

SOUTHERN & SOUTH AFRICA



THIS IS A COUNTRY
THAT OFFERS
SWATHES OF PALM-
FRINGED BEACHES
BATHED IN SUN.



KENYA

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Wide open grasslands literally teeming with wildlife is, without question, one of Kenya's major appeals. But there is a host of wildlife – of a different sort – that isn't often mentioned. And breathing apparatus is required to truly enjoy its wonders ... sealife.

With the equator passing smack bang through Kenya, this is a country that offers swathes of palm-fringed beaches bathed in sun, glorious turquoise water inviting you to come on in and a plenitude of life just beneath its surface.

Mombasa has one of the best beaches and one of the few areas that's good to dive no matter what the season. Birthday Reef is, quite simply, spectacular. Schools big fish mass here and the coral is prolific.

Otherwise, hop into a glass-bottomed boat; snorkel the teeming coral heads dotting the shallow fringing reef that lines the coast; go crazy with watersports; or just laze on the white sands sipping cool drinks.



The best beach is arguably Diani on the south coast. Catch a dhow to Wasini Island to snorkel, dive, explore the island, feast on seafood, watch dolphins and, if you're lucky, spot a whale shark. Speed to the horizon and beyond to fish for big game.

Historically, Mombasa is interlaced with other cultures. You'll see the extravagances of the Arabic culture in the ancient buildings of the Old City; Fort Jesus shouts its Portuguese slave trade origins; the narrow, winding streets whisper of even more.

The food is as exotic. To Swahili, Portuguese and Arabic; Indian, Chinese, Korean have been added. All use the delectably fresh seafood as a prime ingredient.

Try Lobster Thermidore at the Tamarind Restaurant, perhaps by dhow; succulent steaks and game meat at Hunters Bar; freshly-shucked oysters and great scenery at Sea Heaven; Indian at Shenai.

Catch a matatu to Bamburi Beach and have burgers or pizzas at Yuls Beach Bar for lunch; or Mishkaki at Castaways before dancing the night away.

Kalifi, Watamu and Malindi lie a little further north and offshore is both a protected marine reserve and a UN Biosphere area. In other words, put on your goggles and expect more great sightseeing!

The land around here won't disappoint either. Apart from magnificent silvery beaches, the huge Arabuko Sokoke Forest holds many endangered species, as well a number of the animals you'd expect. And the serene blue expanse of Kilifi Creek will entrance.

Ancient monuments include the unassuming Vasco Da Gama Pillar, the Pillar Tombs and the Portuguese Chapel. Further inland, you'll find the crumbling pre-historic remains of Gede, once home to a sultan and his Swahili subjects.

You can travel far into the interior to the mystery and majesty of places like Mount Kenya and the Rift Valley. Closer to the coast, the vast expanse of Tsavo East, the cool rainforest of Shimba Hills and prolific game within Taita game sanctuary offer enough of the real Kenyan experience to satisfy.

Wherever you go, keep your eyes out for their superb wooden carvings, beautiful beads and colorful fabrics. They, on their own, will usually be enough to take you back to the glorious experience that is Kenya.



ITS FLAT ROCKY EXPANSE IS BREATHTAKING WHEN SET AGAINST A CRISP BLUE SKY; OR AT SUNSET FROM A BOAT IN THE BAY. IT'S UNFORGETTABLE WITH ITS CLOTH OF CLOUD.



SOUTH AFRICA

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In the vast African continent South Africa, mix of first- and third-world cultures, is unique. In fact, if it wasn't for the ever-present smiling black faces, you'd be excused for occasionally forgetting you were in Africa!

Take cobblestoned Greenmarket Square in Cape Town. Surrounded as it is by centuries-old buildings, you could be in Europe. The Victorian terraces whisper of England. And nowhere else has the iconic Table Mountain.

Its flat rocky expanse is breathtaking when set against a crisp blue sky; or at sunset from a boat in the bay. It's unforgettable with its cloth of cloud. Take a cable car, climb its steep sides or hike across it from the must-see Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens; abseil, skydive mountain-bike or 'kloof' down it. Just make sure you get there.

In summer, beaches are the go. The trendy café-lined crescent of Camps Bay; Clifton's four sheltered pockets; Muizenberg with its bright bathing boxes; au naturel at Sandy Bay.

Scuba amongst the kelp offshore, or go to the excellent Aquarium (the brave will dive with great white sharks); there's great surfing just about everywhere; and swim with penguins at Boulders.

