

THE CAPE

Stopping for lunch at a boutique vineyard, where a table under a shady tree is temptingly spread with fine food and chilled wine, it is difficult to believe that this is Africa. Yet the gourmet offerings, clear air and spectacular scenery are all intrinsic Cape qualities.

Whether you're seeking to relax, explore or escape, the Cape has much to offer. The more adventurous can hike through unique mountain fynbos in the craggy Cederberg Mountains or search for wild, black-maned lion in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, but most come here seeking the good life on a gentle coastal trip: idyllic landscapes, comfortable hotels, good food and fine wine. For them the range is endless, from old manor houses to top hotels throughout the wine region and the length of the Garden Route.

With a family run B&B or luxury hotel around every corner, the Cape has a greater range of accommodation than anywhere else that we feature in Africa. To help you choose, we have carefully hand-picked a range of excellent hotels and small guesthouses that we know from experience, and are confident in recommending.

With these we've included some interesting game lodges. These can't offer an experience to compete with those in Botswana or further north, but do make for very comfortable introductory safaris which, being malaria-free, are a favourite with young families.

It's easy to combine a few days in the Cape with a trip to Namibia, Botswana or even Mozambique. The more adventurous might use Cape Town and Windhoek as gateways for longer fly-drives, flying into one and leaving from the other – the choice is entirely yours.

South Africa: the Facts

Currency: South Africa's currency is the rand; at the time of writing, £1 = ZAR12.050. Exchange travellers' cheques and foreign currency at banks. Credit cards are widely accepted.

Visas: Travellers with British passports do not need visas.

Health: Several vaccines are sensible (typhoid, polio and tetanus), though none are required. Malaria is normally restricted to Mpumalanga and the northern and eastern sections of South Africa, but always check the latest information with your doctor or travel clinic.

Language: English is one of South Africa's main languages, and is widely spoken.

Food: The Cape is known for its fine cuisine and wines.

Climate: See page 23 for comments on climate and when to visit the Cape.

Driving: Roads in the Cape are mostly good and well signposted; you drive on the left.



View across the V&A Waterfront towards Table Mountain



KGALAGADI

Page 80 This huge, offbeat transfrontier park, amidst red Kalahari dunes, is ideal for self-drive enthusiasts who want a no-frills safari. Great for cheetah, lion and meerkat sightings.

AUGRABIES FALLS

Page 81 At the southern end of the Kalahari's sands, this starkly beautiful park surrounds the Augrabies Falls and its gorge. A good short stop for gentle game-viewing, lovely walking and excellent birdwatching.

NAMAQUALAND

Page 79 The vast fynbos veld (open moorlands) has few visitors for most of the year, but bursts into life during the flowering season (Aug–Sep). The Cederberg Mountains offer great hiking in the south.

