



South Africa & Swaziland

eat like a lion – on a shoestring!

Tourcode: **SZB**

Groepsgrootte: **2-22**

Aantal dagen: **16**

Reisbeschrijving

Kruger National Park

Day 3 will take us to Kruger National Park, where we'll spend three days stalking the wild animals that live in this beautiful reserve. We'll be able to take safaris in both the mornings and the evenings, with the rest of the day free to enjoy the pool or appreciate the magnificent bird-life.

Swaziland

On day 5 we'll travel to Swaziland. Be warned that this will be a culture shock! The land is incredibly poor and the people are still, in many ways, stuck in traditional and sub-optimal lifestyles. You should not be surprised to see a warrior with a spear in the capital, **Mbabane**. The market there is very colourful and absolutely worth a visit, not least because you'll probably find some great and very-affordable ethnic souvenirs there! We'll then spend the night at the nearby **Mlilwane Game Reserve**, after which we'll take a full day to stroll around what is a wonderful area rich in game but without lions (perhaps just as well if you're on foot!). In the evening you'll be able to feast on a delicious 'braai', a South African barbeque that mainly consists of game meat. Human intervention is the only way to control the game population around here, so you needn't feel guilty when you tuck in!

Beaches of St. Lucia

After being overwhelmed by South African's fauna and flora, it will then be time to chill out on the beautiful beaches of St. Lucia. A terrific thrill for any diver will be **Sodwana Bay**, but devotees to wild game can go to see Hluhluwe National Park. Or you could, instead, take a marvellous cruise through **St. Lucia** where you'll see crocodiles, hippos and the **African Fish Eagle**.

Golden Mile

We'll be able to experience Durban's unique culture on day 11, where there is something for everybody. The city is renowned for the nightlife along its Golden Mile and for its massive surf (if you haven't yet mastered surfing, then you must try using a body-board because they're enormous fun too – as long as you swim well). We also highly recommend visits to the Indian market and at least one of the colourful **Hindu temples**.

Royal Natal National Park

On day 12 we'll visit the Royal Natal National Park, its amphitheatre and **Cathedral Peak**. There'll be plenty of time to walk through this fascinating area and the trek to Tugela Gorge is one of the most beautiful imaginable. On day 14 we'll travel to Johannesburg and a chance to see whatever we fancy before saying our farewells.

Please note that the price increases on this tour is due to a hefty price increase



of diesel. Shoestring apologises for this unavoidable difference in cost.

Routekaart



Uitgebreide reisbeschrijving

Welkom

Welcome to Shoestring!

Shoestring is looking forward to welcoming you on one of our unforgettable journeys. Be well prepared, get informed about your destination and make sure you know which vaccinations or other medication you require. During the trip, be flexible and don't feel obliged to always stay with the group. Your guide will advise and assist you, but remember that he or she will have a lot on their mind to ensure that everything runs smoothly. We hope you have a fantastic time in this beautiful destination.

Before you travel

If your trip is unexpectedly cancelled, we will let you know at least three weeks prior to departure. Cancellations are very rare though, so go ahead and prepare yourself for your trip.

Moeilijkheidsgraad Informatie

This journey is classified as Category B



The difficulty of our travels varies greatly. Added to this is the fact that travel difficulty is a very personal perception. To give an impression of the difficulty of a particular holiday we have developed a classification system.

Category A: Light travel, possible for anyone. Short distances, good hotels, and low travelling speed.

Category B: Feasible for anyone who prepares for the trip. Sometimes longer distances, good hotels or camping facilities, some adventure nights, average travelling speed.

Category C: Feasible for anyone who prepares well and is flexible, but some parts of the journey are difficult, distances may be long or require a day's walk, there may be some basic facilities.

Category D: Reasonably difficult trip because of long travel distances, often-primitive facilities or tents, long walks.

Category E: Difficult trip. The traveller knows him/herself and is well prepared, he or she realises that the holiday can be demanding.

This journey through South Africa and Swaziland is in **category B**. The trip can be made by anyone who is in reasonable shape. Keep in mind that we go through developing countries, with a much lower standard of living than you are used to at home. Some travelling days can be long. Apart from that, it is possible that the roads are temporarily inaccessible due to bad weather or bad maintenance and we may have to divert from our planned route. Camping is quite popular, especially in the game parks. The facilities are generally good. You can have a shower almost everywhere and there are proper sanitary facilities. Some help is expected from you with domestic tasks, like doing the dishes and preparing the food. A flexible and open-minded attitude is more important than physical fitness.

