

INTRODUCTION

Limpopo is the most northern province of South Africa. It is sometimes described as the “**Golden Horseshoe**”, which refers to the huge arc of unspoiled natural countryside. Limpopo is the gateway to the rest of Africa, and a unique feature of this province is that it shares international borders with three countries: Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, as well as the provinces of Mpumalanga, Gauteng and North West.



In 1994, the province was formed from the northern region of the Transvaal, and initially named **Northern Transvaal**. The following year, it was renamed **Northern Province**, which remained the name until June 2003, when the name was formally changed to **Limpopo**. The name is a tribute to the province most important river, the Limpopo, located on the border with Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The name “Limpopo” is derived from the Nguni word, “iLimpopo” meaning “rapids” or “waterfalls”. According to legend, it was given by the fleeing army of Mzilikazi on their way to Bulawayo. This referred to the sound of the running water over some rocks where they crossed over to Zimbabwe, somewhere close to the confluence of the Limpopo and Sashe Rivers and Mapungubwe.

Limpopo consists of mainly rural communities, comprising of several ethnic groups that are distinct in their cultures. The largest group are the Northern Sotho (Bapedi) accounting for more than half the population in Limpopo. They are followed by the VaTsonga and VhaVenda. The Afrikaans community only accounts for a small percentage.

Home to two World Heritage Sites, Mapungubwe and Makapan’s Valley (annex to the Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng) and the renowned Kruger National Park. It is also the land of the Rain Queen, Modjadji and the sacred Funduzi lake. Truly, a legendary place and distinctly Africa.



Coat of arms of Limpopo

Motto

“Peace, Unity and Prosperity”.

The colours of the Coat of Arms are green, golden yellow, red, white and black.

The Buffalo: Presents unity, strength and political stability.

The Shield: The government’s commitment to protect human rights.

The Baobab: These trees, only found in the northern parts of the province, have been around for hundreds of years, providing food, healing and shelter. It symbolises the strength and steadfastness of the people.

Mountain ranges in the shield: The mountains and rich agricultural lands.

The coronet (small crown) with cycad leaves: Depicts royalty and encourages the continuation of traditional leadership, just as the endangered Cycads are preserved.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Area	123 910 km ²
% of total area	10.2%
Population (Mid-year Estimates, 2006)	5.3 million
Languages (SA Yearbook 06-07)	Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi) 52.1% Xitsonga 22.4% Tshivenda 15.9% Afrikaans
Races	Black (97.3%) White (2.4%) Coloured (0.2%) Asian (0.1%)
Unemployment rate (Labour Force Survey, March 2006)	35.6%
Capital	Polokwane
Largest city	Polokwane
Premier	Sello Moloto (ANC)

MUNICIPALITIES AND DISTRICTS

During apartheid, the administrations of Lebowa, Gazankulu, Venda and the Transvaal were created.

Today, Limpopo Province is divided into five municipal district and subdivided in 24 local municipalities:

Capricorn District

The name "Capricorn" is derived from the tropic of Capricorn (southern tropic).

The tropic of Capricorn lies 23° 26' 22" south of the Equator. It marks the most southerly latitude at which the sun can appear directly overhead at noon, when the southern hemisphere is tilted towards the sun to its maximum extent in December.

This region stretches from the Ysterberg, all along the foothills of the Wolkberg, to the tropic of Capricorn in the north.

Municipalities

- Aganang
- Blouberg
- Lepelle Nkumpi
- Molemole
- Polokwane

Mopani District

The name is derived from the local Mopane tree, growing in abundance in the region.

The district inherited the Maruleng Local Municipality (Hoedspruit) in March, 2006. It was previously part of the Bohlabela District Municipality that has since been dissolved. Maruleng means "place of the Marula".

Municipalities

- Baphalaborwa
- Giyani
- Letaba
- Tzaneen
- Maruleng

Sekhukhune District

The region is named after Sekhukhune, King of the Maroteng (commonly known as the Bapedi) in Sekhukhuneland during the 19th century.

Sekhukhune used to be a cross-boarder municipality between Limpopo and Mpumalanga Province, but on 27 December 2005, was incorporated into the Limpopo Province in accordance with proclamation No. 422.

