

INSPIRING
VACATIONS

INSPIRING S O U T H E R N AFRICA

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO DO & MORE



WELCOME TO SOUTHERN AFRICA

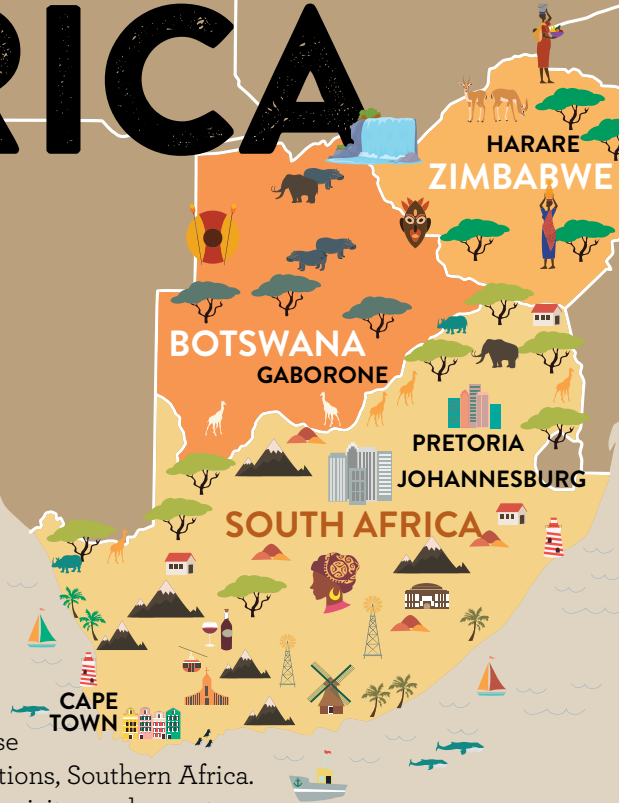
At Inspiring Vacations, we're on a mission to inspire you to see the world.

If you're dreaming of travelling to the most iconic destinations across the globe, you're in the right place.

Inside these pages, we showcase one of our most popular destinations, Southern Africa. It offers so much to the first time visitor and repeat explorer alike — one visit is just not enough. By the end of this eBook, we're sure you'll be as eager to visit Southern Africa as we are to get you there!

Happy travel planning and, as always — safe travels.

Paul Ryan
CEO, Inspiring Vacations



To view our
Southern Africa
tours, scan here



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WHY TRAVEL WITH INSPIRING VACATIONS?



GLOBAL EXPERTS

When you travel with Inspiring Vacations, you can expect thoughtfully curated tours to iconic destinations across the globe. Our authentic and culturally-rich tours are packed with must-see sights, lesser-known locations and enriching local experience, all at an unbeatable price.



INSPIRING COMMUNITY

Our travel articles, digital magazine, destination videos and member-only Facebook community groups will inspire your wanderlust or if you prefer, have a phone chat with one of our travel specialists for their recommendations.



ONLINE ADVANTAGES

Browsing and shopping for your next Inspiring Vacations tour couldn't be easier. We are an online company which means you can shop at your own convenience — anytime, anywhere, even while on tour. Our award-winning website is user-friendly and easy to navigate. We want our customers to be empowered to be able to access and manage their booking at any time — manage upgrades, book optional tours, and more.



Okavango Delta, Botswana

WHY VISIT SOUTHERN AFRICA NOW?



Brendon Cooper
CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER
Inspiring Vacations



WILDLIFE & CULTURE

Southern Africa is not new to the spotlight. Many dream of visiting this part of the world to glimpse the famous wildlife and experience the vibrant cultures. But with more experiences on offer than ever before, there has never been a better time to visit.



TICKING BUCKET LISTS

Zimbabwe in particular is an up-and-comer; with the beginning of a new political era, the country is welcoming record numbers to its breathtaking attractions — from Victoria Falls to Hwange National Park.

Our itineraries are designed to showcase the best that there is to see in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe — start mentally ticking off your bucket list!



TOURS

First time visitors to Southern Africa will love our 5 Star Kruger, Victoria Falls & Rovos Rail package. This trip includes the must-sees including Kruger National Park — Victoria Falls, Kruger National Park and Cape Town — plus three nights aboard the luxurious Rovos Rail from Pretoria to Cape Town.

My personal favourite is our Ultimate African Safari. Not only does this package encompass the 'Big Five,' but you'll witness them in four of Africa's biggest national parks: Kruger, Chobe, Hwange and the Okavango Delta.



UNPARALLELED

No matter which tour you decide on, all our packages offer unparalleled comfort, quality and price — we strive to deliver unbeatable value to Southern Africa whether it's your first or second visit.

(Image: Shutterstock)

↳
A lion at sunrise

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO VISIT?

A trip to Southern Africa is a true adventure. Astonishing landscapes, incredible wildlife, ancient cultures. But, when is the best time to go?

SOUTHERN AFRICA IS NOTHING

short of mind-blowing. South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe all boast some of the most memorable experiences and sights on the planet. And the seasonality provides all the drama — from the wildlife on the savannahs, to the thundering waterfalls. No matter when you go, the weather will play a major role in your experience.

The region's size equates to very diverse weather patterns, but they can largely be categorised into three main seasons: hot and wet summers, dry and cool winters, and the short periods in between.

For those seeking safaris, winter is usually the best time to visit. From **April to August**, the Southern African climate tends to be mild, sunny and rain-free. Game parks are at their most popular between these months, as animals are easy to spot, congregating at water holes and wandering the plains.



(Image: Shutterstock)



Opposite: Southern Africa offers something for every traveller, no matter the season

Temperatures in Kruger National Park average in the mid-twenties during the day, but drop come nightfall. Etosha National Park in Namibia is comfortable and warm, with averages ranging between 25 and 30 degrees celsius. Head east and cross the border into Botswana for temperatures around 25 degrees. Its famed Okavango Delta receives almost no rain during this time, making it an ideal destination.

Victoria Falls still thunders in the winter, with plenty of water flowing from the rainy season. Temperatures are warm, too, averaging in the mid-to-late twenties. Meanwhile, down on the South African coastline, Cape Town experiences its wet season and coolest temperatures, averaging around 17 degrees. But, it's the best time for whale watching.

Summer in Southern Africa brings the wet season. After a long winter period with almost no rain, the landscape and wildlife welcome the water. This season is a bird-watchers paradise, but for safari seekers, the rains can be prohibitive, washing out many of the key roads in the national parks. Temperatures and humidity also escalate at this time of year.

Cape Town is at its best between **December and March**, with hot, dry weather averaging in the high twenties. A journey along the Garden Route is beautiful at this time of year. The national parks, on the other hand, are hot, wet and steamy, with temperatures well into the thirties and plenty of rainfall.

... AFTER MONTHS OF DRENCHING, THE LANDSCAPES ARE LUSH WITH VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE, BUT THE PEAK SEASON CROWDS ARE YET TO ARRIVE. “ ”

The shoulder months of **March and April** are fantastic times to visit, as the rain has usually stopped. After months of drenching, the landscapes are lush with vegetation and wildlife, but the peak season crowds are yet to arrive. Victoria Falls is at its very best, too; travel at this time to see the full extent of this natural wonder.

