

YOUR link to the world...

# travel

## update

ISSUE 2

Affordable

**WINELANDS**

**VICTORIA  
FALLS**

It's not all adrenaline

**AIRBNB:**

The travel app that can  
save you thousands

WIN A  
LUXURY  
BUSH  
BREAK

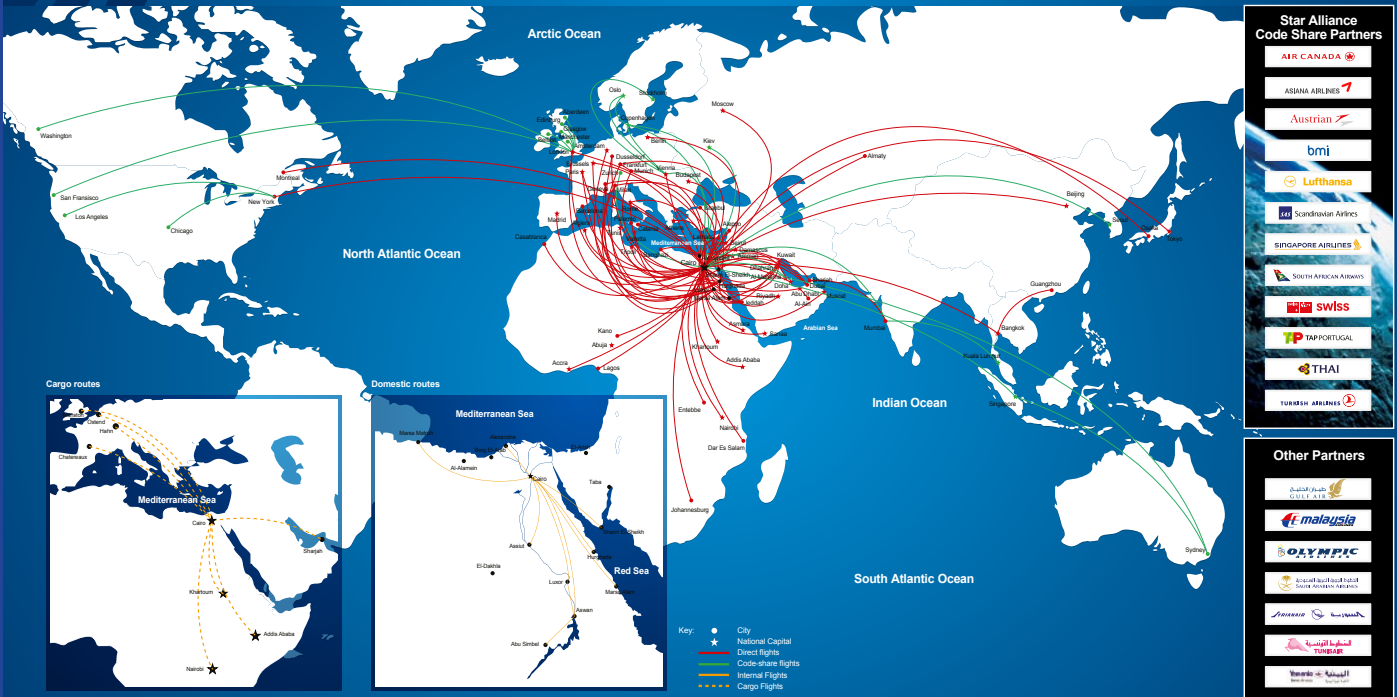
**DUBAI**

CITY BEHIND THE SUPERLATIVES

SOUTH AFRICA'S 1<sup>ST</sup> FREE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# The best connecting hub into Africa

## Routes Around the World



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### LOYALTY PROGRAM

EGYPTAIR Plus has been developed to provide our valued members with more privileges and benefits whenever they travel on EGYPTAIR or with Star Alliance

#### Benefits:

By reserving seats on-line and having your e-mail correspondence accepted, members will earn 1000 bonus miles. EGYPTAIR Plus offers its members a wide range of privileges through their reward tickets, class upgrades and numerous other benefits.

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1. After enrolling with EGYPTAIR Plus, you receive the Classic Blue Card
2. When your account reaches 30 000 miles, you will be upgraded to Silver membership
3. When you accumulate 60 000 miles, you become a Gold member.

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EGYPTAIR has recently taken delivery of its newest Boeing 777-300 and AIRBUS 330-300, bringing the total fleet to an impressive 85 aircrafts.

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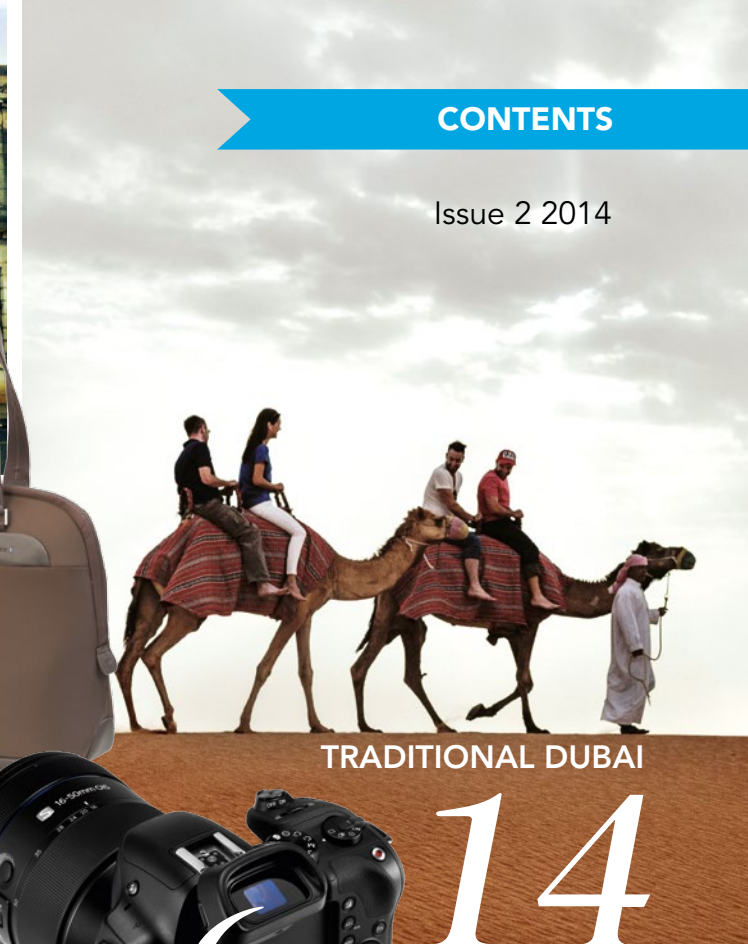




48 HOURS IN MABONENG



VICTORIA FALLS



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I didn't expect to like Dubai at all. It seemed like a garish, over-the-top city competing to be bigger, better and more ostentatious than every other place in the world.

However, if you step away from all the malls, skyscrapers and man-made wonders, you'll find a much more interesting part of the city to explore.

Although most of the major developments took place over the last 30 years, it is city steeped in history that dates back thousands of years.

It was exactly that Dubai that charmed me; getting lost in the bustling souks, sitting crossed-legged on an oriental carpet in the Historic District, eating dates and drinking cardamom-infused Arabian coffee and cruising on an abra along Dubai Creek. In our main feature (page 14) we lift the veil of chrome and glass of Dubai to expose its more traditional side.

The question I am asked most often is: How can I travel cheaper? We've introduced a regular column "Rand Saver" (page 12) in this edition to help travellers get more bang for their buck. Airbnb is a concept that's taking the travel industry by storm, and friends and colleagues that made use of it love its affordability, combined with the added perk of living local while travelling.

I recently fell in love with the Cape Winelands all over again (page 27). After a visit to Europe everything seemed so cheap here. You can't beat the value for money that South Africa offers. I hope you'll find something in this edition that will inspire you to hit the road, board a plane, or maybe just try something new in your city.

Happy Travels!

Carla

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# WIN a luxury bush getaway with Amakhozi Safari Lodge worth R15 400

On the banks of Zululand's Mkuze River lies the five star Amakhosi Safari Lodge. The property is situated in a private game reserve and home to the Big Five. Amakhosi means "The Place of The Kings" and bears testimony to attentive service, opulent luxury and dramatic surroundings that's fit for royalty. Each of the six regal river suites rests in harmony with the magnificent surroundings. Travellers can expect friendly personalised service in a tranquil setting, as well as some of the best game viewing in South Africa.

## TO WIN

All followers of Travel Update's Facebook page will automatically be entered into a lucky draw for the Amakhozi prize. To stand a chance to win, visit Travel Update's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/www.travelupdate.co.za](http://www.facebook.com/www.travelupdate.co.za). Competition closes 31 January 2015.