Municipalities

- Greater Groblersdal
- Greater Marble
- Greater Tubatse
- Makhuduthamaga
- Fetakgomo

Vhembe District

“Vhembe”, meaning “the receiver”, is the Venda word for Limpopo. The **Nzhelele River** (“the giver”) flows into this major river.

The district is sometimes referred to as “the land of legend”, so called for its rich indigenous cultural heritage.

Municipalities

- Makhado
- Musina
- Mutale
- Thulamela

Waterberg District

The Waterberg is the main feature and tourist attraction in this region. The name was given by the Voortrekkers when they first arrived in the area in the 1930’s. It refers to the numerous streams running down its slopes.

Municipalities

- Belabela
- Lephalale
- Modimolle
- Mogalakwena
- Naboomspruit
- Thabazimbi

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE

The main rivers

The Limpopo originates near Johannesburg as the Braamfontein Spruit and the Crocodile River, before joining the Pienaar's Rivier after the Hartbeespoort Dam. It follows a course of approximately 1600km before flowing into the Indian Ocean at Xai-Xai in Mozambique. Sub continental tilt of the Angolan highlands millions of years ago, diverted much of the water from what used to be one of the mightiest rivers in Africa, to the Okavango and Zambezi Delta.

The major rivers flowing into the Limpopo (Vhembe) River

The major rivers feeding it in the north, include the Sand-, Nzhelele- ("the giver"), Nwanedi and the Luvuvhu Rivers.

Others, draining the western regions of the Bushveld

- Crocodile
- Matlabas
- Mokolo
- Lephhalala
- Mogalakwena

The major rivers, draining the eastern regions and flowing into the Indian ocean:

- The Letaba
- Olifants River
- Shingwedzi

The main mountain ranges

Drakensberg Escarpment

- The "Dragon mountains" or "Mountain of Spears" (Ukhakhamba) as it is known in Zulu, forms the eastern border of the Bushveld.
- It starts in the vicinity of Tzaneen and includes the **Wolkberg**.
- **The Strydpoort Mountains** is a western spur of the Drakensberg, running towards Mokopane. It is believed, that the two Voortrekker leaders, Hans van Rensburg and Louis Trichardt had some differences, because ever since they moved through the defile ("poort") in these mountains in 1836, it has been known as "strydpoort" ("defile of conflict or struggle").

Waterberg

- Stretches from Thabazimbi to Mokopane.
- Average elevation: 600m
- Some peaks exceed : 1400m

Soutpansberg

- The most northern mountain range in South Africa
- Situated to the north of Louis Trichardt (Makhado).

Lebombo mountains

- It forms the border between the Kruger National Park and Mozambique.

Springbok flats

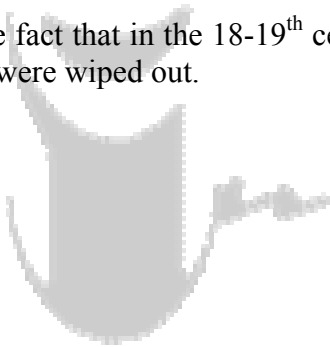
An extensive, **featureless plain that is part of the Bushveld.**

- It stretches on either side of the Pretoria-Zimbabwe railway.
- **Northern boundary:** Strydpoort mountain
- **Western boundary:** Waterberg Range
- **Eastern boundary:** Olifants River

The name was derived from the fact that in the 18-19th centuries, thousands of springbok roamed these parts before they were wiped out.

Average altitude: 1000m

Rainfall: 600m per annum



ROUTES

The “Great North” Road

- The major route is the **N1**, or also known as ‘the Great North’ or ‘Cape to Cairo’ road. It more or less cuts through the middle of the province, passing most of the important towns until it reaches the Zimbabwean border at Beit Bridge.
- Almost any route in Limpopo will take you through unspoilt bushveld scenery, but a few are worth mentioning.

Scenic and adventure driving

- The **R71** from Polokwane to Tzaneen on route to the Kruger Park (Phalaborwa gate) is one of the country’s most spectacular scenic drives, winding its way through the mystical Magoebaskloof.
- Driving from Mpumalanga to Hoedspruit, via the **JG Strijdom tunnel**, provides spectacular views of the Valley of the Elephant.