Likewise, **September and October** are also great off-peak times to go. Animals are plainly visible in the parks as they search for water. Just be prepared for temperatures to climb without rain to cool them down.

Southern Africa will leave you with memories to last a lifetime. When will you go? ●

Watch our
Southern Africa
weather video.
[Scan here](#)





Hippopotami keep cool in a river,
Okavango Delta in Botswana

Watch our
Southern Africa
videos [here](#)



(Image: Shutterstock)

INTRODUCING→

BOTSWANA

SNAPSHOT ON →

OKAVANGO DELTA

The sparkling jewel of Africa, an oasis in the heart of Kalahari, is a natural masterpiece and a must for safari lovers



Mokoro boats in the Okavango Delta

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NOTHING ABOUT THE OKAVANGO

Delta is conventional. From its unique desert location to its vast, untouched habitats, diverse seasons and abundance of endangered wildlife, the world's largest inland delta offers an African safari experience like no other.

Formed millions of years ago after earthquake activity interrupted the flow of the Okavango River, the Okavango Delta is a 6,000–15,000 sq km oasis in the arid Kalahari Desert. Why the differing sizes? It changes with the seasons as the water level rises and falls.

In fact, one of its most astounding features is that it floods every year during Botswana's dry season (June–July), breathing new life into the ecosystems and attracting birds, large mammals and reptiles looking to quench their thirst and splash around in the water after migrating from the parched surrounds. ▶

(Image: Shutterstock)



Clockwise from right: Safari-goers watch watering elephants at Chobe National Park; a cheetah mother with cubs on the termite hill in Okavango Delta; sunset in Moremi

► The crystal-clear water originates from Angolan rains that fall between October and April, then wind their way through Namibia's Caprivi strip before entering the Delta around March, peaking in July.

The phenomenon results in the constant transformation of the wetlands (so return visits will unlikely feel like your first), which comprise numerous little islands, lagoons and winding channels that come together to form a mosaic that is said to appear as an emerald swirl surrounded by dry land from space.

But more than a stunning site, the Delta is where you'll find Africa's largest concentration of wildlife including lion, cheetah, rhino, elephant, leopard, buffalo, wild dog, hyena and a number of rare, as well as more common game, such as puku, sitatunga, red lechwe, springbok and impala. It's also been declared an Important Bird Area since around 24 of the world's threatened birds are among the 482 species that live here, not to mention that it is a fisherman's paradise. Catch-and-release fishing is possible and a must if you'd like to catch species such as catfish, tigerfish and tilapia; there are up to 89 different fish in the pristine water.

With its meandering, reed-lined channels, you have the option of game viewing from the water, either on a motorised boat or *mokoro* (a traditional dugout canoe) — keep an eye out not just for land animals but also those that spend most of their time in the water such as crocodile

and hippopotamus you simply can't get any closer.

On land, consider a walking safari as a way to get up close to the fauna and flora with nothing but the sounds of nature (which won't be drowned out by a game vehicle's rumbling engine). When it comes to night drives though, you'll want to be safely seated in a 4x4.

... AT NIGHT, EXPECT TO BE LULLED TO SLEEP BY A CHORUS OF A MILLION FROGS, THE ROAR OF A LION, OR A CACKLE FROM A HYENA “”



The Delta is protected by Botswana's strict conservation laws, leaving it relatively untouched and since it is not easily accessible (most arrive here by air from Maun), visitors get an exclusive, tranquil, and intimate safari experience. Its unrivalled characteristics secured the Okavango Delta's spot among Africa's Seven Natural Wonders and, in 2014, it became the 1,000 places to be enlisted as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Luxury accommodation is carefully designed to ensure it has minimal impact on the environment.

It's not just the animals who prefer the Delta during the dry season (May to September); this is also the time when tourists visit because of the cooler temperatures and abundant wildlife on show.

The daytime temperature usually hovers in the 20s, but the nights can become biting cold. October is hot and humid, while November and December bring the rain. Don't let this put you off though, this wet season is when most animal babies are born and the vegetation thrives.

From January to March you're most likely to get hot, humid days (often reaching 40 degrees), followed by balmy evenings that are best enjoyed with a relaxing sundowner while overlooking the exquisite sunsets. At night, expect to be lulled to sleep by a chorus of a million frogs, the roar of a lion, or a cackle from a hyena. ●



One of the largest salt flats in the world is a desert for most of the year but when the rains come, it becomes a sanctuary for the thousands of birds that migrate here

TEN THOUSAND YEARS AGO, a vast lake, the size of The Netherlands sat where Botswana sits today. Over the centuries, the enormous lake gradually dried up, creating one of the largest salt flats on earth. Called the Makgadikgadi Pans (or the Botswana Salt Flats) these white, salt-crusts flats are spread over 40,000 sq km of north-eastern Botswana.

The flats are found in the middle of Botswana's Kalahari Desert and are actually made up of multiple smaller flats, the largest of which is called the Sowa Pan. The hot winds blow across the dusty earth creating a surreal landscape of white salt crusts where almost nothing can survive. But it's during the rainy season when these dry, dead lands suddenly start teaming with life. ▶

(Image: Shutterstock)



SNAPSHOT ON →

MAKGADIKGADI PANS

📌 Clockwise from right: Zebra migration in Makgadikgadi Pans National Park; baobab tree on Kubu Island in the south-west of Sowa Pan; ostriches in the grassland of Nata Birds Sanctuary; sign in Botswana; game drive at sunset



whiter than their lesser, pinker cousins. Both breeds travel in huge numbers with around a quarter of a million of the birds making the Pans their home after the rainy season. Before eating, flamingos are famed for doing a little dance, and while it might look like a tribal rain dance, it is, in fact, to loosen the mud where their food is hidden.



THE PANS HAVE ONE OF AFRICA'S LARGEST ZEBRA POPULATIONS, WHICH IN TURN ALSO ATTRACT LARGER ANIMALS ...

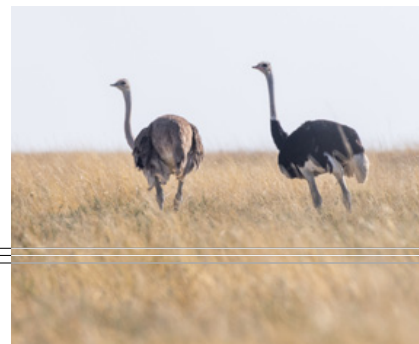
► With the water, comes migrating animals and birds, feeding on the algae and grasses that spring up, out of the desert.

The Makgadikgadi Pans are one of the main breeding grounds for greater flamingos who feed on the algae and brine shrimp found there. The eggs of the shrimp have lain dormant through the dry season, surviving in the salty clay and emerge to swim again, after months of dusty hibernation. After the rains arrive (December to April) huge numbers of the magnificent pink birds can be spotted soaring over the lakes. As the largest breeding ground in Southern Africa, tens of thousands of flamingos can be found there at one time, all trying to breed before the lake dries up in spring.

The greater flamingo is taller and

As well as flamingos, 164 other bird species can be spotted on the flats. Most people go to the Nata Bird Sanctuary by the mouth of the Nata River delta to view them. An ornithologist's paradise it certainly is, with pelicans, herons, cormorants, waders, white-faced ducks, fish eagles, storks, and sometimes cranes can all be seen from the sanctuary.

