

Pocket Guide to South Africa 2016/17
Provinces



South Africa has been aptly described as a microcosm of the world, a place where civilisations meet. With its spectacular views, stunning wildlife and unbeatable biodiversity in contrast with its bustling modern cities, and vibrant economy, South Africa is often described as “A world in one country.”

The country has more than 290 conservation parks. It is home to almost 300 mammal species, and about 860 bird species, and 8 000 plant species.

The annual sardine run is the biggest migration on the planet.

There are eight World Heritage Sites and seven different biomes. It is considered the cradle of humankind and boasts 40% of all hominid finds on Earth. The country has a lot to offer in the form of places of interest and varying forms of amusement.

South Africa has nine provinces, which vary considerably in size. The smallest is tiny and crowded Gauteng, a highly urbanised region, and the largest the vast, arid and empty Northern Cape, which takes up almost a third of South Africa’s total land area.

Each province has its own Legislature, Premier and Executive Council. The country has common boundaries with Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, while Mozambique and Swaziland lie to the north-east. Completely enclosed by South African territory in the south-east is the mountain kingdom of Lesotho

South Africa has three capitals:

- **Cape Town**, in the City of Cape Town metropolitan municipality, Western Cape, is the legislative capital and is where the country’s Parliament is found.
- **Bloemfontein**, in Mangaung metropolitan municipality, Free State, is the judicial capital and home to the Supreme Court of Appeal.
- **Pretoria**, in the City of Tshwane metropolitan municipality, Gauteng, is the administrative capital, and the ultimate capital of the country. It is home to the Union Buildings and a large proportion of the public service.

Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape, lying on the south-eastern South African coast, is a region of great natural beauty, particularly the rugged cliffs, rough seas and dense green bush of the stretch known as the Wild Coast. In the Eastern Cape, various floral habitats meet. Along the coast, the northern tropical forests intermingle with the more temperate woods of the south.

Eastern Cape

Capital: Bhisho

Principal languages:

isiXhosa	82,7%
Afrikaans	10,3%
English	3,9%



Population: 6 996 976

Percentage share of the total population: 12,6%

Area: 168 966 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

The province is serviced by airports situated in Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha and Bhisho.

Free State

The Free State, a province of wide horizons and blue skies, farmland, mountains, goldfields and widely dispersed towns, 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.

Mining, particularly gold, is the biggest employer, followed by manufacturing.

The Free State also produces high-quality diamonds from its kimberlite pipes and fissures, and the country's largest deposit of bentonite is found in the Koppies district.

The National Development Plan has intensified the mining potential that still exists in the goldfields region of Matjhabeng in the Lejweleputswa District as a job intervention zone.

The capital, Bloemfontein, houses the Supreme Court of Appeal, a leading university and some top schools. Important towns include Welkom, Sasolburg, Odendaarsrus, Kroonstad, Parys, Phuthaditjhaba, Bethlehem.

The charming village of Clarens situated in the rolling foothills of the Maluti Mountains.

Free State

Capital: Bloemfontein

Principal languages:

Sesotho	71,9%
Afrikaans	10,9%
isiXhosa	5,7%



Population: 2 834 714

Percentage share of the total population: 5,1%

Area: 129 825 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

Some of South Africa's most valued San rock art can be found in the Free State.

Other key tourist attractions in the province include the majestic Golden Gate National Park, the annual air show in Bethlehem, the Cherry Festival in Ficksburg, and the Fauresmith International Endurance Ride equestrian event.

The annual Mangaung African Cultural Festival, known as Macufe, is hosted in partnership with the Tourism Authority and the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State.

The Vredefort Dome, 10 km in diameter, is on the United Nations' World Heritage Site List.

Gauteng

Gauteng

Capital: Johannesburg

Principal languages:

IsiZulu	23,0%
Afrikaans	10,1%
Sesotho	12,7%
English	11,3%



Population: 13 399 724

Percentage share of the total population: 24,1%

Area: 18 178 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

Gauteng is the economic centre of South Africa and the continent, responsible for over 34,8% of the country's total gross domestic product. Although it is the smallest of South Africa's nine provinces, Gauteng comprises the largest share of the South African population.

Financial and business services, logistics, manufacturing, property, telecommunications and trade are some of the most important economic sectors.

The province is an integrated industrial complex with major areas of economic activity in three subregional areas, namely the Vaal Triangle; the East, West and Central Rand, and Pretoria. Johannesburg houses the Johannesburg Stock Exchange Limited, the largest securities exchange in Africa.

Most overseas visitors enter South Africa via OR Tambo International Airport. Some 50 km north of Johannesburg lies Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa and home to the Union Buildings.

KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal, one of the country's most popular holiday destinations, is the province with the second largest

KwaZulu-Natal

Capital: Pietermaritzburg

Principal languages:

isiZulu	82,5%
English	12,5%
Afrikaans	1,0%



Population: 11 065 240

Percentage share of the total population: 19,9%

Area: 94 361 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

population. This verdant region includes South Africa's lush subtropical east coast. Washed by the warm Indian Ocean, it stretches from Port Edward in the south, and northwards to the Mozambique boundary.

In addition to the magnificent coastline, there is the sweeping savanna in the east, and the majestic Drakensberg mountain range in the west that offers some of the country's most awe-inspiring landscapes.

Within the area is a vast 243 000-hectare sweep of basalt summits and buttresses. This section was formally granted World Heritage status in November 2000, and was renamed uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park.