Terms and conditions apply

Visit [www.travelupdate.co.za](http://www.travelupdate.co.za) for more information on the competition rules. The prize is valid from 01 December 2014 to 01 June 2015. Prizes are non-transferable and there is no cash alternative. Block out period over the festive holidays apply. Entrants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions when entering the competition. Exclusions include transport to and from Amakhozi Safari Lodge, gratuities, items of a personal nature, telephone costs and drinks.



# THE QUESTION

This month we chat to some frequent and expert travelers.

*“What is your best travel advice?”*



Travel as though you were a local. I eat at the local markets and go to a bar that isn't listed in the guidebook. I check into homestays, even if just for a night or two. I do touristy things too, but I find a thrill in understanding a place through a local's perspective.

**IGA MOTYLSKA**

*Travel writer and photographer*



Pack a tube of cortisone ointment, it's a cure-all. On a recent trip to Kenya, I got bitten by sandflies and the ointment helped with the itching and inflammation. The other journalists were also borrowing it from me to treat their scrapes and insect bites.

**HERMAN SCHOLTZ**

*Journalist*



Ignore all misconceptions, talk to everybody, listen. I often travel alone, which could be a lonely place unless you turn it into an opportunity to have conversations you wouldn't otherwise have. I do very little research about a destination as I opt for a fresh, personal and often introspective experience.

**DAWN JORGENSON**

*Travel writer and blogger*



Try to read a book that is set in the area you are visiting. When I visited Kerala in India I read Arudhati Roy's *God of Small Things*. This really made me appreciate the area so much more that I could have imagined.

**JEAN LE CLUS-THERON**

*Art cataloguer*



I like to plan before I travel. Make sure I know what there is to do, where to go, what to see and of course what Geocaches there are in an area before I get there. Always make enough time in your itinerary to get sidetracked. You never know what unexpected gems you'll discover during your travels.

**JONKER FOURIE**

*CEO of ECTOUR and travel blogger*



Leave extra clothes and valuables at home. Extra luggage will weigh and slow you down everywhere you go. I always pack light and buy a few clothing items on my trip. I went to Thailand for a week with only two T-shirts. I came back with seven.

**MORNE BENKENSTEIN**

*Flight attendant*

YOUR link to the world...

# travel *update*

NO

1

Online

On hand

On the Go

Travel Marketing Solutions

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## TRAVEL UPDATE

is an online marketing and media innovation as well as social networking platform for the travel trade and the end users that provides access to useful information, travel specials, competitions, promotions, on-going incentives, and product knowledge campaigns from leading travel suppliers in South Africa and around the world.

Our aim is to connect travel suppliers, travel agents and end users through the use of online marketing, social media technology and strategic brand representation. Our team of sales executives provides exposure and brochure distribution through in-store sales calls to travel agencies throughout Southern Africa. We assist in effectively

introducing, educating and regularly updating the South African travel trade and end users on the unique selling points of your products and services.

## TRAVEL UPDATE

is South Africa's first free travel directory and free travel magazine to the end user as well as the travel agents, which empowers your travel business and gives it the right exposure and the branding you are looking for. In addition to our online initiatives, our team of sales executives provides extensive exposure for our clients through in-store sales calls to travel agents throughout South Africa on a monthly basis.



### Online

Information on travel destinations, visa requirements, travel tips and much more, including ability to get free quotations from leading travel suppliers.

### Search

Great search function enables you to get all the information related to your search in seconds.

### On the go

The **Travel Update** mobile site allows all our content to be read on your smart mobile device or tablet.

### The quarterly magazine

South Africa's first free travel directory and travel magazine provides useful travel information, travel specials, competitions, promotions and product knowledge from leading travel suppliers, as well as info. on new developments, tourism news, airline news, and what you need to know before you go.

## OUR UNIQUE SALES AND MARKETING SOLUTION

- In-store travel agency sales calls.
- One on one exposure to over 160 travel agencies and more than 750 individual travel consultants per month.
- Eight professional and productive in-store travel training sessions per month.
- Flyer and brochure distribution during call-cycles.
- Weekly sales activity report.
- Monthly sales reports.

## WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY

- Post useful info, specials, incentives and competition updates in real-time to Travel Trade and end users.
- Give users the ability to interact by subgroup and special interests.
- Reach users by featuring your brand and products on the home page.



2

1 | SELFIE POLE

The GoPole Evo is the first of its kind – a 26 inch transparent floating GoPro camera extension pole. The transparency of the GoPole Evo makes the pole far less visible for selfies taken at angles of 180 degrees. **R799** at Incredible Connection.

2 | NEWEST IN NAVIGATION

Tech reviewers are raving about the new TomTom 5000 (**R2 799**), calling it 'navigation at its best.' The GPS boasts with 3D maps display, a 13cm touch screen with pinch to zoom function and exceptional performance.

3 | CONNECTED CAMERA

Samsung's latest camera, the 20 megapixel NX30 (**R11 999**), is ideal for bloggers and social media enthusiasts. It sends photos and videos directly to a computer, tablet, printer or cloud service, and allows you to share your photos via e-mail or social media.

4 | BEATS ON THE GO

The Beats by Dr Dre's Pill2 speaker (**R2 999**) is lightweight. Its portable design allows you to take the music wherever you go. It connects to any Bluetooth-enabled device so you are free to let the music move you. It's simple; tap, pair and play.

5 | TRACK YOUR FITNESS

During the day the Fitbit One (**R1 399**) will diligently count all your steps, the calories you burn and the stairs you climb. At night time it will record the way you sleep. It's a constant motivator - an electronic personal trainer that doesn't stop until you have reached your goals.



3

# GREAT GADGETS

Satisfy your inner geek with these cool gadgets, geared for the plugged in traveller.



4

5

1





1



5



3



4



2

# IN THE BAG

These bags are the ultimate travelling partner. They are big enough to hold all your accessories, yet stylish enough to make you stand out.

## 1 | BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

This Samsonite Spectrolite business bag (R1495) is ideal for career women that want functionality with style. Order online at [www.samsonite.co.za](http://www.samsonite.co.za)

## 2 | WORLD TRAVELLER

Want the world on your arm? This tote from Typo (R449,95), printed with a world map will induce a serious case of wanderlust.

## 3 | FREE SPIRIT

We love this boho-chic backpack with leather trim (R399) and a swhe-swhe flower motif from Old Khaki.

## 4 | AHOY MATIES!

If you're rocking the nautical look this summer, the Coby Backpack (R299) from Cotton On is a must-have for your holiday wardrobe.

## 5 | OUTSTANDING

The K-way Amicus Daypack (R699) from Cape Union Mart is the perfect bag for short walks or one day hikes. With 30L at your disposal, there is ample space for all the essentials and more.

# BROOKLYN NY

Walking the streets of the Big Apple and living it up in Manhattan has been on many a traveller's bucket list. But just across the Brooklyn Bridge lies Manhattan's hipster cousin, Brooklyn. **By Yolandi Groenewald**

**T**he last few years this "alternative" side New York City has been gaining a similar reputation to that of a bygone Soho. Brooklyn has become a melting pot of indie bands, cutting edge artists, and trendy bloggers, which has given the Brooklyn of today a unique character. Fantastic food, organic coffee, trendy culture and cutting-edge music, Brooklyn has it all.

## MUST SEE

The first bonus of Brooklyn is its magnificent view of the Manhattan skyline. The famous **Brooklyn Bridge** spans the East River, which connects Manhattan with Brooklyn. This bridge offers the most fantastic views of the Manhattan skyline, but it has become so crowded that the less famous **Williamsburg Bridge** is a better bet. Bike or stroll across the bridges at sunset and your day will be made. Just under another of Brooklyn's bridges sits the **charming DUMBO**. DUMBO stands for "Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass". With its waterfront access, booming art scene, beautiful architecture, and amiable shops, DUMBO is the perfect way to spend the morning.

If hunting down bargains and soaking in local culture is your thing the famous **Brooklyn Flea** is the mother of all treasure chests. It's

a weekend flea market offering all kinds of vintage bits and pieces like vinyl records, clothing, jewellery, homeware, artwork and more. The Flea's food fair, **Smorgasburg**, will dwarf any South African food market you've ever experienced. This food fair showcases the best of Brooklyn's artisanal food scene, with 100 local and regional vendors in a beautiful waterfront setting.

Don't miss the "new Brooklyn" – **Williamsburg**. A little more than a decade back, the neighbourhood consisted mostly of factories and low-income housing, but lately artists, chefs and musicians have gentrified the neighbourhood. If you are in the mood for some people watching, Williamsburg, otherwise known as Hipster Central, is the place to be.

If you love beer, a tour of the **Brooklyn Brewery** is a must. This local institution helped to reinvent the beer industry in Brooklyn, and is one of the mainstays of the alternative

culture in Brooklyn.