As well as birds, the Makgadikgadi Pans are also an important habitat for deer and zebras. In fact, the Pans have one of Africa's largest zebra populations, which in turn also attract larger animals who prey on them. Rare birds, wild animals, a sky that melts into the land on a horizon a hundred miles away, make the Makgadikgadi Pans a once in a lifetime experience. ●



Get up close
and personal
with spectacular
wildlife and ancient
landscapes in some
of Africa's most
pristine nature
reserves

WHAT TO EXPECT → YOUR FIRST TRIP TO BOTSWANA

↙
Elephants in Moremi National Park

BOTSWANA IS BOOMING: ON AVERAGE, the Southern African nation has one of the highest economic growth rates in the world and is known as one of the safest and most stable African countries to visit. Botswana's flat, expansive terrain ranges from the sparse brush of the Kalahari Desert — which makes up a large part of the landscape — to the stark beauty of the Makgadikgadi Pan salt flats. There's plenty to do and see, but as with any adventure, it's always best to be prepared. ▶

(Image: Shutterstock)



Clockwise from right: Meerkat pair standing alert in the Kalahari Desert; zebra migration in Makgadikgadi Pans National Park; on safari in Chobe National Park

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► Firstly, Botswana is a prefix-centric culture — Botswana means ‘land of the Tswana.’ As Tswana refers to the majority ethnic group in the country, its people are thus described as Motswana (one person) or Batswana (multiple people). However, the broad term ‘Botswanans’ is also widely accepted.

Expect a mostly-dry climate, as Botswana usually experiences widespread drought. Its main source of water comes from the mighty Okavango River, the lifeblood of many farmers and cattle herders across the country. Quite appropriately, the *pula* (currency), is also the word for rain, which is a precious commodity

in this striking, but challenging landscape.

Some major sights and activities include camping, the Chobe National Park and the Kalahari Game Reserve, birdwatching, rock art tours in the World Heritage Site Tsodilo Hills, and aerial tours and tiger fishing along the Okavango. Tigerfish are lean, mean, toothy biting machines, known to explode out of the water with great energy. Don’t worry — most, if not all Botswanan fishing operations, abide by a strict catch-and-release policy. Botswana also boasts the biggest elephant population in Africa, magical opportunities for skydiving, and last but not least, the classic safari experience.

One of the best times to visit Botswana is around April and May, as this marks the beginning of seasonal migration and calving season for many animals. May to August tends to be quite dry which means more opportunities to see animals at watering holes.

Work on that budget

Botswana has maintained much of its natural beauty for a combination of reasons: it is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world (considering its size), and the country also operates on a low-volume, low-impact tourism model that necessitates higher prices for visitors. About 40% of the country is made up of nature and wildlife reservations. Despite its reputation as a luxury destination, it is possible to visit Botswana on a low budget, especially if you’re comfortable camping and driving a 4x4 (don’t forget to budget for fuel, food, and water). However, the roads aren’t always great and rural infrastructure is limited.

Getting around

Most locals flag down Combis, which are shared vans concentrated around cities and towns. Most tourists take taxis since many tourist destinations don’t fall along common Combi routes — visitors can also call for a taxi, book one through a hotel or airport, or wait at a taxi stand. As previously mentioned, it’s also possible ►

(All images: Shutterstock)



Clockwise from far left: African elephant, part of the Big Five in Madikwe Game Reserve; off-road vehicles on a game drive in Chobe National Park; a pale chanting goshawk in Kalahari Desert



BOTSWANA HAS ONE OF THE MOST RESPONSIBLE TOURIST POLICIES IN THE WORLD SO YOU'RE CONTRIBUTING TO PRESERVATION PRACTICES THAT HELP MAINTAIN A DELICATE ECOSYSTEM...



► to rent your own 4x4, although this is usually recommended for experienced campers and off-road drivers. Driving through crossroad towns such as Maun will also involve navigating around various animals on the road: cows, donkeys, and dogs can make for difficult driving.

How to pack

Cotton and quick-dry materials are your friends in Botswana, as well as a versatile balaclava or buff that can cover the nose and mouth from dust and keep your head warm at

night. It does get cold in the early morning, so bring a fleece or good waterproof jacket — roofless safari jeeps can get brisk at high speeds. Bring sensible walking shoes with good ankle support. On safari, try to stick to neutral colours. Don't forget sunblock, bug repellent, and any medication you might require (especially allergy meds and antihistamines).

If you're going on a river safari, waterproof plastic bags will come in handy for your valuables, especially cameras, mobiles, and iPads. If your trip involves taking a small charter plane, which is quite

common, we recommend using a duffel or soft suitcase and staying well below the luggage weight limit (usually 20 kg) to avoid sacrificing your belongings along the way. If you're not sure of your charter plane's requirements, ask ahead of time. Lastly, get a pair of binoculars.

Nail those safari reservations

It is crucial to plan ahead for safaris, as they tend to book up quite quickly. Reservations for park trips can be made through the Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks, which also runs several campsites.

Keep in mind that some campsites are independently run, so check ahead, or do your planning in the town of Maun. It's pretty easy to prep ahead and download a wildlife and bird guide app to help identify animals on your trip. Print out booking reservations on paper as backups.

Botswana is a stunning place for adventure-seeking nature lovers, but also offers relaxing alternatives for low-key travellers who would rather drink up the view with a cocktail by the river. Even though most places in Botswana take credit cards, withdraw cash ahead of time especially when travelling to rural areas as cash machines aren't always reliable. As always, keep an eye on your belongings in crowded areas, and be wary of walking or making vehicle stops at night even in the wilderness where nocturnal wildlife can be overly curious (and in some cases, overly hungry). While you may have to spend a little more, Botswana has one of the most responsible tourist policies in the world so you're contributing to preservation practices that help maintain a delicate ecosystem, home to a variety of flora and fauna. ●

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→
Victoria Falls at the border
between Zambia and Zimbabwe

INTRODUCING →

ZIMBABWE



Herd of elephants, Hwange National Park

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SNAPSHOT ON →

HWANGE NATIONAL PARK

Zimbabwe's largest national park delivers predators and thrills galore

EVERY SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRY has an iconic national park: South Africa has Kruger, Botswana has Chobe and Zimbabwe has Hwange — home of the quintessential Zimbabwean safari experience.

With more than 100 types of mammals and 400 bird species, Hwange has one of the highest animal diversities anywhere in Africa. Best of all, the park has relatively low visitor numbers, so you shouldn't be jostling for a space in a traffic jam of open-topped Land Rovers when a thrilling lion kill goes down.

Zimbabwe's biggest wildlife reserve is located in the north west of the country, bordering Botswana and the Kalahari Desert. Its 14,651 sq km expanse is underlain by Kalahari Sands but the park's many pans and watering holes are prime hunting grounds for Hwange's great predators. ►

(Image: Shutterstock)



Clockwise from below: Zebras drinking in Hwange National Park; African leopard; family of giraffes in Hwange National Park

African wild dogs, lions and leopards

Hwange's geography is ideal for rare and highly endangered African wild dogs — the park is one of only a handful of places in Africa where the dogs can be found. The Painted Dog Project, the leading research and conservation initiatives dedicated to wild dogs, is a must-visit for a rare glimpse of the notoriously shy dogs.

usually like to hang out in trees where they can survey the park's goings on — including you.

