

Understand Southern Africa



SOUTHERN AFRICA TODAY644

Elections, crime and corruption make for political intrigue, while progressive leadership and the legacy of the global downturn shape the region.

HISTORY646

Embark on a journey that traces human existence to its very beginning. This is where it all started.

WILDLIFE.....653

From Botswana's world-famous Okavango Delta to the wilds of Zambia's massive protected areas, wildlife is the highlight of the region.

CULTURE.....669

Southern Africa is a melting pot of African and European cultures, with cohesion and fragmentation expressed through literature, art and dance.

MUSIC 677

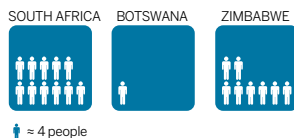
Music, more than any other cultural expression, has best survived the onslaught of Western influences. Written by expert author Jane Cornwell.

ENVIRONMENT.....685

The landscape and its inhabitants are protected through the region's unique reserves and national parks.



population per sq km



Southern Africa Today

Southern Africa constitutes a loose grouping of nations, each with a distinct heritage but who share many common attributes. Some of these attributes, such as poverty, inequality, food insecurity and the spread of HIV/AIDS remain real challenges.

Many countries in Southern Africa felt the ramifications of the 2008–09 economic downturn. By early 2013, though, things were looking brighter. The R40 billion South Africa pumped into hosting the 2010 World Cup was seen as a sound investment, propelled by around 350,000 new arrivals specifically for the event. Tourism revenue for neighbouring countries was not such a star performer, however, with only 5% of World Cup tourists visiting other Southern African countries.

Crime and corruption will be hot topics at the South African 2014 elections, when Helen Zille will likely shrink the gap between her opposition Democratic Alliance party and the governing African National Congress (ANC). Failure of key government service delivery and the whiff of corruption in official circles have dogged the ANC. Crime continues to grab headlines, too, and undermine South Africa's reputation as a tourism destination despite its boost from the World Cup.

Elections were held in Lesotho in 2012, resulting in 72-year-old Thomas Thabane, leader of the All Basotho Convention (ABC), taking office as the new prime minister. He takes over from Bethuel Pakalitha Mosisili, who held power for 14 years. The rate of HIV/AIDS and the King, who represents the slow pace of political reform, are issues in Swaziland but the reality is that locals are busy getting on with their lives (ie surviving).

Botswana and Namibia continue to be beacons of political stability in the region. The subject of diamonds, and when they'll run out, is an issue in both countries, however, as is the fate of the San, an ancient nomadic hunter-gatherer group that has been relocated from its ancestral lands

» If you're offered a gift, don't feel guilty about accepting it.

» To receive a gift, accept with both hands and bow slightly.

Top Movies

The Gentleman (Dir Joe Njagu, 2011)

District 9 (Dir Neill Blomkamp, 2009)

Wah-Wah (Dir Richard E Grant, 2005)

Tsotsi (Dir Gavin Hood, 2006)

In My Country (Dir John Boorman, 2005)

Top Books

Mukiwa (Peter Goodwin) Story of a young Rhodesian boy witnessing a neighbour's murder.

Lost World of the Kalahari (Laurens van der Post) An account of the San during colonial rule.

Interaction

» Learn local words for 'hello' and 'goodbye' and use unsparingly

» Emphasis is placed on handshakes all over the region

» Always treat elders with the utmost courtesy