Spare a thought for old Brooklyn as well. If you are in the mood for nostalgia, head over **Coney Island** where you can eat a hot dog at Nathan's Famous, enjoy some freak shows and of course go for a ride on the rickety old roller coasters.

## MUST DO

The best spot for hipster watching is of course **Hipster Beach**. Though officially called the East River State Park, this strip of grass, rocks and concrete has become the official hangout of the tattooed cool clan looking for a tan.

If you are interested in swimming, just a short stroll away lies the **huge swimming pool in McCarren Park**, which separates Williamsburg from Greenpoint. It has been rated as one of the best public swimming pools in the world, and though it can be crowded, the atmosphere is intoxicating. ■

## TOP TIP

While the metro is the probably the quickest form of transport, biking in Brooklyn is definitely the most enjoyable. Brooklyn has introduced cycling lanes in most of its streets and the alternative culture in Williamsburg has ensured that cycling is now the preferred way of getting around. For tourists, there are ample guided bike tours to sign on to where locals will give you the lowdown of all the landmarks that Brooklyn has to offer.





# MABONENG, JHB

Johannesburg, the capital of crime, commerce and chaos, or so they say. Over the past few years the inner-city gave birth so several gritty cultural hot spots. Maboneng is one of them. **By Kobus Kotze**

**M**aboneng means place of light, and it does indeed shine bright. Situated in Fox Street, Jozi, this hub of hip has it all. Fantastic local food, organic coffee, craft beer, local cinema, a trendy backpackers and weekend food markets.

## MUST SEE

Maboneng is a traveler's dream, and listening to the amount of foreign languages and weird English accents it seems that the City of Johannesburg is doing something right in promoting and establishing this subculture.

I arrive in Maboneng early on a Friday morning, at the **Curiosity Backpackers** ([www.curiositybackpackers.com](http://www.curiositybackpackers.com)), Jozi's only inner city backpackers. The balcony here is the place to be, it overlooks a city built to accommodate thousands of blue and white collar workers.

Bheki Dube, owner of Curiosity tells me the backpackers opened on the 9th of November, 2013, 24 years after the Berlin Wall fell. He views it as symbolic. This space breaks cultural walls and creates memories without border control.

The food in Maboneng is great, anything from traditional Northern African cuisine, barbequed chicken and even some of the best sushi in

the city. **The Blackanese** sushi joint ([www.theblackanese.co.za](http://www.theblackanese.co.za)) recently featured in the New York times. Their sushi is fresh and well prepared.

**Smack Republic!** ([www.smackrepublic.com](http://www.smackrepublic.com)) is a local craft brewery that boasts with beer names that remind you of the rich history and subcultures that exist in Johannesburg. With visual names like the Braamfontein Brawler, The Bree Street Belle and Maboneng Maverick it makes sense why it is fitting to have a cold one with an apt name between the tall buildings and sounds of cars, constantly moving between spaces.

**The Bioscope** ([www.thebioscope.co.za](http://www.thebioscope.co.za)) is an independent cinema that showcases old cult movies, local produced films and a lot of indie stuff. The cinema itself feels like the early '80s and you can even enjoy a

glass of wine while you are watching a movie. The Bioscope can also be booked for private events and parties.

Other highlights include a guided bike tour through the district, a vibrant Sunday food market, pop-up art exhibits and in-depth conversations with coffee shop intellectuals, if that is your thing, of course.

## MUST DO

I firmly believe one must experience a subculture rooftop to basement. I will recommend, apart from the great food, bike tours, cinema, food and music that you sit down, converse with the locals and get a feel for the ever rising inner city vibe that defines a new Johannesburg. ■

## TOP TIP

Parking is well organised, with some guarded parking just underneath the bridge. I would recommend parking in the designated boomed parking area and walking through Maboneng, from the top end of the street till you reach Curiosity Backpackers. Johannesburg Taxi services all know the area well and won't struggle getting there.

The best way to experience Maboneng is on foot. The area has a wide variety of graffiti and street and public art. We recommend Main Street Walks ([www.mainstreetwalks.co.za](http://www.mainstreetwalks.co.za)) or JoburgPlaces ([www.joburgplaces.com](http://www.joburgplaces.com)). Both companies offer walking tours that will help you orientate yourself in the neighbourhood.

# EGYPT

## 5 REASONS YOU SHOULD VISIT IN 2015

Egypt is one of the richest tourist destinations in the world. It's the only country that has Egyptology, a science dedicated to it. Ihab Seif, general manager of EGYPTAIR South Africa looks at five reasons why you should make the country of the Pharaohs your next destination.

### VISIT THE RED SEA RIVIERA

"If you're into scuba diving or snorkelling, this is one of the best places on earth to experience underwater wildlife. The calm waters and increased light penetration ensure great visibility," says Ihab Seif. "The Riviera contains seven beautiful destinations; Sharm El Sheikh, Dahab, Hurghada, Marsa Alam, Nuweiba, Elgouna, and Safağa."

### EXPERIENCE MILLENNIA OF RICH, HISTORIC CULTURES

"Egypt is the only country in the world where you can relive the world's greatest epochs; from the Pharaohs to the Greeks and the Ptolemaic Dynasty, which ruled Egypt during the Hellenistic period. Then there are the Romans, Coptics, Islam and Modern Egypt," he says.

### THE ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE WILL BLOW YOUR MIND

"The Pyramids of Giza is the only remaining Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World. The Karnak temple complex knows no equal," Seif says. Just to give you an idea, Karnak is an open-air museum and the largest ancient religious site in the world. The 54,000 square feet Great Hypostyle Hall is large enough for the Cathedral of Notre Dame to fit in comfortably.

### IT'S COMPLETELY SAFE

"Egypt by all standards is a peaceful country," Seif emphasises. "9.5 million travellers visited us in the last year alone." International touring companies are also re-entering Egypt, after keeping a close eye on the political and social situation. Insight Vacations' first Egypt tour departs

on January 8, 2015.

"We have had a long-standing history with Egypt and we wish to continue this tradition. As a destination Egypt should be an essential component on any serious traveller's bucket list," says Pieter Beyers, general manager for Insight Vacations.

### YOU WON'T BE TRAMPLED BY TOURISTS

Before the Revolution, you couldn't move around the ancient ruins and temples without getting trampled by a tour group. Now you can take photos of all the temples, without a gaggle of tour groups in your shots. In the past you would have been caught in maelstrom of daytrippers from the Red Sea. Travellers that have recently visited Egypt tell tales of an empty Valley of the Kings. Go now, before the hordes return. ■

### FLY WITH EGYPTAIR

"EGYPTAIR's powerful network serves 28 main European, 21 North and West African and Middle Eastern destinations – a total of 525 unique city pairs," Seif explains. EGYPTAIR flies to 82 main global business and leisure destinations. The short total journey hours and seamless connectivity at their new hub, Terminal Three makes this an ideal stopover for travellers. With the youngest fleet & 90.6% on-time performance Seif believes that the airline's difference lies in their punctuality and excellent service. "Our valued guests and partners truly feel the Egyptian Spirit – the spirit of a true civilizations through EGYPTAIR." For more information on their special offers to India, Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada or to book an EGYPTAIR flight, visit [www.egyptair.com](http://www.egyptair.com) or consult your travel agent.





# INSIGHT'S SIGNATURE YEAR FOR 2015

*Insight Vacations launches new European programme that features expanded Signature offerings*

INSIGHT VACATIONS is celebrating its Signature Year in 2015 with an unrivalled choice of destinations. John Boulding, Insight Vacations CEO said: "Last year, we introduced a range of Signature Experiences to our Europe itineraries. a 'Signature Experience' is a authentic experience that Insight has chosen, that are far beyond run-of-the-mill tourist fare. This year, we are building on the success of this program and expanding the concept across every itinerary in four categories: Hotels, Dining, Evenings and Experiences or what we collectively refer to as 'Signature Events'.

"Great consideration and care has gone into designing the 113 escorted journeys in our 2015 programme. We know our guests want to see the main

sights, stay in central locations and be guided by expert tour directors. This is something we consistently deliver – we're proud to consider these hallmarks of any Insight Vacations journey. However, guests have told us it's not just the destinations but what they eat and the people they meet that makes a holiday unforgettable. It's these engaging and authentic – or Signature – experiences that our guests talk about for years to come, whether it's replicating an Italian recipe they learnt during a cooking demonstration with Chef Lorenzo in Umbria, staying in the elegant Château de Rochecotte in the heart of the Loire Valley or tasting luminously green freshly pressed olive oil at a family run Olive Mill".

