South Africa 2015 Crime and Safety Report

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The official unemployment rate is 24 percent, but experts believe it is closer to 40 percent.

Crime Rating: Critical

Crime Threats

Crime is a key strategic concern for the government, as well as for U.S. government employees and visitors. Regardless of the type of crime being committed, crime is distinguished by: 1) the level of violence associated with personal and property crimes, as criminals do not hesitate to use lethal weapons; and 2) the occurrence of crimes across all
metropolitan areas regardless of the socio-economic status of a particular neighborhood.

Crimes range from petty muggings to ATM scams to armed residential home invasions and murder. These crimes occur with frequency and in all neighborhoods. U.S. citizens are not specifically targeted, but are frequently victims of a wide range of crimes.


Of particular concern are home invasion robberies. These crimes are often violent and can occur at any time of day. In many cases, criminals prefer to attack when the occupant is home or arriving/leaving the premises because the residential alarm is off and the occupant can identify where valuables are kept.

Perhaps the most vulnerable chokepoint at any residence is the driveway entrance gate. Criminals attack when victims are waiting for the vehicle gate to open/close. According to SAPS, the majority of carjackings occur when the victim arrives at home and pulls into the driveway; 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 house of its valuables, and carjack the vehicle.
South Africa has one of the highest rape rates in the world. While not specifically targeted, foreigners can easily become victims. This crime occurs everywhere and against all age groups, including infants and the elderly. The use of Gamma Hydroxybutyric (GHB), the “date rape drug,” is common by criminals to facilitate overpowering their victims. Many rape victims are killed or severely wounded either in the initial attack or after being raped. Brutal mutilations and immolation of some live victims are disturbing trends. Due to the extremely high rate of HIV/AIDS, anyone who is the victim of rape or sexual assault should seek medical attention immediately to include prophylaxis against HIV and other STDs, and report the crime to the police.

Financial and identity theft crimes are common, including ATM, credit card, and Internet “lonely hearts” and the “419” scams. Most businesses, including gas stations and restaurants, have portable credit card machines, which are brought to the customer to allow them to swipe their debit/credit card. Despite these safeguards, cards are frequently cloned, resulting in exorbitant fraudulent charges.

Large, well-organized criminal syndicates operate freely. These gangs are known to target businesses and retail stores in coordinated, armed attacks.

Areas of Concern

There are no designated “off-limit” areas, but it is recommended that “township” neighborhoods and Central Business Districts (CBDs) be avoided, particularly after dark.
Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic moves on the left side of the road, and cars have the steering wheel on the right side of the vehicle. There are also different “rules of the road.” Vehicles pass on either side or travel at inconsistent speeds (some very fast, others very slow) in all lanes. In addition, it is common to see older, poorly maintained vehicles on the road breaking down and creating road hazards. Drivers must be hyper-vigilant when driving on the highway, particularly at night. Texting/talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device while driving is a violation of law and can result in heavy fines and/or the impoundment of your cell phone.

Motorists should use caution when driving. 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 the poor quality and practices of drivers, drug/alcohol abuse, un-roadworthy vehicles, and the condition of the road surfaces and the frequent presence of pedestrians and animals in the road outside of large cities. South Africa has a high rate of fatal traffic accidents; there were 1,376 road fatalities during the 2014 winter holiday season alone. Transportation accidents involving mini-buses, which are used for mass transit, occur on a daily basis. Multiple vehicle accidents on major highways are very common. Due to poor
vehicle maintenance and overloading, there are frequent accidents caused by trucks, semi-tractor trailers, and long-haul vehicles. These vehicles do not always use proper hazard identification markers when they breakdown (many times in the middle of the road), which can cause chain-reaction accidents, especially at night.

