

Important Items for Short Term Mission Teams

Information about South Africa

Please read our [packet for interns](#) if you are curious to learn more about the country!

Schedule and Projects

We will do our best to stick with the schedule we provide you and the projects we plan, however if there are more immediate needs that arise we may be required to change. We appreciate your flexibility and servant's heart in these situations.

Cultural Sensitivity

Please remember that you are the guest in South Africa and there are significant cultural differences. You may see or hear things that are different than what you are used to. Be quick to understand, slow to pass judgement. Because something is done one way in America doesn't mean it is wrong if it is done a different way here. Our staff is used to questions and is accustomed to being around Americans, please feel free to ask questions in a respectful way. We want you to learn about South African culture!

Please be sensitive of your speaking volume when in public. South Africans tend to speak at softer volumes outside of their homes and it can draw attention when a group is loud in public. When attention is drawn there can be safety concerns.

An excellent book on the topic of cultural sensitivity is [Cross Cultural Servanthood](#) by Duane Elmer.

Safety

Due to crime and safety in South Africa, we ask that individuals not go anywhere by themselves without letting us know. Anyone under the age of 18 should be with an adult at all times outside of their sleeping quarters. Always be aware of your surroundings and your belongings. Examples: do not pull out money in public and be careful how you use your phone.

Dress

People in South Africa tend to dress less casually than the average American. It is good to keep that in mind while packing, if you are working during the day, plan to bring a change of clothes for the evening. Bible club and other activities should not be done in "work" clothes. Jeans or khaki pants/shorts and a nicer t-shirt or top should suffice while not working.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are available at the camp (or at Onthatile) but depending on the length of your trip you should plan to pack enough clothing items to not need to do laundry.

Winter

If it is winter while you are in South Africa (June-August), please come prepared. You may think "winter in Africa is like summer here, I don't need to pack warm clothes." Please don't do that! Winter here, while different than where you are from, is still cold. Because there is generally no central heating in people's homes, it can be very cold at night. Please bring warm socks, jackets, long pants, etc. in

order to stay warm. During the day it is important to wear clothes that can be layered, it is likely that by about 10am you will be hot and shedding all the layers.

Internet

While we have internet at Onthatile, we will not have the bandwidth to support an entire group using it. Please keep that in mind in regards to communication back home. The camp may have internet in specified areas, but do not expect to have it in your rooms.

Exchanging Money/Souvenirs

South Africa's currency is the Rand. There will be several opportunities to purchase souvenirs, plan to set aside money. US Dollars are not accepted at local businesses and can be costly and tedious to exchange. It is a good idea to plan in advance for one person on your team to withdrawal money from the ATM and distribute accordingly to the team members. We can help with estimations on costs requiring cash if requested. Most things can be purchased using your US credit/debit card. A general rule of thumb is to have two credit/debit cards able to be used because sometimes cards are rejected for no reason. Also be aware of international fees associated with use of your card, some banks charge between 3% and 5% per transaction.

Extra Food/Snacks

Outside of meals and provided snacks, all other food should be purchased at your own expense.

Dietary Requirements

Please let us know as soon as possible any dietary requirements that members of your team have so we can let you know our ability to accommodate.

Medical Information

Please notify us in advance of any medical concerns or risks of your team. Bring with you all medications required for your team for the entire duration of their time. Be sure to bring extra in case of delay or emergency. Medicines may be available here, but if there is a specific brand or type preferred, it is better to bring it due to lack of availability and time constraints. It would be helpful to us if you take care of all medical issues within your team by bringing a first aid kit that includes minor medical supplies. If professional attention is required, there are excellent hospitals and doctors in South Africa.

Vaccinations

We recommend that you speak to your physician or visit a local travel clinic about required vaccinations. Ones we typically see people receiving are Hepatitis A & B, Tetanus booster, and Typhoid. Malaria is not present in Johannesburg, however if you team is planning to travel outside of Johannesburg it may be recommended that you take malaria medication.

Traveling with Minors

If you are travelling with minors, there are specific requirements regardless of whether or not the minor is with one or both of their parents. If you do not have the required documents, it is very likely that you will not be allowed to enter South Africa or even board the plane. Please visit this website to learn more: <http://www.dha.gov.za/files/Brochures/Immigrationleaflet.pdf>

Supplies for Onthatile

Once your team is packed, if you have extra space in your suitcases and are willing, we may ask for you to bring items for our ministry. You will be reimbursed for all costs associated with the purchase of items we ask you to bring.

Special Items

Many teams ask about what special items they can bring us when they visit, check out our [website](#) to see a few of our favorite US items.