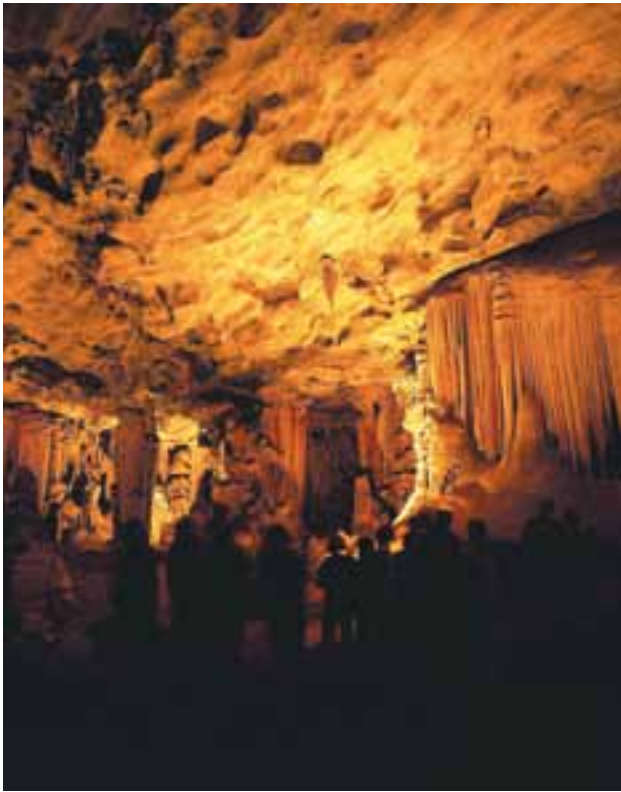
Have a massage at the Long Street baths after perusing the quirky shops; there are fleamarkets aplenty. V&A Waterfront and Canal Walk Century City will satisfy shopaholics.

The food's as cosmopolitan as the rest of the city. Sample Curry Rotis or Smoked Snoek from a vendor; devour cape brandy pudding at a Constantia restaurant; dine on mega-fresh crayfish beachside.

The west coast may be arid, but the flower reserve near Port Owen is awesome in spring. Lunch on fresh seafood while watching for whales at the quaint fishing villages of Stompneusbaai and Paternoster; play golf at Shelley Point and Langebaan; go birdwatching in brooding salt marshes, especially Geelbek.

Here the lagoon is clear and warm, watersports ever-present, and the oyster-shell deposits record-breaking. The beaches are long and sunny; the wetland bird sanctuary excellent; as is the fishing and sailing.

Take a detour through Darling on your way to Paarl in the spectacular Cape Winelands, where you'll find the oldest Dutch Reformed Church in the country. Soaring mountains protect green valleys filled with vineyards, orchards and lovely Cape Dutch architecture. ►



The wines are award-winning and often accompanied by gourmet cuisine; Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are must-dos while on the wine route; Wellington takes you to the historic Bainskloof Pass.

Skirting the Hottentots-Holland range, you'll come to the Strand and Gordon's Bay. Like most places round here, they're framed by purplish peaks and beautiful sand beaches with safe swimming and plenty of rock pools to explore.

Make sure you walk the harbor wall and have a braai (BBQ); hike the Helderberg Nature Reserve amongst fynbos and little Bontebok; play the spectacular Erinvale golf course in Somerset West.

Fish, dive, windsurf; eat fish and chips at Bikini Beach; spot whales along Clarence Drive; and the views from Steenbras Dam are magnificent.

Cross the beautiful Sir Lowry's Pass, stopping at Elgin for apples; the lovely Houw Hoek Pass has farm stalls aplenty; and, at Hermanus, the onshore whale spotting is tops.

Dive amongst Great Whites in Gansbaai's Shark Alley; walk the Fernkoof Nature Reserve; birdwatch from a boat in Kleinriver Lagoon; play golf at Arabella Club to an audience of baboons.

Go wine tasting in the Hemel en Aarde Valley; to Betty's Bay for the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens and Stoney Point penguins; then to Onrus Beach for a calm lagoon and crashing waves.

Stop at Greyton for Devonshire tea on the way to the hot springs and beautiful surrounds of Montagu. Nestled in the fertile Breede River Valley, 22 of the houses are national monuments. The valley's long wine route includes excellent brandy at KWV; Kleinplaasie Museum takes you back to settler's times; hiking trails interlace Winterhoek Wilderness area's bizarre rock formations, sometimes leading to ancient San rock art.

Drive through Cogmans Kloof Hole in the Rock to Sanbona Wildlife Reserve in the Klein Karoo, where the white lion roams free, and on to

the beautiful Garden Route. This is some of the most startlingly beautiful coastline in the country.

Mossel Bay is perfectly positioned between the two. Go north to the limestone caverns of the Cango Caves; watch ostrich races in Outdshoorn; peaceful Prince Albert on your way to Die Hel and the Karoo National Park.

Closer to home, go to Seal Island and the oldest post office in the country; revel in the perfect climate by playing on the beach and in the water; walk the awesome cliffs of Cape St Blaize and through Tunnel Cave to find seashells; play golf at the spectacular championship course.

Catch the Outeniqua 'Choo-Tjoe' along the edge of the ocean to Wilderness, where you can watch whales and dolphins from Dolphin's Point; laze on the miles of beautiful beaches; canoe in the serene Serpentine lagoon; dine on tender calamari, freshly-caught fish and crisp wines.

Go birdwatching at Sedgefield's Swartvlei Lake; check out the forests, mountains, lakes and coast from the Map of Africa viewpoint; have a picnic under Woodville Big Tree; fish for bass in Groenvlei Lake.

