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ISSUE 6

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SOUTH COAST

10 COUNTRIES
to visit in 2016



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EDITOR'S LETTER

By mid-February many have shelved their New Year's resolutions to prioritise more pressing realities. Life gets in the way of change. Perhaps it's easier to be more aware of how you travel. This year, go solo; explore authentically – do a home stay, befriend a local and perhaps they'll share their stories over dinner – be kinder to nature by choosing eco-friendly establishments; and watch animals from a distance. It's certainly easier than keeping up with New Year's resolutions!

First off, if you're going to travel more, or differently, you'll need new luggage. Samsonite is giving away luggage worth R11 000 (page 37)!

The Travel Trends feature (page 16) highlights 10 countries *Lonely Planet* says you should visit in 2016. We've written about Poland (country number 7 on the list, on page 28). Our contributors (page 8) share tips about how to hedge your holiday against a weak rand (page 14), decipher South Africa's visa regulations (page 38) and why you shouldn't pet lions (page 40), while our MICE section (page 51-56) focuses on meetings.

Our 12-page Thailand supplement (either bagged with this issue or available for free download on our website) will have you reaching for your sun hat. Before you pack your bags, the Design Your Holiday feature will help you plan your itinerary based on your interests. Once you're ready to jet set, we've compiled a list of suggested tour operators and service providers.

Tweet (@travelupdatersa) or email us (editor@travelupdate.co.za) about which countries or regions you'd like to read more about or where you plan to travel next. Here's to the journey!



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PUBLISHED BY

Travel Update Media House.

Registration number 2015/195314/07

PUBLISHING EDITOR AND CEO

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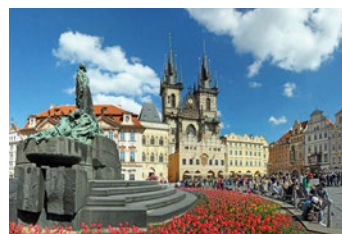
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Anje Rautenbach

48 hours in Seoul page 19

Anje is a caffeinated, globetrotting gypsy who enjoys exploring the nooks and crannies of the world in slow motion... sometimes from the seat of her bicycle.

In 2016 I'd like to revisit Namibia, because once was not enough (and because I still need to go slow in the northern parts of the country).



Lesley Stones

48 hours in Knysna page 18

Lesley is proudly South African with a silly accent because she used to be English. She started her career by reviewing rock bands, then worked for various newspapers before spending four years in Cairo.

Then she followed the sun to South Africa.

My top local destination to explore this year is Johannesburg. It's no longer notorious as a crime capital. Joburg is a culture capital with an excellent vibe, brilliant theatre, funky markets and a city centre rejuvenation.



Herman Scholtz

Features on pages 14 and 38

Herman is a traveller with the expensive taste of a lawyer but the salary of a full-time journalist. (At least he loves his job!)

With the weak rand, keep it local. That's why the Modjadji area in Limpopo should be top of your list for budget-friendly travel destinations. It has reasonable accommodation rates, is truly beautiful and we can (sort of) afford the fuel.



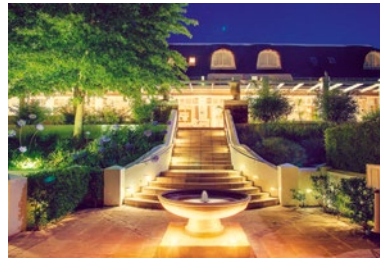
Dawn Jorgensen

Animal rights page 40

Dawn Jorgensen is a travel writer, beauty seeker and earth advocate who finds herself at home, everywhere.

My top responsible tourism destination to visit this year is Watamu on Kenya's East Coast. It's home to pristine beaches, a marine park, turtle rescue centre, mangrove swamps and good people.

Namibia is most often associated with the desert landscapes of the Namib Desert. In this issue of Travel Update we plunge into the 100km-long Four Rivers driving route. It's named after the river system that flows through the Zambezi (formerly known as the Caprivi Strip) and Kavango regions – it's here that the Zambezi, Okavango, Kwando and Chobe rivers find their source. Read more on page 22.



**LE FRANSCHHOEK
HOTEL & SPA**

Le Franschoek Hotel & Spa, situated in the Cape Winelands, offers luxurious hotel accommodation and a truly unique winelands hotel experience. This luxury Hotel features 63 en-suite, elegantly finished rooms and suites, and two lavish villas. Each boasts breath-taking views over either the towering Franschoek Mountains, or manicured gardens. Le Franschoek Hotel is elegantly portrayed in their fine dining eatery – Dish Restaurant. Offering diners an opportunity to indulge in a scrumptious a' la Carte menu, this Franschoek restaurant is complimented by warm service, and picturesque placement. The menu is seasonal and under direction of Executive Head Chef, and experienced gastronome, Scott Shepherd. Le Franschoek offers 5 world class conference venues, seating from 20 to 120 delegates. In addition, it is an ideal destination for a team building, corporate function or a fairy tale wedding.



RIVER HOTELS

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Naudes Nek Pass
Rhodes



Matingwe Reserve
Vaalwater
Limpopo



Tsitsikamma Lodge



Tsitsikamma Lodge & Spa
8km East from the Storms River
Bridge, Eastern Cape



Halyards Hotel & Spa
1 Albany Road, Port Alfred
Eastern Cape



Royal Guest House
8 Beach Crescent Road,
Port Alfred, Eastern Cape



Bushman Sands Golf Lodge
Alicedale
Eastern Cape



The Lodge Accommodation &
Backpackers, 7 Albany Road,
Port Alfred, Eastern Cape



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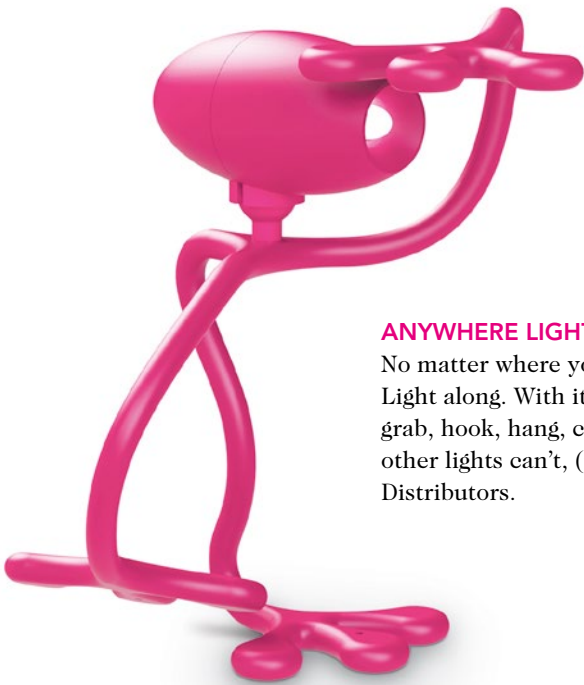
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MAY THE POWER BE WITH YOU

In celebration of the highly-anticipated release of *Star Wars: Episode VII, The Force Awakens*, earlier this year, The Gadget Shop is stocking Darth Vader and R2-D2 2600 mAh powerbanks (**R299**).



RUBIK'S FUTURO CUBE CONSOLE

The digital, motion-controlled gaming cube has an interface which allows you to solve the Rubik's puzzle and play classic games, such as: Tetris, Snake and Five in a Row, or write your own game. Connect them wirelessly and play against your friends, (**R1 599**) from The Gadget Shop.



THREE EYES

Create an awesome triple vision effect with this KaleidOscope attachable smartphone lens (**R129**) from Typo. And bring on those Instagram followers!



BOOKWORM'S DELIGHT

Bookworms will love this compact LED reading light (**from R250**) from SG Distributors. It's small enough to fit into your pocket and easily attaches to books and magazines.

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TRAVEL SMART

Don't leave home without this travel organiser (from R370) from SG Distributors. It has 4 large pockets for boarding passes and passports, 7 small pockets for credit cards, plus a magnetic clasp and comes in various colours.

GO LITE

The lightweight Samsonite B-Lite 3 collection has reinforced corners for added protection and Samsonite detailing you can trust – TSA-approved locks, ergonomic grip handles and smart packing straps (from R3 495).



WIN
1 of 3
55cm spinners!
See page 35
for details.

STAY ACTIVE

Travelling can really push the pause button on your workout routine back home, but with this MP3 armband from Cotton On Body (R199) you'll want to explore your newest destination on foot while listening to your favourite tunes.



AROUND THE WORLD

Whether you're going for a picnic in the park, sundowners on the beach or for a get together at a friend's place, don't forget to pack your 'around the world' cooler bag from Typo (R199).

WRITE ON

Photos may capture a moment, but words chronicle them in time. Keep a journal of your worldly adventures with this A4 notebook from Typo (R99). And why not develop a few photos to stick in here, too?





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DON'T ROLL THE DICE ON YOUR RANDS

The rand is on a rollercoaster and an overseas holiday you plan now may cost thousands more when you take it. Here's how to mitigate the costs of a diving currency. By Herman Scholtz

An ice cream at Disney World Florida cost R12.06 in January 2006; fast-forward to January 2016 and the same ice cream will cost more than R50. That's the double whammy of inflation and a collapsing rand for South African travellers. The panic is palpable and online forums are flooded with travellers seeking refuge against currency volatility. But, the experts say, there's little room for manoeuvring given the legal requirements for foreign currency (see: the Legal Stuff sidebar).

Apart from the (illegal) conventional advice to keep your dollars or ask expat friends to buy your foreign currency in advance, there are other innovative, and legal, solutions.

One is using foreign currency accounts, such as those offered by FNB, ABSA, Standard Bank and Nedbank. The FNB Global Account allows you to convert rands to major currencies by transferring funds from your cheque account.

According to an FNB spokesperson, this account makes international payments possible and allows South Africans to keep their annual discretionary allowance in foreign currency.

A R50 transfer fee applies and FNB charges normal currency conversion commission on the amount. There's no monthly fee and no minimum balance requirement.

Once you have your foreign currency in a separate account, it earns interest (0.4% for American dollars, 0.15% for euros and 2.5% for Australian dollars).

However, these products are intended to keep an investment allowance, the spokesperson insists. Its terms and conditions state "you may not use your Global Account(s) exclusively to fund travels other than under your Discretionary Allowance".

"Banks cannot offer such accounts for travel purposes, which is why they say it cannot be used 'exclusively' to fund travels," says a lawyer, who doesn't want to be identified for professional reasons.

"But if you have a foreign currency account to keep dollars you want to invest offshore in the future and you pay for your hotel from that account, nobody will question a bona fide account holder. As long as you stick to the law and the forex limits."

Always get the necessary legal and financial advice from the relevant service providers, he adds.

Wouter Fourie, director of ASCOR Independent Wealth Managers and the Financial Planning Institute's Planner of the Year 2015/16, also warns against currency trading. "Very few people make consistent money by trading currencies. Although there is general consensus the rand will continue to weaken in the current economic climate, it's a gamble to guess which way the currency will go."

Damage control

Fourie says it's best to pay for your expenses as soon as possible. "You save on flights and bookings, because hotels are willing to discount their prices in exchange for certainty about

their occupancy.

With the option to book travel arrangements now and pay later, rather pay immediately. Credit card payments are not subject to the 60-day rule that applies to foreign exchange.

"Even if the currency strengthens between the time you pay and travel, you're often better off with the savings because of your advance payment," says Fourie.

Saving your rands for that dream holiday

If you're saving for that big-ticket trip, you'll face certain realities. Money in

The legal stuff

- The South African Reserve Bank's manual on foreign exchange explains the most important concepts around foreign exchange control regulations for travellers.
- All South Africans over the age of 18 have a single discretionary allowance of R1 million per calendar year. This amount may be spent abroad, sent abroad in payments or invested in another country without any tax clearance procedures.
- Travellers are warned in the manual: Foreign exchange for your overseas holiday may only be bought up to 60 days before departure, hence the requirement of an airplane ticket.
- You have to convert all unused foreign currency (cash or electronic funds) within 30 days of your return.



a savings account may be losing value in real terms due to inflation, and with a weakening rand, your dream holiday may never happen.

South Africa's All Share Index showed positive returns of 3.39% for 2015 by October, but the index deteriorated by 14.37% in US dollar terms, said Pieter Koekemoer, head of personal investments at Coronation Asset Management, in his latest report to clients.

