



Lifestyle

MOBILITY FOR THE PEOPLE:

How South Africa is Addressing
Transport Challenges

Exploring South Africa's Outdoor Markets

A Taste of Local Culture

FAMILY ADVENTURES IN THE DRAKENSBERG:

Connecting with Nature

FROM TABLE TO THE HEART:

Recipes That Bring
Families Together
This Easter

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Letter from the CEO

Mobility matters!

Dear AA Members,

This season, we will be focusing our efforts and attention on mobility at large. Whether you drive, rely on public transportation, or cycle, reaching your destination should never come at the expense of your safety and well-being. For millions of South Africans, the daily commute presents significant challenges ranging from unreliable transport, hazardous road conditions, and vehicles that offer inadequate passive and active safety.

We are committed to advocating for safer, more accessible, and sustainable transportation for everyone. In this issue, we explore the realities of mobility in South Africa while equipping you with the knowledge to make informed choices. Vehicle safety is critical. For those who drive small or entry-level vehicles, do you know if it provides you with adequate protection in the event of an accident? Our feature, "How Safe Is Your Small Car?" examines crash test results and essential safety features to help you make informed choices for your vehicles and travels. Our transportation ecosystem must serve the needs of all users. "Mobility for the People" assesses current initiatives and outlines the necessary steps to ensure that everyone has access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation.

Distractions behind the wheel can cost lives, especially during peak travel periods. As the Easter holidays approach, "Distracted Driving



The AA CEO, Bobby Ramagwede, reflects on their commitment to safety, service, and innovation.

Over the Holidays" highlights the importance of staying focused on the road.

Safer mobility also extends to protecting our most vulnerable passengers - our children. A properly secured child is a safer child, yet many parents lack access to appropriate car seats or the knowledge to use them correctly. "Safety First: The Essential Guide to Child Car Seats" provides clear, practical advice to help families travel with peace of mind.

Beyond the daily commute, travel is about adventure, culture, and connection. In "The



Car driving through lush, green forest from above.

Connection Between Adventure and Mental Well-Being”, we delve into the mental health benefits of spending time outdoors while also exploring the best travel gear to help you safely capture your 2025 adventures. Discover hidden gems like Gauteng’s secret game reserves and family-friendly escapes in the Drakensberg.

And because nothing brings people together like food, we celebrate Easter traditions with heart-warming recipes in “ From Table to the Heart”.



Ensure your vehicle's tyres are ready for a safe road trip.

Bobby Ramagwede
Chief Executive Officer
Automobile Association of South Africa



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How Safe Is Your Small Car?

What South African Drivers Need to Know

For many South Africans, small cars are the most affordable and practical option for daily commuting. They are fuel-efficient, easy to park, and often come with a lower price tag. However, not all small cars offer the same level of safety. In a country where road accidents claim thousands of lives each year, choosing a car with proper safety features could mean the difference between life and death.

The #SaferCarsForAfrica campaign, launched by Global NCAP in partnership with the Automobile Association (AA) of South Africa, has been at the forefront of crash-testing vehicles to expose safety flaws and advocate for improved standards. The results have been eye-opening. Many small, affordable cars in South Africa provide far less protection than consumers expect.



Always use your safety belt before setting off on your journey.

What the Crash Tests Reveal

The #SaferCarsForAfrica initiative conducts independent crash tests to assess the safety of vehicles commonly sold in South Africa. These tests evaluate:

- **Structural integrity** - does the car's body withstand impact or collapse dangerously?
- **Airbag effectiveness** - do airbags provide real protection in a crash?
- **Seatbelt performance** - are seatbelts effective at securing passengers?

Shockingly, some of the country's best-selling budget cars have received zero-star safety ratings, indicating they offer almost no protection for drivers and passengers in a crash. In some models, the body structure is so weak that improvements through airbags alone are inadequate, making survival in a serious collision unlikely.

Small Cars: Safety Features That Matter

If you are considering buying a small car, here is what to look for to ensure you are making a safer choice:

At least two front airbags -

South African law does not require all new cars to have airbags, but they significantly reduce the risk of injury in a crash.

Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) -

prevents wheels from locking during emergency braking, helping you maintain control.

Electronic Stability Control (ESC) -

reduces the risk of skidding or losing control in slippery conditions.

Strong crash-test ratings -

check the #SaferCarsForAfrica results before deciding.

Three-point seatbelts for all passengers -

some entry-level cars still have lap belts in the back, which are far less effective in an accident.

Child seat anchor points (ISOFIX) -

essential for safely securing car seats for young passengers.

Affordability vs Safety: Is There a Middle Ground?

Many South Africans choose small cars due to budget constraints, and manufacturers argue that adding safety features increases costs. However, a car's price should never come at the cost of human lives. Some relatively affordable models have received three or four-star safety ratings, proving that budget-friendly cars can be safer.

Before buying your next car, do not just consider price, fuel efficiency, or design. Prioritise



Secure your child's safety with proper car seat installation.

Why Are Unsafe Cars Still Sold in South Africa?

Unlike Europe and the United States, South Africa has weaker vehicle safety regulations, allowing manufacturers to sell cars that would not pass minimum safety requirements elsewhere. The #SaferCarsForAfrica campaign has called for urgent reforms, including:

- Mandatory crash testing for all new vehicles sold in South Africa.
- Stricter minimum safety standards, such as requiring airbags and ABS in all models.
- Improved consumer awareness so buyers can make informed choices.

safety. Check the #SaferCarsForAfrica crash-test ratings, insist on essential safety features, and remember: a safer car is not just about protecting yourself but also your passengers and others on the road.

A car may be small, but safety should never be compromised. Make the safer choice.

Mobility for the People: How South Africa is Addressing Transport Challenges

Millions of South Africans face more than just inconvenience in their daily travel - it's a constant struggle. Taxis in poor condition, unreliable trains, and buses that fail to arrive on time make getting to work, school, or home difficult and sometimes unsafe.

Public transport should be safe, affordable, and reliable. In many areas, this is not the

case. The impact is greatest on commuting workers who rely on taxis, buses, and trains to move between townships, cities, and rural areas.

There are, however, signs of progress. Improvements are beginning to take shape through a mix of technology, policy changes, and community-led action.



Public transport offers an affordable option for everyday commuting

A System Under Pressure

South Africa's public transport system has been shaped by historical inequalities. During apartheid, townships were located far from economic centres, making access to jobs and services difficult. This structure still affects millions today but presents an opportunity for meaningful change.

Taxis are the backbone of daily transport, carrying over 70% of commuters. However, limited regulation and oversight raise safety concerns. Poor maintenance leads to accidents, putting lives at risk. A clear framework for accountability and stricter safety standards are needed.

Steps Towards Safer Transport

Despite the challenges, progress is evident. Technology, policy changes, and investment are shaping a better future for public transport.

Improving Taxi Safety

Minibus taxis remain the most used form of transport, but their operation is changing. Digital apps help commuters track taxis in real-time, making journeys more predictable.

The move towards cashless payments also reduces crime and improves convenience for passengers and drivers.

Unfortunately, rail transport, which was once central to public mobility, has declined too. Years of mismanagement, crime, and ageing infrastructure have made trains unreliable. Restoring and modernising the rail network could provide an affordable, efficient alternative to overcrowded taxis and buses.

Improving transport requires collaboration between government, private companies, and communities. A system that prioritises safety, reliability, and accessibility benefits everyone.

Expanding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

BRT systems, including Rea Vaya in Johannesburg, MyCiTi in Cape Town, and A Re Yeng in Tshwane, provide a safer and more efficient alternative to taxis and traditional buses. Dedicated lanes make journeys quicker, but expansion has been slow due to funding challenges, industry disputes, and limited routes.

For BRT to make a real impact, additional routes and better integration with taxis and trains are necessary. Affordability must also be a focus to ensure access for lower-income commuters.

Ensuring Roadworthy Vehicles

The poor condition of some taxis has been highlighted on social media, showing vehicles with faulty brakes, missing seatbelts, and even missing doors. Organisations like the Automobile Association (AA) are calling for:

- Stricter roadworthiness checks before taxis can operate.
- Tougher penalties for operators who ignore safety laws.
- Greater awareness of commuter rights so passengers can demand safer transport.



A man hailing a bus

Reviving Rail Services

Trains were once the most affordable transport option for many. Vandalism, crime, and neglect have left the railway system in crisis. The government has committed R1.8 billion to restore key railway lines, secure infrastructure, and modernise trains.

If managed well, a functional rail system could ease congestion and reduce travel costs, offering a safer alternative to road transport.

Exploring New Mobility Solutions

With rising fuel prices, interest in electric vehicles (EVs) and alternative transport options is growing. Projects such as Gauteng's electric bus pilot show potential for cleaner, more cost-effective transport. These efforts are in the early stages but signal a shift towards modern solutions.



Trains were once an affordable travel option for many.

What Needs to Happen Next?

Transforming transport will take time, but key steps must be taken:



Join the conversation for safer, more reliable travel with #MobilityForThePeople.

- Enforce stricter roadworthiness checks for taxis.
- Invest in rail services to create a viable alternative to taxis and buses.
- Expand and improve BRT networks.
- Develop digital transport solutions to improve reliability and safety.
- Explore sustainable mobility options to reduce costs and environmental impact.

Have Your Say

A transport system should work for the people who rely on it daily. Join the conversation using **#MobilityForThePeople** and be part of the push for safer, more reliable travel.

Safety First: The Essential Guide to Child Car Seats

As the Easter holidays approach, families across South Africa are preparing for road trips, adventures and cherished moments together. With increased traffic, ensuring the safety and comfort of young passengers must be a top priority. Properly securing children in a car seat is not just a recommendation, it is a legal requirement that saves lives.



Ensure all passengers, including children, are safely secured.

The Law: What You Need to Know

South Africa's Regulation 213 of the National Road Traffic Act mandates that all children under the age of three must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system when travelling in a vehicle. Here are the key points every parent should know:

Car Seat Necessity: Babies and toddlers must always be in a properly fitted car seat. Holding a child in your arms while driving is extremely dangerous and not permitted.

