



# South Africa

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## Why Go?

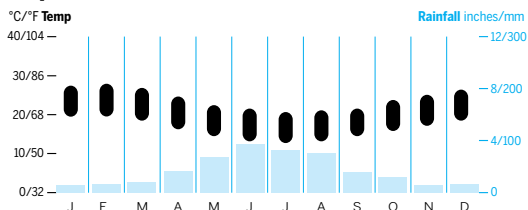
When Archbishop Desmond Tutu called South Africa the 'Rainbow Nation', his words described the very essence of what makes this country extraordinary. Certainly, the blend of peoples and cultures that his oft-used moniker referred to is instantly evident, but the country's diversity stretches far beyond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

Without straying beyond South Africa's borders you can sleep under the stars in a desert or hike to snow-capped peaks. The hills of Zululand and the Wild Coast provide a bucolic antidote to the bustle of large cities like Johannesburg and Durban. Wildlife watching ranges from remote 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 (Durban curries) all represented. And southwest of it all sits Cape Town, where gourmands, art lovers, thrill seekers and beach babes come together to sip, surf and sunbathe in beautiful surrounds.

## When to Go

### Cape Town



**Apr-Aug** Low season bargains; ideal wildlife-watching conditions; whales on the Western Cape coast.

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

**Dec-Feb** Coastal places fills up as South Africans escape the inland heat; busy but vibrant time.

## 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 their heart or provide the 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 nearly everyone has a fascinating, sometimes heartbreaking, story to tell. When the time comes to leave, you may find your heart breaking too.

### 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 Khoikhoi nomadic peoples, collectively known as the Khoisan. The indigenous people shunned the Dutch, so the VOC imported slaves from Madagascar, India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia to deal with the colony's chronic labour shortage. In time the slaves intermixed with the Khoisan; the offspring of these unions formed the basis of sections of today's coloured population.

In 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 Seven Seas', a riotous port used by sailors 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. The slave trade was abolished in 1808, and all slaves were emancipated in 1833.

An outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901 was blamed on 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

#### CITY BOWL & SURROUNDS

The commercial heart of Cape Town, City Bowl is squeezed between Table Mountain, Signal Hill and the harbour. Immediately to the west is the Bo-Kaap, De Waterkant is to the north and Zonnebloem (once known as District Six) lies to the southeast.

#### District Six Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p330; 📍021-466 7200; www.districtsix.co.za; 25A Buitenkant St; adult/child R30/5, walking tour per person R120; 🕒9am-2pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Sat) This moving museum is as much for the people of the now-vanished District Six as it is about them. Prior to the forced evictions of the 1960s and '70s, some 50,000 people of all races lived in the area. Many township tours stop here first to explain the history of the pass laws, which were designed to limit the movements of all non-white citizens.

Displays include a floor map of District Six on which former residents have labelled where their demolished homes and features of their neighbourhood once stood. Many of the staff, practically all displaced residents themselves, have heartbreaking stories to tell. The museum's annex in the nearby **Sacks Futeran Building** (Map p330; 15 Buitenkant St) houses permanent exhibitions related to soccer in the Cape.

#### Castle of Good Hope

MUSEUM

(Map p330; www.castleofgoodhope.co.za; entrance on Buitenkant St; adult/child R28/12; 🕒9am-4pm, guided tours 11am, noon & 2pm Mon-Sat; 📍; 🚶St George's) Built by the Dutch between 1666 and 1679 to defend Cape Town, this stone-walled pentagonal castle remains the headquarters for the Western Cape military command. The **Military Museum** is interesting, as are the displays of antiques and decorative arts. Don't miss climbing up to the bastions for an elevated view of the castle's layout and across to Grand Pde.

#### Company's Gardens

GARDENS

(Map p330; 🕒7am-7pm; 📍Dorp) These shady green gardens, which started as the vegetable patch for the Dutch East India Company, are a lovely place to relax. The squirrels that scamper here were imported to Cape Town from North America by Cecil Rhodes, whose