## ADDITIONAL NEW FEATURES IN 2015 PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- Over 10 new itineraries to destinations including Italy, Greece, Dalmatia and Morocco.
- Four new Gold Luxury itineraries and the introduction of all-inclusive pricing with evening meals, and all Signature Experiences included in the one-price.
- Over 80 Signature Hotels throughout Europe.
- Early Payment Discounts of up to 10 per cent when guests book and pay by 30 January 2015
- Single friendly departures with significant reductions on single supplements on certain departures
- Extensive video content bringing the brochure to life via the mobile 'Layar' application.



## A SELECTION OF SIGNATURE EVENTS INCLUDES:

- Be entertained by gregarious World Champion gelato maker Sergio Dondoli in Tuscany and taste his delicious experiential flavours like raspberry and rosemary and gorgonzola cheese and walnuts.
- Chat with a local market stallholder in the English Market in Cork, regarded by Rick Stein as the best covered market in Ireland and the UK.
- A cooking demonstration and tasting of the Potato Peel Pie from the original WWII ration-book recipe, the intriguing dish was made famous by Mary Ann Shaffer's novel, The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society.
- Partake in a Friday night Shabat dinner in Tel Aviv.
- Stay in the charming 5-star CS Vintage House Hotel overlooking the Douro River in Portugal that dates back to the 18th century.
- At the home of champion Scandinavian dog racer Roger Dahl, meet his adorable huskies and share in the challenges of competing in marathon Arctic dog sleigh races.

For more information visit [www.insightvacations.com](http://www.insightvacations.com) or call (011) 280 8400. Follow them on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram #InsightMoments @InsightSA



# LIVING LA VIDA LOCAL

Tired of impersonal hotel rooms and outrageous hotel bills? Why not live like a local and book your next stay through the popular hospitality startup Airbnb?

By Yolandi Groenewald

**T**hese days, strangers' homes are the new Hilton. Locals in cities from Stockholm, San Francisco, Berlin and Paris to Tokyo and New York are now leasing their apartments or guest rooms through Airbnb ([www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com))

to make a quick buck in these tough economic times. The hook? Travellers love the idea of being a local for a few days in the destination of their choice.

But it is the price that clinches the deal. For a fraction of a hotel room, you can often find a lovely pad while soaking in the local culture and shopping at the grocer around the corner.

Airbnb hosts advertise their guest rooms, apartments, houses, tents, caravans, boats and even igloos. If you can live in it, it's on Airbnb.

The service that began in 2008 today has more than 11 million users and 600 000 properties. Last year, 6 million people joined the service. The people who use Airbnb love it. The service has cult

status among experienced, independent travellers who are tired of the exorbitant prices at hotels and the humdrum tourist attractions.

In May 2013 Daniella van Heerden, a broadcast journalist at eNCA travelled

nights' stay in a hotel."

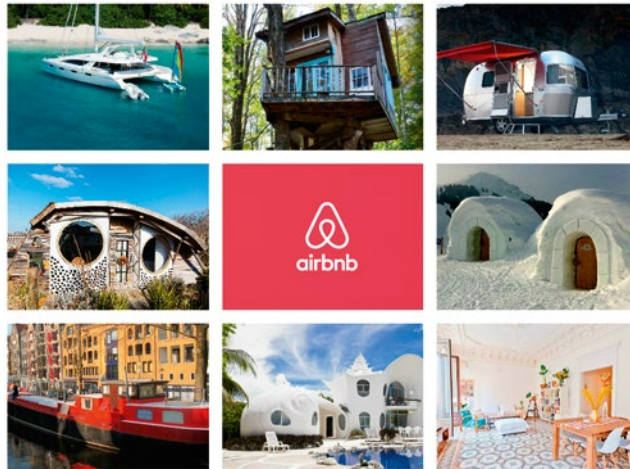
One of their friends recommended Airbnb. "Our New York apartment was amazing - three streets above Central Park, WiFi and TV and kitchen, even a laundry room and lifts in the building.

We paid just over \$100 a night for the place!"

But be warned – it's not for everyone. There are some slummy places on the website, and you must take care to ensure you don't end up with someone who simply throws a mattress on a dirty floor for you to sleep on.

Airbnb's secret lies in the reviews. "Only consider apartments with lots of reviews, and positive ones at that. This is very important." Daniella emphasises. Airbnb users are known for their brutal honesty, and it's with these reviews the

wheat is separated from the chaff. You soon realise there are many wonderful hosts who take a lot of trouble to make you feel at home. The good hosts are usually booked far in advance, though there are always a few good ones to be found on short notice. ■



to New York.

"The Rand was weak against the Dollar and in New York everything is even more expensive than in the rest of the States. I had a look online at some of the hotel and hostel prices, but it became clear that we would only to afford a few

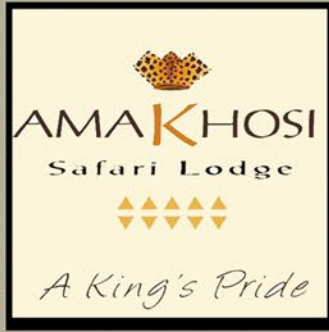
## THE CONVERTED

"We haven't once had a bad experience with Airbnb. In fact, every stay surpassed our expectations. We usually prefer freestanding units to renting bedrooms, but if you only need a place to sleep, a bedroom is perfectly okay. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the area you will be staying in. Google the neighbourhood, check the location on Google Maps and its proximity to public transport.

"When we visited New York we decided to stay in Brooklyn, rather than Manhattan. We rented a small, open-plan space with a kitchenette, pull-out couch and double bed. It was clean and well-kept and looked out onto the street below. The owner of the apartment uses it only for Airbnb rentals, so everything went without a hiccup. Most importantly, it was affordable at around R3 000 for the four nights – amazing value for the often pricey New York."

-Kristia van Heerden, digital editor





*Amakhosi Safari lodge* is situated on the banks of Zululand's Mkuze River in the Big five *Amakhosi* Private Game Reserve in Kwazulu Natal. Visit once and you will long to return forever. At *Amakhosi*, which translated means "place of kings", you will experience the splendour of Zululand, traditional home of Zulu kings, mighty warriors, culture and tradition as well as big game and wide open spaces.

Six river suites rest in harmony with the magnificent location, whilst two splendid Umntwana Honeymoon suites, suitably befitting a King and his Queen, emulate serenity with ceiling high panoramic windows and indulgent bathrooms. An open-plan design sets them apart with a private spacious deck, plunge pool and hammock overlooking the river.

Guests can experience the Zululand bushveld with game drives, walking safaris, genuine cultural experiences and seasonal frogging safaris led by expert rangers. It's a special place where royal treatment is a part of each day and no two days are the same.

The new *Amakhosi River SPA*, with its panoramic views of the Mkuze River and relaxing sounds of the surrounding bush, offers a variety of 'safari spa' indulgences using Africology products, which are produced using natural ingredients and inspired by the wisdom of Africa's traditional healers and celebrating Africa's vibrant heritage, communities and plant life. This epitomises the ethos of environment and culture that *Amakhosi Safari Lodge* deeply values.

Choose *Amakhosi* for the matrimonial journey of a lifetime... a romantic bush wedding followed by the complete royal Kingdom experience in one of the spectacular Umntwana Honeymoon suites, suitably befitting the king and his queen.

*Amakhosi Safari lodge* provides exclusive service and luxury, which accompanies the dramatic surroundings bearing testimony to its name. A mere 5 1/2 -hour drive from Johannesburg and 4 hours from Durban, *Amakhosi Safari lodge* offers guests a truly remarkable African experience

*Amakhosi Safari lodge*, your 'home' in Africa, where your soul is refreshed, your senses awakened and your mind and body restored...



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# DUBAI

CITY BEHIND THE SUPERLATIVES





The Yanks had it all wrong. It's not true that everything is bigger and better in the US. You just have to take a drive down the Sheikh Zayed Road, which is framed with mammoth monoliths of steel and chrome.

Excess surrounds you.  
By Carla Lewis Balden





Every skyscraper in Dubai competes with its neighbour to be taller and more elaborate. Visiting this city is like taking a stroll between the pages of the Guinness Book of World Records. During my stay in Dubai, I was ticking off more records than Hussein Bolt at the Olympic Games.

Want a room with a view? Why not stay at the JW Marriot Marquis, the highest hotel in the world? You'll have a great view over the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world. In this skyscraper's shadow, you will find the glitzy, over the top Dubai Mall, the biggest mall on earth. Then we're not even talking about the world's highest swimming pool, mosque and restaurant, should you be interested in taking a tour of superlatives. All of this is found within a square mile of the most expensive real estate on earth.

I, however wasn't that interested in modern Dubai. I wanted to peer behind the veil of chrome and glass, into the more traditional Arabic culture. I'll take

Scheherazade's tales over shopping malls any time.