Look for seahorses at Lakes National Park on your way to Knysna for scrumptious oysters; wander through glorious bird-filled forest or craft-filled markets; touch the elephants in Knysna Elephant Park; savour the view from The Heads before catching a ferry to Featherbed Bay nature reserve.

**PORT ELIZABETH HAS MORE
SUNSHINE THAN ANY OTHER COASTAL
TOWN. IT ALSO HAS A MAMMOTH
STRETCH OF BEACHES, WARM OCEAN
AND SAILING-FRIENDLY WINDS.**



Last stop in Western Cape is Plettenberg Bay, surrounded by golden beaches, rocky peninsula, verdant forests, lagoons and estuaries. Whales frolic in the bay all year round; dolphins are happy to let you bob around them in a kayak; and the rocky Robberg peninsula is an awesome place to walk.

Birds fly around you at Birds of Eden; monkeys roam free through Monkeyland Primate Sanctuary's forest; Keurbooms River gorge and tidal mouth are must-dos; golfers will feel the same about the Goose Valley and Plettenberg Bay courses.

Travel through the striking Tsitiskamma Forest to Storms River Mouth where the brave will stop to go rafting and jump the world's highest bungee off the Bloukrans River Bridge. Others will continue to St Francis and Jeffrey's Bay in search of the ultimate wave.

If surfing isn't your thing, the lighthouse is a national monument; fishing off Seal Point is legendary; nature reserves, like Baviaanskloof, Kabeljous Estuary, Noorsekloof and Seekoei River Estuary, are great for family days out.

Trek north into the Great Karoo's dramatic open spaces. Tour the Earth Impact Crater Ring; view ancient bones at the Permian Extinction; stop for tea in quaint Graaff-Reinet on your way to the soaring jointed pillars in the Valley of Desolation.

The trails in green Camdeboo Park are worth walking; the trout fishing is good and the national park stocked with game. You'll find Boer War monuments, beautiful Cape Dutch homesteads, ornate Victorian

architecture and the simple, lime-washed buildings of the local Xhosa. Litte Nieu-Bethesda's Owl House is a must.

Port Elizabeth has more sunshine than any other coastal town. It also has a mammoth stretch of beaches, warm ocean and sailing-friendly winds. Then there's the good diving, fishing, walks ...

Sip cocktails after a day's sun at Kings Beach; enjoy unspoilt surrounds at Virgin and Sardinia Bay; spot whales and, if you're lucky, swim with dolphins at Seaview and Maitlands; surf the Fence, the Pipe, Millers Point and wild Bluewater Beach.

The Bridge Shopping Centre is Africa's largest under one roof; MOGO has great indigenous giftware, as well as local mohair goods; Hobie Beach's weekend markets offer more again.

Humewood golf course is one of South Africa's best; historians will love the Konkin Heritage Trail; you can play with young cubs at Seaview Lion Park; Bayworld's oceanarium has been rated one of the world's best – and there's plenty else to do there besides.

There are also a host of malaria-free game reserves here. The renowned Addo Elephant Park in Sundays River Valley; and the private Lalibela, Kwandwe and Shamwari, home to the Big 5 (lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard). ▶



Port Alfred, on the banks of the Kowie River, still feels like an English fishing village. And, if you don't feel like salty water, go up the Kowie River – a favorite with canoeists.

You might spot an endangered barred owl on your Waters Meeting Nature Reserve hike; there are over 1800 different types of seashells on the lovely swimming beaches; the Fish River Sun has a Gary Player golf course; and nearby Grahamstown is a must-do for history and architecture buffs.

Past the lovely old lighthouse at East London, you'll begin to travel along the rugged Wild Coast, where the grandeur of nature is largely left to its own devices. Xhosa huts dot the hillsides, the drop to the white sweeps of sand that edge the ocean is often steep and there are shipwrecks aplenty.

Somewhere in the middle is Coffee Bay. The bird-watching is excellent, the bay lovely and the thunder you sometimes hear will be the waves clapping through a natural rock arch.

Serious fishermen, this is the place for you - the wildwater fly-fishing nearby is unparalleled. Hikers, you can choose between stunning ocean walks, treks into the Amatola Mountains and wanders through thick indigenous forest.

If you can drag yourself away, go to Qunu to visit the Nelson Mandela Museum; a day at the Port St Johns lagoon; and, if the season's right, perhaps a day's skiing up at Tiffindell in the southern Drakensberg.

KwaZulu Natal is a different kettle of fish altogether. This is a place of longstanding seaside resorts. The beaches are long and golden, rocky outcrops form serene lagoons, rivers wind their way through tropical surrounds to a warm, clear ocean.

There is also a plethora of championship golf courses; bird and wildlife watching opportunities are first-rate, especially in Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve; and, depending upon the time of year, there's the awesome Sardine Run.

Port Edward's Silver Beach is one of the most popular as it offers safe swimming, good fishing, thrilling ski-boat launch spectacles, South Africa's longest supertube and, even a shipwreck for diving around.

Hike up to Tragedy Hill or through the lush forest nearby the town; cross the border to the Wild Coast to play the casino or its Robert Trent Jones Jnr course; try your hand at the tricky local 9 hole course.

