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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to South Africa

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if you
like...

Dramatic Landscapes

From the Cape coast of mountains and mountains to experience the Karoo and Karoo, South Africa and mountains are beautiful and beautiful. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains.

Wildlife

From the Cape coast of mountains and mountains to experience the Karoo and Karoo, South Africa and mountains are beautiful and beautiful. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains.

Open Space

From the Cape coast of mountains and mountains to experience the Karoo and Karoo, South Africa and mountains are beautiful and beautiful. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains. The Karoo is a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and mountains.



regions at a glance

Cape Town and the Western Cape are renowned, developed spots, where you can sip wine and enjoy activities on beaches and mountains. Head north to the Northern Cape and North-West Province for rugged experiences in wilderness and wildlife parks. Surfers, hikers and lovers of African culture will enjoy the Eastern Cape, bordering the mountain kingdom of Lesotho and the Free State. The latter's golden fields lead to the Drakensberg, which stretch into KwaZulu-Natal, where beaches, wildlife parks and Zululand spread north from Durban.

Outdoor Activities
Cape Town is a great base for outdoor activities. The city is surrounded by mountains and beaches, offering a variety of outdoor activities. The city is surrounded by mountains and beaches, offering a variety of outdoor activities.

month by month

January

South African winter is the best time to visit. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad.

February

February is a great time to visit. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad.

March

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April

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May

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June

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July

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August

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September

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October

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November

November is a great time to visit. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad.

December

December is a great time to visit. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad. The weather is warm and sunny, and the humidity is not too bad.

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UNDERSTAND SOUTH AFRICA, LESOTHO & SWAZILAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

South Africa, Lesotho

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South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland Today

Over decades after the end of apartheid, life in South Africa remains a complex and multifaceted one. The country is a mix of old and new, with a rich history and a vibrant culture. The country is a mix of old and new, with a rich history and a vibrant culture.

Food & Drink

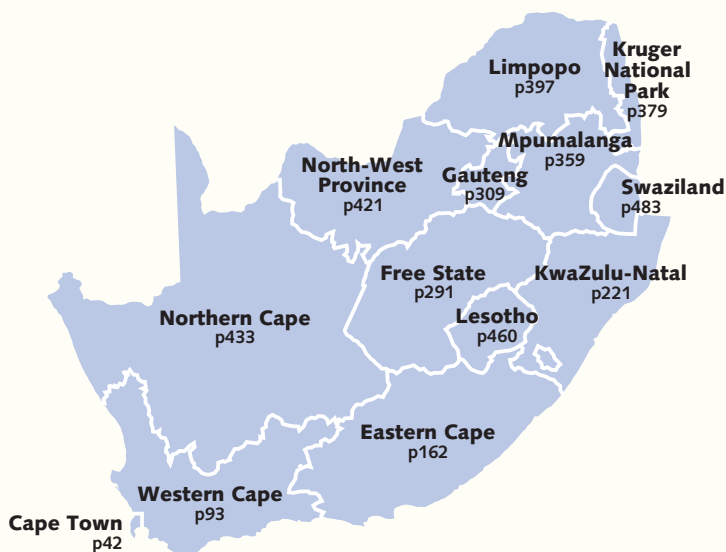
Like a hot black wattle, a dash of Dutch heritage, a pinch of spice and a smidge of Indian influence, what you get is a mix of cultures all simmering away in the pot of what is known as South African cuisine. The result is a delicious and unique blend of flavors that is truly South African.

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

James Bainbridge

**Kate Armstrong, Lucy Corne, Michael Grosberg,
Alan Murphy, Helen Ranger, Simon Richmond, Tom Spurling**

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland



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**Michael Grosberg**

EasternCape Early in his career Michael found his way to Durban, where he investigated and wrote about political violence, prison abuse and other issues, and helped train local government officials in the province of KwaZulu-Natal while still finding time to travel all over the country. In addition to his Lonely Planet work, he's returned to the country for magazine assignments. Michael, a reformed academic, is based in Brooklyn, New York City, and has worked on

nearly two dozen Lonely Planet books.

