



Provinces

South Africa's surface area covers 1 219 090 km², divided into nine provinces, each with its own unique landscape, economic activities, people and attractions. Few, if any, other countries offer the visitor as much breathtaking beauty and astonishing variety.

Each province has its own legislature, premier and executive council. The provinces are: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Free State, North West, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

Western Cape

This is a region of majestic mountains; well-watered valleys; wide, sandy beaches; and breathtaking scenery.

Cape Town, the legislative capital, is one of the world's most beautiful cities and is a must-see for every tourist. Other important towns in the province include Worcester and Stellenbosch for their winelands; George, renowned for indigenous timber and vegetable produce (and, nowadays, for world-class golf courses); and Oudtshoorn, known for its ostrich products and the celebrated Cango caves.

Provincial economy

Agricultural exports increased threefold over the past few years, manifesting in a growth rate of 7,4% in 2005/06.

The Western Cape's share of the national economy grew to 14,4% in 2004. Financial and business services are strong contributors to the provincial economy, while information technology is set to become an important source of growth.

Fact:

The Western Cape's fynbos is one of six floral kingdoms worldwide, with more plant species than the whole of Europe.

Some tourist attractions:

- Robben Island, where former President Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for a number of years, in Table Bay off Cape Town
- Table Mountain, with its modern cableway, which takes visitors to the top, providing breathtaking views
- the National Botanical Gardens at Kirstenbosch
- whale watching at Hermanus
- a wine-tasting tour of the spectacular winelands
- the Cape Floral Region, a world heritage site.

Western Cape



Capital:	Cape Town
Principal languages:	Afrikaans 55,3% isiXhosa 23,7% English 19,3%
Population:	4 745 500 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	129 370
% of total area:	10,6%
GDPR* at current prices (2004):	R199 412 million
% of total GDP**:	14,4%

* GDPR (Gross Domestic Product by Region)

** GDP (Gross Domestic Product)

Source: Statistics South Africa

Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape, a land of undulating hills, endless sandy beaches, majestic mountain ranges and deep green forests, is the second-largest of the nine provinces. The region ranges from the dry, desolate Great Karoo to the lush forests of the Wild Coast and the Keiskamma Valley, and the mountainous southern Drakensberg region.



Provincial economy

The Eastern Cape has excellent agricultural and forestry potential. The fertile Langkloof Valley has enormous deciduous fruit orchards, while the Karoo interior is an important sheep-farming area.

The metropolitan economies of Port Elizabeth and East London are based primarily on manufacturing, the most important being motor manufacturing. The Coega Industrial Development Zone near Port Elizabeth is one of the biggest initiatives ever undertaken in South Africa.

Some tourist attractions:

- Grahamstown, the City of the Saints, a historical, educational and religious centre
- the endless golden beaches of Port Alfred and Kenton-on-Sea
- a walking tour of the Wild Coast
- the pachyderms of the Addo Elephant National Park.

Eastern Cape



Capital:	Bhisho
Principal languages:	isiXhosa 83,4% Afrikaans 9,3% English 3,6%
Population:	6 894 300 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	169 580
% of total area:	13,9%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R112 908 million
% of total GDP:	8,1%

Source: Statistics South Africa

Fact:

KwaZulu-Natal is the only province with a monarchy provided for in its legislation.

KwaZulu-Natal

South Africa's garden province boasts a lush subtropical coastline, sweeping savanna in the east, and the magnificent Drakensberg mountains in the west. The warm Indian Ocean washing its beaches makes KwaZulu-Natal one of the country's most popular holiday destinations. Some of South Africa's best-protected indigenous coastal forests are found along the subtropical coastline.

The bustling metropolis of Durban has the busiest port in Africa.

Provincial economy

In 2004, KwaZulu-Natal contributed 16,7% of gross domestic product (GDP). Sugar-cane plantations form the mainstay of the agricultural economy. Other important agricultural contributors are dairy, fruit and vegetables, and forestry.

Tourist attractions:

- the 19th-century battlefields where imperial Britain clashed with the Zulu nation



KwaZulu-Natal

Capital:	Pietermaritzburg
Principal languages:	isiZulu 80,9% English 13,6% Afrikaans 1,5%
Population:	9 924 000 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	92 100
% of total area:	7,6%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R231 616 million
% of total GDP:	16,71%

Source: Statistics South Africa



- Durban's fascinating mix of eastern and western cultures
- dolphin-spotting on the coast between the Umdloti and Tugela rivers
- experiencing Zulu traditions and culture at authentic villages
- deep-sea fishing off Sodwana Bay
- the Greater St Lucia and Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg world heritage sites.

