SOUTH AFRICA
YEARBOOK
2024/25

Tourism

Tourism plays a vital role in our economy and offers a significant opportunity to promote social inclusion through social, spatial, and economic development. It does more than just generate revenue - tourism fosters goodwill, social cohesion, and reflects the spirit of South Africa, a nation united in its diversity.

The mandate of the Department of Tourism, as outlined in the Tourism Act, 2014 (Act 3 of 2014), is to promote the growth and development of the tourism sector; promote quality tourism products and services; provide for the effective domestic and international marketing of South Africa as a tourist destination; enhance cooperation and coordination between all spheres of government in developing and managing tourism; and promote responsible tourism for the benefit of South Africa and for the enjoyment of all its residents and foreign visitors. The National Development Plan (NDP) recognises tourism as one of the main drivers of employment, economic growth, and a demand stimulator.

The National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) provides a blueprint for the sector to meet the growth targets contained in the NDP. The NDP identifies tourism as a labour-intensive sector with the potential to stimulate economic growth and transformation.

Tourism growth

According to the World Tourism Barometer released by UN Tourism in May 2025, there was an estimated increase of 12,2% of tourist arrivals globally during 2024 compared to 2023. Global tourist arrivals also increased by 4.9% during the January to March 2025 period compared to the same period in 2024. In 2024, all regions experienced an increase in tourist arrivals and generated a total of about 1,7 trillion US dollars in international receipts.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) figures released in 2024, the estimated total contribution of the travel and tourism sector to the global economy for 2024 increased to $10.9 trillion US dollars, which is 10,0% of global GDP. This was an 8.5% increase compared to 2023.

Globally, the total contribution of the travel and tourism sector to employment was estimated to be about 357 million jobs in 2024 (10.6% of total employment), which was a growth of 5,3% compared to 2023.

Likewise, South Africa's tourism performance has experienced remarkable growth in 2024, with total tourist arrivals increasing by 5,1% compared to 2023. From January to December 2024, South Africa welcomed nearly 8.9 million visitors from around the world. Of these international arrivals, approximately 6.8 million came from the rest of the African continent. Across all markets except the Middle East, there was a notable rise in arrivals from Asia, Europe, America, the United Kingdom, and Africa.

The latest available figures for January to June 2025 show that South Africa welcomed nearly 5 million arrivals. This represents an increase of 11,9% compared to the same period in 2024.

In terms of the economic impact for South Africa, total foreign direct spend declined by 3.3%, to R91.6 billion in 2024 from R94.8 billion in 2023. The rand value of international tourist expenditure has surpassed the pre-pandemic benchmark of R90.7 billion. In 2023, the average length of stay for all arrivals was 13.6 days. This represents an increase of 18.8% compared to 2019, indicating a robust post-COVID recovery.

For South Africa, the WTTC has estimated that the total combined contribution of tourism to GDP increased from R577.9 billion in 2023 to an estimated R618.7 billion in 2024 (8.4% of GDP), which was an increase of 7.1%.

The WTTC further reports that for South Africa in 2024, the total travel and tourism sector contribution to employment was estimated at 1,772 million jobs in 2024 (10.5% of total employment), which was an increase of 13.1% compared to 2023.

Budget

For the 2025/26 financial year, the department's budget is R2.434 billion. The main allocations of the budget are as follows:

- R1.3 billion to the Department's main entity – South African Tourism;
- R331 million for Destination Development – the majority will go to the Working for Tourism Programme;
- R331 million for Tourism Sector Support Services, which include tourism incentive programmes like the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP), the Market Access Programme, the Tourism Grading programme, and the Tourism Transformation Fund (TFF); and
- The largest portion of the department's budget is allocated to its entity, South African Tourism, whose primary mandate is marketing of South Africa as a tourist destination to local and international tourists.

Legislation and policies

The Department of Tourism operates under the following legislation and policies:

- The Tourism Act of 2014 aims to promote the practice of responsible tourism for the benefit of the country and for the enjoyment of all its residents and foreign visitors; provide for the effective domestic and international marketing of South Africa as a tourist destination; promote quality tourism products and services; promote growth in and development of the tourism sector, and enhance cooperation and coordination between all spheres of government in developing and managing tourism. The 1996 White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa provides a framework and guidelines for tourism development and promotion in South Africa.
- The NDP is the 2030 vision for the country. It envisions rising employment, productivity and incomes as a way to ensure a long-term solution to achieve a reduction in inequality, an improvement in living standards and ensuring a dignified existence for all South Africans. The NDP recognises tourism as one of the main drivers of employment and economic growth. The Re-imagined Industrial Strategy identifies tourism as one of the seven national priority sectors. The NTSS guides the strategic development and growth on the tourism sector in pursuit of the NDP targets.
- In 2023, Cabinet approved the Tourism Sector Master Plan - a collaborative effort between the Department of Tourism and social partners such as the private sector, labour and community representatives. The Tourism Sector Master Plan guides government and all social partners on how we

should act collectively on shared goals to deliver tourism economic activity and jobs for the benefit of all South Africans. This plan seeks to assist the tourism sector in moving towards full recovery by focusing on:

o Protecting and rejuvenating supply; and

o Re-igniting tourism demand and strengthening the enabling capabilities.

The goal is to preserve jobs and livelihoods within the sector, facilitate the creation of new job opportunities, match demand and supply, and strengthen transformation in the sector, including the empowerment of women, youth, and people with disabilities. We completed and implemented the Tourism Master Plan and finalised the Tourism White Paper and Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan.

- The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa was gazetted in October 2024. The policy envisages a sustainable, competitive and inclusive tourism sector that leverages on innovation, digital technology, addresses barriers to tourism growth, builds partnerships and responds to the social imperatives of the country. It further will enable the tourism sector's contribution to the broader economy, employment and entrepreneurship whilst ensuring that the sector becomes resilient as it better responds to the future needs of the tourism sector.
- The Department of Tourism undertook a review of all its policy documents implemented during the Sixth Administration, including the ERRP, the Tourism Master Plan, the White Paper, and the National Development Plan targets.
- The Department will review outdated strategies, including Heritage & Cultural Tourism, Domestic Growth, Rural Tourism, Service Excellence, and Climate Change.

Tourism impact

The Department of Tourism gives expression to demand-led skills development, which reflects the needs of the industry. In response to this, the Department implements various youth skills development programmes in line with the National Tourism Strategy to strategically support the tourism sector's developmental objectives. These skills programmes have enabled young people from across the country to benefit from accredited skills training and secure work opportunities in tourism establishments. Investing in young people to be a part of our vibrant tourism sector is a key priority for the department, and various skills development programmes include: Women Executive Development Programme, Culinary Skills Programmes, Tourism Graduate Recruitment Programme, Tourist Guide Training, Tourism Monitor Programme, and Recognition of Prior Learning for Chefs.

During the past financial year, the Department:

- Spent R144 million to train and deploy 2 305 Tourism Monitors.
- Has planned to train 450 unemployed youth in various skills development programmes from a committed budget of R12 million and 2 300 Tourism Monitors with a budget of R140 million through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) funding.

Tourism sector transformation

One of the most impactful programmes by the Department of Tourism is our Tourism Incentive Programme (TIP). The Department has allocated R331 million for Tourism Sector Support Services, which include tourism incentive programmes such as the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP), the Market Access Programme, the Tourism Grading Programme, and the Tourism Transformation Fund (TFF).

This Programme was introduced as a tool to stimulate the growth, development, and transformation of the SA Tourism sector.

- The Market Access Support Programme (MASP): offers partial financial support (contribution towards the cost of exhibition space, return airfare, hotel accommodation, etc.) to qualifying small tourism enterprises that wish to participate and exhibit at selected tourism trade platforms. In the past year, we supported 266 SMMEs in participating in global trade shows through the MASP.
- Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP): offers discounts of 80% on grading assessment fees for accommodation and meeting venues that apply for star grading by the Tourism Grade Council of South Africa (TGCSA). During the 2024/25 financial year, the TGCSA graded 4 586 establishments across the country, against the annual target of 5 000. This milestone reflects steady progress in driving quality assurance in the tourism sector.
- Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP): offers partial grant funding on the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities with energy and water efficiency systems. Tourism establishments can apply for funding support (50% to 90% up to R1 million) on the cost of installing relevant technologies and equipment recommended in the resource efficiency audit during the first stage. During the past year, GTIP retrofitted 103 properties.
- Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF): offers a combination of grant funding, debt finance, and equity contributions to facilitate capital investment in new and expansion projects in the tourism sector by black entrepreneurs. The grant funding portion (limited to 50% of the approved loan amount and capped at R5 million) is used to reduce the approved loan finance and/or equity contribution by the National Empowerment Fund where the commercial viability of the tourism project has been established.
- Tourism Equity Fund (TEF): aims to accelerate the quantitative and qualitative increase in participation by entrepreneurs, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, in the tourism sector as reflected by their contribution to growth, investment, and employment creation. The fund is split to assist 80% existing businesses and 20% new businesses.

Tourism safety

The Department of Tourism, through its Working for Tourism Programme, launched the Tourism Monitors with the purpose of enhancing tourism safety awareness at key tourism attractions and consequently reducing the number of criminal incidents that are directed against tourists, to eliminate opportunities for such crime and to integrate current tourism safety and awareness initiatives into sustainable programmes.

The department signed an MOU with the Department of

Police; facilitated the process for the development of the National Tourism Safety Strategy with three key themes namely: (i) Proactive measures, (ii) Responsive measures, and (iii) Aftercare Programmes.

A National Tourism Safety Forum, which includes the private sector, was also constituted to drive tourism safety and to position South Africa as a safe destination.

Entity

South African Tourism

The Tourism Act of 2014 mandates South African Tourism to market South Africa internationally and domestically as a preferred tourism and business events destination while monitoring and evaluating the performance of the tourism sector. In support of this, over the MTEF period, the entity will continue to prioritise support to domestic, regional and international tourism.

Over the period ahead, South African Tourism, through its National Conventions Bureau, will focus on efforts to bid to host events such as business meetings, conferences and exhibitions in rural areas and (small) towns to boost the tourism industry in six focal sectors: mining and minerals, manufacturing, travel and tourism, agriculture, finance, and wholesale and retail trade. We will support 105 MICE bid submissions, aiming to convert 25 into closed wins worth R120 million in economic impact, and host 10 events in villages, townships, and small dorpies for inclusive regional upliftment.

Ensuring that visitors enjoy their experience is a key component of the entity's work, and part of South African Tourism's revitalisation plan entails assuring that tourism establishments are of a high standard. During the 2024/25 financial year, the Tourism Grading Council of SA (TGSP) graded 4 586 establishments across the country, against the annual target of 5 000. This milestone reflects steady progress in driving quality assurance in the tourism sector.

The collaboration between the Department and SA Tourism aims to expand access to the grading system, which will be implemented. The Tourism Grading Support Programme continues to lower barriers to entry by subsidising grading costs, especially for SMMEs. In the 2024/25 financial year, the TGSP supported 2 970 establishments, encouraging active participation in the TGCSA's grading system. These efforts contribute to the standardisation of service excellence, helping South Africa remain competitive in global tourism markets.

To ensure that the grading system remains world-class and relevant to our local environment in South Africa, the Grading Criteria Review will be conducted during the 2024/25 financial year.

Role players

Africa's Travel Indaba and Meetings Africa

Africa's Travel Indaba is one of the largest tourism marketing events on the continent's calendar and one of the top three "must-visit" events of its kind on the global calendar. It showcases the widest variety of southern Africa's best tourism products and attracts international buyers and media from across the world. Meetings Africa is the continent's largest trade show for the business events industry. Meetings Africa has been lauded as the premier business event in this industry, showcasing the continent's diverse offering of services and products.

Hosting Africa's Travel Indaba and Meetings Africa 2026–2028 will be refined with a more effective business model to enhance sustainability and promote a 15% increase in exhibitor diversity.

Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA)

The CATHSSETA is one of the 21 sector education and training authorities established in 2001 under the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998). It was formally known as the Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training Authority. Its mandate is to facilitate skills development within its subsectors through the disbursement of grants for learning programmes and monitoring of education and training as outlined in the National Skills Development Strategy.

The CATHSSETA operates in the following subsectors:

- Arts, culture and heritage;
- Conservation;
- Gaming and lotteries; and
- Hospitality.

Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA)

The TGCSA is South Africa's only officially recognised and globally credible quality assurance body for national tourism products. It utilises a star grading system for evaluating the quality of accommodation establishments. Of the 11 categories of establishments from which travellers can choose (hotels, lodges, bed and breakfasts, country houses, guest houses, self-catering units, caravan and camping parks, backpackers and hostelling facilities as well as meetings, exhibitions and special events venues), establishments that have been graded by one of the TGCSA's accredited grading assessors will clearly display the TGCSA star insignia. The TGCSA star plaque and certificate guarantee quality and service excellence in line with internationally standards.

Tourism B-BBEE Charter Council

The Tourism B-BBEE Charter Council's roles include:

- providing guidance on sector-specific matters affecting B-BBEE in entities within the sector;
- compiling reports on the status of B-BBEE within the sector for the Minister of Tourism and the BEE Advisory Council; and
- sharing information with sector members, approved accreditation agencies and the Minister of Tourism pertaining to B-BBEE in the sector.

Programmes and projects

Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

The department's programmes broadly include the Working for Tourism Programme through the EPWP, which supports greater destination competitiveness, transformation, and accelerated growth in tourism and enterprise.

R331 million has been allocated for Destination Development – the majority will go to the Working for Tourism Programme.

Tourism Incentive Programme (TIP)

The TIP was established with the aim of stimulating growth and developing the tourism sector by providing financial assistance to privately owned tourism enterprises. The Market Access Support Programme offers partial financial support towards the cost of exhibition space, return airfare, and hotel accommodation to qualifying small tourism enterprises that wish to participate and exhibit at selected tourism trade platforms.

The Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP)

The TGSP supports small tourism enterprises in gaining greater access to markets and encourage participation in the tourism grading system respectively.

Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP)

The GTIP provides financial support to privately owned tourism enterprises and promotes responsible practices by offering solutions for the sustainable management of resources. The GTIP offers partial grant funding on the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities with energy and water efficiency equipment/systems based on the outcome of a resource efficiency audit.

Market Access Support Programme (MASP)

The MASP offers partial financial support towards the cost of exhibition space, return airfare, and hotel accommodation to qualifying small tourism enterprises that wish to participate and exhibit at selected tourism trade platforms.

Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF)

Transformation and more inclusive growth of the tourism sector remain a key priority for the Department of Tourism, in line with broader government objectives and legislation for B-BBEE. As part of its efforts to support sector transformation, the department partnered with the National Empowerment Forum (NEF) to establish a dedicated capital investment funding mechanism to encourage capital investment by majority black-owned investors in the tourism sector.

The TTF aims to use grant funding to stimulate accelerated sector transformation and more inclusive growth and is expected to give rise to a new generation of black-owned youth, women and community-based tourism enterprises that will take the sector to new heights. The fund offers a combination of debt finance from the NEF and grant funding from the department for new and expansionary tourism development projects with majority black shareholding. The TTF is managed by the NEF and is capitalised by the Department of Tourism.

National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS)

The vision of the NTSS is to position South Africa as one of the top 20 tourism destinations globally. The overall goal of the strategy is to drive the tourism economy, enhance visitor experiences, position South Africa as a destination of choice and sustain good governance in the industry. The key focus areas of the NTSS are arrivals, GDP and job creation.

To achieve its objectives, the NTSS focuses on domestic tourism with the intention of increasing the number of domestic trips. Regional tourism is also being targeted with South Africa looking to take advantage of untapped markets such as outbound tourists. This strategy represents the government's commitment to intelligent planning and policy formulation. It was developed over two years in close collaboration with local and provincial governments, an advisory panel of top industry minds, representatives of various professional bodies, academia, tourism marketing agencies, civil society and the broader public.

The NTSS is a document to which the entire sector is committed, and it includes coordinated and credible targets. The strategy rests on three pillars: driving the tourism economy, enhancing visitor experiences, and ensuring sustainability and good governance in the industry.

National Astro-Tourism Strategy

South Africa is the first nation globally to develop a National Astro-Tourism Strategy. This strategy has four pillars: infrastructure development, optimising astronomy-tourism streams, public-private partnerships, inclusive tourism and transformation.

It aims to enhance the performance of South Africa's astronomy tourism sector through infrastructure development and improvements, the optimal functioning of various astronomy-related streams with tourism offerings, and the boosting of transformation by enhancing the livelihoods of local communities.

Another niche tourism market is palaeontology, which saw the launch of the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Golden Gate National Park in the Free State Province. The Kgodumodumo centre isn't just a museum — it's an intersection point between science, heritage, tourism, and community. Opportunities abound in utilising new centres like Kgodumodumo to drive public engagement, education, and heritage tourism in less-visited regions. The centre is designed as an interactive, immersive facility combining palaeontology, archaeology, geology, and cultural heritage.

Women in Tourism Programme

The Women in Tourism Programme is an initiative that propels and supports the development and empowerment of women in the tourism sector. Premised on the principles of respect, recognition, representation, and reward, the programme integrates women from diverse backgrounds to converge on a set of common goals and interests that will ensure their success in the sector.

The programme serves as a mechanism to elevate the status of women in tourism by providing training, empowerment and networking opportunities that facilitate their competitiveness as entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

National Tourism Service Excellence requirements

The national tourism service excellence requirements aim to improve and maintain service levels at all service touchpoints in the tourism value chain, as well as guide the sector in achieving the NTSS objective of positioning South

Africa as one of the top 20 global tourism destinations.

The South African Bureau of Standards developed the standards on behalf of the tourism sector and benchmarked them against international requirements. The requirements have four key focus areas: marketing, products, service delivery, and monitoring and evaluation.

National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism (NMSRT)

Responsible tourism is a management strategy in which the tourism sector and tourists take responsibility for protecting and conserving the natural environment, respecting and conserving local cultures and ways of life, and contributing to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local people.

The Department of Tourism, in partnership with tourism stakeholders and the private sector, particularly accreditation agencies, developed the NMSRT. In doing so, South Africa has taken the lead on the continent by publishing a set of national minimum standards that are aligned with the International Organisation for Standardisation/International Electrotechnical Commission 17011. The NMSRT comprises 39 criteria's divided into four categories, namely sustainable operations and management, economic criteria, social and cultural criteria and environmental criteria.

Other projects

Tourism Month

Tourism Month is celebrated annually in September and provides a heightened month-long focus on the importance of the sector to the South African economy. Tourism Month features themed activities that are aligned to the UNWTO's World Tourism Day celebrations that take place annually on 27 September.

The purpose of highlighting Tourism Month is to raise awareness about domestic tourism activities planned, as well as to encourage South Africans to travel within their own country and foster cultural appreciation.

Tourism Enterprise Development Programme

The programme is part of the broader objective of the revised NTSS 2016-2026, which seeks to ensure the sustainable development and growth of tourism enterprises in a manner that facilitates inclusive participation, job creation, and contributes to the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

The programme provides training and support for emerging and existing tourism businesses to ensure their sustainability in the sector. It will also ensure constant monitoring to be conducted by the Department of Tourism's Monitoring and Evaluation, and Enterprise Development units, respectively.

Guidelines for international tourists

Every international traveller to South Africa must have a valid passport and, where necessary, a visa. The Immigration Act, 2002 (Act 13 of 2002), stipulates that all visitors to South Africa are required to have at least one blank page (both back and front) in their passport to enable the entry visa to be issued. If there is insufficient space in the passport, entry will be denied. Enquiries may be directed to South African diplomatic representatives abroad or to the Department of Home Affairs in Pretoria.

Visitors who intend travelling between South Africa and neighbouring countries are advised to apply for multiple-entry visas. Passport holders of certain countries are exempt from visa requirements. Tourists must satisfy immigration officers that they have the means to support themselves during their stay and that they have return or onward tickets. They must also have valid international health certificates. Visitors from the yellow fever belt in Africa and America, and those who travel through or disembark in these areas, must be inoculated against the disease. Malaria is endemic to parts of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. It is essential to take anti-malaria precautions when visiting these areas.

Foreign tourists visiting South Africa can have their Value-Added Tax (VAT) refunded. VAT is refunded on departure at the point of exit. South Africa's transport infrastructure – airlines, railroads, luxury touring buses (coaches) and motor vehicles – is such that tourists can travel comfortably and quickly from their port of entry to any part of the country.

South African Airways, as well as a number of international airlines, operate regular scheduled flights to and from South Africa. Several domestic airlines operate in the country. There are also mainline trains to all parts of the country. The tourist accommodation industry in South Africa provides a wide spectrum of accommodation, from formal hotels to informal holiday flats and cottages, game lodges and reserves, guest houses, youth hostels and bed-and-breakfast establishments.

The Trusted Tour Operator Scheme, which officially launched in February, was designed to streamline visa applications for large tour groups from India and China, two of South Africa's fastest-growing tourism markets.

Tourist guiding

Tourist guiding is a critical component of the tourism value chain. They play a crucial role in ensuring repeat tourist visits to South Africa by creating memorable experiences and subsequently fostering a positive image of our country. This year, Mandarin training will be added to their basket of benefits.

Tourism niche markets

Domestic tourism (Sho't Left)

The Sho't Left Campaign aims to promote a culture of local holiday travel, targeting ordinary South Africans and their families who desire to see more of the country but are unsure of where to go. The Sho't Left Campaign invites South Africans to "see your world differently", even when only visiting family or friends. The campaign is aimed at young, upcoming individuals, couples and families.

Global Campaign

Our flagship "South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy!" brand campaign resonated in seven key markets-Asia, Europe, the Americas and Africa-boosting website traffic by 35% and generating 1.2 million digital engagements.

Adventure tourism

The country's diverse terrain, together with an ideal climate for outdoor activities, makes it perfect for the adventure tourism niche market. Activities such as climbing, surfing, diving, hiking, horseback safaris, mountain-biking, river-

rafting and just about any other extreme activity are supported by dedicated operators. South Africa offers some of the best rock climbing and abseiling opportunities in the world. Those who prefer rivers have a choice of trips ranging from mostly scenic to Grade 5 white-water rafting. Opportunities for escorted or self-guided trips are also available. For those who want to take to the skies, there are more than 100 listed paragliding or hang-gliding launch sites, as well as numerous lesser-known sites. There are also many opportunities for helicopter rides, balloon and microlight flights, aerobatics and skydiving.

Thousands of kilometres (km) of hiking trails wind through the country in desert, forest, mountain or coastal terrains, many with adjacent mountain-biking trails. In addition, South Africa offers a wide variety of horse trails through vineyards, on beaches and in the mountains. For the more adventurous, there are also horseback safaris in game reserves. The 216-metre (m) Bloukrans Bridge, on the border of the Eastern and Western Cape, offers the highest commercial bungee jump in the world.

Business tourism

South Africa remains among the top long-haul business events destinations in the world and is the premier business events destination in Africa. The government recognises business events tourism as an area with significant growth potential and has therefore established the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB) to further promote growth in the conferencing industry. The SANCB is tasked with coordinating national bidding, undertaking research and collaborating with the city and the business events industry to make a united front for destination South Africa.

Cultural tourism

Heritage and cultural tourism are the fastest-emerging competitive niche within domestic and international tourism markets. The National Heritage and Cultural Strategy is aimed at guiding the integration of heritage and cultural resources with mainstream tourism. It aims to stimulate sustainable livelihoods through heritage and cultural tourism products, while also diversifying the sector and raising awareness of heritage and cultural resources. South Africa's diversity is reflected in its cultural tourism, with many destinations commemorating the past. These range from the ancient nomadic San culture to European settlement, apartheid rule and the Struggle for political freedom.

Medical tourism

South Africa has emerged as a medical tourism destination of choice for travellers from other African countries as well as further afield, and the industry is proving to have extensive growth potential. Most medical tourists come to South Africa for cosmetic surgery, but the country's skilled surgeons can also perform organ transplants, cardiac, orthopaedic and obesity surgery and dentistry.

Nature-based tourism

South Africa's fauna and flora, and varied landscapes, have enormous recreational value and attract several million tourists each year. Protected natural areas serve not only to maintain biodiversity, but sustainable visitor access to these areas also adds economic, recreational, and aesthetic value to what is being conserved within their borders. It also helps to preserve a wealth of traditional indigenous knowledge related to biodiversity, which is in itself a tourism resource.

South Africa has 20 national parks as well as numerous private game farms and nature reserves. Four of the country's United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) world heritage sites are natural sites, while one is a mixed cultural/natural site. These are the Cape Floral Region, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, the Vredefort Dome, Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains and the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. South Africa's popularity as an Avi tourism destination is due to the large number of birds, endemic species and major bird habitats. Birdlife South Africa, the country's national birding organisation, has more than 5 000 members and in more than 40 bird clubs nationwide.

Rural tourism

The Department of Tourism plays a vital role in ensuring that the benefits of tourism extend beyond large cities and major attractions to reach local communities, especially those in rural areas, villages, small towns, and township economies. It is therefore actively working to develop tourism in villages, townships, and small dorpies (VTSDs) in South Africa, aiming to promote inclusive regional upliftment and economic growth.

Culture and heritage products are the fastest emerging competitive niche offerings in the domestic and international markets. Sustainable development will be achieved if the people, whose land, culture and natural resources are used for tourism, benefit from such use in a meaningful way.

Sports tourism

More than 10% of foreign tourists come to South Africa to watch or participate in sports events, with spectators accounting for 60% to 80% of these arrivals. The world-class sporting events on South Africa's annual calendar include the:

- Annual Cape Argus Cycle Race, which caters to people riding and pushing their bikes over a 10-km course;
- Midmar Mile in KwaZulu-Natal, which attracts open-water swimmers annually, and the Comrades Marathon; and
- Sports and Events Tourism Exchange, the only event of its kind in Southern Africa and provides a platform that brings together businesses from the sports, events and tourism industries.

Township tourism

Township tours have the potential to present South Africa's culture and heritage, and the Department of Tourism plans to develop packages to achieve that goal. The government wants to capitalise on job creation opportunities in this sector.

Wine tourism

Wine tourism is growing rapidly worldwide and plays a particularly important role in South Africa, thanks to its centuries-old reputation for producing high-quality wine. South Africa's wine tourism has been rated among the best developed in the world. The country's vineyards are mostly situated in the Western Cape near the coast. All

South African wine routes fall under the auspices of the Wine of Origin Scheme. Stylistically, South African wines fit somewhere between Old World and New World.

Regional tourism

Western Cape

The Western Cape is situated at the southernmost tip of Africa. The province's unmatched natural beauty, famous hospitality, cultural diversity, excellent wine and rich cuisine make it one of the world's greatest tourist attractions. The tourism industry in the province has grown faster and created more jobs than any other province.

Cape Metropole

Tourism in the city of Cape Town, which lies at the foot of the magnificent Table Mountain, centres on the V&A Waterfront. A working harbour, the V&A Waterfront offers everything from upmarket shopping malls, arts and craft markets, and a variety of restaurants to theatres, live music and museums. Table Mountain, which forms part of the Table Mountain National Park, is one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature. A modern cableway takes visitors to the top of the mountain, providing spectacular views.

Other major attractions in the city include the Bo-Kaap Museum, the Castle of Good Hope, the Company's Garden, the District Six Museum, flea markets, the Grand Parade, the Houses of Parliament, the South African Cultural History Museum and the South African National Gallery. The Gold of Africa Museum, established by AngloGold Ashanti, houses a celebrated collection of more than 350 gold artefacts. Air flips and trips are available, as are many boat and yacht trips from Table Bay Harbour. There are also trips to Robben Island (proclaimed a world heritage site and also the place where former President Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 of his 27 years in prison).

