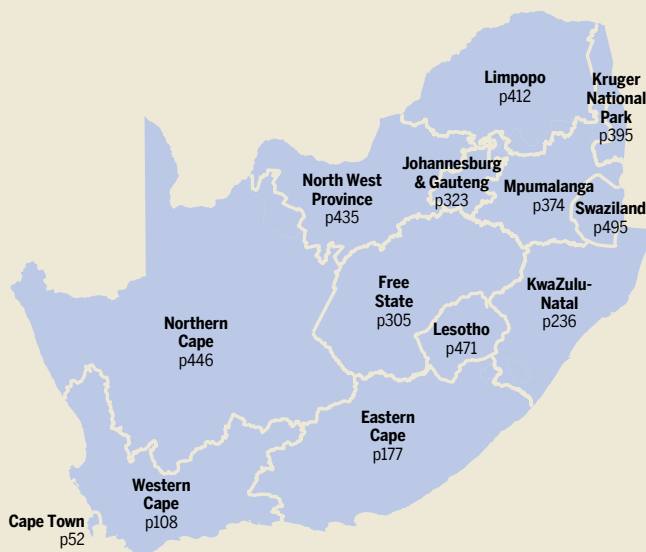




South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland



James Bainbridge,
Robert Balkovich, Jean-Bernard Carillet, Lucy Corne, Shawn Duthie,
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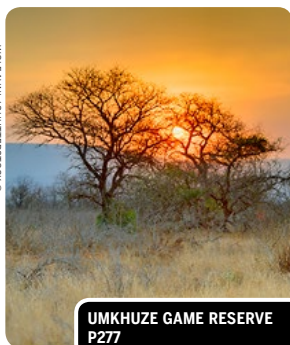
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Itineraries



Kruger to Cape

This trip combines wildlife watching with the Cape's scenery and culture.

Head directly east from Jo'burg's OR Tambo International Airport to **Kruger National Park**, where more than 20,000 growly members of the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino) roam the bushveld. Staying in a bush camp or luxurious private reserve and going on self-drive safaris, guided drives and walks will keep you and your binoculars busy. From Kruger, head back to the bright lights of **Jo'burg**. Spend a night in the inner-city Maboneng precinct's art hotel or hostels, experiencing Afro-globalisation and meeting local hipsters in the galleries and bars.

Next, pick up a flight to **Cape Town**; alternatively, take a scenic overnight train ride in tourist class on Shosholoza Meyl's trans-Karoo service (or the Blue Train or Rovos Rail from Pretoria). Relax and enjoy one of the world's most beautiful cities, spending your days exploring the likes of Table Mountain and Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, and your nights dining in world-class restaurants and drinking in the 'Tavern of the Seven Seas'. The Mother City is surrounded by beaches and vineyards; have lunch in winemaking **Stellenbosch** and wander the refined Cape Dutch student town's lanes.



**21½
WEEKS**

Cape Cruise

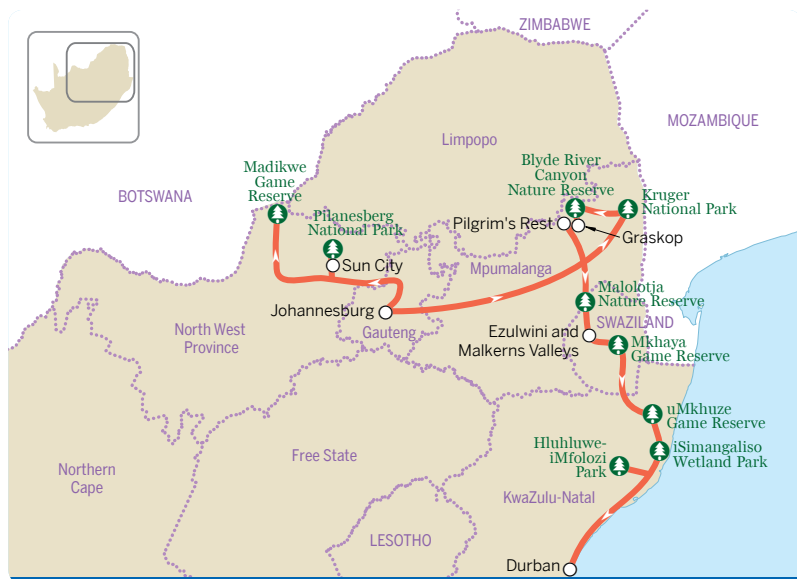
Beautiful scenery, excellent infrastructure and numerous attractions make this the South Africa of the glossy brochures. The route can be covered on public transport, but is perfect for a road trip in your own car.

