

Report of Experiences

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@ 2010

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HOW I PREPARED MY STAY

PREPARATIONS

Once you've decided to venture to go abroad you first have to deal with the application. All important information on deadlines and required documents can be found on the sides of the [international office](#). Also Britta Stigge and Jenka Schmidt are happy to advise you. Besides the application form, a letter of motivation (that explains why you want to go abroad, what you want to do at the University and why you'd be personally suitable) one of the most important points that need to be clarified is certainly the subject of living. If you are not planning to live in one of the flats proposed by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) it is very important that you clarify where you will live and above all that this apartment has been accredited by the NMMU before you leave. The accreditation process can be difficult and takes a long time. **Note:** as long as the apartment is not accredited you can't get registered at the NMMU!

VISA

To apply for the visa, some nerve-wracking and time-consuming administrative procedures are required. First of all, you need a valid passport and a police certificate. You can get both, the [passport](#) (approx. 70 €, processing time: 3-4 weeks) and the [police report](#) (approx. 30 €, processing time: 2 weeks) at the Citizens' Advice Bureau of your city. In addition, a medical certificate (a form, which is filled out by your GP) and a radiological examination report (a form which is filled out by a radiologist (approx. 30 €)) is necessary. Furthermore the acceptance letter of the university, a proof of sufficient financial resources, a copy of a round-trip ticket, a deposit of 767 €, a handling fee of 52 € and a [health insurance policy](#) (which is accepted by the South African embassy) is required. I decided to join the Central health insurance cooperation and paid about 200 € for eight month. Even if the NMMU asks you to take out a South African health insurance this is not necessary. Both the cash deposit and the handling fee can be transferred to the following account:

Account holder:	Südafrikanische Botschaft
Account number:	261 89 24
Bank:	Commerzbank AG Berlin
Bank code:	100 400 00
Purpose:	Study permit; (Name of applicant)

The transfer voucher together with all documents mentioned above, the application form and a self-addressed envelope fund with 3,50 € postage must be send to the following address:

Konsularabteilung
Botschaft der Republik Südafrika
Tiergartenstraße 18
10785 Berlin

Before applying for the visa you should think twice about how long you want to stay in South Africa, as an extension of the visa from South Africa first can take a very long time and second the same documents must be resubmitted. So if you are planning to travel through South Africa before or after your semester abroad you should indicate this in the application. I had my visa already two weeks after my application. However, this is not reliable. The processing time can be up to three weeks.

For further information you can visit the [South African embassy webside](#).

FINANCIAL

In financial terms, I can recommend the DKB. You can withdraw money with the credit card anywhere in the world for free. When paying by credit card fees at the rate of 1.75% of the purchase value arise. In addition you get interest on credit account on the DKB-Visa-Card. Since this is an internet bank, any financial transactions can be organized via the Internet. The application for DKB-Cash account can be found on the [DKB website](#).

IMMUNIZATIONS

Besides the Immunizations against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, you should be immunized against hepatitis A and B. You don't have to worry about Malaria in Port Elizabeth (PE). But if you plan to travel to northern parts of South Africa such as Kruger or Wetlands you should consult a doctor to find out whether a malaria prevention is required.

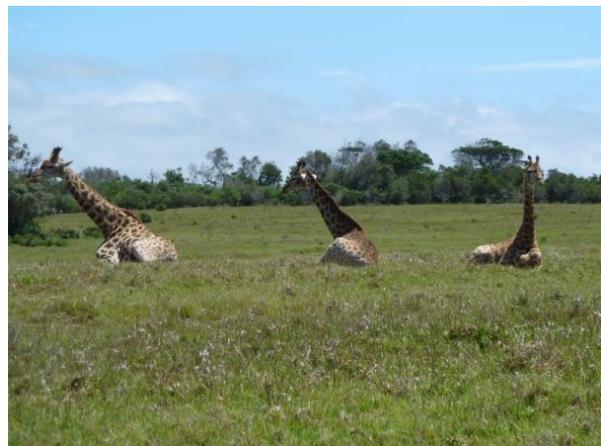
UNIVERSITY

FIRST DAYS AT NMMU

At the International Orientation Day important things, such as courses, regulations, safety and other topics are explained. In the course of a one-hour presentation the International Office introduces itself and prepares you for your stay. This is followed by a campus tour. In this process all internationals are divided into groups. Students of the same university are together in one group. During the campus tour you learn, depending on how well the leader is, what is where and how certain things have to be organized.

