

southern *exposure*





REMAINS OF THE DAY
Sunset at Cape Town's waterfront

South Africa may be best known for its dramatic landscapes and wilderness experiences, but its cities offer an intriguing glimpse into the country's way of life. Kate Armstrong brings you the highlights from three very different metropolises.

The locals know it already and visitors are learning fast: South Africa's three best-known cities, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, are lively cosmopolitan hubs. From Durban's Zulu rickshaws to Jo'burg's mirrored skyscrapers and Cape Town's spectacular setting, this trio of cities is vibrant and diverse. Intriguing products of rich histories and politically charged pasts, the cities do have their downsides. (Hey, what metropolis doesn't?) But these gritty aspects add to the wealth of colourful experiences you're bound to enjoy.

DURBAN

South Africa's third most populous city and Africa's largest harbour, Durban doesn't have the in-your-face beauty of Cape Town, but its charms are many, if more discreet.

Blessed with beautiful beaches and mild weather year-round, Durban also features stunning Victorian

and Art-Deco buildings lining pretty leafy suburbs. The business district maintains an appealingly grungy air but it's a lively place to visit during the day – the People Mover, a bus that circuits the centre, is an excellent way to get around. In the Grey Street district, mingle with friendly Indian traders (Durban is home to more people of Indian descent than any other city outside India). Follow your nose to the Victoria Street market, where the heady aromas of incense and spice mingle. Don't miss wrapping your lips around local taste sensations such as the "bunny chow" – a hollowed-out loaf of bread stuffed with curry.

For upmarket gastronomic options, head to the uShaka Marine World complex, overflowing with cafés and restaurants. Relax over a sundowner at the new Moyo uShaka bar, a glass structure perched over a pier.

Comfortable lodgings can be found in the resort-style Umhlanga Rocks area, around 15 kilometres



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

From top: Outside Jo'burg's Apartheid Museum; a decadent high tea spread at One&Only Cape Town

Opposite: Table Mountain provides the backdrop for Cape Town, one of the world's most picturesque cities

from the city centre. The Oyster Box Hotel is this suburb's latest luxury offering. Elsewhere, the sophisticated suburbs – Morningside, Essenwood and Musgrave (collectively known as Berea) – are also home to an array of boutique accommodations. This cultural hub is popular for its pavement bistros and great galleries. Morningside's Florida Road is the city's "mini Manhattan." Join creative types for drinks or dishes with a twist: think ostrich sashimi at the funky Bean Bag Bohemia.

For your fix of culture, head to The Playhouse Company theatre, where members of Durban's dramatic community perform regularly. For superb African art, hit the Phansi Museum, an extraordinary private collection in the suburb of Glenwood.

Sports-obsessed Durbanites host frequent cricket, soccer and rugby games around town: catch a match at the Moses Mabhida Stadium, constructed especially for the World Cup 2010. And if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Local joggers

pound waterfront pavements while surfers catch breaks offshore from the city's beaches, known as the Golden Mile. If that sounds like too much effort, grab a ride along the oceanfront promenade in a colourful Zulu rickshaw.

Naturalists will be satiated at Durban's stunning Botanic Garden, a beautiful park with all manner of subtropical plants plus a wonderful Garden of the Senses for the visually and hearing impaired. If you're here on a Sunday, catch a live music concert.

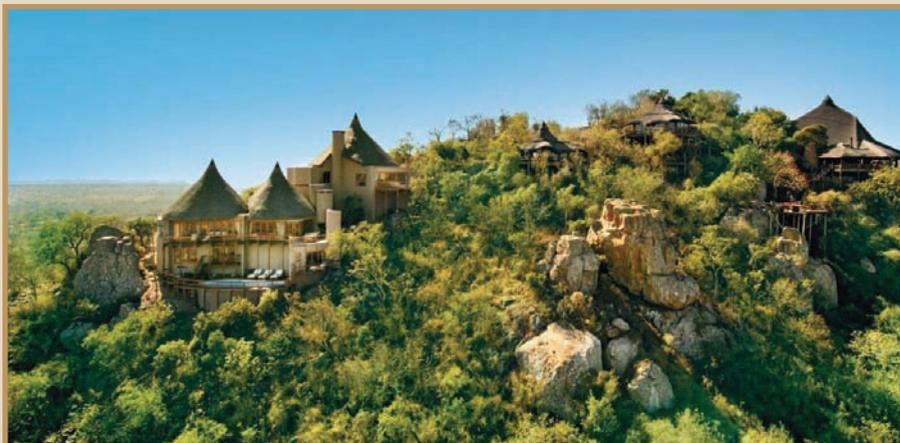
CAPE TOWN

Cape Town is known as South Africa's "Mother City," bragging rights to its self-proclaimed alpha status, but it could equally be called "Cape Cool." Easily identifiable by its hulking landmark, Table Mountain, Cape Town moves to an extremely laid-back beat. But don't be deceived: this is one of the most vibrant and action-packed cities in Africa.