The bubbles in the Bilanhlolo River at Ramsgate make it look like it's boiling; the fishing is great and the rock mussels easy to find; Southbroom beach and lagoon is picturesque.

Margate has some of the best diving in the area – Protea Banks, Adda Reef, Deep Salmon, Bo Boyi and Potato Reefs. You'll find coral and fish. But you'll also find deep caves and large groups of sharks.

Its beach is Blue Flag, the shopping excellent and watersports plentiful; the Bird Park is a must; golfers will enjoy the Country Club course.

Uvongo is also beautiful and adds a plummeting waterfall to the mix; the beaches are sheltered by lush, rocky escarpments; the snorkeling is worthwhile.

Hike or paddle-boat up the river to the nature reserve; buy craft and fresh fruit from beach peddlers; collect shells or fish at Shelley Beach; take a ride on the Banana Express.

Go whale watching and swim with dolphins from Port Shepstone; cruise the huge Mzimkulu River with its animal and bird rich banks; do the world's highest abseil after visiting Overhanging Rock and Lehr's Falls; play the Country Club course.

Take the kids to Jolly Roger near Hibberdene; golfers, play the Selbourne course in Pennington; divers will see the scarce black coral on its tall reefs.



HIKERS, YOU CAN CHOOSE BETWEEN STUNNING OCEAN WALKS, TREKS INTO THE AMATOLA MOUNTAINS AND WANDERS THROUGH THICK INDIGENOUS FOREST.





Spend the day exploring from Mtwalume Falls to the lovely lagoon at the river mouth. There's top class spear fishing, angling and bird watching round here.

Explore wild dune forest near Umzumbe Bay; there's plenty of crayfish hidden in the rocks; try out the Umdoni Park Golf Course.

The rolling hills, forests and river mouth around Scottsborough house plenty of birds and animals; the town has plenty of excellent restaurants, bars and clubs; the vast terraced lawns at Scott Bay lead down to an expansive beach, complete with tidal and paddling pool, supertube and miniature railway.

Visit the Green Point Lighthouse; see flamingos and much more in natural settings at Crocworld; the undulating golf course has beautiful views, as well as two Par 5 and five Par 3 holes.

Winkelspruit and Amanzintoti are close to the major metropolis of Durban. Kids, go to the tidal and rock pools; divers, the Aliwal Shaol is rated one of the world's top ten best sites.

Bird lovers, there are 150 species in the Bird Sanctuary; other excellent reserves are Empisini, Illovo Lagoon, Ilanda Wilds, Isipingo Mangrove Boardwalk and Umbogavango.

With water that rarely drops below 17 degrees, swimming, surfing, body boarding, sailing and scuba diving are firm favorites in Durban. Whether it's a wild rickshaw ride from a Zulu in full regalia, jostling for a spot in the sun on the mammoth beaches, or partying till sunrise in one of the myriad clubs, it's all go go go here.

Have a spicy Samosa in Grey Street while wandering the exotic spice and textile stalls of the oriental bazaars, then visit the enormous Juma Misjid

GO WHALE WATCHING AND SWIM WITH DOLPHINS FROM PORT SHEPSTONE; CRUISE THE HUGE MZIMKULU RIVER WITH ITS ANIMAL AND BIRD RICH BANKS; DO THE WORLD'S HIGHEST ABSEIL AFTER VISITING OVERHANGING ROCK AND LEHR'S FALLS; PLAY THE COUNTRY CLUB COURSE.



Mosque; tread the Indaba Heritage Route for insights into Mahatma Gandhi; take the family to uShaka Marine World, the Snake Park and Funworld.

You'll find the original cycad in the Botanical Gardens; local wire and beadwork at the Umhumbane Flea Market; great surf at the Bay of Plenty; excellent golf courses at Zimbali, Umhlali and Prince's Grant.

Take the long way round through the breathtaking Valley of a Thousand Hills to Umhlanga Rocks, much beloved by surfers. Bordered by a lagoon, tropical Havaan Forest and indigenous marshland it is crossed by rustic bridges and filled with animal and bird life.