**Alan Murphy**

Free State, Mpumalanga, Kruger National Park, Limpopo, History, Environment, Wildlife & Habitat Alan distinctly remembers bouncing around in the rear of a *bakkie* (pick-up truck) from Johannesburg airport sometime in the late 90s on his first trip to South Africa. Since then he has been back numerous times, both working for Lonely Planet and to pursue one of his favourite activities – wildlife-watching. Alan loves to spend time in this contradictory and beautiful

country, especially around Kruger.

**Helen Ranger**

Food & Drink, People & Culture, Music For a Lonely Planet author to dislocate a hip on the way to research a guidebook is pretty devastating! But while she was delayed by a few months, nothing can really keep Helen away from South Africa. Table Mountain beckons, and she can't resist investigating all that's new since her last visit. Helen has worked on several Africa titles for Lonely Planet, including the previous editions of *South Africa*, *Lesotho & Swaziland* and *Cape Town*.

You can follow Helen on twitter at @helenranger.

**Simon Richmond**

Cape Town Simon has been hooked on Cape Town since first visiting in 2001 to research Lonely Planet's *South Africa*, *Lesotho & Swaziland* guide and the *Cape Town* guide. He's returned for every edition of both guides since, exploring practically every corner of the Cape. An award-winning writer and photographer, Simon has also written scores of other titles for Lonely Planet and other publishers, as well as contributed features to many travel magazines and newspapers

around the world. Follow his travels on his website www.simonrichmond.com.

**Tom Spurling**

Gauteng, Lesotho Tom first experienced South Africa while working on Limpopo's shortest-lived newspaper. Returning for this guidebook, he tackled the off-road mountains of Lesotho in a 'sporty' roadster and was often overtaken by blanket-clad horsemen. In Gauteng, he moved faster, pacing city streets in living colour and at full speed. Jo'burg is his new favourite city, shortly followed by Perth, his new hometown, where he lives with his wife and two kids. This is the

fifth continent he has researched for Lonely Planet.

Contributing Author

Dr David Lukas wrote the original *Wildlife & Habitat* chapter. He is an avid student of natural history who has travelled widely to study tropical ecosystems in locations such as Borneo and the Amazon. He has also spent many years leading natural-history tours to all corners of Costa Rica, Belize and Guatemala. He also wrote wildlife chapters for the Lonely Planet *Kenya*, *Tanzania* and *East Africa* guides.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



James Bainbridge

Coordinating Author, North-West Province, Northern Cape Based in Cape Town, James has travelled the length and breadth of South Africa for guidebooks and magazine assignments. He first visited the country in 2008; since then he has met a lovely Capetonian lady, moved to the Cape from London and got married on an organic wine farm. While researching this book, the Northern Cape's wildernesses and North-West Province's wildlife parks were a revelation for James – he loved the sense of space and freedom in the Karoo, Kalahari and Namakwa. When he's not sloping around the Winelands, James contributes to other Lonely Planet guides, including *Turkey* and *Morocco*.

Read more about James at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/james_bains



Kate Armstrong

KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland Kate was bitten by the African bug when she lived in Mozambique, and returns frequently to Southern Africa. For this edition she tackled the region solo in her 2WD hatchback. Memorable moments include her 'altercation' with a bull elephant, her first sip of Marula brew, and learning, while on an isolated pass, that it's still possible to lock one's keys in a car. Kate loves the Zulu culture (plus leopards, and giraffes). She is continually humbled by the generosity of the local people. For more, see www.katearmstrong.com.au

Read more about Kate at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/kate_armstrong



Lucy Corne

Western Cape Since she first visited South Africa in 2002, Lucy has been hooked and has returned on six occasions, spending time in more than 200 towns across the country. Despite having explored the Western Cape in depth before, she still managed a few firsts while researching this guide, including the vertiginous trip to Die Hel, discovering the delectable pinot noirs of Elgin and finding the offbeat Western Cape in the mission villages of Wupperthal, Elim and Genadendal. Lucy currently lives in Cape Town where she writes on travel and beer. Check out Lucy's website at www.lucycorne.com.