Any visitor to Cape Town should spend some time ticking off the must-do attractions: a cable-car ride to the summit of Table Mountain; splurging in the boutiques dotting the V&A Waterfront Precinct and the new Cape Quarter Piazza; and across the bay, a tour of Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for many years.

What to do next? Well, you're spoilt for choice. Window-shoppers will love the indoor markets of Long Street and galleries in Adderley Street. And for gourmands, Cape Town is a sanctuary. For sensational Cape Malay cuisine, make a beeline for the Muslim quarter, Bo-Kaap. Try *pienang* curry, an aromatic lamb stew, and *denningleis*, also made with lamb given a zing with tamarind or lemon juice. For a taste of contemporary Cape cuisine, visit the current hot spot The Test Kitchen.

Get back to nature at the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, popular for its diverse collection of flora and fauna – including some 9,000 Southern African species – and the many



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travelfacts

gettingthere

Under a code-share agreement, South African Airways (SAA) and Qantas fly direct from Perth and Sydney to Johannesburg. SAA have connections from Johannesburg to Livingstone.

- Qantas. 131-313; qantas.com.au
- SAA. 1300-435-972; flysaa.com

gettingaround

Tour companies offering guided trips around South Africa include:

- Adventure World. 61-8/9417-9666; adventureworld.net.au
- Creative Holidays. creativeholidays.com.au
- Wildlife Safari. 1800-998-550; wildlifesafari.com.au

whentogo

South Africa really is a year-round destination. Winter is June to September and is generally cooler but dry, while summer (late November to mid-February) is hot and can be wet and misty. Autumn is generally fine and sunny and in spring, wildflowers carpet the region.

furtherinformation

For additional information about visiting this beautiful country, contact South Africa Tourism. 1800-238-643; southafrica.net

beautiful birds it attracts. In summer, indulge in a gourmet picnic while enjoying one of the regular alfresco music concerts hosted here.

Adrenalin junkies have lots of options, from abseiling and mountain biking to kite surfing. Cape Town's waters make for a chilly swim, but join the sunbathing crowds at one of Clifton's four linked beaches or sprawl out on the sand at Camps Bay.

Nocturnal activities are huge in Cape Town. When night falls, Capetonians hang out at hole-in-the-wall bars in Long Street and upmarket clubs on the waterfront. Alternatively, sip on a biltong-infused Bloody Mary at the One&Only hotel; here, too, you can indulge in an over-the-top high tea.

But don't even think about bar-hopping if there's a full moon. Instead, join the locals and climb to the peak of Lion's Head, between Table Mountain and Signal Hill. From this vantage point, you can watch the sun set on one side of the city while the moon rises on the other.

As for where to sleep (if you can find the time), check in to the business district's newest luxury digs,

The Taj Cape Town, set in the city's old Reserve Bank Building.

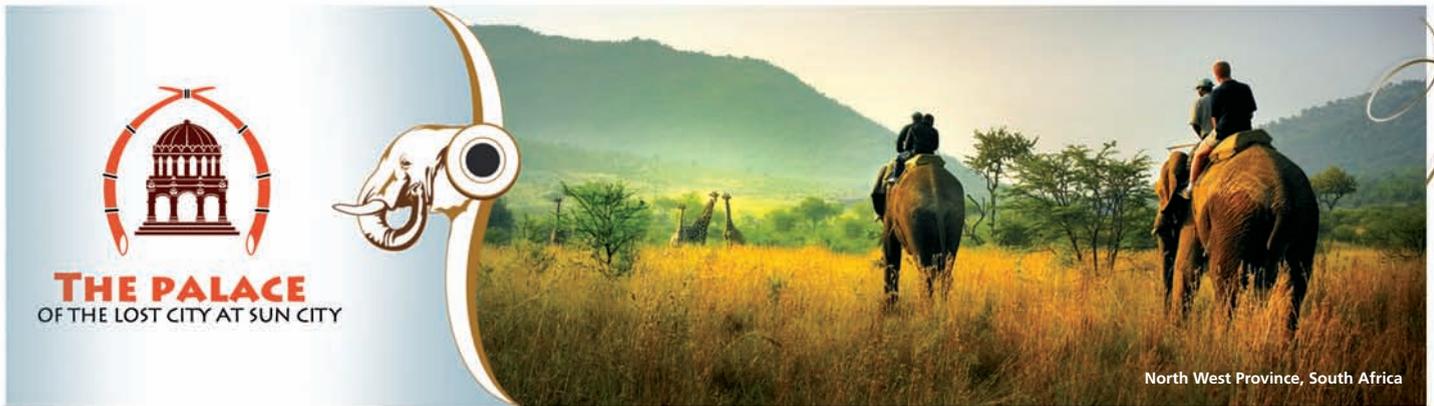
JOHANNESBURG

Despite being one of South Africa's most important cities and the country's business hub, Jo'burg – or Jozi as it is affectionately known to locals – is often overlooked by tourists, who flock south to fashionable Cape Town and beach-beautiful Durban. But venture from behind the city's barriers and you'll be rewarded with cool restaurants, a humming nightlife and Afro-chic accommodation options.