The Nelson Mandela Gateway to Robben Island is in the Clock Tower Precinct at the V&A Waterfront. The gateway houses interactive multimedia exhibitions, an auditorium, boardrooms, the Robben Island Museum and a restaurant. Jazz is big in Cape Town. From traditional blues to progressive jazz and African-influenced jazz, every taste is catered to at a variety of restaurants, jazz cafés, cigar bars, pubs, and wine farms. The top jazz event in the Western Cape is the annual Cape Town International Jazz Festival.

The South African Rugby Museum in Newlands traces the history of the sport back to 1891. The Rhodes Memorial in Rondebosch on the slopes of Table Mountain was built from granite from the mountain as a tribute to the memory of Cecil John Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape from 1890 to 1896. The University of Cape Town is worth a visit for its historic Middle Campus and many buildings designed by Sir Herbert Baker. Cape Point, part of the Table Mountain National Park, offers many drives, walks, picnic spots and a licensed restaurant. Care has been taken to protect the environmental integrity of this 22 100 hectares (ha) reserve of indigenous flora and fauna. Simon's Town's naval atmosphere and Historic Mile are major attractions in the area.

A statue of the famous dog and sailors' friend, Able Seaman Just Nuisance, stands at Jubilee Square. Hout Bay is renowned for its colourful working harbour. Seafood outlets, round-the-bay trips to the nearby seal colony, shell and gift shops, and a famous harbour-front emporium attract many visitors. Duiker Island is a seal and seabird sanctuary. The World of Birds Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the largest bird parks in the world and houses some 3 000 birds of 400 different species.

Big Bay in Bloubergstrand is a surfers' paradise and hosts an international windsurfing event. Rietvlei Nature Reserve is a unique wetland area with over 110 bird species, including pelicans and flamingos. Canal Walk in the suburb of Century City is one of the largest shopping centres in Africa, with close to 400 shops, and is home to the largest cinema complex in South Africa. New Year's in Cape Town is a festive affair, when the Cape minstrels take to the streets with their upbeat music and fancy costumes. The Monkey Town Primate Centre is home to over 200 individual primates and is located east of Somerset West on the N2. Strawberry-picking in Cape Town on the Mooiberge Strawberry Farm is available in season, which begins in November.

Cape Winelands

The Cape Winelands feature dramatic mountains, rolling farmlands and peaceful vineyards. They are home to Route 62 – the world's longest wine route. The Stellenbosch Wine Route comprises over 100 wine estates, most of which offer cellar tours. Stellenbosch is the oldest town in South Africa. The town is a gracious blend of old Cape Dutch, Georgian and Victorian architecture. Dorp Street features one of the longest rows of historic buildings in the country.

The Stellenbosch Village Museum comprises four homesteads and gardens, dating from the late 17th to the mid-19th centuries. The Stellenbosch Toy and Miniature Museum house a collection of 1:12 scale miniatures such as room boxes, miniature houses, antique dolls, cars and cuddly toys. The Spier Summer Arts Festival livens up summer nights from November to March at the Spier Wine Estate near Stellenbosch. Supervised pony and cart rides for children are available on the lawns of the Spier Estate.

There is also a horse-carriage tour and an equestrian centre for older children. The Freedom Monument at Pniel commemorates the freed slaves who were the first settlers at the mission station, established in 1843. Franschhoek has become known as the "Gourmet Capital" of the Cape. The Huguenot Monument was built in 1944 to commemorate the arrival in 1688 of the Huguenots, who were predominantly French. In April, the region hosts the South African Cheese Festival each year. Visitors can also enjoy various hiking trails and historical walks, as well as the Vignerons de Franschhoek Wine Route. There is also an annual book/literary festival in Franschhoek.

Butterfly World, one of the more unique attractions of the Western Cape winelands, consists of a tropical garden in a 1 000 m2 greenhouse. The Giraffe House Wildlife Awareness Centre spans 15 ha and focuses primarily on African wildlife. Giraffe House provides a place for people to enjoy a picnic in the fresh air, while experiencing and learning about animals and conservation. The Drakenstein Lion Park was established as a sanctuary for lions born in captivity. The Jonkershoek Nature Reserve, which includes the smaller Assegaaibosch Nature Reserve, is near Stellenbosch, comprising the Jonkershoek Mountains and portions of the upper Jonkershoek Valley.

The reserve stretches over 9 800 ha, and its rugged terrain is ideal for hiking. Assegaaibosch is much smaller and is suitable for shorter walks and picnics. At Le Bonheur Estate, visitors can experience guided croc-pond tours, which lead across open dams via rampways. Over 1 000 crocodiles are housed in these dams. Visitors can touch a baby crocodile and, during the summer months, witness them being fed. Paarl is famous for its Cape Dutch and Victorian architectural treasures found along a 1-km stretch of the main street.

The area's fynbos supports many south-western Cape endemics, such as the Cape sugarbird and orange-breasted sunbird. The Afrikaans Language Monument is on the slopes of Paarl Mountain, while the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum (Language Museum) is in the centre of the town. The town of Wellington lies in a picturesque valley, with the majestic Hawequa Mountains on its eastern border. Wellington is also the home of South Africa's dried-fruit industry.

Experience life as the pioneers did in years gone by at the Kleinplasie Living Museum. The KWV Brandy Cellar, the largest of its kind in the world, offers cellar tours and brandy tastings. The Hex River Valley is the largest producer of table grapes in southern Africa. Visitors can pick their own grapes at harvest time and sample the variety of export-quality produce.

The well-known Hex River 4x4 trail and the ochre San rock art trail is a must for nature lovers. De Doorns lies in the heart of the Hex River Valley. Bonnievale, on the Breede River, features several cheese factories. For the adventurous outdoor enthusiast, there are canoe trips, as well as birdwatching and riverboating. Surrounded by vineyards, orchards, and roses, Robertson is known as "The Valley of Wine and Roses".

It is known for its connoisseur-quality wines and its thoroughbred horses. Renowned for its muscadel wines, Montagu is the gateway to the Little Karoo. Relax in the healing waters of the Avalon Springs or visit the Montagu Museum, which houses, among other things, original cartoons and books by well-known cartoonist Thomas Ochse Honiball. The picturesque village of Gouda is known for the Parrotts Den pub, a living museum in the Gouda Hotel.

McGregor has a variety of charming, thatched cottages and well-preserved Victorian houses, making it one of the best-preserved examples of mid-19th-century architecture in the Western Cape. Prince Alfred Hamlet is the gateway to the Gydo Pass, known for its scenic views. This quaint village is situated in an important area for deciduous fruit farming. Hidden amid vineyards and wine estates lies Rawsonville, known for its award-winning wines. Tourists can enjoy an afternoon drive along the beautiful Slanghoek Valley with its lush vineyards and panoramic views or relax in the mineral springs at Goudini Spa.

Garden Route

The Garden Route spans approximately 200 km of the southern coast, encompassing a stretch of coastline that includes Mossel Bay, George, Wilderness, Sedgefield, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, and Nature's Valley – each with its own unique charm and attractions. Famed for its lush greenery and the vast Tsitsikamma Forest, the Garden Route is the most biodiverse region in the world. The Garden Route features the Pont at Malgas, which is one of the two remaining points in the country, ferrying vehicles and livestock across the Breede River.

The Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve outside Heidelberg comprises the popular Bushbuck Trail, a wilderness trail and two mountain-biking trails. Riversdale is one of South Africa's most important fynbos export areas. Other attractions include the Julius Gordon Africana Museum. At the historical Strandveld Architectural Heritage Site at Still Bay, visitors can watch tame eels being fed. Ancient fish traps can be seen at Morris Point and the harbour. At the aloe factories in Albertinia, aloe juice is extracted for use in medicine and high-quality skincare products. Nearby, bungee-jumping at the Gouritz River Gorge, hiking, mountain-biking and angling are popular pastimes.

The Point in Mossel Bay is not only popular among surfers, but its natural pool formed by rock is also a favourite swimming spot at low tide. The Saint Blaize trail starts here and is the ideal place from which to watch the whales and dolphins at play in season. The harbour at Mossel Bay is one of the most modern commercial and recreational harbours on the southern coastline of the Western Cape. Other attractions include the Attakwaskloof Pass, Anglo-Boer War blockhouses, and the Bartolomeu Dias complex.

Great Brak River offers a historic village with many opportunities for whale watching and dolphin watching along the extensive coast. The Slave Tree in George, located just outside the Old Library, was planted in 1811, when George was laid out. It is known to be the biggest English oak in the southern hemisphere. George is popular among golfers and is home to the renowned Fancourt Country Club and Golf Estate, as well as various other acclaimed golf courses.

Visitors can board the Power Van at the Outeniqua Transport Museum and enjoy a glimpse of the Garden Route Botanical Garden from this rail bus. The Big Tree at Woodville, an Outeniqua yellowwood, is estimated to be around 850 years old. It is located about 40 km outside of George in the direction of Knysna.

The George Airport, Outeniqua Pass, railway line and the N2 offer convenient access to this region, making George the ideal hub from which to explore the Garden Route and Little Karoo. Victoria Bay and Wilderness are popular for their unspoilt beaches. Wilderness is the western gateway to the southern Cape lakes area. It is a nature lover's paradise, best known for its beaches, lakes, placid lagoon and lush indigenous forests. The Langvlei and Rondevlei bird sanctuaries in the Wilderness National Park, which hosts over 230 different bird species, is popular among birdwatchers.

Sedgefield borders Swartvlei Lagoon, the largest natural inland saltwater lake in South Africa. Activities include beach horse riding, hiking, angling and birdwatching. Knysna nestles on the banks of an estuary, guarded by The Heads (two huge sandstone cliffs) and surrounded by indigenous forests, tranquil lakes and golden beaches. This natural wonderland is home to the largest and smallest of creatures, from the Knysna seahorse to the Knysna elephant, rare delicate butterflies and the endemic Knysna loerie, a colourful forest bird.

The abundant fynbos and forest settings host over 200 species. Knysna is also famous for its delectable homegrown oysters, enjoyed with locally brewed beer in quaint pubs and restaurants. The Knysna Oyster Festival, a celebration of the

good life, has established itself as one of the most popular annual events in the Western Cape. An eclectic mix of art galleries presents the diversity of talent in the area. There are also lagoon cruises, forest hikes, golf and adventure sports on offer. Plettenberg Bay is adventure country, offering boat-based whale watching, blackwater tubing, hiking, as well as forest and cycling trails. The Keurbooms River Nature Reserve at Plettenberg Bay offers a canoeing trail, while the Robberg Nature Reserve is a treasure trove of land, marine, geological and archaeological wealth.

Little Karoo

The Little Karoo's fascinating landscape is fashioned almost entirely by water. Its vegetation ranges from lush greenery in the fertile river valleys to short, rugged Karoo plants in the veld. Gorges feature rivers that cut through towering mountains, while breathtakingly steep passes cross imposing terrain. The region is also home to the world's largest bird – the ostrich.

The Little Karoo is rich in culture and history. Oudtshoorn, the world's ostrich-feather capital, is the region's main town. The annual Klein-Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (National Arts Festival) is held in the town. Some 29 km from Oudtshoorn lie the Cango Caves, a series of subterranean limestone caverns. Bearing evidence of early San habitation, the cave features magnificent dripstone formations.

Amalienstein and Zoar are historic mission stations midway between Ladismith and Calitzdorp. Visitors can take a donkey-cart or hiking trail through orchards and vineyards, while the Seweweekspoort is ideal for mountain biking, hiking, and protea and fynbos enthusiasts. Calitzdorp has four wine estates, three of which are open to the public. The spring water of the Calitzdorp Spa is rich in minerals and reputed to have medicinal properties. The Gamka Mountain Reserve is home to the rare and endangered Cape mountain zebra. Excellent wines and port are produced in the Calitzdorp and De Rust areas. The Swartberg Nature Reserve and Pass, with its gravel roads, is also worth a visit.

De Rust lies at the southern entrance to Meiringspoort. The Meiringspoort Gorge extends 20 km through the Swartberg Mountain Range. Halfway through is a beautiful 69-m waterfall. Wine farms in the area are open to the public. Ladismith is home to the Towerkop Cheese Factory. There are various hiking, mountain-biking and 4x4 trails in the area, as well as the Anysberg, Little Karoo and Towerkop nature reserves. Uniondale, on the main route between George and Graaff-Reinet, features the largest water wheel in the country, the Old Water Mill.

Uniondale Poort is a scenic drive linking Uniondale with Avontuur in the Langkloof Valley. At Vanwyksdorp, visitors can see how fynbos is dried and packed for the export market. Donkey-cart rides take visitors to Anglo-Boer/South African War grave sites.

Central Karoo

The Central Karoo, a fascinating semi-desert area, lies in the heart of one of the world's most unique and interesting arid zones. This ancient, fossil-rich land is five times the size of Great Britain. Here, visitors will find the Earth's largest variety of succulents. Beaufort West, the oldest town in the Central Karoo, is often referred to as the "Oasis of the Karoo".

The local museum displays awards presented to heart-transplant pioneer, Professor Chris Barnard, a son of this town. A township route introduces visitors to the Xhosa culture in the area. The Karoo National Park, on the town's doorstep, is home to a variety of game, as well as the highly endangered riverine rabbit. Matjiesfontein, a national monument, offers tourists a peek into yesteryear and the opportunity to overnight in Victorian splendour.