Legal Consequences: If a child under three is not buckled up, the driver risks a fine.

Expert Recommendations: Although the law does not specifically cover older children, safety experts strongly advocate for the use of car seats or booster seats for all children under 12 years and recommend back seat placement for added protection.

Why Compliance Matters

Research highlights the life-saving impact of car seats:

- Properly used car seats can reduce the risk of fatal injury by up to 80 percent in crashes.
- Unrestrained children are significantly more likely to be ejected from the vehicle during a collision.
- At speeds as low as 50 km per hour, an unrestrained child can be thrown forward with forces equivalent to hundreds of kilograms, leading to life-threatening injuries.

Choosing the Right Car Seat for Every Age

While the law primarily focuses on infants and toddlers, experts emphasise the importance of age-appropriate restraints for all children. Here is a simple guide:

Birth to 12 Months:

Use a rear-facing car seat to protect an infant's delicate neck and spine.

1 to 4 Years:

Keep children in a rear-facing seat for as long as possible, then transition to a forward-facing seat with a harness once they exceed the weight or height limit.

4 to 7 Years:

A booster seat is essential to ensure the seatbelt fits correctly, reducing the risk of injury.

7 to 12 Years:

Children can switch to an adult seatbelt but should remain in the back seat for optimal safety.



Properly install child seats for maximum protection during travel.



Family road trips create fun moments and lasting memories.

Debunking Common Myths

Myth:

- 1. "Holding my child in my lap is safe."
- 2. "I am only driving a short distance, so a car seat is unnecessary."
- 3. "My child does not like the car seat, so I let them ride freely."

Fact:

- 1. In a crash, keeping a child secure in your arms is nearly impossible.
- 2. Most accidents occur close to home, often during routine trips.
- 3. Comfort is secondary to safety. Car seats are critical for protection and children will adapt.



Ensure everyone is safely secured with seatbelts before driving.

Why Compliance Matters

Selecting the right car seat requires careful consideration. Here are key tips to ensure a safe purchase:

- Take your child and vehicle to the shop to test different models before purchasing.
- Ensure the seat is installed as tightly and securely as possible. Older vehicles with long buckle fasteners may not provide stable fastening.
- Straps should be as straight as possible to prevent twisting and discomfort.
- For baby carriers, confirm that your vehicle's seatbelt length is sufficient for proper fastening. Consider a model with a separate base if the belt is too short. Check that the seatbelt retracts properly in booster seats with back support when the child moves forward.
- Some child seats with semi-universal approval (e.g. those with support legs) may not be compatible with all cars. Always check the manufacturer's type list before purchasing.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions in the child seat and vehicle manuals for proper installation and use.

Buckle Up for Safety

As you prepare for your Easter travels, remember that your child's life depends on the safety measures you implement. A car seat is not just an accessory, it is a lifesaver. Prioritising proper restraints ensures your child's safety, reducing the risk of severe injury or fatality in the event of a crash.

Make child car safety a non-negotiable priority because, in an accident, that car seat could mean the difference between life and death.



Check the car seat regularly for safety and correct installation.

Reducing Distracted Driving Over the Holidays

With the Easter holiday fast approaching, road traffic is expected to increase, especially as families and individuals head out to enjoy the long weekend. Unfortunately, Easter also tends to be one of the periods that sees a surge in road fatalities.

As a responsible motoring association, the AA urges all drivers to be more cautious and aware of the risks posed by distractions on the road.



Expect delays, but stay calm and enjoy your trip.

The Impact of Distracted Driving During Holidays



Avoid distractions and stay focused for a safe drive.

Distracted driving is one of the leading causes of road accidents, particularly during holidays when people are more likely to travel longer distances. Distractions can range from texting and using mobile phones to eating or adjusting the vehicle's entertainment system. They can distract drivers from the road, making them less aware of their surroundings and increasing the likelihood of accidents.

The holidays, especially Easter, see a spike in road usage, with many drivers spending long hours behind the wheel. This extended time on the road makes staying focused all the more critical. According to the AA, some of the most common distractions include phone use, which continues to be a significant problem despite the availability of hands-free technology. The holiday atmosphere often encourages more distractions, such as conversing with passengers or getting distracted by entertainment in the car.



Keep your family safe with seatbelts during every trip.



Use navigation apps to guide your trip safely.

Tips for Staying Focused Behind the Wheel

To ensure your safety and that of others on the road, consider the following tips for staying focused and reducing distractions:

1. Avoid Phone Use:

Use hands-free technology if you need to call, but avoid using your phone altogether. Find a safe spot to pull over if you need to check something.

2. Plan Ahead:

Before a trip, prepare the route, music, air conditioning and any other settings. This will reduce the need to adjust them while driving, allowing full focus on the road.

3. Stay Alert:

Fatigue is another significant factor contributing to distracted driving. Take regular breaks during long drives, and rest well before setting off.

Many vehicles now offer driver assistance systems that assist the driver on a long drive. While nothing can replace a well-rested and alert driver, features like lane-keeping assist, adaptive cruise control, and other safety technologies can help keep the driver's attention on the road.

4. Engage with Passengers Responsibly:

While conversations can be enjoyable, ensuring they do not distract the driver from driving is essential. Keep focus on the road and if anything is needed, ask passengers for help with navigation and other tasks if needed.

The Role of Active Driver Assistance Systems



Use cruise control for a more relaxed and steady drive.

Many manufacturers offer active driver assistance systems (ADAS) in modern vehicles designed to reduce distractions and enhance safety. These systems include lane departure warnings, collision prevention, and automatic emergency braking, which can help keep a car on track when the driver is not entirely focused.

For example, adaptive cruise control is a helpful feature that can maintain a safe distance from the car ahead and adjust speed as necessary. This reduces the need for constant speed adjustments, allowing the driver to focus more on their surroundings. Similarly, lane-keeping assist helps drivers remain centred in their lane, offering protection if they become distracted or drift unintentionally.

Most vehicle manufacturers continuously innovate, ensuring drivers have the most up-to-date technology to reduce distractions and increase safety. As technology evolves, we expect these systems to become even more sophisticated, offering greater assistance to drivers and reducing the potential for accidents caused by human error.

Encouraging Safe Holiday Travel

As we look forward to the holidays, the AA urges all drivers to take extra care while on the road. The holiday season is a time to relax and enjoy with loved ones. Still, it should never come at the cost of road safety. By staying focused, using available technology, and prioritising rest during long journeys, we can make our roads safer for everyone.



Enjoy the journey as you drive through beautiful landscapes.

Remember, staying connected is not just about technology in your car but also about connecting with those around you to ensure safe travels for all. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

The Essential Travel Gear for Capturing Scenic Adventures in 2025

In 2025, connectivity is about more than staying in touch. It's about enhancing and enriching every journey. Whether you're setting out on a road trip across South Africa or hiking through scenic landscapes, the right gear can help you capture meaningful memories. This guide highlights some of the best travel gear for capturing moments, from cameras to binoculars and telescopes, ensuring you don't miss a single experience.



Capturing the moment with a camera near a waterfall.

1 Cameras for Capturing Every Moment

A reliable camera is essential for capturing stunning vistas and intimate moments when you're exploring the vast Karoo desert or soaking in the lush greenery of the Garden Route.

In 2025, the best digital cameras combine portability with powerful features. The **Canon EOS R6 Mark II** is a standout choice, offering excellent image quality, fast autofocus, and the ability to shoot in low light, ideal for early mornings or sunsets. The **Sony Alpha 7C** is another excellent option, known for its high performance and compact design. It is perfect for travellers who want to pack light yet still capture professional-grade results.

The **GoPro HERO10 Black** remains a top choice for those looking for something more rugged. This action camera is waterproof, shockproof, and designed for adventure, whether scaling a mountain or diving into the ocean. To add a professional touch, pair your camera with a **DJI Osmo Mobile stabiliser** for smooth video footage, even in rough conditions.

2 Binoculars for Wildlife Watching

South Africa boasts diverse wildlife, from the Big Five in Kruger National Park to vibrant birdlife in the Eastern Cape. Binoculars allow visitors to get a closer look at the natural world without disturbing it, whether in a game reserve or hiking through a national park.

Binoculars are lighter than ever and more compact without sacrificing clarity. The **Nikon Monarch 5 8x42** binoculars offer excellent clarity, durability, and waterproofing, making them a solid choice for outdoor adventures. For birdwatching enthusiasts, the **Vortex Optics Diamondback 10x42** provides a wide field of view and sharp focus, ensuring you never miss a fleeting moment.



A hiker looks out into the forest using binoculars.

If you're an avid wildlife enthusiast, consider adding the **Celestron Nature DX 8x42** to your kit. These binoculars offer affordable optics and a rugged design perfect for challenging environments.



Observing the night sky through a telescope on a clear night.

3 Telescopes for Stargazing

As night falls, the adventure continues with a glimpse into the cosmos. With the right telescope, you can turn any clear night into a celestial journey, whether camping in the Drakensberg or escaping to a remote getaway.

For beginners, the **Celestron NexStar 4SE** is an excellent option. It's easy to set up, offers clear views of planets, stars, and galaxies, and is compact enough to bring on any trip. For those with more experience or a more profound interest in stargazing, the **Sky-Watcher ProED 100mm** offers exceptional optics and high-quality construction, ideal for observing distant objects in the night sky.

Consider a pair of Astronomical Binoculars, such as the **Orion 20x80 Astronomy Binoculars**, for an easy and portable way to start your stargazing journey. These provide a stunning view of the moon's craters and distant stars while being lightweight and easy to transport.



Using a mobile phone to document a moment in nature.

4 Smartphones for Instant Sharing

In today's digital age, a smartphone is more than just a communication device. For those exploring Johannesburg's cultural landmarks or driving along the scenic Garden Route, a smartphone can capture, edit, and share memories in real time.

The latest **Apple iPhone** and **Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra** offer excellent camera capabilities, from ultra-wide angles to stunning night photography, allowing you to capture everything from panoramic views to close-up details.

