



Overseas Security Advisory Council
Bureau of Diplomatic Security
U.S. Department of State

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South Africa 2019 Crime & Safety Report

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses South Africa at Level 2, indicating travelers should exercise increased caution due to crime, civil unrest, and drought.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The U.S. in Mission South Africa does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit cannot recommend a particular individual, service or location as "approved" and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

Review OSAC's [South Africa-specific page](#) for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

Crime Threats

There is serious risk from crime in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Violent crime remains an ever-present threat in South Africa; however, criminals do not single out U.S. citizens for criminal activity, as most crimes are opportunistic in nature. Common crimes include murder, rape, armed robbery, carjacking, home invasion, property theft, smash and grab, and ATM robbery. Armed robbery is the most prevalent major crime in South Africa, most often committed by organized gangs armed with handguns and/or knives. The South African Police Service (SAPS) recently released [April 2017 – March 2018 crime statistics](#)  for all major crimes.

Of particular concern are home invasion robberies and carjackings. These crimes are often violent and can occur at any time of day. In many cases, criminals prefer to attack when the occupants are home or arriving/leaving the premises because the residential alarm is off and the occupants can identify where valuables are kept. Measures to combat home invasions should include several layers of residential security (e.g. perimeter walls, electric fencing, loops on the electric fencing, alarms, motion detectors, grilles on windows/doors). Vehicle gates should also be equipped with anti-lift brackets, as criminals may use crowbars and pneumatic jacks to lift gates off their tracks.

The majority of carjackings occur when the victim arrives at home and pulls into the driveway or entrance gate; the carjackers pull up behind the victim to block an escape path. Victims who resist or fail to comply with demands may be killed or seriously injured. In many scenarios, robbers force the victim into the house, rob the victim of their valuables, and take the vehicle.

Avoid armored cash-in-transit (CIT) vehicles (and their uniformed personnel), especially when they are making deposits or picking up cash receipts. They are frequent targets of well-armed gangs who are not afraid to use weapons, even in crowded public areas.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world. While criminals do not specifically target foreigners for sexual assault, foreigners have been victims. Due to the extremely high rate of HIV/AIDS, survivors of rape or sexual assault should seek immediate medical attention (prophylaxis against HIV and other STDs) and report the crime to the police.

Financial and identity theft crimes, including debit/credit card and advance-fee scams, are common. Most businesses (e.g. gas stations, restaurants) bring portable credit card machines directly to the customer to allow them to swipe their card. Despite these safeguards, cards are frequently cloned, resulting in fraudulent charges. Only use cards in reputable establishments. In order to prevent card skimming, physically watch your card when processed (swiped) and ensure that credit cards are not taken to a back room for processing. Check your credit/debit card account for any unauthorized purchases.

ATM fraud includes the placement of a skimming device on the ATM itself or the ruse of a "helpful citizen" who offers to assist. In this scam, a machine does not work (because it has been purposely disabled), and the helpful citizen clones your ATM card with a small reader and walks off with your PIN. Politely refuse any help. Never give out PINs. Pick ATMs carefully; only use ATMs in a controlled area (shopping mall, hotel), and avoid ATMs on the street. Thoroughly inspect any ATM for suspicious attachments/devices. For more information, review OSAC's report, [The Overseas Traveler's Guide to ATM Skimmers & Fraud](#).

Large public gatherings, such as concerts and sporting events, are rife with criminal activity. Police are aware that that criminals frequent these types of events. However, recent high-profile incidents indicate that police continue to struggle to provide effective protection at large entertainment events.

Cybersecurity Issues

A Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity Bill, with the goal of codifying cybercrimes offences and penalties in South Africa, is currently in the revision process with no set timeline of advancement through the legislative process. As the bill waits, South Africa is experiencing a significant rise in cybercrime. SAPS lacks the resources and technical capability to combat the crimes effectively. Multinational and South African businesses with the financial resources to do so continue to invest heavily in cybersecurity to protect their business assets. Much of the country, to include critical infrastructure, remains vulnerable to cyberattacks. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Cybersecurity Basics](#).

