

Ultimate South Africa - 26 days

Project Overview

Looking for a little bit of everything?

On this marvellous tour of South Africa and Swaziland you will travel from Johannesburg to Cape Town via Swaziland! Along the way you will play with lion cubs near Johannesburg, see Swazi culture and crafts in the Ezulwini valley of Swaziland, take a boat cruise through the St Lucia estuary, spend some time experiencing Zulu culture and the fantastic beaches of Durban, and head towards Cape Town via the famed "Garden Route", a passage lined with beautiful coastal villages set against the backdrop of ancient forests and rugged mountains. Along the "Garden Route " you will pause to take in the majestic scenery on a canopy tour through the Tsitsikama forest. Your tour comes to its conclusion in the vibrant city of Cape Town. You will spend your final week working with disadvantaged children in a nursery school near Cape Town. This action packed four week adventure is perfect for anyone looking to make some great new friends and see the best of what South ern Africa has to offer! You won't believe how much you can see and do in just four short weeks!



There are no minimum numbers for this tour, it is guaranteed to run.

Trip Highlights:

- Hanging out with Lions near Pretoria
- Visiting the stunning Ezulwini valley in the mountain Kingdom of Swaziland
- 3 days on the 'Wild Coast' of South Africa and the opportunity to experience real Xhosa culture
- Travelling along the world famous 'Garden Route' (and taking the option to do the world's highest bungee if you dare!)
- Working in a children's centre near Cape Town supporting disadvantaged children
- South Africa - a brilliant destination

Day 1 – Arrive into Johannesburg and get settled

Please arrange your flights to arrive into Oliver Tambo Airport on the arrival day by 4pm. You will be met by i-to-i representative at the American Express counter in International Arrivals. You will transfer to a local 'backpackers' hostel where you'll have an i-to-i welcome orientation at 5pm on your arrival day followed by a traditional South African meal.

Day 2 – Play with lion cubs

You will spend a full day at the Lion Park near Johannesburg playing with cubs, feeding giraffes, taking photos of the naughty meerkats and visiting the big lions in a safari camp. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included.

Day 3 – Swaziland

Departing Pretoria bright and early to travel to Swaziland you will have plenty of time to enjoy the views and catch up with your fellow travellers as you make the scenic drive to the Ezulwini Valley. You will stay overnight in a backpacker lodge in the Ezulwini valley of Swaziland in a shared dorm. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Day 4 and 5 – Swazi cultural village experience and Mantenga Nature Reserve

You will take a tour of the stunning Ezulwini valley to see all the highlights of this unique area. The tour includes visits to craft centres, the Swazi cultural village and Mantenga Nature Reserve. You will spend the night at the backpacker lodge in the Ezulwini valley. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Day 6 to 9 – Visit the St Lucia Greater Wetland Park, the former "Zululand" and Durban

You will say your goodbyes to Swaziland and travel back to South Africa to the region of Kwa-zulu Natal, formerly the kingdom of the Zulus. Here you will explore the St Lucia Greater Wetland Park, a world heritage site, and take a boat cruise on the St Lucia estuary. Next you will take part in a Zulu cultural tour and will also have plenty of time to explore the vivacious city of Durban. Durban is known for its golden beaches and lively nightlife. You will stay in Durban at a backpacker lodge in shared dorm rooms. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Day 10 to 12 – Visit beaches and experience Xhosa culture

You will travel to the Wild Coast, known for its dramatic coastline, beautiful beaches and laid back rural communities. You will have the chance to relax on the beach, explore the coastal hills and experience Xhosa rural living at its best. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Day 12 to 14 - Garden route and Tsitsikama canopy tour

Next you will travel through the "Garden route", famous for its beautiful coastal villages and set against the backdrop of ancient forests and rugged mountains. You will take a canopy tour through the Tsitsikama forest and also have the option to get your adrenaline pumping by doing the world's highest bungee jump (bungee jump fee is not included in the tour fee). You may also choose to hike through some of the indigenous forests or visit some of the villages and shops. You will stay at backpacker lodges along the Garden route in shared dorm rooms. Breakfast and dinner are included.



Day 15 to 16 - Cape Town

Finally you will travel to Cape Town where you will have the chance to experience the buzz of Africa's most sought after city. You can explore the bars and shops on Long Street or peruse the docks of the V&A waterfront. You will spend the night at a local backpackers lodge on Long Street, right in the center of Cape Town. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Day 16 – Fish Hoek

You will transfer to Fish Hoek, a relaxed coastal town about a hour from Cape Town. There you will meet the Cape Town i-to-i team and settle into the volunteer house where you will be staying for your final week. You will have the afternoon free to go grocery shopping, do some laundry, explore the local area at etc.

Day 17 to 18 – Fish Hoek

You have the weekend free to rest up or to explore Fish Hoek, Cape Town and beyond! The i-to-i team can help you organize trips including shark cage diving, table mountain visit, wine tours etc. These excursions are not included in the project fee.

Day 19 to 23 – Work at a children's center near Cape Town

You will spend the next five days working with disadvantaged children at a nursery school. You will be helping to take care of over 20 children between the ages of two and five. Most of the children attending the school come from parents with drug and alcohol abuse problems. The school staff takes care of the children affording their parents the opportunity to work full-time jobs. The school first started 15 years ago as a community center and was transformed into a nursery for the children in the area. The owner of the school works as a cleaner in order to fund the school's daily operating expenses. You will assist the small staff with a variety of activities including feeding, reading to, singing with and teaching new songs to the children - you may also be asked to keep a watchful eye on the little ones while they sleep!