The Ivory Route

The ivory hunters and gold traders who roamed these areas in the past inspired the Ivory Route. It offers a real experience of the African Wilderness, encompassing about 3.6 million acres of game farms, nature reserves and national parks across Limpopo. The roads also crosses all the major mountains in the province, and some areas would require an off road vehicle (4x4). Good sightings of lions and leopards are possible in the Manyeleti Reserve, while the Letaba Ranch has vast numbers of elephant and buffalo. Some cultural highlights on route include the “kraal” (homestead) of the Modjadji, the Rain Queen, San Rock Art and the Iron Age sites at Thulamela and Mapungubwe. The latter was declared a World Heritage Site, along with the Caves in the Mekanpans Valley, taking the visitor back to the Early Stone Age. Several tented bush camps offer accommodation on route.

The Ribolla Open African Route

The primary areas of Giyani, Thohoyandou, Makhado and Giyani are covered by the route. It focuses on the arts and crafts offered by the province, including famous artists such as Noria Mabasa, Jackson Hlungwane, Phineas Masuvhelele and Sarah Munyai. Traditional VaTsonga/Shangaan and VaVenda culture can be experienced.

CLIMATE

The province falls within a summer-rainfall region (October to March) and thunderstorms in the afternoon are very common.

The eastern and northern parts are subtropical, with humid and hot summers.

Polokwane (previously Pietersburg), lies more or less in the middle of the province and therefore, except for the eastern region, give a good reflection of the province's temperatures. The average temperatures in summer are around 27°C.

In winter (May to September), the nights are cold and mostly frost-free, with chilly mornings and dry and sunny days.

The lowveld (eastern part) can get very hot and smouldering. Towns such as Phalaborwa can reach up to 45°C, but temperatures in the Kruger Park itself are usually around 30°C.

Frequent mist occurs in the mountainous areas (Haarnertsburg and Magoebaskloof area).

ECONOMY

The province had the highest average real-economic growth rate recorded in South Africa between 1995 and 2003. In 1995, its contribution to the national GDP was 5.7 % and in 2004, 6.7% (SA Yearbook 06-07).

GDPR at current prices (2004): R93 188 million

Limpopo is the **natural resource treasure chest** of South Africa, if not the whole of southern Africa. It boasts some of the greatest reserves of agriculture, mineral and tourism resources many of which remain hugely under-exploited.

Agriculture

Many of rural people still practise subsistence farming (most of the produce is consumed by the farmer, leaving little to sell or trade).

Cattle ranching flourishes in the bushveld region and is often combined with controlled hunting. Most of the hunting in South Africa takes place in this province.

In terms of agriculture, Limpopo could be described as the “**garden of South Africa**” with its rich fruit and vegetable production. According to the Provincial Economics, 2003, the province produced the following (given as a percentage of the total production in South Africa):

- mangoes (75%)
- papaya (65%)
- tea (36%)
- citrus, bananas, and litchis (25%)
- avocados (60%)s
- tomatoes (two thirds)
- 285,000 tons of potatoes.

Other products include coffee, nuts, guavas, sisal, cotton, sunflower, maize, wheat and tobacco and timber (more than 170 plantations).

Grapes are also successfully cultivated in the Modimolle district.

The largest tomato farm in South Africa lies between Tzaneen and Makhado.

Mining

The mining sector is also of great importance in the province and employs about 49 000 people in Limpopo (Minerals Bureau, 2002).

It contributed 21.7% in 2004 to the GDP at current prices, and increase of 7.5% since 1996.

An abundance of its minerals occur:

- platinum-group metals (PGM)
- iron-ore
- chromium
- coal (high- and middle grade)
- diamonds
- antimony
- phosphate
- copper
- gold
- magnetite
- vermiculate
- silicon
- mica
- emeralds (the only mine in South Africa is found at Gravelotte)

The follow base commodities are also present:

- black granite
- corundum
- feldspar



INFRASTRUCTURE

Transport

The province is linked to the **Maputo Development Corridor** through Phalaborwa Spatial Development Initiative, which consists of a network of road and rail corridors connecting to the major seaports. This enhances trading and investment opportunities in the Province.

The major airport in the province is Polokwane International Airport. The International Airport falls under the administration of Gateway Airport Authority Limited (GAAL) and is the most north international point of entry to the Republic of South Africa.