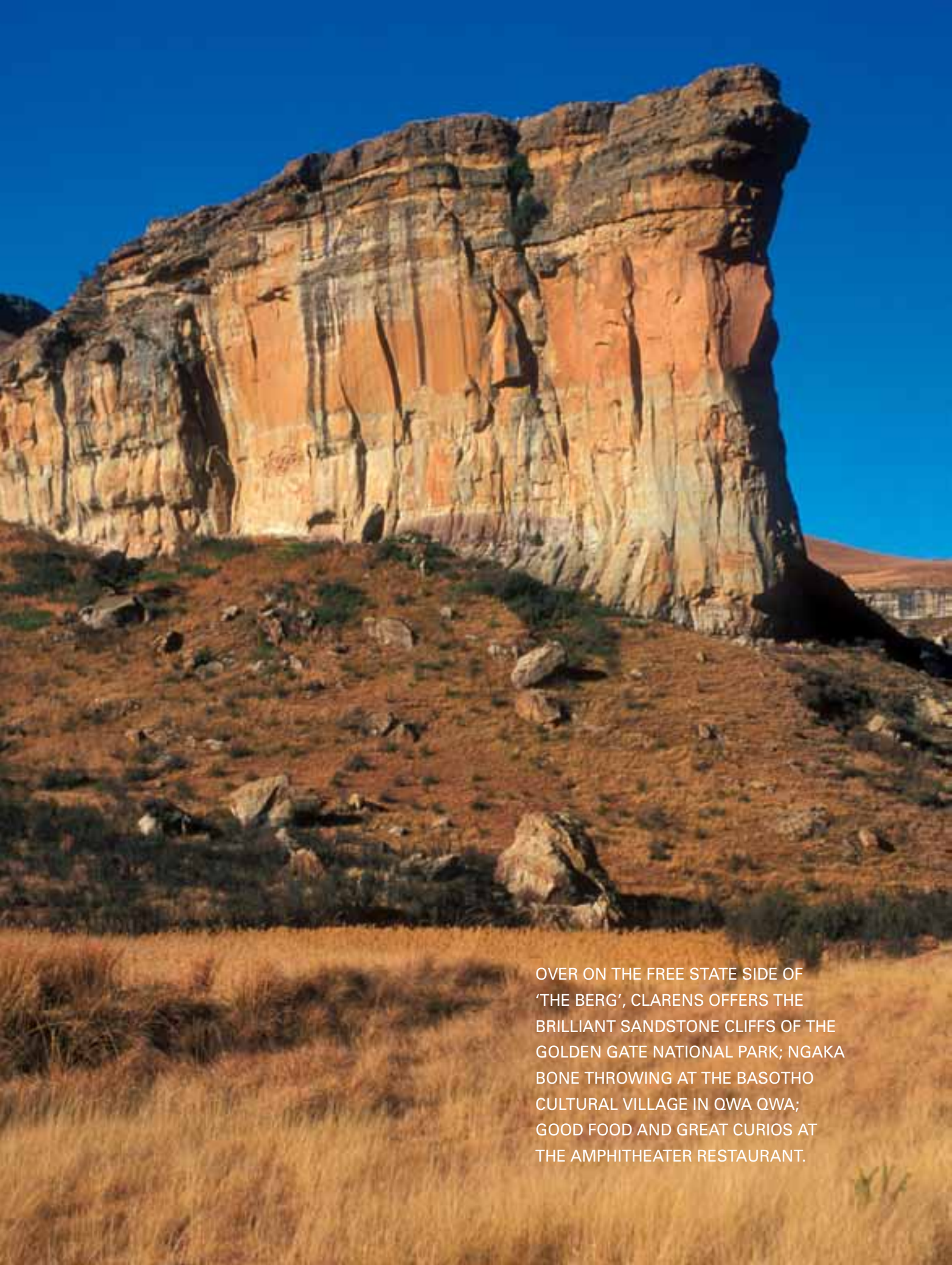
When you're not playing in or next to the water, catch a movie at the drive-in; go shopping at the huge Gateway, while the kids play in its wave pool, skatepark or amusement arcade; and artefact hunt at the Shell Midden.

Fish, snorkel and dive at Granny's Pool; play golf at Mount Edgecombe's two championship courses; jog O'Connor Promenade, or just sit and enjoy the view.

Umdloti and Salt Rock have great rock pools; anglers can choose between surf, rock and ski boat; and dolphins are known to frolic just offshore.

Explore the kingdom of the one-time King of the Zulus around Chaka's Rock, known for its excellent fishing. Its cliff-flanked tidal pool is inviting, deep-sea fishing boats launch from its beach; hikers walk through a hole in the cliff on their way to Ballito Bay.

Pick your own mussels off the rocks; collect oysters and crayfish from the pools; Willard Beach is Blue Flag. Travel a little further north and you come to Richard's Bay on the edge of big game country. ►



OVER ON THE FREE STATE SIDE OF 'THE BERG', CLARENS OFFERS THE BRILLIANT SANDSTONE CLIFFS OF THE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARK; NGAKA BONE THROWING AT THE BASOTHO CULTURAL VILLAGE IN QWA QWA; GOOD FOOD AND GREAT CURIOS AT THE AMPHITHEATER RESTAURANT.

This is part of SA's Birding Route, especially the harbor and New Mouth, where you'll find hippos and crocs as well; the route from Gingindlovu, through the Nkwalini Valley, to Empangeni is a gorgeous drive; and this is the region for the prehistoric Coelacanth fish, especially off St Lucia.

The World Heritage Wetland Park surrounding the estuary is one of the wonders of the world (in fact, it has more species of animal than the Kruger Park); there is every kind of fishing imaginable.

Inland is Hluhluwe, famous for its rhino conservation and big five sightings. Take a side trip for Sodwana's world-class diving; get up close to wild cats at Emdoneni Rehab Centre; Zulu museums worth visiting are Cetshawayo's near Ondini, Gingindlovu and the incredible art of the Vukani Collection.

Drive inland from Durban, through colonial Pietermaritzburg, to the green rolling hills of the Midlands. Rainbow trout fill the fast-flowing rivers; plunging cascades, like Howick and Albert Falls, create their own kind of music; the trails are perfect for horseriding.

