

SOUTH AFRICA



Pic. 1: map

FACTS

Surface:	1.219.912 km ²
Capital:	Johannesburg
Form of government:	democracy
Inhabitants:	~ 45.000.000
Population Density:	40/km ²
Average Income:	52\$/Month
Life Expectancy:	46 (F)/45 (M)
Languages:	English, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, northern Sotho, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
Religion:	68% christians, 2% moslems, 1,5% hindus

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with general facts and issues of South Africa. The history and people of South Africa will take a special place within the following text.

HISTORY

There is evidence that South Africa was populated by humans of the stone age 300.000 years ago. Since ca. 20.000 years there were Khoisan living in the area of what is known today as the Republic of South Africa. They were living as hunter-gatherers and began to settle down for nomad - farming 2.500 years ago in the more fertile areas. A heritage of this time are the many paintings in the caves one can find.

Around 1500 years ago different bantu-tribes (Zulu, Sotho, Tswana & Xhosa) migrated from the western Central Africa to South Africa and started to drive out the Khoi-tribes. In the beginning of the 17th century there were around 200 000 Khoi's living in the south-western and southern areas of South Africa as well as the different bantu tribes were living in the Highveld and coastal areas.

The first europeans discovering South Africa in the early 15th century were the portugese on their mission to find the sea route to india. It was Bartolomeu Diaz in 1488 who reached the southern cape first and called it Cape of Storms. Until today it is quite dangerous to sail around the southern cape in case one does not know the oceans. Later it was called Cape of Good Hope because it opened the tax - free way to India. But the portugese didn't set up permanent settlements at the cape.

This did the dutch man Jan van Riebeck for the VOC (Vereenigde oostindische compagnie) in 1652 to provide a secure harbour and food supply for the trading ships passing the cape on their way to India. Since ca. 1680 the presence of the dutch expanded due to farming interests and they started to oppress and chase the Khoikhoi and San away or to take them into slavery.

Ca. a 100 years later the boers crossed the Oranje river on their way into the inner South Africa and encountered with the tribe of the Xhosa what led to the so called 100 years lasting boer wars.

In 1795 the boers rebelled against the VOC what caused the first occupation of the cape region by british troops. In 1806 the cape became finally british colony.

The abolition of slavery in 1833 in and of the British Empire took away the base of existence for many boers, so they flew again to the northern areas of South Africa.

Between 1835 and 1841 around 14 000 boers emigrated to the northern areas of the orange river, where later on the boer republics of Transvaal, Oranje Free State and Natalia were founded. In the following years different little fights between the boers and Zulu tribes as well as between the boers and the british were fought. In the war between 1899 - 1902 the british defeated the boers finally and their republics became parts of the British Empire. To live in peace with them Afrikaans, the language of the boers, became second official language in South Africa, next to English as the first official language.

1910 the Cape Colony became the South African Union as an independent Dominion of the British Commonwealth.

Within the new state two political directions fronted each other: the South African Party (SAP), which worked for closer relations to Great Britain, and the National Party (NP), which wanted to split South Africa off the influence of GB. The NP also stood for the superiority of the whites over the blacks. In 1924 the NP came into power and forced segregation and restrictions against blacks and indians. From now on for blacks it was forbidden to live in the cities.

1931 South Africa got its formal independency.

After long disputes South Africa's Parliament decided in 1939 to fight next to Great Britain against Germany in the second world war. Premier became J.C. Smuts, who was re-elected in 1943 with an absolute majority.

Because many whites had to fight in the war blacks had to be employed in the industry. So they moved more and more into the cities and the black population increased. That included the black movement got stronger and organisations like the ANC (African National Congress) were born.

Consequently the Whites felt threatened by the growing power and presence of the blacks and saw only in a strict Apartheid policy the security of their superior position in South Africa.

At the elections in 1948 the NP won again and with Daniel F. Malan as the premier they set up the basis for the following Apartheid regime. More than 1000 different laws in case of segregation were released in the following time.

The Apartheid regime created the so called 'homelands' in order to take away the south african citizenship of blacks and to allocate them only to a few special areas in South Africa. Outside the homelands blacks were merely visitors and in fact foreigners in their own country, besides they were not allowed to leave those homelands without valid papers - which were hardly to get.

CONTINENT: Africa >COUNTRY: **South Africa**

With the extension of the Apartheid international criticism grew and South Africa was more and more economically isolated. After the massacre of Sharpsville South Africa were forced to leave the British Commonwealth.