Nature of the trip

This special journey unites magnificent game parks, colourful people and immeasurable space. You will safari in the famous Kruger game park. Explore darkest Africa in Swaziland. Enjoy the beautiful white beaches of KwaZulu Natal and walk through the majestic Drakensberg mountains.

Wat is inclusief

Accommodation in twin share tents; accommodation in hostel in Pretoria, Durban, St. Lucia and Drakensbergen; transportation in (mini)buses or overland truck only for transfers from hotel to hotel; entrance fee for Kruger NP, Royal Natal NP and Mlilwane; English speaking tour leader.

Wat is exclusief

International flights; all meals; tips; visas; optional excursions; all other entrance fees; airport transfers; booking fee; travel insurance.

Let op

♦ You will generally travel with other UK clients. However, if less than 6 people book the tour on the UK website then your group may be combined with a Dutch, German, Italian or Spanish group. Your tour would still be conducted in English.

Dag-tot-dag schema

	Vervoer	Route	Overnachting
1.		Johannesburg / Pretoria	Pretoria



2.	Pretoria - Pilgrim's Rest - Sabie	Sabie
3.	Sabie - Kruger National Park	Kruger National Park
4.	Kruger National Park	Kruger National Park
5.	Kruger National Park - Swaziland	Swaziland
6.	Swaziland	Swaziland
7.	Swaziland	Swaziland
8.	Swaziland - St Lucia	St Lucia
9.	St Lucia	St Lucia
10.	St Lucia	St Lucia
11.	St Lucia - Durban	Durban
12.	Durban - Drakensberg	Drakensberg
13.	Drakensberg	Drakensberg
14.	Drakensberg - Johannesburg	End of tour

Dag-tot-dag schema

Dag 1: Johannesburg / Pretoria

You will overnight in Pretoria in a safe, friendly and cosy backpackers lodge for the first night. Pretoria is the administrative Capital of South Africa and has lots of historic buildings and monuments to explore. Depending on when you arrive, you can visit the city or take an optional excursion to Soweto. Former president Paul Kruger is a local hero, his statue is at Church Square, and you can visit his home. Sir Herbert Baker designed the impressive Union Buildings. As you only spend a short time in Pretoria, it will not be possible to visit both Soweto and Pretoria in the same day. You will have to make a choice between the two.

Pretoria, has a different name these days, 'Tshwane' its original African name meaning 'we are the same'. The name change is part of a national program to aid affirmative action campaigns.

Dag 2: Pretoria - Pilgrim's Rest - Sabie

In the morning you will travel to Mpumalanga. On the way you will stopover at the Sudwala Caves that you can optionally visit. The Sudwala Caves are one of the most important attractions of the Laagveld, and are in the Mankelekele hills in the valley of Houtbosloop (wood bush creek) about 35 km northwest of Nelspruit. These caves are comparable to the famous Cango Caves in the Klein Karoo. Here you will find magnificent stalactites and stalagmites. The caves are at least 2000 million years old. They were discovered at the beginning of the 19th century by Somquba, the son of the Swazi King, Sobhuza I, who fled here with his followers in fear of his brother Mswati. Sombuqa and his people built a village next to the entrance to the caves, where they could hide every time Mswati and his men came. Still, one day Mswati and his men managed to kill Sombuqa and a large number of his followers. The survivors remained under a leader called Sudwala, after whom the caves were named.

You will drive on to Pilgrim's Rest, an old miner's village. Gold was mined here from 1873 to 1972. It was then handed over to the government as an open-air museum. Here, you can get an idea of the life of the mineworkers in those days.

After Pilgrim's Rest you drive to Sabie and pitch your tent for the first time. Sabie is a small countryside village in a deep valley on one of the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains in Mpumalanga ('place of the rising sun') Sabie is a popular destination with breathtaking waterfalls from small mountain creeks. It has a lot of places to stay and



restaurants. Sabie's pride is its SAFCOL Forest Industry Museum. This museum is the only one of its kind and is definitely worth a visit.

Dag 3: Sabie - Kruger National Park

On day 3 you travel via God's Window and the Blyde River Canyon to the Kruger National Park. The bizarre landscape is unique. The Blyde River Canyon is a long canyon (16 km) and is third on the world list of canyons after the Grand Canyon and the Fish River Canyon. At the end of the day you will arrive in the Kruger Park. If time permits, you will have a game drive in the park at the end of the day.

