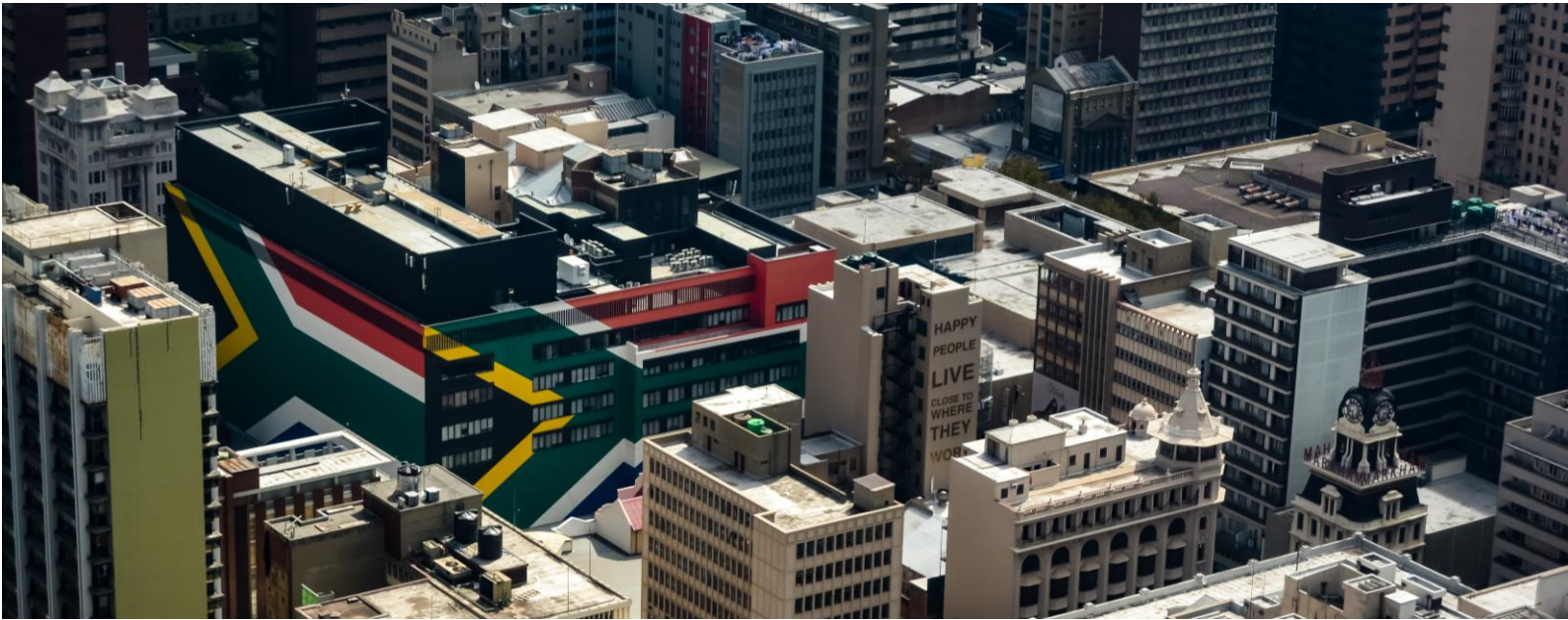


LIVING IN JOHANNESBURG



Johannesburg (or Joburg, as the city is commonly known) is the rhythmic centre at the heart of South Africa. Expats moving to Johannesburg will find themselves not only in the country's economic engine room, but also in one of the foremost financial centres in Africa.

Well known for its role in South Africa's tumultuous history, the city is founded on gold, dust, contrast and conflict. The pace of life in Joburg can be frenetic as business people pursue their ambitions and consumers shop with apparent abandon. The nickname eGoli, given to the city by locals, means 'place of gold' and refers not just to the gold found below the ground but also to the proliferation of wealth above it.

Despite its industrial reputation for mining and commerce, Joburg is not without its own unique brand of natural beauty. Its affluent neighbourhoods are spacious, leafy and quiet, and beyond the electrified fences one can find landscaped gardens of pastoral splendour.

For those who can afford to live in the relative safety of its wealthy suburbs, Johannesburg offers an exceptionally high standard of living coupled with great economic opportunity.

The cost of living in South Africa is generally lower than overseas, and roughly on par with better developed African countries. Living in Johannesburg is about half as costly as in European capitals. Expats with a foreign-currency income will be able to live well, and local salaries, while lower, can still afford a good quality of life.

"I love the colours – pink cherry blossom, purple jacarandas, orange and purple bird of paradise, pink proteas, orange clivia miniata, and always a bright blue sky. Johannesburg turns purple in October, and you cannot but smile as you drive around on your normal daily commute." – Hannah, a British expat living in Johannesburg



Accommodation in Johannesburg is reasonably priced, if not slightly higher in price than in most other South African cities. Grocery costs are on par with those in other cities. Petrol goes for a bit higher than in coastal cities, but otherwise transport costs are about the same. Private education and healthcare, although costly, are more likely to meet expats' standards.

Expat families can enjoy outdoor outings to a range of destinations such as the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens, the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve and Zoo Lake. The Highveld game and nature reserves outside the city also provide an opportunity for expats to get in touch with nature and experience the country's iconic grasslands and wildlife.

That said, many Joburg locals looking for entertainment simply head to the city's mega malls for shopping, socialising, movies and excellent eateries.

There are, however, a few downsides to life in 'Jozi'. It is a fast-paced, vibrant metropolis characterised by continuous growth, but the shadows of its wealth hide an underside marred by crime and poverty. Kamikaze-like minibus taxis, which function as the most commonly used public transport, are a constant source of irritation and danger on the roads, while walking in certain areas is also inadvisable due to safety concerns.

Expats often remark on the ideal climate that Johannesburg enjoys, and the weather certainly is one of the major attractions for many people moving to Joburg. Summer is characterised by hot, clear days and spectacular late-afternoon thunderstorms, while its frosty winter mornings resolve into dry, warm days.

While Johannesburg may have its flaws, just like any expat destination, new arrivals often find they enjoy the high quality of life, low cost of living and are often welcomed by the friendly locals, leading to many expats choosing to call Joburg home on a permanent basis.

CULTURE SHOCK

Given the country's complex society and eclectic nature, it is entirely natural for expats to feel a degree of culture shock in South Africa. With its sweeping geographic variations, 11 official languages and various cultures living in close proximity, the Rainbow Nation can be an easy place to blend in, but also presents expats with unique challenges.

Those expats who have been told horror stories will be relieved to know that there is no wildlife roaming the streets; that while crime is a reality, it is often sensationalised by the media; and that public infrastructure is generally good.

Inequality

Expats moving to South Africa are often the most taken aback by the country's glaring wealth disparity. It's not uncommon to see the newest Mercedes-Benz model parked next to someone



rummaging through a rubbish bin. Guilt can overwhelm new arrivals, but expats should be careful about indulging beggars or opening their homes to those in need. The best way to make a positive difference is to donate to registered charities.

Safety

Expats moving to Johannesburg, in particular, will encounter an obsession with personal safety. Homes are surrounded by electrified fences and high walls and, in some cases, guarded by private security firms. Walking around alone at night is discouraged. The role that crime plays in many people's lives may be the most unfamiliar and disconcerting feature of integrating into South African society.

The good news is that there has been a push towards urban renewal, with an increased emphasis on reducing crime. More and more people are enjoying Johannesburg's outdoor spaces and trendy inner-city areas. At the same time, daytime walks around the streets, beaches and parks in Cape Town are much more common, though it's still necessary to remain aware of one's surroundings and keep personal belongings out of sight.

