



TOPICS

WINTER IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is known for its long sunny days, hence the title, 'Sunny South Africa'. The South African Weather Service uses the following dates for seasons: **Spring** - September, October, November; **Summer** - December through February; **Autumn** - March, April, May; **Winter** - June, July, August. This Nugget will focus on travel during the winter season in South Africa. Winter is a popular travel period for some of our markets and we think more people will consider the winter period if they know the conditions to travel in during our winter period. This is besides the excellent rates that are offered during the winter period! Most of the nine provinces have summer rainfall, except for the Western Cape, which experiences winter rainfall. The Cape can however be quite seasonal and can vary from wet & windy to sunny & bright – often all on the same day. The high-lying areas of the interior can be chilly in winter. The northern part of the country is thus sunny and dry during winter but mornings and evenings can be chilly.

WINTER TIP NUMBER 1: INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR RAINY DAYS IN CAPE TOWN

Winter is normally the rainy season in Cape Town and therefore we suggest the following indoor activities to keep in mind for winter itineraries in Cape Town.

- **Indoor Rock Climbing:** Whether you are looking for safe and kid friendly climbs or an extreme physical challenge, this activity will be able to satisfy all your needs.
- **Cave Golf:** When it's too wet and muddy out to hit your favourite golf course, you can still practice those chipping skills at this indoor 18-hole putt putt haunt. Based just next to the V&A Waterfront's Scratch Patch (another winning rainy day idea for kids), Cave Golf, which is so called because the venue is designed like a cosy cave, keeps players on their toes with an assortment of tricky angles, uneven surfaces, steep hills and awkward obstacles.
- **Watch Feedings at the Two Oceans Aquarium:** This indoor underwater treasure trove is home to over 3000 living sea animals, including sharks, spider crabs, jellyfish, anemones, clownfish and much more. The state-of-the-art aquarium, which is committed to raising awareness about South Africa's marine environment, is worth a visit any time of day, but to get the most out of the experience, schedule a pop-in around the time that the various creatures get fed, so you can see them in action. There are feedings every day of the week.
- **The Springbok Experience Rugby Museum:** This state-of-the-art rugby museum at the V&A Waterfront has enough colour, motion and excitement to help both young and old forget that it's wet and dreary outside. The modern, kid-friendly visitor attraction, which is, of course, all indoors, uses audio-visual exhibits and touch-screen technology to tell the story of the development of Mzansi's favourite sport in an interesting and interactive way.
- **V&A Market on the Wharf:** Unlike your standard fleeting bazaar, the V&A Market on the Wharf, which is based in the Waterfront's Old Power Station, is a permanent foodie mecca that's guaranteed to be open even on the rainiest of Sundays or the frostiest of Fridays.
- **Shows at the Iziko Planetarium:** Based inside the domed auditorium of the Iziko South African Museum, this celestial theatre invites young and old visitors to sit back and take in the beauty of a recreated night sky. The Planetarium promises an extraordinary multimedia experience through several fascinating shows that repeat regularly.
- **The Human Gyroscope at the Cape Town Science Centre:** A world of discovery under one roof, the indoor Cape Town Science Centre features floors full of fascinating interactive displays, challenging puzzles and exciting activities for little ones' enjoyment.

- **Walk Amongst Tropical Parrots and Marmoset Monkeys at Butterfly World:** This is one of the more unique attractions of the Cape Winelands. Not only does this greenhouse-enclosed tropical garden boast a colourful medley of exotic butterflies that flitter and float around visitors, but it's also home to a number of other fascinating creatures from near and far.
- **Arcade Machines and Kiddies' Rides at N1 City Mall's Wonderland:** As its name suggests, this entertainment centre in Goodwood is a veritable paradise for little ones, particularly when it's pouring and they can't expel that energy outdoors.
- **Cape Town Comedy Club:** Not much can distract you from dreary weather quite like a barrel full of laughs. Founded by renowned Cape Town funnyman Kurt Schoonraad, this V&A Waterfront-based comedy club hosts shows every Wednesday to Saturday that feature both up-and-coming talents and some of the best in the business.
- **Natale Labia Artwork Collection at Casa Labia:** Built in Venetian style back in 1929, this grand Muizenberg-based cultural centre is a magnificent spot to visit when the skies are gloomy and grey. The national monument is home to a contemporary art gallery, and while the solo and group exhibitions upstairs change regularly.
- **Theatre at Alexander Upstairs:** Based above the old-world Alexander Bar & Café in Cape Town's city centre, this intimate performance space runs a festival-like programme of evening shows from Monday to Saturday each week that are guaranteed to enchant and entertain those looking to get their minds off dim weather.
- **Tea Tastings and Pairings at Lady Bonin's Tea Room:** The store, which channels a relaxed, calming ambience, not only sells a diverse range of interesting aromatic infusions (think fruit teas, Red Choc Chilli Chai, Ceylon with masala spices and more), but also gives guests the option to sample an assortment of loose-leaf concoctions on site or even pair various teas with carefully selected complementary sweet and savoury snacks.
- **Tours at Newlands Brewery:** How does drinking away those rainy day sorrows sound? Thanks to the regular tours offered at the long-standing Newlands Brewery in Cape Town's Southern Suburbs, you can not only learn about how your favourite lager is made, but also knock back a few jugs of ale under the roof of the house that created it.
- **Bubbly and Nougat Pairing at The House of J.C. Le Roux:** Heavenly combinations are just what's needed to dodge the drabness of miserable weather, and fortunately, The House of J.C. Le Roux in Stellenbosch is the ultimate master of winning pairings. Based in the scenic folds of Devon Valley, this renowned creator of bubbly offers two to-die-for tastings: one that matches three glasses of Methodé Cap Classique (MCC) and two glasses of sparkling wine with various pieces of nougat and one that marries three MCCs and two sparkling wines with marshmallows and meringues.
- **Chocolate, Grappa, Biltong and Beer Tastings at the Spice Route Destination:** This delightful village-like complex in the Paarl Winelands has enough on offer to keep Cape Town victims of cabin fever entertained and distracted for a full day. Aside from a stunning glass blowing studio and a number of restaurants, the charming artisanal destination promises a whole range of tantalising tasting experiences that guests can flitter and float between.



