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ISSUE 9

SA'S  
1ST  
FREE  
TRAVEL  
MAG

**AFRICAN  
HOTELS:**  
figures and foes

48 hours in  
**SWAZILAND**

**RWANDA:**  
Africa's phoenix

Resort to relaxation in  
**MAURITIUS**

REDISCOVERING

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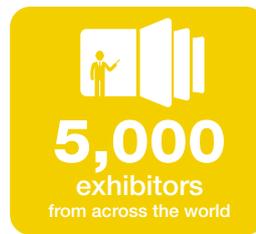
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## PUBLISHED BY

Travel Update Media House.  
Registration number 2015/195314/07

## PUBLISHING EDITOR AND CEO

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## EDITOR'S LETTER

School's out! It's time to practise the art of switching off, simply being and spending quality time with those close to you. There's no better time for a family holiday or a road trip with friends than the end of the year. Leave your laptop at home and switch off your phone. Go somewhere that makes your heart happy and rejuvenates your soul – you'll need it for the year ahead.

We ask South African travel bloggers and writers for recommendations on where you should travel in 2017 in our Travel Trends feature (page 12). Adventure through the Indian island of Reunion on a road trip (page 22) or relax at a resort on neighbouring Mauritius (page 28). These pages will also take you to Rwanda, Zambia, Croatia and Abu Dhabi.

Read our Savvy Traveller article (page 18) about how to stop being a slacktivist and how to contribute change, even if it's from your armchair. Soapbox (page 55) looks at the plight of the great white shark, while our Hot Topic feature (page 58) delves into Africa's hotel sector and whether its being disrupted by Airbnb.

In this issue, our quarterly Pan-African Health Tourism Digest, found at the back of the magazine, features advice on what to do if you fall ill abroad, discusses the rise of surgery safaris in Africa and investigates how KwaZulu-Natal is becoming a research hub for TB and HIV/AIDS.

We want to hear from you. Tweet (@travelupdatersa) or email us (editor@travelupdate.co.za) about your next holiday or which countries you'd like to read about in future issues. Bon Voyage!



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Capetonian **Allison Foot** is a travel writer, photographer, lifestyle blogger and theatre publicist. A former professional ballerina, she now balances her life between exploring the world

and publicising top-end theatre. Find her on: [www.capetowndiva.com](http://www.capetowndiva.com).

*I want to see Leros in Greece and Sicily in Italy, in late summer next year. I want to explore destinations that are quieter, with fewer tourists, where one can interact with local people on a more sincere level.*

**London, page 14**



As The Incidental Tourist, **Dawn Jorgensen** is a self-proclaimed earth advocate and beauty seeker with a deep love for Africa, its people and the environment. Between gorilla trekking

in Uganda, tree planting in Zambia and turtle rescue in Kenya, she returns to Cape Town, which is home, to write about her travels.

*I've always wanted to visit St Helena Island, one of the world's most remote islands with dramatic cliff tops and a sub-tropical interior, close-knit community and intriguing history.*

**Savvy Traveller, page 18**



**Jo Kromberg** was editor for African Safaris and Family Holidays and Leisure magazines and is now the Africa Travel editor for The Beijing Review, published in China. She is a regular contributor

for Conde Nast Traveller China and Conde Nast Traveller India.

*I'd like to visit São Tomé and Príncipe in 2017. It is one of the last (mostly) pristine destinations in the world with an abundance of fauna and flora and a traditional, time-honoured way of life.*

**Zambia, page 33; Rwanda, page 48**



**Linda Markovina** is a freelance photojournalist and travel writer who writes about East and West African countries. She loves writing about the natural world and how we interact

with it, as long as it doesn't have anything to do with snakes. Snakes give her the willies.

