

Cape Town – A Look at Africa's Most Beautiful City

In this report we feature Cape Town & The Garden Route. Discover why Cape Town is considered to be one of the most **beautiful** cities in the world and why the Garden Route tour is the most scenic journey you will ever make...



Chapman Peak, Hout Bay – Cape Town

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1. Cape Town – A Look at Africa's Most Beautiful City

As winter approaches in the northern hemisphere, the earth's rotation round the sun means that summer beckons in the south. I admonish you- take a few days off and follow the sun! The best place to catch the sun in the coming holiday season is without doubt Cape Town. Cape Town's claim to being the most beautiful city in South Africa is undisputed. And seasoned travel writers readily accept the merit of Cape Town's claim that is indeed one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The city is blessed with unrivalled gifts of nature. The mighty kilometer high flat top Table Mountain dwarfs even the most ambitious skyscrapers in the business district. The city is surrounded by glorious landscapes, stunning beaches and a bounty of unique vegetation. Where else do you have a choice of the cool Atlantic Ocean and the warmer Indian Ocean?

But Cape Town offers much more. It is reputed to be the most open-minded and relaxed city in South Africa and is one of the safest cities in Africa for visitors. Action hero Jean-Claude Van Damme in the city to shoot an action thriller recently declared: "I love waking up in this city with the sea around me and the fresh air. The people are young with fresh and warm personalities and are friendly and it's a country full of hope."

The movie is being shot in the city and around the harbour and if you are in town before the end of the year you just might get to see Van Damme at the waterfront. This is the same country that has produced some of the most inspiring people of our times. Desmond Tutu the Nobel Peace Prize winner past leader of the Anglican flock in Cape Town, for example and of course Nelson Mandela.

Take a boat trip to Robben Island, one of the hottest destinations for overseas visitors. This is where Nelson Mandela nearly lost his sight quarrying lime during his long imprisonment. Make sure to get to the summit of Table Mountain by cable where you will enjoy some unforgettable views.

Northwards of the city center is the Victoria and Albert waterfront- a trendy shopping and entertainment complex. It is packed with art galleries, art and craft shops, restaurants, taverns, cinemas, theatres and an aquarium. It is easy to see why many beautiful people converge here. It is when in Cape Town that you will

understand why Desmond Tutu named the country as the "Rainbow Nation". The peoples here have roots in the four corners of the planet and together give the city its vivid colours.

Cape Town is well connected to one of the most popular travel destinations in South Africa: the Garden Route. The Garden Route is the southern coastal area starting west of Cape Town at Swellendam and ending at Humansdorp just before Port Elizabeth. The Garden Route is probably the most scenic journey you will ever make. You encounter soaring cliffs, wide beaches, semi desert, rocky coves, rain forests, tranquil lakes and rugged mountains. The area is good for watersports and the weather allows this year round. A visit to the wine producing regions can also be staged from Cape Town. If you are short of time head for picturesque Stellenbosch just a 45-minute drive away.

The Garden Route tour usually starts from Cape Town with a stop at Mossel Bay. This otherwise uninspiring town is famous for its Post Office Tree, where sailors left letters hanging in a boot to be picked up by those headed towards the country where the letters were addressed. Then to Oudtshoorn and George, a transport hub for the area.

Afterwards, Wilderness National Park a good place for birding and canoeing on your way to the artist colony of Knysna and Plettenberg Bay. Plettenberg Bay, the "millionaires' playground" is South Africa's trendiest resort. Then to Tsitsikamma National Park known for its nature trails, giant trees and caves. A little ahead of Humansdorp is Jeffrey's Bay, reputed to have one of the world's best surfing beaches.

Watersports are big in South Africa. Whale watching and shark-cage diving (with great white sharks) is possible in the Cape area. The best time to spot these sea giants is from June to September. In the last week of September the annual Whale Festival is held at Walker Bay. Diving facilities are good in the area and wreck diving in particular is widespread around the Cape. For fishing enthusiasts, the Cape of Good Hope has one the world's richest fishing grounds.

At the confluence of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean currents is to be found large shoals of tuna and swordfish. For those brave souls seeking hair-raising adventure, there is an excellent opportunity for bungee jumping at the bridge over Blaukrans River. This has one of the world's highest drops.

There are also many beautiful golf courses in the Cape Town and Garden Route area. The best time to play is the cooler months of May to September. The President's Cup is being held this year (18 –23 November) at the Fancourt Hotel

and Country Club at George right on the Garden Route. This event is a match play competition with the world's best international players.

The best period to visit the Cape region is over the summer months November-February. The rest of the year is usually cool, rainy and windy. Most people then find it quite challenging to engage in swimming and water sports. There is a wide range of accommodation in Cape Town and the Garden Route area. Top range 5 star hotels and other rated hotels are found throughout the region.

