

## DRAKENSBERG TO DURBAN SAFARI (14 DAYS)

---

Kwazulu-Natal is a fascinating province from both a natural and cultural perspective. This region incorporates some of South Africa's most dramatic scenery - from the high peaks of the Drakensberg to the azure waters of Kosi Bay and St Lucia – and includes world-renowned game reserves, such as Hluhluwe-Umfolozi, Mkhuze and Ndumo, where we will have the opportunity of seeing some of Africa's big game and some remarkable birdlife. We start our adventure high in the Drakensberg (or "Dragon Mountain"), before descending to the Natal midlands, where numerous battlefields bear witness to the interaction between the Zulus, British and Afrikaners. We then make our way to the lush indigenous forests surrounding Eshowe, with their rich birdlife, and the magnificent game reserves of northern Natal. We then continue to Kosi Bay, one of the most pristine coastal areas of South Africa, teeming with hippos, crocodiles and tropical fish. Finally we make our way down the subtropical coast via St Lucia, a RAMSAR protected wetland, to Durban, South Africa's "Holiday City".

### **BASIC ITINERARY**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>
<b>1 Clarens</b>	Lake Clarens Guest House/ similar
<b>2 Drakensberg</b>	Thendele Upper Camp
<b>3 Drakensberg</b>	Thendele Upper Camp
<b>4 Natal Midlands</b>	Granny Mouse Country House
<b>5 Rorke's Drift</b>	Isibindi Zulu Lodge
<b>6 Eshowe</b>	A Forest View Lodge/ similar
<b>7 Hluhluwe</b>	Hilltop Chalets
<b>8 Hluhluwe</b>	Hilltop Chalets
<b>9 Mkuzi Game Reserve</b>	Mkuzi Game Reserve
<b>10 Kosi Bay</b>	Kosi Forest Lodge
<b>11 Kosi Bay</b>	Kosi Forest Lodge
<b>12 Ndumo Game Reserve</b>	Ndumo chalets
<b>13 St Lucia</b>	Amazulu Lodge/ similar

**Price\*:** *Please refer to rates page on the website.*

\* These prices include all accommodation, meals, transport, entrance fees and guide fees. Prices exclude beverages, laundry fees, any optional activities, gratuities and items of a personal nature (such as gifts and souvenirs).

Some of the lodges in this tour are 'top-end' luxury lodges (such as Isibindi Zulu Lodge and Kosi Forest Lodge), hence the relatively higher price for this tour. If you would prefer more basic accommodation, we can prepare a quote accordingly.

## *DAY 1: JOHANNESBURG TO CLARENS*

---

*Highlights: Golden Gate Highlands National Park, picturesque Clarens*

You will be fetched from OR Tambo Airport or your place of stay in Johannesburg, after which we will make our way towards the majestic Drakensberg (or "Dragon Mountain" in Afrikaans). Today we will explore the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, so-named due to the shades of orange and red cast by the evening sun on the sandstone cliffs. This wildlife reserve is situated in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains close to the mountain kingdom of Lesotho and is home to a variety of mammals including black wildebeest, eland, blesbok, oribi, springbok and zebra. Rare Bearded Vultures and Bald Ibis breed in the cliffs. After exploring the park we make our way to the nearby town of Clarens. This quaint and picturesque village, with its characteristic sandstone buildings, art galleries and craft shops, is also known as the "Jewel of the Free State". The surrounding mountains and trees, with their spring blossoms and autumn shades, attract photographers and nature lovers. We will overnight in one of the sandstone guest houses overlooking the mountains.

## *DAY 2: CLARENS TO THENDELE*

---

*Highlights: Witsieshoek, Sentinel Peak, birdwatching, spectacular scenery, Amphitheatre*

After breakfast we make our way to Witsieshoek, the highest resort in South Africa, where we hope to see the highly endangered Bearded Vulture or "Lammergeier". On certain days of the week, the resort operates a 'vulture restaurant', where meat scraps are put out to attract the vultures. We then visit the nearby Sentinel Peak, where we can enjoy incredible views of the Drakensberg and possibly a short walk. We then continue to Thendele, our second overnight stop in 'The Berg'. Thendele hutted camp is situated in one of the most picturesque settings in the country, overlooking the world-famous Amphitheatre. This area is home to the Verreux's Eagle and, after a storm, waterfalls may be seen cascading down the vertical cliffs. The surrounding valleys and ridges offer numerous superb trails. In the evening we will enjoy a traditional South African 'braai' (barbeque on an open fire) at our chalet.

