

SOUTH AFRICA'S Splendors

By Monique Burns



Durban's Golden Mile
COURTESY: Durban Tourism

Headed to Durban, South Africa, next spring for **Africa's Travel Indaba 2020?** After 3-5 days in coastal Durban, spend another week exploring South Africa's historic Bloemfontein, art-filled Cape Town, and charming Franschhoek village in the Cape Winelands.

DURBAN'S MAGIC

From New York's JFK Airport, fly **South African Airways** (www.flysaa.com) to Johannesburg, a 15-hour journey, then hop a one-hour flight east to **Durban** (www.visitdurban.travel). Largest city in eThekweni Municipality and KwaZulu-Natal Province, Durban is home to the "Golden Mile," four miles of sandy beaches along the balmy Indian Ocean.

On the Golden Mile's Snell Parade promenade, check into four-star **Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani** (www.tsogosun.com). Or head a mile north to Umhlanga Rocks, home to two five-star resorts. **The Oyster Box** (www.oysterboxhotel.com) has a long Ocean Terrace for dining, a stunning art collection, and a red-and-white lighthouse. Next door, the **Beverly Hills Hotel** (www.thebeverlyhillshotel.co.za) features a grand staircase, stylish rooms and classy poolside bungalows.

Durban offers myriad pleasures. Swim, sun or enjoy watersports on the Golden Mile. At the southern tip is uShaka Marine World, Africa's largest aquatic theme park, and at the northern, Moses Mabhida Stadium with the bungee-like "Big Rush Big Swing" and funicular-like SKYCAR. In Durban Central, ornate City Hall houses the Durban Art Gallery and Natural Science Museum. Nearby institutions offer chilling perspectives: The Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre traces the Jewish World War II Holocaust while the Kwa Muhle Museum charts the Apartheid era.

With a Zulu majority and the largest Indian population outside India, Durban offers inspired multicultural dining. Besides Indian samoosas and curries, try Durban's trademark "Bunny Chow," a half-loaf of white bread brimming with curry. Along with seafood, Moyo serves spicy peri peri chicken.

Come nightfall, visit Florida Road, with art galleries, boutiques, bars and restaurants in Edwardian houses, or Station Drive Precinct, home of S43, one of Durban's new craft breweries, and Distillery 031, offering tastings of exotic concoctions like absinthe.

Take a half-hour taxi ride south to the Zulu township of Umlazi and Max's Lifestyle. The



Cape Town's colorful Bo-Kaap quarter
COURTESY: South Africa Tourism

stylish venue is famous for shisanyama, meats and wild game grilled on the braai.

A 45-minute drive west of Durban, in Valley of 1000 Hills, explore Zulu culture at **1000 Thrills** (<http://1000thrills.co.za>) resort with welcoming Zulu dancers, a dining room serving local delicacies and traditional beehive-shaped lodgings.

BLOEMFONTEIN'S BEST

From Durban, take a 1 1/2-hour South African Airways flight west to Bloemfontein (www.bloemfonteintourism.co.za), the country's judicial capital, and check into **Windmill Lodge & Casino** (www.suninternational.com/windmill).

Known for Apartheid-era conservatism, Bloemfontein, capital of Free State Province, has become increasingly open-minded. Today, visitors arrive at Bram Fischer International Airport, renamed in 2012 for the lawyer who represented Nelson Mandela.

Site of October's long-running Mangaung Rose Festival, the "City of Roses" also now hosts the Mangaung African Cultural Festival.

Downtown, the National Museum's First Raadsaal Museum and adjacent Wagon Museum display the early roots of "Bloem," one-time stronghold of Dutch farmers called Boers.

Bloemfontein is also home to the world's only Anglo-Boer War Museum showcasing the 1899-1902 conflict. Don't miss the exhibit on Emily Hobhouse, a Cornish woman who relieved the suffering of Boer women and children in British concentration camps.

Nearby is the little brick Waaihoek Wesleyan Church. The 1912 birthplace of the African Native National Congress, forerunner of the African National Congress, it honors sacrifices of black freedom fighters like John Langalibalele Dube and Nelson Mandela.

Atop Naval Hill, pose with the world's biggest bronze statue of Nelson Mandela. Home to the Franklin Game Reserve, Naval Hill also has a high-tech Planetarium.

The Oliewenhuis Museum, in a splendid white Cape Dutch mansion, houses works by South African artists. The fountain-adorned sculpture garden features a colorful carousel with carved African animals.

A 45-minute drive south, De Oude Kraal (www.deoudekraal.com), a sprawling Merino sheep farm, offers a day spa, horseback riding, and luxury accommodations. The restaurant serves elegant French cuisine.

CAPE TOWN AND CAPE WINELANDS



At Bloemfontein's Anglo-Boer War Museum, the National Women's Memorial - COURTESY: Carlvitoria

Catch another flight 1 1/2 hours south to Cape Town (www.capetown.travel) where the Atlantic and Indian Ocean meet. Check into the **Southern Sun Waterfront Hotel** (www.tsogosun.com) then head to Table Mountain, recently named one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature.

On the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, you'll find Cape Town's newest museum, Zeitz MoCAA. Assembled by German businessman Jochen Zeitz, it's the world's largest collection of contemporary African art, housed in a huge reimagined Grain Silo.

While at the V&A, visit countless shops and over 22 historic landmarks. Then take an elegant gourmet dinner cruise, complete with Champagne and lobster, aboard **The Alba Restaurant** (www.thealba.co.za).

Afterward, head to historic St. George's Cathedral where The Crypt Jazz Restaurant serves up sultry jazz, along with tasty food and drink, in a cozy basement boîte.

If you like live music, local crafts and fresh foods, you'll love the Saturday Neighbourgoods Market at The Old Biscuit Mill. East of downtown, it's in artsy Woodstock, with galleries and boutiques in restored warehouses.

Colorful Bo-Kaap, just south of the V&A, was settled by "Cape Malays," 18th-century Muslim slaves and political dissidents from Malaysia and Indonesia. Along with Bo-Kaap Museum and 1794 Auwul Mosque, the quarter is known for brightly painted houses.

An hour's drive east of Cape Town, in the Cape Winelands, you'll find quaint **Franschhoek** (www.franschhoek.co.za), settled by French Huguenots in the 1680s. A five-minute drive from the village, **Leeu Estates** (www.leeucollection.com) charms with sculpture-dotted vineyards.

Enjoy wine tastings, gourmet meals, spa treatments, and five-star lodgings in the **Manor House** and cottages. Health-care mogul Aniljit Singh also owns four downtown properties: 12-room **Leeu House**, 32-room **Le Quartier Français**, Marigold Indian restaurant, and Tuk Tuk microbrewery, serving Mexican-inspired food.

A 20-minute drive west of Franschhoek, **Boschendal Estate** (www.boschendal.com), nestled between the Simonsberg and Drakenstein mountains, is South Africa's second-oldest farm, founded in 1685.

Just northwest, in Simondium, immerse yourself in venerable splendor at **Babylonstoren** (www.babylonstoren.com). Farm activities and an unforgettable Garden Tour showcase eight acres of herbs, fruits and vegetables.