



South Africa

27 / POP 49 MILLION

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Best Places to Eat

- Bistrot Bizerca (p915)
- Halfway House (p950)
- Narina Trogon (p940)
- Market (p931)
- Deli Street Café (p925)

Best Places to Stay

- 12 Decades Hotel (p937)
- Bulungula Lodge (p926)
- Hobbitt Boutique Hotel (p936)
- Inkosana Lodge (p935)
- Palace of the Lost City (p948)

Why Go?

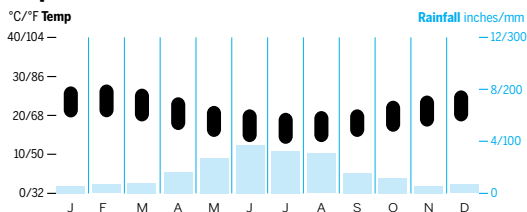
When Archbishop Desmond Tutu called South Africa the 'Rainbow Nation', he described the very essence of what makes this country extraordinary. The blend of cultures that his oft-used moniker referred to is instantly evident, but the country's diversity stretches far beyond its people.

You can sleep under the stars in russet-hued deserts or hike to craggy, sometimes snowcapped peaks. The *rondavels* (round, traditional-style and often thatched huts) which dot the hills of Zululand and the Wild Coast provide a bucolic antidote to the gritty bustle of large cities such as Johannesburg and Durban. Wildlife ranges from life-changing safari walks to up-close encounters with waddling penguins.

Variety continues in the cuisine, with the delicate (West Coast seafood), the hearty (Karoo meat feasts), the fragrant (Cape Malay stews) and the spicy (a Durban curry) all represented. And southwest sits Cape Town, where gourmands sip, surf and sunbathe in beautiful surrounds.

When to Go

Cape Town



Apr–Aug Low season; ideal wildlife-watching conditions; whales on West-ern Cape coast.

Sep–Nov Spring flowers bloom; ideal weather for KwaZulu-Natal beaches and Karoo exploration.

Dec–Feb Coastal accommodation fills up; busy, vibrant time to be in the Cape.

CAPE TOWN

📍 021 / POP 3.1 MILLION

Prepare to fall in love, as South Africa's 'Mother City' is an old pro at capturing people's hearts. And who wouldn't swoon at the sight of magnificent Table Mountain, its summit draped with cascading clouds, its flanks coated with unique flora and vineyards, its base fringed by golden beaches? Few cities can boast such a wonderful national park at its heart.

From the brightly painted facades of the Bo-Kaap to striking street art and the Afro-chic decor of countless guesthouses, this is one good-looking metropolis.

Above all, it's a multicultural city where nearly everyone has a fascinating, sometimes heartbreaking, story to tell. When the time comes to leave, you may find your heart breaking too.

👁️ Sights & Activities

City Bowl

District Six Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p916; 📍 021-466 7200; www.districtsix.co.za; 25A Buitenkant St, City Bowl; adult/child R30/5, walking tour per person R120; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Sat) This emotionally moving museum tells the story of District Six, a once multicultural neighbourhood that was destroyed by forced evictions in the 1960s and 1970s. Most township tours stop here.

Long Street

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p916; City Bowl; 🏰 Castle) Whether you come to browse the secondhand bookshops and streetwear boutiques, or to party at the bars and clubs, a stroll along Long St is an essential element of a Cape Town visit.

Gardens & Around

Table Mountain National Park

PARK

(📍 021-712 2337; www.sanparks.org/parks/table_mountain) This park stretches from flat-topped Table Mountain to Cape Point. For the vast majority of visitors the main attraction is the 1086m-high mountain itself, the top of which can easily be accessed by the **Table Mountain Aerial Cableway** (Map p912; 📍 021-424 8181; www.tablemountain.net; Tafelberg Rd; 1-way/return adult R105/205, child R53/100; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Feb-Nov, 8am-10pm Dec & Jan), which runs every 10/20 minutes in high/low season.

Operating hours change monthly and the cable car doesn't operate when it's dangerously windy. Look out for the 'tablecloth' – a

SET YOUR BUDGET

Budget

- ➔ Dorm bed R120
- ➔ Cafe lunch R60
- ➔ Beer from store R8
- ➔ Local bus ride R5

Midrange

- ➔ Hotel room R850
- ➔ Two-course dinner R120
- ➔ Beer in bar R20
- ➔ Short taxi ride R50

Top End

- ➔ Hotel room R2000
- ➔ Two-course dinner R180
- ➔ Glass of wine R25
- ➔ Daily car hire R200

dense cloud that will obscure the fabulous views. The best visibility and conditions are generally early in the morning or in the evening.

Green Point & Waterfront

Robben Island & Nelson Mandela

Gateway

LANDMARK

(📍 021-413 4220; www.robben-island.org.za; adult/child R230/120; 🕒 ferries depart at 9am, 11am, 1pm & 3pm, weather permitting; 🚢 Waterfront) Used as a prison from the early days of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC; Dutch East India Company) right up until 1996, this Unesco World Heritage Site is preserved as a memorial to those, such as Nelson Mandela, who were incarcerated here.

A visit to Robben Island is highly recommended but is not without its drawbacks. In peak times tickets often sell out days beforehand. Reserve well in advance via the web, or book a ticket in conjunction with a township tour. The packed guided tour allows two hours on the island (plus a 30-minute boat ride in both directions). A former inmate will lead you around the prison. Tours also include a 45-minute bus ride around the island.

Tours depart from the **Nelson Mandela Gateway** (Map p912; admission free; 🕒 9am-8.30pm) beside the clock tower at the Waterfront. There's a worthwhile **museum** here, too.