

Tourist Information on Swaziland

Introducing Swaziland

Swaziland might be among the smallest countries on the continent and one of [Africa](#)'s remaining monarchies, but there's more than novelty value on offer here. You can almost feel [South Africa](#)'s undercurrents of tension fade away when you cross the border into friendly, easy-going little Swaziland, making it a relaxing stopover on the trip between [Mozambique](#) and [South Africa](#). And it's surprising how much there is to do here - the royal ceremonies, excellent wildlife reserves and superb scenery should be more than enough reason to come.

Try [Hlane Royal National Park](#) for an eyeful of white rhinos, lions and antelopes - camping options are available for overnight stays. You may not want to stay overnight in the somewhat dull Mbanane, but you may well pass through on your way to the [Ezulwini & Malkerns Valleys](#), the former renowned for its picturesque scenery and the latter for its handicrafts.

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland#ixzz27MU6z2Dx>

Money & costs

Money

The unit of currency is the lilangeni; the plural is emalangeni (E). It is tied in value to the South African rand. Rands are accepted everywhere and there's no need to change them. Emalangeni are difficult to change for other currencies outside Swaziland.

Only a few ATMs accept international credit or debit cards. The most convenient are at Standard Bank in Swazi Mall, [Mbabane](#) and inside the Royal Swazi Hotel's casino.

Nedbank and First National change cash and travellers cheques. Banking hours are generally from 8.30am to 2.30pm weekdays, and until 11am Saturday. Most banks ask to see the receipt of purchase when cashing travellers cheques.

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland/practical-information/money-costs#ixzz27MTtpGqH>

Visas

Most people don't need a visa to visit Swaziland. If you don't need a visa to enter [South Africa](#), you won't need one for Swaziland. Anyone staying for more than 60 days must apply for a temporary residence permit from the **Chief Immigration Officer** (404 2941; PO Box 372, [Mbabane](#)) whose offices are in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Visas for onward travel

Visas for [Mozambique](#) are available at the borders but it's cheaper to arrange them in advance at the **Mozambiquan High Commission** (404 3700; Princess Dr, [Mbabane](#)) or Nelspruit ([South Africa](#)). Allow 24 hours.

Climate & when to go

Summer sees torrential thunderstorms, especially in the western mountains, and temperatures on the lowveld are very hot, often over 40°C; in the high country the temperatures are lower and in winter it can get cool. Winter nights on the lowveld are sometimes very cold.

Try to avoid visiting rain-soaked Swaziland during the rainy season (December to April). The best time to visit is in May–June or October, but bring something warm.

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland/weather#ixzz27MUvVFQS>

Getting there & away

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Land

Bus & minibus taxi

Generally speaking, Manzini has the main international transport rank for transport to Jo'burg, [Durban](#) and [Mozambique](#). Less frequent departures are in [Mbabane](#) for the northern destinations of [Gauteng](#) and [Mpumalanga](#) ([South Africa](#)).

Mozambique

The main border crossing between Swaziland and [Mozambique](#) is at Lomahasha–Namaacha (open 7am to 8pm). The border crossing between Mhlumeni and Gobahas is open 7am to 6pm. Inquire at the tourist office in [Mbabane](#) about bus services from [Mbabane](#) to [Maputo](#) ([Mozambique](#)). Minibuses depart [Maputo](#) daily in the morning for the Namaacha–Lomahasha border (US\$2, 1½ hours) with some continuing on to Manzini (US\$4.50, 3½ hours). Minibus taxis operate daily from Manzini to [Maputo](#) (US\$10, 2½ hours).

South africa

The main border crossings with [South Africa](#) are: Josefsdal–Bulembu (open 8am to 4pm); Oshoek–Ngwenya (open 7am to 10pm); Emahlathini–Sicunusa (open 8am to 6pm); Mahamba (open 7am to 10pm); and Golela–Lavumisa (open 7am to 10pm).

The **Baz Bus** ([South Africa](#) 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) runs from Jo'burg/[Pretoria](#) to [Durban](#) via [Mbabane](#) and Manzini three times a week, returning direct to Jo'burg/[Pretoria](#) on alternate days.

Minibus taxis run daily between Jo'burg (Park Station), [Mbabane](#) and Manzini (US\$20, five to six hours) and Manzini and [Durban](#) (US\$21, six hours). On many routes, you'll change minibuses at the border. Most long-distance taxis leave early in the morning.