For the next 2 nights you will sleep at one of the campsites in the park. If the campsites in the park are fully booked you will stay in Malelane, on the edge of the Park. You will go on game drives in the Kruger Park on day 4.

Dag 4: Kruger National Park

You will spend this day game driving in the park. The game drives are mainly in the morning and late afternoon. The famous Kruger Park is enormous and offers protection to a great number of animals. Species such as wildebeests, the charming impalas, kudus, zebras, giraffes, buffaloes, warthogs, elephants and hippos, and the severely threatened rhino. You will find the big cats here, lions, cheetahs and (with a bit of luck) leopards. Bird lovers should know that 500 species have been spotted, from small weavers to the large Ground hornbill. When it comes to variety the Kruger Park is probably the best nature park in the world. Optionally, you can make an exciting sunset drive. The game drives we make with our own truck are included in the travel fee. You can also have an optional excursion with open land Rovers which can go off the beaten track. You must pay for the optional sunset drive yourself. Unfortunately, this excursion can only be booked at arrival at the campsite and only when places are still available.

Dag 5 - 7: Kruger National Park - Swaziland

After breakfast you will leave for Swaziland. This small kingdom is home to one million Swazis, who mostly live from farming and forestry. A former British colony, it gained independence in 1968 without any struggle. Past the border you will head for the market in Manzini where beautiful handmade items are on sale. Swaziland is a sharp contrast to South Africa. It is poorer and people live more traditionally. They are related to Zulus, which is clearly visible and are very friendly and enjoy talking about their customs.

In the late afternoon you will reach the Mlilwane Game Reserve, here you will spend two nights at a cosy campsite by a small lake. There are no animals in Mlilwane that are a threat to humans so you can walk around freely. Early in the morning of day 8 you can have an (optional) escorted trek through the Mlilwane Game Reserve (the entrance fee for Mlilwane is not included in the travel fee). You will stand a good chance of seeing hippos, crocodiles, warthogs, impalas, gnus, hartebeests, blesboks and zebras. On the shores of the small lakes you'll see lots of water birds. Optionally, you can have a game drive, go horse riding, make a night drive or go mountain biking.

Dag 8 - 10: Swaziland - St Lucia

On Day 8, St Lucia awaits you 400 km away. For the next few days you can spend your time as you wish. In St. Lucia Park explore the nature reserve on foot or by boat. St. Lucia Park features the enormous St. Lucia lagoon. It is the oldest in South Africa. The Estuary is the largest in Africa consisting of a bay scattered with small islands, and a small opening to the ocean. The lagoon is shallow, the current is slow and the water is warm and very nutritious. The many fish attract crocodiles and large numbers of water



birds. There are pelicans, ibises, fish eagles, goliath herons and kingfishers. The boat trip (which you will have to pay yourself) is the best way to enjoy the bird life and to observe the many hippos and crocodiles. Your tour guide can make a reservation for you. Another day you could take an optional excursion to Hluhluwe Park. This unique park was created to preserve the extremely rare and beautiful white rhino. These days t 1600 of them live here so you should see some. There are buffaloes, gnus, zebras, giraffes, and several kinds of antelopes, lions, cheetahs, hyenas and elephants in this scenic sanctuary. You can take an optional trip to Sodwana Bay for snorkelling or diving. You will stay two nights in an apartment in St. Lucia; each is shared with 5 or 6 people. There are plenty of restaurants in the vicinity.

Dag 11: St Lucia - Durban

After a wonderful time in St. Lucia you will drive southwards for a day along the coast to Durban. Durban is the third largest city in South Africa. Situated on a bay in the Indian Ocean, Durban has one of the most important harbours in the country. This cosmopolitan city has a subtropical climate, popular surfing beaches and many great facilities. The city is home to most of the Asian people living in South Africa. You will spend the night in a guesthouse, just outside the city, sharing a room with 6 people. There are restaurants in the neighbourhood.