Read more about Lucy at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/lucycorne

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One to Two Weeks Safari Special

South Africa is one of the continent's best safari destinations; in just a week or two it's possible to do some serious wildlife spotting. From Jo'burg, head east to Mpumalanga and the country's safari showpiece, **Kruger National Park**. The wildlife here and in the adjoining **private wildlife reserves** will hold you captivated for several days. If time is tight, **Madikwe Game Reserve** and **Pilanesberg National Park**, both within four hours' drive of Jo'burg, are worthwhile additions to a bushveld itinerary.

From Kruger, head south to Swaziland's **Malolotja Nature Reserve**, where 200km of hiking trails cross grasslands and forests, and along the **Ezulwini Valley**, stopping to admire the woodlands and pick up local craftwork, to **Mkhaya Game Reserve**. Wildlife-rich Mkhaya is known for its unsurpassed black and white rhino populations. Leaving Swaziland, hit the N2 to KwaZulu-Natal's **uMkhuze Game Reserve**, where animals lap at waterholes in pans surrounded by fever trees. Nearby are the waterways and diverse ecosystems of the 200km-long **iSimangaliso Wetland Park**, and **Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park**, where hiking the wilderness trails is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From there, continue south along the Indian Ocean to **Durban's** bars, restaurants and beaches.



One to Three Weeks Cape Coast

Beautiful scenery, excellent infrastructure and a platter of attractions make this the South Africa of the glossy brochures. The loop can be done by public transport, but a car offers many possibilities for detours.

After a few days in **Cape Town**, fitting in historical sights such as the District Six Museum and Bo-Kaap alongside iconic Table Mountain and the Cape of Good Hope, bid a tearful farewell and head to the Winelands. Spend a night or two wine-tasting in the vineyard-clad valleys of **Stellenbosch** or **Franschhoek**.

Possible coastal detours include **Hermanus** for watching southern right whales (from June to December); **Cape Agulhas**, Africa's southernmost point, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet; or the beaches of the 34,000-hectare **De Hoop Nature Reserve**.

Continue the gastronomic Winelands activities and head along the Breede River Valley to refined **Montagu**, its thatched cottages and gourmet restaurants reached through a hole in the Cogmanskloof mountains. From here, scenic Route 62, one of the world's longest wine routes, leads through the Little Karoo to **Oudtshoorn**, South Africa's ostrich capital.

With its 19th-century mansions built by 'feather barons', Oudtshoorn is a convenient stopover before tackling the untarred **Swartberg Pass**, an engineering marvel, or **Meiringspoort Pass**, with a waterfall en route. On the far side of the Swartberg (Black Mountain) in the Great Karoo, the 18th-century village of **Prince Albert** is near the N1 back to Cape Town. Alternatively, backtrack south past Oudtshoorn to the Garden Route, where **Wilderness**' beaches and lagoons are less developed than other parts of the coast. Heading east along the Indian Ocean, old-growth forests rise into the mountains above the resort towns of **Knysna** and **Plettenberg Bay**, both offering water sports and activities.

Shortly before entering the Eastern Cape, detour down a windy road to **Nature's Valley**, an aptly named beach village where happy hikers finishing the Otter Trail hang their boots in a tree. Shorter hikes also lead into the rippling valleys of rainforest and fynbos in the surrounding **Tsitsikamma National Park**.

Back on the N2, surf hub **Jeffrey's Bay** is worth a stop if you can tell a supertube from a point break. Otherwise, continue to **Chintsa** for an accessible taste of the Wild Coast area's dreamy coves and Xhosa villages.



One Month Grand Circuit

Getting off to a stunning start in **Cape Town**, head east along Route 62 and the Garden Route, as described in our Cape Coast itinerary. Alternatively, if the Great Karoo's open spaces seem more appealing than cruising along the Indian Ocean, head east from sleepy **De Rust**, on the N12 northeast of Oudtshoorn, along Rte 341, the N9 and Rte 329. Kicking up dust on secondary roads is one of South Africa's unsung pleasures, but check road conditions locally.