Exercise caution when connecting to public WiFi hotspots, as it is difficult to ascertain if the connection is secure. If you must connect to a public WiFi hotspot, use a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

Identity theft remains a significant concern due to several contributing factors: SIM swap fraud, a strong infrastructure of money wiring services, readily available internet, prepaid cell phones, the risk of corruption in private companies and government agencies, and limited police resources/expertise to combat this type of crime.

Romance scams are a growing problem, with fake romantic relationships or engagements developed via the Internet luring victims into sending money to support supposed education, health, immigration, or job-related problems. Never send money to or on behalf of someone you have never met.

An advanced-fee scheme occurs when the victim pays money to someone in anticipation of receiving something of greater value (e.g. a loan, contract, investment, inheritance, or gift) and then receives little/nothing in return. Victims have lost large sums of money to these scams. Visit the [FBI common fraud schemes](#) website before providing any personal/financial details or making any financial commitment. Additional financial scam information is available at the [Department of State international financial scams webpage](#).

Other Areas of Concern

Avoid township neighborhoods and the Central Business Districts (CBDs) of major cities, particularly after dark, unless traveling with an organized tour group or someone who knows the area. Townships are defined as less developed but heavily populated areas, generally located on but not limited to the edges of urban centers. Increase awareness in these areas during daylight, due to high crime rates and spontaneous protests often involving roadblocks and demonstrators burning tires/throwing rocks and other projectiles.

Areas Off-Limits to U.S. Diplomatic Mission Employees:

Occasionally, specific locations may be declared off-limits to employees of the U.S. Diplomatic Mission to South Africa because of risk of violence or other physical dangers. When these same dangers apply to private travelers, the Mission will release an alert to the fact that it has placed a location off limits to Mission personnel. Check the Mission's website to review active and archived Alerts.

U.S. Consulate General Cape Town requires that all employees use fully armored vehicles for official travel into townships in the Cape Peninsula or areas prone to high levels of crime.

Direct questions or concerns regarding a specific area to the Regional Security Offices in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, or Durban.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic moves on the left side of the road and steering wheels are on the right side of the vehicle. There are also different "rules of the road." Vehicles pass on either side or travel at varying speeds (some very fast, others very slow) in all lanes. It is common to see older, poorly maintained vehicles broken down and creating road hazards. Remain vigilant when driving on the highway, particularly at night. The Embassy and Consulates prohibit employees from traveling on highways after dark outside of most major metropolitan areas.

Texting/talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device while driving is a violation of law, and can result in heavy fines, the impoundment of your cell phone, or the solicitation of a bribe by an errant police officer.

While the highway system and toll roads are generally in good condition, automobile accidents are the highest single risk to drivers and pedestrians. This is due to dangerous driving practices, speeding, alcohol use, slow and un-roadworthy vehicles, the condition of the road surfaces, and the frequent presence of pedestrians/animals in the road outside of large cities. South Africa has a high rate of fatal traffic accidents; according to the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), there were more than 14,000 fatal crashes in 2017; final 2018 fatal crash statistics are not yet available. During the 2018-2019 holiday season local news reported more than 1,600 road fatalities nationwide.

Toll roads have emergency call boxes similar to those in the United States. Secondary roads are often in poor condition and frequently marred by potholes. Highway signage can be inconsistent, this is more evident when driving on secondary and tertiary roads. Highway lighting is limited outside major cities and towns. Road construction is often poorly marked. Many construction zones outside metropolitan areas use a “stop-and-go” approach where one lane is completely closed and the adjacent lane is used as a one-way, alternating between directions.