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Air

Swaziland's main airport is Matsapha International Airport, southwest of Manzini. (Schedules and tickets often refer to the airport as Manzini.) **Swaziland Airlink** (518 6155/92; www.saairlink.co.za) flies daily between Swaziland and [Johannesburg](#) (US\$127 one way). **Swazi Express Airways** (518 6840; www.swaziexpress.com) flies four times a week to [Durban](#) (US\$63 to US\$175) and twice a week to [Maputo](#) (US\$21 to US\$63) and Vilanculos (US\$21 to US\$197) in [Mozambique](#)

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland/transport/getting-there-away#ixzz27MVBkCi1>

Getting around

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Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country, and we don't recommend it. But in some parts of [Africa](#) there is often simply no other option to grabbing lifts on trucks, 4WDs, lorries or whatever vehicle happens to come down the road first. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

Hitching is easier here than in [South Africa](#), as the skin colour of the driver and hitchhiker aren't factors in the decision to offer a lift. You will, however, have to wait a long time.

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Bus & tram

Bus & minibus taxi

There are a few infrequent (but cheap) domestic buses, most of which begin and terminate at the main stop in the centre of [Mbabane](#). Generally you'll find minibus taxis are the best public transport, although they often run shorter routes. There are also nonshared (private hire) taxis in some of the larger towns.

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland/transport/getting-around#ixzz27MVKCpLQ>

History

In eastern Swaziland archaeologists have discovered human remains dating back 110, 000 years, but the ancestors of the modern Swazi people arrived relatively recently.

During the great Bantu migrations into southern [Africa](#), one group, the Nguni, moved down the east coast. A clan settled near what is now [Maputo](#) in [Mozambique](#), and a dynasty was founded by the Dlamini family. In the mid-18th century increasing pressure from other Nguni clans forced King Ngwane III to lead his people south to lands by the Pongola River, in what is now

southern Swaziland. Today, Swazis consider Ngwane III to have been the first king of Swaziland.

The next king, Sobhuza I, withdrew under pressure from the Zulus to the Ezulwini Valley, which today remains the centre of Swazi royalty and ritual. When King Sobhuza I died in 1839, Swaziland was twice its present size. Trouble with the Zulu continued, although the next king, Mswazi (or Mswati), managed to unify the whole kingdom. By the time he died in 1868, the Swazi nation was secure. Mswazi's subjects called themselves people of Mswazi, or Swazis, and the name stuck.

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European interference

The arrival of increasing numbers of Europeans from the mid-19th century brought new problems. Mswazi's successor, Mbandzeni, inherited a kingdom rife with European carpetbaggers – hunters, traders, missionaries and farmers, many of whom leased large expanses of land.

The [Pretoria](#) Convention of 1881 guaranteed Swaziland's 'independence' but also defined its borders, and Swaziland lost large chunks of territory. 'Independence' in fact meant that both the British and the Boers had responsibility for administering their various interests in Swaziland, and the result was chaos. The Boer administration collapsed with the 1899–1902 Anglo-Boer War, and afterwards the British took control of Swaziland as a protectorate.

During this troubled time, King Sobhuza II was only a young child, but Labotsibeni, his mother, acted ably as regent until her son took over in 1921. Labotsibeni encouraged Swazis to buy back their land, and many sought work in the Witwatersrand mines (near [Johannesburg](#)) to raise money.

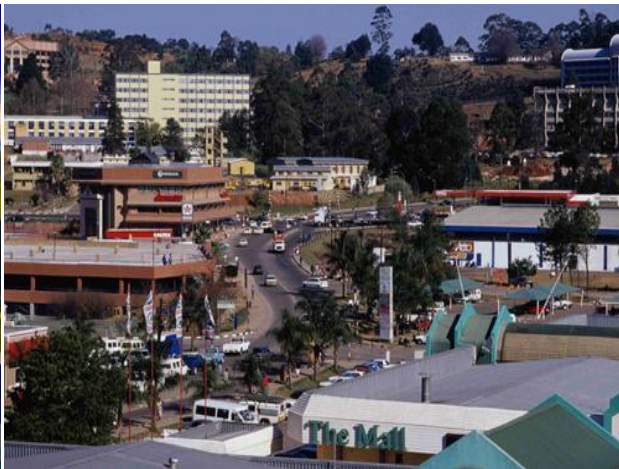
Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/swaziland/history#ixzz27MVa4owK>

Tourist attraction

Piggs Peak



Mbabane



Hlane Royal National Park

