

City Trail Guides

Juba

and the best of

South Sudan

Blake Evans-Pritchard



Essentials

When to go

South Sudan has an equatorial climate, with high humidity and plenty of rainfall. This makes overland travel to some parts of the country difficult — or even impossible — at certain times of the year, as dirt tracks turn to impassable rivers of mud.

The rainy season generally falls between April and November, although it will be slightly shorter the further north you go. During this period, brilliantly blue skies will be punctuated by intense bursts of downpour. The rainfall can last an hour or two, sometimes longer, before dying away and being replaced by calmer weather once again.

An approaching storm is usually signified by a sudden pick-up in the wind and grey skies in the distance. It is worth watching for these tell-tale signs and seeking shelter well in advance of an impending downpour, because you will get soaked to the skin in seconds.

December and January are marked by their stifling heat and empty skies.

Travelling around the country is most pleasant between January and March, when the temperature becomes a little cooler and the rains have not yet arrived.

The weather will affect what excursions you can do; many national parks are simply not reachable during the height of the rainy season.

Time zone

South Sudan operates according to East Africa Time. In winter, it is three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and two hours ahead of Central European Time (CET). The country does not have daylight saving time and so, in the summer, the difference is plus two hours and plus one hour respectively.

Language

The official language of South Sudan is **English**, although not everyone speaks it, especially in the more remote regions.

A form of Arabic, known as **Juba Arabic**, is widely spoken across the South - though it has not yet been made an official language.

Juba Arabic emerged a couple of hundred years ago among South Sudanese soldiers, who were forced to serve in the armies of the north. If you have learnt the Arabic used in North Sudan, then you should be able to get by in Juba Arabic, although there are significant differences, largely influenced by local indigenous languages.

Juba Arabic tends to be spoken rather than written and does not seem to be usually learnt as a first language. These facts, along with a latent hostility to the country's northern heritage, may explain why English – and not Juba Arabic – was chosen as the country's *lingua franca*.

However, you are likely to hear Arabic spoken more often than English whilst in the country, and so it pays to make an effort to learn some key phrases (see our language section on page <?>).

The further north you go, the more the language starts to resemble the Arabic spoken on the streets of Khartoum.

There are more than 60 indigenous languages spread across the country. The most widely-spoken are Dinka, Nuer, Bari and Zande. Most people living in Juba who speak indigenous languages will also speak Juba Arabic. Outside of the capital, in more remote regions, these tribal communities may not speak any language other than their own.

The indigenous language that you are most likely to hear whilst in Juba is Bari, which is widely spoken in Central Equatoria. Nilotic Dinka — which, at an estimated 1.4 million speakers, is the largest language in South Sudan — can also be heard in the capital.

Getting there and away

By air

The easiest way to get to South Sudan is to take a flight to Juba via one of its southern neighbours, such as Kenya or Uganda, or via a middle-eastern country, such as Egypt or the United Arab Emirates. A growing number of airlines also now connect the Sudanese capital of Khartoum with Juba.

The table below lists the main airlines that serve direct routes into Juba.

Egypt: Cairo	EgyptAir	www.egyptair.com
Eritrea: Asmara	Flynas	www.flynas.com
Ethiopia: Addis Ababa	Ethiopian Airlines	www.ethiopianairlines.com
Kenya: Nairobi	Kenya Airways	www.kenya-airways.com
	Fly 540	www.fly540.com
Rwanda: Kigali	RwandAir	www.rwandair.com
Sudan: Khartoum	NOVA Airways	www.novaairways.com
	Sudan Airways	www.sudanair.com
	Flynas	www.flynas.com
Uganda: Entebbe	RwandAir	www.rwandair.com
	Kenya Airways	www.kenya-airways.com
	Air Uganda	www.air-uganda.com
United Arab Emirates: Dubai	Fly Dubai	www.flydubai.com

By water

Following the granting of independence, the waterways in South Sudan did briefly open up and it was possible to travel between Kosti, south of Khartoum, and Juba by boat.

Sadly, the precarious security situation in the country at the moment has put paid to this mode of river transportation. The government does not like to see any boats on the water in or around Juba. Outside the capital, there is a danger that armed tribesmen may fire on vessels they see travelling along the Nile.

River travel may yet return. When it does, expect to pay between \$35 and \$45 for travelling between Juba and Kosti in Sudan. You will need to turn up at the docks in Kosti or Juba and negotiate passage with one of the vessels that ply the route.