*In 2017 I will travel up the coastline of East Africa exploring all the reefs and diving spots from South Africa to Lamu in Kenya on a four-month expedition. It's so fascinating looking at how the ocean life moves between each country's shorelines and how each country's populations live and work on the shores in their distinct ways, I cannot wait!*

**Croatia, page 44**



**Lesley Stones** 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.

*I'll be starting 2017 in Ethiopia on a holiday through Christmas and the New Year. I'm excited to see the rock churches, Gondar castle, hectic Addis Ababa and enjoy the food.*

**Hot topic, page 58**



**Nicola Jenvey** is a freelance financial journalist with 25 years of deadlines under her belt. After 14 years with dailies *The Mercury* and *Business Day*, she gave in to the allure of self-

employment and contributes to publications across the topics of business, property, health and higher education, and assists corporate clients requiring financial journalism experience.

*Bangkok and Chiang Mai in Thailand are on my wish list, but the reality will be a two-week tour through Swaziland and the Kruger National Park in search of the big five and new bird species.*

**Pan-African Health Tourism Digest, pages 76 and 79**



**Nonsindiso Qwabe** is a 23-year-old writer in love with Christ, life and all it has to offer. She is passionate about journalism and believes that every person has a story waiting to be told, just as each

phenomenon waits to unfold.

*My ultimate destination to visit in 2017 is definitely London. Besides it being a long-time favourite, the cultural landscape of the city and the arts environment is one that I believe will leave me transformed.*

**Pan-African Health Tourism Digest, page 71**



**Rachel Moncrieff-Robinson** is a road-tripper, small town explorer, tree hugger, defender of frogs and avid supporter of local is lekker! Born in Zimbabwe and now living in Cape Town,

her life's mission is to encourage everyone to explore more of our beautiful continent.

*My love of tequila aside, I have always wanted to witness Día de Muertos (Day of The Dead) festival in Mexico, where they honour the departed at graveyards and in the streets. I have been wanting to go for years now. Perhaps next year will be the year?*

**Soapbox, page 55**

*City*  
The only Hotel in the world next to a National Park



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**TRUE NORTH**

When you're going hiking, trail running or simply out into nature make sure you attach this small aluminium **compass keyring** to your rucksack or bag, or have it attached to your keys. That way, you never have to worry about getting lost. And it won't get in the way as it's only 4cm in diameter. **R95** from S&G Distributors.



**POOL PARTY**

Whether you're spending the summer taking on the waves at the beach, fishing in a dam or river or simply turning up the tunes at a pool party, this **waterproof speaker** should be your trusty companion. **R299.99** from Typo.



**BRAAI TIME**

There's a time at every braai when things are heating up and then suddenly it's dark. Either the sun sets or the crowd of guys around the fire just gets too thick. To prevent those dreaded burnt chops, whip out the **Tonglite**. With its LED mounted onto stainless steel tongs, it'll shine on the food as you flip, plus you'll still have a free hand for a drink. It's also dishwasher safe (just remove the torch). **R299** from The Gadget Shop.



**UNDER MY UMBRELLA**

The **Oombrella** is a connected umbrella that sends alerts to your smartphone if rain is on the way. In fact, it's a portable weather station that collects data on temperature, pressure, humidity and light, and shares it with local Oombrella users. It'll notify you if you're about to leave it behind somewhere and, apart from a smartphone, you can connect a Go Pro or other camera to the top end of the umbrella stick. It just reached its crowdfunding goal and starts shipping soon: [www.wezzoo.com/oombrella](http://www.wezzoo.com/oombrella).



**DRONING ABOUT**

If you're in the drone market and won't settle for anything short of excellence, the **DJI Phantom 4 Drone** (which comes with an extra battery) boasts a 28-minute maximum flight time, a control range of 5km and reaches speeds of up to 72km/h. The Smart Return Home function allows it to avoid obstacles as it returns home and it also tracks moving objects automatically with its ActiveTrack capabilities. The 4K camera has improved optics and records 120 fps in 1080p mode for super slow motion video. **R27 999** from The Gadget Shop.

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Decrease your carbon footprint each time you fly by planting a tree through **Greenpop**. Read more about it in our Savvy Traveller article on page 18 (R120, [www.greenpop.org/gift-trees](http://www.greenpop.org/gift-trees)).



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PAGE TURNER

No holiday or business trip is complete without a page turner. Bring along a new book or one of your old favourites without worrying about doggy ears with this cool **elastic bookmark**. S&G Distributors and their stockists have a wide selection with different designs (R55).

