

SOUTH AFRICAN SPLENDOUR SAFARI (22 days)

In this 3-week safari, we explore all the natural highlights of South Africa, including its most spectacular scenery, its magnificent wildlife and its most visited attractions. Starting with three days in Cape Town, we journey to the south-western tip of Africa and ride the cable-car to the top of Table Mountain. We then explore the magnificent Garden Route, with its rich scenic beauty and lush evergreen forests, followed by the Drakensberg, South Africa's highest mountain range, and the land of the Zulu people. We then enjoy five magnificent days in the world-renowned Kruger National Park, home to Africa's 'Big 5' species and over five hundred bird species. Finally, we traverse the spectacular escarpment, known as "The Panorama", with its numerous waterfalls, canyons and caves. This tour is made up of our 3 most popular tours – the 'Garden Route', 'Kruger & Mpumalanga' and 'Drakensberg to Durban' Safaris – all condensed into one epic adventure! This tour is recommended for all first-time visitors to South Africa, nature lovers and photographers, and can be enjoyed by the whole family. Truly an African adventure of a lifetime!

BASIC ITINERARY

Day	Accommodation
1 Cape Town	Oakvale Lodge/ or similar
2 Cape Town	Oakvale Lodge/ or similar
3 Cape Town	Oakvale Lodge/ or similar
4 Hermanus	Francolinhof Guest Lodge
5 Wilderness	The Boardwalk
6 Oudtshoorn	De Zeekoe
7 Tsitsikamma	Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park
8 Durban	Gateway Country Lodge/ or similar
9 Natal Midlands	Granny Mouse Country House
10 Drakensberg	Thendele
11 Drakensberg	Thendele
12 Ermelo	Drinkwater Guest Farm/ or similar
13 Hazyview	Blue Jay Lodge
14 Kruger National Park	Lower Sabie
15 Kruger National Park	Lower Sabie
16 Kruger National Park	Satara
17 Kruger National Park	Letaba
18 Magoebaskloof	Magoebaskloof Rest Camp
19 Blyde River Canyon	Otter's Den
20 Blyde River Canyon	Otter's Den
21 Dullstroom	Elands Valley

Price (per person sharing)*: Please refer to the 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).

DAY 1: CAPE TOWN

Highlights: Flight arrives

You will be collected at Cape Town International Airport and transferred to your guest house, where you can relax and freshen up after your flight. Your tour includes a local flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town, so it is recommended that you book your international flight to and from Johannesburg (OR Tambo International Airport). Depending on the time available, you will be taken to a restaurant of your choice in the evening.

DAY 2: CAPE TOWN

Highlights: Kirstenbosch Gardens, Cape of Good Hope, South-western tip of Africa, African Penguins

We start the day by visiting the world-famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. These magnificent gardens, set on the slopes of Table Mountain, contain an amazing variety of indigenous plants and birds found on the Cape Peninsula. After a gentle stroll through the gardens, we take a scenic drive around the foot of Table Mountain and The Twelve Apostles. We pass some of the most spectacular beaches in Cape Town - Clifton, Camp's Bay and Llandudno – on our way to Hout Bay (so-called 'Wood' Bay in Afrikaans due to the dense indigenous forests once found there). We then travel via the awe-inspiring and rather perilous Chapman's Peak Drive (weather-permitting) and the misty cliffs of Scarborough en route to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. This nature reserve is recognised globally for its extraordinarily rich fauna and flora and its spectacular landforms – rugged cliffs that extend into the ocean. Animals seen here include Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Eland (the largest antelope in Africa), Chacma Baboons and up to 250 species of birds! After lunch at Cape Point, we climb (or take a funicular) up to the lighthouse, where we will have spectacular views of False Bay and across the Atlantic. We then visit the Cape of Good Hope – the south-western tip of Africa! We then continue to Boulders, a secluded section of beach that has become famous for its thriving colony of African Penguins. From just two breeding pairs in 1982, this penguin colony has now grown to about 3 000. From mating to moulting, breeding to bathing, the daily lives of these rare penguins are played out within a few metres of fascinated visitors. After watching and photographing these comical birds, we make our way back to your B&B. In the evening, you will be taken to a restaurant of your choice.

DAY 3: CAPE TOWN

Highlights: Table Mountain Cable Car, Robben Island, Victoria & Alfred Waterfront

In the morning we will embark on a trip to the top of Table Mountain by cable car (weather-permitting) where you can enjoy spectacular views of the entire Peninsula. Table Mountain is over 1000m high and is one of the most significant natural landmarks of Southern Africa. After an early lunch at one of the many restaurants in Camp's Bay, you will travel by boat to Robben Island (weather-permitting), where Nelson Mandela, first democratically-elected president of South Africa, was imprisoned for 27 years. After your tour of the island you can spend the evening exploring the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront with its numerous shops and restaurants.