Toll roads have emergency call boxes similar to those in the U.S., but they are often inoperable due to poor maintenance. Secondary roads are often in poorer condition and frequently marked by potholes. Highway signage can be inconsistent 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 South African legal limit is only .05 percent and is strictly enforced. When stopped at a checkpoint, individuals may be required to provide a valid driver’s license and a passport with a current visa or visitor’s permit. Some foreign drivers have been stopped by police and informed their foreign driver’s license is not valid in South Africa, in an attempt to secure a bribe. Foreign driver’s licenses are valid in South Africa for six months. 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 side vehicle window to grab what is easily accessible (purse, cell phone, etc) when a motorist is stopped in traffic, at a stop light, or in congestion. Once the item is snatched, the robber flees (often times into nearby townships that are dangerous to pursue). These crimes can occur anywhere but most are at major intersections and highway off-ramps.
Criminals commonly target vehicles on the highways. Gangs will place debris in the road and wait for a vehicle to stop after hitting the object. Other tactics employed include dropping rocks or paint from bridges onto vehicles passing underneath. In another frequent scenario, an individual (or several working together) may have 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 driver is robbed of valuable and sometimes his/her car is stolen or s/he is assaulted.

Motorists should be aware of their general geographic location and travel with a South African road atlas and preferably a GPS navigation system. Some GPS systems may route motorists through dangerous neighborhoods and townships and/or on remote and unsafe rural roads. Motorists should always travel with a fully charged cell phone and a mobile charger. Motorists should have emergency telephone numbers for the South African Automobile Association (AA), which recognizes the American Automobile Associations (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. South Africa's AA website link is: http://www.aa.co.za/.

Public Transportation Conditions

Avoid public transportation. Avoid use of unlicensed mini-bus "taxis." They are frequently in disrepair, and the drivers are often unlicensed and lack proper driving skills and etiquette.
Rental cars are available or hire a private taxi through the hotel concierge.

Many local residents are armed, especially taxi drivers who carry weapons to ward off criminals and to battle with rival taxi gang members. Obtain taxi services from your hotel and reputable companies. Never hail a taxi on the street. Taxi pick-up/drop-off at any airport should be through a reputable transfer/shuttle service.

The Gautrain railway is a rapid rail link between OR Tambo International Airport and the commercial centers of Johannesburg and Pretoria. The Gautrain is a relatively safe and an efficient alternative means to travel. More information on the Gautrain can be obtained at: http://www.gautrain.co.za/.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Pilferage of luggage at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg is common, and the airline check-in staff reminds travelers not to place valuables in their luggage.

Other Travel Conditions

There have been numerous incidents of fake police officers (especially near OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg and the connecting freeway to Pretoria) pulling over
vehicles to rob them at gunpoint. These are referred to as “Blue Light” robberies. Many victims report they had just withdrawn large sums of money from ATMs or exchanged money at a foreign exchange booth inside the airport terminal. Observers inside the terminals watch for such transactions. They then call criminals masquerading as police officers with information about the victim’s departure from the airport and the make, model and license plate number of the vehicle. If the vehicle stops for these police imposters, the occupants are robbed at gunpoint of their money and valuables, sometimes including their car. This is not limited to the OR Tambo International Airport area, as there have been similar reports throughout South Africa. These fake police officers use unmarked vehicles with a police light in the dashboard and flash what appears to be a “badge” to pull over vehicles. More disturbing, these fake police officers more often use modified fake, but high quality, “marked police vehicles” and wear a police uniform. If you are unsure of the situation, turn on your emergency blinkers to acknowledge them, slow down to a safe pace, and drive to a safe congested area to pull over.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Celebrating 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; it boasts a robust civil society and a dynamic free press. South Africa has a stable, democratic government, but political violence has increased in recent years. In addition to being a premier tourist destination, Cape Town is the legislative capital of South Africa, where the National Parliament and many government offices are located.

