



PROGRAM COUNTRY: SOUTH AFRICA



STS – more than 50 years of experience in student exchange programs all over the world



South Africa is a land of incredible diversity. European city life and western culture are combined with vast untamed natural areas and traditional African culture. The land is spoiled with natural beauty, you will find the outdoors irresistible. South Africa is home to the famous Kalahari Desert, the magnificent Table Mountains, and the world's largest game reserve – Kruger National Park.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Welcome to the Rainbow Nation! South Africa is a large country at the foot of the African continent, where approximately 50 million people live and where the Indian and the Atlantic Ocean meet. Its size is 1,223,201 square kilometres, which is bigger than Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and The Netherlands put together!

South Africa is a very beautiful country, filled with a colourful mix of people from all cultures, races, religions and backgrounds (it is not called the Rainbow nation for nothing!) Population wise, only about 5% are whites, the majority consists of black Africans, and the rest is a mix of so called coloureds, Asians and others.

The four major cities are Johannesburg, Pretoria/City of Tshwane, Cape Town and Durban. Most of the Indian population lives in Durban, and the coloureds in Cape Town.

South Africa's official languages were once only Afrikaans ("old Dutch") and English, but 9 more have been added, Ndebele, Sotho, Swati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, Lebowa, Xhosa and Zulu. Zulu and Xhosa are the biggest indigenous languages. Zulu is mainly spoken in Kwa Zulu Natal (Durban area) and Xhosa in the Western Cape. The host families where students are placed all speak and understand English, although many have another mother tongue. Especially in Cape Town and surrounding areas where most families have Afrikaans as their first language.

As the country lies in the southern hemisphere, midsummer falls in December/January and midwinter in June/July. Heavy rainfalls and thunderstorms occur in the interior during summer, whereas winter typically has dry, hot days and cold nights. The area around Cape Town and along the coast has a Mediterranean climate with rain in the winter and wind in the summer. It can be very cold in winter, and as houses normally have no isolation or central heating, it can be very cold indoors with only electrical heaters and fireplaces

to heat up the house. (You will need warm pyjamas and jerseys.) It is however only for a short period of time. The climate is overall great, and we normally do not have any typhoons or other natural disasters.

The currency is Rand, and there are 100 cents to the Rand. For the ultimate African adventure, there is the world famous Kruger National Park where you can discover the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo and elephant). It is the world's largest game reserve and covers an area bigger than Israel! There are many other game parks where you can see the big five, and STS organizes two tours per year to one of these game parks if there are enough participants.

You can choose short term (four weeks, two or three months) half a school year and a full school year. You can also attend a boarding school.

We are looking forward to seeing you in South Africa!
"TOT SIENS!" ("See you soon!" in Afrikaans.)

SCHOOL LIFE

The South African school year begins in January and ends in December. There are four terms per year. High School consists of grade 8–12. In grade 8 students are 13/14 years old, which means they are 17/18 years old when they graduate. The students must study 6 subjects, whereof English and Afrikaans are compulsory for example.

The other four subject choices are maths, biology, geography and history. It varies from school to school, sometimes students can choose, within the "subject group" subjects like for instance business economics, computing, art, travel & tourism, speech, drama, technical drawing, Xhosa, Zulu. Each session is normally about 45 minutes. Sport, music and art are extra curricular activities and not all schools offer the same.

The schoolday normally begins at 8am and finishes at 2pm. On Fridays many schools finish one hour earlier. Extra curricular activities could be some of the following: rugby, cricket, hockey, netball, swimming, tennis, volleyball, squash, surfing, fencing, choir, drama, art etc. All schools have uniforms. Some schools have boys only or girls only.



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All our partner schools are English or “parallel medium schools”, which means pupils are taught in both English and Afrikaans. Afrikaans is “old Dutch”, and students from Germany and the Scandinavian countries learn the language fairly quickly. Even students from Australia and the Czech Republic have coped well with the Afrikaans language.

South African students work hard and take their studies and sporting activities seriously. The schools have their own set of rules, which are quite strict. All students must learn their school rules when they start. Penalties for misconduct range from verbal warnings and extra work to detention and sometimes expulsion. Serious offences are for instance not doing homework, disobedience, abusive behavior, insolence, absence from school without permission, smoking, possession of alcohol or drugs, wearing the uniform incorrectly etc.

Punctuality is also very important – teachers will not tolerate students being late for class. On the other hand, teachers do encourage students to approach them at all times if they are experiencing problems at school or at home. They are very helpful and involved in their students, and genuinely care about them and their welfare. They take a lot of interest in exchange students, and go out of their way to make them feel welcome in their school. So if a student has problems, questions or does not understand something, they must not be afraid to ask! Many schools have special counselors.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

A high standard of dress (including cleanliness and repair) and general appearance is expected at all times. Each school has their own school uniform.

General appearance:

- No jewellery apart from a watch may be worn.
- Hair must not be bleached or dyed.
- Boys hair must be neatly cut – and of a reasonable uniform length!
- Beards, sideburns etc are not permitted.
- Girls hair - touching the shoulders must be tied up, and hair hanging in the eyes must be clipped back.
- No “way-out” styles and only soft perms are permitted.
- No make-up.