Remember that such a trip is not for those who like to travel in comfort. The journey takes around ten days and will see you travelling through mosquito-infested swampland under often unbearable heat.

By land

The easiest and safest land crossing into South Sudan is through **Uganda** in the South.

The **Kenyan** border is open, although there have been reports of banditry in the area. Most public buses to Kenya go via Kampala in Uganda.

The border with **Ethiopia** is also open but remains risky — travellers have recently been able to cross it, but you should proceed with extreme caution.

The overland crossing to the **Democratic Republic of Congo** remains dangerous, as does the one into the **Central African Republic**. Both borders are officially open.

The border between **Sudan** and South Sudan is not officially open. However, since the border is so long and difficult to police, there remains a huge amount of unofficial traffic between the two countries.

There are no train services into and out of the country.

Travelling around

See page <?> for more transport tips

Within cities

Buses are the cheapest way of travelling around cities. Most journeys will cost you around 1 SSP. They also allow you to really appreciate a side of the local culture that is simply not possible if you use taxis or private vehicles all the time. However, without a good knowledge of a city, you are almost certain to get lost and frustrated when the bus veers off in a quite unexpected direction.

Taxis are another possibility, although remember that there is no guarantee that taxi drivers know where they are going any better than you do. Most city trips by taxi should cost no more than 30 SSP.

A particularly convenient way of getting around cities in South Sudan is to hop on the back of a bicycle or motorbike. These are known as *boda-bodas*, a corruption of the English word “border”, since this was once the main way of crossing the borders between Kenya and Uganda. A ride on a motorbike should cost you no more than 7 SSP to most destinations within a city, whilst bicycles are usually a couple of SSP cheaper. Bicycles are mostly used in rural towns and are not widely available in Juba or other large cities.

If you want more freedom, consider **hiring a car**. Driving in South Sudan can be a pretty hair-raising experience, so you might want to think about getting a driver, too. If you are going to be here for a while, it might make more sense to purchase a car. There is now a thriving second-hand car market

in Juba (near Konyo Konyo Market — page <?>), making it economical to buy a car when you arrive in the city and sell it on afterwards.

There is currently no functioning **rail network** in South Sudan. During colonial times, trains operated all the way from Khartoum down to Wau, but this route has long since been discontinued and is unlikely to start up again in the near future.

Around the country

If you are planning on travelling a long distance, the quickest way is to **fly**.

Domestic flights are cheap, but remember that safety standards are lower than for international trips.

If you do not fancy flying, the number of routes being served by long-distance buses is increasing, although they are not terribly reliable during the wet season.

Overland travel remains risky in many areas of South Sudan due to outbreaks of fighting and banditry on the roads.

When travelling long distances, make sure that you take precautions against the heat, which can make you very ill.

Safety standards for buses are well below those found in Europe or America and drivers are often behind the wheel for many hours with barely a break.

If you plan to **drive** yourself, remember that roads outside the main cities are not always in the best condition, and when it rains quickly turn to rivers of mud that can become perilous. This is improving, though, and massive infrastructure projects have been started along many of the major routes.

You no longer need a **permit** to travel around South Sudan, although some places could be off-limits. Best to check with the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.

What to take

In Juba, it is possible to find many of the items that you might be missing from back home. However, prices are often much higher, largely because of poor infrastructure and high transportation costs.

South Sudan is hot throughout the year so make sure that you pack accordingly. **Loose comfortable clothes**, preferably cotton, are best.

Sandals or light **shoes** are good for short walks around town, although it is also sensible to pack some comfortable shoes for more heavy-duty walking. Many city streets can be difficult to navigate without proper footwear, since they are often poorly paved and pitted with gaping holes. If you are thinking of exploring the countryside, consider bringing proper trekking footwear.

If you want to **camp** whilst in the country, you should bring your own tent and sleeping bag. Camping equipment is in short supply.

The African **sun** can be fiercely hot, particularly in the middle of the day. Bring a high-factor sunscreen. You might also want to think about wearing a hat. Sunglasses are also a good idea.

A **flashlight** is useful in case of power failures. This will also help to avoid potholes and other hazards when walking in the street at night. Street lighting in towns and cities remains poor.

You should make photocopies of all **travel documents** (passport, flight ticket, visa and insurance policy) in case you lose them. One handy trick is to email them to yourself — that way you will be able to print them out whenever you need. There are Internet cafés all over Juba that offer printing services.