Of course, Hwange is not just about fearsome predators — it's also renowned for its large herds of elephants and visitors are nearly guaranteed to spot these ancient African giants — a promise that not every park in Africa can make.



a campfire and more basic camping options. Resort-style accommodation, complete with swimming pools, is available beyond the Park's borders.

The bush experience itself includes morning and evening game drives on open-topped vehicles when you're most likely to spot big game such as elephants, zebras, antelope and — if you're lucky — big cats, hyenas, and others. At other times of the day, wilderness walks can be organised, when visitors can learn more about Zimbabwe's native plants and trees, such as mopane and Zambezi teak.

All game drives and walks are led by experienced teams of rangers and trackers and Zimbabwe's rangers and trackers are often rated among the best in Africa — just one more reason why Hwange remains a perennial safari favourite. ●

PREPARE FOR THE HAIRS ON YOUR ARMS TO STAND UP THE FIRST TIME YOU HEAR THE GRUNTS AND ROARS OF NEARBY LIONS AS YOU RELAX AT NIGHT BESIDE THE CAMPFIRE “ ”

Many other predators thrive in Hwange, too. It has a large lion population, who love to silently stalk their prey as they unknowingly drink from the Park's many waterholes and pans. Prepare for the hairs on your arms to stand up the first time you hear the grunts and roars of nearby lions as you relax at night beside the campfire.

Hwange is also home to the National Leopard Project, which is leading research into these stunning big cats. When you're on safari, remember to look up — leopards

Staying in and around Hwange National Park

While the wildlife opportunities at Hwange seem almost endless, so too are there many types of accommodation available. Different lodges and camps operate just outside the park as well as within Hwange National Park itself.

Accommodation varies from luxury private lodges complete with private chefs, to comfortable permanent tented camps where dinners are enjoyed around



(All images: Shutterstock)

As well as hosting one of the world's most beautiful waterfalls, this jaw-dropping region is the undisputed adventure capital of Africa

5 ADVENTURES OF VICTORIA FALLS

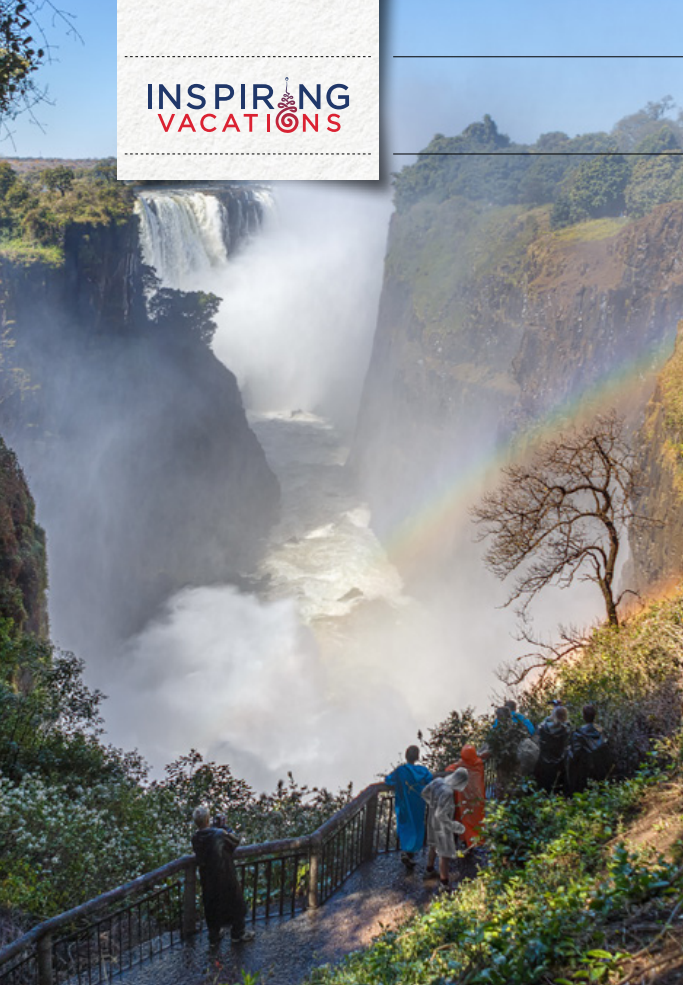
Rainbow over Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe

(Image: Shutterstock)

IT'S NOT THE TALLEST, nor the widest waterfall in the world, but Victoria Falls is certainly one of the most spectacular. The fittingly nicknamed Mosi-oa-Tunya or 'the smoke that thunders' straddles the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe in southern Africa and has enticed travellers for decades. Its source? The mighty Zambezi River, which stretches more than 1,700 metres across a plateau before gushing over the edge and plummeting around 100 metres. In the wet season, the ferocity of its flow causes mist to rise up and soak everything within reach.

While ogling Victoria Falls is a worthy way to spend your time in the region, there are plenty of other activities to enrich your visit.

Whether you're an adrenaline junky, or prefer to keep your feet on solid ground, here, five Victoria Falls adventures. ►



1 WANDER THE FALLS FROM ZIMBABWE TO ZAMBIA

Most associate Victoria Falls with Zimbabwe, but around 25% of the natural wonder is located in Zambia. Rather than staying within Zimbabwean limits, head east to the Victoria Falls Bridge and cross the border for an alternate perspective and spectacular views of the Zambezi River. Zimbabwe is known for its postcard-perfect vistas, but those wanting to get up close and personal with the Falls

should explore the Zambian portion. Just be sure to pack a raincoat!

Experiencing both sides of the falls has never been easier with the introduction of the KAZA Univisa — an initiative allowing unlimited border crossings between Zimbabwe and Zambia for 30 days. The visa is available to 65 nationalities upon arrival at eight major entry points, including Victoria Falls International Airport, and is US\$50 per person.



Clockwise from far left: Victoria Falls otherwise known as 'The Smoke that Thunders'; Victoria Falls is the largest curtain of water in the world; Helicopter flight over the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls



2 TAKE A HELICOPTER FLIGHT OVER THE FALLS

While wandering Victoria Falls on foot is the best way to feel their power, to take in their true majesty you must see them from above. A helicopter flight brings the sheer scale of the waterfall into perspective and reveals parts of the landscape otherwise unseen — from canyons to roaring rapids. In flight, keep your eyes peeled for herds of wildlife crossing the savannahs below; the surrounding Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park on the Zambia side is home to plenty of big game.

If you want to splurge on one activity in Southern Africa, make it a scenic falls flight. Chikopokopo Helicopters is one of the region's best reputed companies, running tours from 12–30 minutes. Pilots will take you close to the action, point out sights of interest and provide expert commentary along the way to ensure your experience is unforgettable. ►



3 BUNGEE JUMP IN NO-MAN'S LAND

If you've always dreamed of bungee jumping, consider taking the leap in no-man's land between Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Victoria Falls Bridge bungee is widely regarded as one of the most scenic jumps in the world, providing views of the Zambezi and its lush surrounds as you plummet 111 metres.

Experienced jumpers are free to leap off backwards or even flip, but the regular head-first bungee is enough of a rush for most. Those after a slightly more sedate thrill can try the bridge swing or zipline, while the less adrenaline-inclined are welcome to watch others jump from the comfort of the Bridge Cafe.