The registration at the University takes place at one of the following days. To enrol in the courses it requires several signatures from up to 4 different offices (Financial Office, Cashier, Medical Aid and International Office). Due to the fact that you have to wait in front of the offices and sometimes have to go to them twice you have to be very patient. After registering you can fetch your student ID. With this card you have access to the computer labs and consequently to the Internet. Besides this you can use the card as a prepaid card to pay your food at the restaurants of the campus or to print.

During the semester the International Office offers several excursions to different destinations. One of the first tours will take place within the orientation week. The main attractions of PE like the Museum, the Donkin Reserve and Lighthouse, the largest shopping mall of the city (Greenacres) as well as one of the Game Parks around PE (Kragga Kamma) are part of this excursion.



CAMPUS

The Campus of the NMMU in PE is divided in three campuses: the North and South campus as well as the 2nd Avenue campus. North and South campus are forming the Main Campus and are located in the same area, a private nature reserve. Due to the fact that this is a huge area it might be a bit scary and confusing in the beginning. But within the first week you get used to the size. The university area is beautiful. Everything is green and clean. Palm trees are blowing in the wind, Monkeys are playing around, students are recovering in the sun and you can see the ocean in the distance.



The University offers a range of popular sports (q.v. Sport). There is a large sport area with several cricket, rugby, football and hockey fields, a tennis and a squash court as well as two fitness centers. Apart from regular institutions like a library, information point and computer rooms you can also find an ATM, a post office and a copy shop on campus.

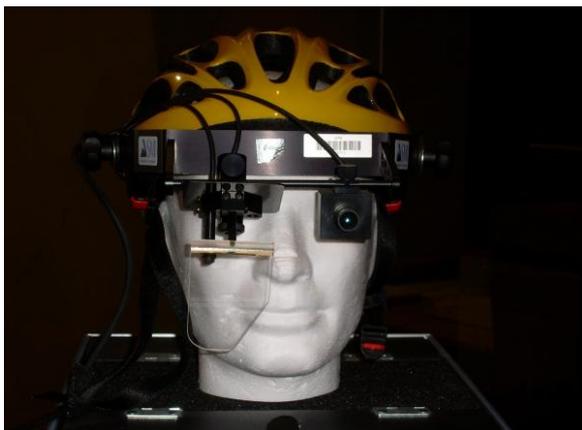
To avoid theft not everyone has access to the campus. If you want to enter you have to pass a gate where you need to show your student ID. Furthermore selected cars are checked for possible stolen property when they are leaving the campus. So if your car has no central locking you should open your boot before leaving in order to avoid delays at the gate.

The computing sciences department is located at the [South Campus](#) on the second floor of the Embizweni Building (Building 9 on the map). Here you will find the offices of all staff and professors as well as several computer labs where you can log onto

the Internet and work on your assignments. Only computer science students have access to these labs. For this reason you should always find a workplace.



To support the students in their research the computing sciences department is very well equipped. For further information about the department, research activities and equipment read this [newsletter](#).



MENSA

There is no mensa on campus. You can choose between a fast food restaurant, a kiosk and a cafeteria. Besides coffee and tea the cafeteria offers a variety of dishes at reasonable prices. Depending on the weather most students enjoy their meals outside on the benches or on the meadow.

SUPERVISION AT THE HOST UNIVERSITY, CONTACT PERSONS

Basically, the atmosphere in the department is very pleasant and personal. Everybody cares for you and you feel very quickly in good hands. Everyone is helpful and available for questions.

Just a few days after my arrival (the term had not even started) I met my responsible supervisors. In a friendly discussion with cookies and coffee we talked about the next steps and my tasks. The head of the Department, Jean Greyling, also took part in that conversation. My final tasks were to write a Mini-Treatise, to enroll a module and to work out my master thesis.

Brenda Scholtz and Andre Calitz were my supervisors for technical advice. But during the semester I mostly worked with Brenda. This was justified by the fact that the field of research of her PhD and my master thesis were in the same area. The title of my Mini-Treatise was: "An Investigation of ERP Learning Approaches for Higher Education". The aim was to explore recent approaches in the field of ERP in higher education. Initially various approaches of different authors were presented in the context of a literature research and review. I analyzed how students are taught to deal with ERP systems and how the ERP system underlying concepts are mediated. Furthermore I determined how an integration of business process knowledge and hands-on experience is made possible at present. I also identified and evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of each approach which were mentioned by the authors to derive a summary of recommendations for future approaches. Brenda helped me in the process of editing my Mini-Treatise. I had to present her my intermediate results weekly. My result was a 30-sided paper which was graded at the end of the term by Brenda, Andre and a professor from another university. The result of my work was the basis of a paper that Brenda published later. Besides this I could use some of the literature and text sections for my master thesis.

