

**Title:**

An Overview of South Africa for Travelers

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**Summary:**

The Republic of South Africa was once the home to apartheid. A movement and a man, Nelson Mandela, changed that. Here is an overview of the country for travelers.

**Keywords:**

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**Article Body:**

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**An Overview of South Africa for Travelers**

As recently as 1991, apartheid was the rule of law in South Africa. The term means separate and effectively divided the country along racial lines in practically every element of society.

The Portuguese were the first to land in South Africa in 1488, but didn't claim a colony. The Dutch East India Company arrived in 1652, with Dutch and Germans moving to the country. These whites became the Afrikaners and eventual dominate class of South Africa. In 1779, the British moved in on the proceedings and the Afrikaners moved north. Known as the Great Trek, this shift put the Afrikaners in conflict with Zulu tribes and warriors. The Zulus won most of the conflicts following their legendary leader, Shaka. In 1828, Shaka was assassinated and momentum turned.

Diamonds were discovered in 1870 and gold in 1886. Europeans immigrated like mad to the area. The British eventually took the Afrikaners land, but more or less gave it back to them when they were put in charge of the newly created Union of South Africa in 1910.

Although native blacks had no power, apartheid didn't officially begin until

1948. In 1912, black groups formed the eventual African National Congress. The ANC became a problem and eventually was banned. One of its leaders, Nelson Mandela, was jailed and became a national symbol of the fight against apartheid.

In February of 1990, the ruling white party gave up the ghost on apartheid. The ANC was recognized as a legal political group and Nelson Mandela was freed after nearly 30 years in prison. He was eventually elected President in 1994.

The transition from white to black leadership has not been without its problems. Crime and economic problems crippled the country for years. Johannesburg was a wild, wild west city at night with rape and other crimes being common. The country has recently seen better times, but it is still rough going for most people.

Modern day South Africa covers an area of roughly 470,462 square miles. The capital is Johannesburg. The country has diverse geographic elements, but a moderate climate.

The people of South Africa are known as "South Africans." Totally population is just over 46 million, with 79 percent black, 9.6 percent white, 8.9 percent colored and 2.5 percent Asian. The primary languages are English and Afrikaans. Life expectancy is a relatively low 50 years for men and 52 years for women.

Following 80 years of apartheid, it is hardly surprising that South Africa has had its problems. That being said, the country is much more stable than it was 10 years ago. It is also a beautiful land as most guidebooks will show you.