Other accommodation options include motels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, farm holidays, beach cottages, holiday flats and bungalows. The Cape region is now a much sought after destination and advance booking is necessary during the summer season (October-April). With prior planning it is possible to get good value and affordable holiday stay.

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2. Destination Facts: South Africa

Full Country Name: Republic of South Africa

Area: 1,233,404 sq km

Population: 45 million (2001)

Capital City: Pretoria (Administrative), Cape Town (Legislative), Bloemfontein (Judicial)

Other Major Towns: Johannesburg, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth

People: 79% Black, 10% White, 9% Mixed Race, 3% Indian descent

Language: 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga

Religion: Christian (80%), Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and traditional religions

Government: Republic

Time: GMT + 2

Currency: South African Rand (ZAR)

Electricity: 220 V/240 V AC (250 V in Pretoria), 50 Hz

Weights and Measures: Metric

Economy: Mining (gold, diamonds), finance, food processing, manufacturing, agriculture

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3. Travel Basics: South Africa

Health

Visitors entering South Africa from yellow fever infected areas require yellow fever international certificate of vaccination. Certain low altitude regions in Northern Province, Eastern Transvaal (including the Kruger National Park) and north east of KwaZulu-Natal are prone to malaria. Visitors to these areas are strongly advised to take anti-malaria medication before traveling. Tap water is generally considered safe in urban areas but not so elsewhere. Bilharzia occurs in the north and east of the country where you are advised not to swim in fresh water. HIV-AIDS is prevalent in the country and due care is called for.

Visas

All visitors to South Africa require passports valid for at least 30 days after planned date of exit. For those visiting for upto 90 days no visas are required from citizens of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, United States, Switzerland and the European Union. There is also visa waiver for between 30-90 days for a few other selected countries. But visa requirements vary from time to time and you are advised to check on prevailing status well ahead of travel. Visas are not issued at South Africa border points.

People & Culture

South Africa is such a vibrant country due to the diversity of its people. There is a lot to be said for the wildlife and natural attractions of this land but you will have missed much if you have no encounters with its people. The Khoi-San (bushmen) are entitled to claim of having the deepest roots and some of their ancestors' rock and cave paintings date back 26,000 years ago. Other prominent members of this "rainbow nation" include Zulu, Tswana, Ndebele, Xhosa, Sotho, Indian, Afrikaans and those of British origin. The Zulu is one of the more vibrant of traditional black cultures and their dance and dress is quite striking.

In historic terms, apartheid has just recently been dethroned and it is not surprising that colour is still such as an important part of peoples identity. Some knowledge of English will help you get by in urban areas and almost elsewhere in the country. Beer and brandy are the popular routes to getting tipsy though many are increasingly finding South Africa's excellent wines tempting. The music scene is vibrant and groups such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo are now well known in the west. The country has so many stories to be told as the grandees who award the Nobel Prize for literature have recognized. The 2003 winner was Cape Town born J.M Coetzee, who follows in the footsteps of Nadine Gordimer winner of the prize in 1991.

Communications

Telephone, fax, telegram, post and Internet services are available. Direct dialing to many countries is available at most hotels. The country code for South Africa is 27. Mobile phones are based on GSM 900 network and coverage extends to most urban areas. You can obtain a GSM card that will allow you to make international calls to any country. E-mail is accessible at Internet cafes around the country.

Accommodation

The accommodation available in the popular tourist routes is equal to the needs of most. From the discerning traveler who accepts none else than 5-star luxury to the cost conscious who is happy to wake up in a plain and cosy guesthouse. Accommodation options encompass hotels, game lodges and camps, resorts, health spas, motels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, holiday farms, beach cottages, holiday flats and bungalows. There are also over 800 camp and caravan sites in the country. Our [South Africa Hotels](#) page allows you to make an online reservation for accommodation at some selected locations in the country.

Money

The local currency is the South African Rand (ZAR). Foreign currency can be exchanged at bureaux de change, some hotels, and larger shops and restaurants. Automated foreign exchange machines and ATMs are also available at limited locations. Travelers cheques (i.e checks) are valid at banks, hotels, shops and restaurants. You get the most reasonable exchange rates for US dollar, Euro and Pound Sterling. Visa and Mastercard credit cards have the widest acceptance. American Express and Diners Club have slightly less acceptability.

Climate

In general South Africa has a warm temperate climate to the delight of many sunshine-seekers. The country experiences about seven months of sunshine. The colder part of the year falls between May and August. But for such a large country there are of course variations. The coast of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Northern Province are generally hot and humid and June and July are the preferred holiday months.

