

Limpopo

 Limpopo	
Capital:	Polokwane
Principal languages:	Sesotho sa Leboa 52,1% Xitsonga 22,4% Tshivenda 15,9%
Population:	5 402 900
Area (km ²):	123 910
% of total area:	10,2%
GDP* at current prices (2004):	R93 188 million
% of total GDP**:	6,5%

* *GDP*(Gross Domestic Product per Region)

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Limpopo, South Africa's northernmost province, lies within the great elbow of the Limpopo River. It is a province of dramatic contrasts – from true bushveld country to majestic mountains, primeval indigenous forests, latter-day plantations, unspoilt wilderness areas and a patchwork of farming land.

Limpopo has a strong rural basis. Its growth strategy centres on addressing infrastructure backlogs, the alleviation of poverty, and social development.

Limpopo is the gateway to the rest of Africa. It is favourably situated for economic co-operation with other parts of southern Africa, as it shares borders with Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The province is linked to the Maputo Development Corridor through the Phalaborwa SDI, which is a network of rail and road corridors connecting to the major seaports, which will open up Limpopo for trade and investment. This is complemented by the presence of smaller airports in centres such as Phalaborwa and Musina, as well as the Gateway International Airport in Polokwane. The airport carries about 38 000 passengers a year.

The Maputo Corridor will link the province directly with the Port of Maputo, creating development and trade opportunities, particularly in the south-eastern part of the province.

Between 1996 and 2005, Limpopo recorded an average real annual economic growth rate of 4%, which is above the country's average rate during the period under review.

Polokwane is the capital city and lies strategically in the centre of the province.

The Great North Road running through the centre of the province strings together a series of interesting towns.

Bela-Bela, with its popular mineral spa, is near the southern border of the province.

Further north lie Modimolle with its table-grape industry and beautiful Waterberg mountain range; Mokopane; Polokwane; Makhado at the foot of the Soutpansberg mountain range; and Musina, with its thick-set baobab trees.

The crossing into Zimbabwe is at Beit Bridge, where the South African section of this important route north into Africa ends.

Other important Limpopo towns include the major mining centres of Phalaborwa and Thabazimbi; and Tzaneen, producer of tea, forestry products and tropical fruits.

This province is in the savanna biome, an area of mixed grassland and trees, which is generally known as bushveld. A trip through this summer rainfall area shows that this is tree country.

Rich in natural beauty, culture and wildlife, Limpopo is an ideal breakaway destination for tourists. The province's natural resources include more than 50 provincial reserves, as well as several private game reserves. The largest section of the Kruger National Park is situated along the eastern boundary of Limpopo with Mozambique.

Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal were the only provinces in the country that received more visitors from foreign countries in 2005, with at least 1,% added growth compared with other local destinations.

This prompted the Limpopo Parks and Tourism Board to initiate the translation of niche brochures into Dutch, German, Mandarin and local indigenous languages so as to attract a diverse range of visitors.

The people

In Limpopo, more than 5,4 million people live on about 123 910 km² of land (*Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2007*).

According to the Census 2001 results, more than a third of those in Limpopo aged 20 years and older have not received any form of education or schooling.

The official unemployment rate for Limpopo is 32,4%. (*Labour Force Survey, March 2007*).

Several museums and national monuments bear testimony to ancient peoples and fearless pioneers who braved the unknown. Living museums include the Bakone Malapa Museum near Polokwane, where Bapedi tribespeople practise age-old skills for the benefit of visitors, and the Tsonga Open-Air Museum near Tzaneen. Mapungubwe (Place of The Jackal) Hill, some 75 km from Musina, used to be a natural fortress for its inhabitants from about AD 950 to 1200. It was declared a world heritage site in 2003.

Valuable archaeological artefacts, including many golden objects, have been discovered in this area, as well as in the northern part of the Kruger National Park.

Agriculture

The bushveld is cattle country, where controlled hunting is often combined with ranching. About 80% of South Africa's hunting takes place in this province. As the largest producers of various crops in the agricultural market, Limpopo is exploiting this capacity as a resource for agritourism. For instance, the Modimolle grape festival is celebrated in January.

Sunflowers, cotton, maize and peanuts are cultivated in the Bela-Bela - Modimolle area. Tropical fruit, such as bananas, litchis, pineapples, mangoes and pawpaws, as well as a variety of nuts, are grown in the Tzaneen and Makhado areas. Extensive tea and coffee plantations also create many employment opportunities in the Tzaneen area.

The climatic conditions in this province allow for double harvesting seasons, which ultimately translates into Limpopo becoming the national food basket. It produces about 60% of the country's tomatoes; 75% mangoes; 65% papaya; 33% oranges; 36% tea; 25% citrus, bananas and litchis; and 60% of its avocados. It has initiated a process to open market access for exporting some of its fresh produce to the People's Republic of China.

More than 45% of the R2-billion annual turnover of the Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market comes from Limpopo. The largest tomato farm in South Africa lies between Tzaneen and Makhado. Extensive forestry plantations are also found here.

Plantations of hard wood for furniture manufacturing have also been established and many of the rural people practise subsistence farming.

The northern and eastern parts of this summer rainfall region are subtropical with hot, humid summers and mist in the mountainous parts. Winter throughout the province is mild and mostly frost-free.

Industry

Mining is a significant economic activity in the province.

Limpopo is rich in mineral deposits, including platinum-group metals, iron ore, chromium, high and middle-grading coking coal, diamonds, antimony, phosphate and copper, as well as mineral reserves like gold, emeralds, scheelite, magnetite, vermiculite, silicon and mica. Base commodities such as black granite, corundum and feldspar are also found in the province.

The province is a typical developing area, exporting primary products and importing manufactured goods and services. It has high potential and capacity with appropriate economic development, and is an attractive location for investors. Resources such as tourism, rain-fed agriculture, minerals and an abundant labour force offer excellent investment opportunities.

2010 World Cup

By mid-2007, construction of the new 46 000-seater Peter Mokaba Stadium was underway. The Limpopo Department of Roads and Transport will spend R76 million upgrading airport facilities ahead of the 2010 World Cup. The money will be used to improve the Giyani and Thohoyandou airports, as well as upgrade the Polokwane Gateway International Airport.

In 2007/08, the department set aside R28 million for the completion of the terminal building, R31 million for the construction of infrastructure at the cargo hub, and R17 million for the development of the Aero City.

The Aero City will include parking for cars, buses, taxis and rental cars, feeder roads and ring roads around the terminal building.

In 2006, the department spent R13 million to improve navigational aid and R10 million on the construction of part of the terminal building.

The Limpopo Provincial Government will be upgrading two stadiums in line with international standards as part of the 2010 World Cup legacy projects.

Source: [South Africa Yearbook 2007/08](#)

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