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The Atholl Sun Ledger

A window-by-window record of what the light actually does on this side of Sandton

Free, un-gated and specific to Atholl: where the sun lands through the year, which rooms suffer, what we would fit on each elevation — and, honestly, what each of those choices costs you in return.

• About 8 minutes to read

• Written August 2026

• No email needed

• Sources at the foot

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— 01 — THE STARTING POINT

Why a suburb this small gets its own shading brief.

Atholl is small and quiet by design: 2.24 km²,^[1] roughly 800 homes — over 700 freehold houses on their own stands^[2] — three kilometres from the Sandton CBD towers.^[2] Leafy streets, large stands, established gardens.^[3] None of that is decoration; it changes what belongs on a window here.

The stock is mixed, not period. Atholl grew out of farmland from the beginning of the twentieth century^[4] and now runs "a blend of architectural styles"^[2] — modern rebuilds beside older stately homes,^[3] clusters beside large freestanding houses.^[4] There is no single Atholl recipe: a 1960s living room under a deep eave and a new glass-walled cluster want different answers on the same bearing.

The glass got bigger; the eaves did not. Almost every rebuild trades wall for glazing — stacking doors, a double-volume stairwell, a kitchen opening onto the patio. An eave sized for a 1965 window does very little for a wall of glass, which is why so many of these rooms are lovely at ten and unusable at four.

The garden is already shading you, unevenly. Johannesburg carries about six million trees, 4.8 million in private gardens,^[5] and mature planting is Atholl's signature.^[3] A deciduous canopy shades a window in January and is bare by July, so a room's light budget swings twice a year — with the sun's angle, and with the leaves.

Late afternoon, west glass.

An open-weave sunscreen holds the glare down without blanking out the garden — the compromise most Atholl living rooms are actually after.

— 02 — THE LIGHT HERE

What the highveld sun actually does over Atholl.

Atholl sits at about 26.1 degrees south^[1] on the Johannesburg highveld — the city stands 1,753 m above sea level.^[5] At Pretoria's latitude, fifty kilometres north, the sun reaches **87.7° at noon on 21 December** and only **40.84° on 20 June**.^[6] Atholl's own angles land within half a degree of those, and that 47-degree swing splits the year in two.

Midsummer noon sun is very nearly overhead, so a north window with any eave above it largely shades itself. **In midwinter it sits at 40° and due north**, driving light and warmth deep into the room — which, with June and July nights around 4.1 °C and the odd frost,^[5] you want. Blanking that out is a real loss.

The trouble is the afternoon. On 21 December the sun sets on a bearing of 243° — about 27 degrees *south* of due west.^[6] From three o'clock it is low and arriving close to

horizontally, and an overhang cannot block a horizontal ray. The study is blunt: afternoons on western exposure run far hotter than mornings, and horizontal overhangs suit high, altitude-dominated angles — northern facades — not low ones.^[6] So on the west you need something *at* the glass or *outside* it, not above it.

Three more facts that change the specification

- **Afternoon storms.** Thundershowers run November to March, and nearly all of Johannesburg's 713 mm of rain falls then.^[5] Anything that folds out over a patio must fold back in fast — so a wind sensor is a specification item, not an upsell.
- **Hail.** South African hail concentrates along the highveld, peaks in the afternoon, and is most frequent from mid-November to February.^[7] Reason enough to fit a retracting exterior product, not a fixed one.
- **Altitude and ultraviolet.** UV rises about 12% per 1,000 m of altitude, because thinner air filters less of it.^[8] Fabrics and finishes on the sunny side age faster here than at the coast — choose a west fabric on performance first, colour second.

— 03 — ROOM BY ROOM

Elevation by elevation, and which rooms suffer.

One house, four different problems. Before anything else, work out which wall a room actually sits on — it decides more than the fabric does.

North — protect in summer, open in winter

North is where the sun lives all winter: high enough in midsummer that an eave does much of the work, then at 40° and pouring in by June.^[6]

Living rooms and studies want something adjustable — light onto the ceiling in January, open flat in July. A blackout roller is blunt: down costs the winter warmth you were entitled to.

Verdict: adjustable beats absolute.