However, concrete and glass has replaced the billowing clothes of a Bedouin tent. Camels you'll find on the desert safaris, relics of another era. They've been replaced by Range Rovers and sexy, souped-up sports cars.

To hear the faint whispers of *1001 Arabian Nights*, you have to move away from the glitz and glamour, into the more traditional neighbourhoods. A decade or two ago Deira and Dubai Creek were the economic heartbeat of the city, but most of the economic activity has moved to downtown Dubai.

I board an abra, a traditional taxi at the water station at Al Ghubaiba, from the Bur Dubai side to the Al Sabkha on the Deira side. It's one of the cheapest forms of public transportation in Dubai, only 1 dirham (R3) per person. When taking a ride on the Creek, you get an impression of two cities. Great towers of steel and glass rise above the more traditional architecture of mosques, mud towers and Turkish minarets.



## BASH A DUNE AND RIDE A CAMEL

*A desert safari was one of the highlights of my visit. First you are taken on an exhilarating off-road adventure, bounding over dunes and flying down slipfaces in a 4x4. After that you watch the sun set over the Arabian desert, before arriving at the desert camp. Persian carpets are spread over the desert sands, framed by Bedouin tents. Here you can smoke a shisha pipe while sipping on a typical Arabian coffee, infused with cardamom spice. Other activities include camel rides, henna tattoos and belly dancing.*



# Dubai

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When visiting the older areas like Deira and Dubai Creek, it's still possible to hear the faint whispers of *1001 Arabian nights*. In any Middle Eastern city, the souk is usually the heartbeat of the city. Dubai is no different.

It resembles the mythical caves of Aladdin and Ali Baba, with treasures of fine metals and precious stones. If you don't have the budget of a sheikh, there are enough trinkets to keep you busy. Hawkers vie for your attention and are constantly trying

to lure shoppers to their stalls with tales of fine silk pashminas and hand-woven carpets at bargain prices. Be sure to bargain hard, most prices are set at three times the going rate.

In the spice markets you also get to experience the old traditions of Arabia, even though the hawkers are chatting on the newest iPhone. While chatting and engaging on WhatsApp, they can simultaneously measure out a helping of myrrh and frankincense.

I point to a mixture of wild flowers and potpourri. That's for keeping evil spirits out of your house, the stall owner tells me. And no, it doesn't work for mother-in-laws. I'm sure if you enquire at the right place, an intrepid salesman can also conjure up a magic lamp. It may involve false bottoms, a trip through a trap door and driving a hard bargain. But hey, it's Dubai, and everything is possible here.

### EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM...

If you want to experience true Emirati hospitality, book yourself a traditional Emirati breakfast or lunch at the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU). Located in the Al Fahidi Historic District, this

is one of the best places to find out more about Dubai and Islam. You get to share a meal with your hosts, which consists of Emirati specialities while they chat about the UAE culture, customs and religion. The setting is in an atmospheric room, decorated with eastern carpets and beautiful, soft lightning. For someone who comes from a Western point of view it's a true eye opener. If you want some beautiful photos of Dubai's wind towers and

traditional architecture, I recommend the heritage tour through the Al Bastakiya neighborhood of the Al Fahidi Historic District. You also get to visit to the Diwan Mosque. For more information visit [www.culture.ae](http://www.culture.ae).

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**Emirates has 7 daily flights from South Africa to Dubai.** Visit [www.emirates.com/za](http://www.emirates.com/za) for more information.

Arabian Adventures is the region's leading destination management company and can organise all of your excursions from desert safaris to wild water parks. Visit their website at [www.arabian-adventures.com](http://www.arabian-adventures.com).

**Dubai has only two seasons, summer and winter.** The best time to visit this city is during winter, from November to April. Winters are warm and short with an average high of 23°C

and overnight lows of 14°C. During the summer months, it's extremely hot and humid, which makes it trying to walk around during the day.

**South Africans need a visa to visit Dubai.** You can book this through Arabian Adventures ([www.arabian-adventures.com](http://www.arabian-adventures.com)) or the Dubai Visa Processing Centre ([www.dubaivisa.net](http://www.dubaivisa.net)) ■

*Carla Lewis-Balden was hosted by die DTCM, Emirates and Arabian Adventures.*





# Dubai: what's new and coming up

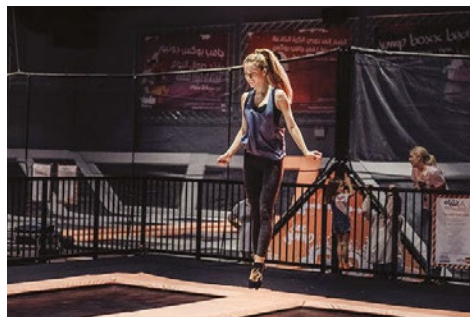
Time never stands still in the Middle East's tourism, business and events hub, which has welcomed a host of new developments, attractions and launches over the last few months. And with plenty more in the pipeline, Dubai is a sure-fire sell to your clients.

## New family attractions

### Trampoline parks

Dubai's two new trampoline parks, Bounce Inc in Al Quoz and Jump Boxx in Uptown Mirdiff, have taken the city by storm, offering visitors of all ages a world of exhilarating fun. The former opened in June and boasts over 100 interconnected trampolines divided into various zones for free jumping, dodge ball, stunt jumps and slam dunks. The latter launched at the end of August and is just as big, with just as much on offer. Both also offer trampolining sessions for kids as young as three years.

[bounce.ae](http://bounce.ae)  
[www.jump-boxx.com](http://www.jump-boxx.com)



### Jumeirah Corniche

The first two sections of this much-anticipated revamp of the Jumeirah coastline have already opened to the public, with the rest of the project due to open in November. Visitors can expect a wide walkway with carefully landscaped areas and shaded benches overlooking the beach, along with a jogging track, rest-houses fitted with kiosks as well as public and health facilities. Once complete, the Corniche will stretch for 14 km all the way from Dubai Marine Beach Resort & Spa to the iconic Burj Al Arab.



### Flight simulators

For aspiring pilots and those with dreams of taking to the skies, two family-friendly flight simulators opened earlier this year – the Emirates A380 Experience in The Dubai Mall and iPILOT in Mirdif City Centre. Both offer a challenging and educational experience, and are so realistic they can be used for training genuine pilots.

[www.emiratesa380experience.com](http://www.emiratesa380experience.com)  
[www.flypilot.ae](http://www.flypilot.ae)



### Arabian Water Parks

This floating inflatable bouncy playground anchored a few metres off the coast of The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence in Dubai Marina launched in April. The park is made up of trampolines, slides, climbing walls and a host of other obstacles and islands, all watched over by professional safety guards. Able to accommodate up to 130 people of all ages, it's the biggest water park of its kind in the world, promising hours of fun and laughter.

[www.arabianwaterparks.com](http://www.arabianwaterparks.com)



### Upcoming events and festivals

- **Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby Sevens**, 4-6 Dec 2014, [dubairugby7s.com](http://dubairugby7s.com)
- **Dubai Shopping Festival**, 1 Jan - 1 Feb 2015, [mysdf.ae](http://mysdf.ae)
- **Dubai Food Festival**, 6-28 Feb 2015, [dubaifoodfestival.com](http://dubaifoodfestival.com)
- **Dubai World Cup**, 28 Mar 2015, [dubaiworldcup.com](http://dubaiworldcup.com)

### New hotel openings

- **Doubletree by Hilton Dubai**: Jumeirah Beach at Dubai Marina
- **Marriott Hotel Al Jaddaf**
- **Warwick Hotel Dubai** in DIFC
- **Waldorf Astoria**
- **Sofitel The Palm**
- **Four Seasons Dubai** at Jumeirah Beach
- **Palazzo Versace Dubai hotel**: Doors open in early 2015

### New restaurants

- **Don Alfonso 1890** at the Shangri-La Hotel
- **CUT by Wolfgang Puck** at The Address Downtown
- **Omnia Gourmet** in Jumeirah Fishing Village
- **The Scene**, Pier 7 in Dubai Marina
- **Clé Dubai** in DIFC.

Keep an eye on [www.dubaicalendar.com](http://www.dubaicalendar.com) for the latest schedule of carnivals, sporting events, festivals and concerts. Whatever their interest, there's bound to be an event that appeals to your customers.

Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing

P.O. Box: 7, Cramerview, Johannesburg, Tel: +27 11 702 9600

[www.dubaitourism.ae](http://www.dubaitourism.ae), e-mail: [dctm\\_sa@dubaitourism.ae](mailto:dctm_sa@dubaitourism.ae), [facebook.com/dtcm](https://www.facebook.com/dtcm)



# CRUISING ALONG

A cruise offers excellent value for money and a wide range of activities. We look at the perks of taking one for your next holiday.