Roadway policing mainly consists of speed traps and checkpoints where officers check for mechanical malfunctions, operator compliance with license restrictions, and alcohol consumption. The legal blood alcohol limit is .05 percent; this is strictly enforced. When stopped at a checkpoint, authorities may require proof of a valid driver's license. Police have stopped some foreign drivers and informed that their foreign driver's license is not valid in South Africa, in an attempt to secure a bribe. Foreign driver's licenses, in English or with an attached translation, are normally valid for three months after entering the country. International driver's licenses are valid and accepted for the duration of the license.

Other common road-related crimes include smash-and-grab robberies. A robber smashes a vehicle window to grab what is easily accessible (e.g. purse, brief case) when a motorist is stopped in traffic or at a stop light. Once snatching the item, the robber flees (often into nearby townships where it is dangerous to pursue them). These crimes can happen anywhere, but most occur at major intersections and at highway off-ramps.

Criminals may target vehicles on the highways at any time, day or night. Gangs will place debris in the road and wait for a vehicle to stop after hitting the object. In another frequent scenario, an individual (or several working together) may position a vehicle on the side of the road with an apparent mechanical problem attempting to flag down passing traffic for help. When a passerby stops to assist or to inspect damage, the criminals rob the driver of valuables, and sometimes steal their car or assaulted them. If a vehicle is on the side of the road, do not stop to render assistance. Instead, call 10-111 (nationwide emergency police number) to report the vehicle's location so that the authorities can respond.

Motorists should be aware of their general geographic location and travel with a South African road atlas or a GPS navigation system. Some GPS systems may route motorists through dangerous neighborhoods/townships and/or on remote/unsafe rural roads. Always travel with a fully charged cell phone and a mobile charger. Keep emergency telephone numbers for the [South African Automobile Association \(AA\)](#) [↗], which recognizes an American Automobile Association (AAA) membership, or other roadside assistance companies. AA and other roadside assistance companies can provide armed response units that will wait with motorists until the vehicle is repaired or towed to a service center.

Lock doors, remove valuables from view, and keep windows up. Remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead of you to allow space for avoidance maneuvers. Wait inside your vehicle on the street until the vehicle gate is open before pulling into a residence; this will provide you an escape route if confronted. Stay on main roads and keep to well-illuminated, public areas. If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest safe area (any area that is populated or normally covered by security cameras). Use caution when traveling, and be prepared with a full tank of fuel, spare tire, cell phone, water, and other supplies when traveling in rural areas.

For more information on self-driving, review OSAC's Reports [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#) and [Road Safety in Africa](#).

As a pedestrian or cyclist, take extreme care when crossing streets or traveling on roadways. Collisions involving vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists are common. Drivers are often aggressive toward pedestrians and cyclists, and fail to yield the right-of-way, even in marked crosswalks.

Public Transportation Conditions

The U.S. Mission prohibits personnel from using minibus taxis, hailing taxis from the street, or hiring taxis from a stand; use individual metered taxis dispatched from established taxi companies, hotel taxis, and tour buses. Public transportation accidents involving trains, buses, minibus taxis, and private cars are a regular occurrence. Often, the safety and security standards on public transportation systems, especially in urban areas and townships, are not on par with U.S. standards. Minibus taxi drivers are often unlicensed and may drive erratically. In addition, criminal elements have targeted minibus taxis and buses for hijacking and robbery.

The U.S. Mission also prohibits personnel from using [Metrorail](#) [↗] service. Despite a 2004 Constitutional Court order stating that Metrorail has an obligation to ensure that reasonable measures are taken to provide for the security of rail commuters, violent crime, accidents, and disgruntled passengers acting out are not uncommon. The long-distance rail service [Shosholozha Meyl](#) [↗]; the suburban rapid rail service [Gautrain](#) [↗]; luxury rail services, such as [Shosholozha Meyl Premier Classe](#) [↗], [Blue Train](#) [↗] and [Rovos Rail](#) [↗] are generally safe and reliable, though mechanical problems and criminal incidents do sometimes occur.