Winters are generally mild except at the higher altitudes where there are occasional snowfalls to the consternation of those visitors with fixed ideas about climatic conditions in Africa. Summer can be uncomfortably hot in the Low Veld. The hotter areas include the lower Orange River valley and the Mpumalanga Lowveld. Regions in the north east of the country can get quite humid. In Cape Town region rainfall is highest in winter. Most of the rest of the country experiences the highest rainfall in the summer. Those who have come to view

game are advised to travel in winter when the grass is short and the animals are much easier to sight.

International Travel

Johannesburg is fast becoming a regional hub for air travel. The country's national carrier is South African Airways (SAA). There are numerous direct and indirect flights for those traveling from Europe and North America. There are also flights from other parts of Africa, the Far East and South America. International airports in the country are: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth. As Cape Town's stature as a destination grows, there is an increasing number of direct international flights.

Local Travel

The road infrastructure is good and it is easy and convenient to get around the country by car. Self-drive and chauffeur-driven rental cars are widely available. Visitors must be in possession of an international driving license. South Africa has taken after the British and driving is on the left. See our [South Africa Car Rental](#) page should you wish to hire a car.

The principal cities of Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria are serviced by daily flights. South African Airways among other domestic carriers operates on the principal routes. Cruises offer links between the country's major ports such as Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and East London.

Rail services of varying quality link the main cities. The luxury and very pricey Blue Train offers an express service between Pretoria, Victoria Falls, Hoedspruit, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. Long-distance trains are equipped with sleeping compartments. You should reserve ahead of travel especially for overnight journeys. A number of bus operators run intercity express links using modern air-conditioned coaches.

Travel Insurance

There are world-class medical facilities in South Africa. Health and the usual travel insurance are recommended.

What to Wear

If you travel in summer you should pack light cottons, linens and rainwear. For winter you need warmer clothes and rainwear if you travel to the Cape region. Casual wear will be adequate for most occasions. On formal social functions however men should turn out in dinner jackets and black ties and women in full-length dresses.

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4. About Africa Point

Africapoint.com is an Africa specialist travel agent, offering travel services through the company website -Africapoint.com and also offline. This pioneering Africa travel website has been assisting travelers make bookings online since early 1999.

The company was started in 1997 has its central reservations office strategically located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The company is supported by a network of partner offices in the leading destinations in Africa. This includes Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo (Egypt), Kampala (Uganda), Victoria (Seychelles), Harare (Zimbabwe). We are members of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

What services do we offer?

We provide reservation services for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars, tours and safaris to the top destinations in Africa. Among the countries we are currently covering are Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mauritius.

We have special discounts for most of the services we offer and some of our prices are upto 50% off standard rates. Please visit our website to view the links of all the services we offer.

How do we make your Africa travel planning easier?

Ours is one of very few websites offering one-stop travel booking and information service to a number of different African countries. In addition:

- We know our destinations and our products **very well**. We are in a position to give you good advice on the best hotel, rental car, tour or safari to suit your particular requirements.
- We are committed to working to the highest industry standards. We have many our past clients who are happy to share their experiences with you. Please visit the [Client Profile & Testimonials](#) page and see what some of our clients have to say.
- Our patience is the stuff of legend! We will patiently seek to answer all your queries until you are ready to pick what is most suitable for your

needs. For high value items such as safaris we have communicated with our clients for 6 months and even longer before they are ready to buy.

Others have come back to and said: "Do you remember that tour we discussed 2 years ago? I am now ready to travel." And of course we remember. We always remember!

- Together with our partners, we are based in the African destination whose travel services we are selling. For this reason we are usually able to get you very good prices. For some products our prices are **40-50%** below standard rates.
- As members of **ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents)** we are committed to upholding **ASTA's** motto of " Integrity in Travel" and operate to those same standards you would expect from an ASTA member anywhere in the world.

One of our North American clients for whose 36 person missionary group we provided an air charter, hotel booking, safari and road transport to 2 African countries had this to say.

"My experience with Africapoint.com was good as any service that I've received any where in the USA. Not only were they helpful before and during, but they went out of their way to also be helpful afterwards.

I'm using them again for an upcoming trip in November and will look forward to using them for years to come."

In addition our membership of ASTA assures you of a **neutral and trusted** arbitrator in the event that a disagreement occurs between us.

What is the experience of other travelers with us?

We continue to serve the many needs of travelers who seek our services. From straight forward single night hotel bookings to short and long term **car rental, tours and safaris** for individuals and groups, international conferences.

5. Forward This Report

If you've found this report to be informative and useful please forward it to your family and friends. We're sure they will like it as much as you did!