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is home to sub-Saharan Africa’s largest container port (Durban) and commodity port (Richards Bay), making the province one of the prime commercial centers on
the continent. KZN is the home province of President Jacob Zuma and a quarter of the nation’s African National Congress (ANC) members. An increasing trend of politically-motivated killings has plagued KZN since 2011. Local media reported that more than 60 members of the ANC, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and National Freedom Party (NFP) were killed in politically-linked violence since 2011. In the run-up to the May 2014 general elections, most incidents happened in areas considered hot-spots, including KwaMashu hostel, Glebe Hostel, Estcourt, eThekwini, and parts of Zululand. Many victims were members of the IFP and NFP. Whereas, in most cases where ANC members were killed, it was suspected to be cases of intra-party violence. There have been some arrests in some of these cases, but convictions have been very few. A level of violence is not new in the KZN and usually occurs in the run-up to elections. The only recent inter-party violence has been between the IFP and its NFP offshoot. Competition for power and economic gain is the root cause of political violence in the KZN. The violence is not targeted toward U.S. citizens, but more against local politicians, usually in townships and in greater Durban.

Political Violence Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

South Africa serves as an important transit and facilitation point for global extremists. Though there has been no indication that operational cells are present, a nexus for recruiting, funding, and safe haven for international terrorists does exist.

The last significant domestic terror campaign occurred in the Western Cape. The Western Cape-based group “People against Gangsters and Drugs” (PAGAD) conducted an urban terror campaign of bombings, assassinations, and vigilante murders from 1997 to November
2001. These activities targeted government facilities and personnel, moderate Muslims identified as threats to the radical Islamic movement, and Western-themed businesses (Planet Hollywood, Hooters, and Hard Rock Cafe) seen by PAGAD as symbols of the anti-Islamic West. The successful investigation and subsequent prosecution of PAGAD members by the government was credited with the suspension of further violence. No significant anti-Western attacks have occurred since 2001.

Terrorism Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Labor strikes in occur frequently and can be violent and disruptive. Gauteng Province (home to Johannesburg and Pretoria) remains the political and economic capital of the country and typically experiences more labor unrest than other provinces (although unrest can, and does, occur in any area). Labor unions carry substantial political clout and can mobilize thousands of people to a protest or demonstration. Typical protest activities include blocking major thoroughfares between Johannesburg and Pretoria (termed a “go slow”) by vehicles or gridlocking Johannesburg’s Central Business District (CBD) with sheer numbers of protestors. Sectors most often affected by labor unrest include: mining, farming, retail, civil service, public transportation, private trucking, and manufacturing.

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 not delivered. These protests often result in burning tires, stoning vehicles, and blocking roads.
Unlicensed protests can get out of hand and have led to property destruction and assaults. Unannounced large-scale wildcat strikes in the mining sector in the Northern provinces and fruit farms in the Western Cape have occurred recently. These wildcat strikes involved thousands of people and led to numerous deaths, injuries, and extensive property damage.

According to the 2013-14 SAPS report, there were 11,601 peaceful protests, and an additional 1,907 illegal, violent demonstrations. The total (13,508) marked an increase over the 12,399 from 2012-13. SAPS noted that the elevated number of protests forced them to divert resources from other police activities.

While protests are generally peaceful, they can involve some level of violence. SAPS generally meets protests with non-lethal crowd control measures but have responded with violence. While protests are legally permitted, police are generally quick to deter demonstrations that do not have appropriate municipal approval. Like all major cities, the security resources of SAPS and the Metropolitan Police Department in Cape Town are adequate to maintain order during authorized demonstrations.

KZN is a frequent host to ANC political rallies and large gatherings that sometimes disrupt the city. Most protests, marches, and rallies pass in front of the building housing the U.S. Consulate General and end across the street in front of Durban’s City Hall, preventing Consulate staff and visitors from accessing or departing from the building. There were over a dozen demonstrations in 2014 that ended in front of City Hall in Durban. SAPS is usually called in to control traffic and demonstrators.
Protests by the military, police, private security industry, truckers, and the minibus/taxi industry have the most potential for violence.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

South Africa has a large and diverse mix of religions, and some communities are sensitive to U.S. government involvement in the Middle East. There have been recent small, peaceful demonstrations in Gauteng protesting these policies.

Service delivery protests frequently spiral into looting of small, foreign-owned shops. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from other African countries who are perceived to be competing for jobs with South Africans are the primary target of these attacks. These attacks are increasingly violent and mainly occurred in South Africa’s largest townships. The government attributes the attacks to high unemployment. Human rights groups, however, note a strong ethnic/religious undertone to the attacks. Somalis, conspicuously Muslim in a majority Christian country, are frequent victims.