Time

The concept of time in South Africa takes some getting used to for expats settling into their new life. South Africans often measure moments in 'now', 'just now' and 'now now'. If expats find themselves struggling to grasp the difference, they needn't be concerned – even among South Africans, the relative lengths of time that these phrases indicate is debated. The point that remains is that, for many South Africans, there is no rush if it can be done later.

However, this is not true in the South African business world, which upholds very Western standards of punctuality and decorum. It functions relatively efficiently, although social engagements and government enterprises often function with a lot more flexibility. Expats should not take problems with punctuality or light-hearted rescheduling personally – this is a cultural norm.

Social life

South Africans of all cultures enjoy a braai, a kind of barbecue which entails cooking meat over hot coals, often accompanied by various salads and sides. Because the hot coals need to cool to the right temperature before the food can be cooked, braais are often an all-day event with attendees relaxing and chatting over a few beers.

Braais often take place around sporting events – the country is passionate about rugby, cricket and soccer (football). While support for local rugby and cricket teams is high, especially at the national level, soccer can probably be considered the favourite national pastime, even if the national team hardly ever performs well on the international stage.



VISAS*

Depending on where they're from and how long they intend to stay, most expats will need a visa for South Africa. Citizens of visa-exempt countries such as the UK, Canada, the US and several others won't need a visa if they're staying for 90 days or less and are in the country for tourism or business purposes. Holders of passports from non-exempt countries and those wanting to stay longer to study, volunteer or work in South Africa will have to apply for a visa beforehand.

It's worth noting that only visa renewals or extensions can be done in South Africa – expats won't be able to change from, for example, a visitor's visa to a work visa from within the country. To change to a new visa category, an expat would need to return to their country of origin and submit the relevant application at a South African embassy.

Temporary residence visas

Expats planning to stay in South Africa for more than three months will need a temporary residence visa. This is sorted into different categories depending on what the applicant intends to do, such as moving to study, work, start their own business or receive medical treatment. Each type of temporary resident visa has its own specified period of validity. Work visas, for instance, are valid for up to a maximum of five years, while medical treatment visas are issued for six months at a time and are eligible for extension.

Permanent residence permits

Expats who want to stay long-term will need a permanent residence permit for South Africa. The application process varies according to what they want to do in the country. The first thing to determine is which category the application falls under.

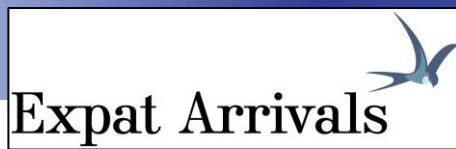
Direct residence permits are applied for on the basis of having been in the country on a work visa for the past five years. Residency-on-other-grounds permits cover other reasons for permanent residency, such as retiring, starting a business or moving to the country to join a family member or spouse. Though some permanent residence applications can be made on a standalone basis in theory, most expats get a temporary residence visa first. This is often because permanent residence applications can take a long time to be processed and granted.

Benefits of a permanent residency

One of the most obvious benefits of a permanent residence permit is the fact that it is valid for life if the holder abides by the permit's conditions. All other permits in South Africa require renewal or re-application at some point. Permanent residents can also sponsor qualifying relatives.

Permanent residence applications

Permanent residence applications can be made either in South Africa or in the applicant's country of origin, but expats should get advice from an immigration agent. The process takes several months and might cause applicants in South Africa to overstay on their current visas.



Using a registered immigration practitioner

Applicants can apply directly to a South African mission or through a South African visa application centre. But certain offices might not be easily accessible, and getting advice is difficult. The process is often confusing, time-consuming and frustrating – South African Home Affairs is notorious for disorganisation and shifting standards.

Applications aren't points-based but are assessed on a case-by-case basis. This policy creates a large grey area that's often best navigated with the knowledge that an immigration practitioner provides.

Work permits

Expats wishing to take up employment in South Africa will need to acquire a work permit, but getting one isn't always a consistent process. In South Africa, work permits are known as work visas and allow the bearer to enter, stay and work in the country.

Applying for a work visa

The main consideration for work visas is still whether South African citizens are able to perform the task in question at the same level as the applicant. The documentation required to prove this is a grey area that partially depends on officials' personal discretion. As a result, patience and persistence are highly advised for expats who don't have an employer organising their permit for them.

There are several visas for expats wanting to work in South Africa, including the General Work Visa, Critical Skills Work Visa and the Intra-company Transfer Work Visa. Either way, the first time that expats apply for a visa has to be at a South African mission outside the country. It isn't possible to change from a visit visa to a work visa while in South Africa.

Types of work visas

General work visas

To apply for a General Work Visa, expats must have a job offer from a South African employer. General Work Visas are issued for the term of the work contract, up to a maximum of five years.

"The work permit and visa process has been EXTREMELY challenging. We started out by using an immigration service which gave us bad advice. The visa processing service in South Africa is very slow and has no transparency when your application is being processed. I have been applying myself now since I got to know the system from dealing with it so often. But I'm still in the process after five years of renewing my work permit and I still need to get permanent residency even though my wife is a South African citizen." – Ryan, an American expat living in Johannesburg

Prospective employers have to prove that they were unable to find a South African citizen or permanent resident for the expat's position. Linked to this, expat employees have to provide proof that they have the necessary qualifications or skills needed for the job. Expat employees are also not allowed to earn less than the average salary and benefits earned by citizens and permanent residents in similar positions.



Critical Skills Work Visas

The South African Critical Skills Work Visa enables foreigners working within certain fields to enter the country regardless of whether they have an offer of employment, as long as they have an occupation listed on the government's critical skills list. As is the case with General Work Visas, Critical Skills Work Visas can only be issued for five years or less. Expats on this visa will need to prove to the authorities that they've obtained employment within 12 months of being issued the visa. The main sectors identified by the critical skills list include engineering, information and communications technology, science, research and medicine.

Intra-company Transfer Work Visas

Multinational businesses often use this visa for transferring personnel between branches in different countries. The Intra-company Transfer Work Visa is valid for up to four years. Required documentation includes an employment contract and letters from both the transferring company outside of South Africa and the receiving company in South Africa.

**Visa and work permit regulations are subject to change at short notice, and expats should contact their respective embassy or consulate for the latest details.*

WORKING

Working in Johannesburg means being employed in the commercial centre of South Africa. The city is home to some of the country's core industries, including mining, finance and telecommunications. There is no better city in South Africa to settle in for expats looking to advance their careers in a work environment that is fast-paced, competitive and demanding.

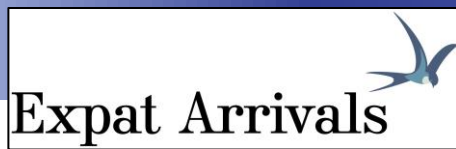
Job market in Johannesburg

With countless locals descending upon the city in search of work, the unemployment rate in Johannesburg is high. The majority of unemployed people in the city are, however, unskilled. Conversely, there is a shortage of workers in skilled sectors such as executive management, accounting, finance, medicine and engineering – meaning that there are many opportunities available to qualified and experienced expats whose skills are in demand.

Finding a job

Expats moving to Johannesburg without a job offer will need to be resourceful and creative. Try to tap into as many word-of-mouth networks as possible – there is often a spirit of understanding between expats in the city, and many are willing to assist each other when they can. To this end, networking with members of already established expat groups in Johannesburg could be very beneficial to new arrivals in the city.

Alternatively, there are several well-respected job recruitment websites, and expats can also look through local newspapers to find job advertisements. Recruitment companies may also be able to assist. Expats are required to have a work visa to take up employment in Johannesburg.



Work culture

As a more business-oriented city than Cape Town, Johannesburg's work culture is comparatively formal. There is more emphasis on presenting oneself well, though full suits aren't usually necessary on a day-to-day basis. As in the rest of the country, openness and friendliness are valued alongside professionalism. A sense of ambition and friendly competition is a key feature of the work culture in Johannesburg.