“**T**here is no doubt that cruising offers outstanding value for money when compared to a land-based holiday”, says Peter Shanks, spokesperson of cruise and holiday specialist Imagine. “The inclusive nature of a cruise, with high-quality dining and entertainment as well as visiting so many destinations, are key reasons why cruising continues to grow in popularity in South Africa.”

Despite the misperception that only those with big pockets can afford to cruise, over 70% of South African travellers polled in a recent travel survey by Imagine say cruising offers better value-for-money than land holidays.

### MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

“Your fares include accommodation, meals and entertainment – so people understand costs before they travel. Almost all your on-board expenses will be included in the total package price”, explains Allan Foggit, director of MSC Cruises South Africa.

Do note that some shore excursions, gratuities and off-ship activities will come out of your pocket. When you reserve a cruise, you will receive detailed information regarding excursion times, prices and itineraries by selecting choices that relate to your personal tastes and budget.

### NO SCHLEPPING ALL THAT HEAVY LUGGAGE

Anyone that has done a European tour knows what trouble it can be dragging your luggage down narrow

cobblestone alleys and up narrow staircases. Then we’re not even talking about living out of a suitcase for a week or two. “With a cruise you get to visit many interesting destinations and countries, but only have to unpack once. This sets a cruise apart from other land-based holidays”, Allan says.



### CELEBRATE A SPECIAL OCCASION WITH A CRUISE

Cruising also works well for family reunions, celebrations and weddings, because many needs can be met at once, while taking the burden off the organiser.

And for those special occasions (birthdays, wedding anniversaries), why not enhance the luxury of your experience by upgrading to a stateroom with a balcony? You can relax on a deckchair with a private view of exotic ports and sparkling

blue seas, without having to make the trip upstairs to one of the main decks.

### IT'S AN AFFORDABLE FAMILY VACATION

“A major selling point in the current economy is that children under 18 sharing with their parents in a family cabin cruise and eat free,” Allan says. Families can enjoy facilities together, or children of all ages can relish in tailor-made fun whilst parents relax on the deck, around the pool or take part in a variety of entertainment activities. Family-friendly facilities on board include the kids club, sports facilities, pools, spa and the daily program, organised by the ship’s entertainment director.

### ITALIAN HOSPITALITY WITH MSC CRUISES

The MSC Opera will dock on South African shores between late October 2014 and March 2015, allowing locally based families to take advantage of cruise departures out of both Cape Town and Durban over the holiday season.

Family-friendly facilities on board include the kids club, sports decks, pools, a spa and the daily programme choreographed by the renowned MSC entertainment team. When the ship docks, exotic island destinations are yours to explore.

Packages start at R3600 for a three-night stay, and R3 850 for a four-night trip, accommodation, meals and entertainment included, but excluding port, service and insurance charges. ■

For more information on MSC cruises, go to [www.msccruises.co.za](http://www.msccruises.co.za).







## GO WITH THE FLOW AT

# VICTORIA FALLS

Victoria Falls is considered the adrenaline capital of Africa. However, if you're not keen about the idea of throwing yourself off a bridge or getting pummelled by rapids, there is still plenty to keep you busy. **Carla Lewis-Balden** takes it easy at *The Smoke That Thunders*

I don't like heights, and I'm not the world's strongest swimmer. While other people are queuing and paying top dollar to throw themselves off bridges and into gorges, I would rather be sipping a gin and tonic and enjoying the view. The same goes for white water rafting; I've seen too many people emerge from those foaming rapids of death with a blue eye or cracked ribs. The most adventurous thing I see myself doing is maybe eating a Mopani worm, or smuggling an illicit wood carving I've bought at the craft market through customs.

Although Victoria Falls is marketed as an adventure destination, there are still plenty of activities to keep the less adventurous busy. These were some of my favourites.

### SUNSET CRUISE ON THE ZAMBEZI EXPLORER

I was completely surprised by the Zambezi Explorer boat. While most companies in Vic Falls try to recreate the colonial glamour of a bygone era, this boat was slick, contemporary and tastefully furnished. The staff wore retro-inspired sailor uniforms that were more yacht club than safari

club, and the decor was straight of a Weylandts brochure. It was a welcome break from the pith helmet chic that prevails at the Falls. At \$80 per head for the Signature Deck it isn't cheap, but this is the Rolls Royce of safari cruises on the Zambezi, not some tacky booze cruise. If you're on a budget, the \$55 per head on the luxury deck still offers value for money.

Guests recline on big, comfortable couches while cruising past the riverine forest on the banks of the Zambezi. All drinks are included, except for the expensive premium brands and champagne. Don't make any dinner plans for the evening, you are fed a steady stream of hors d'oeuvres, canapés, and other scrumptious snacks. By the time I left the boat, I had a jiggle in my step from all the G&T's and I was stuffed from all the snacks. For more information send an email to [info@zambeziexplorer.com](mailto:info@zambeziexplorer.com) or visit [www.zambeziexplorer.com](http://www.zambeziexplorer.com)

### GET YOUR GROOVE ON AT THE BOMA

Seeing a German tourist trying to twerk and get jiggy with the traditional dancers is already entertainment

on its own. But that's not really the reason you come to Boma – Place of Eating. The restaurant offers a more gentrified version of traditional African cuisine and serves it up with various fun activities, like a drumming workshop, a resident sangoma and traditional African dancers. Although the food here is served buffet style, it's not the mass produced fare you would expect from a tourist joint. I had a warthog fillet prepared on the grill right in front of me. You can also choose from other types of venison like kudu and impala.

If you are an adventurous eater, you can try the Mopani worms, everyone that tries one gets a certificate. Feedback includes "earthy, dry, and tastes like green tea." Hardened African travellers may find The Boma a bit touristy, but if you're looking for a fun night out, some dancing and a venue with a great vibe, this is probably the best place in Victoria Falls.

The Boma is located on the property of the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. For more information visit [www.africaalbidatourism.com](http://www.africaalbidatourism.com) or send an email to [saf lodge@saf lodge.co.zw](mailto:saf lodge@saf lodge.co.zw)





### AFTERNOON TEA AT THE VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL

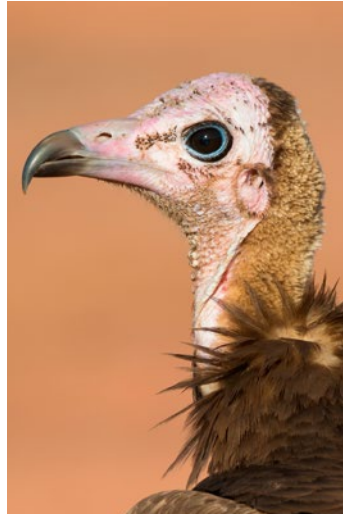
If you want to experience the Victoria Falls of a bygone era, do have an afternoon tea on the Stanley Terrace, overlooking the spray of the Falls. The terrace has a beautiful view of the Victoria Falls Bridge and the sprawling lawns of the hotel. The cake tower is a treat, expect small delicate tea sandwiches served with scones, butter and jam and a selection of cakes. They also have a wide variety of teas. The portions are generous; my partner and I couldn't finish all the decadent pastries on the silver cake stand. All of this is served to the background of a tinkling piano soundtrack. After tea, take a walk to the end of the grounds, you get a good view of the bridge between Zimbabwe and Zambia. If the Falls are quite full, you'll see the Smoke That Thunders. Afternoon tea is served between 15:00 and 17:00 and costs \$35 for the cake stand, which serves two people. Visit [www.victoriafallshotel.co](http://www.victoriafallshotel.co) for more information.



### SEE THE VULTURES FEED

I like vultures, but I never get to see them up close. They're always circling in the heavens or sitting on the top of a dead leadwood tree. The Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (VFSL) runs a feeding scheme for vultures, which gives visitors a chance to see these birds up close. All of the bones and offal not suited for human consumption from

VFSL's restaurants are recycled at the VFSL's vulture restaurant. What follows is a eat as much as you like-buffet of carrion, as hooded vultures, lapped-faced vultures, white back vultures and marabou storks descend to feast on the bones. Visitors get quite close to the action; there is



a little dusty make-shift pavilion from where you can see all of the action. The vulture feeding project is managed by Jonathan Hudson, general manager of the VFSL, which also gathers valuable information for vulture conservation groups. The vultures are fed at 13:00, every day.

Afterwards, you can enjoy a gourmet Buffalo Burger for lunch at the MaKuwa-Kuwa-restaurant.

### SUNDOWNERS ON VICTORIA FALLS BRIDGE

The journey begins in style. A red carpet, which links the Grand Dame, the 108-year old Victoria Falls Hotel with the train platform at Victoria Falls Station sets the tone for the afternoon.