After a few days in **Cape Town**, fitting in historical and cultural sights such as the Bo-Kaap neighbourhood, Zeitz MOCAA Museum and Irma Stern Museum alongside the scenic Cape Peninsula, head out to the Winelands. Spend a night or two wine tasting in the vineyard-clad valleys of **Stellenbosch** and **Franschhoek**. From Stellenbosch take Rte 44 for one of the world's most beautiful coastal drives, to **Hermanus**, where you can watch southern right whales (June to December). Overnight or stop for lunch in the 19th-century village of **Stanford**, before making your way to **Cape Agulhas**, Africa's southernmost point.

Next, head along the **Cogmansklou Pass** in the Langeberg range to countrified **Montagu**. With its whitewashed cottages and rustic accommodation, the quaint town is a great base for rock climbing and the Robertson Wine Valley. Continue along Rte 62 through the Little Karoo, between rolling mountains dotted with farms and charming little towns such as port-making **Calitzdorp**.

Cross the Swartberg range on the **Meiringspoort Pass**, from Oudtshoorn to the Great Karoo and **Prince Albert**. This pretty 18th-century village is green and fertile, with irrigation channels in the streets. The nearby N1 highway leads back to Cape Town; alternatively, backtrack south, possibly via the untarred **Swartberg Pass**, to **Wilderness** beaches and lagoons. East along the Garden Route, old-growth forests rise into the mountains above **Knysna** and **Plettenberg Bay**, both offering water sports and activities.

Finally, descend a windy road to the beach village of **Nature's Valley**, where happy hikers finishing the five-day Otter Trail hang their boots in a tree outside the pub. Shorter hikes also lead into the surrounding **Garden Route National Park (Tsitsikamma Section)**.



Safari Special

South Africa is one of the continent's best safari destinations – in a fortnight it's possible to cover several parks and reserves, plus a few extra stops such as the dramatic Blyde River Canyon.

From Jo'burg's OR Tambo International Airport, head east to the country's safari showpiece, **Kruger National Park**. The wildlife here and in the adjoining private wildlife reserves will hold you captivated. **Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve**, near Kruger's southern and central sections, offers views of the river as it snakes from the Drakensberg Escarpment to the lowveld. Stay overnight in nearby **Graskop**, a good base for outdoor activities and a visit to **Pilgrim's Rest**, a 19th-century gold-rush village.

If time is tight, hit the N4 west for wildlife watching on sealed roads in **Pilanesberg National Park**, within four hours' drive of OR Tambo International Airport. Stay in the Big Five park or the adjoining **Sun City** casino complex. A little further, **Madikwe Game Reserve** is an exclusive destination with accommodation in five-star lodges (and one ecolodge).

If you have a full two weeks, head south from the Kruger area to Swaziland's **Malolotja Nature Reserve**, where hiking trails cross grasslands and forests, and along the **Ezulwini** and **Malkerns valleys** – stop to admire the woodlands and pick up local craftwork. Swaziland's highlight is the wildlife-rich **Mkhaya Game Reserve**, known for its unsurpassed black and white rhino populations. Explore the bushveld thickets and open veld on a guided walking safari.

Leaving Swaziland, hit the N2 to **uMkhuzi Game Reserve**, where animals lap at waterholes in pans surrounded by fever trees. Nearby are the waterways and diverse ecosystems of **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** well-connected airport and beaches, restaurants and bars.

4
WEEKS

Grand Circuit

This epic itinerary covers the bottom half of South Africa, including Wild Coast beaches, the Karoo semidesert and mountainous Lesotho.

From **Cape Town** head along Rte 62 and over the Swartberg Pass to **Prince Albert**. Venture further into the Great Karoo's open spaces to reach the refined oasis of **Graaff-Reinet**, nicknamed the 'jewel of the Karoo' for its 220-plus national monuments and history stretching back to 1786. Also in this corner of the Karoo are **Camdeboo National Park**, with Cape buffaloes and the Valley of Desolation's views over the plains, and arty **Nieu-Bethesda**, home of the sculpture-adorned Owl House. Stop at **Mountain Zebra National Park** for cheetah tracking and more Karoo panoramas, or continue straight to **Addo Elephant National Park**, where great white sharks and southern right whales complete the 'Big Seven'.

Moving east, the Amathole Mountains are worth an inland detour for the eco-backpackers in **Hogsback** and **Elundini**. Staying in a rondavel hut by a **Wild Coast** beach is likely to be a trip highlight when mixed with cultural experiences and community-run activities. Heading north to the jagged green sweep of the iconic **Drakensberg**, take South Africa's highest pass, the **Sani Pass** (2876m), to Lesotho, where Africa's highest pub awaits.

Hiking and pony trekking in altitudinous Lesotho, you will meet Basotho people clad in conical hats and patterned woollen blankets. Spend at least a few days crossing the mountain kingdom, stopping at beautiful lodges in the likes of **Ts'ehlanyane National Park** and **Malealea**. Pass your last Lesothan night among sandstone cliffs in **Roma**, a 19th-century mission station and now the country's seat of learning.

