



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.

For countries requiring proof of Yellow Fever Inoculation, have your certificate ready to show officials.

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.

Currency

In most cases you will not need local currency. Tipping can be in USD and many lodges and hotels accept USD for services not included in your itinerary. Credit cards are accepted at most hotels but not all safari camps. You may want to get some local currency for personal purchases. You can get local currency at banks, bureau de change offices or authorized hotels. ATM machines are available in most urban areas and usually have better exchange rates. Remember ATM's will dispense cash in local currency (for current exchange rates, check out: 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

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. Please be advised that fees/taxes are subject to change without notice so always best to have cash on hand. 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.

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. **East Africa** has a single time zone, which is GMT+3. It is 7 hours ahead of EST from Apr. to Nov. (dates vary) & 8 hours the rest of the year. The clock does not change for Daylight Savings

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. Regionally, carry on luggage is restricted to 15 lb.s so be prepared to check in your luggage for these flights. 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.