

The Grand Tour



Overview

This trip of a lifetime gives an opportunity to see the highlights of South Africa, including the Big Five in their natural habitat, an insight into the Zulu tribal culture, Cape Town and the Garden Route with a mixture of luxury and authenticity in accommodation. Our expert guide will provide lively information along the way on local customs, flora and fauna and wildlife.

Trip Highlights

- All the highlights Kruger, Zululand, Garden Route and Cape Town + more!
- Small personal groups and expert guiding
- Intimate accommodation of a very high standard
- Many meal experiences included
- Discover the Eastern Cape home of Nelson Mandela and South Africa's most up and coming region
- Unpack and relax - 2 nights Kruger, 2 nights Zululand, 2 nights Knysna, 3 nights Cape Town

DAY 1

On arrival in Johannesburg, you will be met and transferred to your accommodation in one of this city's green suburbs. The economic heart of South Africa, Johannesburg has a wonderful energy, and is also one of the greenest more trees have been planted here than anywhere else in the world. This evening, your group will all meet up with your guide for a welcome dinner. Overnight at Leaves Guest House (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Dinner Included.

DAY 2:

This morning after breakfast we head south for Soweto, heart of the struggle against apartheid. There is much history here, including the houses where Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu lived, as well as the monument to the Soweto uprisings of 1976. But there is also a very warm and friendly people, whom we will meet during a lunch stop at one of the local shebeens (pubs). From here, we head east, before stopping for overnight in one of the towns near the escarpment, which will be revealed to us tomorrow. Our lodge is simple with incredible views over Long Tom Pass. Overnight at Misty Mountain (or similar) sightings may include buffalo, hippo, chameleons, bush babies, jackals, hyena and leopard.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch.

DAY 3

We set off this morning to discover the scenic splendour of this region. First stop is the little gold mining town of Pilgrim's Rest, discovered at the turn of the century during a short lived gold rush, and perfectly preserved, before we join the Panorama Route, taking in the strange rock formations at Bourke's Luck Potholes, the impressive Lisbon Falls, and the highlight Blyde River Canyon, the third largest canyon in the world. Dinner and overnight on the edge of the Kruger National Park at Needles Lodge (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4:

An early start as you join your ranger in an open vehicle for your safari into the



Kruger National Park. A full day here will allow you the opportunity to spot the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and buffalo) as well as a host of other animals in this huge wilderness. Return to your lodge for dinner and a chance to discuss today's sightings!

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Dinner.

DAY 5

Depart after an early breakfast and enter the independent kingdom of Swaziland. With its green hills and indigenous forests, it is known as the Switzerland of Africa and it is equally well known for its excellent markets where craft and curio sellers from all over Africa bring their goods for sale. You will have the opportunity to stop at one of these markets en route, before entering northern Zululand. Here we will check into our lodge for dinner and overnight. Overnight at Ghost Mountain Inn (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Dinner.

DAY 6

This morning you will embark on a boat cruise on one of Zululand's most scenic lakes, giving you the opportunity to spot hippos, crocodiles and fish eagles. Return to your lodge late morning, with an optional activity available to you this afternoon - a game drive in either Hluhluwe Imfolozi Game

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Reserve, renowned for its white and black rhino populations, or Mkhuze Game Reserve, with its large hippo pods and resident pack of wild dog. Return to your lodge for dinner and overnight.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7:

We follow the sugar cane fields of KwaZulu Natal south after breakfast, arriving in Durban late this morning. We visit the impressive new uShaka Marine World, one of the largest marine worlds in the Southern Hemisphere particularly renowned for the large shark tank! This afternoon is at leisure, with an opportunity to have a swim in the Indian Ocean. Overnight at Goble Palms Guest House (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast

DAY 8:

Depart this morning for South Africa's most splendid and undiscovered coastlines the Wild Coast. Your route takes you over the spectacular Umtamvuma river and bridge, where you enter the Transkei, home to the Xhosa tribe. The scenery is very rural, with bright coloured huts dotting the hilly landscape. Arrive at the coast and check in to your lodge, with time to wander the wide expanses of beach. Dinner this evening and overnight at Mbotyi River Lodge (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9:

A leisurely morning today doing as you wish: watching the dolphins, lazing by the pool or on the beach or walking the length of the sand and the lagoons. This afternoon, a local Xhosa guide will join us and take us through his village, explaining their customs and history, as well as their close link with the environment. Dinner and overnight at the lodge.

Meal Arrangements: Brunch and Dinner included

DAY 10:

We head inland after breakfast to the main city of this area, Umtata. This is the area of Nelson Mandela's clan, and also where he was born and grew up. We stop at the Nelson Mandela Museum which tells not only of his life story, but also has fascinating audio and visual material of his trial and incarceration. Here a local guide joins us and we travel to the nearby village of Qunu, where Mandela grew up and has now retired to. From here we continue via the Great Kei River to the city of East London for overnight at Quarry Lake Inn (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast

DAY 11:

Our route today travels along the coast, passing the local holiday villages and towns of the Eastern Cape, before we drive inland after the Great Fish River to the little town of Bathurst. This is Settler Country, colonised by English settlers in the 1820's, and scene of bloody conflict between them and the native Xhosas. Bathurst is a very tiny piece of England in Africa, with its lanes and settler houses as well as an infamous pub. We travel a bit further to graceful Grahamstown, known as the City of Spires because of its many cathedrals, before continuing to Port Elizabeth, capital of the Eastern Cape for overnight at Fifth Avenue Beach House (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast

DAY 12:

We set off this morning for the famed Garden Route, driving first through the immense indigenous Tsitsikamma Forest, and stopping at the breathtaking Storm's River Mouth. From here, we drive to Plettenberg Bay, where lunch is a special treat at the Relais and Chateaux hotel, The Plettenberg, with unrivalled views of the sea. It is a short drive to Knysna, unofficial capital of the Garden Route, ideally situated on the Knysna Lagoon. We start our orientation of the town from the top of the Heads, great cliffs that guard the entrance to the lagoon and the town, before checking in for 2 nights at The Waterfront Lodge located on the lagoon (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 13:

A leisurely start today as we join the ferry on Knysna lagoon at about 10:30 and set off for Featherbed Nature Reserve, where we are met by all terrain vehicles that will take us up to the top of the Heads. We return to the lagoon for lunch before setting off for the town of Knysna again. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure in the town. Overnight in Knysna.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch



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DAY 14:

Leaving Knysna after breakfast, our drive takes us over the Outeniqua Mountains, where we leave the lush scenery of the Garden Route and we enter the Klein Karoo, a semi desert region, characterized by small country towns. We arrive in Oudtshoorn, famous as the ostrich farming capital of the world and a place where these comical birds are still a vital industry. We visit an ostrich farm, where we also enjoy lunch before visiting the Cango Caves, one of Africa's largest accessible grottos. Overnight at The Thorntree Guesthouse (or similar)

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 15:

After breakfast, we drive along Route 62, passing provincial towns such as Barrydale and Montagu, before we enter the Cape Winelands. Our first stop is the quaint French Huguenot village of Franschhoek, with its oak lined streets and pavement cafes. We will stop at one of the nearby wine estates for a wine tasting and lunch, before driving on to Stellenbosch, the second oldest settlement in South Africa after Cape Town. There will be plenty of opportunity to discover the old town center and famed Cape Dutch architecture. From here, it is a short drive to Cape Town where we check in for 3 nights at the Adderley Hotel, chosen for its charm and ideal location.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 16:

This morning you will discover Cape Town or the "Mother City" as it is affectionately known. Rich in history you will visit the Castle, and the historic city center, as well as the Houses of Parliament and Company Gardens. We will also stop at the colourful Malay Quarter and bustling market at Greenmarket Square. Weather permitting, we will ascend Table Mountain (own cost) for spectacular views over the entire Cape Peninsula. At the end of the tour, you may choose to be dropped off at your accommodation or at the vibrant Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, a working harbour, with many shops, restaurants and outdoor performers. The rest of the day is yours at leisure to explore the city at your own pace.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 17:

Set off on this morning after breakfast for the Cape of Good Hope a drive that takes you along the incredible Atlantic seaboard, through exclusive areas such as Clifton and Camp's Bay, and the little fishing Harbour of Hout Bay, where we will stop for a cruise to Seal Island to see the Cape Fur Seals. We continue to Cape Point where we ascend by funicular to the top to witness the symbolic meeting of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. We return via Simon's Town and the breeding Colony of African Penguins on the beach there, with a stop at the world famous Kirstenbosch Gardens before reaching the hotel. A farewell dinner this evening is enjoyed at one of the local restaurants with a true African flavour! Overnight in Cape Town.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 18:

A day to say farewell to your fellow travellers and guide. You will be transferred to the airport in time for your outbound international flight with many happy memories and stories to tell those at home.

Meal Arrangements: Breakfast

Flights can be organised by Native Escapes under our ATOL licence Number 9703

General Information

Visas

Visas are NOT required by UK citizens for South Africa. (Note that all nationalities travelling to South Africa must have 2 consecutive blank pages in their passport which lie side by side when the passport is open. Passports must also be valid for at least six months from the date of entry to South Africa. Passengers travelling to South Africa with passports that do not comply with these requirements could be refused entry.



Note: Passport and visa requirements are liable to change at short notice. Travellers are advised to check their entry requirements with their embassy or consulate.

Health

The World Health Organisation (www.who.int/en/) recommends that all travellers are inoculated against diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio as well as for hepatitis B.

Hepatitis A, malaria and typhoid are also recommended by the Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (www.cdc.gov) for travel in South Africa. All travellers should seek advice from their local GP or travel clinic for up to date advice on vaccinations and different malarial options.

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. Guests on group departures must take their policy documents with them on the trip as the guide will ask to see this at the start. The documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for the period of travel. The policy document must also indicate that medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover is included and a 24 hour contact telephone number for the insurance company must be shown on the documentation in case of emergency. Guests unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip will be asked to purchase a policy prior to joining the trip.

Electricity supply

220v, 3pin South African plug. Adaptors are required to charge cameras, etc.

Money

Currency is the South African Rand. There will be ATM's en route for guests to withdraw money.

What to bring

Binoculars, torch, walking shoes, swimming gear, plenty of high factor sunscreen, sunhat, insect repellent, camera, a day pack. Warm clothing is recommended for evenings, and a waterproof jacket. Lightweight clothing is recommended for the day. Avoid brightly coloured clothing for game viewing.

Tipping

It is normal to tip for good service in bars and restaurants in South Africa. Guests may also consider tipping their guide at their discretion.

