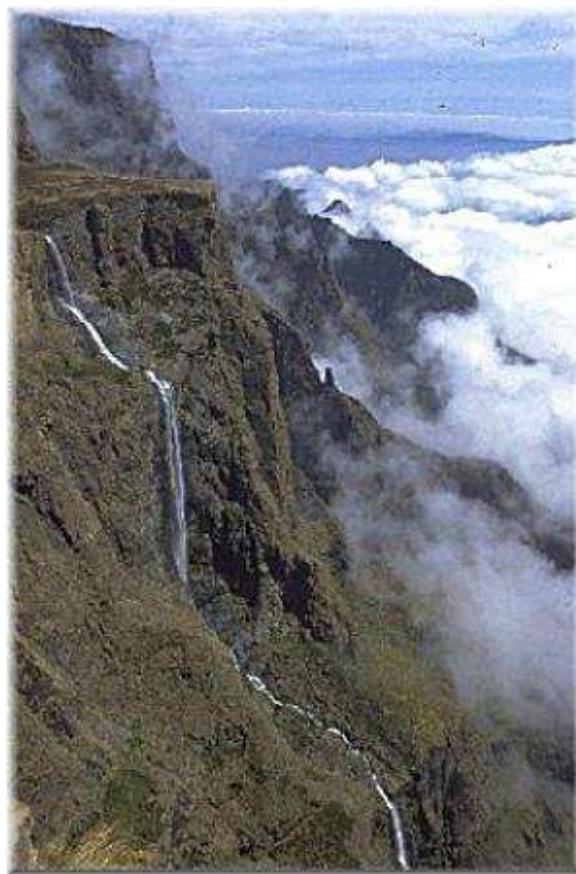


KwaZulu Natal – Shaka's Heaven On Earth



Thukela Falls – KwaZulu Natal

Brought To You By [Africa Point](http://Africapoint.com)



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1. KwaZulu Natal – Shaka's Heaven On Earth

The remarkable diversity of attractions of the KwaZulu-Natal region is unsurpassed in South Africa. It encompasses the splendid Drakensburg Mountains, sublime subtropical beaches, top rated nature and game reserves, historic battlefields, rolling green hills of the Natal Midlands and the city of Durban. The range of activities possible is a challenge even for those with the most eclectic of tastes: swimming, fishing, boating, scuba diving, hiking, abseiling, game viewing, cultural and historical touring, whale and bird watching and golfing.

Warmer and more authentic South Africa than the Cape Region, KwaZulu-Natal is the favourite holiday destination for locals. The region lies between the Drakensberg Mountains and Swaziland to the west; the Indian Ocean to the east stretching from Port Edward in the south to the Mozambique border in the north. As you transition from a subtropical to tropical environment, you encounter cool mountain ranges, savannah grassland, coral reefs, indigenous coastal forest and dunes, lakes and lagoons and papyrus wetlands. Here 9 million people occupy 92,000 sq km of some the fairest and best-watered lands in South Africa.

Little wonder that the Zulu, or “people of heaven” considered the area a heaven on earth indeed, and were extremely jealous of late comers who sought a share of it. And yet the Zulu people themselves had arrived only in the 16th century. Their ancestors, the Nguni, had been pushing southwards from the Great Lakes region for at least three thousand years. The land was inhabited- if you could use the term- by San Bushmen. This hunter-gatherer society was very sparing in its demands on the land. The arrival of the Nguni, a people with numerous cattle herds and great thirst for land, put the Bushman under great stress and severe disadvantage.

The Zulu derive directly from a clan head of the Nguni named “Heaven” or Zulu, who established a territory bearing his own name or KwaZulu in the Umfolozi valley. The Zulu was a fairly insignificant power, even among the Nguni, until the arrival of Shaka Zulu. Shaka, born in 1787, was first-born son to Chief Senzangakhona, but was considered illegitimate on account of a technicality. Shaka eventually corrected this injustice by plotting the death of his younger brother - the legitimate heir. He thus rose to be chief of his people when his father died in 1816.

Shaka was a man gifted with great daring, cunning and imagination. He repulsed numerous attacks by the Ndandwe- a rival and more militarily superior Nguni people, eventually forcing the enemy to flee northwards. Shaka appreciated that

the Ndwandwe would be back unless he created conditions to make it impossible. Above all else a military leader, he devised such weaponry, battle tactics and training methods that resulted in an unbeatable army among known enemies of the day. By numerous treacherous devices -war, assassination, deceit and intimidation - he subdued smaller and larger clans, and gathered all to his realm.

