**Constitution**

**Official name**
Republic of South Africa

**Form of state**
A federal state, consisting of a national government and nine provincial governments

**Legal system**
Based on Roman-Dutch law and the 1996 constitution, in force since February 4 1997

**National legislature**
Bicameral parliament elected every five years, comprising the 400-seat National Assembly and the 90-seat National Council of Provinces

**Electoral system**
List-system of proportional representation based on universal adult suffrage

**National elections**
April 14 2004, the next election is to be held in 2009

**Head of state**
President, elected by the National Assembly; currently Thabo Mbeki

**National government**
Coalition government of the African National Congress and the New National party

**Main political parties**
The African National Congress (ANC) is the majority party in the coalition government. Other parties include the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Inkatha Freedom Party (Inkatha or IFP), the Independent Democrats (ID) United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP)

**Main towns and population**
Metropolitan areas ('000)
Pretoria 1,080
Cape Peninsula 2,185
Johannesburg/Randburg 1,916
Durban/Pinetown 1,137

**Area:** 1,221,038 sq km
**Languages:** Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa, and IsiZulu

**Currency:** Rand

**Exchange rate:**
2005 latest $1=rand 6.3575
2004 average $1=rand 6.4417

**Total population:** 44.8m (October 2001 census)

**Main towns and population:**
Metropolitan areas ('000)
Pretoria 1,080
Cape Peninsula 2,185
Johannesburg/Randburg 1,916
Durban/Pinetown 1,137

**Sources:** EIU; Thomson Datastream