Over the international border, zip through the Free State's shimmering golden fields to the Northern Cape and its capital, **Kimberley**. The city that witnessed the world's greatest diamond rush is a great place to get a feel for South African history. From here, Shosholozza Meyl's trans-Karoo Express will whisk you back to Cape Town (or up to Jo'burg).



Eastern Wander

This eastern jaunt mixes awesome mountain scenery with Xhosa and Zulu culture, and rural calm with urban vibes, giving a good look at the classic South Africa.

After touching down at OR Tambo International Airport, linger a few days in dynamic **Jo'burg**, seeing how urban regeneration is transforming the inner city and creating hip enclaves of restaurants and bars. Go on a city walking tour or head out to South Africa's most famous township, **Soweto**.

Moving on from Jozi, cross the Free State and leave the N3 at Harrismith, to take scenic Rte 712 past Sterkfontein Dam to **Clarens**. The arty town, with its galleries and microbrewery, has surroundings worthy of an impressionist landscape. Next, stay in a chalet in the nearby **Golden Gate Highlands National Park**, with its hiking trails between sandstone outcrops in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains bordering Lesotho.

Just outside the park, the day-long **Sentinel Hiking Trail** climbs the iconic Amphitheatre to the top of the Drakensberg Escarpment. Next, spend a couple of days enjoying the spectacular Drakensberg day walks, such as Tugela Gorge, in **Royal Natal National Park**. Declimatise from the Draks on the twee **Midlands Meander**, with its guesthouses and ceramic studios, before hitting **Durban**, a city of beaches and Indian cuisine that is slowly being revitalised.

Near the Eastern Cape border, **Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve** is an oft-overlooked reserve with cliffs and forests above the Umzinkulwana River. From here, detour off the N2 and along the coast through Pondoland to **Port St Johns** – a laid-back introduction to the Wild Coast's pristine beaches and friendly Xhosa locals. Pastel rondavel huts dot the green hills overlooking the region's gravel roads, which lead to some stunning community-run hostels around **Coffee Bay**.

At the southern end of the Wild Coast, spend a final night by the Indian Ocean in **Chintsa**, and pick up a plane, train or bus from nearby **East London** to Jo'burg or Cape Town.



2 1/2 WEEKS The Wild Northwest

Some of South Africa's gnarliest terrain is found in the vast Northern Cape province, which this itinerary tours in conjunction with the Western Cape's wilder corners.

From **Cape Town**, head north to the mountainous **Cederberg Wilderness Area**, with its sandstone formations, lodges and campgrounds. Continue to the Hantam Karoo outpost of **Calvinia**, before hitting the N7 through the Namakwa region, its rocky expanses carpeted with wildflowers in spring. Almost at the end of the region's straight roads is remote **Port Nolloth**. If you have a 4WD, continue to the surreal mountain desert of **|Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park**.

Head east to **Angraebies Falls National Park** for hiking, rafting and canoeing, followed by a sunset cruise in **Upington**. Continue north through the Kalahari to **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park**, an excellent place to spot big cats, and see more of the thirsty semidesert at **Witsand Nature Reserve**. Return to Cape Town via the Great Karoo, with stops including **Karoo National Park** and historic **Matjiesfontein**.



1 WEEK Alternative Cape

With its mountains, culture and wine, the Western Cape is a justly popular holiday destination. This itinerary suggests a few spots to escape the crowds alongside some old favourites.

From **Cape Town**, head north to the **West Coast National Park**, which offers a glimpse of the spring wildflower bloom alongside Langebaan Lagoon. Overnight here or in **Paternoster**, with its white-washed cottages and glorious beaches.

Turning inland, mountain ranges surround the wineries of **Tulbagh**. Further into the Winelands, **Franschhoek** distills the area's refined charm, with its Huguenot heritage, vineyards and restaurants. Cross the Franschhoek Pass to the village of **Greyton**, for thatched cottages, restaurants, mountain views and Genadendal Mission Station. The **Boesmanskloof Trail** leads hikers to the New Age village of **McGregor**.

Return to Cape Town via **Hermanus**, the world's best land-based whale-watching destination (June to December), and along Rte 44, passing **Cape Hangklip** and **Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve**.

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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THIS BOOK

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- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
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- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
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- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Shawn Duthie

[Swaziland](#) Originally from Canada, Shawn has been travelling, studying and working around the world for the past 13 years. A love of travel merged with an interest in international politics, and led to several years of lecturing at the University of Cape Town and, now, as a freelance political risk consultant specialising in African countries. Shawn lives in South Africa and takes any excuse to travel around this amazing continent.



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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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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



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