With advancements in connectivity, these devices let you instantly share your photos and videos with friends and family, ensuring you stay connected while creating lasting memories. Smartphones also support apps for stargazing, wildlife identification, and even augmented reality, making them perfect companions on any adventure.

5 Travel Accessories for Convenience

While capturing moments is essential, convenience plays a big part in any trip. You'll need the right accessories when you're photographing stunning sunsets or documenting your journey across the countryside. A tripod like the **Manfrotto Befree Advanced** will help keep your camera steady during long exposures or video recording. Portable power banks, like the **Anker PowerCore 20000**, ensure your devices stay charged during long days in remote areas. Camera bags like those from **Lowepro** provide ample space to store your gear securely and safely.

For quick shots, a smartphone tripod, like the **Joby GorillaPod**, offers stability even in rugged environments, allowing you to capture unique angles and moments. To protect your devices, a waterproof case, such as the **LifeProof FRE**, shields them from the elements, ensuring you don't have to worry about rain, splashes, or dust.

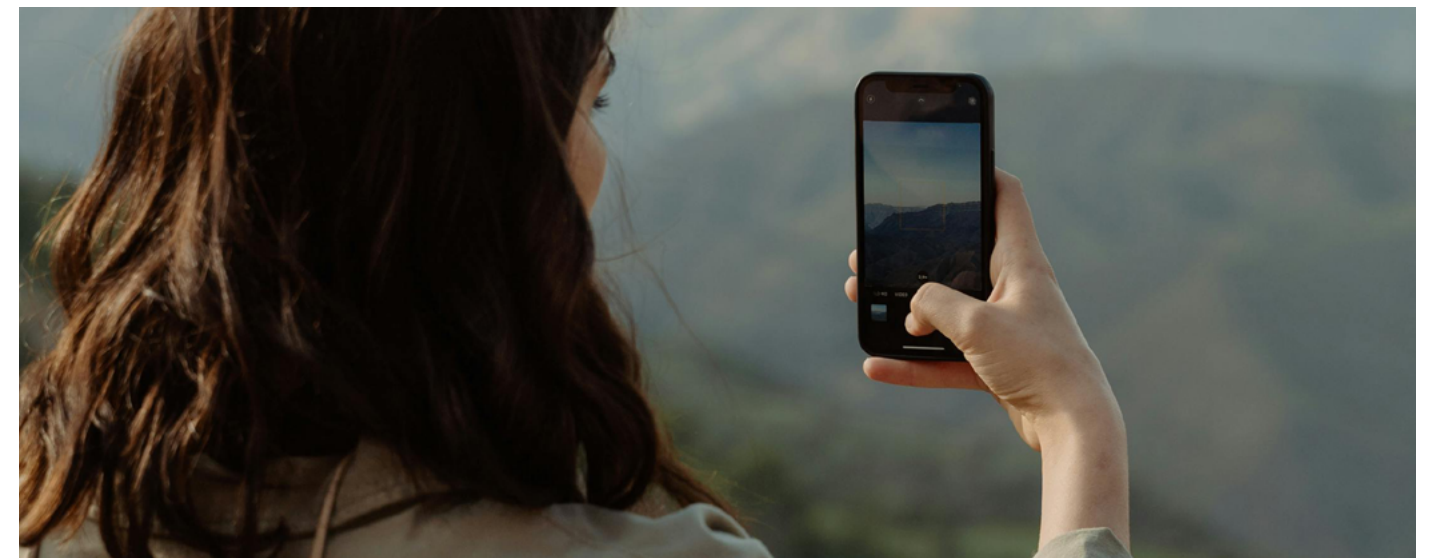


A camera set up on a tripod for steady landscape shots.

Gear Up for Unforgettable Adventures

The right gear helps ensure you capture every unforgettable moment. From cameras to binoculars, telescopes, and smartphones, the best tools will allow you to make your journey memorable. Be it photographing

wildlife, capturing breathtaking landscapes, or stargazing under the African sky, the right equipment enhances your ability to preserve those memories.



Capturing the view from the top of a scenic mountain.



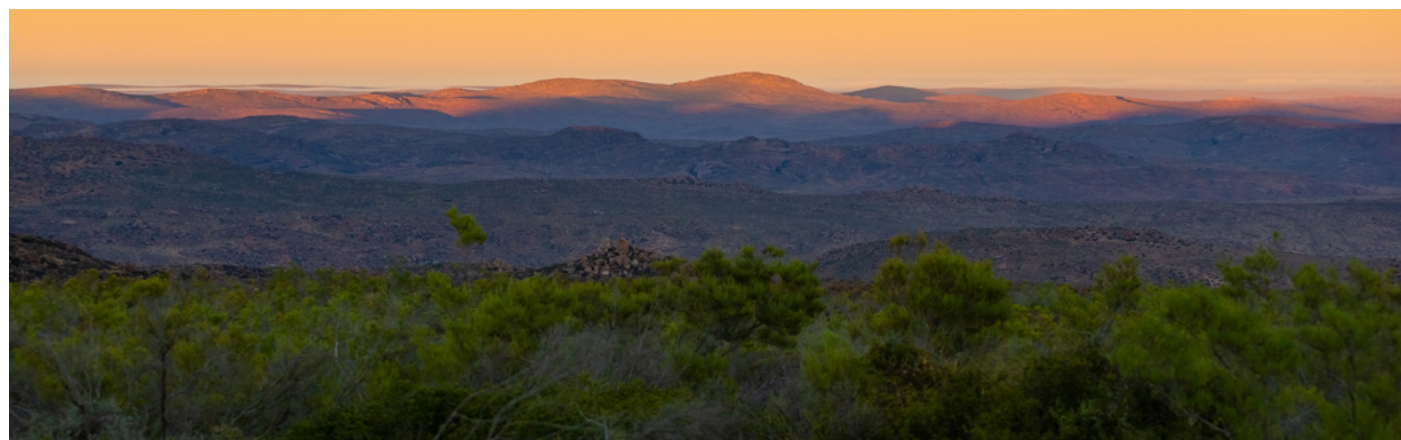
A photographer explores the landscape with binoculars and a camera.



Smart Gear for Safer Hiking and Camping Adventures

As outdoor activities like hiking and camping continue to grow in popularity, it remains vital to stay equipped with tools that enhance the experience and ensure safety. For families and adventurers, the right gear can be the difference between

a thrilling, safe adventure and a perilous situation. Whether you're exploring South Africa's rugged landscapes or venturing into the vast wilderness, here are some of the best smart tools and gadgets essential for safer hiking and camping.



A stunning sunset view over a vast mountainous landscape.

1. Personal Safety Devices: The Key to Emergency Preparedness

One of the most crucial considerations when venturing into the wilderness is ensuring you can quickly signal for help in an emergency. A personal emergency device, such as the AA REMI AMICA, provides immediate assistance with an easy-to-use panic button that alerts emergency services when activated. This device is particularly useful for individuals who need a rapid response in urgent situations.

A satellite communicator like the Garmin inReach or SPOT Gen4 offers enhanced security for those venturing into remote areas without mobile reception. These devices allow users to send distress signals, share real-time location data, and connect with emergency services via satellite communication. Additionally, they provide route tracking, making them valuable tools for solo hikers navigating unfamiliar terrain.

2. Headlamps: Hands-Free Lighting in the Dark

A headlamp is essential for any hiker or camper. It offers hands-free lighting to navigate dark trails, set camp, or respond to emergencies. Modern headlamps, such as those from Petzl and Black Diamond, come with various brightness settings and long battery life, ensuring that hikers can see even in the darkest conditions. Some models even feature red light to preserve night vision, which is beneficial for stargazing or navigating through the wilderness at night without disturbing wildlife.



A hiker on an early morning climb, guided by a headlamp.

3. Portable Water Purifiers: Clean Water on the Go

Access to clean drinking water is vital for any outdoor adventure, and a portable water purifier can be a lifesaver in remote areas. Handheld water filters, like those offered by LifeStraw or Sawyer, remove harmful bacteria, protozoa, and parasites from natural water.



Using a portable filter to access clean water in nature.

sources. These compact and easy-to-use filters are perfect for families and adventurers who need to stay hydrated while minimising the weight of extra water supplies.

For those seeking more advanced filtration, reverse osmosis purifiers such as the Rhino RO Portable Reverse Osmosis Purifier provide high-level purification, removing contaminants, heavy metals, and even viruses from untreated water. Other practical options include UV water purifiers like the SteriPEN Ultra, which uses ultraviolet light to neutralise bacteria, viruses, and protozoa in seconds.

Some purifiers, like the Grayl GeoPress and LifeStraw Go, also come with built-in filters inside water bottles, making on-the-go hydration even more convenient. Whether trekking through the wilderness or camping with family, these purification systems ensure safe drinking water without needing heavy supplies.



Taking a moment to hydrate while exploring the outdoors.



Staying connected with mobile apps during a nature hike.

4. Smartphone Mounts and Power Banks: Stay Connected

While it's important to disconnect during outdoor activities, ensuring your smartphone remains charged can be critical for navigation and emergencies. Solar-powered power banks are an excellent option for maintaining battery life without relying on traditional electricity. Brands like Romoss, Anker, and Goal Zero offer high-capacity solar power banks that can charge multiple devices on the go. These are available from some local retailers and online stores.

Sturdy smartphone mounts are also essential for securing your device while navigating trails, allowing you to follow GPS maps or take photos without holding the phone. RAM

Mounts, available through [NavWorld](#), are a top choice for their durability and secure grip, ideal for rough terrain. Other options, such as universal magnetic mounts and adjustable handlebar phone holders, can be found online. Many of these models feature rugged, dustproof, and water-resistant designs, ensuring durability in challenging environments.

5. First Aid Kits with Smart Features: Prepared for Any Situation

A well-stocked first aid kit is necessary for any hiking or camping trip. However, some modern kits go a step further by incorporating innovative features. For example, the AA Buddi First Aid Kit includes pre-packaged items tailored to specific needs, such as cuts, burns, and insect bites, while also offering easy access to emergency contact information via a smartphone app. Other first aid kits may come with instructional guides or apps that walk you through treatment steps in real-time, which can be particularly helpful for those without medical experience.