Use only those rideshare companies with a dispatch application that provides vehicle description, license plate number, and the driver's name, picture, user rating, and the ability to share trip information. Verify the information provided by the company, such as the vehicle make/model, license plate number, and driver's name/picture, prior to entering the vehicle. Given the ongoing altercations between metered taxi drivers and rideshare companies, do not use rideshare services near traditional taxi stands. Do not use rideshare services for travel outside major metropolitan areas, or to previously disadvantaged areas. For more information on ridesharing, review OSAC's Annual Briefing report, [Safety and Security in the Share Economy](#).

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Pilferage of luggage at OR Tambo International Airport (JHB) in Johannesburg occurs, particularly at the passenger pick-up area outside the arrivals terminal, where criminals may pose as Good Samaritans offering to assist with luggage. Airline check-in staff remind travelers not to place valuables in their luggage.

Criminal syndicates have followed arriving passengers from JHB and robbed them, either at their final destination (e.g. hotel or residence) or en route to their destination. SAPS has seen the following methods used to commit the follow-from-airport robberies: waiting until arrival at a residence or hotel; pretending to be police, using fake badges and blue lights; using two vehicles to block in a victim at a traffic light; and slightly bumping a vehicle to create an accident scene. If you think someone is following you, drive to the nearest safe area.

Other Travel Conditions

There have been numerous incidents in which fake police officers pull over vehicles to rob passengers at gunpoint. These are referred to as “Blue Light” robberies. Many victims report just having withdrawn a large sum of money from an ATM, or exchanged money at a foreign exchange booth. If the vehicle stops for these police imposters, they rob occupants of their valuables at gunpoint. These fake police officers often use unmarked vehicles with a police light in the dashboard, and flash what appears to be a badge. In some incidents criminals have used modified fake, “marked police vehicles” and worn a police uniform. If a marked or unmarked police vehicle forces you to pull over, turn on your emergency blinkers and drive slowly to a secure, well-illuminated area.

Terrorism Threat

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is moderate risk from terrorism in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Traditionally, South Africa’s nexus to international terrorism has been through recruiting, funding, and using the country as a safe haven for international terrorists. There has been a visible increase in terrorism-related activity locally. In May 2018, three unidentified assailants armed with knives attacked and attempted to burn down the Shi’a Imam Hussein Mosque in Verulam, Durban. The assailants stabbed two worshippers and killed the mosque’s imam. Authorities discovered an [explosive device](#) in the same mosque a few days following the attack.

Throughout July 2018, police discovered a [spate of incendiary devices](#) planted throughout Durban. Several of the devices were in shopping malls, and another was underneath a parked car in a neighborhood where a major city festival was taking place. There were no known related injuries or deaths, and the motive behind the incidents remains unclear. Police apprehended 19 suspects in October 2018 in relation to the mosque attack and incendiary devices.

Analysts have highlighted that more attention needs to be paid to an increase in sectarian tensions and growing radicalization among a minority of South Africa’s Muslim population.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

In a [Pew Research Center study](#) released in June 2018, 57% of South African respondents had a favorable view of the United States. Occasionally, political commentators assert that the United States is to blame for unemployment and other inequalities in South Africa.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

After more than 20 years of democratic rule since the end of apartheid, the government maintains a vibrant free society and a market-based economy. Despite inequality in income and educational opportunity, persistent poverty, a severe HIV/AIDS pandemic, and violent crime, South Africa remains a successful multiparty democratic society and boasts a robust civil society.

KwaZulu-Natal, a coastal province, suffers from a long history of political violence. The province has been plagued with politically motivated killings of African National Congress (ANC), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and National Freedom Party (NFP) members. In recent years, intra-party assassinations have risen significantly, with political party members allegedly ordering the murder of rival party members, either in the run-up to elections, or in connection to a potential tender award or other economic benefit. The violence is targeted at local politicians, not U.S. citizens.

