



**One of the best things to do when arriving into any of the African countries is to get into “Africa mode”. Realize that life moves at a difference pace here- relax, employ humor, enjoy experiencing new cultures, and always carry a good book with you!**

### **Arrival**

Whether arriving by vehicle or air, you will be asked by Immigration to complete a simple Arrival Form. It’s always beneficial to have a ballpoint pen handy. If you are getting a visa at the point of entry, try to make your way to the appropriate line quickly with your cash handy.

If you arrive by air, most likely your itinerary has someone meeting you at the airport. You will find your local rep after you go through the Immigration, Customs and Baggage Claim areas. They should have a sign with your name on it. If you don’t see your rep right away, you can always ask the other greeters for help in locating him/her. If you are arriving via a road transfer, the driver/guide will assist you with the process and make sure you connect with your driver/guide on the other side of the border.

### **Passport**

Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of three blank visa pages (excluding endorsement pages). Passports must be valid for 6 months after the intended date of departure. Visitors to South Africa with foreign passports who do not comply with these requirements will either be stopped from boarding the aircraft at their point of departure or risk deportation on arrival in South Africa. This is a condition of entry set by the Department of Immigration.

It is advisable to make 1-2 copies of your passport and carry them with you, separate from your passport.

### **Yellow Fever Certificate**

If you are entering a country in Southern Africa from East Africa or any country where Yellow Fever is endemic, you will be required to show proof of your Yellow Fever inoculation or you may be denied entry. Be sure to carry the certificate with you at all times and note that the rules on requirements can change with limited notice. If you are entering South Africa after visiting Zambia, you are required to have a Yellow Fever inoculation.

### **Currency**

In most cases you will not need local currency while in Southern Africa if you are staying at a safari lodge or hotel, as tipping can be in USD and credit cards are widely accepted at the better lodges and hotels. If you are spending some time in South Africa outside of a safari lodge (for example, in Cape Town or Johannesburg), you should consider getting local currency.

If you do want to get local currency, you can do so at banks, bureau de change offices or authorized hotels. ATM machines are available in most urban areas and usually have better exchange rates, but not in or near game reserves and safari camps. Remember ATM’s will dispense cash in local currency (for current exchange rates, check out: [www.xe.com/ucc/](http://www.xe.com/ucc/)). Be sure to advise your bank that you will be traveling to a foreign country so that charges will not be blocked or denied. It’s recommended you carry at least USD\$300 in small denominations for use in situations where other financial options are unavailable or inconvenient and be sure to budget for tipping.

### **Credit Cards**

Credit cards are accepted by many lodges/camps, but not by all merchants. A fee is sometimes charged for credit card purchases due to high local banking costs. In addition to a major credit card, visitors should be prepared with cash,

especially when traveling outside larger cities. Be sure to advise your bank that you will be traveling to a foreign country so that charges will not be blocked or denied.

### **Airport Departure Taxes & Fees**

If you are flying internationally and departing on a commercial airline, there should be no taxes payable upon departure as these should be covered in your ticket. In some countries (e.g. Zambia) there will be domestic departure taxes that will need to be paid. Please refer to your itinerary for details. If a new fee is introduced after your ticket was issued, however, you will be responsible to pay it in cash upon your departure. It is best to have exact change thus carry plenty of small denominations with you. Please be advised that these taxes are subject to change without notice. Occasionally, a unique airport fee is introduced with limited notice, so it best to always have cash on hand. If we are advised ahead of time, this fee will be listed on your itinerary.

### **Tipping\***

Tipping is not mandatory, though it is customary. Tip at your discretion and if you are happy with the services! Tips can be given in the local currency or US dollars. In South Africa, it is preferable to use the local currency when tipping. Below is a guideline to assist you:

**Safari guide:** \$10 per day, per person

**Trackers:** \$5 per day, per person

**Camp staff:** \$5 – \$10 per day, per person (this typically goes into a communal box or is given to the camp manager)

**Transfer drivers:** \$2-\$5

**Porters at hotels:** \$1 -\$2

**Restaurants:** 10%

\*Please note that safari guides/staff are tipped at the end of each stay, not on a daily basis. However, if you have any day outings or transfers in a city like Cape Town or Johannesburg, then you tip your guide and driver at the end of their services.

### **Time Difference**

**Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa** are 6 hours ahead of EST from Apr. to Nov. (dates vary) & 7 hours the rest of the year, as they do not change their clocks for Daylight Savings Time. **Namibia** has implemented Daylight Savings - so from April to Sept., they will be one hour behind the rest of Southern Africa.

### **Weather**

The climate tends to be semi-arid. Though it is dry for much of the year, there is a rainy season, which runs through the summer months (November – March). Rainfall tends to be erratic, unpredictable and highly regional. Showers are often followed by strong sunshine. Check [www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com) for current temperatures and forecasts for your specific destinations. In general:

- Mid-day temperatures are typically warm and in Oct. and Nov.- expect it to be very hot! Pack long sleeved shirts and long pants made out of very light materials to protect you from the sun.
- Mornings and evenings are often cool. During winter (May-August), morning and night game drives can be downright cold! Be sure to pack a fleece jacket, wind jacket and warm beanie hat.