The village is home to a transport museum and the Marie Rawdon Museum. Experience the vastness of the Great Karoo in Murraysburg, an ecotourist and hunter's paradise. Laingsburg, a tiny village that was devastated by floods about a century after it was established, was rebuilt afterwards. It is the ideal place to study the region's geology. Prince Albert is a well-preserved town at the foot of the Swartberg Mountains. It is the ideal place to sample Karoo cuisine, see examples of local architecture dating back to the early 1800s and enjoy several scenic drives.

The Fransie Pienaar Museum introduces visitors to the cultural history of the area. It features a fossil room and an exhibit showcasing the gold rush in this area during the 19th century. The museum has a licence to distil and sell "witblits" (literally white lightning, also known as "firewater" in the local parlance). Prince Albert is the closest town by road to Gamkaskloof. The Hell, a little valley in the heart of the Swartberg Mountains, was the home of one of the world's most isolated communities for almost 150 years. Gamkaskloof is a nature reserve and national monument managed by Cape Nature Conservation. It has overnight facilities and can be accessed by a 57-km long (but two-hour drive) winding road which starts at the peak of the Swartberg Pass.

West Coast

The West Coast is a region of outstanding beauty and contrast. The coast's scenic beauty is matched only by culinary experiences of mussels, oysters, calamari, crayfish and abalone in season, or linefish pulled from the Benguela Current's cold waters. In April every year, Lambert's Bay has the Crayfish and Cultural Festival. The area is not only a birder's paradise, but every year migrating whales visit the coastal waters from July. Vredenburg, the business centre of the area, has a popular golf course with a bird hide. Lambert's Bay is a traditional fishing village, with Bird Island as a popular tourist attraction. It is a breeding ground for African penguins, the Cape cormorant and other seabirds.

Within two months of the first good winter rains, wild flowers on the West Coast explode in a brilliant display of colour. The Swartland region is known for its wheat fields, vineyards, wineries and outdoor activities. Further north, visitors encounter the Olifants River Valley and the vast plains of the Knersvlakte with its wealth of indigenous succulent plants.

The citrus area in the Olifants River Valley is the third-largest in South Africa. The town of Darling draws visitors to its country museum and art gallery, as well as its annual wildflower and orchid shows, basket factory, and wine cellars. The entertainment venue "Evita se Perron" is situated at the old Darling Railway Station and offers top performances by South African entertainers.

Malmesbury is the biggest town in the Swartland. Major attractions include the Malmesbury Museum and the historical walkabout. The Riebeek Valley is known for its scenic beauty. The area has become a popular haven for well-known artists of various disciplines. Wines and olives can be tasted at various cellars. Elands Bay is a popular holiday resort and surfer's paradise. Khoi and San rock art can be viewed at the Elands Bay caves.

Moorreesburg and Koringberg are major wheat-distributing towns. Tourists can visit the Wheat Industry Museum, one of only three of its kind in the world. Birdwatching, hiking, 4x4 routes, clay pigeon shooting, mountain biking trails, canoeing, and waterskiing at the Misverstand Dam are popular activities. Yzerfontein is famous for its unspoilt beaches, fynbos, beautiful views and whale watching. Another major attraction is the historical lime furnaces. Langebaan, a popular holiday destination, is home to the West Coast National Park.

An internationally renowned wetland that houses about 60 000 waterbirds and waders, the park attracts thousands of visitors each year. The oldest anatomically modern fossilised human footprints were also discovered here. The Langebaan Lagoon forms part of the park and is zoned for specific activities. The Postberg section of the park, across the lagoon, is famous for its wild flowers that bloom mainly during August and September. Cape Columbine at Paternoster is the last manned lighthouse build on the South African coast. The Columbine Nature Reserve is home to a variety of seabird species. Saldanha is a water sport enthusiast's paradise. Its attractions include Doc's Cave, a landmark on the scenic breakwater drive, and the Hoedjieskoppie Nature Reserve. There are various hiking trails in the SAS Saldanha Nature Reserve.

St Helena Bay is best known for the Vasco Da Gama Monument and Museum. Visitors can enjoy fishing (snoek in season), hiking as well as whale watching and birdwatching. Piketberg offers arts and crafts, diverse fauna and flora, a rich wine culture, and a range of recreational activities.

The Goedverwacht and Wittewater Moravian mission stations are close to the town. Porterville is famous for its Disa Route (best in January and February). The Groot Winterhoek Mountain Peak in the Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area is the second highest in the Western Cape. The Dasklip Pass is popular with hang-gliders. At Velddrif/ Laaiplek, visitors can indulge in bokkems (a West Coast salted-fish delicacy) at factories along the Berg River. Tourists can also visit the salt-processing factory and the West Coast Art Gallery in town.

The wine route from Citrusdal to Lutzville produces a selection of internationally acclaimed wines. Citrusdal is famous for its citrus products and wines. The Citrusdal Museum depicts the pioneering days of the early colonists. The Goede Hoop Citrus Cooperative is the largest single packing facility in South Africa. World-renowned Rooibos tea is also produced here.

The annual Citrusdal Outdoor Calabash features 4x4 outings, lectures and visits to rock-art sites and an arts and crafts market. Annually, scores of skydiving enthusiasts visit Citrusdal for a skydiving "boogie" that lasts several days. The oldest orange tree in the country, calculated to be more than 250-years-old, grows in the Citrusdal Valley. The Sandveldhuisie is an example of a typical Sandveld dwelling. The Cederberg Wilderness Area features the elephant's foot plant, the rare snow protea and some of the best examples of San rock art in the Western Cape.

Visitors to Clanwilliam can visit the Rooibos and Velskoen factories as well as the grave of the well-known South African poet Louis Leipoldt. Various historical buildings can also be viewed. The Clanwilliam and Bulshoek dams are popular among water sport enthusiasts. Wuppertal, at the foot of the Cederberg mountains, features the oldest Rhenish Mission Station. Proceeds from the 4x4 trails in the area fund the creation of new hiking trails and the construction of additional overnight huts and guest houses.

The town, which is well-known for its Rooibos and Buchu production, has added one more attraction to its tourism offerings – the Cederberg Donkey Cart Route. The project entails a three-day tour through the Cederberg Mountain area and Heuningvlei, with accommodation facilities for overnight visitors. Vredendal is the centre of the Lower Olifants River Valley.

Major attractions include marble processing and manufacturing, industrial mines (dolomite and limestone), the KWV Grape Juice Concentrate Plant and Distillery, and the South African Dried Fruit Cooperative. The town is also home to the Vredendal Wine Cellar, the largest cooperative wine cellar in the southern hemisphere. The picturesque town of Doringbaai with its attractive lighthouse is well known for its seafood.

Strandfontein, located approximately 8 km north of Doringbaai, is primarily a holiday and retirement resort offering a panoramic view of the ocean. Klawer was named after the wild clover that grows in the area. During the flower season, the area is a symphony of colour. The Doring River offers hiking trails and opportunities for river rafting. Lutzville and Koekenaap are synonymous with wine and flowers in season.

Visitors can also view the Sishen-Saldanha Railway Bridge. Where the railway line spans the Olifants River, it is divided into 23 sections, each 45 m long. The 14 100-tonne deck was pushed into position over teflon sheets with hydraulic jacks from the bridgehead. It is the longest bridge in the world built using this method. Vanrhynsdorp houses the largest succulent nursery in South Africa. The Latsky Radio Museum houses a collection of old valve radios, some dating back to 1924. The Troe Troe and Rietpoort mission stations are a must-see for history enthusiasts.

Overberg

In the most southerly region of Africa east of Cape Town, lies the Overberg. The Hangklip-Kleinmond area comprises Kleinmond, Betty's Bay, Pringle Bay and Rooi Els. It is a popular holiday region, ideal for whale watching, and includes the Kleinmond Coastal Nature Reserve and the Harold Porter Botanical Garden. The Penguin Reserve at Stoney Point, Betty's Bay, is one of two breeding colonies of the jackass penguin of Africa. South Africa's first international biosphere reserve, the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, was proclaimed by the UNESCO in 1999.

It runs along the coast from Gordon's Bay to the Bot River Vlei, stretching 2 km out to sea, and inland to the Groenlandberg Mountains near Grabouw. Hermanus is a popular holiday resort and famous for the best land-based whale watching in the world. Stanford is one of the few villages in South Africa where the market square has been retained. The central core of the village has been proclaimed a national conservation area.

Award-winning wines are produced in the area. Gansbaai is known for its excellent rock and boat angling, diving, shark-cage diving and whale watching. The Danger Point Lighthouse, named as such because of the ships that have been wrecked and lives lost on this dangerous coast, is open to the public. De Kelders is the only freshwater cave on the African coast. Spectacular views of southern right whales can be enjoyed from the cliffs at De Kelders and along the coast to Pearly Beach.

Also popular are white-shark tours, diving safaris and fishing trips. Elim was founded by German missionaries in 1824, with its only inhabitants being members of the Moravian Church. Visitors are welcome to attend services. The Old Watermill (1833) has been restored and declared a national monument. Popular sites in Napier include the Militaria Museum and Rose Boats and Toy Museum. The Shipwreck Museum in Bredasdorp, founded in 1975, specialises in shipwrecks found along the South African coastline. The town also has the Audrey Blignault Museum. De Mond Nature Reserve is home to some rare bird species, including the Damara tern and giant tern.

The Geelkop Nature Reserve derives its name from the mass of yellow flowering plants that cover the hill during spring. The lighthouse at L'Agulhas, which forms part of the Agulhas National Park, is the country's second-oldest working lighthouse. The Agulhas National Park is a ruggedly beautiful coastal plain of 20 959 ha. At Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of the continent, the waters cleave into the Indian and Atlantic oceans. The wrecks of some 130-seafaring craft yachts, Spanish galleons, Dutch East Indiamen, the legendary Birkenhead, and even modern-day fishing trawlers, have found a watery grave around the notorious Cape of Storms.

Struisbaai has the longest white coastline in the southern hemisphere. Arniston was named Waenhuiskrans (coach-house cliff) by the local fishers in honour of the huge sea cave capable of housing several oxwagons. For outsiders, it was named after the Arniston, a ship wrecked there in 1815. The Waenhuiskrans Cave can be explored at low tide. The De Hoop Nature Reserve on the way to Swellendam includes an internationally renowned wetland and bird sanctuary. It is a winter retreat for the Southern Right whale and the Western Cape's only Cape Griffon Vulture Colony.

The red Bredasdorp lily and many species of protea and erica are found in the Heuningberg Nature Reserve. Swellendam is well-known for its youngberries and eclectic architecture. The Drostdy Museum consists of a group of buildings containing a huge selection of period furniture. The Bontebok National Park, about 7 km from Swellendam, provides sanctuary to the threatened bontebok and other species. Known for its world class wine, Barrydale offers the visitor fruit and fresh air in abundance. Situated on the N2, about 160 km from Cape Town, Riviersonderend offers beautiful mountain and river scenery, a nine-hole golf course and sightings of the blue crane.

Caledon is famous for its natural mineral waters, hot springs and wildflower shows. Southern Associated Maltsters is the only malt producer for the South African lager beer industry and the largest in the southern hemisphere. Genadendal is the oldest Moravian village in Africa, with church buildings and a school dating back to 1738. The Genadendal Mission and Museum complex documents the first mission station in South Africa. Villiersdorp houses the Dagbreek Museum that dates to 1845 and was declared a monument in1994.

The historical home, Oude Radyn, is possibly the only building in the Western Cape to have Batavian wooden gutters and down pipes. The Theewaterskloof Dam, outside Villiersdorp, is the seventh largest dam in the country. The Villiersdorp Wild Flower Garden and Nature Reserve has an indigenous herb garden and a reference library.

The Grabouw/Elgin district produces about 60% of South Africa's total apple exports and fine wines. The valley is also renowned for cultivating fresh chrysanthemums, roses and proteas. The Elgin Apple Museum is one of only two in the world. Sir Lowry's Pass offers spectacular views of False Bay from Gordon's Bay to Cape Point.

Northern Cape

Characterised by its vast expanses of space and silence, warm sunny climate, friendly people and hospitality, the Northern Cape is a province with a rich culture heritage. Home to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope, this area gives impetus to the launch of the Astro-Tourism Strategy.

Diamond fields

The Big Hole in Kimberley is the largest hand-dug excavation in the world. In 1871, diamonds were discovered at the site and mined manually by prospectors. The Kimberley Tram Service dates to the early 20th century and continues to transport passengers from City Hall to the Mine Museum. Underground mine tours are a big attraction, as are the famous ghost tours, during which many historical buildings are seen from a different perspective.

Hand and mechanical diamond-digging by private diggers can be viewed by appointment. The McGregor Museum houses invaluable collections of the archaeological finds in the area, as well as San artworks. The house where Sol Plaatje (African National Congress founding member and human rights activist) lived in Kimberley has a library of Plaatje's and other black South African writers' works, and several displays, including a portrayal of black involvement in the Anglo-Boer/South African War. The Pioneers of Aviation Museum, located near Kimberley Airport, features a replica of the Compton-Paterson biplane, which was used

for pilot training by the flying school operated by the Paterson Aviation Syndicate at Alexandersfontein. A township tour of Galeshewe provides a fresh perspective on South Africa's socio-historical realities.

The Pan African Congress founder, Robert Sobukwe, lived there. The Magersfontein Battlefield, located outside Kimberley, features its original trenches and other defences intact, marking the site of the Boers' crushing defeat of the British during the Siege of Kimberley. A cultural centre at Wildebeestkuil outside Kimberley features !Xun and Khwe artwork for sale and a tour of rock engravings by these indigenous people. Barkley West attracts many water sports enthusiasts and anglers. Tucked along the Vaal River near Barkley West lies the Vaalbos National Park.

The park is not only home to large raptors, but also a breeding centre for endangered African herbivores such as rhino, roan and sable antelope and disease-free buffalo.

