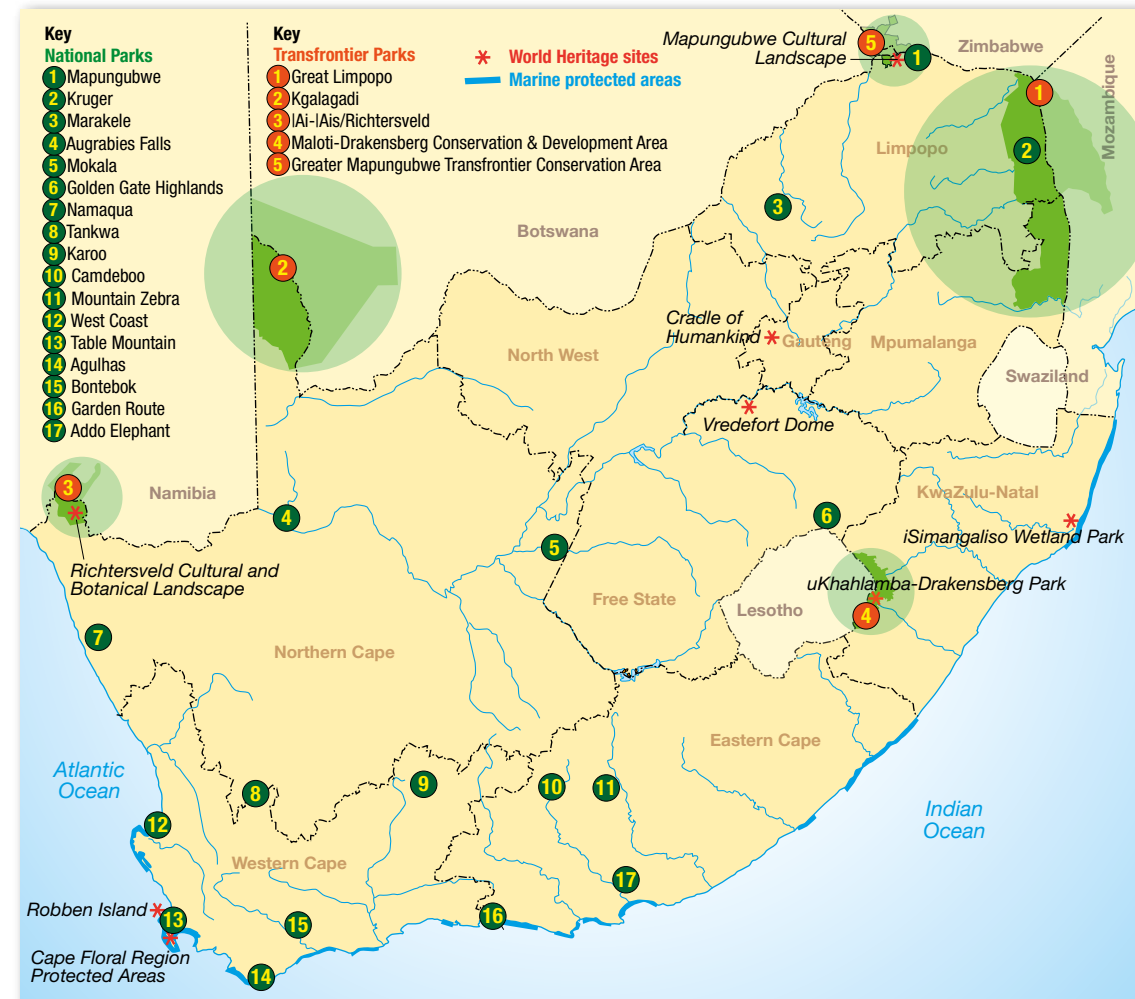


# Natural resources and conservation in South Africa

Natural resources are the things we need to live. Some natural resources are living things, such as plants and animals that live on land or in water. Some natural resources are non-living things, such as water, air, oil, coal and minerals. Human activities can damage our natural resources. We should use our natural resources responsibly so that there are enough for our generation and for generations to come. We should also be careful not to pollute or damage our environment when we use our natural resources. For example, all living things on Earth need air to breathe. Human activities can pollute the air. Air pollution harms people and the environment.

## Management of resources

### South Africa's conservation areas



**Conservation areas**  
Conservation areas are areas on land and in the sea where the natural environment and cultural features are protected. These include nature reserves, game parks and marine reserves. South Africa has 17 national parks and is responsible for five transfrontier conservation areas, which are areas that span across international borders. There are also 22 marine reserves, where the shoreline and the water off the coast are protected. In some marine reserves, no fishing or collecting of shellfish is allowed. In other areas, fishing is controlled by a permit and quota system.

← Conservation means protecting and managing our natural resources for future generations to use and enjoy. This map shows South Africa's conservation areas.



## Ecotourism in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Wetlands are places where the soil is permanently or seasonally covered by shallow water. Plant species that survive in wetlands are specifically adapted to thrive in water-saturated areas. Many wetlands have been destroyed in the past. Today, people focus on protecting wetlands.

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal was declared South Africa's first World Heritage Site in 1999. iSimangaliso is home to a wonderful diversity of bird and animal life that includes whales, dolphins, sea turtles, pelicans, flamingos, hippos, crocodiles, elephants, rhino and buffalo.

Ecotourism in iSimangaliso conserves the natural environment by creating opportunities for tourists to enjoy and learn about the natural and cultural environments without changing or harming them in any way. The local people are actively involved in hosting the tourists and managing the area. This is a win-win situation, benefiting both the environment and the local people.

← Local tourism operators are trained as turtle monitors to protect the endangered leatherback turtle. At the same time, they are teaching ecotourists about the importance of sea turtles.

## Water in South Africa

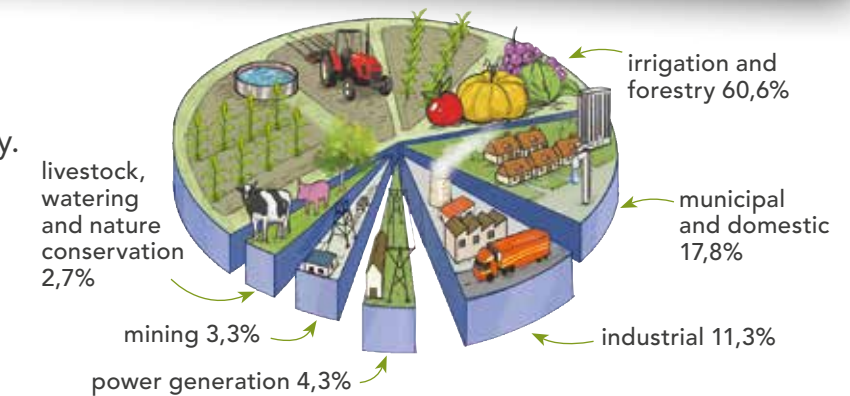
Water is the most valuable of all natural resources. Yet people do not use water sparingly.

### Water availability and requirements

South Africa is a dry country. The average annual rainfall is 450 mm, which is well below the world average of 860 mm. We store most of our water in dams. But our population is growing fast, which places lots of strain on our water resources.

### Floods

Although South Africa is a dry country, floods often occur. Flooding happens during heavy rains, when rivers overflow, when dams break or when ocean waves come onto the land.



↑ More than 60% of South Africa's water is used for irrigation of crops and forestry. About 17% is used in our homes for drinking, cooking and washing.

### Responsible use of water resources

All the users of water need to use water responsibly. We must save the water we have, and use it carefully at home and at school.