



Cape Town

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Best Places to Eat

- » Bizerca Bistro (p73)
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- » Dear Me (p73)
- » Roundhouse (p77)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Mannabay (p69)
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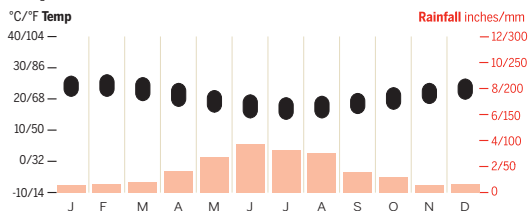
Why Go?

Known as the 'Mother City' for its historical role in the development of modern South Africa, Cape Town is dominated by 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 their heart or provide the wide range of adventurous activities that take full advantage of it.

The World Design Capital 2014 is in the process of using design to transform the city and the quality of life of its population. From the brightly painted facades of the Bo-Kaap and the bathing chalets of Muizenberg 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 everyone has a fascinating, sometimes heartbreaking story to tell. When the time comes to leave, you may find your heart breaking, too.

When to Go

Cape Town



Jan Peak season but also a chance to see the Min-strel Carnival.

Mar Enjoy arts events such as Infecting the City and the International Jazz Festival.

Nov Spring sees beautiful flowers begin to bloom and the start of sunset concerts at Kirstenbosch.

History

Long before the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; VOC) established a base here in 1652, the Cape Town area was settled by the San and Khoekhoen nomadic tribes, collectively known as the Khoe-San. The indigenous peoples shunned the Dutch, so the VOC was forced to import slaves from Madagascar, India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia to deal with the colony's chronic labour shortage. Women were in even shorter supply, so the Europeans exploited the female slaves and the local Khoe-San for both labour and sex. In time the slaves also intermixed with the Khoe-San. The offspring of these unions formed the basis of sections of today's coloured population and also helps explain the unique character of the city's Cape Muslim population.

Under the 150-odd years of Dutch rule, Kaapstad, as the Cape settlement became known, thrived and gained a wider reputation as the 'Tavern of the Seas', a riotous port used by every sailor travelling between Europe and the East. Following the British defeat of the Dutch in 1806 at Bloubergstrand, 25km north of Cape Town, the colony was ceded to the Crown on 13 August 1814. Cape Town continued to prosper after the slave trade was abolished in 1808, and all slaves were emancipated in 1833.

The discovery and exploitation of diamonds and gold in the centre of South Africa from the 1870s led to rapid changes. Cape Town was soon no longer the single dominant metropolis in the country, but as a major port it too was a beneficiary of the mineral wealth that laid the foundations for an industrial society. The same wealth led to imperialist dreams of grandeur on the part of Cecil John Rhodes (premier of the Cape Colony in 1890), who had made his millions at the head of De Beers Consolidated Mines.

An outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901 was blamed on the black African workers (although it actually came on boats from Argentina) and gave the government an excuse to introduce racial segregation: blacks were moved to two locations, one near the docks and the other at Ndabeni on the eastern flank of Table Mountain. This was the start of what would later develop into the townships of the Cape Flats.

Sights

 021 / POP 3.1 MILLION

Cape Town's commercial centre, known as the City Bowl, is bounded by Table Mountain and the suburbs of Bo-Kaap to the west, Gardens to the south and the Fringe, District Six and Woodstock to the east. Moving west around the Atlantic Coast you'll first hit the Waterfront and Green Point, then Sea Point, Camps Bay and Hout Bay.

CAPE TOWN IN...

Two Days

Ride the cable car up **Table Mountain**, then return to the city and wander through the **Company's Gardens**, nipping into the **South Africa National Gallery** to view its latest exhibition. Go souvenir shopping at **Greenmarket Square** segueing into drinks on **Long Street**.

On day two explore the southern end of the Cape Peninsula starting at the magnificent **Cape of Good Hope**. Move on to the cute penguin colony at **Boulders**, charming **Simon's Town**, and the shops and picturesque fishing harbour at **Kalk Bay**. A good option for lunch is Kalk Bay's **Olympia Café & Deli** or **Live Bait** beside the harbour. Return to the city via the Atlantic Coast and **Chapman's Peak Drive**.

Four Days

Drop by the **District Six Museum**, then take a half-day **township tour**. Sail out to **Robben Island** in the afternoon, hanging out at the **Waterfront** after for sunset drinks.

On day four head to **Groot Constantia** for a spot of wine tasting and the gorgeous grounds of the **Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens**. You could have afternoon tea here or at the tearoom beside the **Rhodes Memorial**, with its sweeping view across the Cape Flats. Cap off your trip with a meal to remember at either **Roundhouse** or **Bombay Brasserie**.