West – the elevation that costs you the room

Low, near-horizontal sun from three o'clock, arriving from 27 degrees south of west at midsummer.^[6] This is where Atholl's big new glazing hurts most.

If a west room is unbearable at four, the glass itself is heating and radiating inwards. An interior blind fixes the glare at once and the heat only partly — once the sun is through the pane, the energy is already inside.

Verdict: stop it outside the glass if you can; a proper sunscreen if you can't.

East – glare first, heat second

The same geometry mirrored, into a house that cooled overnight. In December the sun clears the horizon early and bedrooms wake with it; a kitchen takes an hour of glare and it is over.

Two rooms on one wall wanting opposite things: properly dark where you sleep, still see-through where you cook.

Verdict: solve for sleep and glare, not heat.

South – even, cool, and quietly forgotten

Almost no direct sun most of the year, so south rooms hold the steadiest light in the house — and are the coldest come June.^[5]

Shading is rarely the problem here. Heat loss through a big pane usually is, and so is being overlooked — on a walled stand the south side often faces a neighbour, not a garden.

Verdict: think warmth and privacy, not sun.

Stopped outside the glass.

External venetian slats in side guides, tilted against a low west sun — the heat never reaches the pane in the first place, and you keep a view through the slats.

— OPTIONAL

Want this Ledger marked up for your own house?

Tell us which rooms are giving you trouble and we'll email you this same Ledger with your elevations noted against it — which windows we'd treat first, and what we'd be weighing up on each one.

It's an email, not a visit. Nobody phones you about it.

What we'd fit in Atholl, and the catch with each.

Every one of these is right somewhere in this suburb and wrong somewhere else. The trade-off box under each one is the part most brochures leave out.

Sunscreen roller blinds WEST & NORTH LIVING GLASS

One flat sheet of open-weave fabric on a slim tube — no folds, no gathers. It cuts glare and a useful share of the solar gain while leaving the garden visible, which on an Atholl stand is the point of the window. Better than a heavy curtain, which solves four o'clock by removing the view.

THE TRADE-OFF

It reverses after dark — lights on, and you are the one on display. Where a neighbour is close, pair it with a blackout on the same bracket.

Blockout roller blinds BEDROOMS · EAST ELEVATIONS

A single smooth sheet, flat against the opening, no folds to collect the dust off big gardens. Against a December sunrise on an east bedroom window it is the most effective thing there is.

THE TRADE-OFF

Binary — down is dark, up is everything — so the wrong tool for a north living room where you want the winter sun. Without side channels, light always finds the edge of the reveal.

Venetian blinds (aluminium or timber) NORTH ROOMS · STUDIES · WET AREAS

On a north elevation the useful control is *angle*, not coverage: a venetian throws high summer sun onto the ceiling and opens flat in June, so one product handles both halves of that 47-degree swing.^[6] Timber suits studies and character rooms; aluminium goes where there is steam or splash.

THE TRADE-OFF

Slats collect dust, and under Atholl's mature trees that is a real maintenance item. A very wide span splits across more than one headrail. Timber above a bath ages badly.

External venetian blinds HARD WEST & SOUTH-WEST GLAZING

Aluminium slats in side guides, mounted *outside* the glass, tilting the sun away before it reaches the pane. On a hard west elevation we'd specify these over an interior blackout roller, for a physical reason: stopping the heat outside the glass keeps a room cooler than absorbing it inside, where the pane warms and radiates at you.

THE TRADE-OFF

It's dearer, it changes the facade, and it lives outside in a hail belt.^[7] We'd motorise it with a wind sensor so it retracts before a storm — and in a cluster it needs trustee consent first.

Concealed & recessed blinds NEW CLUSTERS · FULL RENOVATIONS

The fabric drops from a slim slot in the ceiling with the hardware completely hidden. For the architect-designed rooms going up around Atholl — where the whole idea is uninterrupted glass — it is the one specification that doesn't undo the room when raised.

THE TRADE-OFF

It has to be planned before the ceiling closes. At drawing-board stage that is straightforward; afterwards the honest retrofit is a slim colour-matched cassette pelmet — very good, but not invisible.

Cellular / honeycomb blinds SOUTH ROOMS · DOUBLE VOLUMES

The fabric cells hold a layer of still air against the glass. On a cold south room, or a double-volume stairwell that dumps its heat every winter night, it is the cheapest thermal improvement you can make without replacing the window.