Mooi River forms part of the art and craft trail, filled with excellent restaurants like the Rose @ Tamakwa; Weston Agricultural College houses British Military artefacts; Kamberg Nature Reserve has Bushman Rock Art; and Bosch Hoek golf course in incredibly picturesque.

The jagged teeth of the Drakensberg border the west coast of KwaZulu Natal. The spectacular Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, near Underberg, is just one of the attractions.

Play golf on the championship Drakensberg Gardens or Glengarry courses; fish for trout; hike the rocky defiles of the towering peaks; drive the awesome Sani Pass or take the Sani Saunter route through quaint Himeville.

Tour the Boer War Battlefield sites on your way to Winterton and Bergville on the northern end, where you can lose yourself in another scenic wonderland. When not sitting beside a cosy fire, play golf at Monk's Cowl or Cathedral Peak; go bass fishing; pick your way through the Marianne Church ruins; and listen to the soaring voices of the Drakensberg Boy's Choir.

If you don't go into the mountains to look at Sans art, you'll find it at the Winterton Museum; rock climb the magnificent Cathedral Peak or wander through its state forest; 4x4 along Mike's Pass on your way to Ndedema Gorge and the Organ Pipes.

The more sedate will prefer the scenic Oliviershoek Pass; hike or horse the Royal Natal National Park's towering amphitheater, Rugged Glen, Cathkin's Peak Forest, Mont-aux-Sources and Tugela Falls.

Explore the Aladdin's cave of KwaZulu Weavers and Candles; browse for curios at Thokizisa; canoe past the Drakensberg Sun; view game at Spioenkop Dam. You will be entranced, amazed and ready for more.

Over on the Free State side of 'the berg', Clarens offers the brilliant sandstone cliffs of the Golden Gate National Park; Ngaka bone throwing at the Basotho Cultural Village in Qwa Qwa; good food and great curios at the Amphitheater restaurant.

Make your way through the steep Sterkfontein Dam kranztes past its crystal clear lake to Harrismith; hike dense valleys and lush kloofs in the Mt Everest Reserve; drive the Maluti Route through the lovely highlands and the magnificent Maluti Mountains to the birding paradise of the Seekoelvlei Nature Reserve.

The flat inland of Ventersberg is a world of boerekos (farmstyle Afrikaner cuisine), verdant farmlands and rocky kopjes. Go skiing on the Vaal Dam; explore the game-rich Allemanskraal Dam and prehistoric ruins on Doringberg of Willem Pretorius Reserve; journey to Vredefort Dome, the oldest and largest meteorite impact site in the world. ▶



THE WORLD HERITAGE WETLAND PARK SURROUNDING THE ESTUARY IS ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD; THERE IS EVERY KIND OF FISHING IMAGINABLE.





Christiana, right on the border with Northwest Province, is big on diamonds and has great hot mineral springs. Stows Kopje has prehistoric rock engravings; Bloemhof Dam has excellent fishing, birds are plentiful and you can hunt its game in winter.

Go on a steam train ride; descend into the depths of a gold mine on the Lejweleputswa Goldfields route; explore the beauty of Sandveld Nature Reserve; follow the Battlefield route.

Way up north, Pilansberg, in the crater of a long-extinct volcano, offers unusual rock formations, a comfortable place to view the game Mankwe Dam attracts, and a chance to sight some rare and endangered species, as well as the Big Five.

Sunsets can be truly spectacular. So can the lightning and thunder-filled storms.

For those who love bright lights and creature comforts, Sun City is in startling contrast to the dusty grasslands and ever-present thorn trees. Built from scratch, it's a land of fantasy and pure pleasure.

Rainforest, rushing streams tumbling off rocky cliffs into blue pools surround the Palace of the Lost City. There's the constant tinkle of coins in the Casino; the Entertainment Centre sizzles with first-rate productions; the Valley of the Waves is world class; there are two championship designer golf courses; the range of restaurants caters for everyone.

Drive to Oom Paul Kruger's historic farm; Rustenberg for more history at its museum, town hall and churches; Swartruggens for African Game's ostrich farm, and Eland River Battlefield and Graves.

Hartebeespoort Dam is a watersport mecca. Otherwise, take the artsy Crocodile Ramble; play golf at Pecanwood Estates; explore the lovely Magaliesberg and its views on the Magalies Meander.

Buffelspoort, on the banks of the tranquil Sterkstroom River, has pretty Cape Dutch architecture; Derby has a military cemetery marking an Anglo-Boer war battle; Brits is surrounded by fragrant citrus groves.

The De Wildt Cheetah Research Centre specialises in breeding these endangered cats; Vaalkop Dam Reserve is tailor-made for birdwatchers; experience a shebeen and get local curios at the Rainbow Cultural Village.

Gauteng encompasses people from every walk of life. And, at its heart lies the seething metropolis, Johannesburg. Locals call it Jo'burg or Jozi and it's a place of big business and multiple types of music.

The streets of the inner city, once a stronghold of white business, are lined with stalls hawking just about everything under the sun; the leafy outer suburbs are filled with mammoth malls, excellent restaurants, jazz bars and clubs; 36 of the country's top golf courses are within easy driving distance.