Shearwater Bungee is the only licensed company on the bridge, operating since 1994 and adhere to stringent safety standards. If you have any health concerns, please speak with your GP prior to booking your bungee jump.

(Images: Shutterstock)



Top to bottom: Bungee jumping at Victoria Falls; Devil's Pool is considered the holy grail for thrill seekers

4 SWIM IN THE DEVIL'S POOL

Nestled into the Zambian side of Victoria Falls, the Devil's Pool is a natural infinity pool where daring visitors can swim atop the roaring waterfall and gawk at the 100-metre drop into the chasm below.

Reaching the pool is its own test of bravery; you must take a boat to Livingston Island, clamour across rocks and swim through part of the Zambezi — a river where crocodiles and hippos are known to inhabit — before leaping into the water. It's little wonder why the activity is considered the holy grail for thrill seekers.

While the attraction is certainly a test of courage, it's not as dangerous as it appears. The pool is only open in the dry season (mid August–mid January), and even then, water levels must be low before tours will run. Below the surface, a rock lip beside the edge prevents people from sliding off, and the current at this time of year is mild.

Tongabezi is the only company licensed to run tours to the Devil's Pool, with expert guides trained to minimise risk to their clients. Of course, the nature of the activity means safety cannot be guaranteed, so carefully consider your health and fitness before booking.

5 CRUISE ON THE ZAMBEZI

The Zambezi River is the lifeblood of southern Africa. Flowing through Zambia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the continent's fourth largest river sustains considerable plant and animal life, powers several hydroelectric stations and acts as a crucial water source for agricultural crops.

Spend an evening cruising along the Zambezi, taking in the scenery as sunset washes over the land and wildlife congregate for their final drink of the day. Hippo and elephant sightings are among the most common, with plenty of other birds and animals known to make an appearance. Once night sets in, relax under the African stars with a drink in hand and plenty of delicious food.

Many companies operate sunset tours on the Zambezi, ranging from no-frills boats for the budget conscious, to ultra-luxe all-inclusive cruises. Zambezi Cruise and Safari have a range of options, with premier boats such as the Sovereign offering stylish lounge areas and several areas to kick back and take in the scenery. ●

BEYOND THE FALLS → WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU'VE VISITED VICTORIA FALLS

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From the World Heritage Listed Sites to the Whawha beer, Zimbabwe offers rich rewards to adventurous travellers

IF A VISIT TO ZIMBABWE'S iconic Victoria Falls is on your must-do list, why not take time to explore more of this fascinating country while you're there?

Take in another four UNESCO World Heritage Listed Sites

It may be the most famous, but Victoria Falls is not the only heritage-listed site in Zimbabwe. The country is home to a total of five sites, including both natural and cultural treasures, with two more currently under consideration for nomination (Naletale Cluster of Dzimabwes and Ziwa National Monument).

Mana Pools National Park and the Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas in northern Zimbabwe encompasses a flood plain of more than 675 hectares in and around Zambezi River, and attracts hippopotamus, crocodiles, zebras, elephants, lions, leopards and more. ►

The bridge from Zambia to Zimbabwe over Zambezi River and Victoria Falls

(Image: Shutterstock)

Clockwise from right: Jacaranda trees lining Milton Avenue, Harare; flower-sellers in Africa Unity Square; biltong; famous balancing rock formations in Matobo National Park

INSPIRING
VACATIONS



... IT PROVIDES AN INSIGHT INTO STONE AGE LIFE AND OFFERS THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF ROCK ART IN SOUTHERN AFRICA “”

► Self-drive the national park or opt for a guided tour. Safari tours are also available in Sapi with more limited options for visiting Chewore.

If you're fascinated by early human history, 35 kms south of Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo, is the Matobo Hills, a natural formation of granite that is home to a collection of rock art estimated to be around 13,000 years old. Extraordinarily well-preserved, it provides an insight into Stone Age life and offers the highest concentration of rock art in Southern Africa.

Near Masvingo in south-eastern Zimbabwe is The Great Zimbabwe National Monument, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, a city built between 1100 and 1450 AD. Said to be the home of the Queen of Sheba, three sites within the Monument are the ruins of



settlements created by the Bantu/Shona people. You can immerse yourself in earlier civilisations at The Khami Ruins National Monument near Bulawayo. Established in the 1600s, remains were found on the site of the old city revealing an established trading relationship between Europe and China.

Check out the capital

Named Salisbury in 1890 by Cecil Rhodes and his Pioneer Column, the name of Zimbabwe's capital was changed to Harare in 1982, two years after the country achieved independence. Harare is a university town and the centre of Zimbabwe's political, social, and cultural life. It's lively yet laid back and has an ideal sub-tropical climate (once voted the world's best), pretty Jacaranda-lined streets and plenty of things for visitors to do.

The Museum of Human Sciences (formerly Queen Victoria Museum) is a Harare must-visit and a great way to prep for a visit to either of the national monuments. ►



(Images: Shutterstock & iStockphoto)



Clockwise from below: Waterfalls near Harare; sculptures at Avondale market; spying an African elephant on safari. Opposite: Zimbabwean handicrafts on display



(All images: Shutterstock)

► Including Stone Age and Iron Age exhibits, it also focuses on Zimbabwe's people and culture, offering a fascinating insight into the country's ancient past.

A taste of Zimbabwe

Think sun-dried salted meat (biltong), tiny sun-dried fish, and staples such as papaya, sweetcorn, pumpkins and peanuts. Sadza, a thick cornmeal porridge, is the national dish and is usually served with meat or vegetables. Get out of your comfort zone by trying Mopane worms, a high protein food, usually dried or fried, and sometimes added to stews. Polish off your meal with Whawha, a local maize beer. In Harare, try Garwe or Dzimbahwe for local specialities or Amanzi for African/European fusion cuisine.

One of the benign legacies of Zimbabwe's British colonial heritage is a strong fondness for tea. High tea is a speciality of many Zimbabwe hotels and is often served al fresco on safari. In Harare Dutch, Portuguese and European restaurants reflect the country's long history of trade and the influence of colonisation throughout Africa.

Take home a little piece of Zimbabwe

If you're keen to find the perfect Zimbabwe souvenir make sure the Doon Estate in Msasa, Harare is on your itinerary.

It's a complex of galleries featuring local art, arts and crafts including sculpture, textiles, pottery, and leatherwork, and cafe's featuring local food and Zimbabwean coffee. Pick up local and African music at Cultural Vibes, and at the daily cheap and cheerful Avondale flea market, browse second-hand clothes, music and local crafts. If nabbing a beautiful piece of Zimbabwean art or craft is your goal, the city's National Handicraft Centre offers affordable, handmade works from artisans across the country, just be sure to check the relevant customs information to make sure your purchase complies with the law. ●



↳
Robberg Garden Route, South Africa

INTRODUCING → SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Southern Africa
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MEET → CAPE TOWN SOUTH AFRICA'S MOTHER CITY

With natural beauty, a vibrant culture, buzzing nightlife and a rich history, it's little wonder that this is South Africa's best-loved city

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE that Cape Town is the location for large-scale films and TV commercials, as well as a globally renowned destination. Blessed with truly jaw-dropping natural beauty, this is an exciting city that makes looking good seem easy.

