

A Guide to Safari Parks in South Africa



Kruger National Park

Kruger is world renowned for its fabulous safari experience. The area is wonderfully scenic, with forest, mountains and rivers forming an impressive backdrop.

Within the Park, there are a number of exclusive, luxurious **Private Concessions**, offering excellent food and superbly guided game drive experiences. Each concession is several thousand hectares: these operators are able to leave the road network within their concession in order to get closer to the wildlife - this is something that is not allowed in the public areas of the National Park.

Although private concessions offer a very similar experience to the private reserves, the concessions will suit visitors who want to visit and explore the heart of the Kruger National Park and not necessarily one of its neighbouring private reserves.

The concessions are only available to guests of the private lodges.

Private reserves flank the western section of the Kruger National Park. Although guests of the private reserves will not cross into the actual park, animals move freely between the private reserves and the Kruger Park.

Your chances of seeing all of the Big Five are virtually guaranteed in the private reserves. Although conservation standards are very high in the private reserves, there are fewer restrictions than in the park, and game vehicles are allowed to leave the roads at the rangers' discretion. The animals here also tend to be more habituated to people, allowing closer and more frequent sightings of otherwise elusive animals.

Accommodation on the private reserves is focused solely on luxury. Guests will enjoy excellent guided game drives conducted by teams of rangers and trackers.

Our opinion

For a first-time safari experience, where an emphasis might be on seeing the big 5, we recommend staying in one of the many private lodges located in the [private reserves](#) hugging the Kruger Park's western border. For second-time safari visitors, staying on one of the Private Concessions within the Park could provide a more varied game viewing experience.

Sabi Sands Private Game Reserve

The Sabi Sand is a 66 000 hectare Private Game Reserve bordering the famous Kruger National Park offering a spectacular big game experience - especially for the Big 5 (lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo).

With no fences between the Sabi Game Reserve and Kruger, the animals are free to roam unhindered over in excess of 2 million hectares, and because the land is privately owned the guides and trackers are able to follow the animals off-road in order to get closer to the wildlife than is generally possible in Kruger itself.

The lodges are generally of a five star luxury standard, offering a fully inclusive rate, which generally includes all meals, accommodation, and morning and afternoon guided safari drives in open Land Rovers. .

Thornybush Game Reserve

Thornybush Game Reserve is situated in 115 km² of pristine African bushveld adjacent to [Kruger National Park](#). Whilst the reserve is fenced off from the neighbouring reserves and Kruger, there is a very high density of animals,

including the Big 5, and lodges offer dawn and dusk safaris in open Land Rovers with qualified rangers and trackers, and bush walks for the more adventurous.

Timbavati Game Reserve

The 60,000 hectare **Timbavati Game Reserve** shares a common unfenced border with the Kruger National Park and is home to Africa's Big 5 as well as many more species of predator and antelope, and this abundance of wildlife ensures that visitors to the area have an unforgettable safari.

Some excellent private game lodges can be found in this hot lowveld area of wood and grassland and visitors can view the big game from open 4x4 safari vehicles, or on foot as part of a guided bush walk.

Madikwe Game Reserve

The 76,000 hectare **Madikwe Game Reserve** is adjacent to the Botswana border and just a 4 hour drive from Johannesburg or a short flight. The wildlife viewing is on a par with the Kruger and the area is one of the best places in Africa to see the sought after wild dog.

Madikwe is ideal for families as it is a malaria free zone.

Manyeleti Game Reserve

The 23,000 hectare Manyeleti Game Reserve is situated between the Timbavati Private Reserve, the Kruger National Park and the Sabi Sands Game Reserve. A huge variety of wildlife roams freely in this area. The Manyeleti Game Reserve is managed by the Mnsi tribe who have been in the area for many generations. The Mnsi are committed to retaining the integrity of the game reserve and ensuring that the benefits of tourism in the reserve are delivered to the surrounding communities.

Pilansberg National Park

Surrounding Sun City is the Pilanesberg National Park, an attractive 50,000 hectare malaria-free park which is centred around an extinct volcano crater. The Park is home to over 7,000 animals including the [Big 5](#), giraffe, hippo, zebra, jackal, hyena and many antelope, and there are also over 350 bird species.

The Waterberg

The Waterberg is an area of 15000 sq kilometres, and has been described as South Africa's best kept secret due to its rugged beauty. The Waterberg has all the Big 5 as well as many more rare species.

The lodges of the Waterberg are an ideal safari destination for visitors to South Africa who will be arriving or departing through Johannesburg, or spending some time at Sun City. It is also a malaria-free area, making the lodges a great choice for families.

Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, KwaZulu-Natal

One of our favourite parks, this is South Africa's oldest the oldest game reserve in Africa. The reserve is renowned as a sanctuary for rhinoceros and has the largest concentration of White Rhino in Africa. It is well populated with wildlife, including lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and giraffe. We recommend using one of our excellent local guides to explore the park, to ensure maximum benefit from their wildlife expertise.