## *DAY 3: THENDELE*

---

*Highlights: Mountain trails, spectacular scenery, horse-riding (optional)*

We will spend the day exploring the Royal Natal National Park. The most popular activity here is undoubtedly hiking, and there are numerous trails available, graded from easy to difficult. One of the most popular routes is the Gorge Walk – a relatively easy trail that takes approximately 5-6 hours to complete – offering spectacular views of the Amphitheatre, Sentinel Peak and Tugela Falls. Other activities include horse riding, trout fishing, picnicking, and swimming in the clear mountain streams.

## *DAY 4: THENDELE TO NATAL MIDLANDS*

---

*Highlights: Midlands Meander*

Today we make our way south to explore the famous Midlands Meander, with its numerous country houses, art galleries and world-class restaurants. The landscape here is dominated by rolling green hills and crystal-

clear rivers, and it is a popular area for trout fishing. Tonight we will be staying at the well-known Granny Mouse Country House, situated on the bank of the Lions River and surrounded by indigenous vegetation and an abundance of birdlife.

#### *DAY 5: NATAL MIDLANDS TO RORKE'S DRIFT*

---

*Highlights: British, Zulu and Boer Battlefields, traditional Zulu culture experience*

After breakfast we make our way to the heart of the Zulu battlefields. Kwazulu Natal is home to 63 battle sites, of which we plan to visit the most well-known sites of Blood River, Rorke's Drift and Isandhlwana (time permitting). The Battle of Blood River, fought on 16 December 1838, was an historic victory for the Afrikaners against the Zulus, whereas Rorke's Drift is the site of one of the greatest victories for the British and Isandhlwana the site of greatest defeat. In the evening we retire to the Isibindi Zulu Lodge where we spend the night in luxury Zulu 'beehive' huts, a traditional method of construction. Tonight we may visit a nearby Zulu kraal (certain nights of the week), where we can enjoy traditional food under the stars and be entertained by Zulu dancers.

#### *DAY 6: RORKE'S DRIFT TO ESHOWE*

---

*Highlights: Bushveld walk, battlefields, Zulu capital*

This morning we can enjoy a short guided walk in the surrounds of our lodge, before making our way to Eshowe, the capital of Zululand. We may visit a further battlefield today, depending on what we were able to see previously. En route to Eshowe we plan to stop for lunch in Ulundi. Eshowe is the oldest town of European settlement in Zululand and its name is said to be inspired by the sound of wind blowing through the indigenous Dlinza Forest, the most significant feature of the town. During the Anglo-Zulu War the British forces under Colonel Pearson were besieged here for 10 weeks.

#### *DAY 7: ESHOWE TO HLUHLUWE-UMFOLOZI GAME RESERVE*

---

*Highlights: Dlinza Forest, Aerial Boardwalk, Shakaland Zulu Cultural Village*

After an early breakfast, we visit the Dlinza Forest, with its lush indigenous canopy teeming with birds. We will explore the forest by foot and view the forest canopy from the recently erected aerial boardwalk – one of its kind in South Africa. The Dlinza Forest is home to many spectacular birds, such as the Narina Trogon and Purple-crested Turaco. We then make our way to the nearby Shakaland – a traditional Zulu cultural village. At Shakaland, originally the set of the popular TV series' Shaka Zulu and John Ross, we will be introduced to various aspects of Zulu culture, including social systems, fighting formations, the greeting of the home, beadwork, pottery, beer making and spear throwing. After our tour, we make our way to Hluhluwe-Umfolozi, South Africa's oldest game reserve. We will enjoy sundowners at a waterhole, followed by dinner at the Hilltop Rest Camp.

### *DAY 8: HLUHLUWE-UMFOLOZI GAME RESERVE*

---

*Highlights: "Big 5" game-viewing, birdwatching*

We will spend the day exploring the reserve, where we hope to see numerous mammals and interesting birdlife. The wide variety of plant life in this park gives rise to a diversity of mammals, birdlife, reptiles and amphibians, including the Big Five - lion, black and white rhino, elephant, buffalo and leopard, as well as a variety of other interesting species such as cheetah, wild dog and giraffe. It is also one of the best places in the world to see nyala (a shy antelope found in wooded areas). Through the world famous project "Operation Rhino", the white rhino population was brought back from extinction in this reserve. From less than 20 animals in 1900, there are now more than 10 000 White Rhinos in existence worldwide. We will again spend the night at Hilltop Rest Camp.