THE TRADE-OFF

The gain sits on the winter side of the ledger — not a heat-rejection answer on a hot west wall. A soft product, too: wrong for a busy kitchen.

Roller shutters (shading) WEST WALLS · ROAD-SIDE ROOMS

Rigid aluminium slats rolling down from a headbox outside the building, covering the whole opening — sun, heat and glare handled before the glass.

Shading, not security. They are made for sun, heat and glare control, and are not security-rated shutters — a different product entirely, which we can quote on request.

THE TRADE-OFF

The most visible exterior change on this list, and the headbox has to live somewhere — a design decision, not a measurement. Closed is closed: coverage, not adjustable light.

Folding-arm awnings PATIOS & ENTERTAINING LAWNS

Where the garden is the extra room — and on stands this size it usually is^[3] — an awning buys more usable house than anything you could do to a window, then folds away for the winter sun.

THE TRADE-OFF

Storms roll through most summer afternoons^[5] and the highveld sits in the higher hail band,^[7] so we'd specify a wind sensor and a cassette that closes over the fabric. A long projection may need extra support.

Also on the list below: **day/night blinds** for privacy without darkness, **vertical & panel blinds** for wide stacking doors, **zip screens** against patio wind, **skylight & shaped-window blinds** for gable glass, **motorised curtain tracks**, and **motorisation** — which on a double-volume stairwell is the only way the blind ever gets used.

Nothing to see when it's up.

A ceiling-recessed system planned in before the ceiling closed — the reason we ask to be involved at drawing-board stage on Atholl's new clusters and rebuilds.

— 05 — THE LOCAL CONSTRAINT

Clusters, trustees and mid-renovation timing.

Atholl is freehold-dominated: over 700 of its roughly 800 homes are freehold.^[2] If yours is one, nobody's permission is needed for an awning, an external venetian or a roller shutter.

The rest is townhouses, clusters and apartments,^[4] where the rule is different. Under the prescribed conduct rules made with the Sectional Titles Schemes Management Act, an owner or occupier of a section **must not, without the trustees' written consent, change the external appearance** of the section or an exclusive-use area, unless the change is minor and does not detract from the appearance of the section or the common property.^[9]

- **Interior blinds** fitted inside an existing reveal change nothing outside, so it doesn't arise.

— **Exterior products** — awnings, external venetians, roller shutters, zip-screen channels — do change it, so in a scheme that is a trustee conversation before a quote.

We fit blinds; we are not your managing agent and won't speak for your trustees. At the measure we say plainly which options touch the outside, so the right question reaches the right person before anything is ordered.

Renovating or building? Get us in early: a concealed ceiling recess has to exist before the ceiling closes. And SANS 10400-XA:2021 requires a fenestration calculation once glazing passes 20% of floor area, up from 15% in the previous edition, and no longer treats west, north and east glass differently for solar heat gain.^[10] Ask your architect early how your shading is counted.

— 06 — THE HONEST LIMIT OF A GUIDE

What we'd still need to check on site.

Everything above is what we know about Atholl. What no page can know is your house — and five things decide the actual specification, all of them settled in about an hour with a tape and a compass.

01

Reveal depth, and whether the opening is square

Depth decides whether a blind can sit inside the opening at all, and how much light creeps round the edge. Openings are rarely square, and a few millimetres changes how the blind is made.

02

What the wall is actually made of

Plaster over brick, a later drywall addition, or an aluminium frame with nothing behind it. The fixings decide what can safely hang there — and outside, whether the job is possible at all.

03

Which way it really faces, and what's growing outside

We take a compass reading, because twenty degrees moves the answer between west and south-west. Then we look out: the tree doing half your shading differs at every window, and half falls off in

winter.

04

Where the power is, and how it reaches the window

For anything motorised the constraint is the route from a power point to the top of the opening — battery or wired, chased in or surface-run. A walk-around with a torch, not a guess over the phone.

05

Wind exposure on the patio

Awnings and zip screens live or die on this. A sheltered courtyard and an open west corner want different products and sensors — obvious in two minutes on the paving.

The patio question.

