10 biggest dams in South Africa

# **What are their capacities?**

South Africa is known for its rich culture and magnificent landscapes. These massive dams are currently the most popular tourist attraction sites even though some were built for irrigation, electricity production, and domestic and industrial use. You will love your visit to the largest dams in South Africa and our list will help you decide which one to view first.

The Department of Water and Sanitation warned about the declining dam levels in South Africa. In July 2021, the levels dropped from 83.3% to 82.8% within a week. Mr Ratau appealed to the people to keep conserving water to maintain water security as rains improve the dams' water levels.

# **Top 10 largest dams in South Africa**

Water reservoirs bring the relief of fresh water and electricity supply in South Africa's major cities. Mzansi's urban centres would be the unhealthiest places to live in the country if these dams did not exist. Show gratitude by not littering the area or polluting the water when you visit. So, exactly what is the biggest dam in South Africa? Here is a list of SA's biggest dams according to their capacities when full:

# Gariep (5,340,000 megalitres)

Gariep include 4x4 trails, boat cruising, canoeing, dam wall tours, motor boating, and MTB trails. Gariep reservoir is South Africa’s largest water reservoir and one of the best holiday destinations in Mzansi. Its inlets are the Orange, Caledon, Slykspruit, Broekspruit, Barkspruit, Palmietspruit, and Oude Spruit rivers. The concrete gravity-arch hydro reservoir was constructed in 1965 in Norvalspont town between the Free State and Eastern Cape provinces and opened in 1971. It is 88 m high, 914 m long, and covers a 353 million m2 surface area. There are lots of fun water sports and activities to enjoy.

# Heyshope (4,534,400 megalitres)

The reservoir is in Mpumalanga along the Assegaai River. The height of its wall is 28.5 m, and the length is 1030 m. Its capacity is 4,534.4 million m³ and has a surface area of 5 023.8 ha. Heyshope was opened in 1986.

# 3. Vanderkloof (3,187,557 megalitres)

Vanderkloof is about 81 miles (130 km) away from the Gariep reservoir and is the second biggest dam in South Africa. The 3,187.557 million m3 reservoir was built in 1973 and opened in 1977. Its original name is PK Le Roux.

The reservoir is 108 m high and 766 m long. It holds 3,187,557 megalitres and sits on a 133.43 km2 region. The reservoir produces up to 360MW of energy and is a fishing paradise for yellow fish, catfish, carp, and mudfish.

# 4. Sterkfontein (2,616,000 megalitres)

Sterkfontein is located close to the Harrismith town in the Free State. It is a unique reservoir built along a stream instead of over a river and has another reservoir inside called Driekloof. Sterkfontein means a strong fountain in Afrikaans.

The reservoir was redirected from the Tugela River due to a water shortage in Johannesburg in the 1960s and 1970s. Its wall is 93 m high, and its capacity is 2.616 million m3. Sterkfontein stretches over a surface area of 69.37 km2, and it is 18.8 km long.

# 5. Vaal (2,613,500 megalitres)

It is among the top 5 biggest dams in South Africa. The Vaal dam is constructed along the Vaal River and 77 km south of the OR Tambo International Airport. The reservoir is fed by Vaal, Wilge, Klip, Grootspuit, Molspuit rivers, and Sterkfontein dam when water drops too low. Lying on a 322 km2 and with a 2,613.5 million m3 capacity and a shoreline stretching over 800 km, the reservoir has enough water sports, fishing, and other recreational activities.

# 6. Pongolapoort / Lake Jozini (2,445,900 megalitres)

Phongolo River is Pongolapoort / Lake Jozini's sole perennial feeder. The reservoir is about 280 km northeast of Durban and was primarily built for irrigation in 1973. Environmentalists are concerned about the massive water pollution from pesticides because it endangers wildlife. It has a 13 272.8 ha surface area and covers a 7814 km2 water catchment area.

# 7. Bloemhof (1,269,000 megalitres)

The reservoir holds up to 1,269 million m3 of water, and its inlets are Vall and Vet rivers. It has a 33 m high wall and 4,270 m in length. The reservoir covers an area of 2226 ha, and its former name was Oppermansdrif.

# 8. Theewaterskloof (480,000 megalitres)

Theewaterskloof reservoir is built on the Sonderend River close to Villiersdorp in Western Cape. It is Cape Town's leading water supplier with a 480 million m3 capacity. The reservoir occupies a surface area of 5,059 ha. Besides the annual Synergy Live Music Festival, other activities include golfing, hiking, water sports, fishing, and biking.

# 9. Greater Brandvlei (459,000 megalitres)

Brandvlei and the Kwaggaskloof reservoirs were combined to form the Greater Brandvlei in 1989. It is built on a tributary of the Breede River and is primarily used for irrigation. The dam's wall has a height of 21.5 m, and its length is 1250 m. The total capacity is 459 million m3, and the reservoir stretches to 4110 ha when full. The area is widely used for fishing.

# 10. Dee Hoop (374,600 megalitres)

It is one of the largest reservoirs in Limpopo. The 374.6 million m3 reservoir is 81 m high and 1000 m long. It is a gravity dam constructed on Steelpoort River near Burgersfort, in the Sekhukhune area. It is the only reliable water solution for over 800,000 people living in the Nebo plateau.

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