



North West Province

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Cape Town Fish Market (p429)
- ➔ Deck (p429)
- ➔ Upper Deck (p437)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Palace of the Lost City (p429)
- ➔ Mosetlha Bush Camp (p434)
- ➔ Tau Game Lodge (p434)
- ➔ Bakubung (p433)
- ➔ Kwa Maritane (p433)
- ➔ Masibambane (p427)
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Why Go?

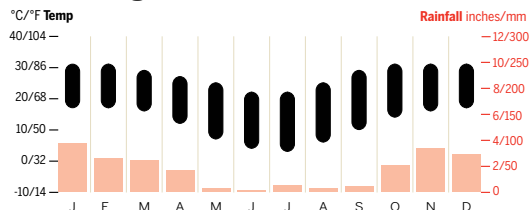
This stretch of bushveld between Pretoria and the Kalahari is famous for Sun City, the southern hemisphere's answer to Las Vegas. Though its slot machines and kitsch edifices are grotesquely fascinating, you may prefer a different kind of gambling in nearby Pilanesberg National Park. Wager that lions and rhinos will wander to the waterhole you have staked out – sightings on self-drive safaris come with a serendipitous thrill.

Alternatively, improve your odds of spotting elusive predators in Pilanesberg and Madikwe Game Reserve by joining a guided drive or walk. And for that once-in-a-lifetime, romantic *Out of Africa*-style experience, a night in the bush at Madikwe's exclusive lodges can't be beaten.

Conveniently, these opportunities to encounter both big cats and one-armed bandits are all within four hours' drive of Johannesburg (Jo'burg). En route, the Magaliesberg area offers detours from the N4, ranging from zip lining to rural accommodation near Rustenburg.

When to Go

Rustenburg



Apr Autumn temperatures drop; wildlife-watching conditions are optimum through to the winter.

May–Jul Dry, sunny winter days, and (bar mid-June to early July) school terms mean thinner crowds.

Dec–Jan Refreshing storms; South Africans head to the coast, leaving more room here for foreign travellers.

History

The North West Province takes in much of the area once covered by the fragmented apartheid homeland of Bophuthatswana (Bop), a dumping ground for thousands of 'relocated' Tswana people. The nominally independent homeland became famous for the excesses of the white South African men who visited its casinos and pleasure resorts for interracial encounters with prostitutes – an illegal practice elsewhere in South Africa.

The area was the site of a complex and sophisticated Iron Age civilisation, centred on the 'lost city' of Kaditshwene, about 30km north of modern-day Zeerust. The people who lived here had an economy so developed they traded copper and iron jewellery with China. By 1820, when European missionaries first visited the city, they found it to be bigger than Cape Town. In the end, Kaditshwene's peace-loving inhabitants proved no match for the Sotho, displaced by Zulu incursions into the Free State. The city was sacked by a horde of 40,000 people in the 1830s and fell into ruins.

Getting There & Around

Convenient for Rustenburg and the Magaliesberg, **Lanseria International Airport** (☎ 011-367 0300; www.lanseria.co.za; off Rte 512) is 30km south of Hartbeespoort Dam en route to Jo'burg. Kulula.com has daily flights from Lanseria to Cape Town and Durban; **Mango** (www.flymango.com) flies daily to Cape Town. Car-hire companies operate from the airport.

Hiring a car is the easiest way to travel around the province. Secure parking is readily available at accommodation, restaurants and sights.

Rustenburg

POP 105,000

Sitting on the edge of the Magaliesberg range, Rustenburg is a big country town with an urban grittiness to its crowded central business district. Pedestrians weave between honking cars on Nelson Mandela Dr (the main drag through the long downtown area), and sidewalks heave with vendors selling mobile-phone cases and the like in front of takeaway chicken shops and undertakers.

It's Rustenburg's location, however, just 40km southeast of Sun City and Pilanesberg National Park, that is its main selling point – it's an option for travellers wishing to visit these major attractions without paying high accommodation rates.

Sights & Activities

Royal Bafokeng Stadium

STADIUM

(off Rte 565) Northwest of town 15km, en route to Sun City, is this stadium, which hosted first- and second-round 2010 FIFA World Cup football matches. Built in 1999, it seats more than 40,000 spectators and its major shareholders are members of the Bafokeng tribe.

Sleeping

Bushwillows B&B

B&B \$

(☎ 082 680 5890; wjmcgill@lantic.net; r per person incl breakfast R250; ☹) This country retreat is owned by local wildlife artist Bill McGill, whose paintings decorate the breakfast room. Birdwatching tours to areas such as Pilanesberg are offered. Coming from the Waterfall Mall, look for the white sign on the right after 5km. From there, it's 2km up the hill.

The rooms are basic and the decor frozen in time, but this matters little in light of the warm welcome you'll get, and the wonderful view of the Magaliesberg from the terrace.

Hodge Podge Backpacker Lodge

HOSTEL \$

(☎ 084 698 0417; www.hodgepodgebackpackers.co.za; Plot 66, Kommiesdrift; camping/dm R70/180, s/d from R350/500; ☹☹) Set below some impressive cliffs, Hodge Podge gives a taste of slow-paced country life up a rocky red track. The outdoor pool is refreshing in the heat and the verandah bar is ideal for sundowners. Colourful bedspreads and bushveld scenes brighten the dinky en suite cabins; airport shuttles and activities including Sun City and Pilanesberg tours are offered. It's signposted about 10km south of the Waterfall Mall.

Masibambane

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(☎ 083 310 0583; www.masibambaneguesthouse.co.za; Kroondal; s/d incl breakfast R540/820; ☹☹) This thatched property is a peaceful, relaxing place, its flowerbeds, mature trees and water features attracting a variety of birdlife, from hoopoes to sunbirds. A three-course dinner (R135) can be organised on weeknights. It's signposted 5km south of Waterfall Mall; the guesthouse is on the right at the end of the paved side-road, just beyond the 'Private Road' sign.

It has a pint-size bar that opens onto a lawn-fronted terrace, and a poolside *lapa* (circular building with low walls and a thatched roof) for braais.

Eating

Most restaurants in Rustenburg are found in the Waterfall Mall (p429), which is