An inland detour along the N9 leads to **Graaff-Reinet**, South Africa's fourth-oldest European-settled town, with 220-plus national monuments. Also in this quirky corner of the Karoo are **Camdeboo National Park**, with Cape buffaloes and views over the plains, and arty **Nieu Bethesda**, home of the sculpture-adorned Owl House. Stop at **Mountain Zebra National Park** for some final Karoo panoramas, or continue straight to **Addo Elephant National Park**, where great white sharks and southern right whales complete the 'Big Seven'.

Moving east, **Amathole**, formerly the Xhosa homeland of Ciskei, is well worth exploring, before the next batch of stellar highlights on the rugged **Wild Coast** and laidback **Durban's** funky Florida Rd hangouts. From Durbs, head back inland, along the Midlands Meander and into the Drakensberg, where the **Sani Pass** climbs into Lesotho. Hiking and pony trekking in the mountain kingdom, you will meet Basotho people clad in their distinctive conical hats and patterned woollen blankets.

Rather than stay in the capital **Maseru**, spend your last Lesothan night among sandstone cliffs in nearby **Roma**, a 19th-century mission station and now the country's seat of learning. Across the international border in the Free State's Eastern Highlands, **Ladybrand** is another pleasant stopover, its sandstone buildings overlooked by jagged peaks.

Zip through the Free State's shimmering golden fields and cross another border to the Northern Cape capital, **Kimberley**. The city that witnessed the world's greatest diamond rush is a great place to get a feel for South African history, with Anglo-Boer battlefields, ghost tours, 150-year-old pubs and the township of Galeshewe. If time is tight, pick up a postcard of the world's largest hand-dug hole and hop on the **Trans-Karoo tourist-class train**, which will whisk you back to Cape Town (or up to Jo'burg) in 12 hours.



Two to Four Weeks The Wild Northwest

From **Cape Town**, head north to the **Cederberg Wilderness Area**, with its sandstone formations, lodges and campsites. Citrusdal and Clanwilliam are convenient bases.

Head over Vanrhyns Pass, or the untarred Pakhuis Pass, to the Hantam Karoo outpost of **Calvinia**. Back on the N7, continue north to **Namakwa**, its rocky expanses carpeted with wildflowers in spring. Almost at the end of the region's arrow-straight roads, between the Atlantic and the middle of nowhere, is **Port Nolloth**. If you have a 4WD and an adventurous streak, continue to the surreal mountain desert of **|Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park**.

Back on the freeway, head east to the epic **Augrabies Falls National Park**, for hiking, rafting and canoeing. Catch the Orange River in a more mellow mood on a sunset cruise in **Upington**, before heading boldly north, between red Kalahari dunes, to **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**, one of the world's best places to see big cats.

Hit the tar back to Upington, or 4WD southeast, and continue through the Kalahari to **Witsand Nature Reserve**, where the wind roars over the dunes. Head east to **Kimberley**, famous for its 19th-century diamond rush, and turn south into the Karoo. Possible stops on the N1 include historic, perfectly preserved **Matjiesfontein**.



Two to Three Weeks Eastern Wander

Start your trip with a night in South Africa's most famous township, **Soweto**. Visit a shebeen and see the street where Nobel Peace Prize winners Mandela and Tutu lived.

Cross the Free State and, leaving the N3 at Harrismith, take scenic Rte 712 past Sterkfontein Dam to **Clarens**. The arty town, with its galleries and microbrewery, has surroundings worthy of an impressionist landscape. In the nearby **Golden Gate Highlands National Park**, stay in a riverside chalet and hike between sandstone outcrop; preparation for the mighty Drakensberg. To climb the iconic Ampitheatre to the top of the Drakensberg Escarpment, tackle the day-long **Sentinel Hiking Trail**.

Spend a couple of days enjoying the spectacular day walks, such as Tugela Gorge, in the **Royal Natal National Park**, and continue southeast. Declimatise from the Draks in **Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve**, with its cliffs and forests above the Umzilkulwana River, and hit the Wild Coast. **Port St Johns** is a possible base for exploring the tribal region, where Xhosa *rondavels* (round huts with a conical roof) dot the green hills and sandy beaches meet the Indian Ocean.

