Almost Everything You Need to Know About South Africa – 2015

This first part is critical so read and heed!!!

! You need a passport, AND be sure it doesn’t expire until 30 days after June 13, AND you must have at least two blank facing pages in it. THEY ARE VERY STRICT ON THIS. You will be checked before boarding in the US and not allowed on the plane if you have not met these criteria.

! SA has no requirement for a visa or shots unless you are coming from, or are a citizen of, a country other than the US (see page 2 for more health and safety information).

! Flight reservations: We will be picked up and dropped off at the Johannesburg Airport by our guide, but he can do so only once. Therefore, make your arrival time in O. R. Tambo International Airport (JNB) to be as close as possible to 5PM on Sunday May 31. For the return, we have a long drive back to the Johannesburg Airport so your departure must be later than 7PM on Saturday June 13. Failure to arrive and depart at the agreed upon time will cost you a very very very expensive cab ride, and will also require permission from the university. And remember, it takes a full day to get there so you have to leave the US the day before. FYI, here is what the course instructors will fly, it would be convenient if you can get these flights:

**Departure:**
Delta – Flight 1613 leaving Indy Saturday May 30 at 2:20 PM, arrive Atlanta 3:50 PM. Leave Atlanta on Delta 200 7:29 PM, arrive Johannesburg 4:50 PM the next day (Sunday May 31).

**Return:**
Delta – Flight 201 leaving Johannesburg Saturday 7:20 PM, arrive Atlanta 5:40 AM the next day (Sunday June 14) Leave Atlanta 9:40 AM arrive Indy 11:15 AM Sunday June 14.

Delta appears to have the best times for arrival and departure. If you cannot make the exact flights above, here are other guidelines. To make things work out for our first night lodging we need a flight that arrives late afternoon/early evening on the 31st. Then for departure, we have about an 8 hour drive to the airport on our last day so we need a departure on the evening of the 13th.
What to expect

- We will travel as a group the entire time in a small bus.
- We will move several times, sometimes staying only a night or two in the same place. Travel times may be several hours.
- Facilities will range from primitive (tents and outhouses) to pretty nice (B&B’s and lodges). Not to worry, the primitive thing is only for two nights.
- You will do some of the meal preparation although there will also be some restaurant meals and local meals included. Duties will rotate from cooking, to cleanup, to off time.
- It gets dark early since it is winter there. To get the most of daylight we will get up by 6AM most days, have breakfast, and be on the road/trail by 7AM.
- We will meet often with numerous officials for presentations on environmental management in SA.
- We will view big game and other flora and fauna from the bus, in open air Land Rovers, and on foot, always under the direction of a guide. This will occur almost daily.

Health and Safety

- Malaria is present in this area, although we will be in their winter and it is the dry season. Our guide tells us the risk will be low at this time, however, the choice is yours regarding prophylaxis. There is always some risk of getting it, but the prophylaxis is also not without risk. Long pants, long sleeves, and bug spray are recommended. You can get information about malaria and other health recommendations at the CDC website: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/south-africa
- Crime is unfortunately a problem in South Africa. The good news is the criminals generally don’t go where we are going. However, in the interest of safety, we will always travel as a group. The common wisdom is to not take valuables on this trip: expensive jewelry, lots of cash, high end camera equipment, etc. Also, if you have time to kill in the airport it is strongly suggested that you do not venture into Johannesburg. The airport itself is relatively safe but many sections of the city are extremely dangerous and you would be an obvious mugging target. You can get more information from the US State Department website: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/south-africa.html
- A bigger risk comes from animal attacks. For this reason it is absolutely critical that you follow the instructions of our guide. In some areas it is illegal to get out of your vehicle.
- Vehicle accidents are also an issue, so you will be required to wear your seatbelt in the bus. They drive on the left so look to your right when walking across a street.
Local considerations

✓ You will find the locals very friendly and numerous languages are spoken there. However, almost everyone speaks English.
✓ We may have the opportunity to buy some handmade products along the way. It is suggested that you don’t bargain with the locals because the prices will likely be very cheap, and these people need the money a lot more than we do. Just pay it.
✓ We will be expected to tip our guide and there will be a few occasions to tip park guides. It probably won’t be more than about $40-50 for the whole trip.
✓ The food is similar to what we are used to, but wild game is served more often than here.
✓ They don’t accept US dollars so you will need to exchange. We will make a stop at the exchange counter at the airport. The currency is the Rand; the exchange rate is about 10 Rand = 1 USD.
✓ ATMs often don’t work in the smaller towns we will pass through. We will give you advice as to when and where to get the local currency.
✓ Wifi and cell coverage is very sporadic so don’t count on it. Tell your parents not to worry if they don’t hear from you for a couple days.
✓ We will have one free day where you can participate in a local tourist activity of your choice. However, this is not part of the class and your participation would be at your own cost and liability. Our tour guide will make recommendations for safe activities.

Problems/contact info:

✓ If you have travel problems please try and get a hold of us:
  o My stateside cell phone: 812-320-1484
  o My South Africa cell phone: 072-270-1990. Add the +27 international prefix if calling from outside of South Africa.
  o My email: lwadzins@indiana.edu
  o South African guide: LD Van Essen 82-320-6620. Add the +27 international prefix if calling from outside of South Africa.
✓ You can also try the SPEA staff to relay a message:
  o SPEA Abroad Office 812-856-0796 (daytime)
  o Chemain Slater 317-607-1450 (after hours)

What to bring

✓ Your passport (see above for additional passport requirements)
✓ Money for incidentals, souvenirs, and tipping.
✓ This will be a field experience so there is no need for dressy clothes. The bus will have very limited storage so your limit is one standard suitcase and one carry-on type daypack for use on the bus and hikes. We’ll use the airline standards for your suitcase size: 50 pounds or less and not exceed 62 inches when you total length + width + height.
✓ There will be an opportunity for laundry part way through the trip so pack light.
✔ We will not always have wifi or electrical access. It may not be worth the trouble to bring your laptop and you don’t necessarily need it for your presentation.
✔ Clothing - temperature range is 40-70 F; layers are your best bet
✔ Light rain jacket
✔ Hat, sunglasses
✔ Toiletries – nature friendly (including sun screen and insect repellent)
✔ Comfortable walking shoes
✔ Flip flops/sandals for the beach, not for hiking
✔ Swim suit
✔ Towel and soap (not always provided at accommodations)
✔ Wash cloth (generally not provided at accommodations)
✔ Personal medicines, aspirin etc.
✔ Journal (something sturdy for field use, not a three ring binder)
✔ Binoculars
✔ Camera/video camera
✔ Flash light or headlamp with fresh batteries
✔ Daypack / Rucksack
✔ Personal Water bottle – e.g. Nalgene or similar
✔ Charger for any electronic devices you may bring
✔ Wall socket adapter and possibly a voltage converter because South Africa operates on 220/240 volts which is twice the voltage of the US. It’s my understanding most laptops, phone chargers, etc. are set up to operate on either voltage. If you look at the fine print on the charger you will likely see something that says “100-240V 50-60 Hz”. If that is the case all you need is the plug adapter. However, if you want to operate something heavy duty like a hair dryer you will need a voltage converter that is rated for that level of use. Actually, it might be easier to buy a cheap hairdryer over there instead of buying the heavy duty converter. See below for more info:

You will need to get an adapter that allows your device to accommodate this type of plug-in (round pins). I have not been able to find any in our area but we can get some over there.