Dag 12 - 13: Durban - Drakensberg

Now its time for the impressive Drakensberg Mountains where you will spend two nights close to the magnificent Royal Natal National Park. The mountain range covers 960 km from Storm Mountain in the Eastern Cape Province to Cloud Mountain in Mpumalanga. The mountains are most impressive on the border between KwaZulu-Natal and Lesotho. An enormous wall of mountains rises in front of you up to the peaks of the Sentinel (3274m) and the Eastern Pillar (3133m). You will also have a perfect view of the 'amphitheatre', a sheer wall of rock, 8km by 1200 m. The Zulu's call the range 'quathlamba' meaning 'battlement of spears'. However, the Voortrekkers, or early Dutch settlers compared it to the toothed back of a dragon naming the range Drakensberg (Dragons Mountains). In the background is Mont-aux-Sources (3298m) the sources of South Africa's most important rivers; Orange River, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean, and the Tugela that flows into the Indian Ocean. The Tugela pours spectacularly down 5 waterfalls, through a narrow overgrown cleft of extraordinary beauty, coming to rest in the valley. The land is very green and fertile and the mountains offer fantastic possibilities for optional walking trips. There are several walks available, short and long. You can also opt for a horse back tour of this amazing landscape. You will spend the night in a resort consisting of several little 6 bed roomed houses. The resort has a restaurant.

Dag 14: Drakensberg - Johannesburg

Today you will travel back to Johannesburg.

It is the last day of your tour but rather than being about 'Goodbye' your thought should be 'Go further'!

Visit your personal 'my.shoestring' page on our website. 'my.shoestring' is the perfect way to make contact with other travellers before and after your trip. You can read and create journals from trips and upload your photos onto the photo gallery. Visit my shoestring today.



When booking your tour, please check to see whether you need any post-tour nights, bearing in mind that accommodation for the night of the final day of the tour (day 14) is not included.

Landinformatie South Africa

Achtergrondinformatie

Celebrations and festivals

Music

Music plays a central role in the life of the black population. Traditional African music serves to feed the ties amongst each other and expresses the inner life force of the people. Jazz came in from America during the 20th century and overtook traditional music in popularity. The white music culture has a predominantly classical character and can be regarded as a continuation of the European heritage. Apart from the black and white musical traditions, there is the music of the Cape Malaysians. The slaves who came from East Indonesia and Malaysia to South Africa in the 17th century brought their own music. Despite African influences you can still recognise a number of Asian elements in it.

Dance

Dancing has always had an important place in African culture. People here dance to express joy or sadness, but it is also a means to fight diseases and chase away evil spirits. Singing and dancing, using traditional musical instruments, is to try to please the Gods to get rich rewards from hunting or war. In the past, loss or gain during an encounter between two tribes was considered a sign of the power of the Gods.

Festivals and public holidays:

Apart from New Year's Day, Easter and Christmas, the following national holidays are celebrated in southern Africa: Human Rights Day (21st of March), Constitution Day (27th of April), Labour Day (1st of May), Youth Day (16th of June), National Women's Day (9th of August), Heritage Day (24th of September), Reconciliation Day (16th of December)

Entertainment

There is more than enough to do in the big cities. Most have a large number of bars, cinemas, some theatres, nightclubs and restaurants. Even in the smaller villages you will find nightclubs and bars. There will be dancing all night, mostly under the open skies. You can also visit markets, parks and museums.

Communications

Sorry, this information is not available at this moment. Please check back later.

Cultural differences and habits

Try to read something about the local way of life before departure. That way you will not be too surprised about the primitive circumstances in which people sometimes live. It will increase the chance that you will enjoy your trip. Try to look at everything that is there rather than wondering too long about the things that may be lacking.



Manners: In general, South Africa has European standards in this area. However, if you want to have a truly open conversation about serious topics like Mugabe or Aids, be aware of racial sensitivities following white minority rule. Do not be surprised if people take a harsh or avoiding stance towards people of different skin. Keep in mind painful things have happened and it has only been a short time since the South African power balance changed (1994) or Namibia gained independence (1990). This applies all the way up to Etosha. Of course, there are enormous cultural differences between Europeans and the different tribes in the area. This shouldn't lead to misunderstandings though. A number of black tribes will bow their heads in respect to older people when they address them. This can strike us as avoiding eye contact, but it is intended to show respect!

Begging: In the big cities, beggars will definitely approach you. They will ask you for money, soap or pens. Sometimes they want sweets. Some beggars immediately mention the sum required of you. By giving them money, you will not solve their problems. More likely, it will make them more dependent on this type of income. Shoestring on principle never gives money to children, at most we give them fruit or something else to eat. When children bring in money from begging, their parents will not send them to school. It is generally acceptable to give money to the old and the handicapped. The real stories behind the beggars are diverse. Few are really begging for food, most of them are begging to pay for their place in a shelter or a home. Besides, there are increasing numbers of alcohol and drug addicts in the cities. Best is to donate money to a reputable charity.