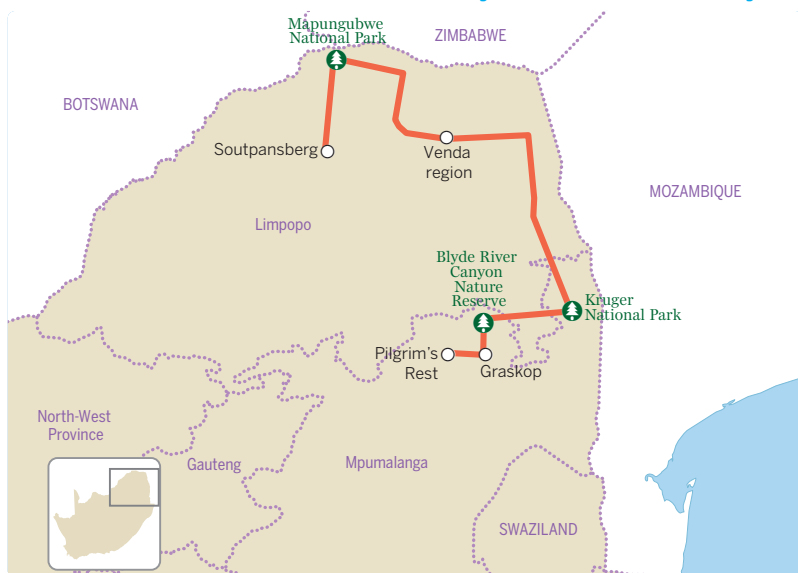
Pick up a connection from **East London** to Jo'burg or Cape Town, or continue west and join our Cape Coast or Grand Circuit itinerary.



One Week Alternative Cape

From Cape Town, head north and stop in **Darling**, where Evita se Perron shows give cross-dressing comedian Pieter-Dirk Uys' distinctive take on South African life. Surrounding the Langebaan Lagoon, the **West Coast National Park** offers an accessible, southern look at the spring wildflower bloom. Overnight in **Paternoster**, with art galleries and restaurants among the whitewashed cottages. Head inland to **Wellington**, where there are some superb wineries in the shadow of Bainskloof Pass. Further into the Winelands, **Franschhoek** distils the area's refined, European charm, with its French Huguenot heritage, vineyards and restaurants. Head southeast over the Franschhoek Pass and hit the N2 through the Overberg to reach the delightful village of **Greyton**. The twee, well-preserved spot has thatched self-catering cottages, good restaurants, mountain views, and a neighbouring 18th-century Moravian mission station. The 14km **Greyton McGregor Hiking Trail** leads through the Riviersonderendberge range to **McGregor**, a new age village in the Breede River Valley.

From Greyton, return to Cape Town via **Hermanus**, the world's best land-based whale-watching destination (June to December). Finish the journey on the stunning, coastal Rte 44, which winds around **Cape Hangklip** and skirts **Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve**.



Two Weeks Bushveld Blast

Head directly north from Jo'burg's OR Tambo International Airport and spend a couple of nights in Limpopo's biodiverse **Soutpansberg** range. West of Louis Trichardt (Makhado) are some wonderfully remote lodges, reached up rocky tracks and decorated with local artworks. Up on the Botswana and Zimbabwe border, one of South Africa's unsung highlights, **Mapungubwe National Park**, sprawls across 28,000 hot hectares in the Limpopo River Valley.

Returning south, even the landscape around the roads is extraordinary, with baboons scuttling between giant baobab trees. Spend a day or two discovering the mystic **Venda region**, where artists produce distinctive work and a python god is believed to live in Lake Fundudzi.

Enter **Kruger National Park** through one of the northern gates and spend a few days ogling the Big Five, heading slowly south. Nip west from Kruger's central section to the spectacular **Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve**, where the river snakes down from the Drakensberg Escarpment to the lowveld.

Before hitting the N4 back to Jo'burg, relax in **Graskop**, with gently sloping hills beyond its sleepy backstreets and craft shops. The town is a good base for **Pilgrim's Rest**, a perfectly preserved 19th-century gold-rush village, and outdoor activities.

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