It's important to consider the currency aspect in your savings and consider your foreign exposure, invest in growth assets such as shares and properties, which have greater volatility and risk, but historically higher returns.

One of the major advantages of offshore exposure – even in rand-denominated funds – is the hedging

effect against currency weakness. If you invest in one of Deutsche Bank's index trackers for the USA, Japan or Europe, your rands will be invested in foreign shares without any administrative fuss. Even if the shares don't grow in real terms over a five-year period, your fund will grow in proportion to the weakening of the rand.

But the opposite scenario (of a strengthening rand) is also true and it's best to get financial advice from a financial planner if you're not financial savvy.

Most financial service providers offer South African rand-denominated funds that invest offshore. But your funds are always in rands and are never taken out of the country. Once you've saved up, you take your money and buy foreign currency for your holiday.

Do the math

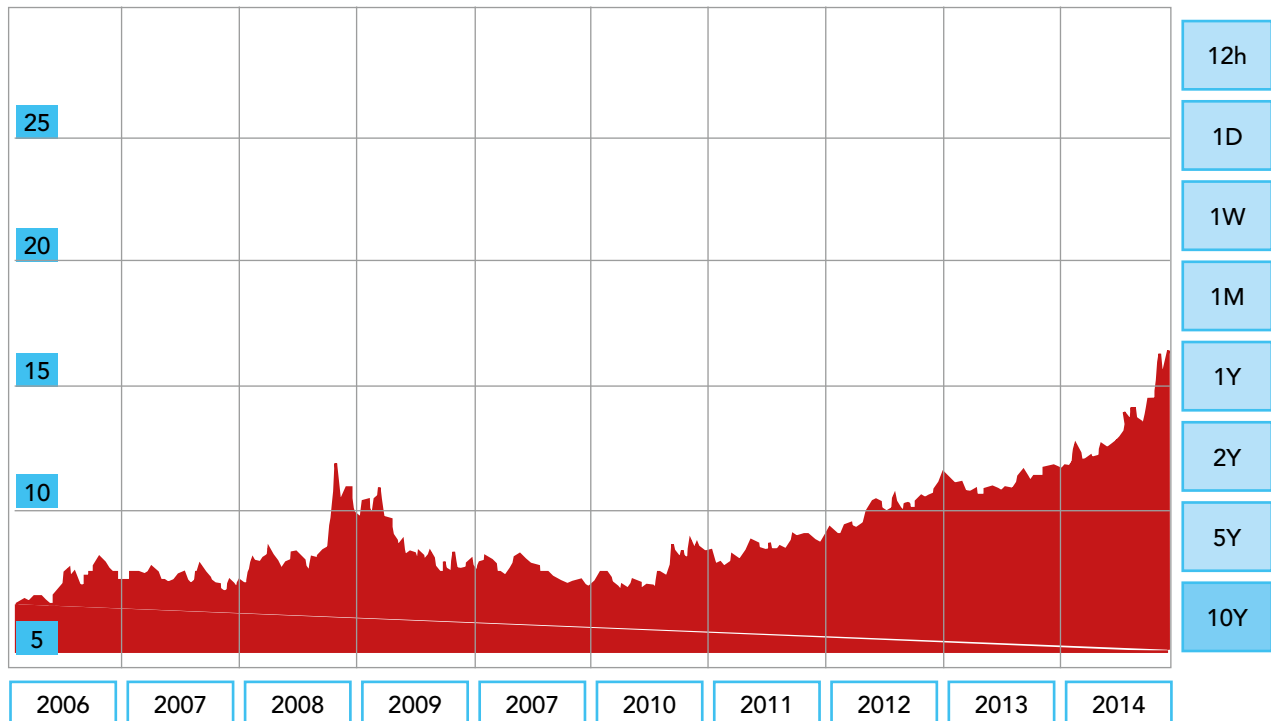
Financial planner Wouter Fourie provides steps to save for a holiday:

- Once you've decided on your destination and date, calculate the cost in today's terms (based on the current exchange rate).
- Based on that calculation, decide if you can afford the trip.
- Add 7% to the cost for every year before your departure for rand devaluation.
- Add another 7% for local inflation and subtract the inflation of your destination (if it's lower) or add it to the 7% if it's higher. For example: If your dream holiday is to a country with 4% inflation, you only need to add 3%. But as a rule of thumb, you should add 14% per year to the cost of your planned holiday.

ZAR per 1 USD

10 Jan 2006 00:00UTC - 7 Jan 2016 22:13 UTC

USD/ZAR close: **16.04793** low: **5.98698** high: **16.16975**



Source: XE.com

THE BEST IN

If *Lonely Planet* says so, you pack your bags.

Botswana

Democratic, progressive, enlightened and invigoratingly wild. Botswana's journey from poverty to becoming one of Africa's most stable, thriving societies is inspirational. The country celebrates 50 years of independence this year and there's a lot for it to shout about. Prepare for a severe case of slack-jawed-with-awe syndrome.

1



Japan

It may be second in this year's rankings, but it's always number one for otherworldly experiences. No other place exemplifies that 'modern yet ancient' cliché like the Land of the Rising Sun. As the 2020 Olympics host, Tokyo raised new developments, but beyond the suburbs Japan is as elegant as its wooden temples.

2

USA

America's National Park Service, which oversees the country's 59 national parks and hundreds of historic landmarks, celebrates a centenary of safeguarding Yosemite, Yellowstone, Badlands and Zion, among others. Lace up your hiking boots and explore the 340 000km² network of surreal landscapes it defends – from earth-rending canyons to alligator-infested swamplands and belching geysers.

3



4

Palau

Palau is one of the world's most magical diving and snorkelling destinations. This far-flung Pacific archipelago turned its marine territory into a sanctuary to protect this 'Serengeti of the sea'. Excessive face mask-wearing may leave you with a temporary red mark, but the fish, coral and other critters will leave you goggle-eyed for longer.



5

Latvia

It's taken 25 years to shrug off the fetters of communism, but this Baltic treasure is resuscitating ancient traditions, restoring crumbling castles and transforming its once stodgy cuisine into cutting-edge New Nordic fare. Riga has built on its reign as a European Capital of Culture with improved infrastructure and renovations.



TRAVEL 2016

Here are 10 of their trendiest destinations this year.

6

Australia

The strength of the Aussie dollar has made a trip down under tough for budget travellers, but with petrol prices on the slide 2016 is perfect for a road trip. You'll gawp at the mega sights, including the Great Barrier Reef and Tasmania's pristine wilderness, which face growing environmental threats.



7

Poland

Poland has superpowers – while Europe descended into the doldrums, visitor numbers have climbed with no end in sight as Wrocław is the European Capital of Culture 2016. Kraków will shine when the Pope arrives for World Youth Day. New air routes to Kraków, Szczecin, Katowice and Gdańsk means it's a destination on the rise. *Read about Poland on page 28.*



8

Uruguay

An estimated three million tourists will arrive in Uruguay – the 'Switzerland of South America' – next year. Sandwiched between Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay has a progressive society that boasts a small capital in Montevideo, pampas where you can act out a gaucho (cowboy) fantasy and nightlife amid the glamour of Punta del Este.




Greenland

Greenland has the world's lowest population density, but those who brave this chilly chunk of the planet see the midnight sun glimmer on glaciers, sail among breaching whales, dogsled the tundra and watch the Northern Lights dance across the ice sheet. In March, Greenland will host the Arctic Winter Games, the largest event of its kind.



9

Fiji

Pleasure-loving Fiji has recovered after a coup and constitutional crisis and travellers will soon benefit from an upgrade to Nadi International Airport. So what will it be? Idle at an upscale resort, try extreme sports or go diving, sailing and angling as you soak up what this tropical archipelago offers. 



10



KNYSNA

Some tourists might not even know where to find it on the map, but there's a lot more to Knysna than oysters, sea horses and hippies.

By Lesley Stones

Must See

Bring some padded pants and gear up for a day in the saddle. Knysna has wonderfully flat stretches of coastline that will give even the rustiest cyclist confidence.

Anne Centner and Mandy Stubbs of Knysna Hike & Bike (knysnahikeandbike.co.za) helped me up for the first time in decades and I realised that riding a bike is a skill you never forget, just as the saying has it. Anne and Mandy run wine-tasting cycle tours to some nearby vineyards (luckily they drive you home afterwards), but you can also choose a heritage trail instead. On this trail, you first stop to admire the Knysna seahorse at the San Parks offices on Thesen Island, where you can view these endangered creatures in small tanks.

The island – once nothing more than a sandbank – has been turned into a posh residential marina.

Back in the saddle, look forward to some fortification at Red Bridge Brewery where Darren Berry pours delicious samples of his craft beer (www.redbridgebrewing.co.za). Go back later for a pint and a bite at the adjoining café. If sweet treats

are more your thing, Mon Petite Pan in Gordon Street serves delectable dainty desserts in an attractive garden (www.iledepain.co.za).

Must Do

Hike a forest trail. Back in the day, Knysna thrived on the timber trade from the dense Knysna Forest, the biggest in the country. There was a brief gold rush too, which tour guide Garth van Rheenan vividly recounts as he leads you beneath a canopy of greenery past magnificent 900-year-old yellowwood trees, or up to the abandoned Millwood mining village (www.rheenendalramble.co.za). After a gentle 3km walk to a waterfall, the tour ends with lunch at Totties Farm Kitchen, started by Garth's great-grandmother in 1922, which still serves hearty home-made food.

Take a boat trip on the lagoon guarded by The Heads – two massive rocks with a small gap in the middle that separate the lagoon from the Atlantic. It might look placid, but the narrow gap is one of the most dangerous shipping passages in the world. But this needn't be your worry as you sip on your sunset-cruise cocktail. Boats depart from the Waterfront, a lively shopping area with boutiques and African crafts, close by.

Try the Turbine Hotel on Thesen Island for funky dining. It's a former power station and as a heritage building the structure and equipment have been retained and restored. The décor is delightfully colourful and quirky while the food is excellent. There's an African Amani Spa in the Turbine too, if you need a massage for your saddle-sore bones. 🍷



Eat seafood! Knysna is famous for oysters and hosts an oyster festival each July. Avoid the festival if you don't like crowds and stay away at Christmas, as the population shoots up from 76 000 to around 260 000. Visit out of season: the bustle ebbs away, shops and restaurants are quiet, and hotel prices fall.



SEOUL

Explore South Korea's capital of Seoul by subway – the cheapest, easiest and fastest way to navigate your way around this megacity.
By Anje Rautenbach

Must See

Pack away the international driver's licence, step off the crowded bus and escape the metropolis' traffic by picking up a map of Seoul's subway. It has over 500 stations and is one of the easiest and fastest ways to navigate your way through the city. Travel back in time to the Joseon Dynasty as you experience intricate royal Korean architecture from 1395 at **Gyeongbok Palace** (Gyeongbokgung Palace Station, Exit 5). Stick around for the guard changing ceremony at the entrance (three times a day) before you make your way to the cobblestone alleys of **Insadong** (Anguk Station, Exit 6) for a fix of traditional art and culture. Duck into one of the alleys for a meal or reminisce about a bygone era at Chatjip, a traditional Korean tea house, over a cup of steaming Omija Cha – the tea with five flavours.

As you leave the past behind step into Korea's military history at the **War Memorial** (Samgakji Station, Exit 1), the largest of its kind in the world. Here you'll get a glimpse of Korea's heartache and victory, from the Japanese Colonial rule to the Korean War, through

powerful exhibitions and displays. Later, head over to the bustling **Namdaemun Market** (Hoehyeon Station, Exit 5) and make your way through the shopping maze. Treat your senses to the market's sights, smells and sounds, and taste local food like *gimbap*, *tteokbokki* and *mandu* at one of the many street food stalls.


After a day of exploring, kick off your shoes and dip your feet in **Cheonggyecheon** (Gwanghwamun Station, Exit 5), an 11km-long stream that runs through downtown Seoul. It hosts the annual lantern festival and is popular with couples. You'll spot them walking its length with interlinked arms.

Put your walking shoes back on and get to the heart of Seoul's cultural heritage on a free walking tour. Choose your course and traverse Cheonggyecheon Stream, along

fountains, wetlands and museums, under the watchful eye of the megacity's towering skyscrapers (book at: +822-397-5908).