Projection, fixing height and wind exposure get decided standing on the paving — and with storms most summer afternoons, the sensor is part of the specification.

Book the free expert measure.

A consultant comes to the house with fabric and slat samples, measures every window properly, and leaves you with a written quote itemised per window. There is no charge and no commitment at the end of it. If you'd rather have a rough number first, the ballpark tool sits inside the form below — same enquiry, no obligation either way.

- ✓ Free in-home measure and a written quote per window
- ✓ No call centre — a real consultant comes out with samples
- ✓ Nothing is made until you've approved the quote
- ✓ Still deciding? Say so on the form and we'll leave you be

Anything you added to your list while reading is already ticked on the form. You don't have to type it again.

— NEITHER, FOR NOW

Just take the Ledger, marked up

Not ready for a visit or a number? Tell us which rooms are the problem and we'll email you this Ledger with your own elevations noted against it. Nothing is booked and nobody phones.

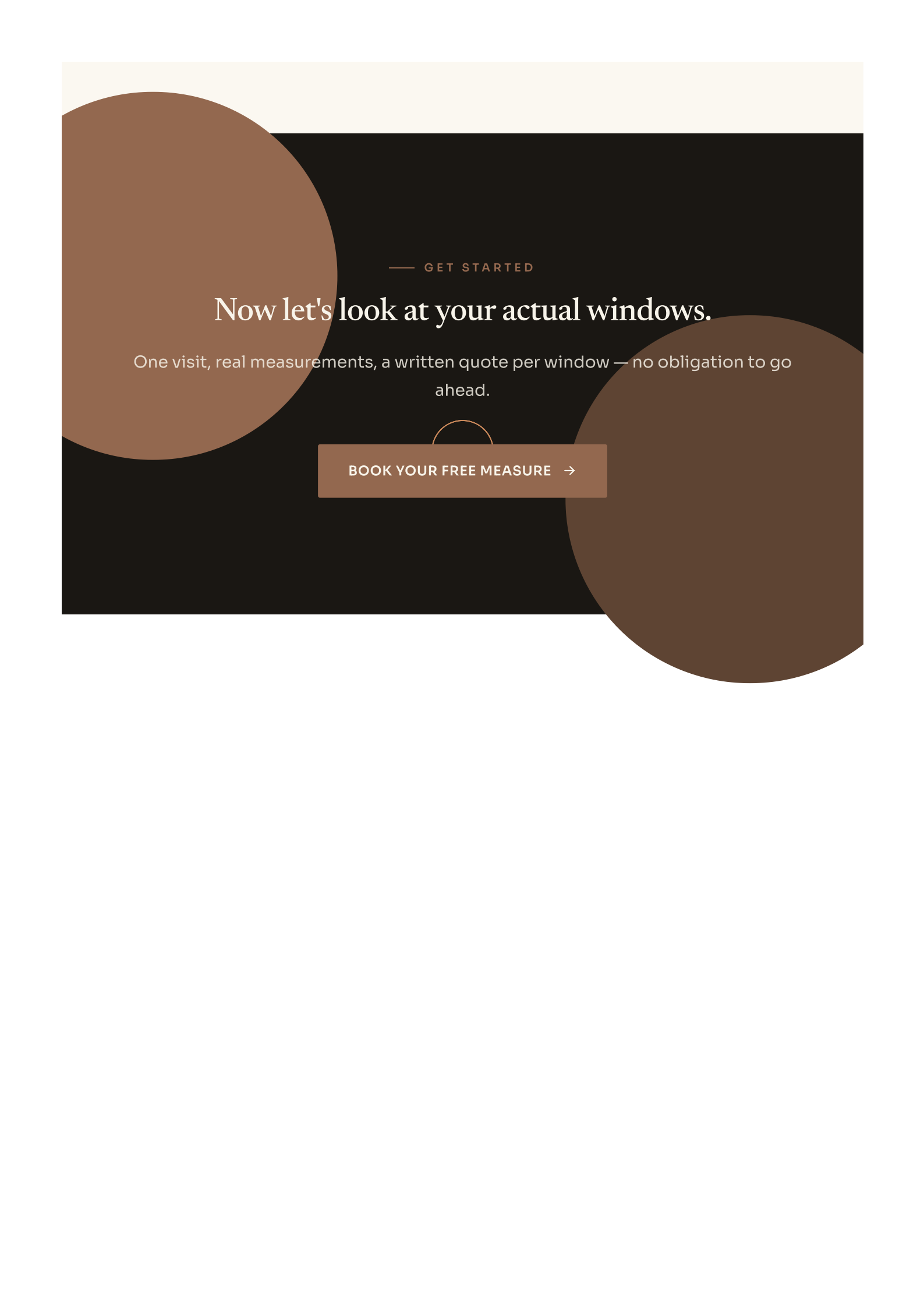
— WORKING OUT

Sources.

Every geography, climate and legal claim above traces to one of these. Anywhere we reasoned instead of citing, the text says so.

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1. Atholl, Gauteng — suburb coordinates (26°6'59"S 28°4'1"E), area of 2.24 km², and the 2011 census population of 4,153 at 1,850 people per km². en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atholl,_Gauteng
 2. Seeff — Atholl area profile: "just over two square kilometers", approximately 800 homes of which over 700 are freehold houses, "a blend of architectural styles", and Sandton CBD about 3 km away. seeff.com/area-profiles/sandton/atholl
 3. Private Property — Spotlight on Atholl: established trees lining every street, large stands with established gardens and verges, and a contrasting mix of modern and older stately homes. [privateproperty.co.za — spotlight on Atholl](https://privateproperty.co.za/spotlight-on-Atholl)
 4. Harcourts — Atholl area profile: a history dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, the area originally part of a large farm, and a property mix running from townhouses and clusters to large freestanding homes and apartments. harcourts.co.za/area-profiles/sandton/atholl
 5. Johannesburg — elevation of 1,753 m, subtropical highland (Köppen Cwb) climate, afternoon thundershowers from November to March, annual rainfall of 713 mm, June/July minima around 4.1 °C with occasional frost, and roughly six million trees of which 4.8 million are in private gardens. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg
 6. Conradie, D. (2018) "Sun, shade and natural daylight in South African town planning, with emphasis on Pretoria", *Town and Regional Planning* 73:47–67 — solar noon elevation of 87.7° on 21 December and 40.84° on 20 June, a December sunset azimuth of 243.35°, the finding that western-exposure afternoons run far hotter than mornings, and the guidance that horizontal overhangs suit altitude-dominated angles on northern facades. [scielo.org.za — S2415-04952018000200005](https://scielo.org.za/S2415-04952018000200005)
 7. Punge et al. (2023) "Characteristics of hail hazard in South Africa based on satellite detection of convective storms", *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences* 23:1549–1576 — hail events concentrating along the Highveld, most frequent from mid-November through February, peaking in the afternoon. nhess.copernicus.org/articles/23/1549/2023
 8. Hong Kong Observatory — ultraviolet radiation at high altitude: "For every 1000 m increase in altitude, the UV radiation level will increase about 12%." [hko.gov.hk — UV radiation at high altitude](https://hko.gov.hk/uv-radiation-at-high-altitude)
 9. Prescribed Conduct Rule 5(1) under the Sectional Titles Schemes Management Act 8 of 2011 — trustees' written consent required before changing the external appearance of a section or exclusive-use area. [stratafin.co.za — sectional title appearance rules](https://stratafin.co.za/sectional-title-appearance-rules) · [saflii.org — STSMA 8 of 2011](https://saflii.org/STsma8of2011)
 10. Roos Architects — a summary of the revised SANS 10400-XA standard (2021 edition): the fenestration threshold rising from 15% to 20% of floor area, and the removal of the west/north/east distinction for solar heat gain. [roosarchitects.co.za — revised SANS 10400-XA](https://roosarchitects.co.za/revised-SANS-10400-XA)
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Two honest caveats. The solar figures in source 6 are calculated for Pretoria at 25.7° south; Atholl sits at roughly 26.1° south, so its own angles differ by well under a degree — we have quoted the published Pretoria numbers rather than invent our own. And the 1,753 m elevation in source 5 is the figure published for Johannesburg as a city, not a survey point in Atholl; we use it to describe highveld conditions generally, which is what it is good for.



— GET STARTED

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