After refreshments, the 19th century-style tram begins its gentle, twenty minute meander through the town of Victoria Falls. The tram passes through African bushveld and rainforest, and if you're lucky, you might spot some game. The final destination is right in the middle of the Victoria Falls Bridge, which straddles the gorge between Zimbabwe and Zambia. This historic bridge is suspended 111 metres above the Zambezi River and gives you a spectacular view directly onto the face of the Falls. When you arrive on the bridge, passengers disembark to watch a demonstration of stunt jumping by the Bungee Flying Squad.

The highlight of the trip is watching the sun slip behind the Falls and the gorge while sipping on a glass of wine. As the fading rays of the sun drop below the horizon, a toot-toot from the tram driver will signal time to begin the return journey home to Victoria Falls. The excursion costs \$65 per head. Visit [www.steamtraincompany.com](http://www.steamtraincompany.com) for more information.



## STAY AT THE VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

The first time I visited the Victoria Falls was with my parents in 1995. We stayed at the then-brand new Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (VFSL). Since then, I've returned several times to Victoria Falls, staying at different properties in town and around the river. The VFSL remains my favourite hotel at the Falls. It may not be situated next to the Zambezi river, but it makes up for this with a beautiful view over bushveld and Mopani shrubland. They also offer options for all budgets, from the

affordable family friendly self-catering units at Lokuthula to the more exclusive Victoria Falls Safari Club.

If you're doing a self-drive with friends or family, I suggest staying at Lokuthula on a bed and breakfast basis. These self-catering units come in either two or three bedroom units. They all come with a fully equipped kitchen, a lounge, terrace and braai area.

The bad ol' days in Zim are over, and supermarkets are fully stocked with fresh produce and groceries.

All facilities on the VFSL property are available to the Lokuthula

Lodges B&B guests. This includes a complimentary hourly shuttle bus to the village, should you wish to go shopping for groceries, markets and The Victoria Falls.

However, if you're looking for a bit more luxury or travelling as a couple, stay at the original Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. All the rooms come with a balcony overlooking the National Park and facing the sunset. For more information visit [www.africaalbidatourism.com](http://www.africaalbidatourism.com). Send an email to [saf lodge@saf lodge.co.zw](mailto:saf lodge@saf lodge.co.zw) ■

*Carla Lewis-Balden was hosted by Africa Albida Tourism, Airlink and Wild Horizons.*

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: VIC FALLS

**Various airlines fly directly into Victoria Falls.** I flew with Airlink to Kasane in Botswana and took a short transfer to Victoria Falls with Wild Horizons. This is a great option if you want to combine your visit to the Falls with a Chobe safari. They also have flights to Livingstone on the Zambian side. Visit [www.flyairlink.com](http://www.flyairlink.com) and [www.wildhorizons.co.za](http://www.wildhorizons.co.za) for more information.

**The best time to visit depends on your expectations.** With my most recent visit in June, the Falls were at its fullest. Visibility is bad, as most of the viewpoints are

blanketed in spray from the falls, but it's the best time to experience the power of the falls. You get drenched, even with a poncho I emerged soaking wet.

If you're planning to take photos, make sure you have waterproof equipment for your gear, the conditions are the same as working in a torrential downpour. If you want a clearer view of the Falls, visit around September to April, when it's dryer, and you have better visibility.

**South Africans do not need a visa to visit Zimbabwe.** It falls within a malarial area, so do take care with insect repellent and chat to your doctor about prophylactic.



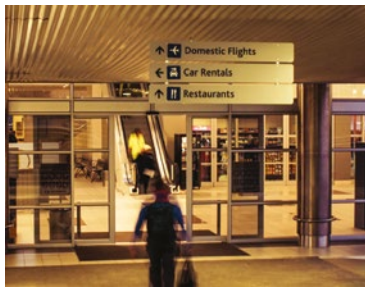
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# DOWN IN THE DEVON VALLEY

You can't beat the value for money that you get in the Cape Winelands, especially outside Stellenbosch. Carla Lewis-Balden followed the route through the Devon Valley.







**T**he German couple sitting next to me on the plane from Johannesburg to Cape Town was already giddy with excitement, after completing a safari circuit in the North.

“It eez so cheap here, ya?” the husband said, fiddling a few Madibas like monopoly money between his fingers.

“We’re seeing an estate agent in the Cape”, the woman told me, her eyes already filled with images of her sitting on a stoep with a glass of Sauvignon Blanc, gazing towards the Boland mountains.

I had recently returned from a tour of Provence in France and Tuscany in Italy. I understood their excitement.

Sure, Tuscany is pretty with its cypress trees and rolling hills, entombed in silver mist. And the old farmhouses with lilac shutters and hilltop towns in Provence have a charming, quaint atmosphere.

However, when faced with rude waiters and expensive food, both regions can lose their charm quite quickly.

Later that day, sitting on the terrace of Le Venue, the restaurant at The House of J.C. Le Roux and gazing over the vineyards and purple-grey Stellenbosch mountains, I started wondering. Why are some people willing to pay so much money to visit Europe, when we have this on our doorstep?

## THE MECCA OF MÉTHOD CAP CLASSIQUE

I toured the Devon Valley, a lovely piece of land with rolling hills covered with vineyards, forests and meadows, just outside Stellenbosch.

My first stop was at The House of J.C. Le Roux, a cellar that specialises in sparkling wine. They are mostly known for their stalwart La Domaine and La Fleurette sparkling wines, the staple of South African wedding

toasts. However, this is the sparkling wine for the masses. If you want to taste the extraordinary, you should try their range of Méthod Cap Classiques.

“We craft each J.C. Le Roux Cap Classique in the French tradition”, cellar master Elunda Basson explained. During this process the bubbles aren’t infused with carbon dioxide, as in the case of ordinary sparkling wine. “The delicate bubbles are created during the process of secondary fermentation in the bottle; the exact method used producing French champagne.”

You can buy a bottle of their flagship MCC, the award winning Scintilla 2008, for a very reasonable R170 at the cellar door. Taking into account that the most entry level champagnes are priced way above R200, this is excellent value for money. For more information, visit [www.jcleroux.co.za](http://www.jcleroux.co.za).

### FAMILY FRIENDLY CELLAR

Middelvlei is the perfect vine and wine experience if you are looking for a kid-friendly venue. They have a petting zoo on the premises, and the cellar is a favourite among local parents for kiddie’s parties. A big rambling farmhouse serves as a restaurant. I loved the simplicity and unpretentiousness of the place. Their *boerebraais* are legendary: expect braai staples like chops, boerewors and chicken sosaties, served with *potbrood*, *braaibroodjies*, homemade pâté and pumpkin fritters. I loved their Free Range pinotage, made of only free-running juice; naturally drained off freshly crushed grapes. The wine has sweet raspberry aromas with mulberry undertones and elegant oak spices. Address: Flamingo Rd, Onderpapegaaiberg, Stellenbosch. [www.middelvlei.co.za](http://www.middelvlei.co.za)

## WINE AND ICE CREAM

One of the things I appreciate about the foodie culture in the Winelands, is that they're not afraid to experiment. And with stiff competition between the vineyards and their food products, chefs constantly have to innovate. Clos Malverne combines two of my favourite delicacies, ice cream and wine for an amazing taste experience. For R45 you can sample four delicious ice cream and wine pairings in their tasting lounge. The pairing events take place from Tuesdays until Saturdays between 10:00 and 16:00. Rest assured that you will not be served ordinary vanilla or chocolate here; the ingredients change according to the season and the mood of the chef. During my visit I tasted banana pancake flavour, butternut and pecan, and chilli chocolate. The butternut was my favourite; I didn't expect to like it at all, but it was rather special. Pre-bookings are required. Visit [www.closmalverne.co.za](http://www.closmalverne.co.za) for more information.



oldest hotels in the Stellenbosch area.

Even though luxurious, it is also unpretentious with an atmosphere similar to that of an inn on the English countryside. The terrace provides an amazing view over the valley and is one of the loveliest places in the region to enjoy a sundowner. I indulged in a



glass of Sylvane Pinotage Reserve, with notes of cherry and mint, as Flooze the resident hotel cat snaked between my legs. In my mind I raised a glass to affordable wine, Stellenbosch and its beautiful surroundings. Who needs Provence?

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

I suggest doing the Marshmallow and Meringue pairing at House of J.C. Le Roux. Three of their MCCs and two of their sparkling wines are paired with gourmet marshmallows and meringues. Each of the sweets has a different subtle flavour

to complement the best flavours in the wine. The tasting costs R65 per person. Visit [www.jcleroux.co.za](http://www.jcleroux.co.za) for more information.

**The Devon Valley Hotel offers affordable luxury accommodation in the Winelands.** It is situated only 15 minutes from Stellenbosch, with special offers on a regular base. Visit their website <http://devonvalleyhotel.com> for more information.