### **Valuables**

We highly recommend that you travel only with necessary valuables. Expensive jewelry, watches and other valuables are best left at home.

### **Luggage**

Pack light and in a soft bag. For regional flights, be sure to travel with luggage that is within the weight, type and size regulations as listed in your itinerary.

Due to the amount of luggage that gets lost or delayed on trans-Atlantic flights, it's advisable to travel with just carry-on luggage. If you do decide to check luggage in, it is advisable to lock your luggage with a TSA approved lock when flying

both locally and internationally. As an additional precaution, you may want get your check in luggage shrink-wrapped at the airport. Be sure to keep key items with you in your carry-on luggage so your trip will not be interrupted in case your check in luggage is lost or delayed.

### **Security**

Take safety precautions as you would at home and ask your local guide/lodge managers for guidance. In larger cities/towns, take extra caution- i.e. do not walk around at night, do not wear expensive looking jewelry. Always keep your passport secure. It's recommended that you carry small locks with you to lock your luggage when you are out of your room.

### **Health Insurance**

Be sure to have your traveler's insurance information on hand and to know what it includes, as well as your personal health insurance coverage.

### **Electricity**

The electricity supply throughout So'n and Eastern Africa is 220 v 50 hz. Two types of plugs are commonly used; the South African type, with three large round pins, and the smaller UK type, with three rectangular pins. While some lodges/camps may have adapters, it is best to travel with your own. Few electronics require a transformer these days but if you're bringing an item such as a hair dryer, check to see if one is needed. Most safari camps are situated in remote areas and operate on generators for a limited number of hours per day. In the event you need to charge electronic equipment, the camp staff will assist you with this. It is advisable to always bring a spare battery.

### **Communications**

Mobile phones do not operate in the more remote areas of most countries; however, the majority of camps are linked with VHF radio with a backup HF radio system. For those with GSM cellular phones, you should be able to get coverage in most urban areas. Be sure to check with your carrier regarding coverage details. A number of hotels and lodges in the urban areas have internet connection (when all is working well!)- some offer the service for free and some charge a fee.

If you are spending time in South Africa and you want to rent a mobile phone, this can be done quite easily. Companies such as Vodacom and MTN have shops in the major airports so you can pick up a phone when you arrive and drop it off when you leave the country.

### **Water & Food**

You should feel comfortable drinking the water and eating the food served in the safari camps and finer hotels and restaurants. They are set up to cater to foreign travelers. You should take caution when eating outside these establishments. It's best to drink bottled water and choose food that has been freshly and thoroughly cooked and is served hot. Raw fruit and vegetables tend to be very difficult to sterilize thus stick with vegetables that have been thoroughly cleaned and fruits that you can peel.

### **Travel in Malarial Areas**

Remember to take your anti-malarial medication as prescribed by your doctor. It's unlikely you will pick up malaria if you take precautions but, should you become ill once you return home, remind your doctor that you recently visited Africa. The best medication, though helpful, does not provide a 100% guarantee against getting malaria. Your best defense is to dress with long sleeve shirts, long pants and socks at night and use repellent. Use mosquito nets when available. If you do not have a repellent with you, most lodges/camps will have some available for you.

### **Dress**

Dress tends to be much more modest in Africa than in the West. Out of respect for the local people, women should cover their knees in the rural areas (you might want to carry a sarong with you that you can wrap over shorts when visiting people). Shorts are fine to wear out on safari. Skimpy clothing/bathing suits should just be worn at camps/lodges and resorts.

### **Laundry**

Laundry services are available at most number of safari lodges/camps. Check your itinerary to see if this is included in any of your lodge/camp stays. If it isn't included, it is generally available for a fee. To have enough time to get laundry done, one generally needs to be at the lodge/camp for two nights. At some camps they will ask that you wash your own underwear. For cultural reasons, it's always best if you can wash your own underwear.

### **Wildlife/Safety**

Always remember that the animals you are viewing are WILD. Ask your hosts/guides what the safety precautions are in each camp and when out on a drive or walk and be sure to follow these. Safety precautions need to be taken seriously and followed. Also, don't ask your guide to get closer to the wildlife. They know what is appropriate and it is not worth risking your safety along with those with you to get a better photo or view... as tempting as it may seem. The behavior of wild animals can be unpredictable, especially when they are frightened. A vehicle too close to the wildlife can hinder a hunt or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal. Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities.

### **Language**

The official language in most of the countries that you will be visiting is English, but the national language may vary according to your specific destination. While English is commonly spoken in the cities and by staff at the camps/lodges, most locals will appreciate it if you try to communicate with them in their local languages and it should make your experience more rewarding.