Shopping should be high on your list of Jo'burg must-dos. Fabulous homegrown fashion labels abound in Sandton Mall and Parkhurst, fast becoming *the* place for upmarket apparel. It's easy to get there, too – constructed for the World Cup, a new train line (the Gautrain) runs between the International Airport and Sandton, where you'll also find a clutch of hip hotels and eateries. The nearby Mall of Rosebank is known for its African craft market.

Still, Jo'burg is trying valiantly

CITY SCENE
Durban at night



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CAPE TOWN

Where to Stay

The Taj Cape Town has elegant rooms in the restored South African Reserve Bank building. 27-21/819-2000; tajhotels.com

Located on the V&A Waterfront, One&Only Cape Town has funky, upmarket rooms. 27-21/431-5888; capetown.oneandonlyresorts.com

Where to Eat

- The Noon Gun Tearoom and Restaurant. 27-21/424-0529; noonguntearoom.co.za
- The Roundhouse. 27-21/438-4347.
- The Test Kitchen. 27-21/447-2337; thetestkitchen.co.za

What to Do

- Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden. sanbi.org
- Robben Island Museum. robben-island.org.za

DURBAN

Where to Stay

Comfortable and chic, 164 Boutique Guesthouse has ethnic art and tasteful touches. 27-31/201-4493; 164.co.za

Glitz and glamour unite at the Oyster Box Hotel. 27-31/514-5000; oysterboxhotel.com

Where to Eat

- Bean Bag Bohemia. 27-31/309-6019; beanbagbohemia.co.za
- Café 1999. 27-31/20-23406; cafe1999.co.za
- Moyo. 27-31/332-0662; moyo.co.za/restaurant-moyo-pier

What to Do

- Phansi Museum. 27-31/206-2889; phansi.com
- The Playhouse Company. 27-31/369-9596; playhousecompany.com

JO'BURG

Getting Around

Gautrain links the international airport with Sandton, a convenient 15-minute train ride. gautrain.co.za

Where to Stay

- 12 Decades Hotel. livinghotels.co.za
- Melrose Arch. melrosearch.co.za
- The Peech Boutique Hotel. 27-11/537-9797; thepeech.co.za

What to Do

- African Craft Market. themallofrosebank.co.za
- Apartheid Museum. 27-11/309-4700; apartheidmuseum.org
- Museum Africa. 27-11/833-5624; museumafrica.org
- SAB World of Beer. 27-11/836-4900; worldofbeer.co.za
- Sandton City. sandtoncity.com
- Soweto Bicycle Tours. 27-11/936-3444; sowetobicycletours.com

to move away from its mall mania. A growing alternative scene is flourishing in the central urban area (a district that fell out of favour during the apartheid years – and you're still best off avoiding Hillbrow) including the Newtown Cultural Precinct, which lives up to its name. On the fringe of the CBD, this revitalised area is alive with cool cafés, restaurants, clubs and dimly lit bars. Each August, it's also home to the annual Joy of Jazz Festival. Here, too, is Museum Africa, whose fascinating exhibits reveal ancient African history; and SAB (South African Breweries) World of Beer, a celebration of the country's brewing traditions.

The city's townships move to a beat of their own. The best-known and most accessible township for visitors is South Western Township (Soweto), home to more than 1.5 million people living in an area of just 150 square kilometres. The safest way to experience Soweto's sights and sounds is on an eco-friendly full- or half-day bike tour. The best companies support local businesses and provide a historical, cultural and contemporary perspective on township life. Chat with the locals, have a brew at a *shebeen* (informal bar) and sink your teeth into a *kota* hamburger, grilled Soweto-style.

These days, apartheid is history, but this shocking era should never be forgotten. The Apartheid Museum, near the Gold Reef City theme park to the south of Jo'burg, is a not-to-be-missed experience. Its exhibits are modern, interactive and poignant, with photographs and recordings recreating key aspects of and episodes in the rise and fall of this oppressive social policy. •

Photography by Kate Armstrong and courtesy of South Africa Tourism, Tourism Capetown and the Apartheid Museum.



CIRCULAR LOGIC
Jo'burg's funky Melrose Arch hotel