Every week all Internationals of the Department met together with Leda van der Post. She made sure that we all are settled at the university and took good care of us. Within the weekly meetings we had to report about the experiences we have made in South Africa, tell something about our hometown or introduce our university. In this way, we got to know each other better and improved our English skills.

If you need a particular program for a module or if you are looking for certain software, you should look out for Jean Rademakers. He has access to all sorts of programs, ensures that you find a place in the lab and supports you in technical matters, such as the network access.

EVERYDAY LIFE AT UNIVERSITY

As already mentioned, the climate in the department is very familiar. Both masters and honors students are each working in one lab (master's lab or honor's lab). Everyone who is writing a thesis has its own place and computer with internet and printer access in the corresponding lab. Although I was working on my master thesis my place was in the honors lab.



About twenty students were working in this lab. If you are yourself an open minded person you will get in touch with the others very quickly. They will admit you to their community, will always help you if there is a problem and will take you to every party. Not all of them were present every day but most of them. Now if fifteen to twenty people are sitting together in one room someone always has to tell something new and a pack of nonsense is made. This produces a lot of noise and you easily are distracted. So if you want to concentrate on working this is not always possible. For this reason I often worked at home. Apart from this you will have a lot of fun and get to know many friendly people.

Every now and then the masters and honors students organize an event. Honors and masters as well as lecturers and staff members of the department are taking part. During my stay abroad there were two events. The first event was a tour on a double-decker bus to one of PE's townships. There we had lunch and lots of fun in a Shebeen.



There also was a department braai in which all Internationals had to contribute something to eat (of course the French guys brought crepes).



Compared to Germany, studying in South Africa is more regimented. Compulsory attendance, “homework”, prescribed readings, two tests during the semester and sometimes you even have to raise your hands. In the beginning, this may be a bit strange and maybe annoying but it has something good: it will keep you focused and you will stay on the ball.

The module which I had chosen took place two hours per week and was divided into a one-hour lecture and a one-hour practical. Due to the fact that the lecture was only one-hour I could stay focused the entire time. In the subsequent practical we had to work on our tasks independently. In case of major problems we had a tutor for support and advice. Besides the weekly practicals and assignments we had to work out a portfolio which had to be completed until the end of the semester. As you can see, there was a lot to do. But you’ll still have plenty of time to get to know the country, its people and culture.

LIVING

ACCOMMODATION

You can live either on- or off-campus. Most Internationals choose to live [off-campus](#). Many of the off-campus residences in Summerstrand are within walking distance to the campus. Accommodations in Humewood or Forest Hill are further away (approx. 5 km), so you have to take a bus or minitaxi in order to get to university.

The Bantry

The Bantry is located in Humewood. Students of different nationalities live here. Two students, mostly students of the same university or with the same nationality, are living together in one apartment. Even if the different apartments aren't necessarily very nice furnished, the cohesion between the residents is amazing. Each week there is a braai (South African word for barbecue) in the courtyard of the Bantry which all residents and friends can join.



Annie's Cove

Annie's Cove is the closest accommodation to the university. Internet is available but you have to pay extra and it's very slow. The area gated and has high walls and an electric fence on top. The entrance is also gated and there is security all day and night. In Annie's Cove the students are living in little two room cottages. I asked a friend to summarize in two to three sentences what he thinks about Annie's. He spent the last six month there and was answering the following: "The accommodation is quite expensive compared to other accommodations and what you get. But you will meet a lot of nice people from different countries (Europeans, Americans, Locals, etc.). Since there are staying approximately 120 students in the area you will always find someone to hang around (not only partying). Also the pool and braai area are

used hardly every day. In my opinion the familiar atmosphere makes Annie's Cove unique."



Unfortunately I don't have that much pictures of Annie's which could give you an idea about living there. But under the following link you can find many images: [Annie's Cove](#).