Include several **passport-sized photographs** in your document wallet, because you'll certainly need to attach them to some form or other.

General **medications** (including antibiotics) can be bought in Juba but are harder to get outside the capital. If you are dependent on special medication, make sure that you take an ample supply as it may not be so easy to get when you are here.

Mosquitoes are a real nuisance throughout South Sudan. To counter them, bring a good **insect repellent** that contains at least 50% DEET. This is a chemical compound that is particularly effective against the critters but can be harmful if used for a prolonged period of time. You might want to bring a mosquito net, too, although this is an item that can be found quite cheaply in most main cities.

If you are planning to do any **sport** in the country, you should bring the necessary equipment from back home. There are tennis courts at the UN compound and Acacia Village, but it is difficult to find any tennis racquets in the country.

There is not a great variety of internationally-recognised **perfumes** in South Sudan so you might want to pack some of your favourite brands. The local brands of perfume, with their distinctively exotic aroma, are worth trying for a change.

Clothes and electronic equipment can be expensive and of poor quality.

Money

See page <?> for more info about banking in the country

The local currency

Following independence, South Sudan wasted no time in ditching the northern currency in favour of its own **South Sudanese Pound**, officially abbreviated as SSP.

When it was launched, the SSP was initially pegged to the northern currency. Such a peg has now been severed, and the value of the currency is largely determined at the whim of the Bank of South Sudan. Persistent volatility has plagued the currency ever since it was introduced.

At the time of research (March 2015), the official foreign exchange rate was 2.8 SSP to the dollar. However, you get a much better rate of exchange if you change money on the **black market**, which most foreigners do. The exact rate of exchange you get depends on how much money you change, and can vary from 3.7 to 4.2 SSP.

A word of caution, though. Changing money on the black market can be risky and it is best to go through an agent that you trust — ask other foreigners who they change with, or see if your hotel can help.

There are black market touts operating near all the main markets, but watch out for scams. A common tactic is to claim that you handed over fewer dollars than you actually did. These black-marketeteers often operate in groups, and so if they all say the same thing you have little recourse. Occasionally, these men may simply grab your money and run, so do take care.

Some of those operating in the black market try to entice the foreigner in by offering a ridiculously attractive rate. Your researchers were offered a rate as high as 5.5 SSP to the dollar. As a general rule of thumb, if the amount being offered sounds too high compared to the usual black market rate, then it is probably best to leave well alone.

One SSP can be divided into 100 *pistras*. Six denominations of notes are available (1, 5, 10, 25, 50 and 100). The *pistras* are issued in the form of coins (1, 5, 10, 25, 50).

Paying for things

South Sudan remains predominantly a cash economy. **Travellers' cheques** and **credit / debit cards** are not widely accepted in the country. KCB Bank has started installing credit card machines at certain hotels, but these are only the large international ones — at the time of going to press only 11 had such facilities, with more on the way (see page <?> for a list of these). Paying for things by credit card at shops or restaurants is unheard of.

There are currently no **ATM machines** in the country that accept Western credit cards. The big banks — such as Equity, KCB and Cooperative — have installed ATMs in Juba, but these currently only accept cards attached to local bank accounts.

Paying for some services over the **internet** can be difficult, since companies often suspect online transactions from the region of being fraudulent. It is not possible to use PayPal to pay for things.

The **US dollar** remains the most useful currency to carry. Some shops and restaurants will accept this *in lieu* of the local currency. The **euro** and **sterling** are less readily accepted, although they can be changed at an exchange bureau. Be careful not to change more money than you need, though, as changing money back is expensive.

If you do bring dollars, you should only carry notes that were printed after 2009 (some say after 2006, but your researchers even had problems with pre-2009 dollars). Many shops will not take older notes because of fears that they can be easily forged.

Dollars are not accepted in all local shops, so it is worth making sure that you also have the local currency with you. Take care. Local notes — particularly the one SSP note — can get very tatty over time, and it is not uncommon for you to be handed in your change a torn note, often clumsily patched together with Sellotape. A number of traders, particularly in the smarter shops, will not accept such notes. There is nothing wrong with refusing to accept a note in poor condition if you think you may not be able to use it later. Many traders do.

For those intending to stay longer, bringing hard currency is likely to be impractical and a **local bank account** might be a better option.

US sanctions against South Sudan do not exist in the same way that they do in the north, although continued inter-dependence between the two countries (particularly in the oil sector) means that certain sanctions still remain. Moreover, following the outbreak of ethnic fighting at the end of 2013, Washington did introduce new targeted sanctions against certain politicians in the country.