Take the subway to **Hongdae** (Hongik Station, Exit 5) if you want to meet the hip side of the city. Here self-expression can be seen in the unique fashion, quirky cafés, urban arts and the underground indie culture.

Must Do

Get a bird's eye view of the city from **Namsam Tower** (Myeongdong Station, Exit 3), the highest point in Seoul at 236m. Discover nature along the **Han River**, one of South Korea's longest rivers, on a rented bicycle. Enjoy the ever-changing scenery, cool down in one of the parks and catch your breath at **Noeul Café** (Ichon Station, Exit 4) for a sundowner. 



Seoul local Haemi Kim suggests tourists buy a local sim card (or opt for roaming), because when you're stuck in a rut you can call the 24-hour English helpline on 1330. You can ask just about any question, from bus times and subway connections to information about attractions. They can also translate for you.

PLACES
IN PIXELS:

BOLIVIA

Bolivia is known for the world's highest capital city, landscapes of snow-capped Andes, the humid Amazon, ancient deserts, large expanses of salt flats and multicoloured lakes.

Photographs by Iga Motylska



A woman in Sucre, draped in a colourful frazada.



The Salar de Uyuni salt flats in south-western Bolivia are the largest in the world.



Laguna Colorada, a salt lake in the altiplano 'high plateau', is home to three flamingo species.

WHERE RIVERS MEET

Namibia's Four Rivers route is a 1 000km overlanding adventure. It makes its way from Nkurenkuru in the north east to Victoria Falls, where four countries meet.
By Travel Update staff writer





Namibia is perhaps most often associated with herds of Oryx roaming the Namib Desert and ochre sand dunes as far as the eye can see, but few know that it's also home to one of Southern Africa's largest water ecosystems. The Four Rivers self-drive route is named after the river system that flows through the Zambezi (formerly known as the Caprivi Strip) and Kavango regions – it's here that the Zambezi, Okavango, Kwando and Chobe Rivers find their source. It's an Eden that covers 18 conservancies where free-roaming animals can be watched from the water and more than 450 bird species nest.

The Four Rivers route stretches for close to 1 000km and is divided into three sections: It starts with the Kavango Open Africa Route at Nkurenkuru in the north eastern part of the country, meanders through the Caprivi Wetland Route and ends with the Four Corners Experience where Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe meet. It's also here that Victoria Falls, the world's largest sheet of falling water, plummets 108 metres into the gorge below.

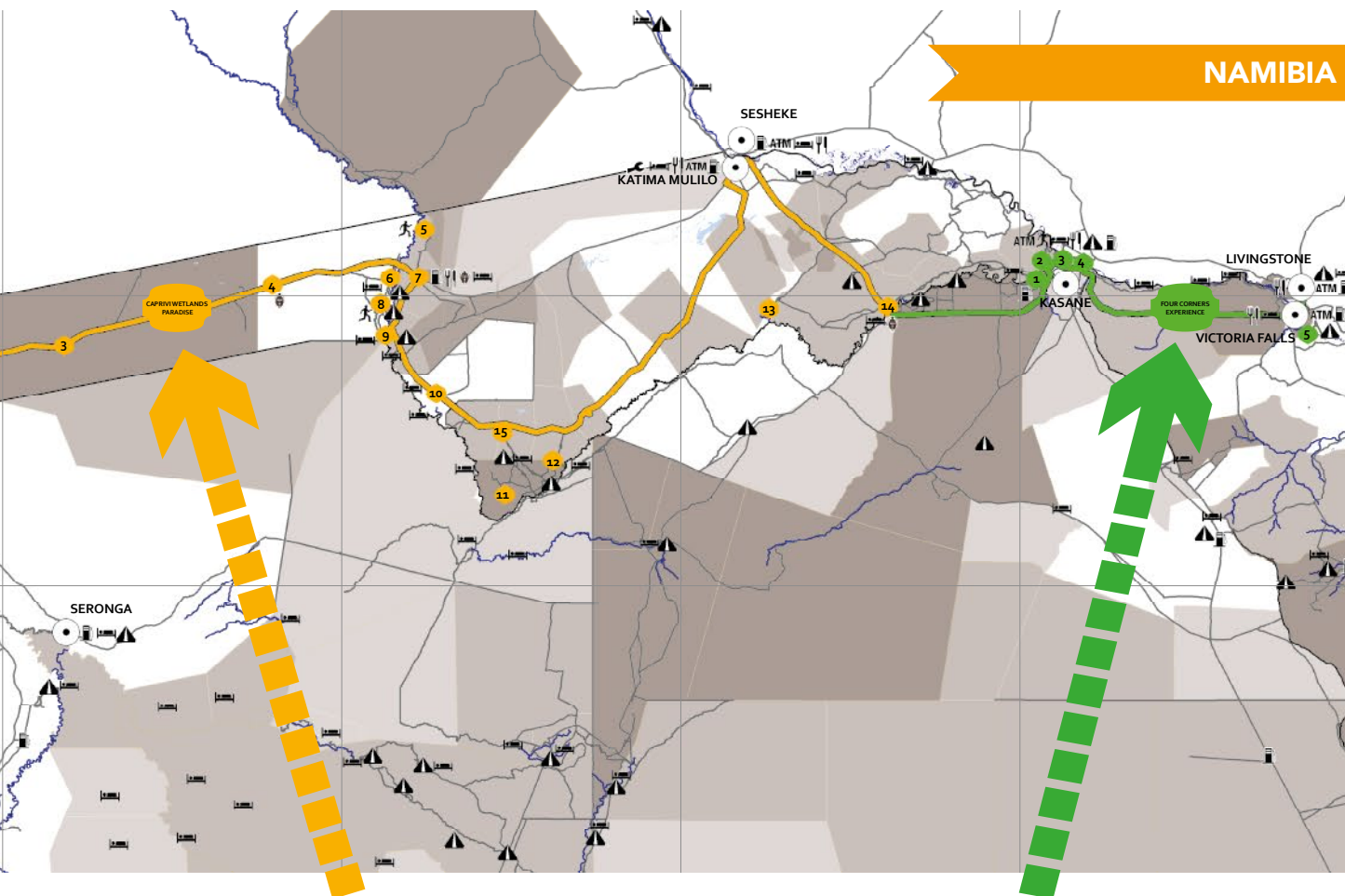
Whether you drive the entire route – which takes at least six days – or only parts of it, pack your 4x4 with jerry cans of fuel, a spare tyre, drinking water and your camera gear because you're about to embark on an unrivalled adventure.

Kavango Open Africa Route
Distance: 383km
Suggested time: 2–3 days

The first leg of the route starts at Nkurenkuru in the west and ends at Mohembo in the east. You'll test your 4x4 skills along the access route to the remote and vast Khaudum National Park, which is a corridor for wildlife movement between Namibia and Botswana.

The 1 600km-long Okavango River is Southern Africa's fourth longest river system and an important ecosystem. It begins in Angola and creates a natural border with Namibia before flowing into Botswana. The rapids at Popa Falls are the habitat for two important fish species – the broadhead catfish and ocellated spiny eel.

Admire the baobabs at Mahango National Park, which is best visited during the dry season (between June and October) when animals come to drink at the water's edge – perhaps you'll spot elephant, hippo and lion, and some of the 400 indigenous bird species.



Caprivi Wetlands Paradise Experience
Distance: 430km
Suggested time: 2–3 days

Around 5 000 people live in Bwabwata (the sound of bubbling water) National Park –which is an example of a community-based natural resource management programme – and has landed it the moniker ‘the people’s park’. At Mafwe Living Museum, which is a traditional village that overlooks the Kwando River, you can experience the locals’ way of life, from basket weaving and fishing to running a homestead.

The villagers live among 35 animal species, best spotted at the Buffalo Core Area in the eastern section of the park or the Kwando Core Area in the west. That’s also where you’ll find the Horseshoe perennial oxbow lake that is a favoured watering hole among the park’s elephants.


Another highlight is the Kwando Riverine, which is made up of the Kwando and Chobe rivers and Linyanti Swamps. If you’re lucky, you may spot local fishermen as they graciously pole their wooden dug-out canoes along the waters in search of the best place to cast their nets.

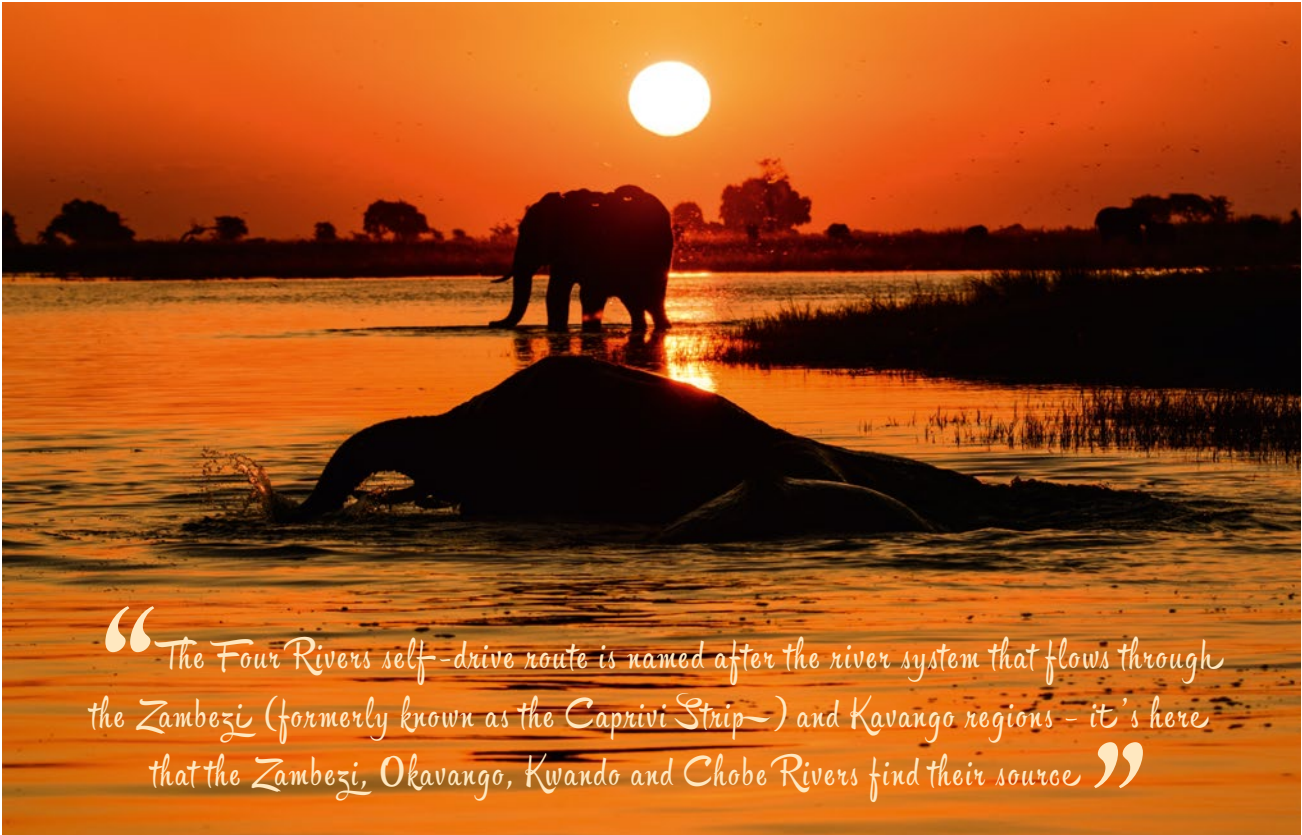
Nkasa Rupara National Park, found on Nkasa and Rupara Islands in the Kwando River, is the largest wetland within a conservation area in Namibia. While the islands are accessible by road during the dry season, after the rains they are cut off from the mainland – it’s quite something seeing the landscape change between the seasons.

Four Corners Experience
Distance: 132km
Suggested time: 1.5–3 days

This is the most popular part of the route as it ends at Victoria Falls, or as locals know it *Mosi-oa-Tunya* (appropriately named ‘the smoke that thunders’). But before you get there you should pass through the green swathes of Chobe National Park, which boasts the continent’s largest concentration of wildlife and is known for its many elephant herds.

Another exhilarating experience is climbing the 18-metre-high baobab on Impalila Island, from where you can see the meeting point of four countries – Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The island is 12km long and 6km wide, and is surrounded by 25 small villages. Travellers have spotted some of Africa’s rarest bird species here.