Keep a first aid kit handy during outdoor adventures.



A couple enjoying the view while hiking in nature.

6. Smart Backpacks: The Future of Carrying Gear

Today's hiking backpacks are more advanced than ever, with built-in technology to make your journey easier and safer. Brands like Osprey offer smart backpacks with hydration packs with automated pumps, allowing you to drink without stopping. Some models even have built-in solar panels to charge small devices while you hike. These backpacks are designed to distribute weight evenly, minimising strain and enhancing comfort on long treks. Additionally, some features integrated GPS trackers, ensuring that if you get lost, your location can be pinpointed by others.

For those looking for smart backpacks in South Africa, Samsonite offers a range of smart travel backpacks equipped with USB charging ports, RFID-blocking compartments, and ergonomic designs for enhanced comfort.

Many outdoor speciality stores stock travel and sling backpacks with modern features such as anti-theft designs, padded laptop compartments, and lightweight materials ideal for outdoor adventures.

By investing in a smart backpack, hikers and campers can enjoy a more seamless and secure outdoor experience, with access to essential gear and technology on the go.



A compact tool ready for practical use during a hike.

7. Survival Multi-Tools: Compact and Reliable

A multi-tool is a must-have when heading into the great outdoors. Whether you need to cut rope, open cans, or start a fire, tools like the Leatherman or Swiss Army Knife offer versatility in one compact device. These tools typically include several blades, screwdrivers, pliers, and even tweezers, which can be useful for various outdoor tasks. Newer models are often designed to be more durable and corrosion-resistant, making them more reliable in harsh conditions.



A hiker pauses to take in the surrounding mountain views.

8. Temperature and Weather Monitoring Gadgets

Understanding the weather is critical when hiking or camping, and technology has made it easier to track environmental conditions. Compact, wearable devices like the Kestrel weather meters allow adventurers to measure temperature, humidity, wind speed, and barometric pressure, giving them the information to make informed decisions. Knowing when to seek shelter or turn back can significantly improve your hiking in remote areas.

Smart tents are revolutionising the camping experience, offering comfort and convenience in the wilderness. Some tents have built-in solar panels to charge devices, LED lighting systems, and even weather-resistant heating or cooling options. These tents provide better insulation and weatherproofing, ensuring families and adventurers sleep soundly in varying climates.



A camp is set up near dunes with vehicles nearby.



A couple shares a quiet break outside their tent.

Stay Safe and Prepared on Your Outdoor Adventures

Incorporating smart gear into your hiking and camping adventures is not just about convenience. It is about improving safety, comfort, and preparedness. With the right tools, adventurers can confidently navigate the wilderness, knowing they are ready for any challenges nature may present. If you're heading out for a family camping trip or exploring the rugged terrain of South Africa, these gadgets will make your experience safer and more enjoyable.




The Connection Between Adventure and Mental Well-being

In a world where mental health issues are increasingly prevalent, outdoor adventures like hiking, cycling, and scuba diving are fun and effective ways to manage stress, improve mood, and strengthen

relationships. These activities provide opportunities to engage with nature, step away from the distractions of daily life, and connect with others, all of which play a vital role in promoting mental well-being.

The Mental Health Benefits of Outdoor Adventure

Outdoor activities provide an excellent opportunity to take a break from the stresses of modern life and embrace nature's calming effects. Studies have shown that spending time outdoors can significantly improve mental health by reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. For example, hiking through forests, cycling along scenic routes, or scuba diving in the open waters have been linked to improved emotional well-being



Two hikers enjoy a scenic climb through nature's beauty.



A woman resting on a rock, enjoying the coastal view.

and reduced negative thoughts.

Nature itself has a remarkable ability to act as a stress reliever. Even brief exposure to natural environments can reduce cortisol levels (the hormone associated with stress) and boost mood. The physical activity of hiking, combined with the mental clarity gained from being in nature, can significantly reduce stress levels. As individuals walk through natural settings, the calming effects of the environment help clear mental fog and promote relaxation. Research from [Frontiers in Psychology](#) reveals that adventure activities in nature enhance happiness and self-esteem and improve social functioning.

Benefits of Cycling and Running for the Mind and Body

Cycling offers unique mental health benefits that complement physical fitness. Whether cycling through urban parks or the countryside, the activity promotes mindfulness and allows cyclists to focus on the present moment. The rhythmic nature of pedalling helps individuals clear their minds, making it easier to relax and experience a break from everyday concerns.

Running also provides a significant mental boost by releasing endorphins, known for their positive effects on mood. This phenomenon, often called a "runner's high," is the body's natural response to intense physical exertion. According to [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#), running helps release these endorphins, promoting a sense of euphoria and well-being. Beyond the chemical rush, running is a great way to release stress and anxiety, making it an ideal activity for improving mental health.



A man jogging along a scenic road.

Strengthening Social Connections Through Adventure

While the mental health benefits of outdoor activities are impressive, they are often amplified when shared with others. Many outdoor adventures, such as group hikes, cycling outings, or team-based scuba diving, provide opportunities to connect with fellow adventurers. The shared experience of completing an activity together builds camaraderie and creates lasting memories.

Social connections are essential for mental well-being. Research has shown that individuals with strong social support systems can better manage stress, combat loneliness, and enjoy higher levels of happiness. Engaging in adventure with family, friends, or fellow outdoor enthusiasts builds deeper interpersonal relationships and mutual encouragement.



A group of friends enjoying a hike through the wilderness.



A joyful family playing on the beach, creating memories.

Bonding with Family through Quality Time in Nature

Outdoor adventures offer families an excellent opportunity to bond away from the distractions of everyday life. Activities like hiking, cycling, or simply spending time at the beach enable family members to connect more deeply. These shared experiences encourage communication, trust, and teamwork, strengthening family relationships.

Outdoor activities also teach valuable life skills alongside their emotional benefits. Activities that require collaboration, such as hiking in a group or completing a cycling route together, help develop problem-solving skills and promote teamwork. This benefits your relationships and instills essential life lessons that help families grow closer.

Building Resilience and Overcoming Challenges

One key benefit of outdoor activities is facing challenges and developing resilience. Climbing a steep trail, navigating difficult weather conditions, or overcoming a fear of heights, outdoor adventures encourage individuals to push their limits. These challenges foster a mindset of perseverance and mental toughness that can be applied to everyday life.



A couple enjoying the sunshine with big smiles.

Overcoming obstacles in nature helps build self-confidence and improve stress management. By conquering difficulties in the great outdoors, individuals develop problem-solving skills and coping strategies that benefit them in both personal and professional situations.

A Path Toward Mental Wellness

The mental health benefits of outdoor adventures are clear. Activities like hiking, cycling, and scuba diving offer opportunities to escape daily stresses and reconnect with nature. They promote physical health, enhance mental resilience, reduce stress, and improve mood. More importantly, they offer the perfect setting to strengthen relationships, creating meaningful social connections that improve overall well-being.

Outdoor activities, whether alone or with loved ones, are powerful tools for improving mental health. So, the next time you feel overwhelmed, consider stepping outside.

Exploring South Africa's Outdoor Markets:

A Taste of Local Culture

South Africa's outdoor markets are a vibrant reflection of the country's rich cultural diversity. These lively spaces are more than just places to shop; they are where local artisans, farmers, and food vendors come together, offering an authentic taste of South African life. These markets provide a unique shopping experience and support local businesses in a busy city centre or quiet rural setting. From food lovers to craft enthusiasts or those who appreciate fresh, local produce, here's a guide to some of South Africa's top outdoor markets.



Local produce displayed at a vibrant outdoor market.

1 Oranjezicht City Farm Market, Cape Town

Located in the shadow of Table Mountain, the Oranjezicht City Farm Market in Cape Town is a must-see for those exploring the Western Cape. This market showcases fresh, organic, and locally produced food every Saturday and Sunday in the Granger Bay area. Visitors can find everything from seasonal fruits and vegetables to artisanal products, all sourced from small-scale farmers. By supporting this market, visitors contribute to the sustainability of local farming communities while enjoying delicious, fresh food.

2 Shongweni Farmers & Craft Market, Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal

The Shongweni Farmers & Craft Market in Hillcrest is a lively, community-driven market open every Saturday from 7 am to 1 pm. Nestled in the Shongweni Valley, it offers fresh, locally sourced produce, organic products, and handmade crafts. The market features a variety of seasonal fruits, vegetables, artisanal baked goods, and unique crafts such as pottery and jewellery.

Live entertainment enhances the vibrant atmosphere, making it an excellent spot for food lovers, craft enthusiasts, and families looking to enjoy a morning surrounded by nature and local culture.



Craft markets showcase local artisans' work and creativity.

3 Blaauwklippen Family Market, Stellenbosch

For those exploring the Stellenbosch Winelands, the Blaauwklippen Family Market is a must-visit. Set in the picturesque Blaauwklippen wine estate, this market offers a mix of farm-fresh produce, gourmet food stalls, and local crafts. What sets this market apart is its family-friendly atmosphere, which features live entertainment, face painting for children, and even a petting zoo. Visitors can relax, enjoy a glass of wine, browse unique handmade goods, or indulge in fresh food from various food trucks.

4 Prison Break Market, Midrand

The Prison Break Market in Midrand is a fast-growing hub for artisanal food, crafts, and entertainment. This unique market, designed with repurposed shipping containers, provides diverse offerings, from gourmet food stalls to boutique shops featuring handcrafted goods. With live music and a relaxed atmosphere, the market attracts locals and visitors looking for an alternative weekend outing. Whether you're interested in street food, craft beer, or one-of-a-kind fashion and décor items, the Prison Break Market provides an exciting shopping and dining experience.



A charming cottage surrounded by greenery and nature.

5 Mbombela Farmers Market, Mbombela

The Mbombela Farmers Market provides a platform for local farmers and artisans in Mbombela to showcase their products. Held on the last Saturday of every month from 10 am to 7 pm, the market features fresh produce, crafts, and live music in a laid-back setting. It's an ideal spot for anyone looking to experience the local culture and enjoy fresh, high-quality products in a relaxed environment.