R76 million will be spend by the Limpopo Department f Roads and Transport, to upgrade airport facilities for the upcoming 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup. The money will be used for upgrading the airports at Giyani and Thohoyandou, as well as the one at Polokwane.

Two other major airports are also used, one at Phalaborwa and the other at Hoedspruit.

According to the MEC for finance, Saad Cachalia the following were achieved in Limpopo during the 2006/07 financial year (Provincial Treasury Budget Speech, at the Provincial Legislature, on March 8, 2007)

Housing, water and electricity supply

- 282 965 households received free basic electricity. This was more than double the number (120 424) that received this benefit in 2005/06.
- 1 020 905 households had electricity.
- 977 223 households enjoyed free water supply.
- 534 548 had access to sanitation.
- 35 548 houses were completed over the MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework – three year spending plan) period.

Education and schools (in 1994, the national classroom backlog stood at 65 000)

- 70 schools for children studying under trees and storm damaged schools had been completed.
- 2 500 schools had been declared no-fee schools (meaning, that children who can not afford it, does not need to pay school fees).
- The above schools also received R319 per-learner per annum (excluding learner support material).
- 1.14 million learners benefited from the national school nutrition programme in the province.

- 8 651 temporary teachers were appointed permanently by the Department of Education.
- 7 000 teachers were trained on the national curriculum statement.

Health care

- The revitalisation of the Lebowakgomo, Jane Furse, Nkhensani and Dilokong hospitals had been completed. (The total number of provincial hospitals is currently 42).
- The Department of Health purchased 100 ambulances, 12 paramedic response vehicles, 20 scene management and 10 rescue vehicles as well as six multiple patient carriers.
- 914 emergency care practitioners were appointed by the Department of health.
- The number of people who got access to HIV and AIDS treatment increased more than six times over the MTEF period from 1453 in 2004 to 8 907 in 2006.



HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS AND TIPS

The Limpopo is still very “wild” and it is common to find warning signs for hippos or crocodiles at recreational water areas or even in towns. Hippo kills more people, than any other animal in Africa and one should avoid their footpaths or coming between them and the water at all times. Crocodile attacks are also reported almost on a daily base in and around the Levuvhu River (Vhembe region) and people should stay away from the water for at least two meters, as crocodiles are silent and sudden hunters. All rules and regulations should be obeyed in National Parks and any other Reserve, to not only contribute to conservation and sustainable tourism, but also for the visitors own safety. While complying with official rules, it is also important to adhere to the laws of nature and have some understanding of aggressive and dangerous behaviour of animals, even when approaching them in the safety of a vehicle. For detailed information on this topic, do visit www.wildlifecampus.co.za.

As most of the activities and experiences in Limpopo are nature-based, there is always a chance of meeting some of its other smaller and creepy residents.

Snake bite

Unlike Australia, many of our snakes are not venomous and very few people die of snakebite in South Africa. Although the Black Mamba is the largest poisonous and most feared snake in Africa, 90% of snakebites to humans are actually contributed to the Mozambique Spitting Cobra and Puff Adders (Hilton-Barber et. al, 2007). The latter, is the most common and widespread poisonous species in Africa. They move slow, often lie very still and are easily trampled on. Other common poisonous snakes in Limpopo includes, the Horned Adder and Common Night Adder, Black and Green Mamba, Egyptian Cobra, Mozambique spitting cobra(or M’fezi), African Tree Snake (Boomslang) and Twig Snake/Southern Vine (Voëlslang). It is also a fallacy that the African Tree Snake will drop from a tree on anyone who risks walking beneath it and then strike (Marais, 1985).

When bitten by a snake get help as soon and phone the hospital on route with a description of the snake. Do not cut or suck the wound or apply a tourniquet. Depending on the venom injected, the following symptoms might be experienced:

- Extreme pain and swelling (Adder venom is toxic to tissue).
- Dizziness, poor coordination, slurred speech, excessive salivation and difficulty in breathing. (Mamba and cobra venom are neurotoxic)
- Headaches, nausea, diarrhea, lethargy, mental disorientation, bruising and bleeding at the site and all body openings (Boomslang and vine snake venom are toxic to blood cells and

thins the blood).