3 Rubin Crescent

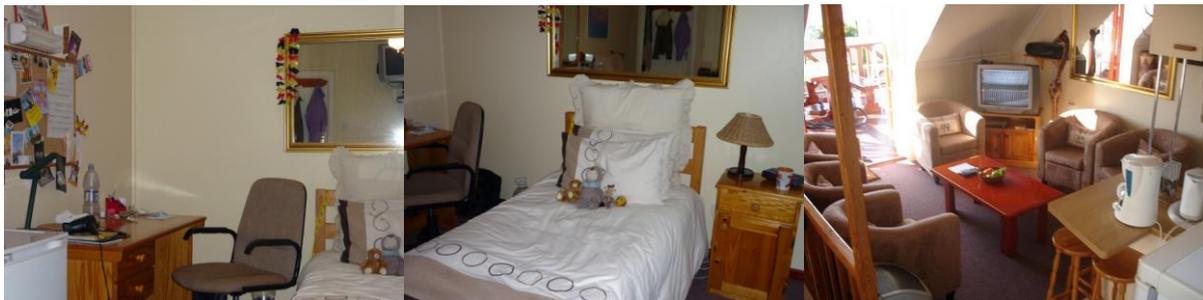
Located in Summerstrand the 3 Rubin Crescent offers thirteen students an accommodation. The two-story house has one kitchen and 2 bathrooms per floor. The landlords Charis and Hendrik are very helpful and nice. They also have two cars which can be rented by students. Internet is available and very cheap.



45 Rubin Crescent

Also located in Summerstrand these accommodations are very beautiful. Each room has its own safe, refrigerator, TV, printer as well as an electric blanket for the colder

days. In addition, the cleaning lady comes every day. Again, the landlords are very nice and helpful. Internet is available but very slow.



Hula Hula

I decided to look for a room on my own. A former exchange student told me about the Hula Hula. She also informed me that Greg, the main tenant was looking for a new roommate. I contacted Greg via Facebook and after a little chat he accepted me as his new flatmate. The Hula Hula is located in Humewood. Close to the Bantry and directly across from the Pendenis Court. The flat is in the sixth floor. All rooms are with sea view and have an own balcony. Although my room wasn't equipped very nice the view was breathtaking. Contrary to other student accommodations, in which the students were mainly living together with people of the same nationality, I had the advantage of staying together with a South African. Besides improving my English

skills I was exposed to the South African culture and its traditions. Furthermore Greg took a lot of time to show me the country and its people. He helped me with the organization of many things which made a lot of so much easier for me. Another advantage compared to most other student accommodations was the kitchenware. Greg was equipped with everything.



But don't forget: If you are looking for a room on your own you definitely should have clarified that the apartment was accredited by the NMMU before your departure to South Africa!

LOCOMOTION

The best, quickest and safest way to move around in PE is by car. Who can't afford a car, has to use a bus, minitaxi, bicycle or cab.

BICYCLES

By bicycle you can quickly get to the beach, shops or university. Along the entire inner coastline of PE, there is a nice boardwalk to ride on (also nice for jogging in the morning or late afternoon). At night riding a bicycle is less safe. For this reason you should rather take a cab. It is very hard to find second hand bikes, as hardly anyone rides a bicycle. New bicycles are not necessarily very qualitatively and also quite expensive. For used bicycles you can check www.gumtree.co.za (also useful for any other kind of second hand stuff) and newspaper ads.

MINITAXI

The minitaxis always shuttle between university and town. It doesn't matter how far you go, one way is always 6 ZAR. You can exit the taxis everywhere you want. Just give a sign and they will stop for you. I always felt save in the minitaxis – even when it was packed or empty. Usually loud house music is played and everybody is enjoying the ride – so it is fun and a real african experience. Avoid the minitaxis after sunset. Although I have never heard of an incident we were always advised to rather call a taxi at night.

BUS

In addition to the mini taxis a bus is driving. It drives along the coast road via Humewood and Summerstrand to the NMMU. The bus runs every 15 minutes.

CAB

At the beginning of the semester the International Office provides Internationals with some phone numbers of trustable taxi drivers. The prices are fixed and depend on

the distance. The most famous taxi driver is Pang (0721993286 or 0788237383). If you ask him kindly, he will also drop of a menu from Mc Donald's or a beer from the Liquor Store at your house in return for a fee.

CAR RENTAL

Cars are rented for about 2500 ZAR a month. Pay attention to limited mileage. If you want to travel a lot, limited mileage makes no sense. When you get over the limit you will pay for every additional kilometer. That can get expensive. For long distance trips, it is advisable to book an extra rental car without a kilometer limit. In terms of insurance and prizes, it is advisable to book with German agencies (like www.billiger-mietwagen.de). Mind that the car is checked very precisely by the agents within the return. So make sure that the car gets no scratches or any other damages on your trip. Also make sure that existing viewable damages on the car are documented on your slip when you receive the vehicle. So check it on your own before you leave! As more eyes as more you will find! In case of any damages the car rental agency has to document this.

