

## SWAZILAND



Swaziland is a unique country blending age- old traditions and culture with modern living. Situated in Southern Africa next to South Africa and Mozambique. Swaziland is one of the few countries in Africa to have never been to war. The population of Swaziland is 986,000 with 67% living in the rural areas. Every Swazi has access to land; a young man is given a piece of land when he reaches maturity. The land can never be sold though as the

King holds the land in trust for his people. If the man passes away the land then belongs to his widow. So even though over 60% of Swazi people live below the poverty line of \$1.50 per day Swazi's have the ability to grow their own food and raise cattle.

### Government...

Ruled the way of the ancients our country's most senior executive power is King Mswati and his mother, Queen Ntombi.

Swaziland also has a Parliamentary system based the English Parliament and with similar powers. We do not have political parties but every four years we vote democratically for independent candidates to represent our interests in parliament.

### Sacred Ceremonies...

Swaziland has two very special and sacred ceremonies that happen each year and the dates for each event are only announced once the elders have checked on the position of the moon.

The first ceremony is the Umhlanga Reed dance, which happens in August, and it is a celebration of the female. It is a Swazi myth that God created man from the river clay and woman from the reed. Each year the maidens come from all corners of the country to partake in this celebration.

The young women gather together to dance and sing in front of the Royal family, the king then despatched them to symbolically cut the reed and bring them back to the palace. Last year over 80,000 young women, dressed in their traditional attire came together and it is a spectacular sight to behold.

On the last day of the ceremony the young women make their way into the arena dancing and singing in unison. In the olden days the king sometimes chose a wife from amongst the girls at the Reed Dance.

Incwala is a national blessing ceremony celebrated in December or January each year. The entire nation comes together and gathers in their chiefdoms at the Royal Kraal in Lobamba. Once again the sight of 80,000 Swazi's dressed in traditional regalia carrying shields and spears is truly incredible.

On the first day a fire is lighted at the Royal kraal then sacred singing and dancing begins before the King blesses the four corners of Swaziland and asks for good rains, good crops, peace and health for the nation.

The songs and dances that happen during Incwala are very special and are only performed during this time. Only Swazi nationals conduct much of the ceremony and so many of the customs remain secret.

The young men also go through their coming of age ceremony at this time. The regiments follow the king on a fifty-kilometre walk up the mountain where the sacred bush, the Lusekwane is harvested. During the night the young men are required to do certain tasks such as filling a water tank by running to the river and using a bucket that has holes in it. The young men are given their warrior names according to how well they perform their tasks.

The entire procession then goes back to the Royal Kraal where more ritual blessings take place and on the last night the King asks for the rain to come down to put out the bonfire. There are only four recordings in the history of Swaziland when it failed to rain on this night.

### **Tours...**

Swift has organised to offer tours throughout the conference to Kruger National Park, the best beaches in the world Mozambique, local game parts and nature reserves. Anyone looking for more information on these tours can contact Roland on [rols@alloutafrica.com](mailto:rols@alloutafrica.com).

They also have three producer visits lined up for those wanting to see more of the country and visit a rural homestead.

Taxi operators will be at the hotels to take people around Swaziland.

### **Health and Safety...**

Swaziland is an extremely safe place to visit. Just be aware not to flash cash or walk alone at night. There are two excellent private clinics available within 10 minutes of the conference facility.

## Language...

Siswati is our first language but English is widely spoken with more than 80% of the population able to converse.

## Visa...

Please see the list of countries for visa requirements. Senegal does require a visa but Kenya does not.

SWIFT can also arrange visa for those that do not have an embassy in their country. They will require a scanned copy of the passport emailed to them. Contact person for this Julie [julie@gonerural.co.sz](mailto:julie@gonerural.co.sz)

Then on arrival the passports will be stamped and the visa paid for at the airport.

Visa applications depending on the specific country can take between 5 - 14 working days, so we suggest that you check with your local Swaziland embassy and begin your application early. The following documents must be submitted for the application of a visa.

- Passport valid at least 3 months beyond intended stay
- One signed complete application form
- One passport size photo
- Vaccination: International Certificate of Vaccination for Yellow Fever required
- Letter of invitation from Organization
- Letter of invitation from Swaziland based host
- Introduction letter from your organization/employer
- Confirmed letter of accommodation
- Return Ticket

COFTA and Swift will provide a letter of invitation from COFTA and local host, and confirmed letter of accommodation upon request and payment

## Business...

Lilangeni (singular) or Emalangeni (plural) and cents are the currency of Swaziland. It is of equal value to the South African rand and cents and both currencies are in circulation. The traveler is advised to change Emalangeni back to his own currency before leaving Swaziland as it is part of the Rand monetary area. There is no currency controls at border posts and no limit to the amount of currency a traveler may carry. All acceptable credit cards and travelers cheques are honored in Swaziland.

## Shopping...

There is an outstanding market every day except Sunday; dawn on Thursdays and Fridays is particularly worth a visit as it is when the rural people bring in their handicrafts to sell to retailers

Learn a bit of siswati translations

ENGLISH	siswati translations
How are you	Ninjani
Good day	Sanibonani
Thank You	Ngiyabonga
Stay well	Salakahle
Go well	Hambakahle

Tip "k" is pronounced as a "G" and then "G" as a "K"

For example Hambakhle is pronounced Ham-ba-gaath-le

## Suggested Clothing & Decorum...

Swaziland provides a unique opportunity to experience a living culture, one where tradition is still very much alive and not a re-creation merely for tourists. Here, many local people dress in traditional attire as a matter of course, and not to impress an audience

Swazis regard the area between the knee and the waist as sacred so we do ask that women do not wear shorts or mini skirts or expose their stomachs when visiting Swaziland.

## Important and Fun Travel Tips from COFTA...

1. Don't expect to find things to be as they are at home. You've left home, you are in a different place, enjoy the difference and uniqueness.
2. Don't take anything too seriously. A care-free mind is vital to enjoying a new place and city.
3. Don't let others get on your nerves. COFTA encourages you to completely enjoy yourself, and this experience.
4. Don't forget that you are a representative of your country at all times. Do your country proud.
5. Try not to worry because "He or she that worries ultimately has no fun." Remember that few things in life are fatal.
6. Know where your passport is at all times because a traveller without a passport is a traveller without a country.
7. As a stranger in a strange land, be prepared, in some part, to do as its people do. Know that decorum and respect of others' culture and religion is a powerful tool, and show of great worth.

8. Don't judge all people of a country by the one person who has given you trouble.
9. Learn to say thank you in the language of the country you are visiting, therefore learn to say "Ngiyabonga" A sincere thank you, along with a smile, and doubles the value of your stay for you and others.
10. Remember that you are a guest and those travellers who treat their hosts with respect, will receive respect in return.