"The work culture is more relaxed than in America. There are more holidays, and the country basically shuts down over the Christmas period. There are fewer suppliers and many products must be imported." – Ryan, an American expat living in Cape Town

DOING BUSINESS

With its famous reputation for cultural diversity, doing business in South Africa is an eye-opening experience. The myriad different practices and customs expats may come across can be daunting, but a few generalities do exist, and Western expats shouldn't experience too much of a culture shock in the South African business world. When opting to do business in 'Mzansi', it won't take long for expats to fit in with a local populace that has learned that the most direct path to success is the one that people carve out for themselves.

Fact facts

Business hours

Generally Monday to Friday, from 8.30am or 9am to 5pm. South Africans rarely work on Saturdays and Sundays.

Business language

English is widely spoken. It is beneficial but not necessary to know some Afrikaans, Xhosa or Zulu.

Dress

Dress is conservative, but not formal. Suits are the exception to the rule, not the norm, and reserved for more corporate environments.

Gifts

Not expected, but generally welcome. Gifts are often opened in front of the giver.

Gender equality

Women in South Africa are entitled to the same opportunities as men but female representation in senior management remains relatively low.

Greetings

Handshakes are the norm in professional settings.



Racial equality

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) is an affirmative action policy that aims to redress the socio-economic imbalances caused by apartheid through helping to bring the black majority into the economic mainstream. Though not compulsory, BBBEE-certified businesses are given certain benefits.

Business culture

South African business culture is marked by striking differences in ethnicity, language and customs. The most important thing for expats doing business in the country is to try to understand the complexities of business culture in South Africa. Over time, a few common practices will emerge.

Cultural nuances

The working world of one urban centre contrasts not only with rural counterparts but also with other cities. South Africans love stereotyping Johannesburg as being hard-working and full of opportunity, while Cape Town is said to be more relaxed but also more insular.

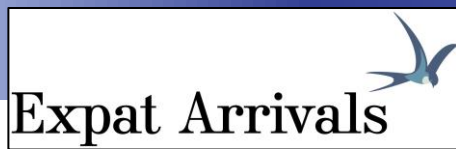
South Africans tend to prefer doing business with people they've met before. They are also known for being warm and inviting, and a bit of relationship-building will go a long way in cementing business arrangements. South Africans value hard work and applaud those who have succeeded – but they tend to prioritise other aspects of life such as family, good living and friendship. Punctuality is also important; however, depending on the client's culture, it may be necessary to wait patiently. Government figures, for instance, are often late.

Work environment

The South African work environment tends to be more relaxed and personable than expats may be used to, with the possible exception of some larger corporations and more established financial institutions. That said, a clear management hierarchy still exists, and showing respect for senior executives and colleagues is essential. In exchange, decisions are often made in a somewhat egalitarian manner.

Dos and don'ts of business

- Do schedule appointments a fair amount of time in advance and confirm the day before the meeting
- Do be punctual, even if expecting to wait
- Don't be surprised if local colleagues ask personal questions or discuss their personal lives. South Africans are friendly by nature and this is common.
- Don't be afraid to join colleagues for an after-work event. This is rarely seen as an obligation but instead as a fun way to get to know one another.
- Do dress conservatively when initially joining an office, cementing relationships with clients or associates, or attending an interview, even in casual offices



COST OF LIVING

The cost of living in Johannesburg is around half that of European cities such as London and Paris. While the average salary in Johannesburg is comparatively lower than in other expat destinations, life in the city is still easily affordable for most expats, especially if they're earning in a foreign currency such as the US dollar.

The 2022 Mercer Cost of Living Survey ranked Johannesburg at 193rd out of 227 cities worldwide. Cape Town costs about the same, coming in at 194th. Compared to other major South African cities, Johannesburg tends to offer residents a higher standard of living as a result of having better purchasing power, especially when it comes to renting and buying housing..

Cost of accommodation

The pricing of housing in Johannesburg is very reasonable, and expats' money will go much further here than in Cape Town. Johannesburg housing is not only cheaper but often roomier. Most expats can easily afford to rent or buy multi-bedroomed houses that typically come with a spacious yard, pool and garage.

That being said, accommodation costs in Johannesburg are also affected by the area or suburb expats choose to live in. High-income city-centre areas such as Sandton are notoriously pricey, while slightly less glamorous but still pleasant areas like Randburg can offer great value for money.

Cost of groceries

The cost of day-to-day grocery shopping in Johannesburg is similar to that of most South African cities. The country's favourable climate allows a wide range of fruit and vegetables to flourish. Fresh produce can be extremely affordable as long as one sticks to whatever is currently in season. As for meat, chicken and pork are cheap, but beef and lamb tend to be more expensive. Quality varies between grocery chains.

Three popular chain stores are present throughout the country: Checkers, Pick 'n Pay and Woolworths. On the affordable side is Checkers, which offers good value for money, while Woolworths is the most expensive supermarket but has consistently high-quality goods.

Pick 'n Pay is pricier than Checkers but significantly cheaper than Woolworths, and their produce is of average quality.

"For us at the moment, it is cheap as chips. Eating out in particular is unbelievably good value. A bottle of wine here would cost you less than a glass at home. But this is because we are paid in pounds. I think it is a lot tougher for those who are paid in Rands as prices are going up steeply. There are some things that are still expensive, even for us: electronic goods, books, imported clothes and shoes. Haagan Daaz ice cream, as I discovered last night!" – Clara, a Cuban expat living in Johannesburg



Cost of transport

With cars being the main mode of transport in Johannesburg, it's important to consider expenses such as the cost of petrol and maintenance. In South Africa, petrol in coastal cities is slightly cheaper than in inland cities such as Johannesburg.

Ride-hailing services such as Uber and Bolt are available throughout most of Johannesburg. A couple of short trips won't break the bank, but if used often, these services can be a pricey way to get around.

As for public transport, the Gautrain, which runs between Pretoria and Johannesburg, can be a fairly inexpensive way to commute if an expat happens to live and work close to the train line, which only has 10 stops.

Cost of healthcare

As the public healthcare system is generally considered inadequate, most expats will do as locals do and opt for private healthcare services instead.

Though trips to the GP are reasonably priced, specialist treatment, surgery, hospital stays and chronic medication costs can be high. To cover these extra expenses, we advise that expats take out a comprehensive medical aid policy with either a local or international health insurance provider.

Cost of entertainment and eating out

The cost of leisure activities in Johannesburg is similar to other major cities in South Africa, and expats should find plenty to do in the City of Gold. Eating out is quite affordable, and expats should have no problem finding something to do across a range of price points.

Imports like electronics, games and books go at a higher cost than expats might expect, though. It usually works out significantly cheaper to buy items such as laptops, tablets and gaming consoles abroad, even in countries where the currency conversion isn't in South Africa's favour.

Cost of education

In general, no-fee public schools in South Africa have a way to go to meet international standards, but some public schools that charge fees or have other forms of income can offer excellent education.

That said, most expats send their children to private or international schools, which offer superlative education at high premiums. Expats should budget accordingly and apply early to beat the waiting lists.

ACCOMMODATION



One of Johannesburg's biggest drawcards is its accommodation options. Houses in Joburg are generally big and often come with a patio, a spacious garden and a swimming pool, all of which are highly useful in the city's sweltering summers. Expats looking for a home in the City of Gold will certainly get a lot of bang for their buck – here, money goes a lot further than it does in pretty-but-pricey Cape Town.

Househunting should be one of the fun parts for expats relocating to Johannesburg. Before the hunt for housing begins, though, expats should decide on the aspects most important to them. Most expats tend to rent rather than buy property, at least initially or if they'll only be living in Johannesburg for a short time.

