around but the views never change.

## When to Go

### Skukuza



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

**Jan–Mar** Great quiet time to visit as holidays are over; accommodation easy to find.

**Mar–May** Rutting season spectacle sees 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 and an avid hunter) established the Sabie Game Reserve, between

the Sabie and Crocodile Rivers, as a controlled hunting area. In 1902, following the second Anglo-Boer War, James Stevenson Hamilton became the reserve's first warden. Hamilton was also the first to see the tourism potential of wildlife-watching, and to bring a conservation vision to the area. In 1926, Sabie Game Reserve was joined with neighbouring Shingwedzi Game Reserve and various private farms to become Kruger National Park; in 1927, the park was opened to the public.

Significant portions of the park (25% to 50%) remain subject to land claims that are still pending; it is unlikely that these will be settled in the short term.

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

## Plant & Animal Distribution

Kruger encompasses a variety of ecosystems, with each favoured by particular species. Most mammals are distributed throughout the park, but some show a distinct preference for certain regions. Elephants, for example, are especially plentiful around Olifants and Letaba camps and other points north of the Olifants River, where their preferred mopane vegetation predominates. Lions, by contrast, favour the grasslands around Satara, with the large herds of buffalo, impala and other grazers. Impalas, buffaloes, Burchell's zebras, blue wildebeests, kudus, waterbucks, baboons, vervet monkeys, cheetahs, leopards and other smaller predators are all widespread, while birdlife is especially prolific along the rivers and north of the Luvuvhu River. All of Kruger's rivers have riverine forest along their banks (often with enormous fig trees), which supports populations of bushbushes and nyalas.

All the park shops sell maps and guidebooks that help in locating and spotting Kruger's wildlife.

### SOUTHERN KRUGER

Southern Kruger is well watered, receiving about 700mm of rainfall annually. Its landscapes range from grasslands to thickly wooded areas with a variety of trees. These include acacias, bushwillows and sycamore figs, as well as flowering species such as the red-and-orange coral tree. The terrain is particularly favoured by white rhinos, buffaloes and zebras, but less so by antelope and, therefore, by predators.



## Kruger National Park Highlights

- 1 Ditching the car and going bush on one of Kruger's excellent **wilderness trails** (p383)
- 2 Sleeping high on the bluff at **Olifants Rest Camp** (p384) and waking up to stunning sunrise vistas over the Olifants River
- 3 Spending time in tropical **northern Kruger** (p381) visiting ancient ruins and appreciating the wonderful birdlife
- 4 Exploring **Kruger from south to north** (p379), taking in the changing topography and nature's rhythms
- 5 Pampering yourself with a few nights at a luxurious **private wildlife reserve** (p392)