BUYING A CAR

To buy a car just makes sense if you plan to stay more than one semester. Even then it is not really advisable.

Facts: Second hand cars are very expensive compared to the German market. It gets even more expensive through the actual exchange rate (currently 1 € = 8,72 ZAR). Affordable cars are usually not very useful for longer trips because they are not really safe and will always give you problems. But that are the “easy” things. To drive the car legal on the streets, the car has to be registered in your name at the traffic office. To register the car it needs roadworthy (equivalent to the German TÜV) and a Traffic Register Number Certificate. That doesn't sound so difficult...but it is! Because you are not South African you will need a lot of documents and a South African citizen to help you. **You will need:** Proof of accommodation, proof of finance (both from your landlord), a statement by the South African police (you have to go there together with your landlord), application form for licensing of motor vehicle, notification form of change of ownership/sale of motor vehicle, and two passport photos. And as if this wasn't enough, the queue at the traffic department (or post office) will take forever!

If you still want to buy a car then mind the following:

Rather spend more money in the beginning than for expensive repairs later on just to keep it running (and you don't want to get lost somewhere in the night). Make sure that the car has papers, otherwise you can't register it and the vehicle becomes illegal.

Although most of the South African streets are tarred, there are still a lot of gravel roads (mostly to the nice hidden places). Especially if you want to experience the Wildcoast, a 4x4 makes sense. The cheaper alternative is a buggy (pickup). Diesel is good for resell. An automatic gear box is easier to drive because you can focus on the left-hand traffic. Check www.gumtree.co.za for second hand cars. There are also some public places where cars from private are offered. For example, next to the patrol station at Cape Road 440. For repairs call Clinton 084-2995859 😊.



My car: A Mercedes 230 from 1979.

INTERNET UND HANDY

INTERNET

The Internet in South Africa really leaves a lot to be desired. In the computer labs of the University each student can log onto the Internet to work or surf at any day- or nighttime. But certain websites, such as Facebook, are blocked from 8am to 4pm. Although the speed of the Internet at the University is not comparable to what you are used to from Germany it is still acceptable. Not every student accommodation, like the Bantry, offers an Internet access. If there is no Internet available in your apartment, but you still don't want to miss it at home, you can rely on different Pre-Paid providers like Vodacom, MTN or Cell C. These providers are offering different

Databundles. An important criterion for mobile surfing is the network coverage. Each of the just mentioned providers offers a good coverage in PE (3G+). From the price-performance ratio Cell C is currently the cheapest provider for PE with 5GB per month for 16 € for a contract period of 12 months. Unfortunately, this offer came too late for me. I used over the entire eight months, Vodacom and paid 40 € for 2,3 GB. But no worries! I spoke to a Vodacom manager and he told me that the prices will fall significantly within the next two years.

Provides the landlord access to the Internet this is often very expensive. The cheapest I have heard was 3 Rubin Crescent with 40 ZAR per Gigabyte.

HANDY

You can find mobile providers at each airport in South Africa including PE. Although the airport isn't very big you can find here both MTN and Vodacom. The two big South African mobile providers. Once you arrived you can get a SIM card (matter of expense: approx. 10 ZAR), to tell your folks back home, that you arrived safely. To get a SIM card you just need a valid passport.

LIVING EXPENSES

Compared to Germany food in South Africa is more expensive. For example prices for vegetables, pasta or cheese are sometimes two to four times higher than in Germany. Even plain water is expensive - a liter costs about 7 ZAR (But if you want to you can drink the water from the tap). Technique products are also expensive. So if you want to log onto the Internet via Internetstick you should import it from Germany. On the other hand meat is fairly cheap – especially poultry. Clothing and going out is also very affordable. A beer is 9 to 17 ZAR, cocktails about 25 ZAR and the price for a main course starts at 30 ZAR (Angelos, Zanzibar).

INFORMATION ON THE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING AREA

RESTAURANTS, BARS, CINEMAS

To get to know most of the other Internationals the weekly, every Wednesday occurring movie day followed by a drink at Barneys is recommended. The entrance to the cinema is only 20 ZAR. The cinemas (Boardwalk, Walmer Park or Greenacres) will always show the latest movies. In addition the cinemas Walmer Park and Greenacres are broadcasting 3D movies.