"The standard of housing in Johannesburg is very high. We are currently renting the biggest house I have ever lived in, with a beautiful garden and swimming pool. We also have someone living in a cottage on our property who helps watch the kids and helps with the housework."
– Ryan, an American expat living in Johannesburg

Types of accommodation

Size is one of the key considerations in choosing accommodation. As is typically the case, the size of a family should determine the size of their accommodation. Most expats do, however, live in bigger houses in South Africa than they would at home.

Freestanding houses

Mostly found in the suburbs of Johannesburg, freestanding houses are spacious and usually have at least two or three bedrooms. These homes tend to have large gardens, either in a wraparound form enclosing the house or split into distinct front- and backyard areas.



Expats opting for this kind of accommodation should bear in mind that, generally speaking, freestanding houses protected by nothing more than a fence are the least secure kind of accommodation. Expats can improve their home security by ensuring the house has an alarm, is fully fitted with burglar bars on all doors and that the house's surrounding fences can't be easily breached.

Apartments

Locally known as 'flats', apartments are smaller units of accommodation situated within one building. They may be bachelor-style with the main living area also acting as a kitchen and bedroom, or they may be larger with several bedrooms and a separate living area. Most apartment blocks have controlled access, making them a bit safer than freestanding houses.

Townhouses

Townhouses are units of accommodation connected to an adjacent home on either one side (semi-detached) or both sides (rowhouses). To maximise floorspace, townhouses often have more than one storey. These are more affordable and more compact than standalone houses, which may suit younger expats well.

Security complexes

The most secure types of housing are those in security complexes. They are protected by high walls, security cameras, and professional security guards that monitor access around the clock. The peace of mind provided by these gated communities is the reason most expats choose to live in them. Another perk is the sense of community, as well as having access to numerous shared amenities.

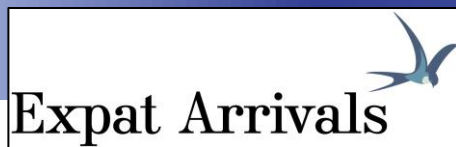
Loadshedding

South Africa's national electricity provider, Eskom, uses the term 'load shedding' to refer to the rotational or rolling blackouts that it implements when the electricity demand exceeds supply. Areas of the country experience a number of daily blackouts ranging from two to four hours in duration.

Expats should keep load shedding in mind when looking for accommodation in Johannesburg. Some apartment blocks and residential complexes advertise their access to backup generators, and properties on the same block as a hospital are typically not subject to load shedding.

Finding accommodation

Once an expat has narrowed down their wish list to a target area, they can then approach an estate agent. Some larger companies serve the entire Johannesburg area, but there are also smaller ones specialising in certain estates. It is also possible to find accommodation without the aid of an estate agent by browsing through online classifieds such as Property24 and local newspapers.



Renting accommodation

Making an application

To apply for a rental, expats will need to submit copies of their passport, bank statements, proof of income and references. Most expats will of course not have rental histories in South Africa, but a solid reference from one's employer can be a good substitute.

Leases

The standard lease is 12 months, though they can be shorter or longer by agreement with the landlord. In some cases, if a tenant has been reliable, the landlord may be keen to renew the lease for a further 12 months at the end of the initial lease period.

Deposits

Most landlords will expect a deposit equivalent to one or two months' rent. If the rental property is returned in good condition at the end of the lease, tenants will receive the deposit back in full.

Utilities

Utilities such as electricity are usually an additional expense for renters and are not included in the cost of rent. However, it's not uncommon for the cost of rent to include other, more minor expenses such as water and refuse.

AREAS AND SUBURBS

Johannesburg is a large and sprawling city, and the accommodation options are endless. No matter where an expat ends up living, they will enjoy one of the greenest urban centres in the world, which combines the feel of being surrounded by nature with the convenience of a large metropolitan area and all of its modern comforts.

Given the size of the city, making the right decision regarding one's living arrangements is crucial. The two main commercial areas for expats are the city centre, which is a hub for mining, commerce and government, and Sandton, where many industries, including financial services and media, are located.

Public transport is often not a viable option, so getting from home to the office and back almost certainly entails driving on Johannesburg's congested roads.

“Dainfern in Fourways is quite popular with American and European expats. Other very nice suburbs to live in include Bedfordview, Edenvale, Sandton, Bryanston and other areas of Fourways.” – Namrata, an Indian expat living in Johannesburg

It is not uncommon for locals to spend up to three hours a day in rush hour traffic – so expats choosing a residential area are well advised to find somewhere close to their place of work and/or their children's school. Many expats choose to live in houses within secure cluster developments.

Sunninghill, Lonehill and Fourways



Characterised by large concentrations of security estates, these well-established neighbourhoods are popular with expats. There is a host of good private schools to pick from, and many options for shopping, entertainment, healthcare and recreation.

While the Sunninghill, Lonehill and Fourways areas are fairly close to Sandton, expats shouldn't be fooled – traffic going that way will be extremely congested with daily commuters.

Sandton and Bryanston

In the last few decades, Sandton has replaced central Johannesburg as the city's hub of business and commerce, which means that many corporate headquarters, banks and large hotels are located there. As a general rule, the closer one gets to Sandton, the more expensive housing becomes, so expect to pay a premium in this area.

Bryanston along the northern edge is slightly less expensive and is mostly known for its beautiful freestanding homes on tree-lined streets that explode in a purple sea of blooming jacarandas in late spring. Further to the south, one finds stately homes as well as apartment complexes in Morningside, Sandown and Hyde Park. This area also has a large concentration of well-respected private hospitals.

Randburg

Much quieter and less ritzy than Sandton, this area is nevertheless ideal in many ways: it's close to Sandton, the centre of Randburg has its own assortment of businesses, the nearby Cresta shopping centre is one of Joburg's largest, and expats will get much more bang for their buck when it comes to accommodation prices.



The leafy suburban streets of Randburg are filled with spacious homes and gardens in proximity to the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens and Emmarentia Dam (perfect for dog walking and summer picnics). Randburg is a large area with lots of variety, and housing here is significantly cheaper than in areas such as Sandton. Generally, it's good for families as well as apartment dwellers.

Northcliff and Melville

These are older and more established suburbs with some of Johannesburg's most beautiful scenery. Northcliff Hill with its winding roads and attractive homes nestled on the slopes is especially stunning, while Melville is trendier and has a Bohemian feel. It's definitely one of the most diverse neighbourhoods of Johannesburg, perhaps fuelled by the proximity to two universities. Here expats will encounter a lively nightlife scene, plenty of street cafés, antique shops and unique restaurants, as well as the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve with its beautiful walks and views.

Linden, Parkhurst and Greenside

Parkhurst and Greenside are some of the city's nightlife hotspots, while Emmarentia Dam and Zoo Lake offer beautiful scenery and recreation right within the city. Centrally located within easy reach of both central Johannesburg and Sandton, Parkhurst and Linden's comfortable family homes are set in well-established gardens surrounded by some of Joburg's most beautiful trees. Linden is also fast becoming a trendy nightlife spot, with more and more pubs and restaurants popping up. Parkhurst, especially, is a trendy neighbourhood where one can find eclectic coffee shops, bakeries, interior design boutiques, antique dealers and some of the best restaurants in Johannesburg.

Rosebank and Parktown

Expats who find a home in Rosebank or Parktown will be living at some of the city's best addresses, in proximity to some of its oldest and best schools. The homes here are sizeable and dignified, set on large properties, and residents are close to the popular, sprawling Johannesburg Zoo.