And what better way to end your expedition than a sundowner boat cruise along the Zambezi? Bring your binoculars, for you’ll glide past hippo pods and spot giraffes grazing by the riverside. 



“The Four Rivers self-drive route is named after the river system that flows through the Zambezi (formerly known as the Caprivi Strip) and Kavango regions - it's here that the Zambezi, Okavango, Kwando and Chobe Rivers find their source”

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Currency: The rand is equal in value to the Namibian dollar. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted.

Visa: Visas are valid for three months from the date of issue and for up to three months from date of entry. Apply at the Namibian consulate. If you're flying make sure you have a valid return ticket.

Temperature and clothing: Although temperatures vary between regions, in general days are hot and nights are cool. Layer your clothing and wear natural fibres.

Malaria: Take malaria precautions when travelling through the northern parts of the country and especially during the rainy season (November to April).

Namibia Tourism Board:

Website: www.namibiaturism.com.na

Tel: +264-6129-06000 or

Email: info@namibiaturism.com.na

Get in touch with their South African offices on

Tel: +27(0)21-422-3298 and **Email:** namibia@saol.com

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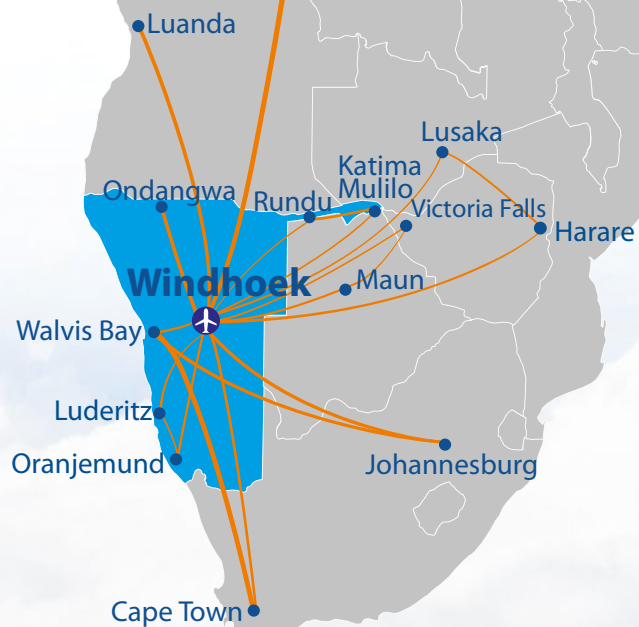
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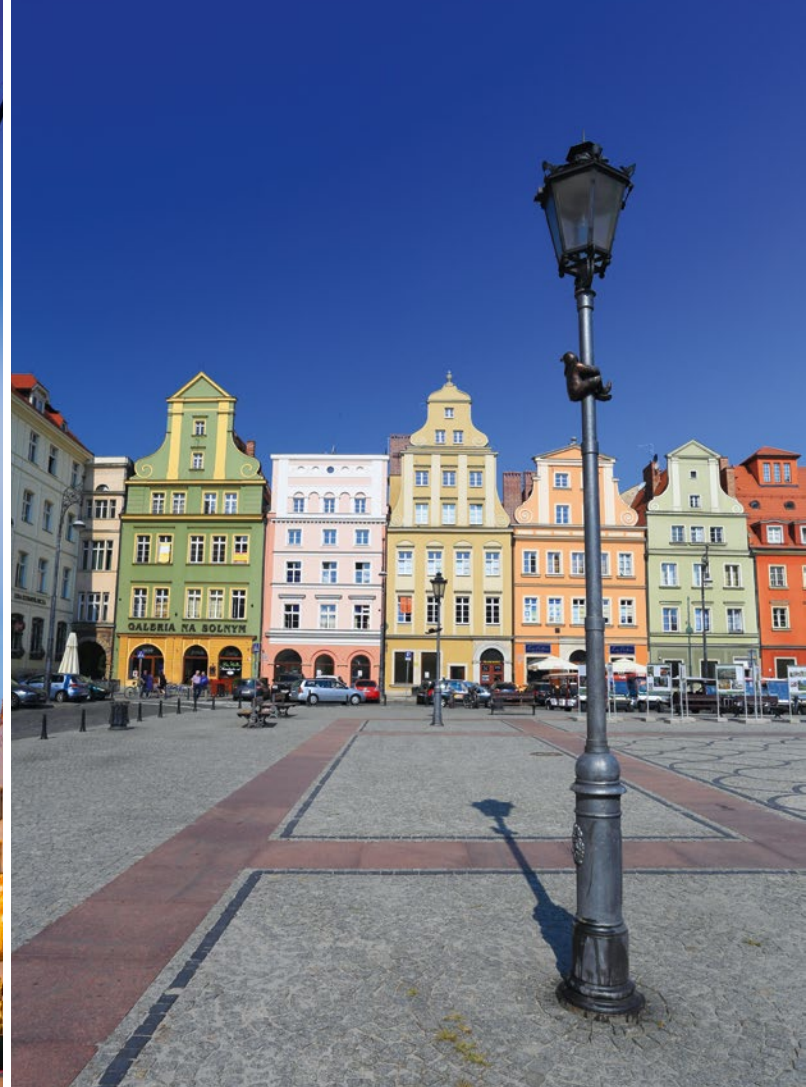
Our Route Map



Air Namibia Offices:

Johannesburg Reservations & Ticketing
Tel: 011 012-9460 / 1
Email: jnb.res@airnamibia.aero
Airport: 011 978-5055

Cape Town Reservations & Ticketing
Tel: 021 418-1366 / 7
Email: cpt.res@airnamibia.aero
Airport: 021 936-2755





Poland

WHERE MAGIC ABOUNDS

Poland is a country of mythical dragons and cities overrun with gnomes, a phoenix that's risen from the ashes, sprinkled with UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Words by Iga Motylska

It's hard to write about your motherland without traces of favourable bias. Your perceptions may be clouded by throw-your-head-back laughter induced by *wiśniówka* (cherry liqueur) and the faint headedness following an indulgence in *pierogi* (dumplings) topped off with fried onions, or memories of cross-country road trips with family and friends.

In naming the central European nation one of the "Top 10 countries to visit in 2016," *Lonely Planet* echoed what 16 million international tourists discovered in 2014 – that it's easy on the wallet (although it's an EU member, it's held on to its currency, the zloty); boasts 14 UNESCO World Heritage Sites; is a country where old and new coalesce; and a place of gothic cityscapes, mountainous landscapes and warm hospitality, where affection is expressed through food.

Cracow

The cultural capital is known by many names: Little Vienna, Slavic Rome and Florence of the North. As I walk its radial cobbled streets that lead to the Market Square, I trace its timeline

from the 14th century past elements of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicist and Modernist architecture.

Not only is Cracow Poland's most visited city, but it's also home to more than 2 million artworks and filled with art galleries and museums – the most famous is Czartoryski Museum, which proudly shows off Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* and Egyptian mummies. Another is MOCAK – the Museum of Contemporary Art in *Kraków* – while the city's national museum is found beneath the town square, which also happens to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The square is outlined with cafés and restaurants that sell traditional Polish cuisine – think hashbrowns the size of your plate topped with goulash; soup served in a hollowed-out rye bread loaf; porcini-filled dumplings; and for those with a sweet tooth steamed, fluffy yeast dumplings drenched in stewed berries with a dash of icing sugar.

If you'd like to better acquaint yourself with a typical Polish menu, Marta and Mark of *eataway.com* invite 12 guests (usually tourists) for a three-course meal in their

home every Wednesday evening.

Back in the square, buy jewellery made of amber from the Baltic Sea, sheep skin slippers, scarves of traditional Polish fabric with bright floral motifs, wooden carvings and little statuettes of the city's mascot – the dragon who was slain at Wawel Castle. It's here that you can get your caricature drawn, feed grain to the pigeons or watch a musical or movement performance by numerous baskers.

Then, get a giant pretzel – Cracow's street food, that's sprinkled with either salt, poppy or sesame seeds – from one of the many mobile street vendors before embarking on one of the six free daily walking tours that range from street art, food or take you on a journey through macabre Cracow, with tales of ghosts and vampires.

If you'd like to wander further afield, less than an hour from Cracow are two other UNESCO sites worth visiting – a reminder of Poland's sombre history at the German Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau, as well as Wieliczka Salt Mine, complete with a cathedral where you can attend classical music concerts.







Warsaw

Although Warsaw has streaks of Cracow’s romantic antics, it’s a modern capital city that’s characterised by its cosmopolitan nature and cultural flair.

Warsaw is a city in love with Fryderyk Chopin. Not only is the international airport named after Poland’s most famed pianist and composer, but you’ll find a museum dedicated to him, as well as a bronze statue of him in the city’s Royal Baths Park. It’s here that my friends take me to picnic on the lawns, after exploring the 76ha park with its palace and open-air theatre that floats on the lake.

It was the first monument to be destroyed by the Germans in 1940. Ask any Pole and they’ll tell you the legend about how the following day

a handwritten signpost placed beneath it read: “I don’t know who destroyed me, but I know why: so that I won’t play the funeral march [which he composed] for your

“Warsaw was the hardest hit Polish city during World War II, with 90% of its old town reduced to rubble, but the same rubble was used during rebuilding efforts – making Poland a reawakening phoenix.”

leader.” A replica of the statue, cast from the original mould, was erected in 1958 and every Sunday afternoon since 1959 Chopin’s

piano recitals can be heard waltzing through the gardens – it’s a tune of Poland’s resilience.

Indeed, Warsaw was the hardest hit, with 90% of its old town reduced to rubble during World War II, but the same rubble was used during rebuilding efforts – making Poland a reawakening phoenix. The historic centre is an exception on UNESCO’s World Cultural Heritage List as it’s the only urban complex that’s almost entirely reconstructed.

The 14th-century Royal Castle – which houses spectacular artworks and period furniture – looks out onto the Old Town Square, where King Sigismund’s column stands tall. Circumnavigate the square in a horse-drawn carriage before settling down for a glass of refreshing compote and people



watching at one of the countless shoulder-to-shoulder cafès.

Then, journey beyond the old city's defensive walls into contemporary Warsaw. It's here that you can visit the Palace of Culture and Science – a stark reminder of Poland's Soviet history. You can easily spend a day in the high-rise building exploring its museums, cinemas, theatres, spas, shopping mall and restaurants. Watch the sunset from the viewing deck on the 30th floor, before pedalling through the city on a night time cycling tour.

Wrocław


The best way to explore Wrocław is by water – whether it be by kayak, row boat, motorboat or water tram. We meander along the canals of the Ostra River through the Old Town. Alternatively, you can enjoy sundowners on the moored Arka

(Arc) floating restaurant.

Much like Venice, this 'Island City' spans 12 islands and has more than 130 bridges. You may even spot a lamplighter, dressed in traditional garb, on Cathedral Island – the oldest part of the city – walking from one lamp to the next. While Wrocław may be an old city, it's young at heart, just like its large student population. It has held the world record for most simultaneously playing guitarists (7 344 in 2014) for 14 consecutive years. This collective musical rendition of Jimi Hendrix's *Hey Joe* has become an annual event.

Wrocław also has numerous cheap bars that are open 24 hours a day, every day. And the statue of the naked swordsman, which stands outside the university, represents a rich former student who bet everything but his sword during a drunken card game. Needless to say,

he lost. It's a warning to students not to make poor decisions, yet even they have been caught trying to make away with his sword as part of drunken bets.

But the city is perhaps best known for its gnomes or *krasnale*. The statues pop out from beneath windowsills, slide down lamp posts, peep from behind corners and wave from a distance. You can find this legion of little people throughout the city in locations that relate to their profession or disposition: there's a sleepwalker, maritime captain, botanist and banker, then there's a locksmith, mailman, a professor and a school boy. One rides a chopper, another twirls his beard while contemplating life and yet another naps after a meal. Their population is 300. And growing. So, when you visit the city, see how many you can find. 



KWAZULU-NATAL'S South Coast

Sugar cane, creamy avocados, freshly-caught fish and steaming bunny chows are a few of the flavours the South Coast offers along its 120km-long coastline.

KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast has nine diverse routes that offer holiday-goers everything from lagoon cruises to tanning on Blue Flag Beaches, an experience of the Sardine Run and wild adventures.

