

Forbes

Why You Need to Visit Durban, South Africa, in July



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The Oyster Box hotel, Durban - DURBAN TOURISM

Durban July is not a month—it's a race. A thoroughbred horse race. A very, very grand one—South Africa's premiere race, held since 1897 on the first Saturday of July, at Greyville Racecourse in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

But never mind the horses.

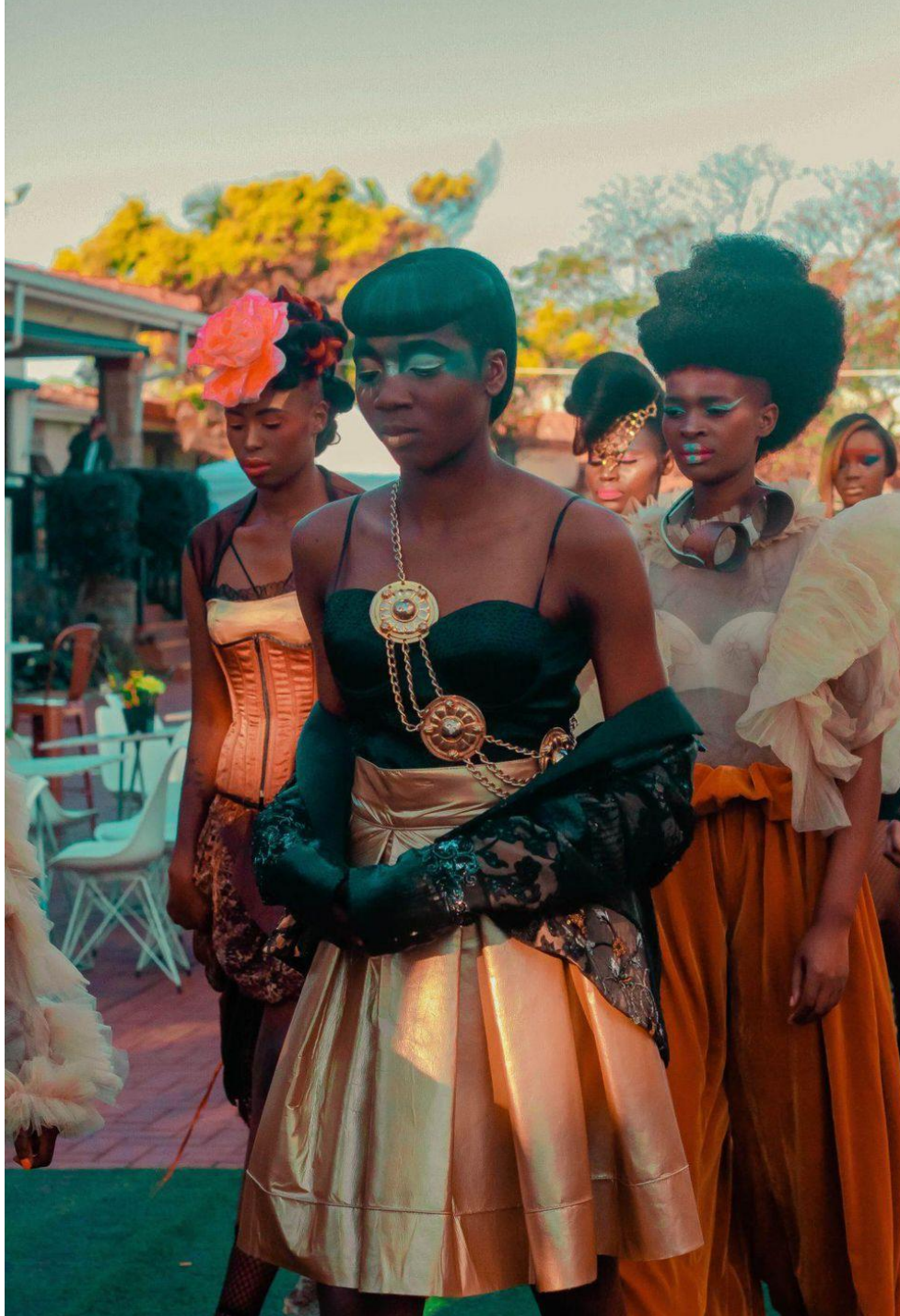
I mean, they are impressive—but I barely saw a single one this year and still had the time of my life. Here's why.



Vodacom Durban July - DURBAN TOURISM

THE MARQUEES South African races are all about the marquees, where betting takes a backseat to fabulousity. Durban July's hottest tents, sponsored by such local companies as Vodacom (the race's main sponsor), Hendrick's gin and Durban Tourism, vie to outdo each other—and you'll enjoy every gluttonous, hedonistic moment of that competition. There's lavish food and drink, live entertainment, DJs, musical performances by South Africa's hottest acts and a party that lasts until midnight—when it's time for the afterparty. Sorry, *afterparties*.

THE FASHION Talk about people-watching heaven. Attendees pull out all the stops, with styles often featuring South African touches and each gown more elaborate than the next. It all adds up to walking art, and it'll leave you relishing your time playing fashion police.



Fashion at Vodacom Durban July - DURBAN TOURISM

DURBAN The race takes over the beachfront city all weekend, but even after the crowds leave, you'll want to stick around and enjoy Durban--which, even in South African winter, is wonderfully mild in climate. The beaches are glorious, the curries are divine and the whole gorgeous vibe is laid-back easy (well, unless you go for one of Durban's famous shark dive excursions).



Lighthouse Bar at The Oyster Box - DURBAN TOURISM

THE OYSTER BOX Set on a divine stretch of beachfront in tony Umhlanga's beachfront, overlooking the Indian Ocean and a picture-perfect red-and-white lighthouse, The Oyster Box is *the* place to be and be seen in Durban—especially during Durban July, when it hosts the race's jockeys. The 86-room Durban institution, newly 65 years old, is the city's only Leading Hotels of the World property, and for good reason: a stay there is alone worth the trip to Durban. There's an award-winning Spa featuring a Turkish Hammam, gorgeous tropical grounds with a private path to the beach, three chic bars, a majestic old-time Clock Library, magnificent local art lining the walls and even a private cinema, screening movies all day. Four restaurants (including a Chef's Table) serve up stunning cuisine with an emphasis on local. The curry buffet at Ocean Terrace delivered one of the best curry experiences this curry fanatic has ever indulged in (oh for the prawn curry!); the Grill Room is nothing short of a slice of Durban history, once host to all of the city's socialites (if those walls could talk!); and the breakfast buffet featured everything from oyster mornay (a delectable concoction of steamed oysters, spinach and poached eggs) to Indian daal, locally harvested oysters and, you guessed it, more curry. Oysterboxhotel.com



Curry buffet at The Oyster Box - DURBAN TOURISM

THE BUSH There are a number of stellar game reserves in easy driving distance from Durban, but you can also simply check into Ammazulu Palace and have a stay-in-the-bush experience just 25 minutes from town. On the edge of the Kloof Gorge, overlooking the Krantzkloof Nature Reserve—the views are spectacular, and you can hike every morning—the all-suite hotel feels like a fantastical dream, decked out in the incredible Zulu art collection of Durban artist Peter Amm. You can imagine you're Zulu royalty. Ammazulupalace.com

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