Visitors can enter the province through the King Shaka International Airport at La Mercy, north of Durban or use the extensive national road network. There are also two major harbours – the port of Durban, which is one the busiest in Africa, and Richards Bay, which is an important coal-export harbour.

There are several tertiary institutions of learning, such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban Institute of Technology.

KwaZulu-Natal is the only province with a monarchy specifically provided for in the Constitution.

Limpopo

Limpopo

Capital: Polokwane

Principal languages:

Sepedi	56,0%
Tshivenda	17,1%
Xitsonga	16,6%



Population: 5 799 090

Percentage share of the total population: 10,4%

Area: 125 755 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost province, borders onto Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana, making it the ideal entrance to Africa. Named after the Limpopo River that flows along its northern border, the province is rich in wildlife, spectacular scenery and a wealth of historical and cultural treasures.

This province is in the Savanna Biome, an area of mixed grassland and trees, which is generally known as bushveld. The province's natural resources include more than 50 provincial reserves, as well as several private game reserves. The largest section of the Kruger National Park is situated along the eastern boundary of Limpopo with Mozambique.

Mpumalanga

Mpumalanga

Capital: Nelspruit

Principal languages:

Siswati	29,1%
isiZulu	28,8%
Xitsonga	9,6%
isiNdebele	10,1%



Population: 4 335 964

Percentage share of the total population: 7,8%

Area: 76 495 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017 and Community Survey 2016*

Mpumalanga means *Place where the sun rises*. Due to the province's spectacular scenic beauty and abundance of wildlife, it is one of South Africa's major tourist destinations. Mpumalanga falls mainly within the Grassland Biome. The escarpment and the Lowveld form a transitional zone between this grassland area and the Savanna Biome.

The area has a network of excellent roads and railway connections, making it highly accessible. Mpumalanga is also served by a number of small airports, such as the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport.

Mbombela is the capital of the province and the administrative and business centre of the Lowveld. Other important towns are eMalahleni, Standerton, Piet Retief, Malalane, Ermelo, Barberton and Sabie.

Large-scale manufacturing occurs especially in the northern Highveld area, particularly chrome-alloy and steel manufacturing.

Northern Cape

Northern Cape

Capital: Kimberley

Principal languages:

Afrikaans 56,8%

Setswana 33,4%

Population: 1 193 780

Percentage share of the total population: 2,1%

Area: 372 889 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*



The Northern Cape is the largest province in South Africa, covering 31% of the country's surface area (slightly bigger than Germany). However, the Northern Cape remains the province with the smallest share of the South African population.

The province is noted for its San rock art, diamond diggings, 4X4 safaris and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. It is a vast stretch of semi-desert land. The province is renowned for its spectacular display of spring flowers, which, for a short period every year, attracts thousands of tourists.

Sutherland hosts the southern hemisphere's largest astronomical observatory, the multinational-sponsored Southern African Large Telescope. The Northern Cape is one of two sites to host the Square Kilometre Array radio-telescope (better known as the SKA Project), the largest and most advanced radio telescope in the world.

Among many other benefits, the province's tourism and hospitality industry is profiting from the project, as scientists and other interested parties are flooding into the town of Carnarvon. Electrical power generation presents an opportunity for greater economic diversification and growth in the province.

North West

North West lies in the north of South Africa, on the Botswana border, fringed by the Kalahari desert in the west, Gauteng to the east, and the Free State to the south. Sun City, the Pilanesberg National Park, the Madikwe Game Reserve, the Cradle of Humankind Site, the Taung Heritage Site, the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust and the Lesedi Cultural Village are some of the tourist attractions.

Some of the largest cattle herds in the world are found at Stellaland near Vryburg, which explains why this area is often

North West

Capital: Mahikeng

Principal languages:

Setswana 71,5%

Afrikaans 8,96%

isiXhosa 5,51%



Population: 3 748 435

Percentage share of the total population: 6,7%

Area: 104 882 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

referred to as the Texas of South Africa. Marico is also cattle country. North West is South Africa's major producer of white maize.

Mining contributes 23,3% to North West's economy, and makes up 22,5% of the South African mining industry. It is known as the Platinum Province due to its abundant mineral riches of platinum, chrome and the platinum group metals. It is also home to a strong dimension stone sector, due to the riches of its slate, marble and granite deposits. The Rustenburg and Brits districts produce 94% of the country's platinum. In addition to granite, marble, fluorspar and diamonds, the province also produces a quarter of South Africa's gold.

Western Cape

Western Cape

Capital: Cape Town

Principal languages:

Afrikaans 46,6%

isiXhosa 31,1%

English 19,6%



Population: 6 279 730

Percentage share of the total population: 11,3%

Area: 129 462 km²

Source: Stats SA's *Mid-year population estimates 2017* and *Community Survey 2016*

Situated on the south-western tip of Africa, the Western Cape with its wide beaches and breathtaking scenery, complemented by a rich variety of cultures, historical landmarks, world-class restaurants and entertainment, is a world-famous tourist destination.

Table Mountain, the Cape winelands, Robben Island and the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens are among the province's most popular tourist attractions.

The Western Cape is also known for its floral diversity. The Cape Floristic Region World Heritage Site comprising eight separate protected areas, covers an area of more than 553 000 ha stretching from the Cape Peninsula to the Eastern Cape. The Knysna-Tsitsikamma region has the country's biggest indigenous forests.

Cape Town has proved again that it's a film-friendly destination and it is reaping the benefits.

The Department of Trade and Industry's rebate to international productions is also a big incentive for foreign film-makers.