The government is aware of the problem but has challenges in addressing the root causes. Local law enforcement can be hesitant in preventing looting and have been captured on video standing by idly. As a result, foreigners working and living in urban areas feel helpless and are prone to resolve matters on their own, leading to further conflict and violence. In May 2013, a mob beat a Somali shop owner to death in Port Elizabeth. The act was caught on camera, posted to YouTube, and showed the helpless man as he was pelted with rocks in the street. Arrests were made, but not one was prosecuted. In January 2015, the shooting of a young
boy by a foreign-born shop owner led to several days of rioting and looting in Soweto and other parts of Gauteng. There were also isolated incidents of violence near Durban and in Cape Town. The SAPS got the violence under control, in most cases overnight or within a day or two, but several people were killed.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

During the rainy season, thunderstorms, lightning strikes, or water damage often disrupt power to alarm systems, traffic lights, and other electronic equipment. Adequate surge protectors should be used to protect computers and other electrical equipment.

If visiting the expansive coastline, be mindful of the possible presence of sharks when swimming or engaging in water sports. From 1990 to 2011, there were 136 shark attacks, 22 of them fatal, in South Africa. In 2012-13, at the Fish Hoek and Jeffrey’s Bay beach, other areas of the Cape Town and Western Cape coastlines and at Port St. John’s in in the Eastern Cape, sharks attacked several swimmers, and some of the attacks were fatal. When lifeguards and shark spotters are on duty and sight a shark close to the shore, local authorities will sound a warning siren to alert swimmers.

Accidents can occur when swimming in the ocean or walking/climbing on shore areas that are not designated lifeguard-patrolled beaches. Visitors have drowned when swimming in coastal waters, where riptides, tides, and wave patterns can change unexpectedly and overwhelm
even excellent swimmers. Do not swim alone in isolated beach areas. Do not dive into unknown bodies of water, as hidden rocks or shallow depths can cause serious injury or death.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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 government-owned utilities’ ability to deliver an uninterrupted power supply. 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 Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The local and national governments remain committed to combating the production and importation of counterfeit products and to enforcing intellectual property rights as per World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments. However, the demand for name brand items at all socio-economic levels sustains the demand for counterfeit products including music, clothing, and accessories. South Africa has made the most progress on counterfeit digital media through close cooperation between authorities and industry.
Importation 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 products 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. Embassy is in close contact with South Africa Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC) in combating counterfeiting and protecting intellectual property rights.

Privacy Concerns

Identity theft remains a concern due to: a strong infrastructure of money wire services, readily available Internet, prepaid cell phones, high levels of corruption in many companies, and lack of police resources/expertise to combat this type of crime. The U.S. Embassy has worked with U.S. citizens who reported their mail was opened, re-routed, or tampered with at the local post office, and later learned the perpetrators assumed their identity. Others have reported that their U.S. passport biographical page was photocopied at hotels during their travels in Africa (standard operating procedure), was altered (Photoshopped), and used in romance, standard traveler, or tax scams against South African and U.S. citizens.

Drug-related Crimes

South Africa is an importer and exporter of drugs. It is the origin, transit point, and/or destination of many drug trafficking routes. International drug trafficking organizations are found in South Africa. Factors that attract legitimate businesses (a relatively stable regime and first-world infrastructure) also appeal to organized crime. Recent trends indicate that Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) from China and the Balkans have developed a significant
presence in South Africa. In addition to importing narcotics directly into South Africa, DTOs ship drugs into Maputo, Mozambique, and then truck them into South Africa.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports South Africa as a leading country for cannabis seizures. While much cannabis is cultivated domestically, significant quantities are also grown in neighboring countries. Large seizures of compressed marijuana are frequently made at the OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg and are generally destined for the United Kingdom.

Cocaine, frequently originating from Brazil and other parts of South America, is regularly seized at the OR Tambo International Airport. Cocaine trafficking is mostly controlled by Nigerian syndicates that have recruiters placed in South Africa and facilitators throughout South America.