Presents: During some of our trips, it is possible to visit a school or some other kind of institution. In this case, blackboard crayons, exercise books and pens are a very welcome gift. On the way, you will meet people who want something from you. Remember that 'to get something, give something' applies in Africa as well. If somebody does something for you (washes your clothes or poses for a picture), you are free to give something like a pen or a t-shirt in return (besides money). Even souvenirs can be swapped for clothes, but keep in mind that a t-shirt cannot buy food.

Buying and bargaining: Potential souvenirs are sisal baskets, jewellery and utensils from different tribes, woodcarvings, gourds and batik. And how about a pair of sandals made from a worn out tyre? In Africa, it is normal to bargain for a better price. Negotiating usually happens in a happy, lively manner. The seller might start at a price that is three to five times higher than the final price. Determine in advance how much you want to pay. This way a certain amount of theatre will get you to a fair price. Stop before things start looking grim, the salesperson might not be in the same negotiating position as you. Good luck!

In general

Always remember that you are a guest in a country where other conventions are observed. They are not deviant; you are the one that is different.

Food and drinks

Eating: Most meals are not included in the travel fee. In the cities and towns you have a good choice of restaurants and cafes. It is expected, when camping, that travellers take their turn in helping to do the groceries, cutting the vegetables, laying the table and doing the dishes. The food in South Africa is not very different from what we are used to



in Western Europe. South Africans are real meat eaters; steaks are very good and inexpensive here. There is a large variety of fresh fish. There are a lot of restaurants that offer specialities from another country, so you can eat Indian, Portuguese, and Chinese etc. Fruit is abundant and can be bought at low prices. In some places, you'll be served a local meal. For instance, in Mlilwane Game reserve you can expect a delicious Braai of gnu-sausage, warthog steak and antelope. It is definitely worth trying a Cape Malaysian meal as well. 'Boboti' is a delightful mix of Indian spices, rice and meat.

Drinking: You should drink a lot of liquids in South Africa. You can drink straight from the tap in most places, except Swaziland. Mineral water is widely available. Soft drinks like Coca Cola and Fanta are cheap and like tea and coffee, are on sale everywhere. We can really recommend South African wines, Sherries and brandies. These are among the best in the world. If you like wine, we definitely advise you to taste a glass or two of South African wine.

Landscape

The Republic of South Africa is the southern-most country on the African mainland between the 22nd and the 35th southern latitude. The Indian Ocean is on the East coast. The Atlantic Ocean is on the West coast. They meet at the Cape of Good Hope. Bordering countries are Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the North and Mozambique to the North East. The independent states of Swaziland and Lesotho are in the middle of the country. South Africa has a total surface area that is around 10 times the size of England. The coastline is almost 3,000 km. South Africa has many private and public game and nature reserves, parks and protected wild life areas. Since 1994 South Africa is a parliamentary democracy headed by a president. Law making powers are in the hands of the National Assembly with 400 seats. The ANC is the largest party. The South African economy is the healthiest of all on the African continent. However, it is an economy that was unbalanced by apartheid. Until recently the country's natural resources were planned for only four million people. Nowadays, these must be stretched to fit the needs of forty million people.

Flora and fauna

The flora and fauna of this part of Africa are simply overwhelming. Due to its higher position and greater rainfall, Swaziland is a green area with an enormous amount of antelopes, zebras, warthogs and gnus. Mainly located in the Mlilwane Game Reserve, they have no natural enemies. The Kruger National Park has a staggering variety of biotypes from little Sugar Birds to Leopards and Cheetahs.

Population

The population in South Africa is very diverse. There are 43 million people: 33 million are black, 5 million are white, 4 million, coloured and 1 million are from Indian descent. The majority of the black population are found in the former 'homelands' and consist of Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho people. The white population mainly descend from colonial Europeans, who brought Western culture to this country. About 60% are originally of Dutch descent ('Afrikaners') and the rest are mainly of British descent. Black Africans mostly populate the provinces of Mpumalanga, Northern Province and Free State. People of British descent mainly live in the KwaZulu-Natal area and the Western and Eastern Cape provinces. The 'coloureds' are descendents from multiple population groups. Most of them live in the



Northern and Western Cape provinces. The smallest population group is Asian. This group mainly consists of Indians, who once worked at sugar cane plantations. They mostly live in the KwaZulu-Natal area.

Religion

Over three quarters of the population claim to be religious.