Whilst none of these sanctions should affect currency transactions – the restrictions on currency in South Sudan now come from the fear of fraud rather than US-imposed sanctions – it is worth bearing them in mind if you are planning on doing business in the region.

Prices in this book

You will notice that, when talking about prices in this book, both the US dollar (\$) and the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) are alternately used. This may at first appear confusing, but there is a logic to it.

We try to use SSP where possible. Sometimes, though, hotels and travel agencies, especially the more international ones, prefer to give their prices in a currency that is less likely to fluctuate – normally the US dollar. It made sense to follow their lead in this book, otherwise a sudden change in the value of the SSP would quickly force the prices that are quoted here out-of-date.

The cost of living

South Sudan, perhaps a little surprisingly, is not a cheap country – at least not in the way that some of its neighbours are.

In general, prices are fixed in supermarkets and shops, whilst some haggling is expected in the market. Prices are also negotiable with taxi and *boda-boda* drivers.

In shops, prices of goods are not always marked, although many of the supermarkets aimed at international clientele will display prices. Such shops are generally more expensive than those catering for the locals, but are handy for finding anything that you might be missing from back home.

Where prices are not marked, make sure you know what you should expect to pay before you part with your cash. Locals in South Sudan tend to be quite honest, but there is always the temptation to hike prices for the rich *khawaja*.

Mail and communication

See page <?> for more info on this

The postal service

There is no door-to-door postal service in South Sudan.

If you need to send something into or ée country, your best bet is to use one of the international courier companies, such as DHL (Airport Road; www.dhl.com) or TNT (Etrias International, Juba Market; www.tnt.com). FedEx (www.fedex.com) used to have an office in Juba, but following the troubles in December 2013 suspended operations there.

Some companies within Juba have PO boxes for receiving packages sent by courier.

There is currently a shortage of PO boxes, and so if you want to open a new one you may have to wait up to a year in order to do so.

Internet

There are a growing number of wireless internet hotspots in Juba. Many of the fancier hotels and restaurants now have wi-fi. Wi-fi is less common outside of the capital.

There are internet cafés all over the place. Look in particular near universities or markets. They tend to charge around 15 SSP for an hour of surfing.

You can also get internet on your phone for around 50 SSP a month.

Most telecom companies provide a 3G network dongle that permits you to connect to the Internet. The dongle itself costs around 150 SSP, and the monthly subscription between 120 SSP and 150 SSP, depending on which operator you choose. The subscription can usually be cancelled with a month's notice.

Phone

The country code for South Sudan is +211. Some people still use Ugandan-registered phones (country code +256), although this is becoming less common.

Mobile numbers in the country start with 09, whilst fixed lines begin with 01.

There are four principal mobile operators in the country: Gemtel, MTN (www.mtn.com), Vivacell and Zain (www.zain.com).

South Sudan is served by a dual-band system, which means that any unblocked mobile phone should work there. Most international SIM cards work as long as you have credit.

Local pay-as-you-go SIM cards cost between 5 and 20 SSP, depending on the network, and can easily be purchased from street vendors or in shopping malls (although they will generally be cheaper if you get them directly from the mobile operator's office).

Once you have purchased a SIM card, you will usually have to take it to an office of the relevant network provider, within 24 hours, so that it can be registered. Some sim card vendors may be able to register for you — they will usually say if they offer this service on a sign outside the shop.

Top-up cards, widely sold by street vendors or in local shops, typically cost between 2 SSP and 20 SSP.

Mobile phones do not work in the more remote regions of South Sudan, which is why many people also use satellite phones. The main satellite phone company is Thuraya (www.thuraya.com). A Thuraya phone number is prefixed with 00882. You will occasionally see Thuraya phone numbers in this book. Remember, though, that the cost of calling such phones can be very high (typically \$2.50 a minute or higher).

3G and 4G smartphone networks work in the country.

Media

The media in South Sudan is developing slowly.

Radio is still the main source of news and information in the country and dozens of radio stations have emerged across the region.

The largest radio station in the country, in terms of number of listeners, is Radio Miraya (www.radiomiraya.org), which is a joint initiative between the UN and Swiss NGO Fondation Hirondelle. In Juba, Radio Miraya plays on 101.0. Broadcasts are in both English and Arabic.