Kalahari

At Black Rock, visitors can view a worked-out manganese mine. Danielskuil lies at the foot of the Kuruman hills. The Tswana people occupied the area before it became home to the Griquas. Boesmansgat, on the farm Mount Carmel outside Danielskuil, is a unique natural sinkhole – the second-deepest and largest of its kind in the world. Known as the "Oasis of the Kalahari", Kuruman is blessed with a permanent and abundant source of water that flows from Gasegonyana (Setswana for "the little water calabash") – commonly called the "Eye of Kuruman" – which yields 20 million litres of water per day.

Moffat's Mission in Kuruman features the house of missionary Robert Moffat, the church he built as well as several other historic buildings. Moffat translated the Bible into Setswana – the first African language in which the Bible was made accessible. The printing press on which he printed the first 2 000 copies can still be viewed. The church he built seats 800 people and is still in use. Explorer David Livingstone married Moffat's daughter and started many famous travels from this mission station. The Wonderwerk Cave at Kuruman features extensive San paintings that may be viewed by appointment.

The Kalahari Raptor Centre cares for injured birds. Many of these majestic creatures can be seen at close quarters. The Witsand Nature Reserve, situated about 80 km south-west of Postmasburg, features a 100-m high dune of brilliant white sand. It stretches for about 9 km and is about 2 km wide.

Green Kalahari

The Roaring Sands site on the farm Doornaar, near Groblershoop, is a popular tourist attraction. Its high sand dunes, surrounded by typically red Kalahari dunes, are said to "roar" when the wind blows. Along the hand-built irrigation canals at Kakamas 11 waterwheels are still used. Kanoneiland is a settlement on the biggest island in the Orange River. At Keimoes, the Orange River flows at its widest. The Tierberg Nature Reserve offers spectacular views of the Keimoes Valley and the many islands in the Orange River.

The original irrigation canal system is still in use. The Orange River Wine Cellar's largest cellar is situated here. Kenhardt is the oldest town in the Lower Orange River area. The Quiver Tree Forest and Kokerboom Hiking Trail, consisting of between 4 000 and 5 000 quiver trees, are within easy driving distance of the town.

Upington is the commercial, educational and social centre of the Green Kalahari, owing its prosperity to agriculture and its irrigated lands along the Orange River. A camel-and-rider statue in front of the town's police station pays tribute to the "mounties", who patrolled the harsh desert territory on camels. The Kalahari Desert SpeedWeek is an annual eight-day speed festival held in a far north-western corner of South Africa. It is a motorsport event where anybody is welcome to enter, and anything with an engine is eligible. Over the years, the event has also become a meeting place for all sorts of eccentric machinery and people.

The Orange River displays its impressive power at the Augrabies Falls in the Augrabies Falls National Park. Visitors can hire canoes to ensure closer contact with the natural heritage surrounding the world's sixth-largest waterfall. The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park comprises 38 000 m2 of land, making it one of the largest conservation areas in the world. Straddling the Green Kalahari and Botswana, the park is a two-million-ha sanctuary for various raptors, antelope, gemsbok, springbok, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, eland, Kalahari lion, black-maned lion, brown and spotted hyena, leopard, cheetah and smaller game, including mongoose, porcupine and the endangered honey badger.

Namaqualand

The Namas are the indigenous people of Namaqualand. Their traditional Nama reed huts still abound in Leliefontein, Nourivier and Steinkopf. Namaqualand is famous for an annual show in spring when an abundance of wild flowers covers vast tracts of desert. The flowers sprout and survive for a brief period before they wilt and disappear in the heat and dry conditions just as suddenly as they appeared.

The small town of Garies is the centre for those setting out to enjoy this show of exuberance in the Kamiesberg. Since diamonds were discovered along the West Coast in 1925, Alexander Bay has become known for its mining activities. The town is no longer a high-security area and no permits are needed to enter. The Alexkor Museum paints a picture of the history of the area. The town also features the world's largest desert lichenfield, which has some 26 species.

At Hondeklip Bay, visitors can dive for crayfish and watch the local fisherfolk conduct their trade. Port Nolloth is a centre for the small-scale diamond-recovery and crayfish industries. It is the only holiday resort on the Diamond Coast. The local factory sells fish and crayfish in season. Set in a narrow valley bisecting the granite domes of the Klein Koperberge lies Springbok. South of Springbok, near Kamieskroon, lies the Skilpad Wild Flower Reserve, part of the Namaqua National Park, which captures the full grandeur of the flower season.

The 1 000 ha reserve is open only during the flower season. The Goegap Nature Reserve comprises more than 15 000 ha of typically granite, rocky hills and sandy flats. The reserve also offers a 4x4 trail, as well as several hiking and mountain-biking trails. Namaqualand is also home to the Ai-Ais Richtersveld National Park. It is managed jointly by the local Nama people and the South African National Parks.

Upper Karoo (Bo-Karoo)

Flanked by the Towerberg, Colesberg is one of the Northern Cape's most beautiful towns. The town features one of the country's last working horse mills. An Anglo-Boer/South

African War tour is also on offer. A weekend tour includes a visit to the Norval's Pont prisoner-of-war camp and cemetery. Colesberg has bred many of the country's top Merino sheep. It is also renowned for producing high-quality racehorses. De Aar is the most important railway junction in South Africa. Author Olive Schreiner lived in the town for many years.

Visitors can dine in her former house, which has been converted into a restaurant. Hanover is known for its handmade shoes and articles made mostly from sheepskin and leather. The "Star of South Africa" diamond was discovered at Hopetown. The town also features an old toll house and a block house dating from the Anglo-Boer/South African War.

At Wonderdraai, near Prieska, visitors can see the horseshoe-shaped island formed by the flow of the Orange River. It seems as if the river turns to flow uphill. Vanderkloof, built to house the people building the Vanderkloof Dam, was turned into a flourishing holiday resort. Visitors can enjoy waterskiing, boardsailing, boating and swimming, or visit the Eskom hydro-electric power station within the dam's wall. The rare riverine rabbit is found in the Victoria West Nature Reserve.

Hantam Karoo

Near Brandvlei lies Verneukpan where Sir Malcolm Campbell unsuccessfully attempted to break the world land-speed record in 1929. Carnarvon is well known for its corbelled dome-roofed houses, built of flat stones due to a lack of wood. The floors of these interesting houses were smeared and coloured with a rich red mixture of fat and oxblood and polished with smooth stone.

A few km outside Fraserburg lies the Gansfontein palaeo-surface. Discovered in 1968, it comprises several trackways of large, four-footed and five-toed mammalian reptiles. The prints are estimated to be some 190 million years old. Sutherland, birthplace of Nicolaas Petrus van Wyk Louw, well-known Afrikaans author and poet, is also known for its brilliant night skies and cold, biting winters.

The South African Astronomical Observatory's observation telescopes, including the Southern African Large Telescope, are in Sutherland. The sterboom (star tree), which blossoms in September, is found only in Sutherland. The Tankwa Karoo National Park, on the southern border of the Northern Cape, 70 km west of Sutherland, encompasses the Succulent Karoo Biome, the world's only arid hotspot, stretches 116 000 km² from the south-western Cape into southern Namibia.

The landscape offers seasonal contrasts of coloured wild flowers and stark desert, set against the backdrop of the Roggeveld Escarpment to the east, Klein Roggeveld to the south and the Cederberg to the west. Its extensive desert plateaus are ideal for viewing game such as gemsbok, Cape mountain zebra, springbuck and bustards.

Free State

The Free State lies in the heart of South Africa, with the Kingdom of Lesotho nestling in the hollow of its bean-like shape. Between the Vaal River in the north and the Orange River in the south, this rolling prairie stretches as far as the eye can see. This central region is characterised by rolling fields of wheat, sunflowers and maize, and forms the principal bread basket of South Africa.

Golden Gate

The Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre was recently launched as a new attraction, fusing culture and history.

Bloemfontein

With its King's Park Rose Garden containing more than 4 000 rose bushes, the Free State's major city, Bloemfontein, has rightfully earned the nickname "City of Roses". The city also hosts an annual rose festival. The Eerste Raadsaal (First Parliament Building), built in 1849 as a school, is Bloemfontein's oldest surviving building. Still in its original condition, this historical building is used as the seat of the provincial legislature. The National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre has works by prominent Afrikaans authors.

Exhibits in the Afrikaans Music Museum and Theatre Museum (part of the centre) include old musical instruments, sheet music, costumes, photographs and furniture. The museum is notable for its wide collection of fossils, cultural-historical exhibits and archaeological displays, including the Florisbad Skull, which was discovered in the 1930s at the Florisbad Spring. The National Women's Memorial is a sandstone obelisk, 36.5 m high, which commemorates the women and children who died in concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer/South African War.

Visitors get a glimpse of life in the concentration and prisoner-of-war camps. The research library contains an extensive collection of Africana. The Old Presidency dates to 1885 and was the official residence of three presidents of the former Republic of the Orange Free State. It houses a museum depicting their respective terms of office, and is a cultural centre for art exhibitions, theatrical productions and musical events.

The Observatory Theatre in Bloemfontein's Game Reserve is a unique attraction. Naval Hill is the biggest game reserve surrounded by a city. Bloemfontein hosts the Mangaung African Cultural Festival, popularly known as the MACUFE, in September every year. The Sand du Plessis Theatre and Art Gallery at Oliewenhuis are also worth visiting.

Botshabelo (Place of Refuge), 45 km from Bloemfontein on the N8 road to Lesotho, is believed to be the largest township settlement in the Free State – and the second-largest in South Africa after Soweto. Nearby, the town of Thaba Nchu features luxury hotels and a casino, with the Maria Moroka Nature Reserve surrounding Thaba Nchu Sun and the Setlogelo Dam.

Xhariep

Bethulie used to be a London Missionary Society station. The original mission buildings still stand. The Pellissier House Museum showcases the local history. There is an Anglo-Boer/South African War concentration camp cemetery in Bethulie. The Gariep Dam, spanning more than 100 km in length and 15 km in width, is part of the Orange River Water Scheme, the largest inland expanse of water in South Africa. Between the dam and Bethulie is the Gariep Dam Nature Reserve. On the southern side of the dam lies the Oviston Nature Reserve. Philippolis, the oldest town in the Free State, was founded as a London Missionary Society station in 1824. It was the first mission station in the province.

Trompsburg is the hub of the Free State Merino sheep-

farming industry. The Tussen-die-Riviere Nature Reserve reputedly supports more game than any other sanctuary in the Free State. A fountain near Koffiefontein was a favourite resting place for transport riders in the 19th century. In June 1870, one of these transport riders picked up a diamond near the fountain. This prompted a rush, and by 1882 Koffiefontein was a booming town with four mining companies.

Thabo Mofutsanyana

Snowcapped mountains and beautiful scenery provide a backdrop to this pristine area. Clocolan is renowned for the beauty of its cherry trees in full bloom during the spring. San rock paintings and engravings are also found in the area. Clarens is often described as the "Jewel of the Free State", owing to its exceptionally beautiful scenery.

San paintings are found on farms in the area. Close by, the Highlands Route meanders along the foothills of the Maluti Mountains and follows the Lesotho border via Ladybrand and ends at Zastron in the south.

The town is known for the many arts and crafts shops, which offer the visitor a wide range of curios and original artwork. Ficksburg is known for its asparagus and cherry farms. Every November, a cherry festival is held there. The town is a gateway to the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. Rosendal, surrounded by the Witte Mountains, celebrated its centenary in 2011. The Golden Gate Highlands National Park, known for its impressive sandstone cliffs and rock formations, is a popular holiday destination.

The birdwatching mecca of Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve near Memel constitutes a wetland with Ramsar status and is surrounded by private game and holiday farms.

Lejweleputswa

Bethlehem, which lies on the banks of the Jordaan River, was founded by the Voortrekkers in the 1840s. The banks of the Jordaan River form part of the Pretoriuskloof Nature Reserve. This is a sanctuary for birds and small game. The museum in Miller Street depicts the history of the area. Van Reenen's Pass winds through the Drakensberg, and was originally used by migrating herds of zebra, hartebeest, blesbok and wildebeest.

The Llandaff Oratory in the nearby village of Van Reenen is believed to be the smallest Roman Catholic church in the world. At Harrismith, there are various memorials in honour of those who fought in the Anglo-Boer/South African War and World War I. Of particular interest is a memorial for the Scots Guards and Grenadier Guards. Platberg, the 2 394-m "flat mountain", is the town's landmark. The Harrismith Mountain Race, well-known race, claimed by some to be the toughest in the country, is run annually up, along and back down the mountain. Sterkfontein Dam is ideal for water sports and fishing. An open-water swimming race takes place there annually.

The Riemland Museum in Heilbron depicts the heritage and agricultural activities of the region. The QwaQwa district is a traditional home to the Basotho people. The Basotho Cultural Village in the QwaQwa Nature Reserve is a living museum where visitors can witness the Sotho traditions and lifestyle in the chief's kraal. Karakul carpets, mohair, wall hangings, copper, glassware and brass are made and sold at Phuthaditjhaba. The nearby Metsi Matsho and Fika Patso dams are renowned for trout fishing. Welkom is known for its gold mines.

It is also the only city in the country where traffic circles are used instead of traffic lights. The world's deepest wine cellar is at the St Helena Mine, which is 857 m below the Earth's surface. Bothaville is regarded as the centre of the Free State Maize Route. The Nampo Harvest Farm and Festival attracts more than 20 000 visitors each year and is the second-largest private agricultural show in the world. Bothaville also hosts the annual Food and Witblits festival, drawing visitors from all over South Africa.

The sandstone church in Kestell is possibly the most impressive of all the Eastern Free State's sandstone buildings. Winburg is the oldest town and first capital of the former Republic of the Orange Free State. The Voortrekker Museum depicts the daily routine of the trekkers. A concentration camp cemetery is situated nearby. Sasolburg was established in 1954 with the founding of Sasol, a synthetic fuel producer. Parys, situated on the banks of the Vaal River, offers tourists a tranquil river retreat. The nearby Vrederfort Dome World Heritage Site was caused by the collision of a meteorite with the Earth many years ago.

