



Preparing for Safari: Local Currency, Cash and Gratuities

Description

(please note some of this information pertains ONLY to MY SAFARIS and safaris in South Africa) Learn about our safaris on the [Africa Wild Safaris Website](#)

Local Currency

You will need some South African Rand to use for tipping, shopping, and some snacks and meals.

The best place to get Rand is at the airport in JFK or ATL. You will have time while waiting for your flight and their rates are good

You can also exchange in Johannesburg Airport (2nd level above arrivals). There are several exchanges there to choose from. Be warned that you credit card may trigger an alert with a transaction for a large € ish amount coming from a foreign country. I believe they will also accept cash, but I have never tried this.

You can also get Rand from your local bank, but you will have to order it a few weeks in advance. The rates are not as good as an airport exchange bureau.

Best to have currency in your pocket before getting on the plane so you can get right to the enjoyment.

It is best to get small denomination bills to use for tipping and buying without requiring a large amount of change.

Stores, guides, restaurants, etc will not take US dollars and most will not have the capacity to do an exchange at the point of transaction. (even in Mexico this is not the way to go)

More and more, credit card / debit has increased as an option. The nice shops at Joburg airport and Kruger are best for credit cards. Some of the lodges will take credit cards for the bar tab, internet, or things from their shop. **Cash is still recommended as backup should power or internet be down.**

In Africa, giving of a gratuity is customary but not mandatory. Gratuity to staff is in gratitude for good service and for exceptional effort.

This guide is not dictating levels of tipping, but to educate guests especially those who are not as practiced with travel tipping in foreign countries due to their culture or less travel experience.

Please consider:

Staff in South Africa work hard and genuinely want to please the guests and make their stay memorable. Most live far from the lodges and live in worker housing at the lodge for weeks or months at a time and the life at a lodge demands long hours. Most are supporting families and incur costs to travel back to their hometowns.

Cash Necessity and Gratuity Reference

Please do not feel these amounts are mandatory! Tipping is entirely up to the guest and based on their individual experience – this is just a guide to help you plan for your cash needs.

For the first 4 days you will be staying with us at our tree house lodge and visiting different people each day. You might see the same driver and tracker more than once, but we advise to give them your thanks on the day you see them. When you get to the Sabi Reserves, you will have a Ranger assigned to the group and you can wait until check out to offer any gratuities.

At our last accommodations the staff is less conspicuous but still makes sure our surroundings are clean, safe, in good repair, and pleasing.

Amounts are a guideline of what to give PER GUEST for each event

While at Bona Ntaba Lodge and Antares (lodge with hide)

½ Day Game Drive	R60
Kruger Day Guide/Driver	R100
Activities guides (boat ride/ Rehab Centre)	R40
Bona Ntaba Housekeeping and Kitchen	R 450 per day x 4 days
Antares Housekeeping	R 150 per day x 2 days

We will supply envelopes on the last evening for the Housekeeping / kitchen.

With our itinerary, the above adds up to R2,300

While at the Sabi Sands Lodge

The lodge at Sabi is a luxury level experience and will share their suggested gratuity rates. These may seem very high to most guests and though presented to guests in a very up front manner, they are only a guide and not mandatory

This is based on the suggestion of the Nkorho Management (not us)

Ranger	R300 per drive (6 drives total)
Tracker	R250 per drive (6 drives)
General Staff & behind the scenes	R1,000 per day (3 days)
	They will supply envelopes for each

The above Suggestions add up to R6,300. In our opinion, it is ok to offer gratuity at half the suggested rates.

***Please do not tip in any currency other than South African Rand â€œ it is inconvenient for staff to change the money and they often get ripped off or accused by the bank of stealing it.**

Other Needs for Cash

1 -2 possible lunches at a cafÃ© or snack stops in Kruger or elsewhere

Cash bar for sodas, drinks at Sabi lodges (3 nights)

A visit to a store for BYO beverages (4 nights at tree house lodge and 2 nights at Antares)

You will need cash for food and other things on your airport days

I give rough guide of R3,500 cash per guest. A current average exchange rate is R18 to USD \$1

Other Important Information:

- Water: Our lodge (first 4 nights) provides filtered and chilled water guests can fill a reusable water bottle (we have some to borrow) â€œ our water is also ok to drink from the tap (deep well). The other lodges provide a reasonable amount of water for free with extra available at a charge.
- Credit Cards are safe to use in Johannesburg and the gift shop in Kruger. The lodges at Sabi and Baluli can also settle with a card. Other places it is best to have cash to back up in case the system is down or slow (this happens less these days but we still get power outages)

Exchange Bureaus:

There are exchanges at the Johannesburg airport that give a reasonable rate. You can use cash or credit cards at these facilities. The major airports also have exchanges and give a decent rate.

Do not go into a bank in South Africa to exchange money â€œ they are extremely inefficient and charge major fees and bad rates.

Please get sufficient cash before leaving Johannesburg! : have an exchange in our town, but it is a 35 minute drive and their hours are spotty. They also want documentation and passports when making the trade.

Approximate Other Costs

Lunch	R100 Burger, fries, Drink â€“ R250 CafÃ© Meal
Bottle of wine	R80 +
Can of Soda/bottle water	R15 â€“ R25
Beer at a Lodge Bar	R35
Gin and tonic at Lodge Bar	R45

[Currency Exchange Rate Tool](#)

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