Apartheids brutality reached its peak in 1976 as military and police forces killed 176 black students in the massacre of Soweto, where the students demonstrated peacefully against the new law to teach Afrikaans - the language of the oppressors - in black schools. The riots lasted until 1978.

Pieter Willem Botha caused, because of international pressure, the repeal of a few Apartheid laws, but extended the national pressure on political opponents in the frame-work of his 'total strategy' - what reminds of the 'total war' in Hitler-Germany.

In 1984 a further wave of strikes and riots hit the country and many townships were occupied by the army. From 1985-1986

first a limited and afterwards until 1990 the national state of emergency was installed.

Only Frederik Willem de Klerk finished the Apartheid Policy.

Under his government the prohibition of the ANC was abolished. Only a few days later Nelson Mandela, one of the leaders of the ANC was released after a 27-year long imprisonment on Robben Island.

The Government and ANC negotiated about a peaceful transition to democracy and a new constitution. In February 1992 the policy of conciliation was approved in a referendum by 70% of the white population (the other population groups still had no right to vote). De Klerk and Mandela got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

The first free elections with participation of the black majority took place from 26th to 29th of April, 1994. The ANC won the elections with an overwhelming majority of voices. At the 27th of April 1994 the new constitution was set into power and on 9th of May Nelson Mandela, as the first black president of South Africa, took over his new position. Mandela was President until 1999.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Today South Africa is a stable democracy with Thabo Mbeki as the President. The constitution ensures equality and human rights to every South African citizen. The so-called homelands were integrated back into the state. Now South Africa is structured into 9 provinces.

Images:

Pic.1: Wikipedia.org; Pic.2: Katrin Bade, own Source;
Pic.3: Katrin Bade, Source; Pic.4: Undine David, own Source

CLIMATE

South Africa has a mostly subtropical climate caused by its position at the southern tropic. That's why the climate is mostly sunny and dry. Snow is only falling in the mountains. In the South African winter from March to September it can get very cold at night, mostly in the north of SA (highveld, Johannesburg and in the Drakens Mountains), but in daytime temperature is rising up to 20 degrees. In summer it's around 30 degrees warm. At the coast of Cape Town it's rainy and grey but not colder than around 5 - 8 degrees in winter. In summer it's dry and hot up to 40 degrees. But caused by the ocean there is a constantly blowing wind, that cools down the air temperature nicely.

TOPOGRAPHY

The central plateau is situated between a height of 900m up to 2000m. In the north west of Bloemfontein extends the Kalahari desert to Botswana and Namibia and the Drakens Mountains stretches from the north east of South Africa to the south west of Lesotho with their highest point at 3482m height. The western and southern boundary is the Atlantic Ocean and the eastern side is limited by the Indian Ocean. Indian and Atlantic Ocean meet at the most southern point of South Africa, the Kaap Agulhas. The most important rivers in South Africa are the Orange River, the Vaal and, as a natural border in the north-east directed to the Indian Ocean, the Limpopo.

VEGETATION

Dry Vegetation dominates the South African landscape with long extended savanna areas fading in the west into the Kalahari desert and in the southwest into the Karoo. Closed forest stands one can only find in the strongly rain-gifted east and

southeast areas of South Africa. At the North- and West Cape there are growing beautiful wild flowers in spring. The northern Cape seems to be a real ocean of flowers from middle of August to the middle of September. Anyway South Africa is of indigenous flowers and plants. The worldwide protected Aloe Vera is wide spread in the dry areas of the country.

South Africa is also famous for its National Parks like the Kruger

Literature:

Architecture, Apartheid and after; Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic;
David Philip Publishers Ltd.; Cape Town (Pty)

National Park where one can find a very varied animal life.

SOCIETY

A heritage of apartheid times is the still present division of South African population into 4 groups: blacks, coloureds, whites and Asians.

Surprisingly the people themselves use those categories to describe and classify themselves.



Pic. 2:

Pic. 3 / Pic. 4

Nevertheless there is to say that South Africa's Society is very multicultural. Many Europeans (Dutch, German, French and British) emigrated over the years to South Africa. Additionally and evident through the many languages spoken the country is populated by many tribes, like the Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho and many more.

Websites:

<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BCdafrika>
http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geschichte_S%C3%BCdafrikas