Bedfordview

Located on the East Rand but still not far from the city centre, Bedfordview is ideally located for business travellers flying in and out of the nearby OR Tambo International Airport on a regular basis. It offers quiet, spacious and safe estate living in another one of Joburg's leafy tree-lined areas, and is also conveniently located close to multiple shopping centres.

Maboneng, Newtown and Braamfontein

Most expats wouldn't dream of moving into Joburg's city centre, given its bad reputation and the crime problems of areas such as Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. That said, just like in other big cities, this area has lately undergone some urban rejuvenation and many hail the Maboneng Precinct, Newtown and Braamfontein as the places to be, especially for single professionals and couples without children.

There are plenty of renovated apartments and lofts available with good security, beautiful views, amazing nightlife and shopping within walking distance, and the campus of Wits University is just around the corner.



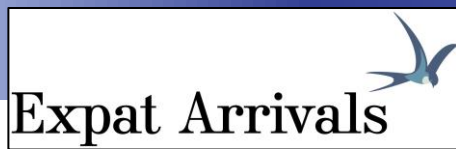
SAFETY

Crime and safety in South Africa are major factors for expats considering moving to the country. Much of the country's crime is linked to income inequality.

On a day-to-day basis, theft-related crimes are likely to be the most cause for concern. Violent crimes, on the other hand, are typically linked to gang activity which is concentrated in particular areas. Expats are far less likely to come across this type of crime.

Burglaries, mugging, petty theft and hijackings are usually opportunistic, with perpetrators taking advantage of what they consider to be easy targets.

Expats can reduce their chances of falling victim to these types of crimes by being aware of their surroundings, avoiding isolated areas and investing in home and vehicle security.



Residential safety

While burglaries can be a problem in some areas, expats can increase their personal safety by contracting an armed response security provider and investing in an alarm system. Many suburban estates also have controlled access, while neighbourhoods without controlled access often have neighbourhood-watch patrols instead, which can also decrease the chance of crime.

There are a few more factors that can improve the residential safety of expats:

- Be vigilant about locking front and back doors at all times, and make sure alarm systems are set before leaving the house
- When choosing a home, it's a good idea to opt for enclosed neighbourhoods or security villages, apartments with gated security, or areas with effective neighbourhood watches
- The vast majority of South African properties have burglar bars installed on windows and safety gates on external doors. Sliding doors are sometimes overlooked by property owners in this respect, but it's important that they are fitted with safety gates too, as they are particularly vulnerable potential entry points. Burglars have also been known to get through even the smallest of windows, so tiny, innocuous-looking windows should also have burglar bars.
- Extra precautions such as perimeter walls, guard dogs and electric fencing can make the property more secure and are good to have, but aren't absolutely essential
- A common complaint is that police response is too slow – so expats should consider using private security companies with armed response units capable of responding to emergencies

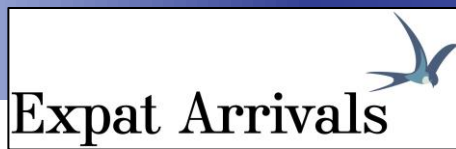
Public transport safety

A lack of safe public transport in South Africa poses a frustrating challenge. Minibus taxis, trains and even certain buses are especially vulnerable to pickpocketing and muggings. Consulting trusted locals, such as friends or co-workers, on the safest mode of transport in the area is recommended.

There are no underground trains, but the speedy Gautrain operating between Johannesburg and Pretoria provides a safe and effective means of travel, although it is somewhat expensive. The MyCiTi bus services in Cape Town are also widely regarded as a safe option, but valuables should still be kept out of sight and caution is advisable at night, especially when travelling alone.

Road safety

Road safety in South Africa is an ongoing concern. Reckless driving, especially by minibus taxis, is the cause of many accidents. Expats in South Africa should drive defensively and be sure to obey the rules of the road and constantly be aware of their surroundings, especially at night.



Car doors should be locked and windows rolled up at all times. Drivers should also stick to main routes, park in well-lit areas, keep valuables out of sight, and never pick up hitchhikers.

In certain areas, smash-and-grab thefts and hijackings are threats too; hotspots include residential driveways and traffic lights, particularly those near motorway off-ramps. When in these two situations, it is important to keep a sharp eye out for any suspicious-looking figures trying to lurk in the car's blind spot.

Drivers should also make sure they have an escape route available by leaving a gap between their car and the car in front of them at traffic lights, or by rolling slowly towards the traffic light. Coming to a total stop makes it easier for criminals to approach the car and smash a window.

When parking at night, expats should choose a security-patrolled or well-lit area. Informal and formal car guarding services are common in South Africa. Should a car guard offer their assistance in keeping watch over the car once it has been parked, it's accepted practice to pay them some change when returning.

Scams

ATM scams in South Africa are a possibility. Never engage a stranger in conversation while drawing money. Don't count money in public, and avoid drawing large amounts of cash if strangers are watching. If the ATM withholds a card, immediately call the helpline number displayed on the ATM, and do not allow a stranger to assist.

Political and social unrest

Protests stemming from social inequalities and labour disputes are fairly common in South Africa. These can disrupt traffic and service delivery in the affected area, and violence has erupted on occasion.

Large labour union strikes are usually reported on in advance, and there is normally a notable security presence surrounding such events. Expats should keep abreast of local developments and avoid any affected areas.

Emergency telephone numbers

- Emergency services: 10111
- Emergency services (from a cellphone): 112
- Ambulance: 10177

"I really hate focusing on the crime. I run in the parks most days, and walk around Joburg. We don't have burglar bars on the windows of our home, nor do we live in a security golf estate. So it depends what you want to focus your time and attention on. Do people get mugged, and do things get stolen? Yes. There are a number of problems here. But the vast majority of expats who live here do so happily and without any experience of crime." – Hannah, a British expat living in Johannesburg

BANKING, MONEY AND TAXES

South Africa's banking system is sophisticated, making it easy and convenient to handle financial matters. There are numerous international and local banks in South Africa and each of these offer expats various options and competitive rates for managing their finances.

Currency

The currency in South Africa is the South African Rand, abbreviated as ZAR or R. The rand is subdivided into 100 cents.

Retail stores won't have trouble giving customers whatever change they need, and will happily take payment in the form of a debit or credit card, but street hawkers and small corner stores might battle to break large notes and may not have card machines.

- Notes: 10 ZAR, 20 ZAR, 50 ZAR, 100 ZAR and 200 ZAR
- Coins: 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, 1 ZAR, 2 ZAR and 5 ZAR

Banking

The four major banks are Absa, First National Bank (known as FNB), Standard Bank and Nedbank. Banks are generally open from 8.30am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday, closing at 11am on Saturdays, although branches in airports often have extended hours. All four major banks have good online and mobile banking systems for customers' day-to-day banking needs.

Opening a bank account

Opening a bank account in South Africa as an expat is quite a bureaucratic process. Requirements do differ from one bank to the next and it's often difficult to get clear information from the bank's website alone. Generally speaking, expats will need their passport and a valid work permit to open a South African bank account. In some cases, they will also require a letter from one's employer as proof of income.

Some expats opt to open an international bank account before relocating to South Africa. Although these may incur various charges, they do allow expats to carry out their basic banking until they are able to get a South African bank account. If an expat's existing bank back home has a large international presence, it should be fairly easy to make the necessary arrangements. Some banks with an international presence, such as Investec and Old Mutual, are actually based in South Africa.

Foreign citizens may wish to consult with their bank about offshore account options. Many expats choose to keep a bank account open at home for mortgages and other bills, open another account in South Africa for living expenses, and open a third offshore account for savings and for financial security.