Discover Table Mountain

For most visitors, the first stop is to the peaks of Table Mountain, Lion's Head and Devil's Peak. These are favourites with hikers but those seeking a more leisurely experience can simply hop on the Table Mountain cable car. Cross your fingers and hope

for a clear day when the famous Table Cloth (clouds that descend onto the top of Table Mountain) is absent.

Enjoy sweeping views of the city, the surrounding peaks and the Atlantic Ocean. If you're lucky, you'll also catch a glimpse of one of the mountain's native critters — the dassie, a small but adorable rodent.

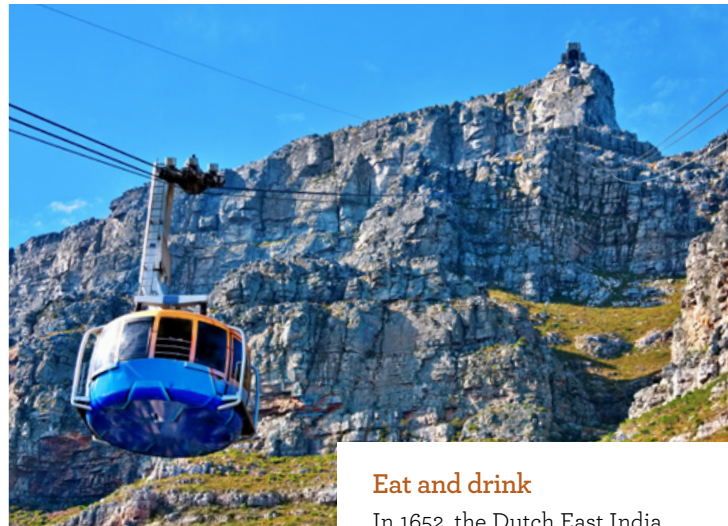
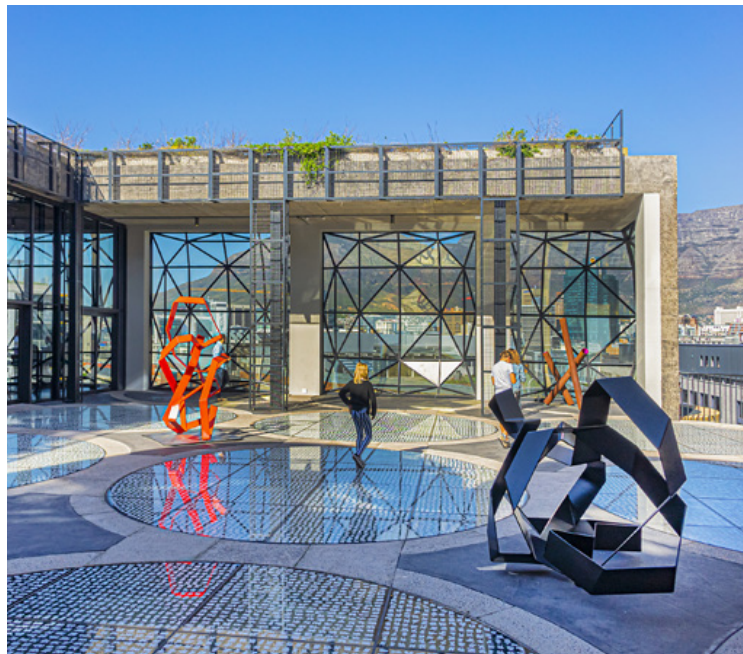
Alternatively, experience another side of the mountain by grabbing a picnic basket and bottle of wine, and enjoy an afternoon in Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens which are nestled just below Table Mountain. ►



Victoria and Alfred Waterfront

Built on Cape Town's harbour, this is the city's most popular tourist centre, complete with a bevy of fine-dining and casual restaurants, bars and top hotels. It is also the departure point for tours to Robben Island. Here, former president Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in jail under the apartheid government. A trip to the island is a moving experience where visitors learn about the famous inmates and the system of apartheid.

A recent addition to the V&A is the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA). Designed by London-based architectural firm Heatherwick Studio, the modern space (once a grain silo) showcases the best of contemporary African art from across the continent.



Eat and drink

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company selected the Cape as a place to grow veggies to supply its ships making the long voyage from Europe to India. Add to that the arrival of French Huguenots who fled religious persecution in Europe, bringing their winemaking knowledge with them, and it's little wonder that the Western Cape is South Africa's top culinary destination.

A particular feature of Cape cuisine is the influence of Malay culture. Slaves from south east Asia brought to South Africa introduced the country to new flavours and tastes. Think: fruity chutneys, gentle turmeric and a little bit of spice.

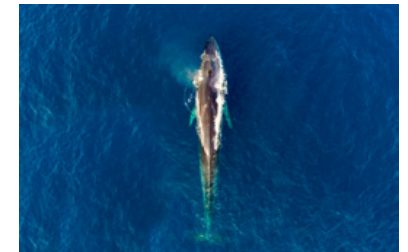
As well as top restaurants within Cape Town and the surrounding suburbs, the wine-producing regions of Franschhoek, Stellenbosch and beyond offer outstanding culinary experiences.

Beaches, birds and whales

Beyond the mountains of Cape Town, there's plenty of outdoor activities. Cape Town's beaches are among the world's best, or if during the summer months you fancy the sound of leather on willow, head to Newlands, regarded as one of the world's most beautiful cricket grounds.

For unique wildlife experiences, head to Boulder Beach at Simons Town for an encounter with the most adorable birds around – the African penguin.

Meanwhile, in the winter and spring months, the town of Hermanus, about 120 km southeast of Cape Town is known as a whale-watching hotspot. Whales can be spotted from the land or visitors can join a whale watching trip. ●



(All images: Shutterstock)

SOUTH AFRICA 3 WAYS

Whether you love feasting on local delicacies and wine, or sightseeing from a great height, South Africa is just the ticket

Table Mountain, Lion's Head and Twelve Apostles

ONLY IN RECENT YEARS has South Africa's gems — beyond safaris and *braai* — come to the attention of the savvy traveller. With an eclectic mix of culture, homegrown wines and more outdoor activities than you could dream of, South Africa is a destination like no other. ►



Clockwise from far left: Turn right for Stellenbosch; the Iziko South African Museum and National Art Gallery with Table Mountain in the background; a local street-side vendor sells art souvenirs; an example of beautiful Cape Dutch architecture in Stellenbosch; colonial art galleries and restaurants in Cape Town



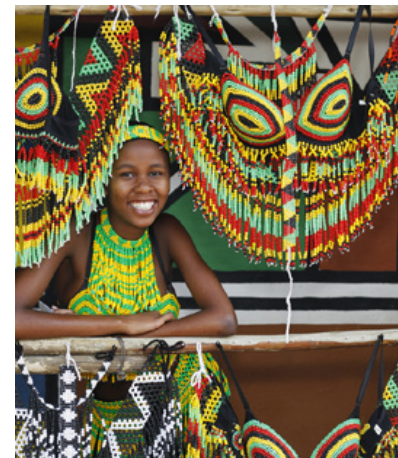
Stellenbosch Art Gallery, located about an hour from Cape Town in South Africa's premier wine region, specialises in sculptures, ceramics and handmade glass. The area itself is a worthwhile stopover: Stellenbosch is the second oldest town in South Africa and is home to some of the most beautiful examples of Cape Dutch, Georgian and Victorian architecture. And what about that wine? Stellenbosch is best known for its exceptional reds – the Cabernet Sauvignons are full-bodied with intense colour and deep aromas.