Heroin is also a drug of abuse in South Africa. There were several investigations where heroin was smuggled from Pakistan into South Africa and onward into the U.S. According to a UN study, most of the heroin trafficked into South Africa is intended for domestic consumption.

SAPS reports an increase in the number of clandestine drug manufacturing laboratories. These labs produce synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine (known locally as “tick”), largely for the domestic market. While there is limited knowledge of narcotics trafficking financing terrorist activities, the U.S. government has no corroborated intelligence to indicate widespread narco-terrorism in South Africa.
Kidnapping Threat

While there have been a few cases of U.S. citizens seeking business opportunities in South Africa being abducted by criminals misrepresenting themselves as legitimate businesspersons, U.S. citizens are not targeted specifically for kidnapping. Scam artists who purported to be engaged in legitimate business enterprises have lured unsuspecting victims with promises of lucrative business deals. In one instance, the victim arrived in South Africa and met his “business contact,” the victim was abducted and ransomed for safe return. These abductions are motivated purely by greed and do not target U.S. citizens specifically. U.S. citizens have not been the target of kidnap for political gain.

Police Response

The police forces are well intentioned but have limited effectiveness due to a lack of equipment, resources, training, and personnel to respond to calls for assistance or other emergencies. In addition, law enforcement agencies have lost many experienced officers and personnel to attrition and reorganization of command and administrative structures.

If stopped without valid identification or a current visa by the police, individuals of any nationality can be subject to arrest, detention, and for deportation. There are pockets of corruption within the government, but as a policy, law enforcement frequently collaborates with U.S. counterparts to target drug trafficking.
How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

While corruption exists, complaints of street level shakedowns for money or similar forms of harassment are uncommon among the U.S. expatriate community. One in three South Africans reports to having paid a bribe to police officers (or police impersonators) once they engaged them for assistance. 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 the fine will be paid at a police station.

U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained by SAPS or feel they are being harassed can contact American Citizen Services at:

U.S. Consulate General - Johannesburg
1 Sandton Drive, Sandton, 2146
Tel: 011-290-3000; Fax: 011-884-0396
Afterhours emergency assistance: 079-111-1684
E-mail: consularjohannesburg@state.gov

U.S. Consulate General - Cape Town
Police/Security Agencies

There are two police agencies. The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) deals with traffic control and the South African Police Service (SAPS) deals with criminal investigations and regular law enforcement duties. SAPS continues to address poor response time and officer indifference with an effort to improve their sector policing capabilities in many neighborhoods. While SAPS attempts to respond to emergency residential calls and other potential developing crimes, real improvements in this effort are still forthcoming. Property crimes are a lower priority. Police response may take two-to-three days after a break-in to respond to take a report.

Community watch groups, such as those found in the U.S. or Western Europe, are increasing slowly. They also compliment SAPS’ efforts to detect/deter crime and provide improved response to calls of a serious nature. Though there has been an improvement in community policing, police are mistrusted and seen as corrupt.

For residential/commercial properties in affluent neighborhoods, the use of private security companies is the norm 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 more affluent areas are protected by roving security reaction units with the responsibility of responding to violent crimes (home invasions, business robberies, etc), communities have experienced little to no success in this effort.

Medical Emergencies
The private health care sector ranks amongst the best in the world.

Counterfeit medication is a major problem throughout Africa. It is not a significant problem in South Africa, but the lack of effective border controls, well-organized criminal syndicates controlling these illicit practices, and the tremendous amount of proceeds they generate means counterfeit medications may become the next challenge. These illicit practices affect all levels of society, with the poor as primary targets. To avoid being a victim of this scam, be familiar with the physical characteristics of the medications one takes. It is also important to know the color, shape, printing, and form of medication and packaging, and the color, shape, and texture of the actual medication. If in doubt, immediately return the medication and/or 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 Recommended Hospitals/Clinics
Three private health corporations – Netcare (https://www.netcare.co.za), Mediclinic (http://www.mediclinic.co.za), and Life Hospitals (http://www.lifehealthcare.co.za) -- dominate the private health care system in South Africa. Each corporation owns approximately 60 hospitals, which are scattered throughout the country. Nearly every medium sized city, including those cities near remote game parks, has a private hospital operated by at least one of these three corporations. The more remote hospitals provide less specialized care, but all have abilities to stabilize very ill or injured patients until transferred to a larger medical center in a major city. The three corporation’s websites have excellent search tools to find a hospital, clinic, or doctor anywhere in South Africa.