Freshly baked bread, ready to be enjoyed.

6 Kamers Vol Geskenke, Various Locations

Kamers Vol Geskenke is a unique, travelling market focusing on high-end, handcrafted goods made by South African artisans. With events held in multiple cities, including Pretoria, Stellenbosch, and Cape Town, this market is the perfect place to find one-of-a-kind home décor, fashion, and accessories. Visitors can interact directly with artisans and learn about the stories behind their creations, making it a truly special shopping experience.



Vibrant handwoven baskets showcasing traditional craftsmanship.

7 Harkerville Market, Garden Route

Located between Plettenberg Bay and Knysna, the Harkerville Market is a vibrant, community-driven market that runs every Saturday. It offers an excellent selection of fresh produce, homemade baked goods, and handcrafted products, making it a must-visit for those travelling along the scenic Garden Route. With a welcoming and rustic atmosphere, visitors can enjoy a leisurely morning surrounded by nature, delicious food, and friendly local vendors.



Shoppers selecting fresh goods from a local market vendor.



A selection of fresh pastries.



A variety of fresh vegetables ready for cooking.

Supporting Local Artisans and Farmers

South Africa's outdoor markets are unique in their ability to foster community connection. These markets are not just places to shop; they serve as hubs for local artisans, farmers, and entrepreneurs to showcase their work. Visiting these markets provides an authentic experience of South Africa's food, culture, and creativity while supporting small-scale businesses. Many of the products are handcrafted or produced by local artisans who rely on community support to thrive.

From Johannesburg's busy streets to the Western Cape's tranquil markets, outdoor markets across South Africa offer something truly special.

Colourful fruits and vegetables on display at the local market.

From Table to the Heart: Recipes That Bring Families Together This Easter

As Easter approaches, it's the perfect time to gather with loved ones, share stories, and create lasting memories over a delicious meal. Food has always been a powerful connector, and there's no better way to bring a family together than

with heartwarming, simple-to-make recipes that everyone will enjoy. Planning a lavish spread or a more intimate gathering, here are seven recipes to make your Easter table one to remember.



Baking with loved ones.

1

Slow-cooked Leg of Lamb with Lemon Herb Infusion

Lamb is a true Easter classic, and a slow-cooked leg takes this timeless dish to the next level. Infusing the lamb with fresh lemon zest and fragrant herbs adds an unexpected, refreshing twist to this savoury masterpiece. The result is a fragrant and tender roast that melts in your mouth.

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 1.5kg leg of lamb
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup white wine (optional)

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 160°C.
- Rub the lamb with olive oil, garlic, rosemary, lemon zest, salt, and pepper.
- For added depth of flavour, pour white wine around the lamb (this is optional but adds richness).
- Roast for 3-4 hours, occasionally basting with the pan juices to keep it juicy and tender.
- Serve with roasted root vegetables or a vibrant, minty couscous salad for an Easter feast everyone will remember.



A perfectly roasted lamb with fresh herbs and garlic.



Couple cooking together.

2 Cape Malay Pickled Fish with a Sweet Mango Twist

Pickled fish is a South African favourite, but let's make it even more special by adding fresh mango. The mango's sweetness balances the sour and spicy notes of the pickling sauce, creating a beautifully layered flavour. This dish can be served as an appetiser or a refreshing side to complement your mains.

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- 500g firm white fish fillets (hake or snoek)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 ripe mango, peeled and sliced

Instructions:

- Lightly fry the fish fillets in vegetable oil until golden, then set aside.
- In the same pan, sauté the onions, garlic, and ginger until softened.
- Stir in the turmeric, coriander, vinegar, sugar, and bay leaf, simmering for 5 minutes.
- Layer the cooked fish in a dish and pour the sauce on top. Add slices of fresh mango.
- Refrigerate for 24 hours to allow the flavours to develop. Serve chilled, and enjoy the vibrant colours and flavours of this dish.



Fresh fish fillets, ready for cooking.



Delicious homemade pickled fish with freshly baked hot cross buns.

3 Mini Hot Cross Bun Doughnuts with a Citrus Twist

Let's give the traditional hot cross bun a fun makeover! These mini doughnuts, made from hot cross bun dough, are fried to perfection and finished with a tangy citrus glaze. Perfectly spiced and incredibly fluffy, these bite-sized treats bring a festive flair to your Easter table.

Serves: 12-15 mini doughnuts

Ingredients:

- 500g strong white bread flour
- 75g caster sugar
- 10g salt
- 7g instant dry yeast
- 250ml lukewarm milk
- 75g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground mixed spice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Zest of 1 orange
- 100g currants or sultanas

Instructions:

- Mix the flour, sugar, salt, yeast, cinnamon, and spice in a large bowl.
- Add the warm milk, butter, egg, and vanilla to form a sticky dough, then knead until smooth.
- Fold the currants and let the dough rise for 1–1.5 hours.
- Roll the dough into small circles, allowing it to rise again for 30 minutes.
- Heat oil to 180°C and fry the doughnuts until golden. Drizzle with a glaze made from icing sugar, lemon juice, and orange zest, and serve warm for a delightful treat.



Hot cross buns fresh from the oven.



Hot cross buns ready to enjoy with butter.

4

Cheesy Bunny Buns with Herb-Infused Butter

These cheesy bunny-shaped buns are a fun addition to your Easter meal. The gooey cheese and soft, fluffy texture make these buns irresistible, while a hint of fresh herbs in the butter elevates the savoury flavour. These playful and delicious buns will be the talk of the table.

Serves: 8- 10 bunny buns

Ingredients:

- 500g strong white bread flour
- 7g instant dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 300ml lukewarm milk
- 50g unsalted butter, melted
- 1 large egg
- 100g grated cheese (cheddar or gouda)
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, chopped

Instructions:

- In a bowl, mix flour, yeast, salt, and sugar. Combine warm milk, melted butter, and egg in a separate jug.
- Add the wet ingredients to the dry and stir until a dough forms. Knead for 8-10 minutes until smooth.
- Fold in grated cheese and rosemary, then let the dough rise for 1–1.5 hours.
- Shape the dough into bunny shapes and let it rise again for 30 minutes.
- Bake at 180°C for 15–20 minutes, then serve with a herb-infused butter for a fun, savoury treat.



Golden, freshly baked dinner rolls ready to serve.



Family baking together, making memories in the kitchen.

5

Easter Pavlova with Passionfruit and Lime

Pavlova is a crowd-pleasing dessert, and for Easter, we've added a zesty passionfruit and lime topping for a tropical twist. The crispy meringue with a soft marshmallow centre pairs beautifully with the tangy fruit, creating the perfect balance of textures and flavours

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 4 egg whites
- 1 cup caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- Fresh fruits (kiwi, berries, passionfruit, lime zest)



Assembling fresh fruit on pavlovas for a treat.

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 120°C and line a tray with parchment paper.
- Whisk egg whites until stiff peaks form, then add sugar, cornstarch, and vinegar.
- Spoon the meringue onto the tray, shaping it into a circle.
- Bake for 1 hour, then let it cool in the oven.
- Top with fresh kiwi, berries, and passionfruit pulp, and garnish with lime zest for a refreshing twist.



Baking meringue with eggs and fresh ingredients.

6 Roast Vegetable Salad with Honey-Balsamic Glaze

Roasted vegetables never go out of style, but let's add a sweet and tangy honey-balsamic glaze to take it up a notch. This vibrant, flavour-packed salad complements any Easter feast and offers the perfect balance of earthy, sweet, and tart notes.

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- 2 sweet potatoes, cubed
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 100g mixed greens
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 200°C.
- Toss sweet potatoes and carrots with olive oil and rosemary, then roast for 25 minutes or until tender.
- Mix honey and balsamic vinegar, then drizzle over the roasted vegetables.
- Toss the vegetables with fresh greens and serve immediately for a bright, seasonal side dish.



Freshly harvested carrots ready for cooking.



Roast potatoes with seasonings and fresh herbs.

7 Malva Pudding with Spiced Orange Syrup

This indulgent dessert takes South Africa's favourite malva pudding and adds a spiced orange syrup for an aromatic, citrusy twist. The result is a comforting, fragrant dessert that pairs beautifully with warm custard.

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon apricot jam
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1/2 cup sugar (for syrup)
- 1/2 cup water

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- To form a batter, mix the sugar, egg, milk, apricot jam, flour, baking soda, and melted butter.
- Pour the batter into a greased dish and bake for 40 minutes until golden brown.
- Meanwhile, make the syrup by boiling the sugar, water, orange zest, and cinnamon stick.
- Simmer for 5 minutes.
- Pour the syrup over the warm pudding before serving with custard for a comforting finish.



Muffins in yellow cups cooling down after baking.



Mother and daughter baking together with joy.

With these seven recipes, your Easter meal will be a celebration of flavour, tradition, and family. Whether you serve slow-cooked lamb, cheesy bunny buns, or a vibrant pavlova, each dish is designed to bring people together around the table. Enjoy the moment, the food, and the company; that's what Easter is all about.

Gauteng's Hidden Game Reserves:

Perfect for Family Adventures

For families looking to escape into nature without venturing too far from home, Gauteng offers a variety of game reserves that provide exciting wildlife encounters in a safe and accessible setting. If you're not heading to the coast for holidays, looking for something to do with the kids on the weekend or want to explore South Africa's natural beauty, these hidden gems are perfect for family adventures. From intimate experiences with the Big Five to peaceful moments in the bush, Gauteng's game reserves offer an ideal opportunity for families to reconnect with each other and the natural world while creating lasting memories.

1 Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve

Located in the Cradle of Humankind, the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve is a prime destination for family outings. Just a short drive from Johannesburg, this reserve is home to various animals, including lions, rhinos, wild dogs, and several bird species. Its accessible game drives offer a family-friendly way to explore the park, while guided tours provide expert insight into the animals and the environment.



A close-up of a rhino in its natural habitat.