DAY 4: CAPE TOWN TO HERMANUS

Highlights: Historical Stellenbosch, cellar tour, wine-tasting, whale-watching (seasonal)

Today we make our way towards Stellenbosch, the second oldest town in South Africa (after Cape Town) in the heart of the Cape Winelands. We explore the historical oak-lined streets flanked by buildings of Cape Dutch and Georgian architecture. Here we will visit 'Oom Samie se Winkel', a quaint general store bursting with interesting and historical items and the nearby Delaire Wine Estate - vineyards in the sky - with its spectacular views of the Jonkershoek Mountains and Simonsberg. We continue to Delheim Wine Estate for a relaxing lunch in the courtyard. At Delheim, you will have the opportunity to sample some of the estate's internationally-acclaimed wines in the coolness of their Downstairs Cellar and enjoy a cellar tour. In the afternoon, we will make our way eastwards, along the beautiful False Bay Coast towards Hermanus, a picturesque coastal town nestled between a tranquil bay and the rugged fynbos-clad mountains. We have a chance of seeing a variety of marine birds and mammals along this route, including Cape Gannets, Cape Fur Seals, dolphins and whales. Between July and to November, Hermanus is one of the best land-based whale watching spots in the world and the bay may be teeming with Southern Right Whales. Rock hyraxes and other wildlife are also usually present to entertain us. We will overnight at the nearby Francolinhof Guest House.

DAY 5: HERMANUS TO OUDTSHOORN

Highlights: Historical Swellendam, Drostdy museum, Aloe factory, Ostrich Show Farm

Today we make our way inland via the historical and beautiful town of Swellendam, situated at the base of the high Langeberg Mountains. Swellendam was established in the early 1700s and is the 3rd oldest town in South Africa. We will visit the local Drostdy Museum (the seat of the first Magistrate, or *Landdrost*, built in 1747) where we will be given insight into the early way of life of the settlers here. We then continue our journey eastwards towards the Garden Route, with its spectacular coastline, rich evergreen forests, high mountains and pristine lakes. As we approach Albertinia, we are entering "Aloe country". Our next stop will be at an aloe factory, where a myriad of products (with many useful and healing properties) are made from the *Aloe Ferox* plant. We will join a brief tour of this factory, where we will be given insight into the production process from the Aloe leaf to each of the raw products, followed by a light lunch. We then travel further inland towards Oudtshoorn, the ostrich capital of the world and the heart of the Little Karoo. During the ostrich feather boom, this town became extremely wealthy, but hit hard times after World War I, when the feather industry collapsed. Ostriches are still ranched here in large numbers for meat, leather and eggs. We will retire for the evening to De Zeekoe, a working ostrich farm where we will spend the night in stylish log cabins situated on the edge of a vlei (marsh) teeming with water birds.

DAY 6: OUDTSHOORN TO WILDERNESS

Highlights: Meerkats, Ostrich show farm, Cango Caves

This morning we will get an early start in order to join a local meerkat (suricate) specialist for a sunrise tour where we can watch and learn about meerkats in their natural environment - amongst the world's cutest and most comical small mammals. This is one of the best places in the wild for getting close views of these

fascinating little creatures. After our meerkat tour, we will visit an Ostrich show farm to find out more about these large flightless birds. After lunch, we will make our way to the nearby Cango Caves. These caves, formed over millions of years within a thick limestone layer, extend as far as 5.3km into the Swartberg Mountains. You will have the option of either touring the main caverns, with their spectacular stalactite and stalagmite formations, or doing the extended adventure tour, which includes climbing and crawling through tight, narrow passages. We then continue our journey via the spectacular Outeniqua Pass to Wilderness, a picturesque town situated in the foothills of the Outeniqua Mountains. This is a region of incomparable beauty, which encompasses lakes, rivers, lagoons, forests, fynbos and pristine white beaches. We will have sundowners overlooking the Indian Ocean (where we may be fortunate enough to see dolphins) before spending the night in luxury log chalets with spectacular views.

DAY 7: WILDERNESS TO KNYSNA

Highlights: Knysna Heads, Monkeyland, Bungy Jumping

After breakfast, we continue up the Garden Route to Knysna, a legendary town, famed for its freshwater oysters and elusive forest elephants (now virtually extinct). We will explore the Knysna waterfront before embarking on the well-known "John Benn" for a lunchtime cruise to the Knysna Heads (where the lagoon enters the sea). We then make our way to Monkeyland, the world's first free-roaming, multi-species primate sanctuary. Here we will join a guided walk through the indigenous forest, where we can see some of the world's small primates, including lemurs, roaming freely in the trees. We will stop briefly at Blaauwkrans River Bridge to watch or participate in (if you are really daring - optional), the highest bungee jump in the world – an incredible 217m! This area forms part of the renowned Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park. Tsitsikamma, meaning "*place of many waters*" in the indigenous Khoi-San language, is an area of unmatched beauty with a wild rugged coastline, aquamarine breakers and an abundance of marine life. We will enjoy dinner overlooking the moonlit bay before retiring to our chalets.