They are currently running a "pay for three, stay for four" special offer, including a daily breakfast and a bottle of wine in the room on arrival. The offer is, subject to availability, applicable to a Vineyard Luxury Room and Manor House Room. Supplements

may apply.

**The Devon Valley Detour (R115 per person) offers you the best of the region.** The package includes four bespoke wine experiences. You can book this through the Devon Valley Hotel. ■

## WINELANDS HOSPITALITY

My last stop was at the Devon Valley Hotel. It is a quaint four-star boutique hotel, set between rambling old gardens and vineyards, and one of the

## WIN WITH THE HOUSE OF J.C. LE ROUX

One lucky reader and a partner can win a lunch for two to the value of R350 at Le Venue, J.C. Le Roux's restaurant. After that, they can sample the cellar's Méthode Cap Classique with a MCC-tasting. To win, send an email with "J.C. Le Roux" in the subject field to [win@travelupdate.co.za](mailto:win@travelupdate.co.za). Include your name and contact details. T&C's apply. Closing date, 31 January. Winners are responsible for their own transport to and from J.C. Le Roux.



# TRAVEL NEWS

## CALLING ALL SINGLE TRAVELLERS

“Single guests often feel penalised because they have to pay more, so we’ve addressed this by creating portfolios that have been branded for the single traveller,” says Theresa Szejwallo, managing director for Trafalgar.

For 2015 Trafalgar will be catering to single travellers by waiving or significantly reducing single room supplements in many of the packages offered, usually by about 50 per cent but the waiver can be as much as 100 per cent. These single-friendly deals will be valid on selected departures for 17 of their popular itineraries. Trafalgar’s 7 day Italian Holiday, priced from R19 900 features three departure dates in April and August that have a 100 per cent waiver of the single supplement, representing a savings of over R3000. Solo travellers can visit Rome, Venice, Lake Garda, Florence and Pisa at no additional cost.

For more information contact your Area Sales Manager or Trafalgar on (011) 280 8400.

Visit [www.trafalgar.com](http://www.trafalgar.com) and follow

#TrafalgarInsider on Twitter to learn more.



## MEET JEN, SHANGRI-LA'S SEXIER SISTER

Hotel and resort giant Shangri-La recently launched Hotel Jen, an exciting new brand concept, focusing on technology-savvy, carefree travel. Hotel Jen Orchardgateway Singapore, the first of a new ‘Jenre’ of fresh, friendly and fuss-free mid-range hotels by Shangri-La International Hotel Management Ltd, opened its doors to the public in September. Hotel Jen is a diverse collection of hotels in the best locations across Asia Pacific, with a unique brand of style and service delivery designed to appeal to a ‘New Jeneration’ of travellers. The brand is the brainchild of virtual persona Jen, a professional hotelier and all-time lover of life, travel and discovery. For more information visit [www.hoteljen.com](http://www.hoteljen.com)



## BLOGGER WE ❤️

Holiday designer turned travel blogger Dawn Jorgenson’s Incidental Tourist travel blog ([theincidentaltourist.com](http://theincidentaltourist.com)) is everything travel writing should be. Dawn gives you the inside scoop on destinations, through skilfully written reportage, beautiful photos and engaging stories. One warning though; paging through The Incidental



Tourist can give leave you with a serious bout of wanderlust.



## KNOW THE LINGO “BRAGGIE”

A ‘braggie’ is an image posted to social networks, often of a travel destination, designed purely to show off or make friends jealous. According to new research one in ten users do this regularly. Hotel groups are realising the marketing value of braggies. According to the World Travel Market report more hotel chains are offering reward schemes to encourage these types of photos to promote a hotel’s brand.

**92** – the percentage of South Africans who feel international roaming charges meted out by local network providers are too expensive, according to a Travelstart survey.



## EAT HERE

If you’re in the Cape Winelands this summer, be sure to swing by Grande Provence in Franschoek to sample their summer menu. Executive Chef Darren Badenhorst is one of South Africa’s most talented young chefs. He takes inspiration from the precision of French cuisine and combines this with the bold flavours of Asia.

“Nostalgic elements of my childhood and special food moments from my life are definitely evident in our latest menu,” he says.

The summer menu starts at R355 and includes an amuse-bouche, palate cleanser and three courses. The Restaurant at Grande Provence is open daily for lunch and dinner. To book your seat, phone (021) 876 8600 or e-mail [restaurant@grandeprovence.co.za](mailto:restaurant@grandeprovence.co.za).

## TRAVEL LEGEND

Contiki recently has teamed up with Natalie Dormer from *Game of Thrones* for their Legends campaign.

“Travel is so important in its capacity to expand the mind. It’s exciting to start as young as possible – you get to see how other cultures live, challenge your senses and try different cuisines.” Natalie says.

“My first time to Rome was when I was backpacking with my best friend around Europe for a month when I was 18 years old, so I remember that excitement of being away from home properly for the first time. I could have done with a Contiki Trip Manager though!”

To see Natalie’s video and get the full story, fans can head to [contiki.com/legends](http://contiki.com/legends), plus check out the other authentic traveler tales that have been shared as part of their Legends campaign.



## CONSUMER QUESTION

**“On a recent escorted tour one of our flights (which was included in the tour price and paid for) was cancelled. The tour leader instructed us to buy new tickets and claim it back from our travel insurance. Is this common practice with escorted tours?”**

For international flights this is something the airline has control over and we can’t comment on that. If, however, the internal flight is cancelled as part of our guided holiday, Trafalgar would take full responsibility for the arrangements and associated costs on behalf of our guests.

**Theresa Szejwallo, managing director for Trafalgar**





# GROOTBOS

British Glossy *Tatler* ranked Grootbos Private Nature Reserve in Gansbaai as “The best family hotel in the world”. Yolandi Groenewald visited the property with her family to see if it really is all that.

With our arrival at Grootbos it is glaringly obvious that the staff regularly deal with tired, irritated parents and bouncy, hyperactive children. After a road trip of several hours the two boys are squirming in the back seat. Christian, the three year old is taunting his older brother Ruan. The Groenewald car has turned into a ticking time bomb of tempers.

But salvation is at hand when we arrive at Grootbos and a whole army of child minders arrive to greet us. Immediately the irritated offspring are spirited away to high adventure, and the smiles once again emerge. With hardly any effort, Grootbos defuses frayed tempers and lifts the mood of impatient parents and frustrated kids.

Our home for the next two days is Grootbos’s tranquil but family friendly Garden Lodge. Our suite is one of 11 family friendly rooms, hidden away in indigenous milkwood forests. We are blessed with a beautiful private wooden deck that looks over the world famous bay, which attracts whale watchers from all over the world.

Three hours after our arrival, just before sunset two dirty, tired little boys return to our suite as happy as a hog after Christmas. Christiaan

solemnly proclaims Grootbos as our new home and decree that we’re not allowed to leave. Ever.

For a pair of tired parents that want to enjoy a long, romantic dinner without a pair of whinging little voices, Grootbos is indeed a godsend.

Later that evening we are welcomed to the restaurant at the lodge with a dazzle of flickering candles and a homely fireplace. The atmosphere is romantic and intimate, but our boys are not that impressed. Miraculously the child minders appear as if summoned, and immediately start the job of impressing the two difficult younger customers.

They quickly place their orders of fish fingers (please no gourmet green for these two), before they are again whisked away to a playroom. We, of course, move onto greater culinary treats. The menu at Grootbos changes daily, according to what fresh ingredients are available and the mood of chef, Duane Lewis. Every portion is a masterpiece, each bite a piece of heaven.

The next morning we are awakened by our two bouncing boys, who can hardly wait for the next adventure. Woken by the promise of new explorations and fresh ocean air, there is no time for a lie-in.

Before breakfast, the boys assist

the staff in collecting eggs for their breakfast. In an era where most kids think eggs and milk come out of a carton, it’s a valuable lesson in the origins of our food.

After breakfast we venture to the stables for some time with the horses, and the pony rides turn into the highlight of the trip for the three year old. We spend the rest of the morning exploring the numerous beaches, collecting beach side treasures and soaking our feet in the many rock pools of the area.

After devouring a gourmet burger for lunch, we spend the afternoon exploring the Klipgat Caves. The caves are one of the Western Cape’s most important heritage sites. Archeologists have found that people lived there up to 80 000 years ago.

The end of our trip arrives all too soon and the three-year old erupts in tears when he realizes his decree has been broken. The weather reflects our mood, the past two sunny days has been replaced with a silver blanket of mist blanket over Grootbos. As we drive out among the fynbos somewhere in a distance, a foghorn lets out a long, deep baulk - a final goodbye to an incredible stay. ■

For more information visit [www.grootbos.com](http://www.grootbos.com) or call (028) 384 8008

*Yolandi Groenewald and her family were hosted by Grootbos.*



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