

WILDERNESS MAY BE SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST CELEBRATED ASSET, BUT THE RAINBOW NATION BOASTS AN URBAN SOPHISTICATION UNPARALLELED IN AFRICA.

URBAN LIFE 01

World-class infrastructure lays the ground work for a bounty of museums, art galleries, restaurants, bars, dizzying nightlife and lazy day life. Dwelling in each of South Africa's cosmopolitan cities is layer upon layer of the country's multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-faithed and multi-hued population. Put simply, skipping the metro culture here would be like trying to enjoy France without the champagne, Japan without karaoke, England without the pubs – it just wouldn't do.



SOUTH AFRICA

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FESTIVALS

South Africans love to celebrate, and while they don't need a cause, they fill their calendar with plenty of festivals. Check out the South African Tourism website at www.southafrica.net for listings.

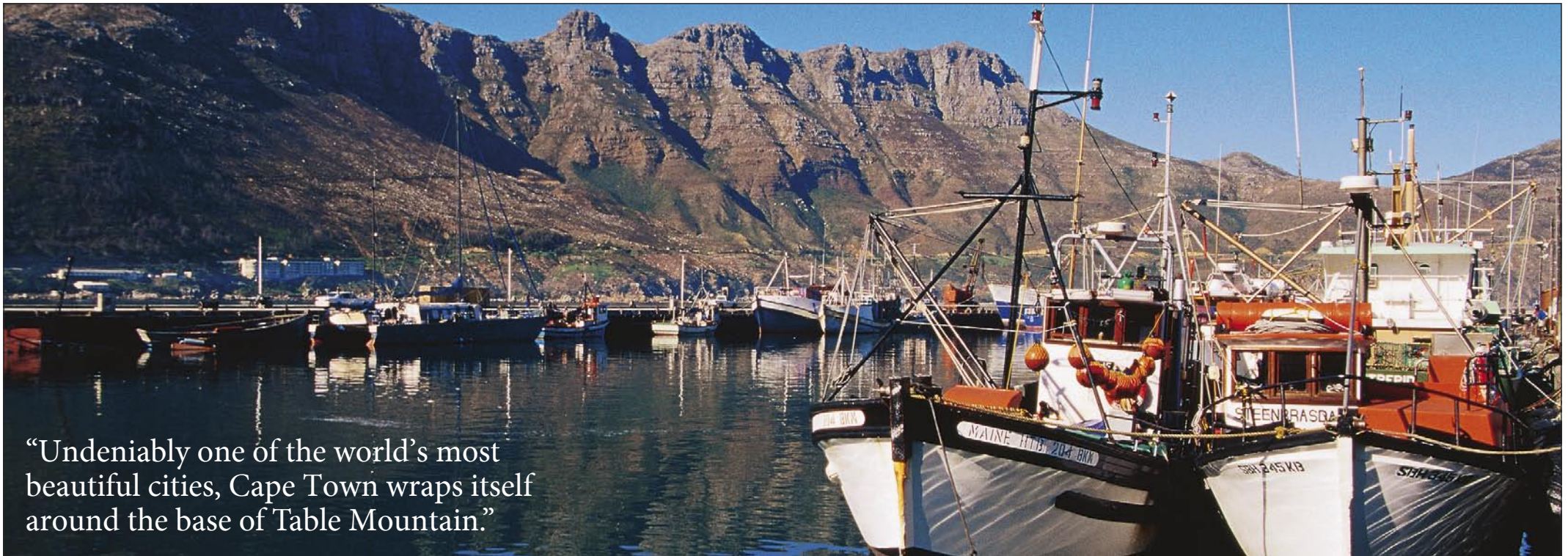
January kicks off with **Cape Town's New Year Carnaval**, the city's oldest street party. Durban is the flavour of February, hosting the Hindu **Kavadi Festival**, during which participants can pierce their bodies as a sign of devotion. South Africa's alternative love-it-up at the Free State's **Rustler's Valley One World Unity Party** over Easter, and the southern Drakensberg hosts an orgy of rock, pop and jazz at April's **Splashy Fen Music Festival**. In June, Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape hosts the **National Arts Festival**, South Africa's largest, and Soweto pulses for a week in December during the annual **Soweto Arts Festival**.