A unique feature of the reserve is its interactive approach. The Day Visitors Centre offers designated braai and picnic spots where families can enjoy a relaxing lunch before returning to explore more of the reserve. Educational experiences are also available, allowing children to learn about wildlife conservation through engaging displays and activities. With its accessible game drives and guided tours, the reserve provides a family-friendly way to discover the park's diverse animal species while enjoying a fun and educational outing.

For families seeking adventure with a touch of luxury, the reserve also offers accommodation options where you can stay in the heart of the bush for an unforgettable overnight experience.



Giraffes in the wild, towering above their surroundings.



Lions in the wild, showcasing nature's raw beauty.

2 Dinokeng Game Reserve

Dinokeng Game Reserve is one of Gauteng's most exciting and unique reserves. Located about 50 km north of Pretoria, Dinokeng offers a malaria-free safari experience and is home to the Big Five. The reserve is well-suited for families with young children, as it is a safe and easily accessible destination that does not require long travel times.

Visitors can explore the reserve through self-drive safari routes, allowing families to travel at their own pace and enjoy the area's beauty. The reserve also offers guided game

drives for a more in-depth experience, with knowledgeable guides providing insights into the animals and the ecosystems that support them.

Dinokeng's family-friendly accommodations include rustic campsites, lodges, and chalets, each designed to blend seamlessly into the environment. Whether you prefer to camp under the stars or stay in a comfortable lodge, Dinokeng provides various options to suit every family's needs.



Comfortable tented camp set in a tranquil natural setting.



An elephant's textured skin, showcasing nature's remarkable detail.



A mutual relationship where the bird keeps the antelope clean.

3 Mongena Game Lodge

Situated within the Dinokeng Game Reserve, Mongena Game Lodge offers a more intimate experience. The lodge is known for its personal service and tranquil atmosphere, perfect for families looking for a relaxed yet immersive wildlife experience. Guided game drives allow families to see various animals in their natural surroundings, including elephants, giraffes, and antelopes.

Mongena's lodge facilities are family-friendly, offering spacious rooms and ample activities for children. Additionally, the lodge features an outdoor pool where families can cool off after a day of safari adventures. With a focus on family comfort and an unforgettable connection to nature, Mongena is a top choice for those seeking a quieter retreat within a wildlife reserve.

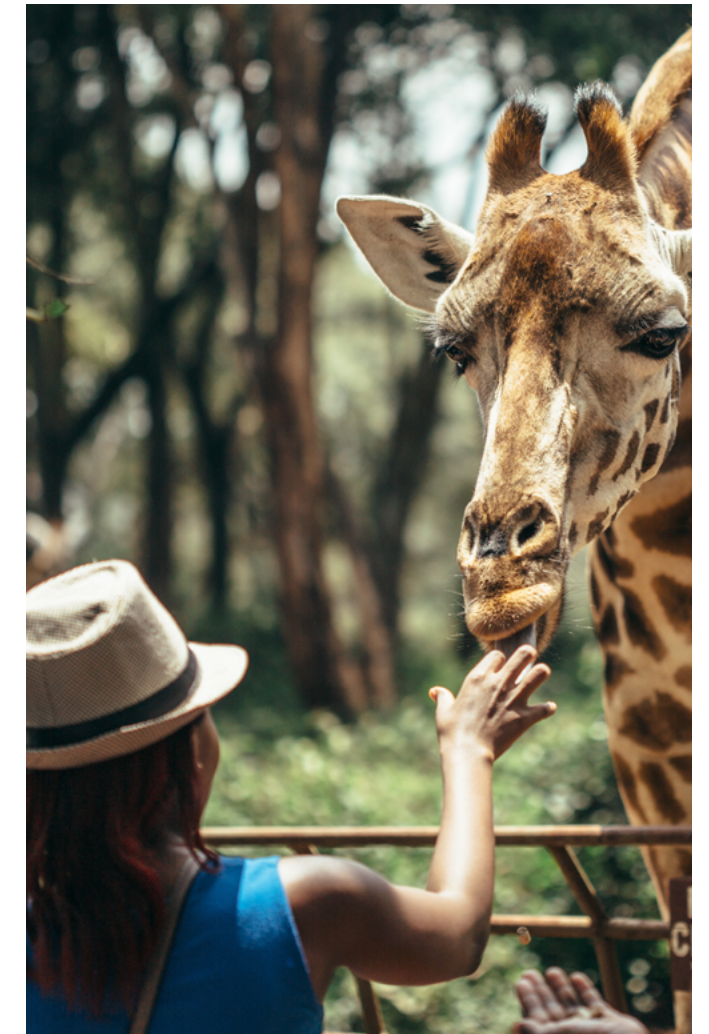
4 Pilanesberg National Park

While slightly further afield, Pilanesberg National Park is still easily accessible from Gauteng and offers an incredible safari experience. Located near Sun City, Pilanesberg has an impressive range of wildlife, including lions, elephants, and buffaloes. Its open, rolling plains and scenic views make it an ideal location for game drives and self-guided walks.

Pilanesberg's family-friendly accommodations make it a popular choice for those looking for both adventure and comfort. Lodging options cater to all family sizes, and various activities are designed for children, from nature walks to bird-watching expeditions. With its proximity to Sun City, families can enjoy a day of fun at the resort after a morning safari, making it a perfect combination of wildlife adventure and leisure.



Zebras crossing the road during a safari adventure.



Connecting with nature during a memorable safari experience.

A Perfect Family Getaway

Gauteng's hidden game reserves offer families a fantastic opportunity to connect with nature and learn about the diverse wildlife that inhabits South Africa. With various reserves to choose from, ranging from rustic escapes to more luxurious stays, there is something for everyone. These reserves allow families to create unforgettable memories, whether on

a game drive, enjoying a picnic under the African sky, or spending a night surrounded by the sounds of the bush.

For those searching for a convenient, enriching experience close to home, Gauteng's game reserves are the perfect destinations for a family getaway.

Family Adventures in the Drakensberg:

Connecting with Nature

The Drakensberg mountains, straddling the borders of KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State, offer some of the most stunning natural landscapes in South Africa. The Drakensberg is an ideal destination for family getaways and nature enthusiasts with its rugged peaks, flowing waterfalls, and wide-open spaces. Whether you're looking for quiet picnics, gentle hikes, or the thrill of a more extended adventure, this area provides the perfect backdrop for making memories.



A tranquil waterfall surrounded by lush green landscapes.

Exploring the Outdoors with Family

Spending time with family in nature is a bonding experience like no other, and the Drakensberg is the perfect place for it. The region offers trails of varying difficulty for

people of all ages and fitness levels. You can trek up to a high mountain peak or stroll through the lush valleys at your own pace.

The Blue Pool and Nyosi Grotto Hike is an excellent family-friendly option. This trail features manageable paths suitable for younger children and seniors, offering scenic views and a rewarding stop at the Blue Pool for a refreshing dip. It's an ideal introduction to the majesty of the Drakensberg.

For families with more adventurous members, Sani Pass presents a thrilling challenge. Although it's a more difficult route, the panoramic views and the experience of traversing this iconic path make it unforgettable. The adventure doesn't stop at hiking. You can also enjoy horseback riding and mountain biking through the foothills, with professional guides ensuring fun and safety.



A winding road leading through scenic mountainous terrain.

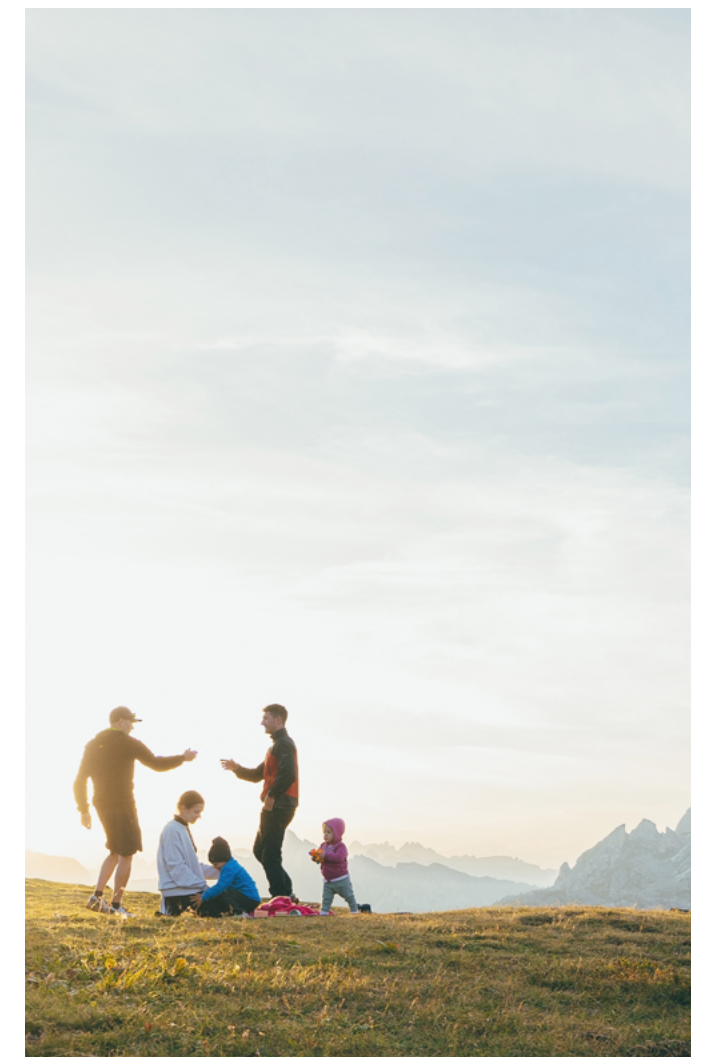
Picnics and Scenic Stops

A highlight of exploring the Drakensberg is stopping for a picnic in some of the most serene spots. These locations are perfect for laying down a blanket and enjoying a meal surrounded by towering cliffs and lush vegetation. Royal Natal National Park is an excellent choice, with its pristine scenery and peaceful environment. Families can unpack a meal and let the kids roam freely in nature, watching for wildlife such as baboons, antelope, and various bird species.