To wear a school uniform and to not wear make up can be difficult for some students to accept. Also some of the school rules might be too conservative for their liking, but after a while they get used to the system and appreciate all the things the schools can offer them here.

Johan Welander, an exchange student from Sweden who attended an old well-known boys school in Paarl, wrote the following in his school magazine:

“I believe that my school in Sweden has much to learn from Boys’ High School. The fact that everybody stood up when I entered the school ground the first time, gave me a good impression of the school. In Sweden we do not have all these school sports, and

I have learnt how important they are for building up the school spirit. I also think that you learn to know someone much better if you have something in common, like a school sport. The school has a lot of traditions and also assemblies once a week that I appreciate. It has also been fun to experience inter schools, i.e. sport and other competitions with different schools. Because of my experience now, I am going to try and change school when I come back to Sweden as my present school does not have any extra activities.”

HOST FAMILY LIFE

The South African in general is a very friendly and generous person, and the host families really look forward to have an exchange student and learn something about a different culture. The middle class family home in South Africa will not be as modern and well-furnished as what you are used to. This is mainly because the standard of living is lower and they are used to living more outdoors and are not so concerned about the interior as, for instance, people in the Scandinavian and European countries.

All families can speak English, but we have 11 official languages. Afrikaans and English are the main languages that the student will learn and study. The students are placed with families of all ethnic groups, but everybody speaks and understands English. If students are placed in the Cape area, we have a lot of so called “coloured” host families, many of which have Afrikaans as their first language. We also place students in English speaking Indian families, but this is mostly in the Durban area. We do not place students in townships.

Some families have still got servants that are employed either part or full time. This does not mean that the student must not look after his or her room and generally help out with household chores. Many families are working full time so they do expect a bit of help in the house. Some families will tell you that you are not expected to do anything, so you must just ask if you are not certain about your duties. Not all families have a car.

Generally speaking, it is more conservative here than where the students come from. The families have a stricter discipline, curfew rules etc., but at the same time students will find that the families are very generous and will do their utmost to make the student feel “at home”.

It is very important that the student makes an arrangement with the host family about when they can use the internet, if they have access to that. The telephone costs, also domestic phone calls, are high in South Africa, so is petrol and electricity.



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The South African currency is called Rand. The value of the Rand is low compared to most other currencies, which means that the student will find that everything is cheaper in South Africa. However, the South African family finds that, due to sharp price-increases over the last years, everything has become extremely expensive and wages are much lower in South Africa!

Weather wise it can be quite cold in winter (June, July, August). In the Johannesburg area it can be frosty, and in the Western Cape we sometimes get snow on the mountains. The students will find it cold indoors during the winter months, as most houses do not have any heating apart from portable electrical heaters, fireplaces etc. Most of the year however, we have a very nice warm climate.

The Public transport in South Africa is very poor. There are seldom any school buses, so the students are always attending the best school in the neighbourhood, or where their host sister and/or brother goes. The student will as a rule be chauffeured around by the host family or lift-clubs. They can not just jump on a public bus or a train as they might be used to. This can cause a problem in the beginning as they can feel a bit isolated, but it is the same for all, and as soon as they get to know more people and get more friends, the families normally take turns to drive. Obviously, students must not take for granted that they can be fetched and taken when it suits them all the time, but must come to an agreement with the host family or someone else who is driving and reimburse their costs for transport costs.

CRIME

Due to the crime rate in certain areas – it is very important that the student obeys the host families rules. After a while it will be easier to understand and know what to do or not to do. Also it takes some time to build up a mutual trust between the student and the family. After a while, however, the students will realize that the rules are there for their protection.

As mentioned before, South Africans are very sports orientated. They enjoy the outdoors, and there are many activities in which the students can take part.

South Africa is a “third world” country in many aspects, but at the same time they will find many “first world” ways of living as well. It might not always be what the student thought, but it will be different and an experience to treasure in years to come. It is very exciting to be a part of South Africa today.

PROGRAM EXTRAS

We organise a Safari Tour and a Cape Town Tour, provided there are enough participants. This is a fantastic opportunity and will be a memory for life! PLEASE grab this chance to have a real adventure and explore South Africa! You will receive the information about the tours offered after your arrival in South Africa.

SPECIAL INFO

Boarding School Program / Special Requests: Optional Sports
Students can also choose enrollment and placement in Private Boarding Schools in Durban, Pretoria or the greater Cape Town Area.

Also students with special sporting requests for e.g. Golf, Field Hockey, Swimming, Soccer or Rugby should very strongly consider the boarding option. This special program is recommended for enrollment of Term-, Semester or Full Academic Year students. (Additional school and/or boarding fees apply).

Flexible Program Length and Start Dates

All shorter program options are extremely flexible when it comes to program start/end dates; students can usually enroll up to four weeks prior to their program start. Should they be interested to stay for a month, two months or max three months as for such programs (for most sending countries), no special visa is required and a normal tourist visa is sufficient.



All information is subject to change.