It is the only world heritage site in the Free State. It features unique fauna and flora, including 100 different plant species, more than 300 bird types and a variety of small mammals. Jukskei is the first indigenous game that has developed to international participation. The Jukskei Museum in Kroonstad has over 3 500 objects that depict the development of the game. Jagersfontein has the deepest man-made hole in the world. The Excelsior diamond of 971 carats was found in this open-cast mine in 1893. Eagles nest against the cliffs of the mine.

Eastern Cape

The main feature of the Eastern Cape is its magnificent coastline with its open sandy beaches, secluded lagoons and towering cliffs. Added to the diverse coastal experiences are more than 60 state-owned game reserves and over 30 private game farms, which collectively cover an area greater than the Kruger National Park.

Mountain region

The Amatola Mountains are famous for their scenery and history; and they stretch from Adelaide in the east to Stutterheim in the west. With its lush forests and ancient battlefields, it is an area steeped in Xhosa culture and early settler history. The dense forests of the Amatolas are a haven for the endangered Cape parrot, and were also home to the first dinosaur to be identified in South Africa, the Blinkwater Monster, a large-fossilised reptile discovered near Fort Beaufort.

Outdoor enthusiasts enjoy Cathcart where trout fishing, hiking, riding and birdwatching are among the attractions. The Amatole Hiking Trail is a well-known scenic, with a strenuous trail. The coastal city of Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) is a superb holiday destination offering a diverse mix of eco-attractions. It also hosts the annual Buoy open-water swim and the Isuzu National Sailing Week held annually in April in Algoa Bay. The Red Location Museum of the People's Struggle in New Brighton, was designed to be a monument to South Africa's Struggle against apartheid, and an integral part of community life in a township that acted as a crucible for the struggle.

Bay World has an oceanarium and snake park, and many splendid museums. Within the city there are some beautiful parks with well-landscaped gardens. These include St George's Park, which covers 73 ha and houses the famous Gqeberha Cricket Club, the oldest bowling green in South Africa; Prince Alfred's Guard Memorial; the 1882 Victorian Pearson Conservatory; and the 54-ha Settlers' Park.

Tourists can also explore the Donkin Heritage Trail, take a ride on the famous Apple Express, and hike along the site of ancient shipwrecks on the Sacramento Trail. At King William's Town, tourists can visit the Amathole Missionary Museum. The grave of the Black Consciousness activist, Steve Biko, is also in the town. Other attractions include the Greater Addo Elephant National Park and game reserves; the traditional healing village, Kaya Lendaba, birdwatching; air tours; canoeing; various mountain-biking and horse-riding trails; and organised outdoor excursions.

Wild Coast

Since Portuguese mariners first pioneered the sea route around the Cape to India, this notorious coast has claimed countless ships. Southern right and humpback whales, along with their calves, are regularly spotted from the high dunes, typically between May and November. Meanwhile, common and bottlenose dolphins are often seen close to shore. The entire region is the home of a major section of the isiXhosa-speaking southern Nguni (or Pondo) tribes. Brightly coloured examples of their beadwork, together with traditional pottery and basketry, can be bought from roadside vendors and at some trading posts.

Visitors to the rural village of Qunu can view the childhood home of former President Nelson Mandela. In Mthatha, the Nelson Mandela Museum tells the story of this great figure through a display reflecting the life and times of Mandela. Mandela received thousands of gifts from presidents, groups and ordinary people. Accepted on behalf of the people of South Africa, they are in safekeeping at the museum for the benefit and appreciation of the nation. Artefacts range from children's letters to bejewelled camel covers. Coffee Bay is popular among surfers, anglers and shell collectors.

To the south is the prominent rock formation, the Hole in the Wall. The local Xhosa people refer to this place as Izi Khaleni ("Place of Thunder"). During high tide, the waves break through the hole in such a way that the concussion can be heard throughout the valley.

East Griqualand

East Griqualand is an area of great beauty, featuring colourful, living history. Kokstad lies in the Umzimhlava River basin between Mount Currie and the Ngele Mountains. The original town hall, built in 1910, is a national monument, now serving as the local library. The former library, built in 1907, is also a national monument and houses the Kokstad Museum. The Weza State Forest runs through indigenous forests and commercial plantations.

The forest is home to several antelope species and a huge variety of birds. The southernmost portion of the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site, the impressive Swartberg, Bokkiesberg, Cedarberg and Ngele mountain ranges lie in East Griqualand. Between Kokstad and excursions into its surrounding, water-filled hollows. Steam-train journeys can be undertaken between Swartberg and Creighton.

Karoo

The vast plains of the Karoo have an air of grandeur, and its many picturesque towns are steeped in history. The Owl House in Nieu- Bethesda displays the creative talent of the late Helen Martins. Statues of mermaids, wise men, camels, owls and churches create a wonderland in the garden. All the artworks were created with broken bottles, bits of mirror and cement. More than 200 houses in Graaff-Reinet have been restored to their original Victorian appearance and proclaimed national monuments. The Old Library Museum houses the Lex Bremner Fossil Collection of Karoo reptile fossils and a collection of Khoi and San art reproductions.

Urquhart House has a popular genealogical research centre. Almost 50 km south-west of Graaff-Reinet is the Kalkkop Crater, which is of major scientific importance. To the north-west of Graaff- Reinet lies the Valley of Desolation. A steep and narrow road leads into the mountains that surround the valley. The Valley of Desolation is a national monument within the Karoo Nature Reserve, and was formed millions of years ago by weathering erosion. The first evidence of the presence of dinosaurs in South Africa can be viewed at Maclear.

The Mountain Zebra National Park is a haven for the Cape mountain zebra species, which at one time inhabited most of the Cape. The park saved these animals from extinction, and their population stands at about 300. Other species found in the park include various antelope such as eland, the African wildcat, bat-eared fox, and more than 200 bird species, including the pale-winged starling, the booted eagle and the blue crane.

N6 Route

This route runs from Bloemfontein to East London. Popular attractions include the slopes of the Tiffindell Ski Resort and the trout-filled streams, as well as the many caves adorned with ancient rock art. Several historic towns can be found in the region, including Smithfield, Barkly East, Lady Grey, Elliot, Aliwal North, Burgersdorp, Queenstown and Rhodes.

Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast comprises miles of beaches. Port Alfred lies at the mouth of the Kowie River. Coastal hills are home to the oribi – a small territorial buck that was recently near extinction. Inland, Makhanda (previously Grahamstown) is sometimes referred to as the "City of Saints" due to the more than 40 churches in the town. It is also known for the National Arts Festival, which is held annually. During the festival, Grahamstown is transformed into a dedicated arts venue where performers, visual artists, audiences, writers and craftspeople fuse in a celebration of creative energy.

Other attractions include various museums and historical buildings, the oldest post box in South Africa, botanical gardens, the cathedrals of St Michael and St George, nature reserves and hiking trails. Situated northeast of Makhanda, the Great Fish River Reserve consists primarily of valley bushveld habitat and is surrounded by tribal land, commercial game reserves, and farms.

The reserve has abundant wildlife such as white rhino, giraffe, waterbuck, Cape buffalo, hippo, kudu, springbok and eland. There are several historic forts and remains from the

frontier wars located in the area. East London, which forms part of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, is South Africa's only river port city.

It was originally established as a supply port to serve the colonial British military headquarters at King William's Town. The East London Aquarium houses approximately 400 different marine and freshwater species. The museum depicts the natural environment and rich heritage of the region.

Best known for the prehistoric coelacanth, the museum also displays reconstructions of the extinct dodo of Mauritius, along with the only extant dodo egg in the world. The Baviaanskloof Wilderness Area is the largest of the inland protected areas and provides opportunities to visit fynbos-covered mountains on foot or in off-road vehicles. There is a fascinating shell collection at the Shell Museum at Kei Mouth.

Tsitsikamma

This region, stretching from Plettenberg Bay to Jeffreys Bay, is renowned for its dense forests, majestic mountains and deep river gorges. It forms the eastern end of the Garden Route. The word "tsitsikamma" is derived from the Khoekhoen words "tse-tsesa" meaning "clear", and "gami" meaning "water". South Africa's first marine park, the Tsitsikamma National Park, extends along a rocky coastline of 50 km and 3 km out to sea. Inland, adventure seekers will find deep gorges and temperate evergreen forests crisscrossed by six hiking trails, including the five-day Otter Trail. The varied wildlife includes dolphins and whales, caracal, genet, chacma baboon, dassie and mongoose.

Prominent bird species in the area are the African black oystercatcher, the orange-breasted sunbird, the Nerina trogon and the colourful Knysna loerie. A lucky few may catch a glimpse of the rare Cape clawless otter, after which the Otter Trail is named. Another popular adventure is a blackwater tubing experience on the Storms River.

Limpopo

The Limpopo landscape is made up of dramatic contrasts characterised by hot savanna plains and mist-clad mountains, age-old indigenous forests and cycads alongside modern plantations, ancient mountain fortresses and the luxury of contemporary infrastructure and modern-day facilities. Steeped in history, Limpopo celebrates a rich cultural heritage, and at many archaeological sites, the mysteries of the past and ancient peoples are still being unearthed. Much of the land, particularly in the Kruger National Park and other game and nature reserves, is unspoilt and provides sanctuary to large numbers of game.

Waterberg

The Nylsvley Nature Reserve has one of the greatest concentrations of waterfowl and bushveld birds in South Africa. More than 400 species frequent the area. The Mokopane vicinity has several nature reserves. The Arend Dieperink Museum features a fine cultural-historical collection. The Makapansgat Caves are notable for their fossils, and the caves are being developed into an archaeological site. Makapan Valley is an extension of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site.

The Thabazimbi district has a large concentration of private game reserves and is one of the fastest-growing ecotourism areas in the country. The Marakele National Park is home to some rare yellowwood and cedar trees and the world's largest colony of Cape vultures. Bela Bela is known for its hot springs. There are also a number of game reserves and leisure resorts in the area. The Waterberg range is rich in indigenous trees, streams, springs, wetlands and birdlife. Cliffs known as the "Palace of The Vultures" harbour a large breeding colony of Cape vultures. Modimolle is the region's main town.

Capricorn District

The Bakone Malapa Northern Sotho Open-Air Museum, located outside Polokwane, is a traditional kraal. Men and women practise traditional skills such as making baskets, clay pots, furniture and utensils, as well as preparing hides. Polokwane is considered the premier game-hunting destination in South Africa. Polokwane offers a variety of museums and art galleries, including the Bakone Malapa Museum, the Polokwane Museum and the Hugh Exton Photographic Museum. Zion City at Moria, near Polokwane, is the headquarters of the Zion Christian Church, which attracts more than a million pilgrims every Easter.

Vhembe District

The Mapungubwe archaeological site, 80 km west of Musina, lies within the boundaries of the Mapungubwe National Park. It is one of the richest of its kind in Africa and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Excavations in the 1930s uncovered a royal graveyard, which included several golden artefacts, including the famous gold-foil rhinoceros. The Schoemansdal Voortrekker Town and Museum, west of Makhado, is built on the site of an original Voortrekker village and depicts their lifestyle between 1848 and 1852. Also, worth visiting is the Big Tree in the Mutale Municipality, the Tshatshingo potholes, the mystical lake of Dzivhafundudzi and the holy forest and waterfalls at Phiphidi.

Mopani District

The Lekgameetse Nature Reserve in the northern foothills of the Drakensberg is part of the Cloud Mountain Biosphere. This 18 000-ha nature reserve is well known for its abundant butterflies. The Modjadji Nature Reserve, north of Tzaneen, is named after the legendary Rain Queen, Makobo Constance Modjadji, who is believed to have settled in the area early in the 16th century.

The reserve encompasses the world's largest concentration of the cycad species Encephalartos transvenosus, also known as the Modjadji cycad. The Hans Merensky Nature Reserve and Mineral Spa on the southern banks of the Great Letaba River supports a large variety of game. At the adjoining Tsonga Kraal Open-Air Museum, arts, crafts and traditional huts reflect the Tsonga lifestyle of 100 years ago.

The Kruger National Park (northern section) is home to a large number and wide variety of amphibians, reptiles and birds, as well as 147 mammal species, including the Big Five. Thulamela, in the northern part of the Kruger National Park, yielded the skeletons of two ancient royals and a multitude of artefacts, including gold bangles, beads and a double gong. On the way to the Kruger National Park, visitors can enjoy wildlife experiences at Manyeleti, home to the Big Five. Adventurers can attempt mountain-climbing at

the Mangwazi Nature Reserve, enjoy the Mapulaneng Trail at Zoeknog and the Injaka Dam at Bushbuckridge.

North-West

North-West has several cultural villages that entertain and enrich visitors. A number of game reserves have been established, including the Pilanesberg National Park, situated in the transition zone between the Kalahari and the Lowveld. Home to the Big Five, the park offers a wide variety of accommodation and is close to popular attractions such as Sun City and only a two/three-hour drive from Johannesburg. The park has an area of approximately 550 km², making it the fourth largest park in South Africa supporting more than 7 000 herd of game and 350 bird species.

Central District

The historic route of Mahikeng includes an Anglo-Boer/South African War siege site, the Molema House where Sol Plaatje lived while writing his Mafikeng Diary, and the Mahikeng Museum. The Lichtenburg Biodiversity Conservation Centre and the Botsalano Game Reserve are well worth a visit. The Groot Marico region is known as mampoer country and visitors can explore the Mampoer Route. The Kortkloof Cultural Village is dedicated to the Tswana people.

