

Eastern Cape

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Capital:	Bisho
Principal languages:	isiXhosa 83,4% Afrikaans 9,3% English 3,6%
Population:	6 906 200
Area (km2):	169 580
% of total area:	13,9%
GDP* at current prices (2004):	R112 908 million
% of total GDP**:	8,1%

* *GDP* (Gross Domestic Product per Region)

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The Eastern Cape, a land of undulating hills, expansive sandy beaches, majestic mountain ranges and emerald green forests, is the secondlargest of the nine provinces in terms of surface area.

The region boasts remarkable natural diversity, ranging from the dry, desolate Great Karoo; to the lush forests of the Wild Coast and the Keiskamma Valley; the fertile Langkloof, renowned for its rich apple harvests; and the mountainous southern Drakensberg region at Elliot.

The Eastern Cape's main feature is its spectacular coastline lapped by the Indian Ocean. With its long stretches of pristine sandy beaches, rocky coves, secluded lagoons and towering cliffs, the coastline provides the province with an unsurpassed natural tourist attraction.

The graceful curve of Algoa Bay provides an ideal setting for the Port of Port Elizabeth. East London offers equally favourable harbour facilities. The province is serviced by three airports situated in Port Elizabeth, East London and Mthatha.

The architecture of many of its cities and towns reflects the rich heritage of its people. Important towns in the province include Bhisho, the capital; Uitenhage, which has important motor vehicle-manufacturing and related industries; King William's Town, rich in early settler and military history; Grahamstown, also known as the City of Saints because of its more than 40 churches; Graaff-Reinet, with its interesting collection of historic buildings; Cradock, the hub of the Central Karoo; Stutterheim, the forestry centre of the province; Aliwal North, famous for its hot sulphur springs; and Port St Johns, the largest town on the Wild Coast.

In the Eastern Cape, various floral habitats meet. Along the coast, the northern tropical forests intermingle with the more temperate woods of the south. This makes for an interesting forest habitat of various species endemic to this region.

Age-old forests occur at Keiskammahoek, Dwesa, Port St Johns and Bathurst; dune forests are found at Alexandria; and man groves along the Wild Coast.

Rolling grasslands dominate the eastern interior of the province, while the western central plateau is savanna bushveld. The northern inland is home to the aromatic, succulent-rich Karoo.

The People

The Eastern Cape has almost seven million people living on 169 580 km² of land. The majority of the people speak isiXhosa, followed by Afrikaans and English.

The province has a number of HE institutions, including the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of Fort Hare and the Walter Sisulu University of Technology. Despite the high quality of education facilities, 22,8% of the population aged 20 years or older has never received any schooling, while 6,3% has completed some form of HE (Census 2001).

In 2007, the unemployment rate of the province stood at 25,5% (*Labour Force Survey, March 2007*).

The provincial economy has performed well over the past three years. Provincial GDP increased by an estimated 4,7% in 2006 (4,8% in 2005), compared with the national GDP growth of 5% in 2006 (5,1% in 2005).

Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry

The Eastern Cape has excellent agricultural and forestry potential. The fertile Langkloof Valley in the south-west has enormous deciduous fruit orchards,

while the Karoo interior is an important sheepfarming area. Angora wool is also produced here.

The Alexandria-Grahamstown area produces pineapples, chicory and dairy products, while coffee and tea are cultivated at Magwa. People in the former Transkei region are dependent on cattle, maize and sorghum-farming. An olive nursery has been developed in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare to form a nucleus of olive production in the Eastern Cape.

Extensive exotic forestry plantations in the high rainfall areas of Keiskammahoek provide employment for large numbers of the population. The province is a summer-rainfall region with high rainfall along the coast, becoming gradually drier behind the mountain ranges into the Great Karoo.

The Eastern Cape Provincial Government plans to develop the province's forestry and timber industry by creating up to 100 000 ha of plantations over the next 10 years.

Nationwide, the timber industry employs about 170 000 people and annually contributes about R16 billion to the economy.

The Eastern Cape has been selected as the national pilot for the implementation of biofuels, through the mass planting of canola. This project has the potential to create 21 600 direct and indirect job opportunities.

The basis of the province's fishing industry is squid, some recreational and commercial fishing for line fish, the collection of marine resources and access to line-catches of hake.

Ostrich exports are flourishing and the provincial Department of Agriculture has been hailed for the support it is giving this industry. Each ostrich export establishment has a resident official veterinarian, which is a requirement for exporting ostrich products to the European Union.

The game industry is enjoying unprecedented demand in the international market due to health-conscious consumers increasingly demanding lean organic game meat.

Industry

The metropolitan economies of Port Elizabeth and East London are based primarily on manufacturing, the most important industry being motor manufacturing. The province is the hub of South Africa's automotive industry.

Several of the world's biggest motor manufacturers, such as Volkswagen, Ford (Samcor), General Motors (Delta) and DaimlerChrysler, have plants in the Eastern Cape.

With two harbours and three airports offering direct flights to the main centres, and an excellent road and rail infrastructure, the province has been earmarked as a key area for growth and economic development. Environmentally friendly projects include the Fish River Spatial Development Initiative (SDI), the Wild Coast SDI, and two industrial development zones (IDZs), namely the West Bank (East London) and the Coega IDZs. The latter, 20 km east of the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage metropolises, was the first IDZ to be earmarked, and is one of the biggest initiatives ever undertaken in South Africa. Plans for the development of the area as an exportorientated zone include the building of the Port of Ngqura.

By mid-2007, the Department of Public Enterprises was in the process of designing the framework for a partnership in the operation of the new container terminal under construction at the port.

The railway from Mthatha to East London was refurbished and the process of finding an operator for the line initiated.

2010 World Cup

The new 50 000-seater Mandela Bay Stadium in Port Elizabeth will host seven matches. By March 2007, construction of the stadium had started.

In King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, the final design for a new 15 000-seater stadium had been approved.

In Buffalo City, two stadiums – Absa Stadium, which seats 10 000 and Bhisho Stadium with 20 000 seats – were being refurbished. The city has been identified as a basecamp city for training both prior to and during the 2010 World Cup.

The provincial Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture has partnered with the Educational Institute for Service Studies in Port Alfred, to upscale the capacity of 40 bed-and-breakfast owners.

Parallel to the football spectacular, there will be an arts and culture programme. A crafters' database was being compiled, together with three additional crafters-hubs in Dimbaza, Dispatch and Flagstaff.

Fan parks – public viewing areas with large-screen TVs, entertainment and food and beverage stands – will be established for the tournament.

Port Elizabeth will spend more than R500 million upgrading the city's transport system – which includes a new bus system – ahead of the 2010 World Cup. The city will have a “bus rapid transit” system that will use low-platform buses travelling in designated bus lanes.

A total of R58 million will be spent on purchasing new buses. The city's innovative business model also integrates the bus and taxi systems.

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

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