If you want to spend a nice evening at a good restaurant with excellent service I can recommend the Bluewaters. The food is good and the restaurant offers a beautiful view on the ocean. This you can also find in "The Island" which is located in the cape recife. The Pizza at Vovo Telo is delicious. If you would rather have lunch in an extraordinary creative environment you should check out Café Ruwach. Delicious bread and a very good cuisine you can find at Deli Street Café. For affordable but good food you should go to Angelos or Zansibar. Both located in the Ring Street. Be sure to try the Chicken Pasta at Angelos! Here you can find some bars which simultaneously serve as nightclubs. **But:** In this area you shouldn't walk around alone. Especially at night!

TRAVELLING, SHORT TRIPS, SIGHTSEEING

There are a lot of options for day trips. You could drive to the nearby Cape Recife or the Maitland Dunes to chill at the beach or you could have fun at J-Bays Waterfall. To see animals you should drive through the Addo Elephant Park. On a long weekend you should visit the Tsitsikamma National Park and go on a cruise on the Stormsriver or do a bungee jump from the highest bungee jumping bridge in the World. You could also take a horse ride at Kenton on Seas beautiful beaches or see the sunset in the Valley of Desolation in Graaff Reinett.



For the long holidays it s advisable to go on a road trip along the Wildcoast up to Mozambique to get an impression of the real Africa. Melt with nature at the "Whole in the Wall", surf perfect waves at the hidden place of Coffee Bay, watch hippos and crocodiles on a boardtrip in St. Lucia, and relax your soul in the unreal panorama and silence of the Drakenberg



Mountains. This trip has it all: nature, action, and recreation.

The [Coast to Coast](#) backpackers' guide is highly recommended for traveling. You can get it in every backpacker. In it you'll find all the information you'll need of South Africa's backpackers. You can reach many of these backpackers by the so-called [Baz buses](#). This cheap travel alternative is a "hop-on hop off" and "door to door" bus service between several backpackers in South Africa. Although I never took the Baz Bus, I met many people who could not afford a rental car and who drove around with these buses. They all were very satisfied with this bus service.



SPORT

As already mentioned the NMMU offers a large variety of sport possibilities such as rugby, soccer, tennis, golf and so on. The NMMU welcomes you to join the club of your favourite sport to get socialized and participate at local competitions. For further information you should visit the [NMMU homepage](#).

South Africa is a golf country. For those students who always wanted to experience the amazing sport of golf, South Africa is the place to be. On the clean green yards of the NMMU sport centre, a professional golf instructor will teach you how to grab the club, to hold your body, to swing and to hit the ball. Accompanied by the sound of the close sea, you can try to hit the ball as far as possible or to place it as close as possible to the centre of the field. For those who can't get enough, the Walmer Driving Range is open 7 days a week. Flags show the distance of your tee off. The more experienced golfer will find a nice golf court at the Shark River Golf Club.

Besides golf, South Africa offers a large variety of all kinds of water sports such as surfing, wind- and kite surfing, diving, canoeing and more. For information according to surf forecast and spot finders visit www.wavescape.co.za, www.magicseaweed.com or www.wannasurf.com. Surfboards can be hired or bought (second hand or new) at the Humewood Surf Center as well as in one of the many surf-shops in Jeffrey's Bay. For beginners it is advisable to take surf lessons before they enter the water by themselves. The basic requirement is to feel comfortable with the waves, the sea and all the life in it. When you are lucky you will see dolphins, which are enjoying the beautiful waves of South Africa, right next to you in the water.



Besides one of the best waves in the world, Jeffrey's Bay offers safe lagoons to learn kite surfing. If you are looking for a kite lesson call Garry (082-9575311). In summer and winter there is always a light breeze blowing several days a week. Each July, Jeffrey's Bay hosts the Billabong

Pro - one tour stop of the surfing professionals. This event is definitely worth to visit. Enjoy high level surfing performance, amazing waves, interesting people and long party nights.



Yes – paintball is a sport. Motivate your fellow students for a paintball game at “paintball heaven” and solve your flat-sharing disagreements on one of the five courses! Surrender or die....

Besides golf, rugby and cricket are the most common sports in South Africa. Port Elizabeth’s new rugby stadium offers a great atmosphere for up to 50.000 fans - dive into the South African culture and watch a rugby game!