Other attractions include the Wondergat; the Bosbult Monument, which commemorates a battle fought during the Anglo-Boer/South African War; the Kaditshwene Iron Age Village Ruins; and various hiking trails. Ottosdal is in the centre of North West. It was established as a Dutch Reformed Church parish on the farm Korannafontein in 1913 and named after its owner, Gerhardus Petrus Otto. It is the only place in South Africa where the unique "wonderstone", or pyrophyllite, is found and mined. The annual agricultural show in Ottosdal is one of the oldest in the province. Trenches and cemeteries dating back to the Anglo-Boer/South African War can be found on the farms of Gestoptefontein and Driekuil.

In the Garden of Remembrance are graves of soldiers killed during the war. The Old Farmhouse built in 1910 houses a unique African collection. The Old Watermill built around 1860 is a national monument. The Ottosdal Night Race is organised in conjunction with the Diamond Marathon Club. The event consists of 42.2-km, 21.1-km and 10-km races and a 5-km fun run. San rock engravings, Stone Age implements and structures are found on farms such as Witpoort, Gestoptefontein, Driekuil and Korannafontein.

Eastern District

Hartbeespoort Dam is a popular spot for weekend outings; breakfast runs and yachting. The Hartbeespoort Reptile and Animal Park are on the banks of the dam. Cultural experiences in the area include the popular Mapoch and Gaabo Motho cultural villages as well as the Ring Wagon Inn. The Ann van Dyk Cheetah Centre (formerly the De Wildt Cheetah Breeding and Research Centre) specialises in breeding cheetah and other endangered wildlife species. Other places of interest include the Borakalalo Game Reserve, the Margaret Roberts Herb Farm, and the Phaladingwe Nature Trail.

Bophirima District

The Taung Skull Fossil Site and Blue Pools are renowned for the Taung skull found in the Buxton quarries. The Taung Skull Fossil Site is an extension of the Sterkfontein Fossil Hominid Site. This region is popular with adventure seekers – especially those who enjoy 4x4 routes and hunting farms.

Rustenburg District

The 60 000-ha Madikwe Game Reserve is home to 66 large mammal species. Over 10 000 animals of 27 major species have been reintroduced under Operation Phoenix. Hot-air balloon trips, day and night game drives and bushwalks are available. The reserve has the second-largest elephant population in South Africa and guests are assured of sighting not only the Big Five but also the elusive cheetah and endangered wild dog.

Sun City and the Palace of the Lost City are very popular tourist attractions, offering gambling, golf, extravaganza shows, water sports and an artificial beach. The region offers various hiking trails. The Heritage Route starts at the Sterkfontein Caves World Heritage Site and ends at Pilanesberg.

Southern District

The OPM Prozesky Bird Sanctuary in Potchefstroom has over 200 bird species and is situated adjacent to the Mooi River. The Oudorp Hiking Trail takes visitors through the old part of Klerksdorp, where 12 Voortrekker families settled. Other attractions in the region include the Potchefstroom Lakeside Resort, the Faan Meintjies Nature Reserve in Klerksdorp, mine tours at Orkney, the Diggers Route at Wolmaransstad, and the Bloemhof Dam Nature Reserve.

Mpumalanga

Mpumalanga – "The Place Where the Sun Rises" – epitomises every traveller's dream of the true African experience. Located in the northeastern part of South Africa, the province is bordered by Mozambique to the east and the Kingdom of Eswatini to the south and east. The climate and topography vary from cool highland grasslands at 1 600 m above sea level, through the Middleveld and escarpment, to the subtropical Lowveld towards the Kruger National Park and many private game reserves.

Scenic beauty, climate and wildlife, voted the most attractive features of South Africa, are found in abundance in this province. Attractions range from game viewing and birdwatching to scenic drives across the valleys and peaks of the vast Drakensberg escarpment, and include agritourism, industrial and adventure tourism and cultural experiences.

Historical sites and cultural villages, old wagon routes and monuments mark events and characters who passed this way in search of adventure and wealth. Ndebele bead work and wall-painting in the north-west, the arts and crafts of the Lowveld. The different traditional villages throughout the province offer a unique insight into the people's history and cultures.

Mbombela

Mbombela is the capital of Mpumalanga and the commercial and administrative hub of the Lowveld. The Mbombela Historical Trail is an hour-long walking route stretching from the Promenade Centre to the Civic Centre. The Green Heritage Hiking Trail in the Mbombela Nature Reserve is one of several walks in the reserve and one of many in the

region. Not to be missed is the Lowveld Botanical Garden, as well as the Reptile Park, the Sudwala Caves and the PR Owen Dinosaur Park.

The tranquil town of White River to the north of Mbombela is well known as an artist's haven and a gateway to the Kruger National Park. Rottcher Wineries have taken advantage of the area's prime production of oranges to make a truly unique wine, which has been a hallmark of the area for over 50 years.

Panorama

Barberton features many reminders of the early gold-rush era. Museums include Belhaven, Fernlea House and Stopforth House. The only known verdite deposits in the world are found in the rocks of the Barberton district. The annual Diggers Festival is held in September. The Blyderivierspoort Nature Reserve near Graskop is characterised by striking rock formations and a rich diversity of plants. Within the reserve, the Bourke's Luck potholes were formed by river erosion and the action of floodwater.

The Blyde River Canyon is a 26-km-long gorge carved out of the face of the escarpment, and is one of the natural wonders of Africa. The canyon is the third-largest in the world, the only green canyon, and hosts three rivers that feed the Blydepoort Dam at Swadini. God's Window provides a magnificent panoramic view across miles of densely forested mountains, the green Lowveld and the canyon. The Blyderivierspoort Hiking Trail is one of the most popular in the country. The southern section of the Kruger National Park, which is a major tourist attraction, falls within this region. Kaapsehoop is a historical village known for the wild horses that frequent the district.

Blue swallows are regular visitors from September to April. The Lydenburg Museum is in the Gustav Klingbiel Reserve, which is the site of archaeological ruins from the Later Iron Age. The Lydenburg Heads, human-like masks dating back to 500 AD, were discovered in this area. Sabie is the centre of the largest man-made forest in South Africa and a popular mountain-biking destination. The Cultural Historical Forestry Museum depicts various aspects of the country's forestry industry. The Bridal Veil, Horseshoe and Lone Creek waterfalls, and Mac Mac pools and falls just outside Sabie are well worth a visit. The 69-km Prospector's Trail starts at the Mac Mac Forest Station and leads to the Bourke's Luck potholes.

At the Montrose Falls in Schoemanskloof, the Crocodile River cascades 12 m into a series of rock pools. It is also the starting point of the annual Lowveld Crocodile Canoe Marathon, held in February. Pilgrim's Rest is a living museum and a replica of the early gold-mining town. The Alanglade House Museum offers guided tours of the former mine manager's house, while the Diggings Museum just outside the town arranges guided tours of gold-panning activities. This area was the setting for Jock of the Bushveld, the novel by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick about the experiences of a man and his dog as they shared adventures in the world of African gold-mining.

The Dredzen Shop Museum features a range of items in use nearly a century ago. Mount Sheba Nature Reserve, south of Pilgrim's Rest, is best known for its indigenous forest – one of the few left in the region.

Highlands Meander

The Highlands Meander is a mecca for fly fishers. It is in the pristine waters of this region that one finds various stocks of fish, with trout as the major drawcard. At the Verloren Vlei and Steenkampsberg nature reserves at Dullstroom, one can get a rare glimpse of the endangered blue, wattled, and crowned cranes. The Loskop Dam Nature Reserve offers game-watching, boating, and fishing. Many hiking trails are available, such as the Elandskrans Trail, which includes a 30-minute train ride between Waterval Boven and Waterval Onder.

Cultural Heartland

Visitors to the Cultural Heartland can immerse themselves in the true cultural heritage of Mpumalanga. Here, one can learn about the proud and welcoming Ndebele people, revered for the striking and colourful geometric patterns on their houses, clothing and beadwork. This region also has illuminating historical sites such as the Botshabelo Historical Village near Middelburg.

Cosmos Country

Cosmos Country covers parts of what is known as the energy belt of Mpumalanga, which is home to a number of power stations. This region also has the world's largest underground coal-mining complex and the Sasol plant that is renowned for its oil-from-coal technology. The carpet of cosmos flowers that blossom in late summer lures visitors to this region.

Wild Frontier

Various archaeological discoveries dating back almost three billion years were made in the imposing mountains of this region. Visitors can enjoy a rare glimpse of the San paintings embossed in some rocks. The region also holds rich historical sentiments centred on the monument of the late Mozambican President Samora Machel, constructed in the village of Mbuzini.

Grass and wetlands

Grass and wetlands are a paradise with their variety of bird species. This region stretches across the deep valleys and mountains of the east where thermal springs bubble to the surface. There are 270 pans and lakes within a 20 km radius of Lake Chrissie. In this region, visitors can take part in the unusual "frogging expedition" or simply gaze at the stars during "star-gazing weekends".

Gauteng

Gauteng, the "Place of Gold", is the commercial powerhouse of the country, but its offerings are not limited to commerce and industry. Anchored by the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, Gauteng provides plenty in the way of entertainment through its network of upmarket shopping malls, casinos, street markets, theatres, restaurants, museums and parks. Gauteng is characterised by a cosmopolitan mix of people from all walks of life. The province's unique cultural and social legacy is evident from the many excellent museums, theatres, cultural precincts and craft markets.

Although Gauteng is the most populated, built-up and industrialised province, it still has natural areas offering a variety of leisure activities such as day hikes, picnic spots

and sports activities. The Vaal Dam, which supplies water to most of Gauteng's residents, covers some 300 km2 and is a popular venue for water sports. Numerous resorts line the shore. The dam also attracts diverse bird species. Tourism attractions in and around the Cradle of Humankind have grown to more than 380, with over half of these offering graded accommodation.

The broader 47 000-ha Cradle of Humankind site has many caves, the most famous of which are the Sterkfontein caves. In 1999, Sterkfontein and its environs were declared a world heritage site. About 40% of all the world's human ancestor fossils have been found here, including several of the world's most famous and important fossils. A further 500 hominid fossils and more than 9 000 stone tools have been excavated in the area during ongoing work. The famous skull of Mrs Ples, an estimated 2.5-million-year-old hominid fossil, and Little Foot, an almost complete hominid skeleton some 3.3-million-year-old, were discovered at the Sterkfontein Caves near Krugersdorp.

The Krugersdorp Game Reserve provides sanctuary for several game species, including four of the Big Five. The African Fauna and Bird Park houses various species of wildlife and birds. The Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden has a 70-m high waterfall and a breeding pair of black eagles. Some 40 km north of Pretoria is a ring of hills 1 km in diameter and 100-m high. These are the walls of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater, left by an asteroid that hit the area some 200 000 years ago. There is a museum adjacent to this site. The crater is covered with indigenous trees and bushes, which attract a variety of bird life.

The old mining town of Cullinan has developed around the Premier Diamond Mine. The mine has produced some of the world's most famous diamonds, including the Cullinan Diamond, the world's largest at 3 106 carats.

Johannesburg

The Adler Museum of the History of Medicine depicts the history of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy in South Africa. The Pharmacy Museum in Melrose houses a large variety of medicines, including more than 670 traditional medicines that have been collected throughout southern Africa. Newtown is at the heart of initiatives to revitalise the inner city of Johannesburg. Here, visitors will find the renowned Market Theatre, jazz bars, dance studios and artists' communes among museums, libraries and other places of historic interest.

The Absa Money Museum lies in downtown Johannesburg. Historical records stretch all the way back to the beginnings of Johannesburg, and displays ranges from fairly early money forms like cowrie shells and Venetian glass beads, through to gold coins recovered from sunken ships.

The scientific study of money and its history, or Numismatics, is the essence of the museum's displays. The Nelson Mandela Bridge is a landmark gateway into Newtown. It is the largest cable-stayed bridge in southern Africa. Museum Africa in Newtown tells the story of life in South Africa from the Stone Age to the Nuclear Age and beyond.

The Market Theatre complex comprises three theatres, an art gallery, restaurants and pubs. A bronze statue of the champion of passive resistance, Mahatma Gandhi, can be seen in the city centre. Gold Reef City is a theme park based on Johannesburg during the gold rush era. The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg is a state-of-the-art tribute to the rise and fall of apartheid, with 22 exhibition areas that take the visitor on an emotional journey through the state-sanctioned system of apartheid.

Constitution Hill features the impressive building housing South Africa's Constitutional Court, which offers visitors the chance to view the fort, the so-called native gaol, the women's gaol and the awaiting-trial block. A large, well-established park surrounds Zoo Lake, which breeding bird colonies frequent. Other attractions include jazz concerts, rowing boats for hire, a tea garden and a restaurant. The James Hall Museum of Transport was founded in 1964 and houses an historical collection of various modes of land transport used in South Africa, dating back 400 years.

The South African Museum of Military History holds an impressive collection of weaponry and uniforms from the two world wars. The two-bedroom house where Mandela lived before his incarceration has been declared a national monument and converted into a museum. The Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown, Soweto, is the place where the Freedom Charter was signed in 1955. The Kliptown Project comprises a hotel, the Kliptown Museum, retail outlets, restaurants and offices.

Soweto is a popular tourist destination. No tour of Soweto would be complete without a visit to the Hector Pieterson Museum, which commemorates the people who died during the Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976. The Nelson Mandela Foundation's Centre of Memory is open to the public as a place of memory-sharing and reflection on the life and times of former President Mandela. At the Lesedi Cultural Village in the Swartkops hills north of Johannesburg, visitors can experience families of different cultural groupings.

It features four traditional homesteads where visitors can spend the night with a family of their choice. The Phumangena Zulu Kraal is home to traditional Zulu people living and working there. The Melville Koppies in Johannesburg was once the site of a Stone Age African village and iron-smelting works. Flora includes 80% of the species recorded on the Witwatersrand. It is open to the public from September to April.