ZIP IT UP

Avoid bumps, scratches and damage to your iPad, tablet or Macbook Air while travelling with this nylon padded **travel sleeve**. Sizes vary from 'mini' (22cmx15.5cmx2cm) to 'tablet' (26.5cmx20.5cm x2cm) and the funky design will spur on your wanderlust. **R290** and **R340** from S&G Distributors respectively.



SO LITE

The **Samsonite Octolite** range is lighter, stronger, has increased durability and modern features. The interior is divided into two halves, one with crossed ribbons and the other with a zip-in divider and side pocket. It's bold box shape with rounded corners maximises volume, while the double wheel design provides awesome maneuverability. It has an integrated carry handle, built-in address tag and fixed combination lock. Available at [www.samsonite.co.za](http://www.samsonite.co.za) and starting from **R3 495**, depending on size.



*built-in power bank*



WEEKENDER

Who would have thought that this sexy little canvas and leather **Weekender** tote bag has a built-in power bank? It's compatible with smartphones, tablets, cameras and GPS devices (basically anything with a micro USB port) and gives one full charge after every time it's charged. The slim battery design has been cleverly placed into a secret slip-pocket inside the bag, keeping it safe and sound. **R1 799** from Take Charge ([www.take-charge.co.za](http://www.take-charge.co.za)).



## Shikwari Game Reserve

*This four-star, family-owned game lodge on a plains game reserve is situated in the north eastern Limpopo below the escarpment, with majestic views of the Northern Drakensberg Mountains, The reserve offers viewing of game, such as giraffe, zebra, blue wildebeest, kudu, waterbuck, bushbuck, nyala, impala, duiker and jackal. Birding is also great in spring and summer.*

### Main Lodge Area

This area offers a relaxing lounge with satellite flat-screen TVs, books and magazines. The Warthog Bar is fully licensed and there's also a dining room. Relax in the lounge, take in the views from the open veranda or cool off in the tranquil plunge pool. Our caring staff offer friendly service in amazing bush surroundings with breathtaking views. A Continental and hot-plated English breakfast buffet is served at guests' requested time on the main lodge's veranda. The three-course Country Chic dinner is served al fresco, weather permitting, either on our deck boma or on the large veranda at the front of the

lodge. Our cuisine is a mix of South African favourites with touches of the flavours from across our rainbow nation.

### Shikwari Suites

#### Five affordable luxury thatched suites:

Four are set in the bush and are connected by pathways to the main lodge area. Each suite is beautifully appointed with colonial-style furniture and luxurious textiles and has been personally decorated by the owners. The Wild Fig Family Suite is closer to the main lodge and accommodates two adults on a queen bed. There is a main bedroom and a smaller

room with a bunk bed for two children. All suites have bathrobes and slippers, a hospitality tray with fresh coffee, quality teas and homemade crunchies. A table with chairs are out on the small outdoor veranda for bird watching. The private bathroom includes towels and toiletries. All beds are made up with percale linen and there is a turndown service at night. The suites offer a choice of king or twin beds. Each suite can accommodate two adults and we accept two children, between the ages of 10 and 12 years old, who may share with their parents at a supplement cost. Teenagers over the age of 13 will be accommodated as adults. .



### Activities:

- Guided game drives and walks with a FGASA guide are available at the lodge.
- There are also Big 5 safaris available to nearby private reserves.
- Guided tours to the Kruger National Park with bush breakfast and our resident guide.
- The lodge is close to the Kruger Park, Nyani Cultural Village, The Blyde River Dam Boat Trip, The Panorama, the Blyde River Canyon, and Jessica the hippo.
- All these and many more activities may be booked with us.

*Commission for Tour Operator and Travel Agent gladly given please inquire in email*



# WHEN SERIAL TRAVELLERS

We asked some seasoned travel writers and bloggers where you

**Verushka Ramasami** ([www.spicegoddess.co.za](http://www.spicegoddess.co.za))

**India** The state of Kerala, God's Own Country, is a land of diversity, beauty and colour, from lush tea plantations to floating houseboats. Trekking in the Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is unforgettable. With influences from the Portuguese and Arabs this state is full of history and spices. Any kind of traveller will find something in Kerala. It's the perfect introduction to India.



