



7th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

04-08 December 2018, Durban, South Africa

“Beyond 2020: Shaping flyway conservation for the future”

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND SECURITY (UNDSS)

SECURITY BRIEFING FOR DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Useful tips for your stay in Durban and for traveling around the city safely

Entry/Exit requirements

Please note: South African law requires travellers to have one blank (unstamped) visa page in their passport to enter the country and have two blank pages to allow for entry and exit stamps for South Africa and other countries to be visited, on the way to South Africa or elsewhere in the region.

As a general precaution, all travellers are advised to carry a photocopy of the photo/bio information page of their passport and keep it in a location separate from their passport.

At your accommodation:

- Do not leave your luggage unattended unless it is locked away in your room;
- Store valuables in the safe deposit box or lock box at the reception desk;
- Keep your room locked **at all times**;
- If someone knocks, check who it is before opening the door;
- Use the chain or loop, even better get a rubber doorstop;
- **Do not** enter your room if you find your door unlocked. Go back to the reception and inform them;
- **Do not** leave the sign “*Please clear the room*” on your door when you go out;
- While you go out in the evening leave the sign “*Do not disturb*” on your door.
- Make sure that luggage is only given to the hotel’s bell staff and a receipt is issued for stored luggage.

What to look out for on the streets:

You are at your most vulnerable when you're lost, so plan your route carefully before you set off. Durban is a wonderful place with amazing weather, unfortunately the city and nearby suburbs are overrun with children and youths smoking “Tik” (crystal meth).

They are ready to rob, and even kill, so avoid them at all costs. Do not give to any beggars no matter how “handicapped” they make themselves appear, they do not want food either, they just toss it away, they want money for “tik”. You may feel guilt ridden that people have so little when you have so much, but giving money exacerbates the problem rather than solving it and simply encourages beggars to be more demanding and aggressive.

Cell Phones:

It is recommended that you carry a mobile phone whilst in Durban. You may find it useful to have an “unlocked” cell phone with international roaming capability to use. The Independent Communication Authority of South Africa has established new rules that require all new cell phones and SIM cards to be registered. You may buy an inexpensive SIM card to use with your "unlocked" cell phone and airtime once you arrive in Durban. SIM cards and airtime may be purchased at many retail outlets, including Woolworths, Pick ‘n Pay, Spar, Checkers, and most grocery stores and cellular retail stores such as Vodacom, MTN, Cell C, etc.

Threats to safety and security

Terrorism:

Although the terrorism threat remains low in South Africa and Durban, nevertheless, the UNDSS remains concerned about the continued worldwide threat of terrorist attacks so always be stay alert of what is going on around you.

Public Disturbances and Strikes:

Organized or wildcat labour actions and protests in poorer communities against shortfalls in public services occur regularly in Durban townships and the rest of South Africa. While localized and normally well away from typical tourist destinations, these disturbances can develop quickly and unpredictably, and they sometimes turn violent. Remain cautious and steer clear of any area where protests, demonstrations or other public disturbances are taking place. During strikes by public workers, access to government offices and public hospitals and schools may be difficult due to pickets and should be avoided if possible. For medical care, use private facilities/services that are not impacted by public-service strikes.

Public Transportation:

Often the safety standards on public transportation systems in Durban are not on par with what travellers would expect across cities in Europe. Many robberies and car jackings occur and the un-accredited taxi operators mostly collaborate with thieves. Refrain from using Mini Bus Taxis which compete with each other and aggression levels are usually high, making these types of taxi unsafe. Most of them don’t meet the local standards for operating taxis.

Ocean Safety:

If visiting Durban’s expansive coastline, be mindful of the possible presence of sharks when swimming or engaging in water sports. When a shark is spotted close to the shore, local authorities will sound a warning siren to notify swimmers.

Crime:

The vast majority of visitors have no problems during their trips to avels in Durban without problems; however, visitors should be aware that criminal activity, often violent, is prevalent throughout the country. The government has a number of strong anti-crime initiatives in place, but violent crimes such as armed robbery, carjacking, mugging, "smash-and-grab" attacks on vehicles, and other incidents are still common and do affect visitors who are seen as soft targets.