WINTER TIP NUMBER 2: SAFARI IN WINTER IS GREAT

During the winter months in South Africa (May to August) the days on safari are excellent since it is not too hot and vegetation is not too thick ensuring excellent safari game viewing conditions. Another bonus is that rates are often very affordable during this season since it is actually considered 'low' season in South Africa.

The Greater Kruger National Park region is undoubtedly the best area for a truly South African Safari. Although there are other regions where game viewing is also possible, we will be focusing on this region.

The region consists of:

- The Kruger National Park
- Private concessions within the Kruger National park
- Private Game Reserves on the Western side of the Kruger National Park

The Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in South Africa covering nearly 2 million hectares (20,000 square kilometres) of land that stretch for 352 kilometres from north to south along the Mozambique border. The Kruger National Park lies across the provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo in the north of South Africa, just south of Zimbabwe and west of Mozambique. It now forms part of the **Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park** - a peace park that links Kruger National Park with game parks in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and fences are already coming down to allow game to freely roam. Kruger National Park accommodation is traditionally within rest camps which are all run by the South African National Parks Board.

Tourist staying at hotels outside the National Park can enjoy game viewing in the National Park as day visitors either on self-drive basis in their car or on a guided tour in their air-conditioned vehicle (microbus, minibus or coach) or in guided open 4x4 safari vehicles. Day visitors must strictly adhere to gate closing times and leave the National park by sunset.

Private Game Reserves

Flanking the western boundary of the Kruger National Park is a number of private game reserves. Though none of them fall within the park's boundaries, together they form the heart of South Africa's big game country and some of the most famous private lodges and the best wildlife viewing in the world take place here. The main reason for rich game viewing is the free movement of animals between the private reserves and the Kruger National Park - at least 100 kilometres of fencing has been removed, ridding the area of man-made borders. The private game reserves allow for vehicles to leave roads, and animals on the whole are more used to the presence of man so there's a greater chance of seeing them. **Private game reserves include Sabi Sand Private Game Reserve, Timbavati Private Game Reserve, Thornybush Private Game Reserve, Kapama Private Game Reserve and Manyeleti Private Game Reserve.**

Only guests that stays overnight at these game lodges are allowed entry into the private game reserve areas. All safaris are conducted in open 4x4 safari vehicles with qualified rangers and trackers. The typical day at a private game reserve lodge starts with arrival just before lunch followed by lunch, afternoon tea and then an open vehicle safari drive that continues into the early evening in order to view the nocturnal animals as well before returning to the lodge for dinner. Mornings start with an early wake up call before sunrise, followed by a dawn safari and then return to lodge for breakfast. Activities at a private lodge include: morning and evening game drives, guided bush walks, stargazing, specialized safaris, i.e. birding.

Private Concession within the Kruger National Park

The private concessions are large tracts of untouched land that have been leased by the government to private operators. The concessions consist of established lodges that offer incredible luxury, superbly guided game drives, and the freedom to move into the greater park area if desired. These private game lodges offer a more intimate and exclusive experience of the vast Kruger Park. The Game lodges in private concessions are operated on a similar basis to the ones in the private game reserves but subject to certain rules and regulations formulated by the National Parks Board. The private concessions are the "newest" safari option with the first private concessions granted about 10 years ago.

Private lodges (in both the private concessions within the Kruger National Park as well as in the private game reserves) really go the extra mile to ensure guests have a memorable safari experience and winter is no exception.

- Hot Water bottles are provided on vehicles as well as in rooms.
- Blankets are provided on vehicles for the early morning and evening chill.
- A special 'winter' drinks stop are done on game drives.
- Lodges with fireplace will have it lit when guests return from evening game drives as well as fire places in public areas will be lit.
- Some lodges may provide guests with a warm cloth upon return from game drives.
- Some lodges may provide decanters with sherry in rooms.
- During winter game drives often depart a bit later, therefore guests can lie in a bit.

The above are only a few of the 'special touches' the lodges do to ensure that the winter chill is a bit more bearable during those early morning and evening activities.

Tip: 'Dress like an Onion' – layering. Have multiple layers of clothes – start your morning game drive with multiple layers and peel them off as the morning heats up. In the afternoon you start with the minimum and then layer up as the game drive progress and the temperatures drop.