Civil Unrest

There is moderate risk from civil unrest in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Labor strikes and protests occur frequently and can be violent and disruptive. Avoid strikes and protests, given the frequency at which these turn violent. Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces host the political and economic capitals of the country, and typically experience more labor unrest than other provinces. Labor unions carry substantial political clout, and can mobilize thousands of people. Typical protest activities include blocking major thoroughfares (termed a “go slow”) with vehicles and/or debris, or gridlocking central Johannesburg with sheer numbers of protestors. Labor unrest affects the mining, farming, retail, civil service, public transportation, private trucking, and manufacturing sectors.

Unannounced protests have led to property destruction and assaults. Unannounced large-scale strikes have occurred in the mining sector and in agricultural areas in the Western Cape in recent years. These wildcat strikes involved thousands and led to numerous deaths, injuries, and extensive property damage.

Although not connected to industrial action, another form of protest is “service delivery protests,” which often flare up in neighborhoods when water, electricity, or other public utilities are cut off. These protests often result in burning tires, stoning vehicles, and blocking roads.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from other African countries perceived to be competing for jobs with South Africans are sometimes the target of mobs. These incidents are often violent and mainly occur in the largest townships and in central business districts. The government attributes the attacks to high unemployment; the official unemployment rate is over 26%. The government has challenges in addressing the root causes. Local populations sometimes perceive law enforcement as ineffective, prompting instances of vigilantism. In recent years, several well-publicized fatal incidents have involved mob attacks on citizens of other African and South Asian countries. Authorities seldom prosecute perpetrators successfully.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Since 2015, South Africa has experienced its worst drought since 1982, with water shortages across the country. Although the severity of the drought is episodic, many areas of South Africa are still experiencing severe drought and tight water restrictions. Funding for long-term water projects is limited due mainly to a lagging economy, inefficient management of water infrastructure, and non-payment for services rendered.

During the rainy season, thunderstorms, lightning strikes, or water damage often disrupt power to alarm systems, traffic lights, and other electronic equipment. Use adequate surge protectors to protect computers and other electric equipment.

While visiting game parks and reserves, it is dangerous to leave your vehicle or be on foot, even in the presence of a guide. Observe all local/park regulations, and exercise appropriate caution in unfamiliar surroundings. Visitors have been seriously injured and killed by wild animals. Even in the most serene settings, wild animals present a threat to life and safety. For more information, review OSAC’s report, [When Wildlife Attacks](#).

If visiting the expansive coastline, be mindful of the possible presence of sharks when swimming or engaging in water sports. Accidents can occur when swimming in the ocean, on both public and private beaches, or walking/climbing on shore areas that are not designated lifeguard-patrolled beaches. Do not swim alone in isolated beach areas, and do not dive into unknown bodies of water; hidden rocks, fast-moving currents, or shallow depths can cause serious injury or death. Rip tides are common but unpredictable. For more information, review OSAC’s report, [Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Abroad](#).

Critical Infrastructure

Although the infrastructure is relatively stable, it is not without challenges. Consumer demands, insufficient power generation, and the theft of electrical wire and other equipment often interfere with the ability of government-owned utilities to supply power. South Africa’s primary electricity supplier, Eskom, periodically conducts load-shedding (rolling blackouts) to safeguard the electrical grid. Electricity outages have increased even though Eskom has brought new generation capacity on line. Eskom continues to address overdue maintenance issues and upgrades infrastructure, but these fixes have not eased load-shedding of electricity. Consider purchasing residential generators for backup electricity. The U.S. Mission requires its personnel to have a generator at home.

Telephone landlines are becoming more unreliable and difficult to maintain or replace. Copper wire is often stolen and is, therefore, scarce. Telephone systems are saturated, making it increasingly difficult to get new phone numbers and to have landlines installed or replaced.