Knysna Fine Art, located on the scenic Garden Route, has an eclectic mix of art, photography, sculpture and ceramics, as well as rotating exhibitions from local and international artists. Past exhibits include Pretoria-born Lionel Smit known for his portraiture and sculpture and award-winning Stilbaai artist, Hannalie Taute. ►

ART AND CULTURE

South Africa is a mecca for artists and crafters from all over Africa from Mozambique to Zimbabwe and as far afield as the Congo. Visitors can pick up beautiful arts such as vibrant oil paintings and stone sculptures as well as indigenous crafts like handwoven baskets and vibrant sculptures, everywhere from local markets to road-side stalls.

For fine art lovers, there's plenty on offer, too. The Goodman Gallery, which has venues in Johannesburg and Cape Town, was established over 50 years ago and was one of the key galleries in the 1985 Art Against Apartheid exhibition. Today, it is considered one of the most influential art galleries in Southern Africa with a focus on emerging and established artists from the African continent, or those who engage in African themes.



VISITORS CAN PICK UP BEAUTIFUL ARTS ... AS WELL AS INDIGENOUS CRAFTS LIKE HANDWOVEN BASKETS AND VIBRANT SCULPTURES, EVERYWHERE FROM LOCAL MARKETS TO ROAD-SIDE STALLS 🍷



➤ Clockwise from far below: The wine tram arriving at a railway station; enjoying local wine at an idyllic setting at the southern tip of Africa; braaied meat on a grid; entrance of Waterford Estate winery in Stellenbosch; a braai broodjies sandwich

MOVE OVER ITALY — SOUTH AFRICA MAY NOT BE ONE OF THE WORLD'S PREMIER FOODIE DESTINATIONS, BUT IT SHOULD BE. “ ”

There are plenty of variants on this humble toastie, but a cheese, onion and tomato braaibroodjies is the original and best.

For a taste of Cape Malay, try *denningvleis*, a lamb dish flavoured with spices and one of South Africa's oldest dishes, or *bobotie* which is similar to moussaka and contains a delicious mixture of curried meat and fruit with a creamy egg-based topping.

When dining in South Africa, copy the locals and experience a *shisa nyama*. Translated from Zulu, this literally means 'burnt or cooked meat'. In practice, it's when friends gather around a fire and the communal meal, usually comprising of meat, is cooked over coals. If you don't score an invite from a local, the best place to take part in *shisa nyama* is in the township of Soweto near Johannesburg.

Where there is a healthy foodie scene, an even healthier wine scene usually follows.

Similar in style to Australia or California, but at a fraction of the price, South Africa's wine regions deserve a place on any itinerary.

The most famous of these, after Stellenbosch, is Franschhoek, located about an hour from Cape Town. Not only is it home to some of the best cellar doors in the country, the European-inspired towns, galleries and cafes, and picturesque landscapes make it a charming place to visit. The distant Cape Dutch style architecture is distinctly grander than any Australian or New Zealand wineries. The Franschhoek Wine Train is as dreamy as it sounds: the hop-on, hop-off tram allows visitors to explore up to six wineries in a day and there are five wine tram routes to choose from — pure genius, right? ▶



(All images: Shutterstock)



WINE AND DINE

Move over Italy — South Africa may not be one of the world's premier foodie destinations, but it should be. Over the centuries, the amalgamation of different cultures — including African, Dutch, German, French, British and Cape Malay — has resulted in a mix of dishes that are particular to South Africa. Like many destinations, sometimes the best way to understand a culture is to try the most popular dishes.

The first, and perhaps the simplest, is *braaibroodjies*, or grilled sandwiches.





3

Clockwise from far left: Bloukrans Bridge is the place to bungee jump; hiking Table Mountain via Platteklip Gorge; appreciating the beautiful view of Knysna

IF YOU LOVE HIKING ... HEAD FOR TABLE MOUNTAIN. TOWERING MORE THAN 1,000M ABOVE CAPE TOWN, IT'S A BREATHTAKING EXPERIENCE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. “”



OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Regardless of your thrill-threshold, South Africa has options aplenty — get your heart racing atop a mountain or put on your boots and take the scenic route.

For adrenaline junkies, Bloukrans Bridge is your place. Located on the Western Cape, the world's third-highest bungee jump is a dizzying 216 m high. Prefer to keep two feet firmly on the ground? Walk the Bloukrans Bridge instead, it's free for friends or family accompanying the bungee-jumper.

If you love hiking, pop on your boots and head for Table Mountain. Towering more than 1,000 m above Cape Town, it's a breathtaking experience in more ways than one. There are plenty of trails of varying levels and durations, the most popular being the Platteklip Gorge trail. Depending on your fitness level, the zig-zag hike can take 1.5-3 hours one way. Once you reach the top, you can either hike back down or catch the cable car. For an extra dose of adrenalin fun, abseiling from the summit is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. With the Atlantic Ocean directly below your feet, the view, unsurprisingly, is like nowhere else in the world.

The Pipe Track trail, while less thrill and more chill, doesn't skimp on breathtaking views. Take in the Atlantic Ocean and Lion's Head, a 669 m high peak next to Table

Mountain, at your own pace.

This route suits all fitness levels as it goes around Table Mountain rather than up to the summit.

If you prefer aquatic pursuits, head to Gansbaai, about two hours from Cape Town and get up close and personal with the local sharks. While many will balk at the idea, cage diving in Gansbaai is one of the most popular reasons for a visit: it has the highest concentration of great whites in the world so if you're going to do it, this is the place.

A visit to South Africa is not complete without seeing some wildlife. St Lucia, in KwaZulu-Natal in northeastern South Africa, is the best place to see hippos in the wild. In the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a UNESCO site, you can view crocodiles and hippos in their natural habitat. The kayak expedition, which runs for 2.5 hours, is a hearty mix of both the tranquil and the terrifying.

If you're travelling the world-famous Garden Route drive in the Western Cape (an adventure in itself), be sure to stop in Knysna. On the banks of the Knysna lagoon is a small marine estuary that is home to seahorses. Hire a local guide who will show you the best places to snorkel and spy on these enchanting little creatures as they go about their day. ●

(All images: Shutterstock)

THE TASTE OF SOUTH AFRICA



Grilled chicken legs with jollof rice, orzo, and black eyed peas

Prepare your
taste buds for a
food safari through
African, European
and Asian flavours

SOUTH AFRICAN CUISINE reflects its people perfectly — it's an exciting mix of cultures, flavours and food traditions from right around the globe. For centuries, people have been arriving here from across Africa and the globe, bringing their own recipes and traditions.

From Africa, there are tender meats — beef, chicken and lamb — and fresh veggies — corn, spinach and beans — from the rich soil. Then there's a touch of fruity, Asian spices thanks to the Malay influence, particularly in Cape Town. And from India, there's chilli and spice in famous Durban curries.

Many European groups have

made their marks here, too. The Dutch legacy lives on in cinnamon-infused delights, morning rusks and sweet and savoury pancakes; the British gave South Africa afternoon tea followed by G&Ts and the Portuguese speakers from Mozambique made South Africa mad for peri-peri.