Cape Town

Undeniably one of the world's most beautiful cities, Cape Town wraps itself around the base of Hoerikwaggo (Table Mountain), dipping and climbing at the mighty bluff's mercy. The powerful Atlantic Ocean provides a perimeter of beaches and intimate coves. Humbling as the natural boundaries are, Cape Town is no shrinking violet, and this city of over three million responds with sass and class.

First stop for most is an expedition up **Table Mountain** (www.tmntp.co.za). You can conquer this beautiful massif on foot, or take the **cableway** (021-424 5148; www.tablemountain.net). Once ensconced within your glassy cabin you can appreciate the true size of Cape Town's splendiferous sprawl as it drops away in equal measure to your jaw.

Culture vultures can dose up on the city's emotive history at the **District Six Museum** (021-466 7200; www.districtsix.co.za; 25A Buitenkant St), which charts the tragic story of a suburb evicted during the apartheid era. Step back further in time at the **South African Museum & Planetarium** (021-481 3330; www.museums.org.za/sam; 25 Queen Victoria St, Gardens), which delves into the art and culture of the Khoekhoen and San, the area's first peoples. More contemporary art, in the form of 16th-



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and 17th -century masters such as Rembrandt, is on display at the impressive **Michaelis Collection** (021-481 3933; www.museums.org.za/michaelis; Greenmarket Sq) and the **SA National Gallery** (021-467 4660; www.museums.org.za/sang; Government Ave, Gardens).

All that culture is bound to test the grey matter, in which case you’ll need to seek respite in one of Cape Town’s parks. In the heart of the city, the **Company’s Gardens** are home to a florid mass of frangipanis, African flame trees and plenty of space to park the behind. But they pale in comparison to the vivid

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (021-799 8783; www.sanbi.org; Rhodes Dr, Newlands). Creeping up the foothills of Table Mountain, these exquisite gardens are awash with indigenous flora and a peppering of introduced figs and grand oaks.

Cape Town’s wide-open spaces are equally bewitching by the water, and the city possesses superb beaches. Brave the surf at Llandudno Beach, brave the nudists at Sandy Bay, or blend with the bronzed and beautiful at trendy Camps Bay. Sip on cosmopolitans in the beaches’ stylish bars, dine on the best of South African cuisine,

treat yourself to some live music and party into the wee hours.

Cape Town is a gastronome’s playground, with a smorgasbord of eateries to suit all tastes and budgets. Restaurants make the most of the Atlantic Ocean offshore and fruitful farmlands inland, using fine seafood and fresh, inventive ingredients. Head to **Long St** for funky dining and street life, tuck into beef fillets doused in chilli-chocolate sauce at **Madame Zingara & Cara Lazuli** (021-426 2458; 192 Loop St, City Bowl) or savour sushi at Tank (021-419 0007; Shop B15, Cape Quarter,

Waterkant St). For a dabble in some of the country’s finest cuisine, employ the services of **Cape Town Gourmet Adventure Tours** (083-693 1151; http://gourmet.cape-town.info).

Hit the **Victoria & Albert Waterfront** (www.waterfront.co.za), Cape Town’s answer to San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf. Blow the shopping budget in the glossy mall and then pour over your new wares in one of the pubs or restaurants. Mingle with sharks, seals, penguins, turtles and other marine life at the **Two Oceans Aquarium** (021-418 3823; www.aquarium.co.za; Dock Rd, Waterfront).



Johannesburg

Jo'burg accommodates almost six million residents but manages to elicit an affectionate anthology of nicknames from all of them. This defiant, proud and friendly city is in the grip of urban renewal and the focus of the movement is **Newtown**, where the **Museum Africa** (011-833 5624; museumafrica@joburg.org.za; 121 Bree St) explores the characters and events of the 'new' South Africa. Equally enriching for history and politico buffs is the interesting **Apartheid Museum** (011-309 4700; www.apartheidmuseum.org; cnr Gold Reef Rd & Northern Parkway), which details the country's

era of segregation with a chilling emphasis on interaction.