ATMs

ATMs are plentiful throughout the country and all of the main banks have their own ATMs, although certain brands may be lacking in smaller towns. Customers can use any ATM no matter which bank they belong to, although fees will be slightly higher for withdrawals from other banks' ATMs. The four main banks also provide facilities to make some bill payments or cellphone airtime purchases at their ATMs, and certain machines also accept cash deposits.

Taxes

An expat's tax obligations are to a large degree determined by their tax residency status. Those who are not residents for tax purposes are taxed on their South African income only. Residents for tax purposes are taxed on their worldwide income, but there are double-taxation agreements in place with some countries.

Expats are categorised as residents for tax purposes if they have been in South Africa for any of the following periods:

- 91 days or more in total during the year of assessment
- 91 days or more in each of the preceding five years
- 915 days or more in total during the preceding five years of assessment

Income tax rates in South Africa range from 18 percent to 45 percent. For the latest advice, it's best to consult with an expat tax specialist.

TRANSPORT AND DRIVING

As with so much else in the city, how people get around Johannesburg depends largely on their economic status. The majority of the city's better-off citizens make use of private cars, while public transport is mostly used by the city's working-class residents. More commuters are now making use of the Gautrain, which runs between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Over the next decade, the city also intends to spend billions on improving, integrating and expanding its public transport network in an attempt to reduce traffic congestion.

Driving

Owning a car in Johannesburg is a necessity for anyone who wants complete freedom of movement. Cars in South Africa drive on the left-hand side of the road, which means that the driver's seat is on the right-hand side of the car.

They are also more often than not manual transmission. Additionally, expats wanting to register a car in Johannesburg should do so with patience – lines at traffic departments are often long, and it isn't unheard of to have to go back several times because of the city's notorious bureaucracy.

Security is a priority for the city's drivers, since vehicle break-ins, hijackings and smash-and-grabs are known to occur. Expats should at least invest in an alarm with anti-hijacking features and make sure that their doors are locked, that their windows stay rolled up and that their valuables are kept out of sight.

At the same time, residents should exercise caution and be aware of their surroundings. Many locals and expats avoid driving in high-risk areas in the inner city and certain townships, especially at night. There are, however, safe areas to travel in, and many people never have to deal with serious crime, but it's always better to be cautious.

Expats planning to drive should note that Joburg drivers often drive fast and recklessly, with minibus taxis generally being the worst offenders in this respect. For this reason, it's vital to stay aware and ready to react at all times, especially when driving on the highway.

Until they are granted permanent residence, expats can legally drive in South Africa using their own country's driving licence as long as it has a photograph of the driver, is valid and is in English. After that, they have one year to convert their driving licence to a South African one. If one's driving licence doesn't meet these requirements, an International Driving Permit (IDP) can be used instead.



Public transport

Trains

Trains in Johannesburg are operated by Metrorail, the state's passenger rail service. The network is fairly extensive and connects the city to other parts of the country. Unfortunately, it doesn't reach some of the areas expats are likely to live in, such as Sandton, Rosebank and Randburg. Expats interested in using Metrorail should be advised that pickpocketing is not uncommon, especially during peak periods, and valuables shouldn't be openly displayed.



While Metrorail trains occasionally run late and are vulnerable to strikes in the transport sector, they are an affordable and easily accessible way of getting around the Greater Johannesburg area.

Gautrain

Sandton, north of the city centre, does have access to an alternative means of rail transport. Initially intended to be built in time for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the Gautrain project was completed in June 2012. Running for around 50 miles (80 km), it forms a mass rapid transit railway system that connects the Johannesburg CBD, Sandton, the OR Tambo International Airport, Midrand, Centurion and Pretoria. Regular passengers can purchase a Gautrain card for a nominal fee to access parking, shuttle bus and train services.

Buses

The Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network opened its first route in 2009 and has been expanding in phases since then. The system currently runs through areas in and around the city, and also runs a line between Johannesburg and Soweto. While a number of strikes have halted services in the past, it is one of the safest and most efficient modes of public transport in Joburg. The Johannesburg Metrobus, on the other hand, consists of over 300 routes that service commuters across the Greater Johannesburg area, fanning out in all directions from the city centre. Due to outdated buses and the availability of more attractive options, patronage has been declining for several years. There are plans to revitalise the service.

Minibus taxis

Minibus taxis are the most common form of public transport in Johannesburg and follow an informal route system, picking up passengers at various terminals and the side of the road. Passengers flag them down using a variety of hand signals which indicate their desired destination, and the taxi either stops or drives past depending on whether their destination is on its route.

Minibus taxis in Johannesburg tend to be loud and overcrowded and are notorious for disregarding road rules. They are, however, the most readily available form of transport serving the country's working-class majority. Expats are unlikely to take one, although if they choose to, locals are normally willing to help with getting into the right one.

“Public transport is quite non-existent in Johannesburg. Most of the city is serviced by small minivans known as taxis, but they only go from point to point, and you may require several changeovers to get to a particular destination. Driving and owning your own car is thus a necessity here, in order to go anywhere. Most households need at least two cars.” – Namrata, an Indian expat living in Johannesburg

Taxis

Metered taxis are available throughout the city and can be flagged down, although the most reliable way of getting a reputable taxi in good condition is by calling one of several cab companies in the city. Passengers should ensure that the driver switches his meter on or that a flat fare is negotiated before embarking. Tips aren't expected but are always appreciated.

Expat Arrivals

Many Joburg locals and expats use ride-hailing services such as Uber to get around town because of their competitive prices and reliability.

Cycling

Although the City of Johannesburg has been introducing cycling infrastructure such as bicycle lanes, cycling has not yet taken off as a popular form of transport in the city. The city's minibus taxis also make cycling a dangerous way to travel, as they are prone to attempt to speed past traffic jams using any available space on the road – including cycle lanes.

Walking

Given its size, it is unlikely that expats will walk to work in Johannesburg. Walking alone in downtown Johannesburg isn't recommended, especially at night. The northern suburbs, where most expats stay, are safe for the most part. As is the case when driving, expats should keep their valuables out of sight.

LIFESTYLE



With a work-hard, play-hard mentality, the lifestyle in Johannesburg is sometimes fast-paced. To balance out the stresses of the job, many of Johannesburg's residents enjoy spending their hard-earned money in the city's shopping centres and markets, as well as on nights out and fine dining.



Expats in Johannesburg will have a lifestyle that is fairly typical to South Africans around the country, and should find it easy to befriend both locals and fellow expats. Everybody in the city is influenced by its wealth and natural beauty.

Shopping

There is no shortage of options when it comes to shopping in Johannesburg. From designer boutiques to bargain buys at local markets, mega malls and department stores, the city has it all.

Sandton City, at the heart of Johannesburg's financial centre, is a good place to start. Almost anything can be found at one of its hundreds of stores and, as if that isn't enough, shoppers can catch their breath at the adjacent Nelson Mandela Square, which offers fine dining and luxury shopping options of its own.

Those wanting a more personal shopping experience can head to one of the city's markets, a popular pastime on Sundays and public holidays. The Neighbourgoods Market in Braamfontein is definitely worth a visit, along with Sylvia's Market in Fairmount and the Rosebank Sunday Market.

Nightlife

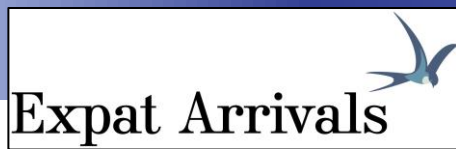
Joburgers have mastered the balance between hard-working days and glamorous nights of excess. As one might expect of one of the richest cities in Africa, there is a fairly wide selection of clubs, bars, theatres and cocktail lounges.

Expats can go for a night out on the town in trendy Melville, artsy Newtown, mellow Linden or ritzy Rivonia. Those with more refined tastes can also head to Hyde Park, Sandton or Melrose Arch to rub shoulders with local celebrities and the city's wealthy and well-heeled.