Other main radio stations in the country include Eye Radio (98.6 FM), funded by USAID and broadcasting in a number of languages including English and Arabic, the state-run South Sudan Radio Network, the Catholic-run Bakhita Radio (91.0 FM) and the privately-owned Capital FM (89.0 FM).

The BBC World Service also broadcasts in the capital on 90.0 FM (Arabic) and 88.2 FM (English), and the Voice of America on 93.5 FM (English only). Radio France International — broadcasting in French, English, Arabic and Kiswahili — is on 91.4 FM.

Television in South Sudan is still at a very early stage, and the main station at the moment is the state-run South Sudan TV. Privately-owned Citizen TV was recently launched in the country, although went off air following the violence at the end of 2013 and has not yet returned.

Newspapers in South Sudan circulate almost exclusively among the educated elite in urban areas and very few copies reach rural villages.

There are three main English-language daily newspapers: The Juba Monitor (which replaced the now defunct Khartoum Monitor that was in circulation prior to independence), The Citizen and The Patriot. The New Times is a newspaper published weekly, and The New Nation is published every month.

The two main Arabic dailies are Al-Watani ('Salvation') and Al-Mouqif ('The Issue'). The first Arabic daily in the country, Al-Masir, has just shut down.

Newspapers from Uganda also widely circulate. It is also possible to find a number of newspapers and magazines from the US and Britain, although they may not be the latest issues.

Newspapers are generally sold by street vendors in the main cities.

Many of the large hotels have newspapers that you can browse in the lobby. The Institut Française, on Juba University's campus, has fairly old editions of international magazines, in both French and English.

Electricity

The standard voltage in South Sudan is 230. Sockets are either the British three-pin or the round two-pin plug — there seems to be no fixed rule. It is not uncommon to find both of them in the same building. You should bring an adaptor for both kinds of plug.

The quality of plugs and extensions is generally very poor. Moreover, the spacing between the pins is not always consistent. This means that, when you plug something in, it is often either too loose or doesn't fit at all.

Power shortages are commonplace and can last for a number of hours, particularly in the more remote towns and villages. Bring a flashlight just in case.

Most of the large hotels will have a backup generator, though, which kicks in if the power fails.

Visas and permits

See page <?> for more info on visas

Entry visas are required by most nationalities, and are usually valid for one or two months. You should get a visa before arriving in the country. Officially they are no longer available at the border, although exceptions are sometimes made.

You must **register** within three days of arriving in the country, with the Ministry of Immigration. You are also expected to register with the local authorities in every new city that you visit.

You are not allowed to take **photos** in the country without an official permit, which you can obtain from the Ministry of Information, just off Ministries Road (cost: \$50). This is the same slip of paper that you need to work as a journalist in the country — an indication that culturally South Sudan does not appreciate the value of taking photos simply for pleasure rather than publication. Without this permit, you are certain to be stopped and questioned by the police. Even with the permit they are likely to interrogate you.

You do not currently need additional permits to **travel** outside of the capital. However, the volatile situation in the country at the moment means that there are numerous roadblocks and control points all over the place, and you may be quizzed about your intentions and sometimes stopped from travelling to a certain place. The situation can always change. If in doubt, ask at the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism about this.

Health and vaccinations

This section outlines what health precautions you should take if travelling to South Sudan. However, since health and vaccination requirements change all the time, you are strongly advised to consult your local health clinic for the latest information. All visitors should take out a good health insurance policy before travelling.

Whatever length of time you are staying in the country, you should be vaccinated against **typhoid**, **tetanus**, **diphtheria** and **polio**. Vaccination against **hepatitis A** is also recommended if you are staying in the country for more than four months. For a longer stay, vaccination against **meningococcal meningitis** is advisable. **Hepatitis B** is present in the country, but it is usually only contracted through intimate contact with a carrier.

Rabies is present and a rabies vaccine is recommended for those at high risk of animal bites. Should you get bitten by an animal during your stay, seek immediate medical attention; rabies can be fatal.

At the time of going to press, a worrying number of **cholera** cases were being detected in Juba and elsewhere in the country, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) was intensifying efforts to combat the outbreak. Cholera is typically transmitted by contaminated food and water, so be careful what and where you eat.

If you are travelling from a country where **yellow fever** is prevalent, you will need to have with you a yellow-fever vaccination certificate. You will also need to have a yellow-fever certificate if you plan to travel to Egypt during your stay in South Sudan.

Malaria is widespread in South Sudan, so preventative medication should be taken before, during and after your trip.

