

welcome to South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland



Rainbow Experiences

South Africa, its mountains, deserts and rivers leading to vibrant cities and sprawling townships, is truly a rainbow nation in the experiences it offers. This vast and beautiful, troubled but developing land's diversity is reflected by its world-famous associations: Table Mountain, Soweto, the Big Five, Zulu culture, Robben Island, big skies, broad smiles and the Drakensberg. To get the most out of your time here, ditch any preconceived ideas about South African history and society, pack a pair of binoculars for spotting lions – and get ready for a country that stuns and surprises at every turn, from the Wild Coast's bendy back roads to Cape Town's lanes.

Accessible Africa

South Africa has a reputation as 'Africa light' – an accessible corner of the continent, relatively safe and comfortable. It does indeed shine on this front, offering superb accommodation and opportunities to interact with various African people and cultures; wildlife watching in terrain from bushveld to the Kalahari, at prices well below some nearby countries; and scenic spots where you can just relax and enjoy the *lekker* (tasty) views and hospitality, including the Cape Winelands, Indian Ocean getaways, wilderness lodges and refined Karoo towns.



MASSIMO PIRANI/CORBIS

Rhinos at waterholes, township art, clouds pouring over Table Mountain, Kalahari dunes, Drakensberg peaks, Swazi and Zulu ceremonies: Southern Africa's famous trio is rich with adventures and experiences, culture and scenery.

(left) Vineyards, Franschhoek (p103)

(below) Xhosa woman, Lesedi Cultural Village (p427)



MARTIN HARVEY/CORBIS

Cultural Experiences

Groups including the Brits, Boers, Zulu and Xhosa have jostled for position at the tip of Africa, resulting in today's multicultural mash-up. In a country with 11 official languages, you can learn how to cook Cape Malay curries, visit a shebeen and catch some township jazz, see reed dances in Zululand (and over the border in Swaziland), visit craft cooperatives in former homelands, and eat samosas in Indian-dominated Durban. Meeting locals whose lives were directly affected by momentous 20th-century events, you will hear stories laced with the courage and humour that got them through apartheid. Escaping the westernised bubble of the tourist trail rewards with a broader view of this fascinating, fragmented land.

Landscapes & Activities

Nature reflects social diversity in the region's landscapes, ranging from the parched Kalahari and Namakwa to the Drakensberg's towering peaks, overlooking Zulu *rondavels* (round huts with conical roofs) and, across the Lesotho border, Basotho ponies trekking between villages. In just a couple of weeks, you could travel from the predator-stalked Kruger National Park, down the tropical east coast, and across the wide-open Karoo to the Cape's sublime mix of mountains, vineyards and beaches. In such varied terrain, activities range from shark-cage diving to some of Africa's greatest multiday hikes, and from wine tasting to spotting southern rights in the world's best land-based whale-watching spot.