

## 14 Day Southern Explorer Cape to Johannesburg CAM0506

Day 1 We depart early from Cape Town and head for the most southern tip of Africa at Cape Agulhas. Here the warm Indian Ocean and the cooler Atlantic Ocean meet, and from August to November Southern Right and Humpback Whales maybe spotted along the coast. From Cape Agulhas we travel inland and camp for the first night close to the picturesque town of Swellendam, one of South Africa's oldest settlements with tree lined streets and white washed Cape Dutch homesteads.

Day 2 Today we travel through the Outeniqua Mountains to the Little Karoo. We visit the Cango Caves recognised as amongst the worlds finest network of Calcite caves. The bizarre formations of Stalagmites and Stalactites represent over a million years of slow formation. We also visit an Ostrich farm to learn more about the worlds largest bird. The Ostrich has been around for 8 million years and a feather was actually discovered in King Tutankhamuns tomb. 97% of the worlds population of Ostrichs lives in the Karoo and here we will have the opportunity to ride one!

Days 3 & 4 We spend two days winding our way along South Africa's famous Garden Route and there is a wealth of things to see and do. We travel through the popular resort of Knysna, located on a tranquil lagoon that is protected from the sea by two enormous cliffs known as 'the heads'. We visit the Tsitsikamma Forest, where you will be able to hike along the coast and view the crashing waves at the mouth of the scenic Storms River, and maybe spot dolphins and whales in the ocean. Optional excursions in this region include mountain biking, black water tubing, and the mother of all bungee jumps at Bloakrans Bridge - the biggest jump in the world at 216 metres.

Day 5 From the Garden Route we continue along the coast and stop at South Africa's surfing mecca, Jeffrey's Bay, home to the international surfing championships and world renowned supertubes. In the afternoon we reach Addo Elephant National Park which has recently been extended to include part of the coast and is now home to the BIG 7 - lion, rhino, elephant, leopard, buffalo, whale and shark! On our game drive we hope to spot some of the many elephant that the park is famous for, which are the most southerly population in Africa.

Days 6 & 7 Today we drive to the beautiful and remote wild coast, an area of rolling grasslands stretching from East London to KwaZulu Natal. Once a former black homeland during the days of Apartheid, the inhabitants are mainly Xhosa people who herd their goats and cattle across the endless pastureland and live in rural settlements of brightly painted kraals. Previously neglected by tourism, it is isolated and wild with great coastal scenery and swathes of long empty beaches. Along the rocky coastline are the skeletons of sunken ships, which bear testament to a region that has sunk more ships than anywhere else in Africa. We enjoy 2 nights next to the Indian Ocean, and lazily explore the shell strewn beaches, lagoons and forests.

Days 8 & 9 From the wild coast we have a long day's drive north and out of South Africa into the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. Often referred to as 'the kingdom in the sky'. This little country is completely surrounded by South Africa and is covered by mountains from 1000m to 3000m high. The scenery here is tremendous and the mountain air crisp and fresh and we will see Lesotho's horsemen dressed in their blankets and gumboots trotting around the hillsides. We spend two nights at Malealea



Lodge, Lesotho's most famous countryside retreat tucked up high in the mountains. Here there are isolated waterfalls, cool rock pools ideal for swimming, and peaceful hikes in the surrounding hills. This is also a great place to try pony trekking, even if you have never been on a horse before, and the best way to enjoy the scenery is from a sure footed Lesotho pony.

Days 10 Today we drive through the lowlands of Lesotho and visit Thabo Bosiu with a local guide (time & weather permitting). This mountain stronghold was the home of Chief Moshoeshe, the founder of the Basotho nation. We continue through Lesotho's tiny capital Maseru, and re-enter South Africa near Fouriesburg. We spend the night camping in the Golden Gate National Park on the edge of the Drakensburg Mountains. This is an area of massive sandstone rock formations and the park gets its name from the green grasslands, caves and cliffs set against a backdrop of golden rocks that are illuminated to their best at sunset. During the summer months the grasslands are full of wild flowers.

Day 11 & 12 Continuing into KwaZulu Natal we enter the Drakensburg Mountains where we spend the next couple of days exploring the Royal Natal National Park, a dramatic region of the Drakensburg beneath the famous Amphitheatre - a massive wall of rock with over 4kms of sheer cliff face. Here you will have the opportunity to climb to the Tugela Falls, a hike that includes an ascent by chain ladder, to view the Tugela River as it plunges over the edge of the amphitheatre wall dropping some 800 metres below. The Drakensburg Mountains are known by the Zulu as the 'barrier of spears, and are today a UNESCO world heritage sight for their outstanding natural beauty.

Day 13 & 14 Johannesburg was built on the gold rush, and has grown into one of the wealthiest cities in the world. We arrive here in the afternoon and stay in a backpackers lodge for 2 nights. Although Jo'burg is changing slowly many of the old apartheid divisions still exist, especially in the urban spread where poorer areas are home to the black population and the richer suburbs home to mainly white people.

There is plenty to do and see in Jo'burg. A 'must do' activity is a tour of Soweto, where in this sprawling township, modern African culture is at its most vibrant and intense and you can visit one of the local shabeens (pubs), talk to local families and drop into the former home of Nelson Mandela. You can also visit the powerful apartheid museum, take a tour down a 700ft goldmine at Gold Reef City or visit South African breweries.



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