### *DAY 9: HLUHLUWE-UMFOLOZI TO MKHUZE GAME RESERVE*

---

*Highlights: Game-viewing, birdwatching*

After breakfast, we drive to the Mkhuze Game Reserve. Mkhuze, proclaimed a protected area in 1912, is a reserve of great beauty and high contrasts, and is regarded as one of the richest birdwatching spots in Africa (with more than 420 bird species on record)! The reserve has a wide diversity of natural habitats, including mountains, acacia savannah, swamps, woodlands, riverine forest and sand forest. Two beautiful pans are home to communities of hippo, crocodile, pink-backed and white pelicans, as well as a diversity of ducks and geese, which gather in spring. Animals that we could see include black and white rhino, elephant, giraffe, leopard, buffalo, nyala, blue wildebeest, kudu, cheetah, hyena and suni. After dinner we will embark on a night drive where we have the chance of seeing leopard, owls and other nocturnal creatures.

### *DAY 10: MKHUZE GAME RESERVE TO KOSI BAY*

---

*Highlights: Guided walk, game-viewing, scenic coastline*

We start the day with a guided morning walk in the Fig Forest, where we hope to encounter numerous spectacular birds and some shy mammals. After lunch, we travel coastwards to the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve – an unspoilt wilderness that is part of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, a World Heritage Site. We will stay at Kosi Forest Lodge, set in a beautiful sand forest on the banks of the Kosi Lake. The luxurious thatched suites are carefully positioned to provide guests with privacy and intimacy with the peaceful surroundings. In the late afternoon we may enjoy a guided walk through the magnificent Raffia Palm Forest (the largest species of palm in the world) where we can listen for abundant birdcalls and perhaps catch a glimpse of the rare Palm-nut Vulture in the canopy. Between Mid-November and Mid-January we will have the added adventure of turtle-tracking! At this time of the year, giant Leatherback and Loggerhead turtles make their way onto the beach to lay their eggs, having swum the entire length of the continent. Research shows that eggs are often laid exactly where the mother emerged as a hatchling years previously. Guests are able to view these magnificent creatures laying their eggs from a distance of just a few metres. The

turtle-tracking excursion takes place at night and can last up to 3-4hrs. Utmost precaution is taken to ensure that the females are not disturbed.

### *DAY 11: KOSI BAY*

---

*Highlights: Boat trip, Fish traps, picnic lunch, Bhanga Nek, snorkelling*

Today we will explore the Kosi Lake system by boat, a series of interconnected lakes which stretch over some 18km. We will explore the various sized lakes and channels, walk through the famous Kosi Bay fish traps, enjoy a picnic lunch, and swim or snorkel in the sea at Bhanga Nek. Once we return to the lodge, we can relax at the pool with its unsurpassed views of Lake Shengeza.

### *DAY 12: KOSI BAY TO NDUMO GAME RESERVE*

---

*Highlights: Canoeing, game-viewing, birdwatching*

In the morning we may explore the lake by canoe before making our way to the nearby Ndumo Game Reserve. This reserve is known for its magnificent bird life and boasts many beautiful pans surrounded by fever trees, extensive wetlands and reedbeds as well as acacia savannah and sand forest. An astonishing range of aquatic birdlife can be seen here, including black egrets, pygmy geese and flocks of pelicans. The reserve is also home to black and white rhino, nyala, bushbuck, red duiker, suni, hippos and a very large population of crocodiles.

### *DAY 13: NDUMO GAME RESERVE TO ST LUCIA*

---

*Highlights: Game-viewing, birdwatching, boat cruise*

We will embark on an early morning game drive in the reserve before breakfast. We then head southwards to the St Lucia Wetlands, one of the world's great eco-tourism destinations. The area attracts considerable numbers of animals, especially antelope, hippo, crocodiles and elephants. Lake St Lucia is also one of the most important breeding areas for birds in South Africa and is surrounded by a mosaic of coastal forest, woodlands and grasslands. We will embark on an early evening boat cruise on the lake where we will hopefully be able to get close to hippos and crocs. After our boat trip we will dine at a local restaurant and spend the night at the luxurious Amazulu Lodge.

### *DAY 14: ST LUCIA TO DURBAN*

---

*Highlights: St Lucia Wetlands, forest walk*

In the morning we will do a short walk in the forest - there are plenty of areas to explore and plants and wildlife to be seen. After lunch, we will make our way down the subtropical coast to Durban, South Africa's favourite holiday city. We plan to arrive in Durban in the late afternoon. You can then either catch a flight back to Johannesburg or we can arrange accommodation for you in Durban.