Within three years to 1819, the Zulu nation emerged as the largest and most feared in the whole of southeastern Africa. And Shaka, now King Shaka, was sitting pretty as its head. His success had however caused unprecedented mayhem in the region, and aroused bitter jealousy amongst his ambitious compatriots. He also ruled with an iron fist and was such a tyrant as had never risen before among the Zulu. Shaka was speared to death by Dingane -his half brother, in 1824. The Zulu kingdom survived him, but his legacy was to be severely tested, later in the century in conflicts with new rivals – the British and Boers.

The British had approached Shaka, shortly before his death, for trading rights in ivory and animal skins. Shaka signed a document granting them the chieftaincy of Port Natal, their small base on the east coast. In a very liberal and rather dishonest interpretation of Shaka's intentions, they claimed the Port Natal area in the name of the King of England. Port Natal is today known to most as Durban – and to locals as "Durbs". The city is the gateway and business hub of KwaZulu-Natal, and the logical starting point for exploring the region. Its port ranks among the world's top 10, and is the busiest on the African continent. To discover KwaZulu-Natal, [rent a car at Durban](#) or take a [South Africa tour or safari](#) that covers the region.

Durban's weather is mild and pleasant - temperatures average 17 degrees C in winter (June-August) and 27 degrees C in summer (December to February). Holidaymakers are favoured with sea temperatures averaging 24 degrees C in summer rarely falling below 19 degrees C in winter. This coastal playground enjoys at least a good 320 days of sunshine every year. The rains come over the summer months, when it can get quite hot and humid, with temperatures reaching for 33 degrees C. Long before everybody else, the San Bushmen wintered in Durban, taking advantage of the excellent climate relative to their inland domains.

"The Golden Mile" is a 6 km long waterfront lined with some of [Durban's top rated hotels](#). The city has some of the finest beaches in the country. Good beaches for swimming and surfing can be found to the south of the city- Ansteys, Brighton, Cave Rock, and Garvies. To the north- Country Club, Tekwini, and Laguna beaches are more exclusive and less crowded. Within the city, you can visit museums and art galleries and shop for crafts. The Kwa-Muhle museum

will educate you about Apartheid, which is important if you want to understand South African society.

There are numerous restaurants- Indian, African and Western – in this cosmopolitan city. The Indians started coming here in 1860 as indentured labour for the sugar plantations. Today, the Durban metro area has the largest Indian population outside India. Durban stands between the North and South Coast of South Africa's eastern seaboard. The North Coast beaches include Umhlanga Rocks, Ballito, Shaka's Rock and Shelley Beach. Here you find good accommodation and myriad opportunities for swimming and surfing. Around Ballito is great for watching the ever-fascinating dolphins.

The South Coast stretches from Durban to Port Edward and covers Hibberdene, Port Shepstone, Margate and Southbroom. The region has fantastic beaches and matching amenities. Between Port Edward and Hibberdene is the scene of the sardine run. This most spectacular display of the natural world occurs around June and July. It is triggered by a 4-5 degrees C drop in sea temperature that prompts millions of sardines in great shoals to head northwards. On this dash, game fish, dolphins, sharks, whales and others of their mortal enemies follow. This unforgettable experience appears to be the marine world's answer to the annual wildebeest migration on the Kenya-Tanzania border.

To see wildlife you can travel to the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park, 175 km to the northeast of Durban. This combination of the game reserves of Hluhluwe and Umfolozi occupies 960 sq km. The park is mostly savannah grasslands and low acacia bush, but has a forested mountainous section. You will see the famed "big five"- lion, elephant, buffalo, leopard and rhino. The park is well known for its very successful black and white rhino conservation efforts. Other animal species to look out for include impala, blue wildebeest, waterbuck, zebra, nyala, kudu, bushbuck, warthog, cheetah, hyena, jackal and giraffe. Birding is great and over 300 species are on record.

You can see game on guided walks, but for obvious reasons, an armed ranger must accompany you. The less adventurous will have an equally satisfying game viewing experience aboard a vehicle. Accommodation in the Umfolozi reserve is available at various bush camps at Sontuli, Nselweni and Mndindini and at the self-catering cottages and tented camp at Mpila. At Hluhluwe, the well-positioned Hilltop Camp offers accommodation ranging from a luxury lodge to self-catering chalets and rondavels. The dry season in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi area falls between May and August, while most off the rains fall within the rest of the year.