For a stunning yet less rugged experience, The Amphitheatre is a must-see. This massive, ancient cliff face provides a panoramic view of the valley below. The area surrounding the amphitheatre is flat, making it easy for younger kids to run around while older family members enjoy the expansive view.



A peaceful hammock offering a view of rolling hills.



A family enjoying time outdoors during a camping trip.

Comfortable Accommodation

Although camping in the Drakensberg is a popular option, the region offers a variety of comfortable accommodation choices for families, from cosy cabins to luxury lodges. These accommodations provide the perfect base for families to return to after a day spent in nature. Many lodges offer family-friendly amenities such as indoor activities, swimming pools, and organised nature excursions.

For a more rustic experience, Monks Cowl campsites offer an opportunity to experience nature at its rawest. Camping in the Drakensberg is the perfect way for families to bond while learning essential outdoor skills, such as setting up camp, cooking over a fire, and stargazing under some of the clearest skies in South Africa.



Majestic mountains and blooming calla lilies in nature's embrace.

Conservation and Learning Opportunities

The Drakensberg offers more than just physical activity and scenic beauty; it's also a fantastic place for families to learn about environmental conservation. With numerous nature reserves in the area, families can participate in educational activities designed to teach about the region's biodiversity and ecological significance. Drakensberg Nature Reserve, part of the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, offers guided walks and interpretive talks that explain the unique flora and fauna of the area.

The Drakensberg Boys' Choir School, renowned for its music and cultural significance, provides an opportunity to introduce younger family members to local arts and heritage. This region's harmonious blend of culture and nature offers a richer experience than just a simple trip outdoors.



White calla lilies blooming in a lush green setting.



Sunset casting golden light on the rugged mountain peaks.

A Place for Reconnection

The Drakensberg offers a truly memorable place to reconnect for families looking to break from everyday life's rush. Relax by the fireplace at a lodge or hike to a secluded waterfall. The mountains offer countless opportunities to pause, reflect, and enjoy each other's company amidst breathtaking scenery.

This is more than just a vacation; it's a chance to create lasting memories in one of South Africa's most beautiful regions. Pack up your car, head toward the hills, and experience the tranquillity and adventure the Drakensberg offers. Your family is bound to leave with stories to tell and a renewed sense of connection to nature.

Reconnect With Loved Ones at South Africa's Top Family Getaways

Modern life often pulls families in different directions, making quality time together more valuable than ever. A well-planned getaway provides the perfect setting to reconnect, laugh, and create lasting memories. South Africa's diverse landscapes offer a wide range of destinations that bring families closer, whether through the thrill of a safari, the serenity of the mountains, or the fun of a beach holiday. Here's a closer look at the best family-friendly getaways across KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga.

We've gathered five fantastic activities to keep your little ones entertained while promoting eco-friendly habits and family bonding:



A father shares a joyful moment with his child at sunset.



A couple walks hand-in-hand along the beach, enjoying nature.

KwaZulu-Natal: Where the Ocean Meets Adventure

Warm weather, golden beaches, and breathtaking landscapes make KwaZulu-Natal a paradise for family fun. Exploring the mountains or diving into coastal adventures, this province guarantees excitement for all ages. Families can stay at **Drakensberg Sun Resort**, which offers comfortable family rooms, child-friendly activities, and access to scenic trails for hiking. **The Drakensberg Canopy Tour** is a must-do, where families can zip-line through the lush forest canopy, adding an exhilarating adventure to your mountain getaway.

Along the coast, Ballito is a perfect destination for ocean lovers. Families can enjoy the unspoiled beaches or splash around in the tidal pools while staying at **Zimbali Coastal Resort**, which offers family suites and easy access to the beach. For more fun, take a trip to the nearby **Flag Animal Farm** or indulge in water sports such as kayaking or



A pod of dolphins swimming together in the clear ocean.

paddleboarding. **iSimangaliso Wetland Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers boat cruises where families can spot hippos and crocodiles while learning about South Africa's diverse ecosystems. The park's **St. Lucia Wetlands Guest House** provides family-friendly accommodation, and activities such as snorkeling and birdwatching are perfect for nature-loving families.



Two hippos enjoy the calm waters of their natural habitat.

Eastern Cape: Where Wildlife and Wonder Collide

A journey through the Eastern Cape combines the thrill of wildlife encounters with the charm of historical towns and mystical forests. Families can stay at **Addo Safari Lodge** near **Addo Elephant National Park**, where they can explore the park's wide range of wildlife. The lodge offers a variety of kid-friendly activities, from guided safaris to Junior Ranger programs, making it the ideal place for young adventurers to learn about conservation. Addo's family-focused safaris allow you to witness the Big Five in a malaria-free environment, and for those who want a more interactive experience, a guided tour or a self-drive safari is a fantastic way to explore the park.

Hogsback is a magical retreat where towering trees, misty landscapes, and cascading waterfalls create a fairytale setting. Families can stay at **The Edge**, which offers cosy family lodges perfect for relaxing after a day of hiking through ancient forests or visiting **The Hogsback Fairy Sanctuary**. For a more hands-on experience, families can engage in pottery or storytelling workshops, connecting with the area's artistic spirit.

Families can immerse themselves in a family-friendly safari experience in the **Lalibela Game Reserve**. Stay at **Forest Camp**, where comfortable accommodations and educational activities are designed for children. The reserve offers expert-led safaris, where young explorers can learn about conservation while spotting wildlife up close.

Free State: Slow Down and Soak in the Scenery

For families who prefer a slower pace, the Free State's wide-open landscapes provide the perfect escape from city life. With its artsy mountain atmosphere, Clarens offers families the chance to explore boutique galleries or enjoy peaceful hikes with breathtaking views. Families can stay at **Clarens Retreat** or **The Clarens Boutique Guest House**, where spacious family rooms are complemented by nearby outdoor adventures, such as river rafting for some added excitement.

Golden Gate Highlands National Park offers dramatic sandstone cliffs and vast landscapes perfect for hiking and wildlife viewing. Families can stay in the park's **Golden Gate Hotel** or self-catering chalets, where they'll have access to scenic trails and the opportunity to spot zebras and wildebeest. After a day of exploring, enjoy a cosy evening at the lodge, ideal for storytelling under the stars.

Limpopo: A Safari Adventure Like No Other

Limpopo's untouched wilderness and cultural richness make it a top choice for families looking for a safari experience without the crowds. **Kruger National Park**, located in Limpopo, is legendary for its incredible wildlife, including lions, elephants, and giraffes. Families can stay at **Kruger Gate Lodge** or **Jock Safari Lodge**, both offering family-friendly accommodations and exciting safari tours. Many lodges also feature Junior Ranger programs, where kids can actively engage in conservation activities and gain hands-on experience in the bush.



Golden light casts over rolling hills at sunset.



A bathtub with a breathtaking view of the surrounding forest.

For a more intimate safari experience, the **Waterberg Region** offers malaria-free game reserves where kids can safely experience the magic of the African bush. Stay at **Waterberg Game Lodge**, which offers family suites and guided bush walks. The area's activities, including storytelling sessions around the campfire and guided nature walks, provide a unique blend of adventure and relaxation.

Mpumalanga: Spectacular Views and Endless Exploration

A road trip through Mpumalanga is a feast for the senses. The Panorama Route offers breathtaking landmarks like God's Window, the Blyde River Canyon, and Bourke's Luck Potholes. Families can stay at **Blyde River Canyon Lodge** or **The Royal Hotel**, which provide family rooms and stunning views. The drive also offers plenty of opportunities for easy hikes and picnics at scenic lookout points, allowing families to immerse themselves in the beauty of the landscape.

For a more interactive experience, **Makalali Game Lodge** offers a family-friendly safari adventure. Families can stay in spacious family suites and enjoy guided game drives, where kids learn about wildlife conservation while tracking animals with expert guides.

Lastly, **Kiepersol** is a charming retreat offering farm-style accommodation, making it perfect for families who enjoy nature and tranquility. Stay at **Kiepersol Country Lodge** and explore the countryside on scenic walks, enjoy fishing in the nearby dams, or simply relax and unwind as a family.

Kapama Private Game Reserve offers luxury accommodation in **Kapama Karula** and **Kapama Buffalo Camp**, where families can enjoy interactive safaris catering to children. The lodge's educational programs ensure that kids learn about wildlife conservation while parents can unwind in comfortable, well-appointed lodges.

Unforgettable Family Escapes Await

South Africa's diverse landscapes provide the ultimate backdrop for reconnecting with loved ones. From wildlife safaris to beachside retreats and mountain escapes, every trip offers the chance to laugh, explore, and create stories that will be cherished for years. Pack your bags, gather your family, and embark on a journey of adventure, relaxation, and meaningful moments.



A leopard moves gracefully along a tree branch in the wild.

How Much Should You Save In Your Emergency Fund?

Life is full of unexpected incidents, mishaps, and opportunities. Very often, these unexpected situations (whether they bring joy, pain or frustration) come with a price tag. This is why having an emergency fund is so important.

You might suddenly find yourself with the opportunity to go on your dream holiday for a much lower price – but you would still need some extra cash to pay your way. Maybe you've discovered that you're having

another baby. It could also be that you've lost your job, received an unexpected medical bill, or need to pay for urgent car repairs.

The point is, having money set aside can prevent you from going into debt. The question is, how much should you save to ensure you're adequately protected?

Let's explore the best practices for building an emergency fund and how to tailor it to your circumstances.

Step 1. How Much You Should Save

It would be great if we could provide you with an exact number, however, as, you may imagine the amount needed will vary depending on personal factors.

That said, financial experts typically recommend saving three to six months' worth of essential living expenses. It's also been suggested that if your income is irregular or you have dependents, you may want to aim closer to six or even nine months' worth of savings.

The thinking is that this general amount will help give you an adequate cushion so that

if there is an emergency, you'll have enough funds to cover your rent or bond, groceries, water and lights, and other critical costs.

Now, to calculate your emergency fund amount, you will need to sit down and work out what you consider to be your essential monthly expenses. Then it's simply a matter of calculating the total amount so that you can multiply it by a minimum of three and a maximum of six.