Outdoor activities and sports

Johannesburg is known for being a premier shopping destination, but it is also a city that celebrates sport in a big way. The city is home to the calabash-shaped FNB Stadium, which hosted the FIFA World Cup Final in 2010; Ellis Park, where the Springboks famously won the Rugby World Cup in 1995; and the Wanderers Stadium, venue for the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup Final.

Many of the locals and expats in Johannesburg look to escape the hustle and bustle of the city on weekends. There are many places within the city that fit the bill, such as the Johannesburg Zoo, the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden and Zoo Lake. Other options include weekend getaways to nearby small towns such as Hartbeespoort, Clarens, Dullstroom and Cullinan.



Kids and family

Raising kids in Johannesburg comes with its challenges. On the one hand, the city's reputation for crime concerns both expat and local parents who want their children to be as safe as possible. On the other, some complain that there's not much to do outside its sprawling malls and the playgrounds of its mega nurseries. This couldn't be further from the truth.

There is a wealth of activities for expat children to take part in and which can help them adjust to their new surroundings. While safety is justifiably a concern for expat parents, with the necessary precautions and lifestyle adjustments, their children are likely to be happy and secure in their new lives.

Child safety

Given the city's reputation for crime, one of the main priorities for expat parents in Johannesburg is the safety of their children.

As is the case in most places, parents should be aware of their children's whereabouts in public places. They should also ensure that their children memorise the phone numbers of both parents, their home address and emergency phone numbers as soon as possible.

Most parents in the city don't allow their children to take public transport, as it's often considered unreliable and potentially unsafe. Some parents also don't allow their children to play in public parks; however, this is largely an area-specific consideration and, in some of the more affluent areas in Johannesburg, children should be safe provided that they are supervised.

The upside of living in Johannesburg is that expat families with freestanding houses in the city's suburbs are likely to have a more spacious garden than they would in a major European or American city, meaning that their children will have space to play and run around outdoors within the confines of their own yard.

Activities for children

While it may not be the most popular of destinations for family-oriented expats, there are still a number of rewarding activities for children in Johannesburg to enjoy. Given its absence of a beach and relative lack of public spaces, businesses in the city often cater to children, while many parents are willing to drive a bit further to ensure that their children are entertained. One of the most popular options for parents is Gold Reef City. The area's largest theme park, it offers thrill rides alongside much tamer children's rides. For expats with younger children (or who just prefer having their feet firmly on the ground), there are plenty of other activities to choose from, such as catching a show at the 4D theatre.

"We love to hike in some of the city's beautiful parks. We enjoy going to the Johannesburg Zoo. Going to the cinema was also a favourite pastime before Covid hit. The bird park at Monte Casino is great and we can't wait to go to Gold Reef city theme park once things are back to normal. There are many great family-friendly restaurants that have play areas for the children and minders to watch them so you can have a peaceful meal with adult friends while the kids have a great time." – Ryan, an American expat living in Johannesburg



Another popular option is taking a weekend trip away to Sun City, a two-hour drive to the northwest of Joburg. It offers a host of activities suitable for the whole family. Children will probably be most interested in the Valley of the Waves, an artificial lagoon with a wave pool.

Closer to home, it is always fun for younger children to feed the ducks and geese at Zoo Lake and Emmarentia Dam, which are also popular picnic spots. Johannesburg Zoo is home to all sorts of different animals and makes for a great day out. Other popular outdoor activities include the Montecasino Bird Gardens, the Cradle of Humankind and, perhaps for older kids, paintballing.

Johannesburg knows how to keep itself entertained indoors, too. There is a selection of large indoor playgrounds which are popular kids' party venues throughout the city. There are pottery and art classes for all ages, and children as young as two years old can go for cookery classes at one of the Little Cooks Club events spread across the city. Finally, but not exhaustively, is the Wits Planetarium, which offers various shows all about the solar system.

Attractions

The concrete jungle of Johannesburg is often overlooked as a tourist destination in favour of coastal Cape Town. However, those who are willing to look beyond Johannesburg's 'city life' facade will find that it has just as much to offer. From natural wonders to museums and culture, expats will find an abundance of things to see and do in Johannesburg.

Apartheid Museum

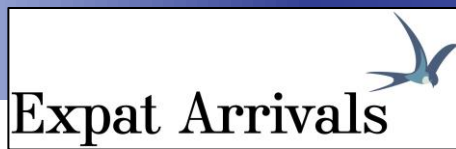
Take a glimpse into South Africa's past to learn about the struggle that South Africans went through to achieve democracy. This heart-wrenching museum illustrates how far this unique and diverse country has come.

Constitution Hill

This national heritage site houses a former prison that is famous for once having held political prisoners such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Visitors can take a fascinating journey through the prison's history as they walk through the museum, learning about the terrible conditions prisoners suffered there. As a symbol of transformation, the South African Constitutional Court was built on this site in the 1990s and is home to a collection of over 600 contemporary artworks which can be viewed by the public.

Cradle of Humankind

Some of the oldest fossils of our human ancestors have been found in the Sterkfontein Caves, a central feature of this World Heritage Site. This includes the discovery of Mrs Ples and Little Foot, estimated to be 2 million and 3 million years old respectively. The Maropeng Visitor Centre illustrates the evolution of humans, and visitors can also view the Sterkfontein Caves in person.



Gold Reef City

Expats who have relocated to Johannesburg should be sure to pay a visit to Gold Reef City, an entertainment complex for the whole family that portrays what the city would have looked like during the gold rush of the 1880s. Descend into a gold mine shaft, ride the amusement park theme rides, have fun in the casino or spend a night at the Victorian hotel.

Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum

The iconic image of 12-year-old Hector Pieterse being carried through the streets of Soweto during the Soweto Uprising in 1976 has been etched into the minds of many across the globe.

The museum is situated just two blocks from the site of Pieterse's death. It not only pays tribute to the little boy who died that day, but also fuses memorabilia, cultural history and modern technology to create a fascinating museum experience.

Johannesburg Zoo

This is a great place to take a stroll, go on an outing with the kids, or just take some time out from the hustle and bustle of the City of Gold. The Johannesburg Zoo is home to more than 2,000 animals, including the famed Big Five.

Montecasino Bird Gardens

After browsing the shops at Montecasino and perhaps enjoying lunch on the piazza, visit the Bird Gardens to see over 60 species of birds and a few of their reptile and mammal friends.

Soweto Tour

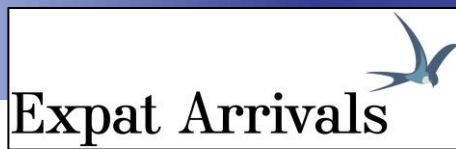
Soweto is another place rich with the history of South Africa's struggle toward democracy. While Soweto's attractions such as the Mandela House Museum or the Hector Pieterse Memorial can be visited alone, an official half-day or full-day Soweto tour will give expats an even fuller picture of Soweto's past and present.

Annual events

Johannesburg is a vibrant, bustling metropolis with an assortment of activities and events on offer. The city boasts numerous art, culture, entertainment and sport activities for expats to explore. Whether they're looking for something to do solo, with the family or with newfound friends, new residents of Joburg won't have a shortage of options.

The Rand Show (April)

Founded more than 120 years ago, the Rand Show is a multi-day festival with non-stop entertainment throughout. Festivalgoers will have plenty to keep themselves occupied, with the show split into seven main areas, each dedicated to a particular type of entertainment and interests. There's a play zone, a foodie zone and a proudly South African zone, to name just a few.



The Wine Show (June)

Attendees at the Wine Show can join fellow wine enthusiasts in tasting and buying wines from dozens of estates around the country. There are also opportunities to learn about winemaking and wine pairing.