Economic Concerns

The national, provincial, and local governments remain committed to combating the production and importation of counterfeit products and to enforcing intellectual property rights per World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments. However, the demand for name-brand items at all socio-economic levels sustains the demand for counterfeit products (e.g. music, clothing, accessories). South Africa has made progress against counterfeit digital media through close cooperation between authorities and industry.

The import of manufactured counterfeit products has been more difficult to stem. One manufacturer of a U.S. clothing brand in Durban is working with local authorities to remove Chinese-made imitations from the streets and to halt importation of these items. The inability to find the source of the counterfeit products has hampered local investigations. The U.S. Mission is in close contact with the South Africa Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) in combating counterfeiting and protecting intellectual property rights.

Personal Identity Concerns

South Africa is one of the most progressive countries in the world in the protection of LGBTI rights, but it still faces a number of challenges. The Constitution outlaws discrimination based on sexual orientation, and same-sex marriage has been legal since 2006. Although the legal system protects LGBTI individuals, public attitudes are divergent. Human-rights groups reported the local LGBTI community, particularly in the townships, was subject to hate crimes, gender violence, and murder. There have been no reports of violence against U.S. travelers based on their sexual orientation. LGBTI travelers should exercise caution when visiting traditional communities, as they may be less accepting of same-sex public displays of affection or LGBTI culture than major cities and tourist destinations. For more detailed information about LGBTI rights, review the State Department's annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#). For further information for LGBTI travelers, please read the State Department's [LGBTI Travel Information page](#).

Drug-related Crimes

South Africa is the largest market for illicit drugs in sub-Saharan Africa, and serves as a transshipment point for cocaine and heroin primarily destined for Europe. South American cocaine enters South Africa primarily via air to JHB Airport. The trade is often controlled by Nigerian criminal organizations, who distribute a portion for local consumption and traffic the remainder internationally. Heroin, primarily of Afghan origin, typically arrives in ports in Tanzania, Kenya, and Mozambique from southwest Asia before being smuggled overland into South Africa, often transiting Zambia and Botswana. Heroin not consumed within South Africa is then trafficked via air to Europe, although a small percentage is shipped to the United States. Methamphetamine (known locally as "tik"), methcathinone ("cat"), and methaqualone are synthesized from precursor chemicals imported primarily from India and China.

Cannabis is legal in South Africa for personal consumption, but distribution remains illegal. However, a dangerous trend that has emerged in poorer communities is the use of a combination of heroin and marijuana called "nyaope." Distributors often adulterate such drugs with toxic substances. Quantifying domestic drug use is difficult. SAPS annual crime statistics indicate that drug-related crime continued to rise in 2018. The stated goals of South Africa's National Drug Master Plan are to "reduce illicit drug supply, demand, and harm," but insufficient resources and limited capacity challenge implementation. An ongoing anti-crime operation, Operation Fiela, focuses enforcement efforts on areas identified as havens of illegal drugs, weapons, and other illegal activities, but has attracted controversy for its alleged targeting of foreign nationals. The nationwide operation involves South African police and military raids, and has resulted in the arrest of an estimated 10,000 suspects and the seizure of large quantities of weapons and drugs.

South Africa cooperates with international counterparts to increase the impact of its efforts against transnational drug trafficking and other forms of crime. U.S. law enforcement agencies effectively coordinate with South African counterparts on investigations and operations, and provide training to build capacity.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) has occurred on few occasions. ISIS sympathizers have been arrested in connection with some KFR operations. U.S. citizens have not been the target of kidnap for political gain. There have been a few cases in which U.S. citizens seeking business opportunities have been abducted by criminals misrepresenting themselves as legitimate businesspersons. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Kidnapping: The Basics](#).

