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Travel / #Wanderlust

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## Check Out Durban South Africa During African Heritage Month



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*I travel the world: smart, luxe, connected -- and often.*

I really enjoyed [Durban](#). It's a mix of modern and historical, and offers a big city's pleasures with nearby traditional tribal villages, beaches and game parks. An hour southeast of Johannesburg by air, Durban is in KwaZulu-Natal Province (KZN). A bustling harbor city and popular surfing spot, Durban lies on the Indian Ocean and is South Africa's third largest urban area.

Remnants of British colonialism and a mix of Zulu, Indian, and Afrikaans traditions give the city a rich cultural heritage, while outdoor activities abound on the signature "Golden Mile" beachfront and in the rolling hills that encompass Durban's suburbs.

September marks South Africa's annual Heritage Month, which celebrates central aspects of the country's culture both tangible and intangible, including performing and creative arts, history, language, food, significant events, and more. In the seaside city of Durban, visitors can take part by visiting some of the city's most intriguing museums and heritage sites to explore the country's complex history and learn about the South Africans who made their mark.

## Durban Old Court House Museum



*Playhouse Theatre in Anton Lembede (formerly Smith) Street, Durban. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)*

Built in 1866, Durban's colonial style [Old Court House](#) is the oldest public building in the central business district. The museum is comprised of two stories of exhibitions chronicling Durban's early history and the people who shaped the Natal colony, part of what is today KwaZulu-Natal Province. The courthouse was often visited by Mahatma Gandhi when he was practicing in Durban as a young lawyer. Gandhi, along with Durban's namesake Sir Benjamin d'Urban and Shaka Zulu are just a few of the important historical figures profiled in the museum.

## The KwaMuhle Museum

[The KwaMuhle Museum](#) exposes visitors to a darker side of Durban's past during apartheid. The museum is housed in the former Native Administration Department where black South African men came to obtain housing, medical, and labor permits.

These requirements were part of an attempt to monitor and control the area's black population known as the Durban System. Today, the historic building showcases exhibits that tell the story of Durban's urban growth and the history of its residents from a range of perspectives.

### **Phansi Museum**

The [Phansi Museum](#) holds the largest collection of African arts and crafts on the continent, with more than 4,000 handmade works housed in a fully restored Victorian house. Many of the works are simple objects made by rural people that are influenced by local traditions and used in their everyday lives. Telephone wire creations based on traditional Zulu beer pots sit alongside traditional and contemporary woven grass baskets, beadwork, carved wooden platters, fertility dolls, and more. Thirty life-sized puppets clothed in the ceremonial attire of various southern African countries are the museum's premier attraction.

### **KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields**

Guided tours of the [KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields](#) recount the violent conflicts between the Dutch-speaking farmers known as Boers, the British, and the Zulu nation that took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s as these groups fought for control of the region. Several battlefield sites are located approximately an hour from Durban by car.

## Nelson Mandela Capture Site



*Dramatic sculpture at Nelson Mandela Capture site (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)*

On August 5, 1962, police waved down a car on a lonely country road in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands just over an hour outside of Durban. At the wheel was anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela, posing as a chauffeur. He was arrested, which ultimately resulted in his 27-year imprisonment.

Today, the [Nelson Mandela Capture Site](#) is marked by an impressive sculpture designed by artist Marco Cianfanelli with the help of architect Jeremy Rose that was erected in 2012. From a distance, the sculpture appears to consist of a random collection of 50 steel poles of varying heights, but from a closer distance the poles merge to form an image of the prolific freedom fighter's face. An educational exhibition on-site tells the story of Mandela's life and how he built a new nation from within a conflicted South Africa.