DAY 8: TSITSIKAMMA TO DURBAN

Highlights: Forest walk, Boat trip/ snorkelling,

After breakfast, we will set out on a boardwalk through the forest to the impressive (and somewhat dizzying!) pedestrian swing bridge over the spectacular Storms River Mouth. On this route, we may see Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Chorister Robin-chat and many other birds. If we are fortunate enough, we may even encounter a Cape Clawless Otter feeding on the shore. After the walk, we will either join a boat trip up the steep-sided Storm's River gorge (weather permitting) or snorkel in one of the quiet bays or rock pools, with an abundance of marine life. We then make our way to Port Elizabeth to catch our flight to Durban. Once we arrive in Durban, we make our way to our guest house situated in Umhlanga.

DAY 9: DURBAN TO NATAL MIDLANDS

Highlights: Durban city, Valley of 1000 Hills, Zulu cultural experience, Midlands Meander

After breakfast, we will do a brief drive through the city of Durban before making our way to the Valley of 1000 Hills, home of the Zulu people. Here we will visit a Zulu cultural village, where we will be given insight into the fascinating Zulu customs and traditions. We will enter beehive-shaped thatch huts, view Zulu artefacts and enjoy some traditional Zulu dancing. We then 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 numerous 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 10: NATAL MIDLANDS TO DRAKENSBERG

Highlights: Spectacular mountain scenery

Today we head northwards to the Drakensberg ("Dragon Mountain"), South Africa's highest mountain range and the source of the Tugela River. We will be staying at Thendele, a hatted resort situated in one of the most picturesque parts of the Drakensberg, overlooking the world-famous "Amphitheatre". This area is home to the Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) and Black Eagle and, after a storm, numerous waterfalls may be seen cascading down the vertical cliffs. The surrounding valleys and ridges offer numerous superb walks. We may embark on a short walk in the afternoon, followed by a traditional South African 'braai' (barbeque on an open fire) at our chalet.

DAY 11: DRAKENSBERG

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 – which offers spectacular views of the Amphitheatre, Sentinel and Tugela Falls. Other activities include horse riding, trout fishing, picnicking, and swimming in the clear mountain streams.

DAY 12: DRAKENSBERG TO ERMELO

Highlights: Sentinel Peak

After breakfast we drive to the nearby Sentinel Peak, where we can enjoy incredible views and possibly a short walk. We then travel northwards to Mpumalanga. We will spend the night on a tranquil guest farm close to Ermelo.

DAY 13: ERMELO TO HAZYVIEW

Highlights: Spectacular scenery, waterfalls, Sudwala Caves

After breakfast we travel via Carolina to Waterval Boven. Waterval Boven (meaning "Above the Waterfall" in Dutch) is situated on the Elands River at the top of a spectacular 228m waterfall. The town was built on the Transvaal Republic's main railway line from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay. We will enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant, after which we will make our way to the Sudwala Caves, the oldest known caves in the world! These magnificent Dolomite caves were formed up to 240 million years ago and have been used as a refuge by people through the centuries. We will join a guided tour through the caves before continuing our journey via Nelspruit (the Capital of Mpumalanga) to our tranquil guest lodge in Hazyview, close to the border of Kruger National Park.

DAYS 14-17: KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Highlights: Game viewing, bird watching

After a leisurely breakfast at our lodge we will make our way to the spectacular Kruger National Park. Kruger, one of Africa's largest and most magnificent game parks, was established in 1926 and is nearly 2 million hectares in extent. The park is home to an incredible 150 mammal species and over 500 bird species, making it one of the most popular game parks in the world! Here, we hope to see elephant, lion, cheetah, leopard, rhino, various antelope species, crocodile, hippo and many others. In addition to the "Big 5" we should also encounter some spectacular birdlife including bee-eaters, rollers, kingfishers, cuckoos, hornbills, eagles (including Bateleur), vultures, owls, turacos, storks, and many others. We will spend seven nights in Kruger during which we will traverse the entire length of the park from the drier south to the subtropical Pafuri in the far north. Particularly in the northern section of Kruger we hope to find good numbers of bird species. We will spend two nights at Lower Sabie (with its spectacular river views, and population of hippos), one night at Satara (a good area for sighting lions and other big cats), two nights at Letaba (a shady camp, and an area popular with elephants), and two nights at Punda Maria (the best area for birds and for viewing shyer mammals). Each day we will embark on game drives in the early morning and late afternoon where we will seek out mammal and bird species and have the opportunity to visit various lookout points, hides and picnic spots along the way. We will spend the heat of the day (when animals are more scarce) relaxing at the camps. Most of the camps have swimming pools and at each camp there is the option of going on a night drive to view nocturnal creatures, such as genets, spring hares, civets, and aardvark (optional extra activity).