Northern Cape

The Northern Cape lies to the south of the mighty Orange River, which provides the basis for a healthy agricultural industry. Away from the Orange, the landscape is characterised by vast arid plains with outcroppings of haphazard rock piles.

The province is renowned for its spectacular display of spring flowers which, for a short period every year, attracts thousands of tourists.

Provincial economy

Mining, particularly the production of diamonds and iron ore, dominates the economy. The province is also rich in asbestos, manganese, fluorspar and marble. Strong growth areas include game farming and food production.

Tourist attractions:

- the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, which, together with the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana, forms Africa's first transfrontier conservation area, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
- the Augrabies Falls, among the world's greatest cataracts
- the Sol Plaatje Museum in Kimberley.

Fact:

The Rustenburg-Brits region is the largest single platinum-production area in the world.

Northern Cape



Capital:	Kimberley
Principal languages:	Afrikaans 68% Setswana 20,8% isiXhosa 2,5%
Population:	1 094 500 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	361 830
% of total area:	29,7%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R30 087 million
% of total GDP:	2,2%

Source: Statistics South Africa

Free State

The Free State lies in the heart of South Africa. Between the Vaal River in the north and the Orange River in the south, this immense rolling prairie stretches as far as the eye can see.

The capital, Bloemfontein, houses the Supreme Court of Appeal, a leading university and some top schools.

Provincial economy

Mining, particularly gold, is the biggest employer, followed by manufacturing. A gold reef of over 400 km stretches across Gauteng and the Free State. The province accounts for 30% of South Africa's total gold production, and contributes significant amounts of silver, bituminous coal and diamonds. The Free State has cultivated land covering 3,2 million ha. Field crops yield almost two-thirds of the province's agricultural income, with most of the balance being contributed by animal products.



Some tourist attractions:

- the sandstone formations at Golden Gate
- the spectacular scenery of the town of Clarens
- the King's Park Rose Garden in Bloemfontein
- the Basotho Cultural Village in the QwaQwa National Park
- the desolate beauty – and watersports – of Sterkfontein Dam.

Free State



Capital:	Bloemfontein
Principal languages:	Sesotho 64,4% Afrikaans 11,9% isiXhosa 9,1%
Population:	2 958 800 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	129 480
% of total area:	10,6%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R75 827 million
% of total GDP:	5,5%

Source: Statistics South Africa

North West

North West borders Botswana, fringed by the Kalahari Desert in the west, and the Witwatersrand in the east. A province of varied attractions, North West is home to some of South Africa's most visited national parks, the celebrated Sun City and Lost City resorts, picturesque dams and dense bush.

Provincial economy

North West is, thanks to platinum in particular, the dominant province in terms of mineral sales, which contribute 25,6% to the provincial

Fact:

Gauteng is the wealthiest province in South Africa, generating 33% of South Africa's gross domestic product.

economy. Diamonds are also mined here. Manufacturing activities include fabricated metals, food and non-metals. North West is South Africa's leading producer of white maize. Some of the world's largest cattle herds are found in the area around Vryburg.

Some tourist attractions:

- Mafikeng, site of the Anglo-Boer/South African War siege
- the mampoer (moonshine) country of Groot Marico
- entertainment, gaming and sports at Sun City and the Palace of the Lost City
- a game drive or walk in Madikwe Game Reserve, home to 10 000 animals
- spotting the Big Five in the Pilanesberg National Park
- Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site.

North West



Capital:	Mafikeng
Principal languages:	Setswana 65,4% Afrikaans 7,5% isiXhosa 5,8%
Population:	3 374 200 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	116 320
% of total area:	9,5%
GDPR at current prices (2004):	R87 127 million
% of total GDP:	6,3%

Source: Statistics South Africa



Gauteng

Although geographically the smallest of the nine provinces, Gauteng (Sotho word for 'the place of gold') contributes more than a third of South Africa's GDP.

The main cities are Johannesburg, the biggest city in southern Africa, and Pretoria, the administrative capital of the country.