JOHANNESBURG (larger private hospitals, multiple others available)

Milpark Hospital – NetCare: 9 Guild Rd, Partown West, Johannesburg 2193
Tel: +27 (11) 480-5600, Emergency: +27 (11) 480-5917

Morningside Medi-Clinic: Cnr Rivonia and Hills Rd, Morningside, Johannesburg 2057
Tel: +27 (11) 282-5000, Emergency: +27 (11) 282-5126/5127

Sandton Medi-Clinic: Cnr Main Rd and Peter Place, Bryanston, Johannesburg 2021
Tel: +29 (11) 709-2000, Emergency: +27 (11) 706-7710/7711
PRETORIA (larger private hospitals, multiple others available)

Unitas Hospital – Netcare: Clifton Avenue, Lyttelton, Centurion 0140
Tel: +27 (12) 677 8000

Pretoria East – NetCare: Corner of Garsfontein & Netcare Roads, Moreleta Park
Tel: + 27 (12) 422 2300

Life Wilgers Hospital: Denneboom Rd, Wilgers Ext14, Pretoria 0040
Tel: +27 (12) 807-8100

Kloof Hospital Medi-Clinic: 511 Jochemus St, Erasmuskloof X3, Pretoria 0083
Tel: +27 (12) 367-4000, Emergency: +27 (12) 367-4076

CAPE TOWN (larger private hospitals, multiple others available)

Life Vincent Palloti Hospital: Alexandra Road, Pinelands, Cape Town 7405
Tel: +27 (21) 506-5111
Christiaan Barnard Memorial- NetCare: Cnr Long Market and Loop Street, City Centre
Tel: +27 (21) 480-6111, +27 (21) 424-4228

Constantiaberg Mediclinic Hospital: Burnham Road: off Gabriel and Amin Streets
Tel: +27 (21) 799-2911, +27 (21) 797-1107

Claremont Hospital: Main Road, Claremont
Tel: +27 (21) 670-4300, +27 (21) 671-3315

DURBAN (larger private hospitals, multiple others available)
St Augustine’s Hospital – NetCare: 107 Chelmsford Rd, Berea, Durban 4001
Tel: +27 (31) 268-5000, Emergency: +27 (31) 268-5030

Umhlanga Rocks Hospital – NetCare: 323 Umhlanga Rocks Drive, Umhlanga Rocks, Durban 4320
Tel: +27 (31) 560-5500, Emergency: +27 (31) 560-5607/5612
Etanbeni Hospital – Life Healthcare: 148 South Ridge Rd, Berea, Durban 4000

Tel: +27 (31) 204-1300, Emergency: +27 (31) 204-1377

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

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

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

Recommended Insurance Posture

U.S. government employees working elsewhere in Africa are often evacuated to South Africa for medical treatment. Travelers are encouraged to purchase traveler/medical evacuation insurance policies. 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.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
HIV/AIDS remain major public health concerns. Due to the high HIV infection rate, the U.S. government advises all personnel and 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 are required to present their current and valid “International Certificate of Vaccination” record (commonly called a “yellow shot card”) as approved by the WHO or a statement of medical exemption (also located on the same “yellow shot card”). This requirement is imposed on travelers flying to South Africa via any yellow fever country, including low risk countries, even when transiting passengers are required to stay on board the plane or if the plane makes an unscheduled landing in a yellow fever country. South Africa treats Zambia and Tanzania as yellow fever countries. Immigration inspectors do not generally accept letters, scans, copies, or faxes regarding prior yellow fever vaccination. While this requirement may not be consistently applied, travelers who cannot present an original, valid “yellow shot card” risk being refused entry. Yellow fever vaccinations are not administered at South African ports of entry. Yellow fever vaccination must have been administered at least 10 days prior to a traveler’s arrival in accordance with WHO regulations. A yellow fever vaccination is valid for 10 years.