Religion in South Africa varies from local religions to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. A quarter of the population belong to a local religion, 20% to an independent church, 36% are Christian and 5% support another world religion. The Bushmen, Hottentots and the Bantu had their own religions long before the arrival of the whites. In these indigenous religions the group plays an important role this makes them quite different from the more individual religious convictions of the West. The original Christian church is the Nederduits Reformed Church. Dutch immigrants founded this in the second half of the 17th century with a very strong Calvinistic character. During and after the period of the Great Trek, two new churches evolved; the Hervormde Kerk van Afrika and the extraordinarily conservative Gereformeerde Kerk van Afrika. All three had only white members. Out of discontent with western religious convictions in the missionary churches, a black group established the first indigenous Christian church. These independent churches were (and are) exclusively for the black population.

Durban and Cape Town are the centres of the Islamic community in South Africa. The Muslims are descendants of slaves from Malaysia and seasonal workers from India. Nevertheless, most of the Indian population practice Hinduism. There is a small Jewish community that has its roots in Eastern Europe.

Weather and climate

Climate: Generally, South Africa is mild and sunny. The country has the highest amount of sun hours in the world. However, the temperatures are rarely very high because three quarters of the land is surrounded by sea, causing the cool air from the ocean to reduce the impact of the sun. As the country is situated below the equator, the seasons are opposite to those in Europe. So when it is summer with us, it is winter in South Africa, which means the temperatures will be a little lower than in summer. Most of the rain falls during their summer, but it is very rare that they last long. Rain and even snow are quite normal in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Drakensberg & Lesotho. During this period (June, July, August) bring enough warm clothes and a raincoat. Even a shawl and a pair of gloves would not be overdoing it.

Best time to travel: The best time to travel largely depends on what you want to see and do. The moderate temperatures make autumn and spring the best time to go on a trekking tour. During the dry season (April-October) you'll have the best chance to see game, because then the growth of bushes and grasses is less thick and the animals are more likely to gather near artificial drinking places.

Praktische informatie

Arrival information

On your first day in Africa, take it easy. Take time to acclimatise. The change of climate and culture can be quite difficult. Get used to the country at your leisure, relax and enjoy Southern Africa.



Electricity

Wall plugs supply 220 Volt, 50-hertz alternating current. For sockets, a universal plug is needed. You can buy one in most locations. The tour guide will offer you the possibility to buy one at the beginning of the journey. Power failures do not occur often. Nevertheless, it is good to take a torch with you. It can also be useful in the parks if you have to visit the toilet at night.

Health

Those who travel in southern Africa with hygiene and skin care in mind are unlikely to encounter any health problems. Below are some issues that should be considered:

Food and drink: Mineral water is available most of the time, and in many places you will be able to drink from the tap. You should ideally take your meals in busy restaurants. People eat there for a reason and the turnover rate is high. Wash your hands thoroughly before eating.

Sunshine and heat: Sunburn is a frequent cause for health problems. Sunburn and sun/heat strokes are easier caught than you may think. You should therefore avoid the sun during the hottest hours of the day, always wear a hat and good sunglasses when you are walking, and use a good suntan lotion when sunbathing. The latter can best be brought along from home, where the choice of product is much larger and prices are lower. At high temperatures the body's need for water increases very rapidly, as does its need for salt. Make sure you drink enough when the heat is extreme and you will simply have to take it very easy during the hottest hours of the day. Make it a habit to treat wounds, however small, with something like iodine. Infections can occur and spread rapidly in the tropics, so take as much care as possible with scratches and insect bites.

Malaria: The World Health Organization (WHO) advises all travellers to Africa to "to take all possible preventive measures to avoid malaria." It is a dire necessity to prevent being stung (use a mosquito net and anti-mosquito lotion on the skin) and take malaria tablets. Malaria risk is very high during the rainy season. The prophylaxis recommended for most destinations in Africa by the WHO is mefloquine (Lariam). You have to start taking the tablets three weeks before departure. It is crucial to keep on taking the tablets until four weeks after your return. This is due to the long incubation period of the malaria parasite. These days Malarone is also recommended; it has fewer side effects, but is a bit more expensive. Consult your GP or some other healthcare authority.

Diarrhoea: Next to sunburn, the most common health problem is diarrhoea. Travellers in the tropics are often hit by it after a few days. In most cases, it is an innocuous phenomenon caused by the change of diet, the heat or harmless bacteria, against which the body will soon develop its defences. The main risk is dehydration. This occurs when the body loses more fluid, salt and glucose than it receives. The result is a feeling of listlessness and weakness. It can be prevented by drinking a solution of water and ORS. It is sold in bags at the pharmacies at home and contains all the minerals and sugars that are evacuated with diarrhoea. You can also take noncarbonated soft drinks or heavily salted broth. When diarrhoea is accompanied by high fever, bloody defecation or a strong urge to vomit, consult a physician. When the diarrhoea lasts for more than a few days without the above-mentioned symptoms or when you have to travel, you may take



Imodium a couple of times. It is an opiate that stops the bowels completely for a number of hours.