Route 1: Where paradise begins

Let your journey begin outside Durban, where blue ocean and lush landscapes are the first signs of a holiday. The coastal drive meanders past Illovo, Umkomaas, Scottburgh, Rocky Bay and Pennington – all popular beach resorts with lots of family entertainment and four golf courses. It's also popular with fishermen and surfers and home to Aliwal Shoal, one of the world's top 10 shark dive sites.

Route 2: Paradise unexplored

This beautiful stretch of coastline

is filled with unique sights. Bazley, Ifafa, Elysium and Mtwalume are quiet coves off the beaten track. The beaches are quiet – perfect for long strolls and lazy, sunny days. Mtwalume has a ski-boat jetty and is known for its rock fishing. A little further south, you'll reach Hibberdene and Umzumbe – both Blue Flag beaches. As you continue south through leafy Umtentweni towards Port Shepstone, the coast becomes visibly more developed.

Route 3: The adventure zone

Around 12km from Port Shepstone, the Umzimkulwana River has etched a spectacular gorge into the mountain. The gorge, 27km long and 1km at its widest point, is the site of Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve, which also offers hiking and mountain biking trails. It has the world's highest gorge swing and Africa's fastest and longest zipline.

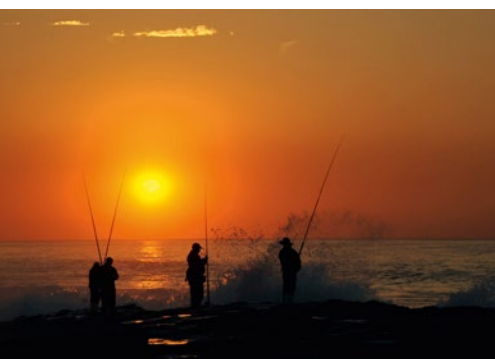
This is macadamia nut and sugar cane land, while further inland, you can enjoy the forests of the Ingeli area, with its hiking, running, and mountain biking trails.

Route 4: Paradise unexpected

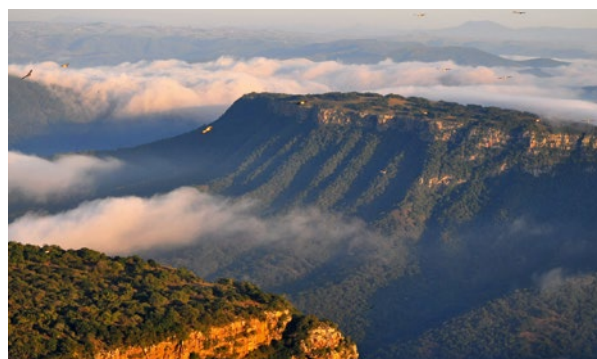
With four amazing beaches – Oslo, Shelly, St. Michael's and Uvongo, the Skyline Nature Reserve, a very popular Park Run and the Ugu Sports & Leisure Centre, this is the place to get active. The Protea Banks reef is one of a few places in the world where you can dive with a wide variety of shark species. Rock, surf and deep fishing are also popular along this stretch.

Route 5: Paradise day and night

Margate – undoubtedly the holiday centre of the South Coast – is vibrant and renowned for its exciting night life, action-packed beach festivals



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©KATHY KAY



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South Coast MAP

T5 Southern Explorer 

Southern explorer
MAP BASED ROUTE GUIDE
www.southernexplorer.co.za

9

There are 9 Colour Coded Tours showcasing businesses which fall under the WHERE TO STAY, WHERE TO EAT, WHERE TO SHOP and WHERE TO PLAY categories!



and Africa Bike Week, the largest of its kind in Africa. The beach is within walking distance of Margate's bustling restaurants, cafés and galleries. And it's easy to get here as Margate Airport serves daily flights from O.R. Tambo.

**Route 6:
A piece of paradise**

Ramsgate's unique character as a seaside haven of agriculture, culture and cuisine can be traced back to the 1920s when retired maritime captain Paul Buck built his shack beside the quiet lagoon. As folklore has it, Buck was a talented painter, poet and violin maker, and the village has attracted many like-minded souls over the years. It also boasts a whale deck and 6km of superb beachside rambling.

**Route 7:
Paradise on pause**


South of Ramsgate lie Southbroom, Umkobi Beach, Marina Beach and San

Lameer. Southbroom is set in a subtropical jungle alongside a deep lagoon. The beach is protected by a rocky point and offers great swimming and surfing conditions. The Southbroom Golf Course (voted most popular in KwaZulu-Natal) offers spectacular views of the ocean, while San Lameer Golf Course is home to the SA Women's Champs. Marina Beach is famed for its Blue Flag beach and tidal pool.

**Route 8:
A pristine paradise**

Secluded seaside hamlets set the tone for the unfolding of countryside scenes along this route. Families can play putt-putt, visit butterfly domes or ride horses on the beach. If you're looking for a Blue Flag beach – try Trafalgar Beach or head south to Munster, Glenmore and Kidd's Beach.

**Route 9:
An untamed paradise**

Leading to the Wild Coast Sun Casino and Wild Water Waves, Port Edward is the gateway to the Eastern Cape. It's famed for its beauty, historical significance and natural landscapes. The São João ship, which ran aground a century ago, gave the area its strong Portuguese influence. Long stretches of beach, the famous Splash Rock, the world's southernmost coffee plantation, Umtamvuna Nature Reserve, numerous hiking and biking trails are just some of its drawcards. 

For more information visit: www.tourismsouthcoast.co.za and www.facebook.com/southcoasttourism



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DECODING SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW VISA REGULATIONS

New visa regulations have created much confusion for tourists into and out of South Africa. Herman Scholtz takes a deeper look.

As the rand hit record-lows at the end of 2015, South Africa's tourism industry should've flourished. But the *UK Telegraph* reported in December that about 10 British families were turned away at London's Heathrow Airport every day because they did not meet South Africa's new visa requirements – one of a string of articles denouncing the South African government's latest visa regulation plan.

Martin van Niekerk, a tourism industry consultant based in Cape Town, says the article accentuates the confusion surrounding these regulations and the long-term damage to the industry.

"International tourists are obviously not conversant with the regulations," he said.

Cause and effect

Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba, on several occasions, blamed child-trafficking as a reason for the new regulations. But Jacob van Garderen, national head of Lawyers for Human Rights, is sceptical about this rationale. "Our courts have stated repeatedly that undocumented children face the greatest risks. Human traffickers don't present themselves

at O.R. Tambo International Airport with the child's authentic passport."

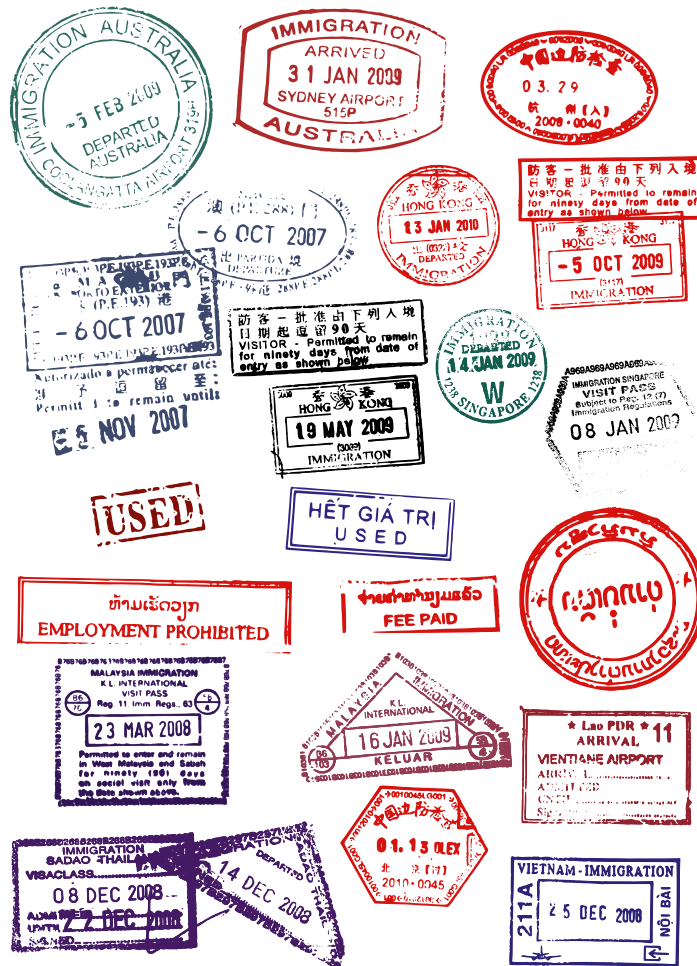
More cold water was poured on the government's human trafficking claims by Africacheck.org, an

independent fact-checking website. While the department claims that 30 000 children are trafficked in South Africa annually, the available evidence shows only 23 victims of child trafficking were reported between 2012 and 2015, according to Africacheck.

An inter-ministerial task team, appointed to investigate the "unintended consequences" of the regulations, recommended relaxations, but Van Niekerk says it remains to be seen how effective this will be. By the end of January, the first phase of relaxing visa regulations for foreign tourists had not been implemented.

Damage done?

It's difficult to ascertain the impact of the regulations. Official tourism figures from Statistics South Africa show a year-on-year decrease of 13% in arrivals for June 2015, the month the visa regulations were implemented. But Gigaba hit back in January with his own figures showing an increase in the number of foreign travellers over the festive season.



Gigaba said, in a statement, the increase was 7.6% year-on-year, an indication that recent concessions made to the regulations are undoing some of the initial damage. Nonetheless, around 1 700 minors (of approximately 284 000) were refused entry into South Africa between December and January for incorrect documentation.

Van Niekerk also says arrival figures – especially at land ports of entry – are not only tourists. “We have a huge VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) market. People crossing the border from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Swaziland doesn’t mean we had more tourists.”

Research conducted by Grant Thornton consultancy on behalf of the Tourism Business Council estimated that the regulations cost South Africa R2.6 billion in 2015.

The silver lining

Most international tourists applying for South African visas must visit their nearest South African mission in person to capture biometric data, such as fingerprints.


But with limited South African missions in some countries, some tourists have to travel extensively

within their own countries to apply. Concessions are being rolled out, with the first easing expected to be implemented in February.

Citizens of countries where there are no South African missions will be able to apply for visas by post and have their biometric data captured on arrival.

Furthermore, some tourism companies in China, India and Russia (BRICS member states) will be accredited to submit visa applications on behalf of clients. The South African government also says they will include more countries in the future and open more visa facilitation centres.

According to the new regulations, all children are required to have

a passport, an unabridged birth certificate and supporting documents to prove that the child is travelling with consent of both parents. Since many countries don’t issue such documents, the regulations are expected to be changed to a document detailing parental information.* 

*Additional source: Stakeholder update circular of the Department of Home Affairs.

“The regulations cost South Africa R2.6 billion in 2015”

South Africans travelling with children

The easing of the visa regulations offers little administrative relief for South Africans travelling abroad with their children.

Advice on the process:

- Check your child’s passport to ensure parental details are included. If they aren’t, apply for an unabridged birth certificate at Home Affairs, currently being rolled out. Be warned, the process can take months.
- Track the status of your application by phoning the department’s customer service hotline on 0800-60-1190. Special emergency numbers for birth certificate issues have been implemented. They are 072-634-0614, 072-634-0589, 073-567-6208, 073-567-5968.
- If both parents travel with the child, the child’s passport and birth certificate will suffice.
- If only one parent travels with the child, an affidavit of permission from the other parent and a certified copy of the absent parent’s passport is needed. Instead of

drafting your own affidavit, use the template provided on www.dha.gov.za (>Immigration>Parental Consent Affidavit). The affidavit must be filled out and stamped by a Commissioner of Oaths. Certify copies of the absent parent’s passport (original must be present for certification) at any police station.

- Widows and widowers can show a death certificate of the other parent, but other single parents need co-operation from the other parent. A court order granting sole custody is sufficient. “However, parents must be aware of the difference between full parental responsibilities and sole custody. Divorce orders usually have a wording granting full parental rights to both parents, even if one of the parents doesn’t actually see the child on a regular basis or fails to take financial responsibility,” says Reghardt van der Westhuizen, a family lawyer. If the other parent cannot be traced, the parent can approach the department for a letter of special circumstances.



ANIMAL INTERACTIONS ~~ABUSE?~~

Animal interactions seem like a fun thing to do while lending a hand to conservation, but there's a dark side to it, writes Dawn Jorgensen.