Although the African Python is not poisonous, snakes longer than three meters are potentially dangers to man. It is the best to uncoil the snake from the tail end in the event of it constricting a person. Pythons are not aggressive, but will defend themselves when provoked and can administer a painful wound. They may not be killed as they are a protected species (Marais, 1985).

Spiders and scorpions

Only the stings from the **Buthidae family** of scorpions (thick tails and thin pinchers) can be fatal. Symptoms include an intense and burning pain, numbness and tingling across the body, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, blurred vision, slurred speech, difficulty breathing or swallowing and shock. To avoid being stung: Shake out your shoes before putting it on and be careful when picking up wood or lifting stones.

Dangerous spiders in South Africa include the sac-, black- and brown widow spiders. A bite may cause a reddened wheal and ulcer, but can also lead to intense pain around the area, sweating, muscle spasm, fever and difficulties in breathing.

They are particular prominent during the hot and humid summers in the Vhembe and Mopani districts.

If clothes are hung outside, it is possible for a female fly to lay eggs on them, especially when the clothes were contaminated with urine or faeces (i.e. baby's nappies). The clothes are then worn and the eggs penetrate the skin.

Mango flies

Precautions

- It is very important to iron all clothes with a hot iron as it will kill any eggs laid on them.
- The other possibility is not to wear them for 48 hours after they have dried, as this is longer than the lifespan of the eggs.
- Do not leave clothes on the ground to dry.

Symptoms

- People will usually complain that their body is itching and within three days, painful, boil-like lesions occur.
- Over the next three days, pus emerges from each sore as it gets ripe. Once the sore is expressed, a worm comes out of it.

Treatment

- If you suspect you may have been infected by the larvae of a mango fly, it is important that you see a doctor immediately. Attempting to remove the larva yourself could cause severe pain, rupturing and

	<p>inflammation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment usually consists applying the lesion with petroleum jelly or liquid paraffin to suffocate the larva. • Treatment should be left on for 30 minutes to an hour and then the larva should be pushed out via finger pressure. • A course of antibiotics is then followed.
<p>Tick bite Fever (Rickettsia)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can occur when camping or going on a hike. <p>Precautionary measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear long pants and check body for ticks or bites regularly. • The bite is a black crust surrounded by a red halo. • The onset of symptoms is within 5-7 days (up to 10 days) with flu-like symptoms • Symptoms: Fever, headache and neck muscle myalgia
<p>Bilharzia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bilharzias parasite occurs in some of the pools and rivers in the Limpopo province, and is caused by infestation by a parasite that is released by freshwater snails which penetrates the human skin. • 'Swimmer's itch' is one symptom that develops where the parasite entered the skin and is often the only symptom. Other symptoms that may occur include muscle pains, diarrhea, fever, vomiting, coughing, burning when passing urine, passing urine more frequently and blood in the urine. <p>Prevention</p> <p>Do not walk bare feet, bathe or swim in rivers or pools of water that might be infected.</p>
<p>Malaria</p>	<p>Visitors to the Kruger – and Mapungubwe National Park are at risk of contracting malaria, especially between December and April.</p> <p>Prophylactic medicines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-malaria prophylactic medicine is recommended for these areas during the high-risk period and depending on the drug type, treatment is commenced one week or 48 hours prior to entering the malaria area. All drugs have to be continued for specific period after returning home, for a week or month. • It is advisable to consult a medical practitioner or travel clinic as to the specific medication required and the possible side effects i.e. nausea and hallucinations; contraindications; requirements for

pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, as well as babies and small children.

Preventive measures

- Many people decide not to take medicines and rather try to avoid being bitten.
- The most vulnerable times are between dusk and dawn and people are advised to stay indoors during these periods or cover exposed skin with light clothing.
- On top of this, insect repellent should be sprayed from head to toe, the ankles being the most critical area.
- Burning anti-mosquito coils and ensuring netted screens are kept closed, also will reduce the risk.

Malaria Symptoms

Any person developing flu-like symptoms within 7 to 20 days (or even longer) after being in malaria areas should immediately be tested for malaria, and be treated.

Will you contract malaria if been bitten by a mosquito in the Kruger Park?

Most types of mosquito do not carry the malaria plasmodium and if one is bitten, it does not mean one will contract malaria. Only mosquitoes of the anopheles genus carry the plasmodium, and then only if they have previously fed on an infected host.

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