Cash-in-transit (armoured vehicles) robberies remain popular, you should try to avoid these vehicles and personnel during a cash delivery or pick-up, particularly at shopping centres or other public locations. Crimes against property, such as carjacking, have often been accompanied by violent acts, including murder, when victims resist or are slow to respond to attackers' demands. South Africa also has the highest reported incidence of rape in the world. Foreigners are not specifically targeted, but several have been the victims of rape. Victims of violent crime, especially rape, are strongly encouraged to seek immediate medical attention, including antiretroviral therapy against HIV/AIDS. Questions about how to receive such treatment should be directed to the nearest police station/hospital/clinic.

Criminal activity, such as theft, is particularly high in areas surrounding certain hotels and public transportation centres, especially in the Durban city centre. Theft of passports and other valuables is most likely to occur at airports, bus terminals, and train stations. A number of visitors have been mugged or violently attacked on commuter and metro trains. Avoid the train's and use metered taxi's.

Should you be confronted by an armed individual - immediately comply, avoid making sudden movements, and do not offer any form of resistance. Any hesitation on your part could be perceived as a threat and may result in unnecessary violence. Criminals do not discriminate.

ATMs:

Criminals often loiter close to ATMs, targeting persons withdrawing cash. A common scheme is the "Good Samaritan" fraud, where a criminal attempts to help out with a particular ATM transaction. As this is a prevalent crime, do not accept "assistance" from anyone, or agree to assist others with ATM transactions. Criminals have used commercial explosives to blow up ATMs in Durban. ATM bombings have taken place in the early hours of the morning in remote or isolated areas, although some attacks have taken place at gas stations and shopping complexes. It is safer to draw out your money at shopping malls where there are guards 24/7.

Based on these threats, the following security precautions are recommended:

- Avoid using ATMs in dark, remote, or isolated areas;
- Never allow someone to assist you at the ATM, and never assist anyone else at the ATM either;
- ATMs located inside shopping malls, hotels, and banks are preferred since they are normally high-traffic areas and monitored by security guards and cameras;
- Avoid using an ATM with a cord or other foreign object attached to it. Should you notice a suspicious device on an ATM, immediately leave the area; take cover, and notify the police. Shrapnel and debris from an explosion can travel long distances and cause serious injury or death.
- Before withdrawing money, scan the area for any suspicious persons or activity;
- Should anyone approach you while you are withdrawing money, immediately cancel the transaction and leave the area;
- Incidents of credit card fraud, counterfeit U.S. currency, and various check-cashing scams have also been reported;
- When giving your credit card to a store or restaurant employee for processing, do not let the card out of your sight. Most South African restaurants have portable credit card machines that can be brought to your table.

Financial Scams:

Visitors should also beware of telephone, internet, or email schemes, which attempt to win the confidence of unsuspecting persons who are persuaded either to provide financial information or money, or to travel to South Africa and assist in a supposedly lucrative business venture.

Car Thefts and Carjacking:

Carjacking and theft of property from cars remain a serious problem. Doors should remain locked and windows rolled up at all times. Motorists are urged to hide bags, cell phones, and other valuables from view at all times and to be extremely cautious when approaching intersections. “Smash-and-grab” robberies are common throughout South Africa, particularly in urban areas, at traffic lights and on highway off-ramps. A criminal, sometimes posing as a vendor or beggar, will walk between lines of vehicles waiting at an intersection, surveying the contents for valuables.

Once an item of value is identified, the perpetrator will quickly smash the window and grab the item off the seat before fleeing, often before the driver can determine what happened. In another scenario an individual (or two working in tandem) may indicate to a driver an apparent flat tire or other problem and wait for the driver to pull over or exit the car before grabbing exposed valuables. You should avoid carrying anything of value inside the car (e.g., briefcases, purses, cell phones, etc.) that could attract potential assailants.

Criminals, often in groups, have placed large and sharp objects in the road (rocks, bricks, shards of metal, etc.) in an effort to puncture a vehicle’s tires. Another less frequently used tactic is for thieves to throw rocks and bricks from freeway overpasses onto moving vehicles to damage cars and disorient drivers. The thieves then rob the driver once he has pulled over to inspect the damage.

Airport Safety:

Although infrequent, travellers leaving the airport have been targeted by criminals for robbery, while on the way to their hotels or places of residence. Arrange pick-up directly with a hotel or using pre-arranged shuttle services, wherever possible.

There is a serious problem with theft from baggage at all International airports in South Africa. Travellers are encouraged to secure their luggage with [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) approved locks, use an airport plastic wrapping service and avoid placing any items of value in checked luggage. Make an inventory of items in checked baggage to help with processing a claim, if theft does occur.