We've all done it, or at least wanted to cuddle a lion cub, stroke a cheetah's coarse fur, ride an elephant or peer through the cage at a shark, and all in the name of experience, education and even conservation.

But recent years have exposed a dark side to these attractions that speaks of animal exploitation, unbridled greed and poor ethical practices and prompts us to ask important questions: where does the never-ending supply of lion cubs come from; how are elephants broken in; why are caged predatory cats attacking tourists who have come to pet them? All is not as it seems.

On my first visit to Zimbabwe a decade ago, I was offered an elephant safari at Zambezi National Park. I

the more it became apparent that few had anything to do with conservation or rehabilitation.

Elephant interactions remain a popular tourist attraction in Asia and there's a growing demand in Southern Africa. According to World Animal Protection (WAP), there are at least 39 commercial elephant venues across Southern Africa with at least 215 captive elephants.

No matter whether they are bred in captivity or taken from the wild, elephants used for human interaction suffer a cruel breaking in process, which involves being tightly restrained with ropes or chains. Elephants are trained to respond in a certain way to the commands of their handlers and pain is inflicted with bull hooks, wooden battens and whips

spent chained in small enclosures.

In May 2014, the National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA) laid police complaints against the Knysna Elephant Park when footage emerged of their calves being chained, roped and stretched, shocked with electric cattle prods and hit with bull hooks. In August, the Director of Public Prosecution decided not to prosecute, stating these training methods didn't constitute "cruel treatment or cause unnecessary suffering" to the elephants. On the back of this court case Pilanesberg Elephant Back Safaris closed its doors in the same month and committed to integrate their five elephants with wild herds in the Pilanesberg National Park, a process that may take years.

Murky Waters

Looking toward the ocean, shark cage diving sits firmly on the fence. Sharks are timid animals, divers attest to them being curious, but cautious. Shark cage diving operators want to guarantee their clients close sightings of great whites. In Gansbaai, where up to 10 operators offer tours three times a day, sharks need to be baited. This is done by pouring blood and fish oils in the water. This chum triggers a response from sharks in the area, but without delivering food as the creatures expect in the wild. The great white shark is listed as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, but many operators feed the *Jaws* mindset, rather than educate the public about the plight of these prehistoric creatures.

“ SANCTUARIES INVOLVED IN CONSERVATION WILL NEVER BREED OR TRADE IN ANIMALS AND WON'T ALLOW HUMAN INTERACTION BECAUSE SUCH ANIMALS CANNOT BE RELEASED INTO THE WILD. ”

signed up for the encounter with an animal I adore. The project charaded as a conservation project that helped rescued and orphaned animals and it felt good to support it, but the elephants were prodded and spoken to harshly, back at the camp they were chained to posts and forced, with bull hooks, to do tricks.

It was a turning point for me, the more I researched and visited such animal interaction service providers

until they respond appropriately. They are also often deprived of food and water as punishment for inappropriate behaviour. The breaking in process traumatises the young elephants and creates a fear of humans. The elephants are confined to elephant camps leaving them unable to form natural social relationships. Although most captive elephants are allowed to forage in the bush during the day, their nights are

If you'd like to do shark cave diving, ensure it's with an eco-tourism registered company, such as Marine Dynamics, who are linked to the Dyer Island Conservation

Be the change.

- Wild animals should not touched, trained to perform, tied up or forced to interact with humans.
- Warning signs of mistreatment: animals pacing, swaying or displaying stress behavior.
- Tourism attractions involving animals that should be avoided in the name of sustainable tourism: circuses with animals, bullfighting, walking with big cats, cub petting, ostrich riding, swimming with dolphins, dolphin, seal and orca shows, dancing bears and performing monkeys

What you can do:

If you're at an animal park and sense that all is not as portrayed: too many cubs without their mothers, excessive human interaction or if the animals look unwell, injured or mistreated, contact the SPCA Wildlife Unit Manager Brett Glasby: www.capespca.co.za, Tel: +27(0)21-700-4158 or +27(0)83-326-1604, Twitter: @capespca. Alternately Marcelle Meredith at the National SPCA: www.nspca.co.za, Email: nspca@nspca.co.za, Tel: +27(0)11-907-3590, Twitter: @NSPCA_SA

Sustainable wildlife volunteering:

Chimp Eden, Jane Goodall Institute South Africa: www.chimpeden.com
 Watamu Turtle, Kenya: www.watamuturtles.com
 Panthera Leo Africa, South Africa: www.pantherafrica.co.za
 SANCCOB, South Africa: www.sanccob.co.za
 Wildlife ACT, South Africa Malawi and Seychelles: www.wildlifeact.com
 Drakenstein Lion Park, South Africa: www.lionrescue.org.za

Trust and African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary. When it comes to any animal interactions, look for a Fair Trade Tourism accredited member, which means the operator is committed to conserve, appropriately train their staff and give back to nearby communities. They have a listing of activities on their website that ensures a guilt-free holiday as all members are vetted and comply to a strict code of conduct.

Biting the bullet


Of all the animals caught up in the business, it seems big cats are the most susceptible to exploitation. The South African documentary *Blood Lion*, which aired to millions of audiences across 175 countries in 2015, exposed the link between captive and hand-raised lions and the canned, or captive, hunting industry.

The exposé, which coined the phrase “bred for the bullet”, discourages all human interaction. It shows young cubs being taken from their mothers to lion parks, where they are hand-raised to be petted by visitors. Once they pass the cute and cuddly stage they are replaced by younger cubs and are often recruited for ‘walking with lions’ wildlife experiences, and eventually end in enclosed hunting reserves, where they become easy targets for hunters who pay around \$25 000 per lion.

It's a multimillion-dollar industry. According to *Blood Lion*, 70% of South Africa's lions are captive and there are around 200 lion farms and breeding facilities in the country that

hold around 8 000 lions and other predatory cats, such as leopards, cheetahs, tigers, jaguars and pumas. Breeding farms make use of paying wildlife volunteers that help raise the young lions, some breeding farms earn \$100 000 monthly. Due to weak legislation South Africa is the only African country where canned hunting is legal. In 2007 the government tried to regulate captive lion breeding and canned hunting, but the Predator Breeders Association of South Africa took it to court and the proposed legislation was overturned.

These lion and wildlife parks often pose under the pretense of conservation to lure unsuspecting volunteers. *Blood Lion* researcher Ian Michler says animal sanctuaries involved in conservation will never breed or trade in animals and won't allow human interaction because such animals cannot be released into the wild. *Blood Lions* joins films like *Gorillas in the Mist*, *Echo of the Elephants*, *The Cove* and *Blackfish* that Will Travers, Born Free Foundation president, says “have truly influenced the way we interact with wild animals”. Indeed, *Blood Lions* has been screened for presidents and parliaments. Australia has already banned the import of lion parts; France, among other countries, will follow suit shortly. Numerous global airlines have stopped carrying animal trophies and a public outcry has caused various tourism companies and booking agencies to remove breeding facilities from their websites and itineraries.

There is hope, the Panthera Africa sanctuary in Gansbaai and the Drakenstein Lion Park in Paarl are a haven for rescued bred, captive or performing predatory cats and both offer lifetime care to their animals. To quote Marcelle Meredith of the National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA): “Animals are sentient beings, and we have a moral obligation not to cause them harm in the name of our entertainment.” 

MSC MAKES EXOTIC HOLIDAYS MORE AFFORDABLE

Despite the weakening rand, a cruise with MSC cruise liners is still the most affordable way to travel, says Allan Foggitt.

The rand may have fallen, but that doesn't mean local or international holidays are a thing of the past for South Africans. In fact, every summer more and more South Africans board MSC Cruises for an affordable escape and this summer is no exception. Here's why.

No hidden costs

The cost of your MSC Cruise includes everything from the stylish accommodation aboard our luxury cruise liners, five-star cuisine and a 22-hour daily buffet – there's even a kids' menu with pizzas, hamburgers, pasta, hot dogs and delicious desserts – to the entertainment provided by our talented artists, as well as an extensive variety of on-board activities that are sure to keep the whole family busy. Book and pay for your on-shore excursions before departure to suit your budget.

Activities galore


You'll never get bored while cruising with MSC. Guests can dance and sing the night away with our live entertainment. During the day they can play, swim, golf, jog, gym and soak up the sun on a lounge to the sight of thrilling ocean views, without paying an extra cent. There's much to do for the kids, too.

All aboard

What's even more enticing for families is that children under the age of 17 who share their parents' cabins stay and eat *con i nostri complimenti* – with our compliments, for free! And there are endless hours of free entertainment for the kids, such as art and craft clubs for various age groups, from 9am-11pm every day. Then there are Lego play areas, a spray park, kiddie discos and parties with dance competitions, magic shows and themed events, too. Kids can stay active by getting involved in basketball and soccer tournaments, playing volleyball, mini golf and tennis, as well as ping pong. We'll keep their creative

juices flowing and future journalists and cartoonists can show off their works published in the kids' newspaper. They'll have so much fun, they'll never want to leave! It also gives Mom and Dad the chance to relax, especially as there are baby sitting services available.

Early bird discount

MSC Cruises gives holidaymakers early booking discounts of up to 50%, while honeymoon couples are given a free upgrade on all MSC ships. The company's recently launched loyalty programme rewards travellers with upfront discounts on local cruises and the accumulation of points on the pre-purchase of on-board services. 

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To book your cruising holiday, visit: www.msccruises.co.za, contact an ASATA travel agent, or call 0860-11-44-11.



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DATE	NTS	ITINERARY	INSIDE FROM	OUTSIDE FROM	BALCONY FROM
01 Nov '16	4	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 4 500	R 4 650	R 5 750
05 Nov '16	2	Durban, No Where	R 2 350	R 2 350	R 3 250
07 Nov '16	4	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 4 500	R 4 650	R 5 750
11 Nov '16	7	Durban, Portuguese Island & Ilha de Mozambique	R 6 600	R 7 000	R 8 300
21 Nov '16	4	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 4 150	R 4 650	R 5 750
28 Nov '16	4	Durban, Portuguese Island - 2 days	R 4 200	R 4 200	R 5 750
05 Dec '16	4	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 4 900	R 5 050	R 6 700
12 Dec '16	4	Durban, Portuguese Island - 2 days	R 6 000	R 6 300	R 7 750
16 Dec '16	3	Durban, Portuguese Island	R 6 400	R 6 500	R 8 050
19 Dec '16	7	Durban, Portuguese Island & Ilha de Mozambique	R 11 400	R 11 640	R 15 600
26 Dec '16	11	Durban, Reunion & Mauritius	R 18 850	R 20 950	R 34 500
06 Jan '17	3	Durban to Cape Town	R 3 300	R 3 900	R 4 400
13 Jan '17	2	Cape Town, No Where	R 2 580	R 2 800	R 3 240
15 Jan '17	5	Cape Town, Walvis Bay & Luderitz	R 5 250	R 5 850	R 7 300
23 Jan '17	4	Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban	R 2 650	R 3 000	R 4 200
27 Jan '17	2	Durban, No Where	R 2 150	R 2 400	R 2 950
29 Jan '17	5	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 4 350	R 4 850	R 6 100
03 Feb '17	3	Durban, Portuguese Island	R 4 050	R 4 550	R 5 650
06 Feb '17	7	Durban, Portuguese Island & Ilha de Mozambique	R 5 500	R 6 050	R 8 280
13 Feb '17	4	Durban, Portuguese Island - 2 days	R 3 750	R 4 200	R 5 300
17 Feb '17	3	Durban, Portuguese Island	R 3 650	R 4 100	R 5 200
20 Feb '17	4	Durban, Maputo & Portuguese Island	R 3 750	R 4 200	R 5 300
24 Feb '17	3	Durban, Portuguese Island	R 3 650	R 4 100	R 5 150

Other weekly departures up until 30 April 2017

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All rates are per person based on 2 people sharing a 2 berth cabin and subject to availability, foreign exchange and fuel cost fluctuations. All cruise offers are capacity controlled and offering selected cabins at a specific price in line with MSC Cruises Dynamic Pricing Policy. KIDS CRUISE FREE: Up to 2 children under 18 years, sharing a I2 or O2 cabin category with 2 adults, for Suites 2 children under 12 years & for balconies 1 child under 18 years, only paying the mandatory charges. Above cruise fares exclude mandatory port, service and insurance charges: listed above. Single supplement applies and multiple berth cabins carry a surcharge. Promotions are not combinable with each other, but are combinable with MSC Voyagers Club discounts (except for Tandem). Price correct at time of submission. ST&Cs apply. E&OE.