Insect bites: mosquitoes cannot be entirely avoided in this part of the world, but there are some measures that will considerably reduce the inconvenience. The "mosquito coil" will keep them at a distance for about eight hours. It helps to wear long trousers and a close fitting long sleeved roll-neck T-shirt in the evenings. Citronella and other repellents do have some effect, but do not expect miracles.

Bilharzia: Bilharzia does occur at some locations. Larvae that live in slow moving and stagnant fresh water cause it. One larva needs no more than a few minutes to enter the human body through the skin. The larva's eggs mainly cause damage to the kidneys and bladder. The disease is very insidious and develops over a number of years. After diagnosis, full treatment is often possible. Cold and fast moving water will probably not put you at risk, but you should avoid all freshwater pools except swimming pools.

First-aid kit: A health kit for the tropics should contain adhesive bandages, bandages, cotton wool, scissors, thermometer, iodine, painkillers, malaria tablets, O.R.S.-packages (Oral Rehydration Solution), loperamide (against diarrhoea), sunscreen, pair of tweezers, insect-repellents such as DEET and a soothing ointment for persistent itching. If you are on medication, make sure to have a precise description available in English (no brand name, but composition and doses are important). Bring along a double quantity for the duration of travel and keep it separated from the other luggage.

Contact lenses: If you wear contact lenses, take a pair of spare glasses if you can. Contact lens users regularly suffer from irritation of the eyes caused by dust and drifting sand.

Medication: Ask your pharmacy to draw up a medical passport for you. This includes names of the substances and the exact composition of the medication that you use. Keep this document and your medication in your hand luggage. If you have a chronic illness, ask your GP for a written explanation of your disease and its treatment (in English). Likewise, make sure you carry a doctor's statement when travelling with needles.

Vaccinations: The information below was given by the healthcare authorities at the time of writing. This information may change. Besides, your needs depend on whether you have had previous vaccinations, whether you are allergic to certain medicine, if you are pregnant, your age, and so on. This is why you should always contact your GP or some other healthcare authority for advice. We cannot give further information by telephone. In any case, we advise you to take malaria tablets and injections against DTP and Hepatitis A. Ask your health insurance if they refund vaccinations and malaria prophylaxes.

Some more advice for a pleasant stay: give your body and mind time to adapt to the new location. Avoid tension; do not plan to do a lot of things immediately. At least take it easy on the first day after arrival. Getting up early is a good habit; in hot countries, morning is often the most pleasant. Also, the people in the countries you are visiting are used to get up early themselves. If you adapt to their rhythm, you will see most of the country. If you are well rested, you will be able to absorb all the new impressions and have enough energy to make the most of your time.

Info for people at home



Make sure that those at home know in which country you are and how long you are planning to stay away. Fix a date when you will contact them again. Provide those picking you up from the airport with your flight times and numbers. Shoestring will not provide flight and/or travel information, hotel and campsite names and telephone numbers to third parties. Any information on delays can be retrieved via the information number at the airport or Teletext, not via Shoestring.

Contact persons

In case of an emergency, it is important for us to have details of someone we can reach a contact person back home on your behalf. You have entered a name on the booking form. It is possible that this person is unavailable or on holiday during your trip. If so, enter a second person so that we are sure to be able to get in touch with somebody.