Johannesburg Arts Alive Festival (September)

Arts Alive celebrates the city's awakening from its winter slumber and the onset of spring. This vibrant and eclectic feast of arts and culture takes place at various venues in and around the city throughout September and features the very best in home-grown theatre, dance, music, visual art and entertainment.

FNB Art Joburg (September)

This once-a-year art event is exclusively devoted to African art and features pieces from local and international galleries, as well as photography, sculptures and installations.

Soweto Marathon (November)

Starting and ending at the FNB Stadium in Soweto, this well-known event can be run in various distances to suit different fitness levels. This includes traditional full- and half-marathon lengths as well as a shorter 6-mile (10 km) option.

HEALTHCARE

Healthcare in South Africa is very much divided along socioeconomic lines. A massive gap in quality exists between the private and public sector and, in practice, these systems cater to different populations. The public healthcare system mainly serves a lower income bracket, while those who can afford it use the private healthcare system.

It's strongly recommended that expats take out health insurance and opt for treatment in private facilities, which generally provide world-class levels of care.

"I find South African healthcare to be excellent, convenient, and affordable. You can walk into a private medical clinic and get an appointment quickly, for much less money than in the United States. I don't know enough about hospitals to recommend any one specifically." – Heather, an American expat living in Johannesburg

Public healthcare

Much of the South African population uses the public healthcare system, which is heavily affected by a lack of resources and funding. The system is not yet universal, although fees are charged according to a patient's income and number of dependants. Public hospitals, though usually manned by highly qualified professionals, are often poorly maintained. Expats will find minimal creature comforts, and will likely come across long queues, dingy exam rooms and overworked staff members.

Private healthcare

In contrast to the public health sector, South Africa's private health sector is excellent. Most cities and towns have a good selection of clinics, hospitals and general practitioners. The standard of treatment in South African private hospitals is some of the most highly regarded on the continent, and in the opinion of many expats, on par with that of Europe. The medical tourism industry has shown steady growth, and many foreigners travel to South Africa for plastic surgery and dental work. That said, private healthcare in South Africa comes at a price, especially for those earning a local salary. Although it's possible to pay per treatment, medical costs can quickly add up. Expats should take out private health insurance to protect against the hefty bills that accompany emergency situations, repeat consultations and specialist treatment.

Health insurance

An assortment of local medical aid providers and international health insurance companies are available to expats in South Africa. Local providers offer various schemes and charge monthly premiums on a progressive scale. Most local health insurance providers in South Africa require claims to be pre-authorised, a stipulation which makes it necessary for people to keep their medical aid card in their wallet.

Insurance plans can either be comprehensive, covering a range of services, or more basic, serving as backup in the case of an emergency. While hospital plans cover the cost of ambulance transport and hospital stays, these are essentially emergency plans which don't cover day-to-day medical expenses such as doctor consultations and treatment, dental treatments, and prescription medications. Expats interested in getting coverage for day-to-day expenses should compare the different packages offered by local insurance providers. Alternatively, expats may opt to use international insurance providers. Emergency evacuation insurance is unnecessary, as private South African facilities are adequate.

Hospitals





Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital

www.nelsonmandelachildrenshospital.org

Address: 6 Jubilee Road, Parktown

Fordsburg Clinic

www.fordsburgclinic.co.za

Address: 22 Bonanza St, Selby

Netcare Linkwood Hospital

www.netcarehospitals.co.za

Address: 24 12th Ave, Linksfield West

Wits University Donald Gordon Medical Centre

www.dgmc.co.za

Address: 21 Eton Road, Parktown

Pharmacies and medicines

Pharmacies are readily available in urban centres and are generally well stocked, but expats travelling to outlying rural areas for extended periods should pack basic medications. Those living in rural areas may need to travel to larger towns to fill prescriptions.

Health hazards

Contrary to popular belief, malaria is not a wide-scale problem in South Africa. But there is a narrow high-risk area that stretches across the extreme northeast of the country along the borders with Mozambique, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) and Zimbabwe where taking anti-malarial medication would be wise in peak season. It should be noted that the Kruger National Park is considered a moderate-risk area.

The tap water in South Africa's cities and towns is generally safe to drink and often of good quality, but caution should be exercised in rural areas. Though decreasing, prevalence rates remain high for HIV/AIDS, but expats who take appropriate precautions against the disease need not be concerned.

Emergency services

Public ambulance services in South Africa are run provincially, and standards and response times vary. The close cooperation of fire and ambulance services is the norm, although they are technically separate entities. Emergency paramedics are employed by the government and often work with volunteers, especially in outlying areas.



The South African Red Cross and St John's Ambulance are run by volunteers and supplement the national system. There are also two private, profit-making national ambulance services, ER24 and Netcare 911, which are contacted via their own emergency numbers. Health insurance providers will have a preferred ambulance service and provide their customers with the corresponding contact numbers.

Ambulance contact details

- Public ambulance services: 10177
- Netcare 911: 082 911
- ER24: 084 124

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

When it comes to education and schools in Johannesburg, expats will have plenty of choice. There are many government-run public schools of varying quality, independent private schools as well as international schools. The majority of expats send their children to private or international schools in and around the city.

The waiting lists for the best schools in Johannesburg can be long, and expats are advised to apply as far in advance as possible if they want their children to attend their school of choice.

Public schools

Some government schools in Johannesburg have excellent track records. However, those supported solely by government funding are generally understaffed and have limited resources. The better public schools are those that obtain additional funding from fee-paying parents, alumni donations and governing bodies.

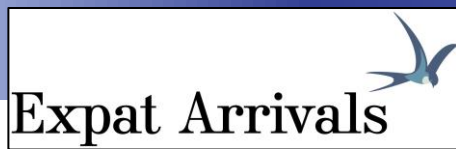
Though these schools are still limited to offering the standard South African curriculum, the quality of education and facilities is higher than at regular public schools. Parents will have to pay fees at these institutions, but the prices are much lower than those of private and international schools.

Private schools

There are a number of good options for private schools in Johannesburg. As they are funded privately, they have more freedom in terms of what curriculum they offer.

Many private schools teach through the lens of a particular religion, such as Catholicism, or an alternative educational philosophy, like Montessori.

"Basically, the international schools are great, particularly the American one. We have chosen the South African private schools, which are all outstanding but very hard to get into." – Hannah, a British expat living in Johannesburg



Many private schools have excellent academic standards as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities, all taking place within pristine facilities. Fees at these schools can be high, though they are generally lower than international school fees.

International schools

There are a handful of international schools in Johannesburg serving the expat population. These schools offer foreign curricula such as those of the UK, the US or the International Baccalaureate.

The main advantage of international schools is that they allow expat children to continue with a familiar, globally recognised curriculum. They're also an ideal place for both children and parents to make friends with other expat families. Though fees are high and waiting lists long, most parents agree that the quality of education is well worth it.

Special needs education

In light of the extremely limited resources of public schooling in Johannesburg, we advise parents of children with special needs to make use of the private education sector instead.

Some mainstream private schools offer extra support while giving the child the benefit of mixing with a greater number of peers. However, not all mainstream schools are equal in this regard – some schools offer more support and are more experienced with special-needs children than others. If more specialised and individualised support is needed, there are a number of private schools catering specifically to children with special educational needs.

Tutors

Tutors in South Africa are most frequently used when a child is having trouble with a particular subject, or in the run-up to major assessment periods such as the matric final exams. Expats may find tutors useful for purposes such as learning a new language, maintaining a mother tongue, and catching up to an unfamiliar curriculum. Reputable companies include Brightsparkz Tutors and Goodie Tutors, both of which offer one-on-one in-person or online tutoring based on the needs of the client.

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