

**Forbes**

# Move Over, Cape Town: Durban's The New Darling Of South Africa



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Lifestyle



Durban is emerging as a hot spot for travelers in South Africa.

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Cape Town captivates visitors to South Africa, and rightfully so. The city's beauty is only rivaled by its vibrant culture and opportunities for adventure. But on South Africa's other coast, there's another often overlooked city that deserves just as much attention: Durban.

The third-largest urban area in South Africa, Durban has earned a place in the hearts of in-the-know travelers for its golden beaches. The bustling harbor city, standing proudly on the sparkling coast of the Indian Ocean, swirls with the cultures and traditions of its diverse residents. Its

distinctive laid-back surfer vibe sets the tone for the city, but don't be fooled—Durbanites understand the art of adventure and know how to have a good time.

Move over, Cape Town—Durban's the emerging darling of South Africa. Here are some of the reasons why you should visit Durban.

### **Long stretches of beach**

Durban's Golden Mile is a partial misnomer. While the sands are just as glistening as the name implies, the beach actually stretches for nearly four glorious miles, giving locals and travelers seemingly endless spots to soak up the sun. Plus, the warm Mozambique Current keeps the waters warm throughout the year. Take a stroll on the promenade at sunset for some of the most epic views in all of South Africa.



Durban's Golden Mile beachfront stretches for nearly four miles.

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Roughly 10 miles north of downtown Durban, you'll find the resort community of Umhlanga Rocks. It has its own magnificent shoreline and plenty of posh places to bask in the scenery, cocktail in hand. Or, drive about 45 minutes away and put your sense of adventure to the test on a [cage shark diving trip](#)—just remember to keep your fingers and toes inside!

### **Flavor-packed Indian cuisine**

People often joke that Durban's the largest Indian city outside of India. The destination has a large population of descendants from indentured laborers the British brought from India to work Durban's sugar cane fields in the 19th century. Nowadays, their traditions have become a quintessential part of Durban's cultural melting pot.



No bunnies are harmed in the making of Durban's signature dish, bunny chow.  
GETTY

There's no better way to get a taste (literally!) of Afro-Indian fusion than in Durban's signature dish, bunny chow. It's a hollowed-out loaf of white bread overflowing with spicy, satisfying curry. (And no, there's no rabbit meat—the name is rooted in an Indian term for merchants.)

Where to find the best bunny chow in Durban is a hotly contested debate. [Jeera Restaurant at the Suncoast Towers hotel](#) took first place at last year's Coca-Cola Bunny Chow Barometer Competition for its secret bunny chow recipe, followed by [The Curry O's](#) and [North Beach Cafe and Take Away](#). Other long-time favorites include [Cane Cutters](#) and [House of Curries on Florida](#). But resist the pressure to find the best bunny chow in Durban—there's really no bad bunny in this city.

### **Lively markets**

Durban's markets are so much more than a place to find one-of-a-kind souvenirs—they're an immersion into the local culture, offering opportunities to connect with Durbanites in a lively environment.



Shop for beaded jewelry handmade by local artisans at Victoria Street Market in Durban.  
JONI SWEET

Check out Durban's oldest one, [Victoria Street Market](#). It's a maze of 200-plus stalls hawking crafts, art, beaded jewelry, apparel and brassware. You can also get custom-made spice blends (perfect for trying to recreate bunny chow at home!). Don't be afraid to chat up the shopkeepers—they're as eager to engage in friendly conversation with foreigners as they are to make a sale.

### **World-class boutique hotel**

If there's one truly stand-out experience around Durban, it's a stay at [The Oyster Box](#). A member of [The Red Carnation Hotel Collection](#), the boutique beachfront hotel in Umhlanga boasts 86 charming rooms, suites and villas that exude character in every corner. The hotel itself practically doubles as an art gallery with hundreds of works collected from around the world hung on nearly every wall of the property.



Enjoy cocktails at sunset at The Oyster Box's Ocean Terrace.  
THE OYSTER BOX

Even if you can't score one of the exclusive rooms, you should still check out The Oyster Box's drinking and dining scene. Savor the expansive curry buffet at lunch at The Ocean Terrace—nothing beats tucking into tandoori favorites with just about every kind of Indian bread while gazing out at the crashing Indian Ocean. High Tea in the Palm Court looks like something out of a fantasy, with giant bowls of candy, plates of colorful cupcakes and candies, and towers of finger foods. Fun fact: The Palm Court's chandeliers once dangled from the ceiling at the old Savoy Hotel in London.

Be sure to bid goodbye to the Oyster Box's resident tabby cat, [Skabenga](#), before you leave. He likes to rest outside of the lobby.

### **Revitalized arts district**

Creativity thrives in [Station Drive Precinct](#), but it wasn't always that way. Once a rundown warehouse district, the neighborhood has transformed into a must-visit spot for art, shopping and dining—a revitalization driven largely by Durban's creative community.



Sample some of South Africa's best small-batch spirits at Distillery 031 in Station Drive Precinct, Durban.

DENVER GOVENDER, SNAPOUT PHOTOGRAPHY / DURBAN TOURISM BOARD

Check out the large-scale murals on the exteriors of the warehouse walls. Then, start exploring the shops and restaurants in the area. Sample some of the best small-batch spirits in South Africa at [Distillery 031](#) (its Scarlet Gin, made with coffee cherries, has taken home international awards). Seek out antique treasures at [Con Amore](#) (you never know what you'll find!). And treat yourself to a cup of creamy gelato from [Momenti Artisan Gelato](#) (the tiramisu gelato is downright decadent).

### **Home base for excursions**

The beauty of adding Durban to your South Africa itinerary is that it serves as a convenient jumping off point for excursions around KwaZulu-Natal.



Take a day trip from Durban to iSimangaliso Wetland Park to see hippos.  
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You can experience authentic Zulu culture just a half hour away at the welcoming village of [iSithumba](#) in the Valley of 1,000 Hills. Get up close to hippos and crocodiles in [iSimangaliso wetland park](#). Or, try to spot each of the “Big 5” game animals at [Hluhluwe Imfolozi Game Reserve](#), Africa’s oldest established wilderness area.