Firearms:

Travellers to South Africa may not import or take in-transit any firearms or ammunition without a temporary import or in-transit permit issued by the South African Police Service. Information on how to obtain a permit for firearms for personal protection and hunting can be found at the South African Police Service’s Firearms website.

Victims of Crime:

If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime, you should contact the local police as soon as possible. They will help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of violent crimes such as assault or rape, put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities, and contact family members or friends. They will help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime. The local equivalent to the “911” **emergency line in South Africa is 10111.**

Criminal Penalties:

While you are traveling in South Africa you are subject to its laws. If you violate South Africa's laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in South Africa are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Based on the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, there are bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in South Africa, you should request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the UNDSS Personnel.

Special Circumstances:

HIV and AIDS remain major public health concerns in the Republic of South Africa. According to the South African Department of Health, Provinces that recorded the highest HIV prevalence were KwaZulu-Natal (39.5%), Mpumalanga (35.1%), Free State (30.6%) and Gauteng (30.4%). The Northern Cape and Western Cape recorded the lowest prevalence at 18.4% and 18.5% respectively.

However, it is recommended you exercise appropriate precautions if you are exposed to a blood source other than that supplied by a hospital for transfusion purposes.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions:

While in Durban, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in your country. Unlike many countries with right-hand traffic, South Africa has left-hand traffic.

Deaths from road accidents are roughly twice as high in South Africa as they are globally. According to published reports, the high incidence of mortality in these collisions is due to a combination of poor driving, limited enforcement of traffic laws, road rage, aggressive driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol.

Travellers should use caution at all times when driving, and especially avoid night time travel outside Durban's built up areas. Road conditions are generally good in South Africa. Treat all intersections with malfunctioning traffic lights as a four-way stop. Kwa-Zulu Natal is the province wherein Durban is found. This province has the highest number of recorded deaths due to accidents.

Pedestrian Safety:

Take extreme care when crossing streets. Collisions involving vehicles and pedestrians have occurred and resulted in serious injuries to the victims.

Areas to avoid, especially after dark:

- The opposite end of Durban city away from the hotels and beachfront.;
- The townships surrounding Durban, ie **Kwa-mashu, Inanda, Lamontville, Chesterville and Umlazi**. (Townships are classified as any informal settlement characterized by dwellings/shacks fabricated by corrugated metal, plastic, wood etc.);

Safer suburbs:

- The safer suburbs of Durban are in the north, i.e. **Umhlanga, West (Pinetown) and the South (Amamzimtoti) of the city** and are generally considered to be safer than the city centre at night.

Visitors should remain vigilant and exercise caution at all times!

Emergency numbers:

Local Emergency Numbers		
POLICE	101111	National Flying Squad, it is not necessary to dial an area code when calling this number
AMBULANCE	10177	
REPORT A CRIME	086 001 0111	
EMERGENCY	031 361 0000	Metro Police and Metro Fire
FIRE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT	031 361 000	
AIDS ENQUIRIES	031 202 9520	
VEHICLE BREAKDOWNS	083 843 22	Automobile Association (AA) Member call Centre
CELL PHONE EMERGENCIES	112	

Emergency Contact DSS, South Africa

DSS South Africa Emergency Contacts		
Name	Cell phone	Email address
Rustam Sylyakhov, DSA (Pretoria)	082 552 3240	ustam.sylyakhov@undss.org
Rumen Antanasov, FSCO (Johannesburg)	082 552 3241	rumen.antanasov@undss.org
Sunesh Indhur, NSA (Cape Town)	083 283 9025	Sunesh.indhur@undss.org
Maria Magdalena De Lange, NSA (Pretoria)	082 465 8025	maria.delange@undss.org
DSS, South Africa	073 592 5278, 078 029 7102	

Medical Facilities and Health Information:

Private medical facilities are good in the surrounding area of Durban. Pharmacies are well-stocked and the equivalent to most American/European medicines are available. Recommended hospitals are St Augustines, Entabeni, Umhlanga and Westville. While most of South Africa is malaria-free, malaria risk exists throughout the year in rural low-altitude areas in the coastal lowlands of KwaZulu-Natal north of the Tugela River (including in Zululand but excluding urban areas of Richards Bay). In all risk areas, risk is much lower from June to September. Visitors should prepare accordingly and use malaria prophylaxis. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases, consult the [World Health Organization's \(WHO\)](http://www.who.int) website.