To the northeast of KwaZulu Natal is the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, which stretches along a 280 km coastline from Cape St Lucia to Kozi Bay near the Mozambique border. This first rate eco-tourism paradise, is an amalgamation of

a number of protected areas including - Lake St Lucia, St Lucia and Maputaland Marine Reserves, Coastal Forest Reserve and the Kosi Bay Natural Reserve. Declared a World Heritage Site in 1999, the official bulletin justifying this distinction highlighted the existence of 5 ecosystems resulting in an exceptional diversity of species and actual ongoing speciation.

The park is a tropical and subtropical interface and has landforms that include coral reefs, sandy beaches, coastal dunes, lakes, swamps, and reed and papyrus wetlands. It occupies more than 3200 sq km, but supports more animal species than larger parks. Here you can find hippos, turtles, crocodiles, rhino, leopard and sharks. The birding is unsurpassed and more than 530 species are on record. The numerous activities possible include- fishing, hiking, boating, diving, game viewing and whale and bird watching. You can seek accommodation within the park or nearby towns in the range of basic camps and luxury game lodges to hotels and self-catering chalets.

Sodwana Bay Nature Reserve, which falls within the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park is a haven for sport fishing, boating, snorkeling and scuba diving. The underwater world, and the coral reefs in particular are outstanding, and the marine life plenty. This is one of the world's top diving destinations. You can visit year round, but conditions for diving are best April to September. Water temperatures vary from about 20 degrees C and can reach 29 degrees C in summer. Take time off from water sports for a guided to see loggerhead and leatherback turtles. There is good accommodation for most budgets nearby.

The Drakenberg Mountains on KwaZulu-Natal's western border are one of South Africa's most outstanding attractions. Rising 3282 m above sea level, the spectacular 200 km long mountain ranges were named by the martial minded Zulu as uKhahlamba or "Barrier of Spears". The thoroughly photogenic "Amphitheatre" is very impressive and is popular with visitors. This is a rock wall with a height of 500m and stretching for 5 km. Many adventure activities are available here in the most scenic of surroundings, including- hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, paragliding, white-water rafting, birding, and fly and trout fishing.

There are several parks and game reserves around the Drakensberg Mountains, the most prominent of which is the 2430 sq km uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 2000 mainly for two reasons; first for its remarkable physical charm and biological diversity, and second to highlight the outstanding collection of San rock art. Scattered over 600 sites; there are more than 35,000 well-preserved artworks, with scenes depicting hunting, dancing, fighting and food gathering. The oldest paintings are estimated to date back 2400 years, with more recent ones less than 200 years old.

Scholars have in recent years studied San rock art closely and the consensus now is that this is not merely representation art but it has some spiritual content. At the Kamberg Rock Art Centre, you can learn more about the San people, and how to interpret the symbolic and spiritual content of their art. In the Drakensberg region, there is a very wide range of accommodation including – basic bed & breakfasts, guesthouses, camps, hotels, and luxury resorts. The rains come in summer between October and April, with the rest of the year being mostly dry. Beware that winter nights can get extremely chilly and of sudden thunderstorms in summer.

Descending from the Drakensberg, you can visit the battlefield sites, where some of South Africa's most vicious battles were fought. The protagonists were Zulu, Boer and British who engaged one another in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The hottest battles were fought in areas around Colenso, Weenen, Dundee, Estcourt, Glencoe, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Utrecht, Volksrust, Vryheid and Winterton.

The Voortrekkers had headed north away from the Cape Colony to escape British control. After crossing the Drakensberg, just like the Zulu people earlier, they believed they had reached "Heaven on Earth". Conflicts over land and other resources were inevitable and in several episodes between 1836-1852, the two parties sought a resolution through arms. Next came the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. The British eventually won, but they met a number of disasters as they had initially underestimated the Zulu army. This is the war that broke the hearts of Bonaparte royalists after Prince Louis Napoleon – an observer with the British party- succumbed to multiple assegai thrusts.

The British were busy making war again, this time on the Boers between 1880-81. They lost the war, made peace but sought a rematch in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. This second engagement attracted worldwide attention, and it was the first war ever recorded on film. Two of the giants of the twentieth century were witnesses - Churchill as a reporter, and Gandhi as a stretcher-bearer. It is advisable to tour with an accredited battlefield guide, who will retell the story of the battles at various sites. While in the area, there are opportunities to learn about Zulu history and culture, and also to buy local arts and crafts.

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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!