

Mpumalanga

	Mpumalanga
Capital:	Nelspruit
Principal languages:	siSwati 30,8% isiZulu 26,4% isiNdebele 12,1%
Population:	3 536 300
Area (km ²):	79 490
% of total area:	6,5%
GDPR* at current prices (2004):	R94 450 million
% of total GDP**:	6,8%

* *GDPR (Gross Domestic Product per Region)*

** *GDP (Gross Domestic Product)*

Mpumalanga means "Place Where the Sun Rises". Due to the province's spectacular scenic beauty and abundance of wildlife, it is one of South Africa's major tourist destinations.

With a surface area of only 79 490 km², the second-smallest province after Gauteng, it has the fourth-largest economy in South Africa.

Bordered by Mozambique and Swaziland in the east, and Gauteng in the west, it is situated mainly on the high plateau grasslands of the Middleveld, which roll eastwards for hundreds of kilometres. In the north-east, it rises towards mountain peaks and terminates in an immense escarpment. In some places, this escarpment plunges hundreds of metres down to the low-lying area known as the Lowveld.

The area has a network of excellent roads and railway connections, making it highly accessible. Because of its popularity as a tourist destination, Mpumalanga is also served by a number of small airports, such as the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport.

Nelspruit is the capital of the province and the administrative and business centre of the Lowveld. Witbank is the centre of the local coal-mining industry; Standerton, in the south, is renowned for its large dairy industry; and Piet Retief in the south-east is a production area for tropical fruit and sugar. A large sugar industry is also found at Malelane in the east; Ermelo is the district in South Africa that produces the most wool; Barberton is one of the oldest gold-

mining towns in South Africa; and Sabie is situated in the forestry heartland of the country.

The Maputo Corridor, which links the province with Gauteng and Maputo in Mozambique, heralds a new era in terms of economic development and growth for the region.

As the first international toll road in Africa, the Maputo Corridor is attracting investment and releasing the local economic potential of the landlocked parts of the country. It will thus generate sustainable economic growth that will lead to sustainable high-quality jobs.

The best-performing sectors in the province include mining, manufacturing and services. Tourism and agroprocessing are potential growth sectors in the province.

Mpumalanga falls mainly within the grassland biome. The escarpment and the Lowveld form a transitional zone between this grassland area and the savanna biome.

Long stretches of undulating grasslands change abruptly into thickly forested ravines and thundering waterfalls of the escarpment, only to change again into the subtropical wildlife splendour of the Lowveld.

Sabie and Graskop provide a large part of the country's total forestry products. These forestry plantations are an ideal backdrop for ecotourism opportunities, with a variety of popular hiking trails, a myriad waterfalls, patches of indigenous forest and many nature reserves.

Lake Chrissie is the largest natural freshwater lake in South Africa and is famous for its variety of aquatic birds, especially flamingos.

The people

Even though it is one of the smaller provinces, Mpumalanga has a population of more than 3,5 million people (*Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2007*).

According to the 2001 Census results, some 27,5% of those aged 20 years or older have no schooling, while the population growth rate is higher than the national average.

Mpumalanga's official unemployment rate is 26,3% (*Labour Force Survey, March 2007*).

Agriculture and forestry

The province is a summer-rainfall area divided by the escarpment into the Highveld region with cold frosty winters, and the Lowveld region with mild winters and a subtropical climate.

The escarpment area sometimes experiences snow on high ground. Thick mist is common during the hot, humid summers.

An abundance of citrus fruit and many other subtropical fruits – mangoes, avocados, litchis, bananas, pawpaws, granadillas, guavas – as well as nuts and a variety of vegetables are produced here.

Nelspruit is the second-largest citrus-producing area in South Africa and is responsible for one third of the country's export in oranges. The Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops is situated here.

Groblersdal is an important irrigation area, which yields a wide variety of products such as citrus fruit, cotton, tobacco, wheat and vegetables.

Carolina-Bethal-Ermelo is mainly a sheepfarming area, but potatoes, sunflowers, maize and peanuts are also produced in this region.

Industry

Mpumalanga is very rich in coal reserves. The country's major power stations, three of which are the biggest in the southern hemisphere, are situated here. Unfortunately, these cause the highest levels of air pollution in the country.

Secunda, where South Africa's second petroleum-from-coal installation is situated, is also located in this province.

One of the country's largest paper mills is situated at Ngodwana, close to its timber source. Middelburg produces steel and vanadium, while Witbank is the biggest coal producer in Africa.

2010 World Cup

By mid-2007, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government was establishing the Integrated 2010 Office to streamline all the preparatory work for the 2010 World Cup and to ensure co-ordination among the implementing institutions.

To advance the province's social-development agenda, R10 million was allocated to implement five community sport and recreation programmes in each district municipality in 2007/08. Construction of the Mbombela Stadium in Nelspruit started in June and is expected to be completed in May 2009. Some R15 million was put aside in 2007/08 for the first phase.

Linked to the establishment of the Disaster Management Centre is the implementation of the Health Emergency Medical Services Model that focuses on achieving shorter response times, better communication systems, vehicle replacement, aero-medical services and a basic training course for ambulance assistants.

About R22 million was allocated for the purchase of 83 ambulances.

The 2010 Office is expected to consolidate and facilitate the optimal use of Mpumalanga's relationship with North Rhine Westphalia in Germany, which had three venues during the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

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

Editor: D Burger. Government Communication and Information System

[[back to top](#)]