For example, if your essential expenses come to R20,000, you should aim to save between R60,000 and R120,000.

Step 2. How Much To Start Saving Monthly

Saving such a large amount can feel daunting, so take comfort from knowing that there are no financial experts who would ever dream of suggesting that you immediately save huge chunks to establish your fund in the quickest timeframe as possible.

In actual fact, it's recommended that you start small and build over time. Firstly, you need to examine your budget so that you can see how much you can afford to set aside for your emergency fund. Only once you've done this, can you set a manageable goal.

Rather start with a smaller goal of saving towards R2,000 and then gradually increase the amount to R5,000 and then more. A good idea would be to automate the transfers to your emergency fund each month as this can help you achieve consistent progress without requiring extra effort.

Step 4. When You Should Rebuild Or Adjust

Your emergency fund isn't a one-and-done project. After all, it's likely that you'll need to dip into it and so it makes sense that there will come a time when you'll need to rebuild your fund. Added to that, your lifestyle and financial needs may change, which may require you to review your savings goals. For example, if you buy a new home and have bigger bond repayments then your emergency fund should grow to accommodate this bigger expense.

Step 3. Choose Where To Keep Your Emergency Fund

For starters, you should consider keeping your emergency fund savings separate from your main bank account. It can be so tempting to dip into this money for non-essential spending. Thankfully, many banks in South Africa offer dedicated savings accounts that allow easy access in emergencies.

When looking for a separate account, keep in mind that accessibility is crucial. You need to be able to withdraw money quickly, whenever you need to, without penalties. This is a good time to chat to a financial advisor, however we can say that, generally, a high-interest savings account or money market account is ideal because it offers liquidity while still earning some interest.

Feeling informed?

Having an emergency fund is by far one of the most financially responsible actions to take. While it might appear to be something for those who are "well off," an emergency fund is something that everyone can (and should) build. The fact is that everyone needs a buffer against life's unexpected expenses. While building one can take time, these steps will help get you started.

Don't forget that AA Inform is home to a range of useful financial tools and resources that can assist you along the way, including access our Monthly Personal Budget Calculator.

Tips For Healthy Living On A Budget In South Africa



It's hardly surprising that living a healthy lifestyle has the power to significantly prolong your life. Of course, 'living well' can mean different things to different people, but by and large, the idea is to eat a balanced and nutritious diet, move your body (some call it exercise), avoid smoking, and limit your alcohol intake.

In the wake of wellness influencers and the healthy lifestyle aesthetic that has taken

over what it means to be healthy, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that healthy living comes with a hefty price tag. The good news is that it absolutely doesn't have to be an expensive endeavour. There are various strategies you can adopt to improve your wellbeing – without breaking the bank.

Let's explore a few practical tips to help you live a healthier life while staying within your budget.

Embrace Affordable Whole Foods

We tend to think of pre-packaged foods as the cheaper option, but the reality is, these types of foods can be quite costly, and depending on the type of food it is, it could be lacking in the essential nutrients your body needs.

It can take a bit more effort at times, but incorporating whole, unprocessed foods into

your diet can be the cheaper and healthier choice. For example, buying seasonal vegetables and herbs is more affordable than the eye-catching produce that's out of season. And the end result? A big batch of delicious soup that you can enjoy once, and then freeze the rest for another meal.

Meal Prep And Plan Ahead

Planning your meals in advance can save you heaps of time and money. It may seem like a lot of prep work, but if you set aside a few hours on the weekend, you can prepare healthy meals and snacks for the week ahead. Not only does this ensure that you have nutritious options on hand, but also helps you avoid the temptation of expensive takeout or convenience foods. And we all know that a major drain on our income these 'little' unplanned expenses can be, like the weekly cheeky takeaway that you hadn't realised had become more of a regular occurrence than the occasional treat.

Explore Free Or Low-Cost Fitness Activities

Staying active doesn't have to mean that you need an expensive gym membership. Not when you can explore free or low-cost fitness options, such as heading to your local outdoor park and trail for walking, jogging, or cycling. You could also go online and use the free workout videos on YouTube or even download a fitness app and workout at home. That said, don't dismiss the possibility of joining a gym. Most gyms offer discounted gym memberships, or you could take advantage of subsidised gym memberships through your employer or medical aid provider.

Prioritise Preventive Healthcare

Minor health issues can develop into more problematic and expensive issues further down the line, so don't ignore those aches and pains. It may seem like you're saving money by not seeing your doctor and hoping for the best, but in reality, scheduling regular check-ups with your doctor, dentist, and optometrist to catch any potential health issues early can help you avoid more costly procedures later on.

In fact, there are a number of medical aid providers in South Africa who offer free or discounted preventive care services, so be sure to take advantage of these benefits.

Manage Stress And Prioritise Self-Care

Stress can have a significant impact on your physical and mental wellbeing, leading to various health issues. Incorporate stress-reducing activities into your routine, like meditation, deep breathing exercises, or journaling. The good news for your budget is that you don't have to be on top of a mountain or book yourself into a fancy (and expensive) retreat to do any of this. Visit your local park, find a nook in your home, or even take a drive to a bit of pretty wilderness that's reasonably close, and hey presto! You're breathing away the stress and not spending a cent.

It's also recommended that you carve out time for self-care activities that bring you joy and relaxation, such as reading, listening to music, or spending time in nature.

Feeling informed?

The great news for anyone looking to get healthier without blowing their entire budget, is that it can be done. Our last piece of advice is that you should start by setting your health goals, because you can't hit a target you haven't identified. Clearly, your priorities will vary whether you're looking for more flexibility in your life, looking to improve your cardiovascular fitness, hoping to improve your diet, or something else.

By implementing these tips, you can then prioritise your health and wellbeing without compromising your financial stability.

Remember, small, consistent steps towards a healthier lifestyle can have a profound impact on your overall quality of life. You can also make use of AA Inform's Monthly Personal Budget Calculator.

Don't forget that in addition to life advice, AA Inform can also help you compare home and car insurance costs through the AA Insurance Supermarket and even obtain a Free Vehicle Valuation Report, which tells you how much your vehicle or a vehicle you're interested in buying is worth.



Meal prepping healthy and delicious foods.



Take a moment to connect with yourself.

EPIC AFRICAN ROAD TRIPS

Budget and Destination Crossword

Ready to hit the open road? Test your knowledge of Africa adventures, travel budgeting, and some hidden gems of the continent! Complete this puzzle, and you'll be one step closer to planning your dream road trip



Across

- 1. Known as the 'Pearl of Africa' for its breathtaking landscapes
- 2. Popular off-road vehicle for long-distance African drives
- 3. Budget accommodation, often located in natural settings or eco-lodges
- 5. The African city is known for its bustling Medina
- 7. A scenic South African pass known for its breathtaking curves and mountain views
- 9. A crucial document for travel to several African countries
- 10. The popular type of vehicle for a safari trip
- 13. This African city is known for its historic ruins and proximity to the pyramids
- 14. The popular road food item in many parts of Africa
- 15. A national park in Uganda famous for gorilla trekking

Down

- 4. This Famous Kenyan national park is known for the Big Five
- 5. A scenic coastal drive in Kenya
- 6. The largest desert in Africa
- 8. Country where you can drive from Addis Ababa to the historical rock-hewn churches
- 11. A small, hand-held device for navigating on your road trip
- 12. A famous road trip route through the desert in Namibia
- 16. A must-have when camping in the wild
- 17. A must-have to keep hydrated during long desert drives
- 18. This South African route connects the main economic hubs in the country

Beach Sudoku

Stay Cool and Solve the Puzzle!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column, and 3x3 square contains the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers. A cool and refreshing puzzle to enjoy under the summer sun

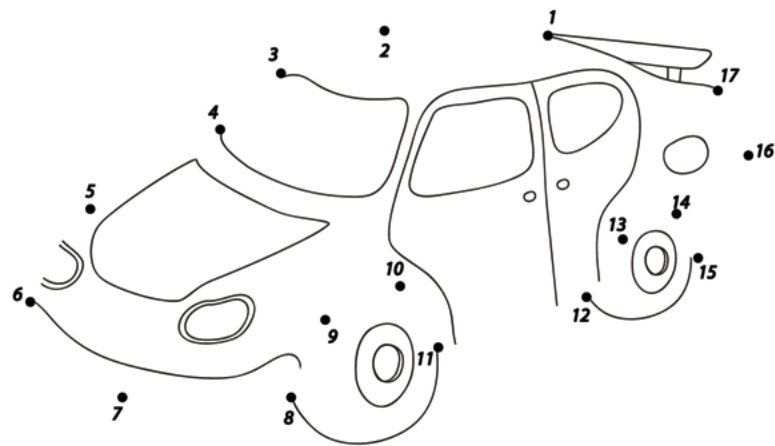
	2	4	5				9	7
5			7		4			
3		7			6			
4		5	6	8	2		3	
	9						7	2
1						5		
7	3		9	5		4	2	1
9		8	2	6	1			
	5			3		9	8	



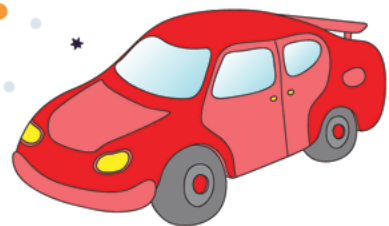
RACE TO THE FINISH!

Connect the Dots

Rev up your engines and put the pieces together! Can you connect the dots to reveal the car? Follow the numbers, draw the lines, and watch as a car takes shape before your eyes. Get ready to power up your drawing skills in this fun, interactive puzzle!



Nice work! You connected the dots and brought the car to life!



EASTER

EGG HUNT

Can you find them all?

Let the hunt begin! Grab your magnifying glass and get ready to spot those sneaky Easter eggs. They're hidden in the most unexpected places, from inside the car windows to on the picnic blanket. How many can YOU find before the picnic's over? Get searching and let the egg-tastic fun begin!"



Did you spot them all? Great job! Now go ahead and count how many eggs you found!"