As for the French? They brought their winemaking know-how to the southern tip of Africa.

While much of South Africa's fare has traditionally been associated with meat-consumption, there's loads of vegetarian and, increasingly, vegan, options on offer, too. ▶



Get ready for your first *braai*

If there is one aspect of South African food culture that every visitor will encounter, it's the braai. This is Afrikaans for barbecue and it is a firm favourite across all cultural groups. In fact, braaing is so important that the nation comes together each October to celebrate National Braai Day.

South Africans will *braai* just about anything — meats, vegetables, seafood. However, a *braai* essential is boerewors, a spicy coiled 'farmer's sausage' made from beef, pork, coriander and a blend of spices.

Boerewors is often paired with *mielie pap*, the South African staple food. Made from maize meal, this starchy carbohydrate is similar to polenta and is frequently served with tomato and onion gravy.

... A BRAAI ESSENTIAL IS BOEREWORS, A SPICY COILED 'FARMER'S SAUSAGE' MADE FROM BEEF, PORK, CORIANDER AND A BLEND OF SPICES. “



Clockwise from below: Homemade rusks, a popular food eaten with tea or coffee; malva pudding; boerewors grilled and served with a creamy sauce; braai, traditional South African meat grilling

Discover local wines and beers

As South Africans tend to braai over coals, there's usually at least an hour between the fire being lit and the fire reaching optimum heat. This leaves time for sundowners — the first drink of the evening — which is served as the sun makes its rapid descent toward the horizon (only the Western Cape enjoys long light evenings in the summer months).

Sample wines from the Western Cape (Chenin blanc and Pinotage are favourite varieties) or, a local brew such as Castle Lager or a craft beer. And you know what goes perfectly with a sundowner? Biltong. Similar to jerky, this dried meat snack is made from beef or antelope such as impala or kudu. It is salted, rubbed with spices and dried.

Sweet South African treats

Speaking of sugar, there's no shortage of indulgent puddings in South Africa. Two favourites are malva pudding, a spongy dessert made with apricot jam and served with custard or ice cream, or *melktart* (milk tart), unsurprisingly made with milk, pastry and cinnamon.

End the evening off with a glass of sweet *stoepwyn* (veranda wine) or Amarula over ice. This liqueur is similar in style to Baileys but is made from the fruit of the Amarula tree — a favourite with elephants who are said to get 'drunk' after gorging on the heavenly fruits.

Breakfast and lunch

South Africans typically rise early and visitors on safari are likely to get up before dawn, too. Because of this, start your day with a rusk. Similar to biscotti, these morning snacks are enjoyed dunked in coffee. Other popular breakfasts are porridge, fresh fruits or a traditional bacon and egg fry-up.

Lunch could be anything from leafy green salads with a side of peri-peri chicken, savoury pancakes, quiche, soup or maybe, bunny chow. Not what it sounds like, this dish is, in fact, a quarter or half loaf of bread with the middle removed and filled with a spicy veggie or meat curry. The bunny chow was invented by Indian workers who created it as a way to take their lunch with them to the sugarcane fields of KwaZulu-Natal. ●



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Donna

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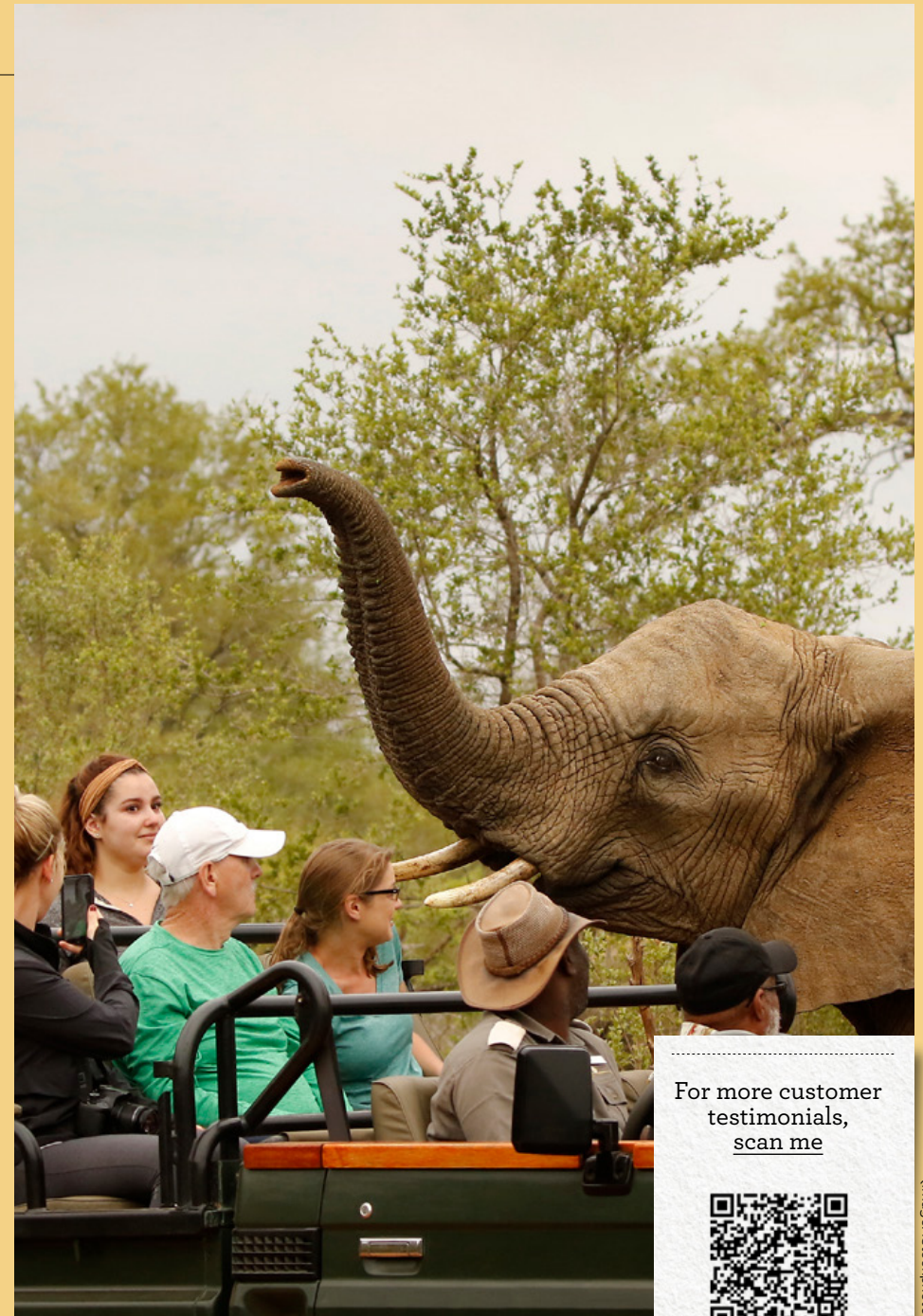
Despina

“Extraordinary wildlife”

“We went on an awesome adventure through Botswana and Zimbabwe, plus a short stay in South Africa. It was fantastic from start to finish! Extraordinary wildlife experiences and game drives. Loads of beautiful people met along the way. Africa is in our hearts and soul. I highly recommend this trip.”



Adrienne



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