TRAVEL NEWS

UNWTO 2014 HIGHLIGHTS (PUBLISHED 2015)

International tourist arrivals in 2014 increased to 1.13 billion and global tourism-related earnings reached \$1.25 trillion.
Tourism is big business, here's the evidence.

Why tourism matters:



Contributes **9%** to the world's GDP



Creates **1/11** jobs globally



Africa welcomed **56 million** international tourists (up by 2%)

Travellers to Africa spent **\$36 billion**

9 549 000 international arrivals to South Africa



5 – 6 billion domestic tourists



The United States, France, Spain and China

top international arrivals and receipts rankings



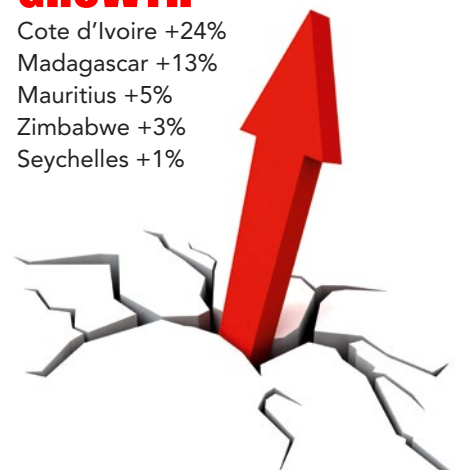
China

(the world's biggest tourism market source since 2012) increased expenditure abroad by 27% to reach

\$165 billion.

African countries with the **BIGGEST TOURISM GROWTH**

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- Madagascar +13%
- Mauritius +5%
- Zimbabwe +3%
- Seychelles +1%



Top 10 COUNTRIES THAT TRAVEL THE MOST

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 China | 2 USA | 3 Germany | 4 UK | 5 Russia |
| 6 France | 7 Canada | 8 Italy | 9 Australia | 10 Brazil |

Visit www.unwto.org for more info

FLYING HIGH

Fastjet launched a daily Johannesburg-Harare route on 1 February and announced it would be increasing the amount of weekly flights from seven to 11 by the end of the month, due to high consumer demand.



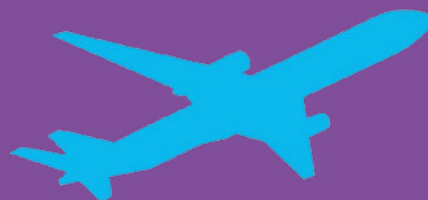
OMAN AIR

Oman Air, which currently flies to 26 countries, is looking for a representative partner in South Africa.



INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS

Cape Town International Airport experienced a growth of 8.8% in international arrivals for 2015, compared to a growth of 6.5% at King Shaka International Airport and 5% at O.R. Tambo International Airport. According to Tourism Update, tour operators and hoteliers have reported an increase in bookings from core markets – the UK, USA and Europe – with guests booking longer stays and spending more money.



INSIGHT VACATIONS UNVEILS LUXURY GOLD COLLECTION

Insight Vacations, known for its premium and luxury escorted journeys, recently launched the Luxury Gold Collection with over 30 itineraries across Europe, India, Bhutan, Nepal, as well as North and South America. Itineraries boast stays at the finest hotels, epicurean cuisine at Michelin-starred restaurants and exclusive VIP experiences with local experts that allow guests a peak behind the scenes of some of the world's most iconic attractions, events and excursions.



BLOGGER WE ❤️

Going Somewhere Slowly travel blog started in October 2012 when Anje Rautenbach, the someone behind the somewhere, decided to explore Indonesia from the seat of a bicycle. As an ex-expat and now a reborn South African gypsy, she never knows where's next. Anje enjoys off-the-beaten-path destinations, immersing herself in different cultures and going on slow-motion journeys. Caffeine, people, high-fives, a passion for words and digital media are her fuel. Her blog is all about seeking the beauty in the somewhere and finding the something in everything. Read about her adventures here: www.goingsomewhereslowly.com.

1 233 404 km²
South Africa's landmass

(Source: SAT)





DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

What's in a name, is in the service. Iga Motylska learnt just that during a business stay with Doubletree Hilton in Cape Town's trendy Upper Eastside development.

The cookies

Every stay at the Doubletree Hilton Cape Town Upper Eastside starts with a cookie, made by the hotel's pastry chef, that's kept warm at the reception desk for your arrival. And there's an endless supply of them throughout your stay. Even the shuttle drivers have a stash when they collect you from the V&A Waterfront. There's no need to feel guilty about all this indulgence though, as you can work it off at one of two gyms or an indoor heated pool.

Location, rejuvenation, gentrification

This Hilton ventured where other high-end hotels feared to tread. And their risk paid off. While most other four-star hotels are in the city centre, Hilton's newest South African property is in Cape Town's Upper Eastside development in the suburb of Woodstock, and is at the forefront of the area's gentrification.

"Woodstock is an exciting urban area and we felt the addition of a hotel would work very well," Caroline Coates, the marketing manager, says. It's only 14km from Cape Town International Airport – an airport transfer costs R320 – and a mere 10 minutes from the city bowl.

On business

Not only is there free, high-speed Wi-Fi available throughout the hotel, but the library, which offers the use of computers and its books, is open 24 hours a day. Getting to the International Convention Centre or to town for a business meeting is simple enough – it's located off Main Road, the artery that runs the length of the peninsula's southern suburbs. An Uber ride will cost you around R30 to town, depending on traffic. And if you're looking for a lively sundowner spot, a free shuttle runs between the hotel and the V&A Waterfront four times a day.

Hilton HHonours Rewards

With Hilton HHonours, you earn points towards free nights every time you stay at one of their 10 brands, book a meeting at their venue or host an event at Hilton.

Plus some

The hotel adjoins a small, quiet shopping centre with an ATM, Vida e Caffè, small shops and a few offices. Renovations (slated for completion in 2017) will give it a fresh, modern feel. Ask for a harbour-facing room on the upper floors and you'll most likely never want to leave. 📍

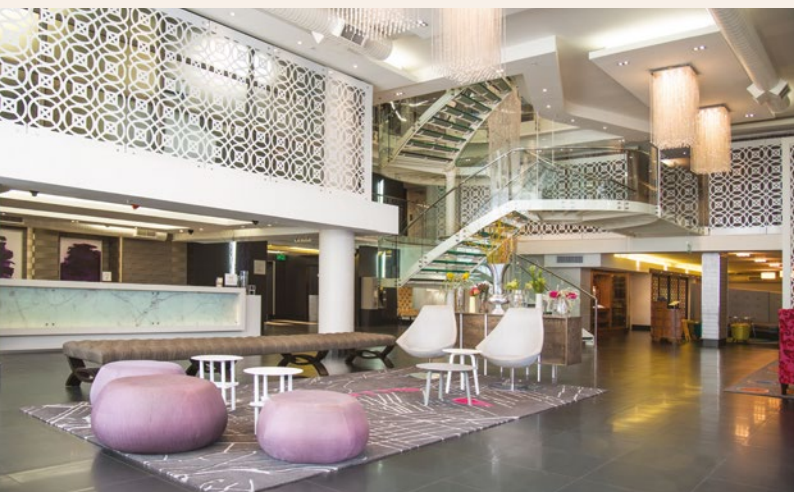
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FAIRCITY MAPUNGUBWE

With its Tripadvisor *Certificate of Excellence* 2015 award, Iga Motylska won't have to convince you to stay at Faircity Mapungubwe during a business trip to Joburg.

Long stay

Many entrepreneurs travel to Johannesburg, South Africa's economic heartland, for many days at a time; Faircity Mapungubwe's relaxed atmosphere makes them feel at home, while the staff's attentive service reminds them why they love business travel. The option for a long-stay visit is not only easier on the wallet, but also caters to guests' every need and special requirements – complimentary Wi-Fi being just one of them.

Self-catering

After being on the road for a while, there's nothing I crave more than a home-cooked meal. Of course, I indulge in eating out at restaurants – where each detail is carefully thought out by the executive chef – and Faircity Mapungubwe offers just that with its three daily meals served at Twist Restaurant. However, guests can also prepare their own meals, as all rooms have a kitchenette, which I appreciate.

Dive in

The swimming pool in the centre of the hotel is necklaced by a wooden deck. It's the ideal place to relax beneath an umbrella with their signature Twist Crush in hand – it's spiced rum churned with muddled lime, peach extract, fresh pineapple juice and mint. Here you'll find guests reading and taking in the hotel's peaceful ambiance. If you look through Faircity Mapungubwe's guestbook, you'll find comments about how it's "an oasis in a concrete jungle".

Explore the city

Faircity Mapungubwe is located in Johannesburg's inner city and is within close proximity to many premium corporate companies. It offers guests a complimentary shuttle within a 5km radius of the hotel and all guests receive a free, open-top City Sightseeing bus tour, including complimentary transfers to and from Park Station or Gandhi Square. Nearby, The Market Theatre, The Sheds Market, SAB World of Beer,

New Junction Mall and Maboneng Precinct are waiting to welcome you.

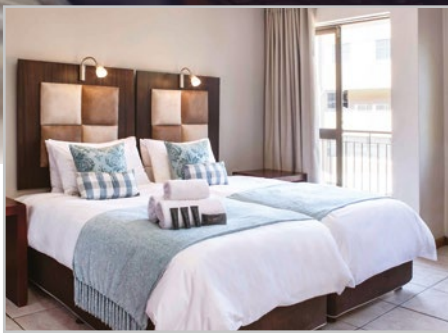
The Vibe

Even though this four-star property mostly caters to business travellers, it knows how to throw a party. There are daily food and drink specials at the lounge during week nights – a great place to network with other professionals – and on Friday evenings their resident DJ churns out house tunes for the local crowd. Twist Restaurant serves South African favourites alongside Asian and continental flavours, while the stylish Vault mixes up a selection of shooters and cocktails, which will ensure your stay is memorable. 🍷

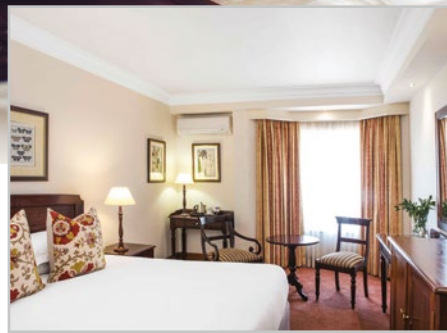
Address: 50-54 Marshall Street, Marshalltown, Johannesburg
Website: www.faircity.co.za
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RETHINK & REVITALIZE

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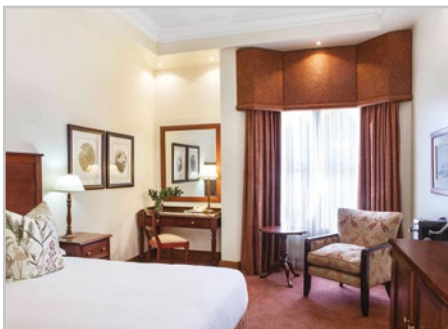
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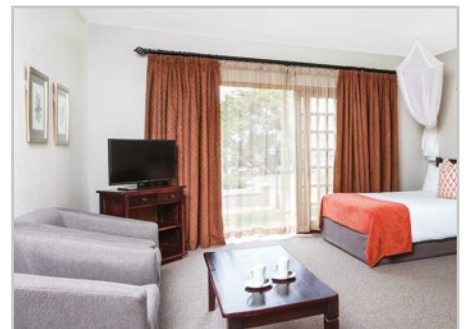
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THE PRESIDENT HOTEL

The President Hotel is stylish and sassy, just like the people of Bantry Bay. Carla Lewis-Balden paid a visit.

A fat fitness menu

The beautiful people of Cape Town love to exercise, but please don't expect them to sweat indoors. In Cape Town the world is your gym and The President is the ideal place for outdoor enthusiasts that like to get their blood pumping. The hotel is less than 50 metres from the Sea Point Promenade, should you like to go for a stroll or jog and the hotel rents bicycles to guests. And should you feel adventurous, you can hike or climb Lion's Head, just behind the hotel.

