



© Wilderness Safaris, Cape Town, South Africa

8.18 South Africa

Protected and conserved areas in South Africa⁸⁵

South Africa has 1,580 protected areas covering 102,060 km² of the land and 224,640 km² of the ocean (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2019s).

In October 2018, South Africa's cabinet approved the declaration of 18 new protected areas, thus increasing the network of protected areas. There are nine provincial conservation authorities and the South African National Parks Agency who manage protected areas and implement conservation of plant diversity outside of reserves. Protection level is not evenly spread across South Africa's nine biomes, with a few (desert, forest and fynbos) having more than 17% of their area protected, while the remaining six all have far less than 17% of their area protected. Of particular concern are the grassland and Nama-Karoo biomes which have less than 5% of their areas protected.

With regards to the marine environment, MPAs around mainland South Africa cover approximately 0.4% of the marine area around South Africa. There is also a large offshore MPA around the Prince Edward Islands Exclusive Economic Zone. Altogether, the total protected coastal and marine area is over 10%.

Transboundary protected and conserved areas

South Africa includes part of six transboundary conservation areas, namely /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld TFCA, Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and Conservation Area, Greater Mapungubwe TFCA, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Lubombo TFCA, and Maloti Drakensburg TFCA, which is also a transboundary World Heritage Site.

Policy context

A comprehensive report on legislation and policy related to protected area management, governance and equity was undertaken by the BIOPAMA programme. It identified 158 relevant laws and policies in South Africa (Tessema, 2019).

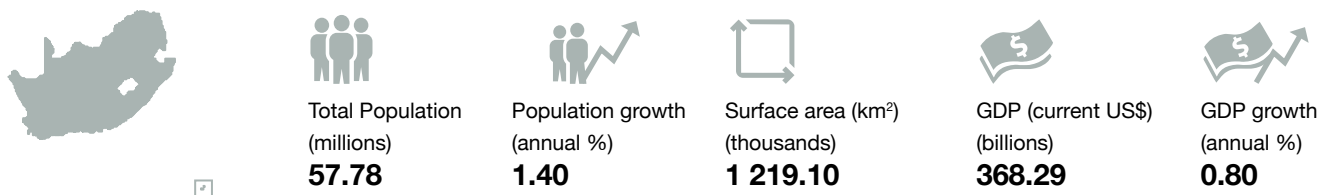
Key species⁸⁶

South Africa is considered one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world. It has a high rate of endemism and diverse ecosystems. While it occupies only 2% of the world's land surface area, South Africa is home to over 95,000 species, contributing a significant proportion to world plant species (6%), reptile species (5%), bird species (8%) and mammal species (6%), with more species regularly discovered and described. Furthermore, it harbours around 15% of the world's marine species. Endemism rates reach 56% for amphibians, 65% for plants, 49% for freshwater fish, 48% for reptiles, 36% for sea breams, and up to 70% for invertebrates.

85 The section draws on information contained in South Africa's Sixth National Report to the CBD (Republic of South Africa, 2019).

86 The section draws on information contained in South Africa's Fifth and Sixth National Reports to the CBD (Republic of South Africa, 2014; 2019).

Figure 8.35 South Africa Summary



Source: The World Bank Group, 2018.

Area Protected:

1 580 protected areas



covering **102 060 km²** of land

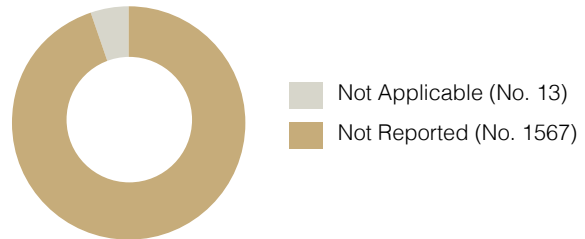


covering **224 640 km²** of ocean

Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2019s

One of the most biologically diverse countries in the world

Protected and conserved areas in South Africa in IUCN Management Categories



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019s).

Coverage of protected areas in South Africa

Type of protected area	Area protected or conserved*	Area protected or conserved**
Terrestrial and inland water	8.34%	12.96%
Coastal and marine	14.56%	10.00%

* WDPA dataset

** From National Report on Biodiversity

Source: Republic of South Africa (2019); UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019s.)

Protected and conserved areas designated as global sites of importance in South Africa

Global designation	No. of sites
UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves	10
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Natural or Mixed)	5
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)	23

Source: Ramsar (2019); UNESCO(2019a (2019b).

National designations of protected and conserved areas in South Africa

National designation	No.	Area (km ²)
National Park	21	39 781
Forest Wilderness Area	12	2 745
Forest Nature Reserve	53	1 732
Special Nature Reserve	2	336
Nature Reserve	1 371	38 719
Protected Environment	30	7 436
Mountain Catchment Area	16	6 246
Marine Protected Area	39	224 682

Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019s).

Priority areas for conservation



10 sites
Alliance for Zero Extinction sites



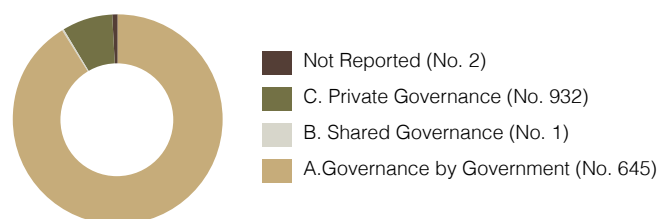
99 sites
Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas



76 sites
Key Biodiversity Areas

Source: AZE Secretariat (2019); BirdLife International (2019b, 2019c).

Protected and conserved areas in South Africa in IUCN Governance Types



Source: UNEP-WCMC & IUCN (2019s).

Figure 8.36 South Africa protected areas



Pressures and threats⁸⁷

The major pressures on South Africa's biodiversity include: loss and degradation of natural habitat in terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems due to unsustainable land-use practices, inappropriate or poorly-located land uses; invasive alien species (both plant and animal); destructive and over-harvesting of species, especially in the marine environment; illegal wildlife trafficking and other illegal resource use; over-abstraction of water and pollution of aquatic ecosystems; disruption of natural drivers of ecosystem functioning (such as fire cycles); and impacts induced by climate change.

⁸⁷ The section draws on information contained in South Africa's Fifth and Sixth National Reports to the CBD (Republic of South Africa, 2014; 2019).