Provincial economy

Manufacturing, financial and business services and logistics make Gauteng the economic powerhouse of southern Africa. Success in attracting value-added new-economy investment is borne out by the burgeoning high-tech corridor in Midrand.

Gauteng has a greater proportion of its labour force in professional, technical, managerial and executive positions than any other province. Johannesburg houses the JSE Limited, the largest securities exchange in Africa. Hundreds of leading local companies have their head offices here, as do the regional operations of many multinationals.

Some tourist attractions:

- Soweto, home to two million people and the site of much of the anti-apartheid struggle
- Pretoria in spring when some 50 000 jacaranda trees turn the city purple
- the Cradle of Humankind, the richest source of pre-hominid fossils on the planet, and a world heritage site

Fact:

The southern hemisphere's three biggest power stations are located in Mpumalanga.

Gauteng



Capital:	Johannesburg
Principal languages:	isiZulu 21,5% Afrikaans 14,4% Sesotho 13,1% English 12,5%
Population:	9 526 200 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	17 010
% of total area:	1,4%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R462 044 billion
% of total GDP:	33%

Source: Statistics South Africa

- Maropeng, near the Cradle of Humankind
- bustling, funky downtown Johannesburg, city of gold.

Mpumalanga

Mpumalanga (place where the sun rises) is bordered by Mozambique and Swaziland in the east, and Gauteng in the west. It is situated mainly on high plateau grasslands which roll eastwards for hundreds of kilometres. In the north-east, the province rises towards mountain peaks and then terminates in an immense escarpment. In some places, this escarpment plunges hundreds of metres down to the low-lying Lowveld, home to the Kruger National Park.



Provincial economy

Mpumalanga combines mining and heavy industry with the cultivation of citrus, tropical and subtropical fruits and extensive forests. The southern hemisphere's three biggest power stations are located in the province, supplied by the Witbank coalfields which are among the most extensive in the world. Middelburg is a major steel producer and Secunda has a key oil-from-coal installation.

Some tourist attractions:

- Kruger National Park and its ultra-luxurious, privately owned adjoining lodges
- the spectacular Mac Mac Falls outside Sabie
- the well-preserved historical gold-rush towns of Pilgrim's Rest and Barberton
- the stunning scenery of the Blyde River Canyon
- spectacular scenery at God's Window
- the historic train ride between Waterval-Boven and Waterval-Onder.



Mpumalanga

Capital:	Nelspruit
Principal languages:	siSwati 30,8% isiZulu 26,4% isiNdebele 12,1%
Population:	3 508 000 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	79 490
% of total area:	6,5%
GDP at current prices (2004):	R94 450 million
% of total GDP:	6,8%

Source: Statistics South Africa



Limpopo

In the extreme north of South Africa, Limpopo is a province of dramatic contrasts: bush, mountains, indigenous forests and plantations. Well-situated for economic growth and trade with other parts of southern Africa, between 1995 and 2001 the province recorded the highest real economic growth rate in South Africa. The greater part of the Kruger National Park is located within Limpopo.

Provincial economy

Limpopo is rich in minerals, including copper, asbestos, coal, iron ore, platinum, chrome, diamonds and gold. While exports are mostly primary products, the province is rich in resources, particularly in tourism, agriculture and minerals. Cattle ranching is frequently combined with hunting. Tropical and citrus fruits are extensively cultivated while tea, coffee and forestry are important economic contributors.

About 60% of South Africa's tomatoes, 33% of its oranges and 70% of its mangoes come from Limpopo. More than 45% of the R2-billion annual turnover of the Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market is from the province.

Some tourist attractions:

- the unforgettable bushveld scenery of the Waterberg
- fun and relaxation in the mineral baths of Bela-Bela
- the Big Tree near Tzaneen
- the springs of Tshipise, which attract a million visitors a year
- the Modjadji Nature Reserve
- the Mapungubwe iron age site.



Limpopo

Capital:	Polokwane
Principal languages:	Sesotho sa Leboa 52,1% Xitsonga 22,4% Tshivenda 15,9%
Population:	5 365 400 (Mid-year Population Estimates, 2006)
Area (km ²):	123 910
% of total area:	10,2%
GDPR at current prices (2004):	R93 188 million
% of total GDP:	6,7%

Source: Statistics South Africa