In Soweto, visit Kliptown, where the Freedom Charter was drawn up; Nelson Mandela's old home; and memorials like Sharpeville. The Apartheid Museum documents the black man's struggle; Constitution Hill continues the story; and across the Nelson Mandela Bridge, lies Newtown's Market Theatre which defied law by insisting on being multi-racial no matter what.

Beer lovers will stay in Newtown to tour the brewery and enjoy a few cold ones; the kids will love the Zoo and lunch at Zoo Lake; walk round the tranquil Emmerentia Lake and on the Botanical Gardens.

The muti markets will amaze; relive the gold rush at Days of Gold; kids will love the Lanseria Lion Park; there are plenty of wild animals at the Krugersdorp Game Reserve; explore Sterkfontein Cave, one of the Cradle of Humankind sites, where nearly half the worlds' hominid fossils have been found.

Benoni's lakes are popular for swimming, fishing and picnicking, and the garden city of Pretoria has over 100 parks, bird sanctuaries and nature reserves. It is spectacular in spring when the jacarandas are flowering.

Worthy of special mention are the Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary, Roodeplaas Dam and Rietvlei Nature Reserves, the 100 year old fig of Wonderboom; and the Botanical Gardens, especially in winter when the aloes flower.

The Sir Herbert Baker-designed Union Buildings and its terraced gardens are magnificent; Melrose House is a beautiful example of Victorian architecture; the granite Voortrekker Monument is imposing; and Museum Heartland will keep you busy for days.

Make a detour to the impressive Tswaing Meteorite Crater on your way to peaceful Cullinan, where the world's largest gem-quality diamond was found. The oak and jacaranda-lined streets are filled with beautifully-preserved Edwardian buildings and the pools in the surrounding kloofs are cool and inviting.

A little further north and you're well and truly in the Bushveld. This is the kind of country you read about. Grassland dotted with low, spreading thorn trees and the occasional baobab; rolling hills and steaming hot springs; rocky mountains rising up out of the savannah.

Go game and bird watching at Sondela Nature Reserve (see if you can find the Big Five) on foot, in open safari vehicles or on horseback; soak away your cares in the hot mineral springs of Bela Bela (Warmbaths); or play the excellent golf course.

Travel past fields of sunflowers to Thabazimbi's game reserves, which are renowned for their hunting; to the exceptional Nylsvlei wetlands near the historic Naboomspruit; and to the wonderland of the Marakele National Park in the breathtaking Waterberg biosphere.



BENONI'S LAKES ARE POPULAR FOR SWIMMING, FISHING AND PICNICKING AND THE GARDEN CITY OF PRETORIA HAS OVER 100 PARKS, BIRD SANCTUARIES AND NATURE RESERVES.



Hike past rare yellowwood and cedar, 16 foot (five meter) high cycads and tree ferns, to the colony of endangered Cape Vultures; the Heritage Site of Welgevonden has vast white rhino herds; plus find hippo at Mabalingwe.

The first 'ape-man' was discovered in Makapansgat Valley; Lalapala truly is a wilderness; and the unique Rhino Museum near Vaalwater is worth a visit.

If you've never seen a leopard, there's a good chance you'll see one in the jagged Soutpansberg mountains as there are more in the remote Vhembe region than anywhere else in the world. The mighty Limpopo River flows through the valley beneath, bringing life to the herds of animals and the fruit plantations that inhabit the spaces between the thorn and mopane trees.

Hot and dry, this land is still incredibly beautiful and home to the sheer sandstone cliffs of World Heritage Mapungubwe Mountain. Surrounded by national park, you'll find dinosaur footprints, ancient rock art, the seat of an important Iron Age kingdom and over 500 tree species amongst huge boulders and rocky koppies.

Volcanic in origin, the area around Tshipise has hot springs, geysers and mudpots; walk the Boabab Trail through the Honnet Reserve; birds and wildlife thrive amongst over 100 gigantic baobab and one of the worlds' oldest datable rocks of the Musina nature reserve; walk at least one forest trail.

View the sacred Lake Fundudzi on your way to game-spot in the northern reaches of the famous Kruger National Park. This is a very different Kruger to the bulk of the park. Look for the unique tropical rainbow killifish in the water pans of the Wambya sandveld; red hare and yellow-spotted dassie in the sandstone hills near Punda maria; and hippo in the Letaba and Olifants Rivers.

Letsile, surrounded by citrus orchards and the Olifants Valley, makes a great Lowveld base. Walk through the mopane and combretun trees of the Hans Merensky reserve on the Great Letaba River; play its championship golf course - make sure you miss the elephants when driving! ▶

Hoedspruit is a great base for the private Timbavati and Klaserie game reserves. Visit the Endangered Species Centre to view wild dogs, cats, cheetah and others; hike the trails in the Moholoholo Rehabilitation Centre; enjoy the lush, spectacular Klein Drakensberg scenery and fish the rivers that flow through its valleys; go lion spotting on a game drive in central Kruger.