Luggage and clothing

A big part of this tour will take you through desert where the climate is harsh. Nights here can be very cold and days can be extremely hot during winter months. Bring thin clothes and a high-necked long-sleeved T-shirt or a thin cotton roll-neck jersey for the nights to protect you against mosquitoes. Also, bring a jersey or a sweater and a raincoat. An umbrella is of good use against the rain as well as the fierce sun. A pair of worn-in walking shoes with a good tread and strong soles is important. Acacia thorns can easily perforate soft soles. Sandals or slippers are comfortable footwear on days we are not walking. Other important items are: sunglasses, suntan lotion, toiletries, basic medical travelling kit, sun hat or scarf, photo or film equipment and an adequate amount of film, spare batteries, torch, maybe a pocket knife (not in your hand luggage), alarm clock (winding up or battery-powered), stationery, books, passport, sufficient cheques and cash, copies of passport and travel insurance, a list of cheque numbers and the receipt, your travel insurance card with the emergency number, a diary with important addresses and a good travel guide. Plus, a sleeping bag, with or without sheet bag, a towel and, if possible, a battery-powered reading lamp. All this should be packed in an overnight bag or a backpack. Hard suitcases cannot be taken into the safari truck. Additionally, a small rucksack or shoulder bag is handy for carrying everyday hand luggage. To keep valuable papers safe, you are best off purchasing a slim cotton money belt to wear under your clothes. Be sure to have a change of clothes in your hand luggage and to be able to survive 48 hours without the rest of your luggage in case it is carried to Africa indirectly. Keep essentials like the pill, malaria pills, essential medicine, cheques, camera and your toothbrush in your hand luggage. Make sure your luggage is not too heavy. You will not need the maximum weight allowed on the airplane at all: 20 kg. During your trip, you will certainly buy a number of souvenirs, which means you will soon have too much to carry. We advise you to bring a maximum of 13 kg of luggage.

Money and currency

The amount of pocket money we advise you to take is the minimum amount to pay for your meals, drinks, optional excursions and tips. Of course, what you end up spending depends on you, which is one of the reasons souvenirs are not included. We suggest £125- £150 per week.

Try to avoid bringing too much currency in the form of travellers cheques. Although these can be exchanged at many hotels and banks in big cities, there will be places that this is not possible.



You are able to make cash withdrawals all over South Africa but do be aware that the power could fail or that there are other causes for ATM's not to work. That said, it is useful to have a credit card (Visa and / or MasterCard) as a safety net for unforeseen expenses.

It is recommended to wear a money belt underneath you clothes and to keep your eyes open at all times when you are at the ATM's and or the Exchange. Remember being aware is the best way to prevent fraud and theft.

Photography

To photograph game we advise you use a telephoto lens of 200-300 mm. Never leave film or camera in a locked truck. The rapidly advancing temperature can harm the quality of photographic material in no time.

Not all kinds of batteries for cameras are available, so make sure you take enough for the whole journey. The use of a (small) video camera should not be a problem. At most places we stay you will be able to charge the battery. You do need a universal plug. Remember that during camping safari's you may not be able to charge your camera for a few days.

The local population generally does not like being photographed. Always ask permission and respect it if people refuse. Practice restraint when taking pictures of the national flag, police officers, government buildings, airports and soldiers.

Safety

Crime: In the big cities (like Durban and Pretoria) there are a lot of street robberies at night. Do not walk the streets alone after sunset. In the daytime, some care should be taken. Don't reveal large wads of money, be sure to hide your camera when it is not being used and avoid conspicuous jewellery. Remember that in the eyes of most Africans we are immeasurably wealthy. For example, a camera represents five annual salaries. Never leave anything in your hotel room and always keep an eye on your bag and money belt.

Wildlife: In principal, the many wild animals you will see are not dangerous provided you stick to some basic rules. The first rule is to always promptly do what you are told by the travel guide when he or she senses danger. You can only discuss the matter afterwards. When you want to go swimming, first ask whether there are crocodiles or hippos in the water, and if the water is free of bilharzia. Always check your shoes before putting them on, as there is a small chance that a scorpion or snake has crawled into them. Keep them in the tent, because hyenas like them too! Sometimes there are groups of baboons that are quite relaxed around people. When eating or preparing food, they can attack. Let the Africans chase them away.

Time difference

There is only a small time difference with South Africa being 2 hours ahead of the UK.

Tipping

Restaurant and hotel workers do not earn much money. You cannot put an end to poverty in the country, but you can make sure that those who work for you receive a decent tip.



Our rule of thumb – if the service has been to your satisfaction – is to tip the equivalent of GBP 0.80 per day per traveller for hotel staff. Use the same amount for the drivers of the vehicles hired by Shoestring. It is practical to keep a tip box for these payments that can be kept in turns by the travellers in consultation with the travel guide. In eating places and restaurants, you can leave a tip of 10% of the bill. Equally, taxi and minibus drivers, guides and service providers in the street will also expect some compensation. Never pay in advance!

Your travel guide also expects to be tipped at the end of the trip if he or she has performed well. Shoestring pays the tour guides a salary that is equivalent to those paid by most other adventure travel organisations, which is low. Again, our guideline is the equivalent of GBP 0.80 per day per traveller.

Adresgegevens