DAY 18: KRUGER TO MAGOEBASKLOOF

Highlights: Spectacular scenery, huge baobab

After a final early morning game drive in Kruger we head westwards via Venda to the forested escarpment. Here we will visit the largest baobab tree in the world (which even has a pub inside of it!). We then continue to the Magoebaskloof, known as the "Land of the Silver Mist" with its magnificent mountain peaks, indigenous forest and waterfalls. We plan to have dinner at a rustic local pub and spend the night at Magoebaskloof Rest Camp with views over the mist-covered valley.

DAY 19: MAGOEBASKLOOF TO BLYDE RIVER CANYON

Highlights: Forest drive, bird watching, tea plantation

In the morning we will explore the nearby Woodbush Forest, with its magnificent, tall Yellowwoods, Ironwoods, Stinkwoods and Cabbage Trees and over 200 species of orchid! This forest is rated as one of the premier forest birding spots in South Africa and is inhabited by the critically endangered Cape Parrot, of which there are now only about 1000 individuals in existence. The sprawling mountain forest also supports other spectacular species such as Knysna and Purple-crested Turaco, Narina Trogon, Orange Ground Thrush, Black-fronted Bush-shrike, White-starred Robin and Yellow-streaked Greenbul, among others, and rare Blue Swallow breed in the surrounding grasslands in summer. After brunch on a local tea-farm, we will make our way through Tzaneen, one of the most productive subtropical agriculture and tea-growing regions in South Africa, and we will have the opportunity to sample some of the local produce en route. We will continue our journey to the Blyde River, where we will spend the night on a forested island at Otter's Den.

DAY 20: BLYDE RIVER CANYON

Highlights: Wildlife rehabilitation centre, Silk factory, Blyde Canyon boat trip

This morning we will visit the world-renowned Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, a haven for abandoned and injured wildlife, and a breeding centre for endangered Southern African species. The centre is home to numerous birds of prey, including Crowned and Marshall Eagles, as well as large cats such as lions, leopards, and cheetahs. After our tour of the centre, we plan to enjoy lunch at the Bombyx Mori Silk factory, one of only two in South Africa, where we will be introduced to the history and art of silk weaving and have the opportunity of viewing a large variety of silk items for sale. In the afternoon we will embark on a boat trip through the Blyde River Canyon, the third largest canyon in the world (after the Grand and Fish River Canyons) and inhabited by crocodiles and hippos. We will spend another night at Otter's Den.

DAY 21: BLYDE RIVER CANYON TO DULLSTROOM

Highlights: Three Rondawels, Bourke's Luck Potholes, God's Window, Pilgrim's Rest

After breakfast we head via the spectacular Abel Erasmus Pass to various view sites along the "Panorama", including the Three Rondavels, Bourke's Luck Potholes (interesting geological features formed by swirling whirlpools grinding their way into the bedrock of the Blyde River), God's Window with its tropical rainforest and magnificent outlook onto the Lowveld, and the much-photographed Pinnacle. We then continue to the historical mining town of Pilgrim's Rest, where we will enjoy lunch and spend the afternoon exploring the town. Virtually the entire town has been declared a national monument and remains largely unchanged since the gold rush in 1873. Here we will visit a number of museums, restored houses and quaint shops and, time-permitting, may even engage in a little bit of gold panning! We then continue to Dullstroom, South Africa's premier trout fishing destination and one of the highest towns in South Africa (2100m). Numerous grassland bird species such as Denham's Bustard, Secretary Bird, Bald Ibis and occasionally Wattled Crane can be found in the green rolling hills around the village. We will spend the night in a stone lodge in the tranquil surrounds of Dullstroom.

DAY 22: DULLSTROOM TO JOHANNESBURG

Highlights: Spectacular scenery, birdlife, Dullstroom

In the morning, we explore the nearby grasslands where we hope to see various crane species and water birds. We will then explore the characterful village of Dullstroom and enjoy brunch at one of the pubs or restaurants, before making our way back to Johannesburg to catch your flight home. We expect to arrive at OR Tambo International Airport in the mid-afternoon. If you would like us to arrange accommodation for you in Johannesburg, we would also be happy to do so.