Day 24 to 25 - Fish Hoek

You have the weekend free to do whatever you please. It is time to buy those last minute souvenirs, take your final photos and say goodbye to your new friends.

Day 26 - Departure

Today you will sadly leave the volunteer house and make your own way to the airport. Can you believe how fast these past four weeks have just flown by?

What's included:

- Airport pick-up on arrival
- All local transport related to the tour
- All accommodation in shared rooms
- Swazi craft shop and cultural village experience
- St Lucia boat cruise
- Zulu cultural village experience
- Tsitsikama canopy tour activity
- Experienced guide throughout the tour
- Most meals while on tour, as per itinerary
- The services of i-to-i's in-country team throughout your time in South Africa
- An amazing experience!

What's not included:

- Travel to South Africa
- Visa if applicable
- Some meals as per itinerary
- Any optional activities
- Transfer to the airport at the end of the trip

Who is this trip for?

- This trip is perfect for anyone who is looking for a little bit of everything. If you love spending time with children, seeing wildlife in its natural habitat and learning about new cultures, this is the ideal tour for you. The transport and accommodation are all basic but clean. Our only criteria is that you are 18 and older.
- To ensure your airport pickup, please book your flight to arrive at Johannesburg Oliver Thambo Airport (airport code JNB) on the advertised arrival date.
- There are no minimum numbers for this tour, it is guaranteed to run.

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 4 weeks
- Project Costs: £1599.00 for 4 weeks
- Location of project: *Various in South Africa and Swaziland*
- Arrival Airport: *Johannesburg (JNB)*
- Activities: *Play with lion cubs, visit villages and nature reserves in Swaziland, boat cruise in the St Lucia estuary, canopy tour and working with disadvantaged children near Cape Town*
- Working Hours: *Various as per itinerary*
- Getting to the project: *Various as per itinerary*
- Requirements: *Minimum age 18*

What's Included

- Accommodation: *Various; shared room in hostel and volunteer house*
- Food: *Some meals are included; on occasion you will need to purchase your own food (budget approximately \$US50 per week)*
- Airport Pickup: *Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!*
- Training: *In-country orientation*
- Support: *Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support*

What's not included

- *International flights, Insurance, Visas, Return Airport transfer, daily transport to and from your project in Cape Town, some meals - please see itinerary for full information*

Country Guide - South Africa

A little bit of history...

A journey into South Africa's history is to haul through periods of racial tension, oppression and hope. Its multicultural mix originates from the earliest settlers, the San (also known as Bushmen) and Khoi-Khoi tribes, followed by Bantu-speaking groups, and through to the swarm of European traders. The Dutch were among the first European settlers and arrived in the 17th century, establishing their presence through their own dialect, Afrikaans, and religion in the form of the Dutch Reformed Church. By the end of the 18th century, the British began to push their presence forward into the country's towns. It was a period of flared tensions with Zulu chief Shaka renouncing war on neighbouring tribes. Meanwhile, the Boers (Dutch Afrikaner farmers) and the British became locked in conflict; the Anglo-Boer War lasted from 1899 to 1902, ending with the British taking control of the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State (OFS) and consequently ruling the country.

By 1910, the Union of South Africa was created and gave political power to whites, while blacks set up political parties in protest, the African National Congress (ANC) the best known. It ushered in the beginnings of apartheid, which became widely ingrained after the Afrikaner National Party came to power in 1948. Violence against protests from blacks was enforced and the black population were evicted to so-called Homelands. In the 1960s, leaders of the ANC were imprisoned, notably Nelson Mandela, and the country became isolated having left the Commonwealth and declaring its republic status. After a long period of racial divide and conflict, in 1989 FW de Klerk came to power with the aim to rid the country of apartheid and instil democracy. The following year, Mandela was released from prison and in 1994 became president after the ANC won the country's first non-racial general elections; the country also returned to the Commonwealth. The country's democratic stance has steered it toward a more harmonious future, though economic inequalities between whites and blacks exist, but as the most developed economy on the continent it is in a good position to reconcile with its past.



Best time to go...

Naturally, South Africa's seasons are the reverse of the northern hemisphere with summer heat burning from November to March and cooler winter temperatures from June to August. Temperature wise, spring (September to October) and autumn (April to May) provide a happy medium. Certain must-do activities are restricted to specific times of year: safari is best from June to September and the whale watching season is June to December. The busiest time, hence the most expensive, is during the summer months, while the major school holidays are during December and Easter.

Getting around...

Given the distances involved, flying is the most convenient way to travel between the main destinations, while land transportation can efficiently pick up the rest of the mileage for exploration in and around. There are an assortment of domestic carriers to choose from that fly the main routes, with most running from Johannesburg or Cape Town; these include South African Airways, Nationwide Airlines, Kulula and 1Time. Booking early is advisable to secure discounted rates.

The country also boasts a comprehensive bus network that covers the main cities; the road trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town is around 20 hours (compared to a 2 hour in a plane). The main bus companies are Translux, Greyhound and Intercap. Baz Bus is aimed at the backpacker crowd and provides a hop-on, hop-off service and also travels to remote areas. It's a good way to discover the picturesque patch of coastline that is the Garden Route, which it services en route from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth.

Train travel can work out longer than by bus, with the trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town edging toward almost 30 hours. If you're after a little luxury, try the Blue Train or the Rovos Rail for a taste of stylish travel.

Car rental is an attractive option thanks to the good road conditions, great scenery and the flexibility driving allows. The big car rental companies like Avis and Budget have outlets and it's essential to be fully insured and have a valid driver's licence. It's also a convenient way to get around cities as public transport can be unsafe.