Police Response

SAPS has made a strong effort to decrease its response time in recent years. While active crimes will take precedence over crimes that have happened in the past, SAPS tries to respond to incidents as soon as resources allow. SAPS patrol vehicles will typically be the first responding unit. Officers are capable of opening a case docket and taking statements at the scene, or can advise the complainant to report the crime at the nearest police station. There are effective detective programs at all SAPS stations, and detectives are on duty 24/7. Cases are reported to detectives, who will generally make contact with the complainant once they are ready to continue the investigation. Though there has been an improvement in community policing, many in the public mistrust police and see them as corrupt.

The formation and use of community watch groups is increasing slowly. They complement SAPS efforts to detect/deter crime, and provide improved response to calls of a serious nature.

Unauthorized photography of certain sites (government buildings, similar locations) might result in fines/arrest. For more information, review OSAC's report, [Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography](#).

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Although corruption does occur in South Africa, complaints of street-level shakedowns for money or similar forms of harassment are not common among the U.S. expatriate community. According to the Ethics Institute's [2017 South Africa Citizen's Bribery Survey](#)^[2], 37% of respondents knew someone who had been asked to pay a bribe in the past year. On occasion, motorists have been informed they can pay a fine directly to the officer after being caught in a speed trap or at a road-worthy checkpoint. If this occurs, the best course of action is to advise the officer to provide a citation and pay the fine at a police station.

U.S. citizens arrested or detained by SAPS, or who feel threatened, can contact American Citizen Services at:

U.S. Consulate General – Johannesburg

1 Sandton Drive, Sandton, 2146

Telephone: 011-290-3510

After-hours emergency assistance: 079-111-1684

E-mail: ACSJohannesburg@state.gov 

U.S. Consulate General – Cape Town

2 Reddam Avenue, Westlake 7945

Telephone: 021-702-7300

After-hours emergency assistance: 079-111-0391

E-mail: ConsularCapeTown@state.gov 

U.S. Consulate General – Durban

Delta Towers, 31st floor

303 Dr. Pixley kaSeme Street, Durban 4001

Telephone: 031-305-7600

After-hours emergency assistance: 079-111-1445

E-mail: ConsularDurban@state.gov 

Crime Victim Assistance

The national police emergency number is: 10-111 or 112 from a mobile phone.

Ambulance is either 10177 from any phone or 112 from a mobile phone.

Police/Security Agencies

SAPS has nationwide policing responsibilities broken down into national, provincial and municipal levels. In addition to SAPS, there are various traffic and metropolitan police departments throughout South Africa. The National Traffic Police has authority to enforce traffic laws throughout South Africa, especially on all major highways. In addition, there are traffic police departments at the provincial level in each of South Africa's nine provinces. Metropolitan police departments enforce both traffic and criminal offenses in their areas of operation.

For residential/commercial properties in affluent neighborhoods, the use of private security companies is normal for first response to a crime in progress. These private companies generally have 1-2 armed officers in response vehicles and patrol neighborhoods throughout the day. While roving security reaction units protect and react to violent crimes in areas that are more affluent, patrols have done little to decrease the prevalence of these crimes.

Medical Emergencies

The private health care sector ranks among the best in the world. U.S. government employees elsewhere in Africa often evacuate to South Africa for medical treatment.

Counterfeit medication is not a significant problem in South Africa, but the lack of effective border controls, well-organized criminal syndicates controlling illicit practices, and the tremendous amount of proceeds they generate means counterfeit medications may become a challenge. Illicit practices affect all levels of society, although the poor are the primary targets. If you believe your medication might be counterfeit, immediately return it and report to SAPS or local authorities.

Ground Ambulance Services

NetCare 911: 082 911 (Private, nationwide)

ER 24: 084 124 (Private, nationwide)

The nationwide emergency number for an ambulance is: 10-177

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

Three private health corporations ([NetCare](#) , [Mediclinic](#) , and [Life Hospitals](#) ) dominate the private health care system in South Africa. Each corporation owns approximately 60 hospitals throughout the country. Nearly every medium-sized city, including those near remote game parks, has a private hospital operated by at least one of these corporations. The more remote hospitals provide less specialized care; it is best to transfer to one of the three corporate hospitals if significantly ill or injured. The three corporate websites have search tools to find a hospital, clinic, or doctor anywhere in South Africa.