Pretoria

A variety of historical buildings is found in the city, such as the Union Buildings, which celebrated its centenary in 2013. Designed by Sir Herbert Baker, construction started in 1910 and was completed in 1913. It is the setting of many national celebrations, including Women's Day and Freedom Day. In December 2013, a bronze statue of former President Mandela was unveiled at the Union Buildings.

Church Square is built around a statue of the former President of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, Paul Kruger, and includes buildings such as the Old Raadsaal and the Palace of Justice. Ten minutes' drive from Church Square is Freedom Park, which commemorates the country's political history. The 35-ha site comprises a garden of remembrance, a museum, and statues and sculptures to honour South Africans who contributed to the country's freedom and development.

The Kruger House Museum contains the personal belongings of President Kruger. Melrose House is a beautiful

example of Victorian architecture. The Peace Treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the Anglo-Boer War/South African War, was signed there in 1902. Demonstrations at the Pioneer Open-Air Museum include milking, butter- and candle-making, bread-baking and coffee-bean grinding.

Other museums include the South African Air Force Museum, Police Museum, Coert Steynberg Museum and the Transvaal Museum of Natural History. The Voortrekker Monument commemorates the Great Trek. Some 260 steps lead to the dome, where spectacular views of the city can be enjoyed. Fort Schanskop has been refurbished and has a 375-seat amphitheatre.

The Sammy Marks Museum near Pretoria dates from 1885. Rooms in the house are filled with Victorian paintings, furniture, silverware and porcelain. Visitors can relax at the tea garden and restaurant on the premises. The General Smuts House Museum in Irene in the southeast of Pretoria, contains the original furnishings of the Smuts family home. The Rietvlei Nature Reserve is notable for its grass types, herbs, large number of game including rhino, hippo and many bird species.

The Mapoch Ndebele Village, north of Pretoria, is the first living cultural village in South Africa owned and managed by its residents. Mamelodi is about 20 km from the city centre and features Solomon Mahlangu Square, which is dedicated to this freedom fighter. The Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum outside Pretoria features a farmstead dating from 1880. Traditional farming activities are demonstrated, and annual events include a prickly pear festival, a mampoer festival and the Agricultural Museum Show. The Pretoria National Botanical Garden houses the National Herbarium of South Africa, which is the largest in the southern hemisphere.

KwaZulu-Natal

The garden province of South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal, is a subtropical region of lush and well-watered valleys, washed by the warm Indian Ocean. One of the country's most popular tourist destinations, the province stretches from Port Edward in the south to the borders of Eswatini and Mozambique to the north. History-filled towns lead to adventure sports and game viewing, along with outlets for unique arts and crafts.

Durban and surroundings

The city of Durban, overlooking Africa's busiest seaport, is warm and inviting. It is not only South Africa's domestic tourism leader, but is also popular among visitors from throughout Africa and the rest of the world who seek a unique blend of vibrancy, sophistication, cultural diversity and excitement in a beautiful setting. The Golden Mile skirts the main beaches of the Indian Ocean.

Attractions include an amusement centre, paddling pools, paved walkways and fountains. The uShaka Marine World has a theme park, oceanarium, dolphinarium and oceanographic research institute. It is home to a wide variety of sea life, including sharks, dolphins and seals. One of its main attractions is the long lane of shops and the multitude of restaurants, especially those in the old wreck (a replica of a ship wreck in the centre of the park), and a tourism information office at its entrance.

The Durban area has more than 50 reserves, developed parks and specialised gardens, the most renowned being the Municipal Botanical Garden. Besides the botanical gardens, Mitchell Park is one of the most popular green spaces and includes an outdoor restaurant and a zoo, plus a sizeable playground for children. Mini Town is a model city depicting Durban's best-known buildings. Museums include the Natural History Museum, the Natural Science Museum, the Old House Museum and the Old Fort. One of the most intriguing museums is the Maritime Museum, complete with two floating ships in the harbour.

The Shree Ambalavaanar Alayam Temple (the Second River Temple) in Cato Manor was the first Hindu temple in Africa. It is a national monument. The Juma Musjid Mosque is the largest mosque in the southern hemisphere. Annual events in and around the city include the popular Comrades Marathon between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, an international surfing competition, the Duzi canoe marathon, the Midmar Mile and Dolphin Mile open-water swimming events, the July Handicap horserace and the Amashova-shova cycle tour. Umhlanga Rocks, just north of Durban, is notable for its ski-boating facilities and the Ski-Boat Festival held every April.

The KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board offers shark dissections and interesting displays. Guided tours of the Hawaan Forest are also on offer. Hawaan is the last relic of coastal forest in the region and has rare indigenous trees. The Umgeni River Bird Park overlooks the Umgeni River and ranks among the world's best bird sanctuaries. Walk-in aviaries hold many varieties of indigenous and exotic birds. The maritime offices, which control the entry of ships into and out of the busiest port in Africa, are in the Millennium Town at the end of the Bluff.

North Coast

Throughout the year, frolicking dolphins and impressive seasonal whale migrations make the coastline between the Umdloti and the Thukela rivers aptly called the "Dolphin Coast". The rarely seen larger humpback dolphins are also found here. Many of the first Indian immigrants settled here, and the area's markets, mosques and temples give it an authentic Eastern flavour. Tongaat is an area where sugar was first planted in 1854. The town's Indian ambience is accentuated by two prominent Hindu temples – the Juggernath Puri and Vishwaroop temples. Other towns along the Dolphin Coast include Shaka's Rock, Salt Rock, Ballito, Verulam, KwaDukuza, Darnall and Umdloti.

Zululand and the Elephant Coast

Zululand's north-east quadrant, between Mozambique, Eswatini and the warm Indian Ocean, has its own unique tale to tell. This is the Elephant Coast or Maputaland, named after the mid-17th-century king who established dominion here some 200 years before King Shaka consolidated his Zulu empire to the south. The Tembe Elephant Park in the far north is home to herds of the massive African elephant. The Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park is one of South Africa's largest game parks. Visitors should look out for the Big Five as well as the elusive cheetah and wild dog.

The eMakhosini Valley, birthplace of King Shaka, is known as "The Valley of Zulu Kings". A joint public-private sector project aims to preserve the culture and history of the Zulu people. This heritage park is near a nature reserve that supports the Big Five of the animal kingdom. At the eMakhosini Memorial Site, seven Zulu kings are buried.

Umgungundlovu was once the royal capital of King Dingaan and was reconstructed.

The beehive huts and the layout of the original Zulu village have been reproduced. Authentic Zulu villages such as Shakaland, Kwabhekithunga Kraal, Damazulu and Stewart's Farm offer accommodation and the opportunity to experience traditional Zulu culture. St Lucia and its surroundings comprise a globally important wetland and have five separate ecosystems. It is a fishing and birdwatching paradise, and boat trips on the lake offer opportunities for crocodile and hippo sightings. St Lucia is the only town in the world that is surrounded by a natural world heritage area.

The Kosi Bay Nature Reserve is part of the Coastal Forest Reserve between Mozambique and Sodwana Bay. The adjacent Indian Ocean provides exciting snorkelling and fishing opportunities. On offer is a four-day guided walking trail around the estuarine system. uMkhuze is a small trade and transport centre. The Mkuze River cuts through the Ubombo Mountains before serving as a natural boundary for Zululand's popular Mkuzi Game Reserve. The Border Cave, a site of immense archaeological interest on the border of Eswatini, now also has an interpretation centre. Lake Sibaya is South Africa's largest natural freshwater lake, covering some 77 km2.

Sibaya Lake Lodge is the first South African ecotourism development jointly owned by private enterprise and the local community. The coral reef in the Sodwana Bay National Park attracts hundreds of scuba divers throughout the year, and in summer, power boaters arrive for some of the best marlin fishing in the world.

South Coast

Amanzimtoti is popular for its safe swimming beaches and a variety of fun activities and attractions for the whole family. The Hibiscus Coast stretches between Umkomaas and the Wild Coast. Margate is the largest resort town along this coast and is very popular during the holidays. The Hibiscus Festival is held there in July. The Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve encompasses forest, rivers, rapids and ravines. Birdlife, including five kingfisher species and seven eagle species, is prolific. There is also a variety of mammals, and a 140-m abseil and gorge swing for adrenalin junkies.

Port Edward offers safe swimming and good fishing opportunities. Nearby, the Umthamvuna Nature Reserve is noted for its beautiful scenery, birdlife and many rare plant species. The Shell Museum at Shelly Beach is well worth a visit. Other popular coastal towns include Port Shepstone, Ramsgate, St Michael's-on-Sea, Uvongo and Scottburgh. Nature's annual extravaganza, the unforgettable sardine run, strikes the South Coast around the end of June every year, when people flock to the beaches and anglers await the arrival of the game fish following the sardines.

Pietermaritzburg and the Midlands

Pietermaritzburg has various museums, including the Msunduzi Museum that depicts the heritage of different cultural groups of KwaZulu-Natal, a replica Hindu Shiva temple and a beautiful herb garden, the Natal Museum and the Natal Steam Railway Museum, which offers steam-train rides on the second Sunday of every month. The Tatham Art Gallery is also extremely popular.

The Albert Falls Public Resort Nature Reserve and the Albert Falls Dam provide opportunities for sailing, canoeing and fishing. Birdwatching, horse riding and hiking are also popular activities. The Howick Falls are in the Nature Valley Reserve, where the river tumbles 100 m in a single fall. There are several climbing routes. The Midlands Meander is a scenic drive between Hilton and Mooi River, with some 430 ports of call en route, ranging from art studios, potters and painters to herb gardens and cheese makers. Midmar Dam is zoned for yachting and powerboating. The 1 000-ha Midmar Game Park is inhabited by rhino, zebra, a wide variety of antelope species and waterfowl.

Drakensberg

The mountainous "Barrier of Spears" uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, adorned with Stone Age cave paintings, forms the north-western border of KwaZulu-Natal. The entire area is a bird sanctuary, featuring, among other species, the endangered bearded vulture. The highest concentration of walks and trails in South Africa is found here.

The uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park consists of almost the entire Drakensberg mountain range from Bushman's Neck in the south to the Royal KwaZulu-Natal National Park in the north. Peaks soar to over 3 000 m and are often snow-covered in winter. There are trout hatcheries in the Kamberg Reserve area and at Cathedral Peak. Lotheni Nature Reserve is notable for its trout-fishing facilities (angling permits are required). Relics of the area's history have been preserved in the Settler Museum.

The Himeville Nature Reserve has two lakes stocked with trout. The nearby Swamp Nature Reserve attracts a variety of waterfowl, including the rare, wattled crane. The Ndedema

Gorge in the Mdedelelo Wilderness Area near Cathedral Peak has examples of Khoi and San art. Sani Pass is the only road across the high escarpment between KwaZulu-Natal and the Kingdom of Lesotho. The top section is only passable in 4x4 vehicles. The Giant's Cup Hiking Trail, starting at the foot of the pass, is described as one of South Africa's finest Giant's Castle Game Reserve is especially known for its more than 5 000 San paintings.

The Bushman Site Museum is worth a visit. Royal Natal National Park offers many scenic highlights, including the Amphitheatre, Mont-aux- Sources and the Thukela Falls.

Battlefields

The KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route has the highest concentration of battlefields and related military sites in South Africa. The Battlefields Route starts at Estcourt, winding north through Colenso and Ladysmith to Newcastle and Volksrust, and eastwards to Utrecht, Glencoe, Dundee, Nqutu, Paulpietersburg, Vryheid, Babanango and Ulundi. All the towns along the route have their own unique charm and range of attractions: arts and crafts, scenic hiking trails, farm resorts, Zulu culture and roadside stalls. Game viewing, natural hot springs, horse trails and water sports can also be enjoyed.

The Chelmsford Nature Reserve, located near Newcastle, is a birdwatcher's paradise. Powerboating and carp fishing are added attractions. Game includes springbok, zebra, rhino and blesbok. Majuba Hill and O'Neill's Cottage are other interesting places to visit. The Ladysmith Siege Museum provides insight into the battles of Colenso, Spioenkop, Vaalkrans and Tugela Heights.

Museum staff arrange guided tours to nearby battlefields such as Wagon Hill. Other attractions include the statue of Gandhi, the All Saints Church, the Soofi Mosque and the Spioenkop Dam and Nature Reserve. Near Dundee, tourists can visit various battlefields, including the Ncome- Blood River, Isandlwana, Rorke's Drift and Talana.

The Talana Museum depicts various facets of the coal industry, and local Zulu, Boer, and British history. Rorke's Drift was the setting for one of the most famous battles of the war. The main attraction is the Rorke's Drift Battle Museum.

Top 10 reasons to visit South Africa:

- **Affordable** – In South Africa, you can afford luxury and still have spending money for shopping and other treats.
- **Natural beauty** – South Africa's scenic wonders are legendary. From Table Mountain to God's Window, the mountains, forests, coasts and deserts will sooth your soul and delight you.
- **World-class facilities** – You will find it easy to get around, find a comfortable place to stay and have a great meal.
- **Adventure** – With over 130 adventures, there is something for everyone from mountain walks to shark-cage diving.
- **Good weather** – In sunny South Africa, with great weather, you can enjoy the outdoors, play golf year-round and take advantage of the nearly 3 000 km of coastline.
- **Rainbow Nation** – The Rainbow Nation celebrates all its African and immigrant cultures. South Africans are known for their friendliness and hospitality.
- **Diverse experiences** – Go almost anywhere in South Africa and experience the ultimate combination of nature, wildlife, culture, adventure, heritage and good vibe.
- **Wildlife** – The abundant and diverse wildlife include the Big Five (African lion, African elephant, Cape buffalo, African leopard and black rhinoceros).
- **Rich history** – Discover a nation's struggle for freedom whilst following the footsteps of Nelson Mandela, Hector Pieterson and many other celebrated revolutionaries.
- **Responsible tourism** – In South Africa, you can travel with care as you explore protected areas, contribute to social and conservation projects, and collect arts and crafts.