Malaria does exist in the low elevations areas in the northeast, including Kruger National Park and the border with Mozambique. Individuals traveling to these areas are advised to consult their medical provider or a travel medicine clinic on prophylactic malaria medications and take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

South Africa has the world’s third highest rates of TB (behind India and China), with the World Health Organization (WHO) statistics giving an estimated incidence of 500,000 cases in 2011. Therefore, about one percent of the population (of about 50 million), develops active TB disease each year. The incidence has increased by 400 percent 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 in 2013, but this excludes those people who had both TB and HIV infection when they died.

For more information on these topics, general health questions, other routine travel vaccinations, visit the CDC website at:

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

ATM fraud includes the placement of a skimming device on the ATM itself or the ruse of a “helpful citizen” who offers to assist. Credit card scams are also prevalent. It is highly recommended that you thoroughly inspect any ATM for suspicious attachments or devices, and ensure that the ATM is in a controlled area (i.e., a mall). In addition, never allow anyone to provide assistance and never give out PIN codes. Residents and travelers should ensure that credit cards are not taken to a “back room” for processing. Always complete credit card transaction(s) with the establishment’s employee in one’s presence.

“Lonely hearts” scams are a growing problem with fake romantic relations or “engagements” via the Internet to lure victims into sending money to support education, health, or job problems.
A “419” scam is an advanced fee fraud scheme where the victim is requested to wire money (typically through MoneyGram or Western Union) to pay up-front costs associated with receiving a substantial monetary windfall. This unsolicited Internet scam is often initiated under the guise of a seemingly legitimate business proposition. Bogus websites are set up to give the appearance of legitimacy to dupe a victim seeking a specific business opportunity. Based on the information in the unsolicited email or on the bogus website, the victim contacts the scammer to either send money or agree to travel to South Africa to negotiate a business deal. If travel is involved, the unwary victim can be kidnapped for ransom or bilked out of all their funds. When individuals fall victim to a “419” scam, SAPS will not pursue an investigation unless the victim is willing to file a formal complaint and testify in court. Victims have lost large sums of money to these scams. For more information, please see the SAPS website at: www.saps.gov.za and search 419 scams. Upon receipt of a “419” solicitation, please visit the FBI website (www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm) before providing any personal/financial details or making a financial commitment. Additional financial scam information is available at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_3155.html.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

First, be aware of your surroundings. Your vigilance may convince a would-be attacker to find an easier target. In urban areas, walk in “controlled areas” (shopping malls or other areas with a security presence). Do not travel to an area you are not familiar with. Travel in groups, whenever possible, and minimize your movements after dark. If you believe you are in danger, leave the area immediately and go to a well-lit and populated location to seek help.
Maintain a low profile and do not flash cash or wear expensive jewelry. Travelers should safeguard their passport, wallet, and other valuables and know where these possessions are all times. Travelers should use a safe and or reception desk lock boxes at hotels for all valuables. Keep photocopies of your passport and other identity documents on your person or separate from the originals and keep the originals locked up in the hotel safe.

If confronted by an armed individual; cooperate. Do not resist. Resistance or hesitation on the part of the victim can result in death or serious injury. Keep your hands visible and follow instructions carefully. Do not make any furtive movements that might startle your attacker. Surrender items requested – your things can be replaced; your safety and your life cannot.

If you are in a vehicle, doors should be locked, no valuables should be left in plain view (to avoid smash-and-grabs), and car windows should be kept up. When stopped at a red light, leave room between the car you are in and the car in front of you in case you need to take evasive action. Stay on main roads and keep to well-lit public areas. If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest safe area (hospital, store, or any area that is populated or normally covered by security cameras). If forced to pull over for any reason by a police vehicle (marked or unmarked), with your emergency blinkers on, drive at a slow pace to a secure and well-lit area (i.e., police station, mall, gas station, service area, or any populated area populated covered by security cameras). This is especially true near the OR Tambo International Airport due to heightened “Blue Light” robberies. 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 appropriate authorities can respond. Use caution when traveling and be properly prepared with cell phones, water, and other supplies when traveling in the remote “bush” country.
Before entering an establishment, scan the area for any suspicious activity. This will reduce the chances of walking into a “robbery in progress.” Once inside the establishment, take note of the nearest fire exits or other avenues of escape.