**Anje Rautenbach** ([www.goingsomewhereslowly.com](http://www.goingsomewhereslowly.com))

**Nepal** This is a favourite among adventure travellers. It offers easy hikes, like the Ghorepani Poon Hill trek, and intense routes like those to Everest Base Camp. Most activities are easy on the pocket, it's safe for solo travel and rich in cultural experiences and gastronomic variety. Visit in March and April to see the Rhododendron flowers bloom and for Holi, the annual colour festival.

**Zaid Mahomed** ([www.travpacker.com](http://www.travpacker.com))

**China** Visit mainland China, not just for R&R, but for inspiration and new ideas. It's a destination where resourceful, hardworking and innovative people are building the world's next superpower and helping themselves out of poverty. Visit the electronics markets or factories of Shenzhen and Shanghai. You'll leave with optimism and hope for the remarkable potential of humanity.



**Carla Lewis-Balden** ([www.reismier.com](http://www.reismier.com))

**Papua, Indonesia** I'm for travelling to unknown places, where fewer tourists go. I've never experienced snorkelling like this before. It's remote and pristine, but be prepared to travel for at least 24 hours by plane and boat. It's more expensive and harder to reach, but you'll visit rewarding destinations off the beaten track.

**Meruschka Govender** ([www.mzansigirl.com](http://www.mzansigirl.com))

**Vilankulo, Mozambique** A recent trip to Vilankulo reminded me how lovely it is. It's a tropical paradise just off the coast of the Bazaruto Archipelago. I saw turtles and tropical fish while snorkelling, bought capulana cloths and sipped G&Ts at a beach bar. I saw hundreds of dolphins and whales on my first deep-sea fishing trip.



# HIT THE ROAD

should go in 2017 and why. Here's what they said.



**Katchie Nzama** ([www.travelwithkatchie.com](http://www.travelwithkatchie.com))

**Kalahari Desert, Northern Cape** Visit Augrabies Falls, also known as 'the place of great noise'. Do a game drive through the arid, but beautiful landscapes of the Augrabies National Park. Drive on the R360 outside Upington, along the Red Dune Route to discover small towns Kakamas and Askham. At the latter, go sandboarding and visit the Meerkat Sanctuary.

**Katarina Mancama** ([www.myslowjourney.com](http://www.myslowjourney.com))

**Reunion Island** Reunion has dramatic mountains and one of the world's most active volcanoes. Go paragliding, scuba diving or hiking. Trek for days along old volcano craters and visit villages only accessible by foot or helicopter. It's remote and wild, yet you can still have a hot shower and a Creole meal at the village guest houses. *Read more about Reunion Island on page 24.*



**Gillian McLaren** ([www.gillianmclaren.blogspot.co.za](http://www.gillianmclaren.blogspot.co.za))

**Thailand** Go to affordable Thailand for a massage on the beach in the sultry heat. Thai people are hospitable so you'll be spoiled and treated kindly. There's something for everyone, from raucous nightlife to Buddhist retreats in a forest monastery. The scuba diving is wondrous, the food delectable and nothing beats fresh coconut water.

**Vaughan McShane** ([www.thetravelmanuel.com](http://www.thetravelmanuel.com))

**Israel** This Middle-Eastern country is saturated in historical and spiritual significance. It's overflowing with colour, creativity and delicious food. From the stone-coloured squares in Jerusalem to the more secular Tel Aviv, it's a vibrant and inclusive country. Each corner turned presents something perception-shattering. Apart from the technology and start-up culture, Israel has a beautiful and diverse population.



**Eugene Yiga** ([www.eugeneyiga.com](http://www.eugeneyiga.com))

**Ethiopia** This East African country won the World's Best Tourism Destination Award in 2015 and has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites. There are lush hiking trails and the opportunity to climb active volcanoes. The "land of origins" is home to the world's rarest dog, Africa's only indigenous goat and over a dozen bird species you won't find elsewhere.