Across in Mpumalanga, step back in time at lovely little Pilgrim's Rest. The town deserves its national monument status. Relive the gold rush; browse the gorgeous curio and craft shops; wander the historic churches and museums; walk through outstanding scenery of the Mount Sheba reserve.

Drive the truly spectacular Panorama Route to explore Echo Caves' endless limestone tunnels; marvel at the animal, bird and plant life of the Blyde River Canyon; take in God's Window, where you can see forever.

Stop for pancakes at Graskop on your way to the impressive Lisbon and Mac Mac Falls; explore Jock of the Bushveld country; continue on to the exquisite Bridal Veil, Lone Creek and Horseshoe Falls near Sabie.

While you're in the area, view bushmen rock art; shop for African art, craft and curios before lunching on fresh trout at the Loggerhead or Fig Tree restaurants; play the Top 10 Sabie Club golf course.

The interesting Shangana Cultural Village has top handmade curios; stay in Hazyview to ride hot-air balloons over the banana plantations and grassy lowveld; sample unique beers at The Brewery and Summerfield Kitchen; and Perry's Bridge Reptile Park has some of the world's most venomous snakes.

Cross the Long Tom Pass past Silver Protea on a much easier route than the Voortrekkers had, stopping at Misty Mountain viewpoint; any one of the dams to do some trout fishing; and bird watching in the beautiful Gustav Klingbiel Reserve's Kliggatspruit valley and rocky promontories.

Stay at Lydenberg, where you can do your best to recapture the ox-wagon experience on 4x4 trails through the Steenkampsberg and Mauchsberg mountain ranges; choose from excellent art, carvings, stained glass and botanical sketches; enjoy the three magnificent cascades of the Lydenberg falls.

Thanks to its many lakes and rivers, Dullstroom is South Africa's fly-fishing capital. If that's not your thing, there are plenty of excellent restaurants and pubs; the Boer War memorial garden fits in with the quaint architecture; and the surrounding scenery is great.

The Steenkampsberg Reserve provides a sanctuary for the rare Wattled Crane; its trails through the protea-strewn Suikerboskop Mountain are easy and lead you to an old British blockhouse and war graves. Do some rock-climbing and abseiling while you're about it.

Go to Belfast for some more excellent bass fishing; the lovely little village of Waterval Onder, where the Elands River falls off the Drakensberg escarpment; the crocodile farm, waterfall and rock pools of lovely Schoemanskloof.

Stay at Machadadorp to enjoy its magical healing spring and succulent potjiekos cuisine; or Schagen, closer to Kruger, and surrounded by natural bush. This is where the crowned eagles soar, hooded kingfishers dart and elusive loeries call.

The grasslands and shimmering lakes of Carolina are another birding paradise, especially the Nootgedacht Reserve and Wakkerstroom. Fish, swim or hike through the spectacular Komati Gorge or play on Lake Chrissie.



BIRDWATCHERS, KEEP YOUR BINOCULARS AT THE READY AS YOU'LL SEE EVERYTHING FROM TRUMPETER HORNBILLS TO MALACHITE HUMMING BIRDS.



Explore the Bushman and Voortrekker heritage; visit the many battlefields and the Burger Monument in Market Square; Songimvelo Reserve at Ekulindeni is picturesque; and the cosmos in the southwest is spectacular in summer.

Badplaas, surrounded by the rolling Ndumdlumu hills, has an excellent hot spring. Birdwatchers, keep your binoculars at the ready as you'll see everything from trumpeter hornbills to malachite humming birds; walk the ancient canals to a cascading waterfall and great valley views; the golf course has lovely views as well.

The imposing Mkonjwa mountains hold archeological treasures dating back over three billion years; Barberton brings gold rush days to mind; the botanical gardens near Nelspruit contain an African rainforest and multiple ancient cycads.

View collenia fossils before watching a stage production deep in the oldest dolomite caves in the world, Sudwala; wild horses graze in quaint Kaapsehoop; the nearby thatch-roofed Kruger Airport is definitely worth a look.

Little White River's Anglican Church is worth a look-see too; pick up antiques and treasures from the Mission End Trading Post; the butterfly garden will enchant; follow a hunting leopard at the exclusive Sabie Sand Game Reserve.

Komatipoort, at the confluence of two rivers, has a perfect winter climate. From here you can take daytrips to Swaziland and Mozambique; the markets are full of delicious subtropical fruit; tiger fishing in the Komati River is top notch; elephant-back safaris are unique.

These destinations are all beautiful. They're also all close to the marvels of the southern Kruger National Park. Skukuza, perfectly positioned on the banks of the Sabie River, is right in its heart and is established enough to have an excellent golf course.

Its deep valleys hold rare trees; animals take advantage of the distinctive rocky koppies; Jock of the Bushveld was born where the old wagon trail crosses a stream at Ship Mountain.

This is where the white rhino can be found; cheetahs and wild dogs are more plentiful than lion; and bushwalks are a must. Not only can you get up close and personal with the plantlife and smaller animals, you'll also be able to experience the heart-thudding feeling of tracking a buffalo, elephant or big cat through the African bush.

Perhaps this is why so many say there is something about Africa that simply feels different. It's certainly why, once hooked you're bound to return. ■