After gaining an appreciation of the past, savour Jo'burg's present. The city's action has long since moved from the CBD and now hums in the chic northern suburbs. Hit the **Rosebank Rooftop Market** (011-788 5530; Craddock Ave; Rosebank) on a Sunday morning for fine African crafts and then dine on Afro-Mediterranean at earthy **Gaia** (011-912 7879; cnr 4th Ave & 7th St, Linden). Watch the beautiful folk natter at the sophisticated **Sundeck Bar** (011-728 2279; 72 Grant Ave; Norwood). Follow Jo'burg's 'in the know' and head to **Melville**, the city's latest 'it' strip. 7th

St, known as 'Old Melville', and the busier Main Rd about 1km away, known as 'New Melville', both brim with restaurants, cafés, shops and niche bars. Dine on delicate Asian cuisine at swanky **Soi** (011-726 5775; cnr 7th St & 3rd Ave, Melville) or cool down with a beer at the arty **Berlin Bar** (011-482 9345; 6 7th St, Melville).

Pretoria

Dwarfed in size by Jo'burg's megalopolis, Pretoria sits just 50km north, but pushes its own identity with subdued style. Complementing the city's brilliant sea of jacarandas and bougainvillea, a vibrant student population drives a dynamic bar,

pub and club scene in the cosmopolitan suburbs of **Hatfield** and **Arcadia**.

In the city's east you'll find exquisite dining in **New Muckleneuk** and **Brooklyn**. A work in progress, the inspirational **Freedom Park** (012-470 7400; Koch St, Salvokop) will be a tribute to individuals who have sacrificed themselves for freedom worldwide, while the imposing **Voortrekker Monument & Museum** (012-323 0682; Eeufees Rd) charts the Afrikaans' frontier history.

Durban

South Africa's third-largest city is a confluence of cultures and landscapes. On the flirty waterfront a carnival-esque esplanade littered with cafés, shops and hotels winks at a buttery strip of beach. Durban has South Africa's highest concentration of people of Indian descent, and the smells, sights and ambience of the subcontinent are imbued in laneways, streets, shops and restaurants throughout.

Holding pride of place on the seafront is **uShaka Marine World** (031-368 6675; www.ushakamarineworld.co.za; Addington Beach, the Point), a dizzying theme park with the world's biggest aquarium, the southern hemisphere's largest collection of sharks, Africa's largest dolphinarium, a mock 1940s steamer wreck, classy restaurants, a shopping centre, freshwater rides and a beach. Exhausting isn't it? Save some energy to indulge in the treats of trendy **Wilson's Wharf** (www.wilsonswarf.co.za) or to dabble in Durban's bohemian arts, crafts, music and eateries in the contemporary **BAT Centre** (Maritime Pl).

Durban's **Art Gallery** (031-311 2264; City Hall) is a goldmine of Zulu arts and crafts, and the acclaimed **KwaMuhle Museum** (031-311 2237; 130 Ordinance Rd) details the history of apartheid in KwaZulu-Natal. The city's culinary offerings are eclectic, constituting everything from takeaway curry to Mediterranean-cum-Asian-cum-African-infusion dishes. Hit the city's chic suburbs and tuck into cocktails and kudu fillets at **Cat Man Du** (031-312 7893; 411 Windermere Rd, Morningside),

a cold beer at **Billy the Bum's** (031-303 1988; 504 Windermere Rd, Morningside) and live jazz at the iconic **Rainbow Restaurant & Jazz Club** (031-702 9161; 23 Stanfield Lane; Pinetown).

Bloemfontein

In the middle of the country and the middle of nowhere, the Free State is a seamless expanse of farms, sunflower fields, grassy plains and vast blue skies. That is until you hit its capital, 'Bloem', which makes up for all that space with an edgy cosmopolitan flair. For a culture hit head to the acclaimed **Oliewenhuis Art Museum** (051-447 9609; oliewen@nasmus.co.za; 16 Harry Smith St) to see traditional and contemporary South African art, or the haunting **National Women's Memorial & Anglo-Boer War Museum** (051-447 3447; Monument Rd) for history. Bloem's wining and dining is centred on the picturesque **Waterfront**, where you can also stroll the boardwalks, potter among the shops and take in some live music.

Other Urban Treats

South Africa's south coast is littered with mini-urban delights, and the celebrated Garden Route is a continuous thread of stunning seaside towns. In the Western Cape, **Knysna** thrives on arts festivals, contemporary craft shops, gay-friendly nightlife and sublime seafood. The Eastern Cape's **Jeffrey's Bay** entertains world-class surfers with feisty shopping, dining and drinking.