For medical assistance, refer to the U.S. Mission's [Medical Assistance page](#).

Available Air Ambulance Services

International SOS: Tel: +27 (11) 541-1100 or +27 (11) 541-1300

NetCare 911: Tel: 082 911 or +27 (10) 209 8392

Insurance Guidance

Consider purchasing a supplemental medical evacuation (medevac) insurance policy prior to travel. U.S. health insurance is usually not accepted at any medical facility in South Africa. It is common that a foreigner without local health insurance may have to pay for medical services in advance with cash or a major credit card. Those unable to pay a deposit may be referred to the closest public health facility for treatment. For more information, refer to OSAC's report, [Medical Evacuation: A Primer](#).

Country-Specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

HIV/AIDS remains a major public health concern. Due to South Africa's high HIV infection rate, the U.S. government advises all personnel/visitors to seek immediate medical assistance in the event of a sexual assault, high-risk sexual encounter, or blood-borne injury.

Travelers entering South Africa from World Health Organization (WHO) yellow fever-designated countries must present their current and valid International Certificate of Vaccination record (commonly called a "yellow card") as approved by the WHO or a statement of medical exemption (also located on the same "yellow card"). Yellow fever vaccination must have been administered at least ten days prior to arrival in accordance with WHO regulations. Immigration inspectors do not generally accept letters, scans, copies, or faxes regarding prior yellow fever vaccination. This requirement is imposed on travelers flying to South Africa via any WHO-designated yellow fever country, even if the plane makes an unscheduled landing in a yellow fever country. Passengers in transit from Senegal and Ghana that do not leave the aircraft do not require a yellow fever certificate. While authorities may not apply this requirement consistently, travelers who cannot present an original, valid yellow card risk denial of entry. Yellow fever vaccinations are generally not administered at ports of entry. According to the WHO, a yellow fever vaccination is now valid for life, but not all countries honor this new guideline.

Malaria does exist in the low elevation areas in the northeast, including Kruger National Park, the border with Mozambique, and in Gauteng province. Consult your medical provider or a travel medical clinic on prophylactic malaria medications and take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

South Africa has the world's third-highest rate of tuberculosis (TB) infection, behind India and China, with WHO statistics estimating 500,000 cases of active TB in 2011; about 1% of the population develops active TB each year, an increase of 400% over the past 15 years. TB continues to be the leading cause of death in South Africa. WHO gives a figure of 25,000 deaths from TB in South Africa in 2013, but this excludes those people who had both TB and HIV infection when they died.

Water is potable from most city taps, and food bought from grocery chains does not require decontamination.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [South Africa](#).

OSAC Country Council Information

The Country Council in Johannesburg (including members based in Pretoria) meets quarterly, as does the Country Council in Cape Town. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC's [Africa team](#) with any questions.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

877 Pretorius St, Arcadia 0083; Hours 0745-1700 (Monday-Thursday) and 0745-1245 (Friday)

Embassy Contact Numbers

Telephone: +27 (12) 431-4000

Marine Security Guard Post 1: +27 (12) 431-4169 (After Hours)

Regional Security Office: +27 (12) 431-4099

Email: DS_RSO_Pretoria@state.gov

Website: <https://za.usembassy.gov/>

Consular Services Coverage by Province

[Consulate General Cape Town](#): Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape

[Consulate General Durban](#): KwaZulu-Natal

[Consulate General Johannesburg](#): Gauteng, Free State, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and North-West

Embassy Guidance

U.S. travelers should register with the U.S. Department of State [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Additional Resources

[Country Specific Information for South Africa](#)

Attachments

 [OSAC - 2019 CSR - South Africa.pdf](#) ↓

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