

By IAFRICA, iafrica.com, Updated: 2009/12/04

The rules of SA roads

Planning on driving in SA? Here are some important road rules that you should know about...



Copyright (c) IAFRICA.COM

Although it is steadily improving, South Africa's public transport system is not as seamless and convenient as that of some developed countries.

If you are planning on renting a car in South Africa and driving yourself around for the duration of your stay, there are some important road rules that you should pay attention to.

General information

In South Africa we drive on the left. You will need to have your driving licence on you whenever you are driving. Unless your driver's licence (from your home country) is in English with a photograph and signature, you will need to apply for an international driver's licence before you come to South Africa.

South African cars, which are largely manual, take one of three kinds of petrol (gas) - unleaded petrol, lead-replacement petrol, and diesel. When having your car filled at a service station (which are not self-service), it is a good idea to specify which type of petrol needs to be used. Petrol attendants, who will fill the car with petrol, check your oil and water, and clean the windscreen, are usually tipped approximately R5.

Although you can drive freely on the vast majority of South Africa's roads, there are certain sections of road which are toll roads. Visit the National Roads Agency website to find out whether your planned route has any toll roads and how much they will cost.

Speed limits

The speed limits are generally clearly marked with road signs. However, if in doubt, the following general rules apply:

Basic rules

Things that will get you into trouble

Drinking and driving

Driving under the influence of alcohol (or any other narcotic) could land you with a hefty fine or, even more seriously, in jail. If you are stopped by police or traffic officers in South Africa, they are legally allowed to test your alcohol level. The limits are:

Blood alcohol level: must be less than 0.05% (0.05g/100ml)

Breath alcohol level: must be less than 0.24 grams per 1000ml of breath

Although measurements vary according to the size of the individual, this works out to approximately one glass of wine for women and one-and-a-half glasses of wine for larger men.

In case of an accident

If you are in an accident that involves damage to any property or injury, you need to report it to the nearest police station within 24 hours of the accident (even if none of the parties involved intend pressing charges or claiming damages).

It is illegal to fail to stop following an accident. Failing to do so can result in a fine or a prison sentence. It is also illegal to leave the scene of an accident in which someone has been injured without the permission of a police officer.

Useful contacts:

South African Automobile Association