

TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR SOUTH AFRICA

GENERAL INFORMATION

South Africa (capital: Pretoria) lies at the southern tip of Africa. It is bordered by Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and completely surrounds Lesotho. Tourist facilities are widely available. The local currency is the rand (7Rand = CDN\$1). There are 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.

Since 1998, there have been a number of terrorist bomb explosions in Capetown, some of them serious. Targets have included popular bars and restaurants, often those frequented by the gay community, and establishments with American connections. One should exercise caution and avoid suspicious packages.

Armed assaults, car-jackings, muggings and theft occur frequently. There has been an increase in robberies of armoured vehicles on highways. One should remain alert to their surroundings, keep a safe distance from these vehicles and never stop along the roadside for any reason. Proceed to a location where help will be available. Exercise caution at traffic lights and stop signs where car jackers are active. Keep a safe distance from other vehicles to react quickly in event of a problem. Vehicle doors should be locked and windows shut.

One should remain valiant, particularly in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth, where violent crime including murder is high. Avoid the central business area of Johannesburg after dusk and during weekends. Tourists have been mugged around the Rotunda bus terminal. Be alert around the Carlton Centre. Avoid the area of Hillbrow at all cost, and refrain from venturing to Brea and Yeoville. Drug trafficking occurs in these areas. Pretoria's Church Square, State Theatre and central business areas are dangerous. Avoid Durban's city centre and beach after dark. Cape Town's business district is dangerous and during weekends. Visitors should walk through the district purposefully and avoid ambling about with a camera, or repeatedly looking at a map. An increased anticrime effort in city cores has led to higher crime in suburbs of major metropolitan areas, including suburban hotel districts.

Theft, particularly of passports, is prevalent at international airports, especially in baggage and immigration areas, in telephone booths, and at foreign exchange counters. Visitors should carry photocopies of their documents and avoid displays of money, jewellery, cameras, mobile phones, and video cameras. Travellers should arrange to be met upon arrival and avoid using taxis.

Crime occurs in and around railway stations and on trains. Muggings and violent attacks have taken place on local commuter and metro trains between Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Strikes and demonstrations occur and can turn violent. Canadians should monitor local news reports and avoid large crowds and demonstrations.