WINELANDS

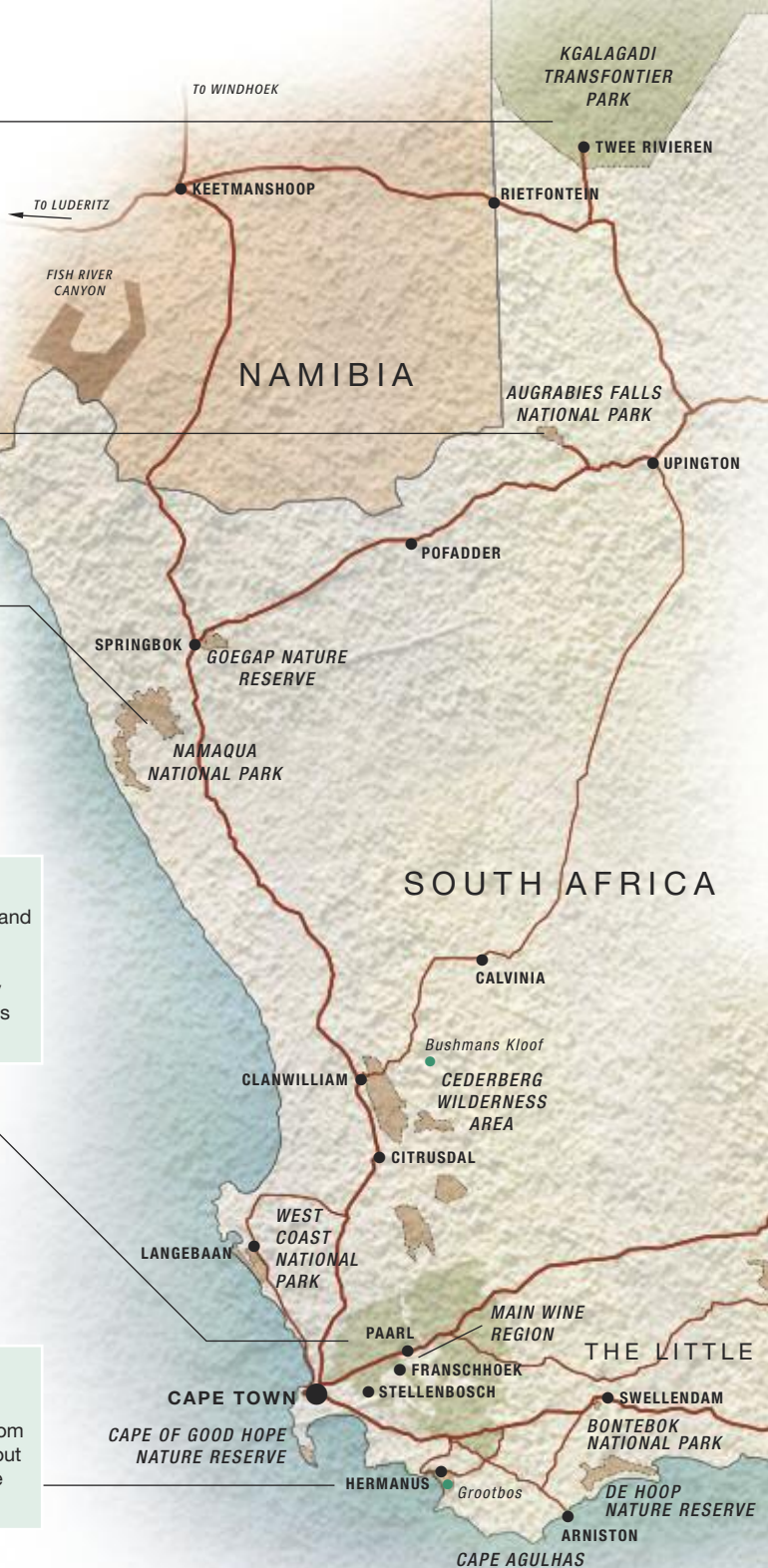
Page 73 A scenic area of mountains and vineyards, dotted with welcoming retreats. Visit for the day from Cape Town, or stay for a few nights to enjoy the Cape Dutch architecture, first-class wine and great food.

CAPE TOWN

Page 72 A beautiful, cosmopolitan city that is African and yet very European. Stay at least 4–5 nights; there's a lot to see and do, from shopping and restaurants, to mountain hiking and chic beaches.

HERMANUS

Page 74 Africa's top spot for whale watching (best Jul–Nov), by boat or from scenic cliffs. Nature-lovers also seek out Grootbos for first-rate insights into the Cape's unique flora and fauna.





Ostrich watching tourists in Addo Elephant Park

Approximate Distances/Driving Times

Distances within the Cape are not huge and the vast majority of roads are very good tar, so it's quick and easy to get around here. Your driving times around the Cape depend largely on how busy the roads are, as well as the distances. Typical rough distances and guide times would be:

Cape Town to Stellenbosch.....	50km:	1 hour
Cape Town to Paarl.....	60km:	1 hour 10 mins
Cape Town to Hermanus.....	100km:	1 hour 45 mins
Cape Town to Springbok.....	560km:	5 hours 30 mins
Cape Town to Swellendam.....	220km:	2 hours 30 mins
Cape Town to George.....	440km:	5 hours
Cape Town to Knysna.....	500km:	6 hours
Swellendam to Knysna.....	270km:	3 hours 30 mins
Knysna to Port Elizabeth.....	270km:	3 hours 30 mins
Cape Town to Springbok.....	560km:	5 hours 30 mins
Springbok to Upington.....	395km:	4 hours
Upington to Twee Rivieren.....	260km:	3 hours



View of Cape Town from the top of Table Mountain including Lion's Head, and in the background Robben Island

THE GREAT KAROO



GAME PARKS

Page 78 Malaria-free, child-friendly safari parks offering a taste of a 'big-five' safari experience. First-time visitors to Africa often spend 2-3 nights here, either at luxurious, all-inclusive lodges or on more affordable self-drive trips.

GARDEN ROUTE

Page 75 A compact coastal belt between the warm Indian Ocean and rugged mountain ranges. Numerous cosy hideaways and smarter hotels are dotted amongst lovely beaches, verdant forests and small, bustling towns.