Larium (otherwise known as mefloquine) is often recommended as the best medication for protection against the particular strain of malaria found in the country. Follow your medical professional's advice regarding dosage: it is usually taken as a weekly tablet for the duration of your stay in the country. Some people experience side-effects with larium — including dizziness and paranoia. The best thing to do is to try larium a few weeks before your departure and, if you do experience bad side-effects, consider switching to another drug. Your local health centre can give you more information on the drugs available.

See the box on the previous page for more advice about dealing with malaria.

Don't drink water straight from the tap in South Sudan. Stick to bottled drinking water (2 SSP for one-and-a-half litres) or use water purification filters, which are available from household stores (costing around 60 SSP for a packet).

AIDS is present in South Sudan, although less common than in other sub-Saharan countries. If you have any sexual relations whilst in the country, it is always a good idea to use protection.

Food poisoning is common in South Sudan. Symptoms include stomach cramps, vomiting and being unable to eat and drink. To minimise the risk of getting food poisoning, be careful where you buy your food, particularly when it comes to meat products. Look for food that has just been cooked. In general, frying food gets rid of more bacteria because it is cooked at a higher temperature.

Hospitals in South Sudan are sub-standard compared to many in the West. They are mainly used by expats when emergency procedures have to be carried out for stabilisation of a condition. It is best not to rely on them for treatment that can be carried out when you are back home.

For further information about the health requirements of South Sudan, visit:

- www.nathnac.org
- www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Malaria Travel Advice

Malaria can prove fatal if left untreated, and so you should seek medical advice if you start exhibiting any symptoms of the illness. Telltale signs of malaria are similar to severe flu: fever, sweating and shivering, headache, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, aching muscles and joints, and backache.

Malaria can spread rapidly, especially cerebral malaria, which is the most deadly form of the disease. Always seek medical advice if you have any suspicion that you may have contracted the disease. You must get customised advice about how to protect yourself against malaria. What precautions you take will depend on your medical history, what medications you are currently taking, where you are going, what you will be doing, what time of year you will be travelling and for how long you will be staying.

Some key things that you should do to deal with malaria effectively:

- Avoid getting bitten in the first place. This means using effective insect repellents (ideally containing at least 50% DEET) and wearing appropriate clothes to cover arms and legs.
- Take malaria prevention tablets, according to what your travel clinic advises — and take them consistently, as per instructions.
- Treat any symptoms without delay, ideally within eight hours and certainly within 12 hours of them starting.
- Consider taking an emergency treatment kit, especially if you are likely to be in a region where immediate treatment will be hard to obtain.
- Malaria can strike several weeks, and sometimes more than a year, after that fateful mosquito bite. Continue taking your tablets for the full length of time recommended and immediately report any suspicious symptoms to your nearest emergency department, even if it is in the middle of the night.

Public holidays and weekends

The weekend in South Sudan consists of Saturday and Sunday. Civil servants also often take Friday afternoon off, which means that doing anything with ministries at this time can be challenging.

The following national holidays are observed in the country:

- January 9 (Peace Agreement Day) – when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, which formally set the country on the path to independence.
- May 16 (SPLA Day) – commemorating the day in 1983 when the rebellion against the north was officially launched.
- July 9 (Independence Day) – when the country officially seceded from the North.
- July 30 (Martyr’s Day) – commemorating those who have fallen during the struggle
- December 25 (Christmas Day).
- December 26 (Boxing Day).

Crime and safety

The security situation in South Sudan can be precarious. Always keep in mind the political situation in the country, and pay close attention to the news to see if things are likely to change. Most national embassies recommend that you register with them when you arrive.

There has been a steady rise in crime in recent months. Be alert near markets, where pickpocketing is commonplace. Security services have also reported organised criminal gangs operating throughout Juba. These gangs tend to be fairly well-organised and are made up of South Sudanese, Ugandan, and Kenyan citizens.

Walking around Juba during the day is generally fairly safe. However, it is not advisable to walk the streets after nightfall.

There has been a growing number of reports of armed robberies, particularly during the night. Such incidents remain comparatively rare, but you might want to think about staying at an hotel or in a compound that offers greater security. Although it is possible to get fairly cheap accommodation these days in Juba, such places do not always come with the level of security that you might desire.

Begging is common in many cities throughout South Sudan, although beggars rarely turn out to be threatening.

Take care if changing money with black market touts on the street, as there are many scams in operation (page <OV>).