Pool with a view

Bantry Bay is known as the Cape Town suburb with the best weather. It has an average of 290 wind-free days a year, which means you can work on your tan without getting whipped by the city's infamous South-Easter. The hotel's pie-shaped pool overlooks the Atlantic Ocean, and the crashing waves, salty air and loud sea

gulls provide the perfect backdrop for a break. It looks, smells and sounds like holiday.

Beautiful rooms

The first impression I got when I stepped into my room was that of a serene Greek island in the Aegean Sea; everything was decorated in beautiful shades of crisp white and deep cerulean. The rooms are stylish without being over the top and I had a fully equipped kitchenette in my spacious one-bedroom apartment. If you're travelling with children, the two-bedroom units will ensure no one gets cabin fever.

Boutique pleasures

The hotel was previously owned by a big hotel group, but has recently become independent. Although I sometimes like the predictability of bigger hotel chains, it seems that a bit of independence suits The President just fine. It feels more personal,

with excellent service to rival any of the bigger chains, but also more individualised touches.

In-room massages

The hotel doesn't have a spa on site, but offers massages in your room or in their spa suites, it also has a nail and hair salon. Personally, I prefer in-room massages – after the masseuse is finished you don't have to waddle back to your hotel room with untidy hair. The masseuse brings her table, takes you to heaven and back, and afterwards you can just crawl into bed with that lopsided 'I just got a massage' grin on your face. 📺

Address: 4 Alexander Road, Bantry Bay

Web: www.presidenthotel.co.za

Tel: +27(0)21-434-8111

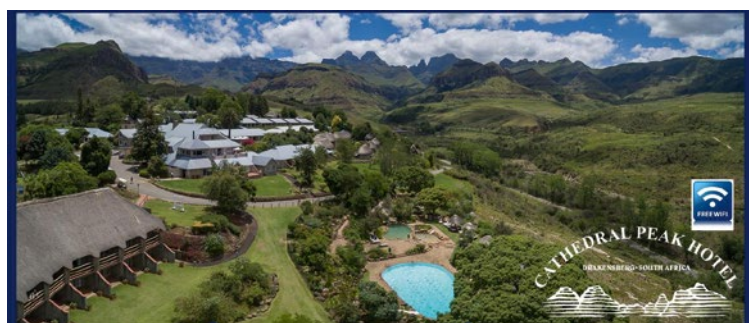
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MICE

news

**YOUR GUIDE
TO MEETINGS,
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TRAVEL & TOURS

Conference: SAACI

An overview of 2015 and a look at what SAACI members can expect in 2016, by SAACI chairperson Wayne Johnson.

The Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) gained momentum in critical areas in 2015. We opened our Tshwane branch and sub-branches in Ugu on the South Coast and in Mangaung. This has renewed interest from members in these regions.

The launch of our new website, with its advanced functionality, makes connecting with other members easier and enhances the educational capabilities and resources of the platform.

The SAACI Academy, which was launched at the end of last year, is our biggest member-to-member benefit as it provides an easily accessible education platform for various skill levels. We will dedicate much of

this year to ensuring we teach our members how to access information and so provide more business opportunities to our members.

We have ensured that more industry-specific training material will be launched via the SAACI Academy in the first quarter of the year. We will also offer training courses at our head office in Rosebank, Johannesburg, where industry experts will share their knowledge and skills on a one-on-one basis. Plans are being finalised to offer these courses across our branch network.

SAACI is currently in talks with five African countries – Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia – and plans to open new branches in three of those

countries during the course of the year. Our CEO, Adriaan Liebetrau, will travel to meet with the ministers of tourism and stakeholders in each of these countries. This will open new channels for our members and will enhance collaboration across our borders. It's part of our vision to establish a truly southern African footprint and to enhance business tourism across the SADC region.

SAACI will engage and connect with stakeholders from various parts of the world at the Meetings Africa exhibition in February. This will be a great opportunity to showcase what South Africa and the industry have to offer leisure and business travellers from around the globe. Visit our SAACI stand at Meetings Africa (22-24 February at the Sandton Convention Centre) to find out more about us – we look forward to connecting with our current members and attracting new ones. 

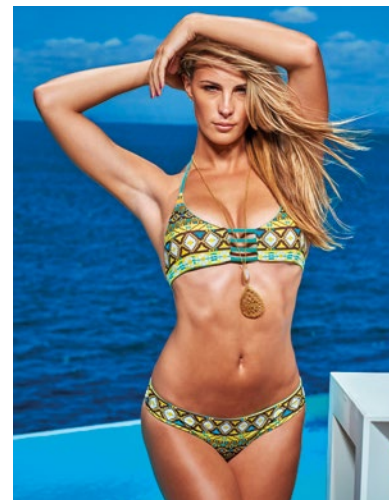


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MEETINGS AFRICA 2016

The annual tradeshow hosted by South African Tourism that focuses on the MICE sector takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre from 22–24 February 2016.

Why attend?

Now in its 11th year, Meetings Africa has grown in prominence in the last decade to become Africa's largest business event tradeshow that focuses on the MICE sector (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) of the tourism industry. It promotes Africa as a business events destination and serves the business-growth needs of exhibiting companies. The electronic diary and prescheduled appointment system gives exhibiting companies access to business and networking opportunities.

Why exhibit?

Exhibiting at Meetings Africa – a world-class, professionally-managed show – is easy. The South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCNB)

is committed to making your experience as an exhibitor seamless and to deliver the business rewards you demand from a tradeshow of this global calibre. A number of African convention centres have already registered.

Hosted buyers

Meetings Africa gives attendees the opportunity to meet with more than

600 local, regional and international buyers, including African associations as well as local and international corporate planners.

What is BONDay?

The first day of the tradeshow (22 February) – also known as BONDay (Business Opportunities Networking Day) – will see local, regional and international speakers impart

“BY LEARNING FROM OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS, WE CAN GAIN GREAT INSIGHTS INTO THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF OUR INDUSTRY AND ADVANCE THE GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS OF THE AFRICA CONTINENT AS A WHOLE.”



their knowledge about the business events industry via numerous educational sessions. BONDday will also include: the IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leader Forum Africa; the IAPCO Bespoke Seminar; the Event Greening Forum AGM; Corporate Business-to-Business Speed Marketing Sessions; the Local Corporate Buyer Event; numerous networking opportunities.

The European Cities Marketing Academy

The European Cities Marketing (ECM) Academy will host a summer school event ahead of Meetings Africa. It aims to develop future leaders for emerging destinations and will showcase speakers from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway and Italy. This full-immersion course is designed for conference and exhibition centres, hotels, PCOS, DMOs and airlines. It provides insights into the functioning of the meetings industry from a European best-practice perspective. "By learning from our global partners, we can gain great insights into the structure and functioning of our industry and advance the global

Meetings Africa 2015:



270
EXHIBITORS



178
*international
hosted buyers*



14
*African countries in
attendance in 2015*



200
MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES
REPORTED ON THE SHOW

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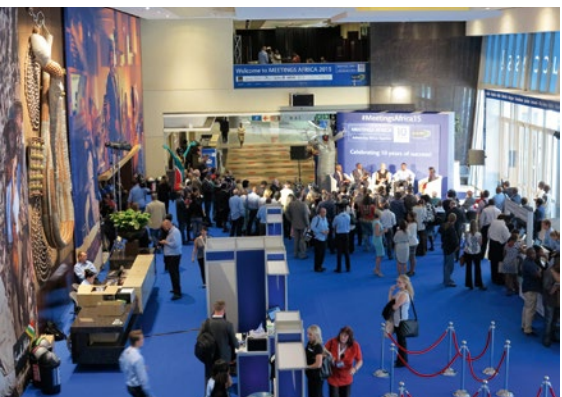
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competitiveness of the African continent as a whole," says Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Bureau Officer at SANCB. This will be ECM Academy's first time in South Africa.

Cost: R1 500


Dates: 19-21 February 2016,

*Inquiries: Mmabatho Sikhakane
mmabathos@southafrica.net*

African Society of Association Executives (AfSAE)

The African Society of Association Executives (AfSAE), which launched at Meetings Africa last year, will open its headquarters in Johannesburg in a ribbon-cutting ceremony with hosted buyers and stakeholders on 21 February.

This association will encourage

future meetings to be held and rotated across Africa. 

For more information visit:

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WORLD TRAVEL MARKET AFRICA

Visit WTM Africa at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from 6-8 April 2016.

World Travel Market (WTM) Africa is the African installment of the global World Travel Market events. This three-day, business-to-business exhibition for the travel industry, held in Cape Town every April, attracts international travel professionals, government ministers and the press. It's attended by senior travel and tourism industry executives whose aim is to conduct business deals and to gain product knowledge and insights into industry developments from the latest research and industry trends.

WTM Africa connects travel buyers with quality contacts, content and networking communities. Exhibitors can promote brand knowledge and launch new products, generate sales leads, enter new markets, conduct

market research, receive press coverage and maintain relationships with their partners and buyers. But, perhaps most importantly, it provides the platform to conclude deals that

numbers for WTM Africa 2015 were 7 731, with 572 exhibitors, 197 hosted buyers and 418 Buyers' Club Members. It also saw 7 600 pre-scheduled appointments with hosted buyers and the event generated \$333 million in business deals.

Exhibitor space for the 2016 event has filled up quickly, with only a few spaces remaining. It's anticipated that WTM Africa 2016 will witness more exhibitors, meaning an increase in networking opportunities between exhibitors, buyers, visitors and the media.

Chardonnay Marchesi, general manager of Africa Travel Week, said: "We are very proud of the platform we have provided for the travel industry over the past two years. We look forward to achieving an increase in participation this year and to hosting another successful event in Cape Town this April." 

WTM Africa 2015

18%
VISITOR GROWTH 

572
EXHIBITORS

 **7731**
attendees

\$333 million
IN BUSINESS DEALS

197 hosted
buyers

7600
APPOINTMENTS 

will help their businesses grow further. Since WTM Africa's launch in 2014, it has witnessed visitor numbers grow by 18% and has seen a 39% increase in the attendance of travel professionals. Attendance

World Travel Market

WTM Africa is part of Reed Travel Exhibition's WTM portfolio of events, which also includes World Travel Market in London, World Travel Market Latin America in São Paulo, and Arabian Travel Market in Dubai. In 2014, the WTM Portfolio facilitated around \$7 billion in industry deals from negotiations between more than 15 000 buyers and 9 500 exhibitors in attendance at its four events.

Africa Travel Week

Africa Travel Week comprises three co-located shows – World Travel Market (WTM) Africa, Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings (IBTM) Africa, and International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) Africa -- all of which encompass Africa's inbound and outbound markets for leisure travel, luxury tourism and the MICE/ business travel sector.



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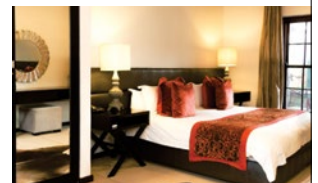


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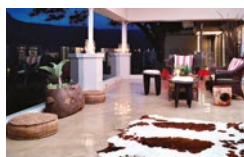


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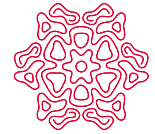


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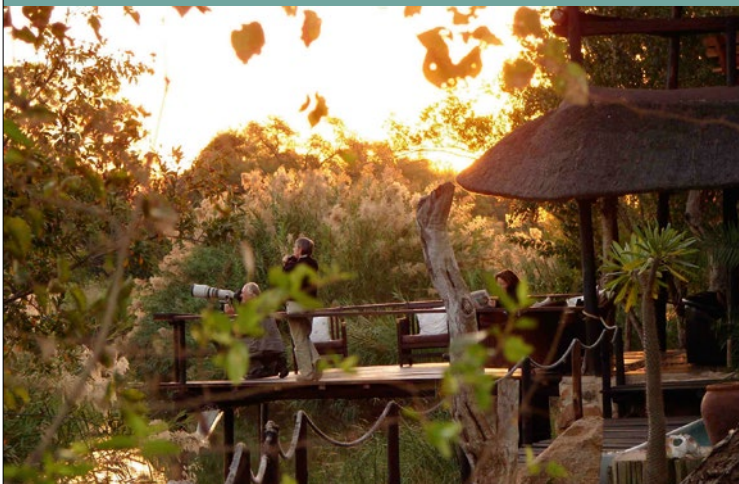
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