Avoid armored vehicles (and their uniformed personnel), especially when they are making deposits or picking up cash receipts. They are frequent targets by well-armed gangs who are not afraid to use weapons, even in crowded public areas. If you hear gunshots, get down on the ground. Do not try to investigate or intervene.

If you need to use an ATM, use one inside a controlled area such as a shopping mall or hotel. Avoid ATMs on the street since watching criminals will attempt to “assist” you during your transaction. Criminals do bomb ATMs, although this usually only occurs during the early morning hours in remote locations. Credit/debit card fraud is frequent. Only use cards in reputable establishments. In order to prevent “card skimming,” physically watch your card when processed (swiped). Check your credit/debit card account for any unauthorized purchases.

Drink responsibly. Drinking alcohol in public is an offence. If caught, you may be arrested and detained.

Measures to combat home invasions should include several layers of residential security, such as perimeter walls, electric fencing, loops on the electric fencing, alarms, motion detectors, and grilles on windows and 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. Wait inside your vehicle on the street until the vehicle gate is open before pulling into
the residence. This will provide you an escape route if confronted.

Avoid confrontations with local residents. Avoid areas where political gatherings are taking place. Pay attention to local media reports on the location(s) of proposed demonstrations. Protests and demonstrations are not spectator events. Avoid them at all costs.

Victims of violent crime, especially rape, are strongly encouraged to seek immediate medical attention, including anti-retroviral therapy against HIV/AIDS.

Residents may wish to consider purchasing residential generators for backup electricity.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Mailing: PO Box 9536, Pretoria 0001
Physical: 877 Pretorius St, Arcadia 0083, Pretoria
Embassy and Consulate General hours of operation are 0745 to 1700

Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: +27 (12) 431-4000; Fax: +27 (12) 342-2299

MSG Post 1: +27 (12) 431-4169 (After Hours)

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

Email: DS_RSO_Pretoria@state.gov

Website: http://southafrica.usembassy.gov/

Nearby Posts

Consulate General Johannesburg: http://southafrica.usembassy.gov/consulate_johannesburg.html

Consulate General Cape Town: http://southafrica.usembassy.gov/consulate_capetown.html

Consulate General Durban: http://southafrica.usembassy.gov/consulate_durban.html
Embassy Guidance

The Consular Information Sheet for South Africa (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1008.html) provides additional information. It recommended that any traveler register with the U.S. Department of State: https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/.

OSAC Country Council Information

South Africa’s OSAC Country Council is based in Johannesburg. The Regional Security Office in Pretoria and Johannesburg co-chair a vibrant and proactive OSAC Country Council with over 65 members to include major U.S. companies in a variety of industries. The OSAC Country Council meets monthly in Johannesburg. Both Regional Security Offices (Pretoria and Johannesburg) attend all meetings to engage in roundtable discussions. The OSAC Country Council takes an active role on all issues of crime and security in South Africa to include outreach to public officials for speaking engagements and training seminars. For more information, please reach out to OSAC Johannesburg (osacjohannesburg@googlegroups.com).

Regional Security Offices (RSO):

Pretoria:+27 (12) 431-4099DS_RSO_Pretoria@state.gov
Johannesburg:+27 (11) 290-3426DS_RSOJohannesburg@state.gov
The U.S. Consulate General Cape Town continues to develop and cultivate a nascent local Country Council, including 20 members of U.S. companies in that region. Please contact the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Consulate General (tel: +27 (21) 702-7438, email RSOCapetown@state.gov) if you are interested in participating or need more information.

American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM): +27 (11) 788-0265 www.amcham.co.za

To reach the OSAC Africa team, please email OSACAF@state.gov.