# LONDON

Writer Samuel Johnson said: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life". But there's no chance of that in the city with a massive appeal that draws more than 31 million tourists a year. By Allison Foat (@allisonfoat)

## Must see

You've landed and with 48 hours to discover London, you want to hit the ground running. So first, coffee! **Monmouth Coffee**, conveniently situated at **Borough Market** in South Street, is a great place to start. While you sip and sate your caffeine addiction, you can choreograph your day and explore and sample delicious artisanal fare. Walk off all that grub along the scenic **Millenium Mile**, stretching between **Westminster Bridge** and **London Bridge**, taking you past some of London's top attractions like **Big Ben**, the **House of Parliament** and the **Tate Modern** with numerous exhibitions, performances, interactive art and video installations celebrating new art. Further along on the North Bank is the imposing **Tower of London**, where the Crown Jewels have been kept since 1216. Today, the spectacular collection of royal bling is under the watchful eye of the Yeoman Guard, popularly known as 'Beefeaters'.

A spin on the world's tallest ferris wheel, the **London Eye** ([www.londoneye.com](http://www.londoneye.com)), is particularly magical at sunset with a glass of

bubbly in hand as you survey the sprawling metropolis below. And since 2016 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death, see a play at **The Globe Theatre** ([www.shakespearesglobe.com](http://www.shakespearesglobe.com)) and afterwards have a nightcap at the slick **Aqua Spirit** rooftop bar on Regent Street.

## Must do

Have breakfast – a Bombay omelette with masala beans on the side – at **Dishoom** in Carnaby Street, one of a few Irani café-bars that are huge with foodies in London right now. Then take a Voice Map audio tour (download the app and select the Theatreland Tour: [www.voicemap.me/tour/london](http://www.voicemap.me/tour/london)) and get a dose of theatrical and general history as you wander from **Leicester Square** to **Covent Garden**, **Embankment** and **The Strand**, and the back streets of

the **West End**, guided by the voice of legendary Sir Ian McKellen. The route enables you to see **Seven Dials**, the **Royal Opera House** and **Somerset House**. Afternoon Tea at **Fortnum and Mason** on Jermyn Street is immensely satisfying. Don't leave without buying a tin of their legendary lavender melt-in-your-mouth shortbread. Sip a Dubonnet and gin cocktail, Her Majesty's favourite tippie, at the opulent **Oscar Wilde Bar** at Hotel Café Royal, a few metres from **Piccadilly Circus**. After dinner at the Peruvian restaurant **Lima Floral**, make your way to the **Cellar Door**, a sexy Weimar-styled bar, with the UK's first SMS-enabled jukebox and a performance line up that includes drag, comedy, live music and burlesque. Have a nightcap at the stylish **Rumpus Room** at the **Mondrian**, with views over **St. Paul's Cathedral** and the city. 📺



Buying a London Pass online ([www.visitbritainshop.com/world/the-london-sightseeing-pass](http://www.visitbritainshop.com/world/the-london-sightseeing-pass)) is a great cost saver when it comes to using select public transport, visiting sights and being in line for special offers at various attractions.





ADVERTORIAL

# 8 THINGS TO DO IN BRITAIN – FOR FREE!

Travelling to the UK on the rand doesn't mean you'll have to eat nothing but two-minute noodles after your return. Many museums, art galleries, walking tours, festivals and cultural events are free, as well as notable heritage sites.

## 1. Museums and galleries

London's British Museum, the National Gallery, the Natural History Museum and Tate Modern are some of the big guys you can visit for free. Plus there are hundreds of others wherever you go in the country: [www.visitbritain.com/freemuseums](http://www.visitbritain.com/freemuseums).

## 2. Come all ye faithful

Step inside many of Britain's churches and cathedrals for free. You can experience the splendour of Durham Cathedral in northeastern England or King's College Chapel's famed Christmas Eve carol service in Cambridge, only an hour by train from London.

## 3. Banksy tour

While some of Banksy's works sell for millions, others by the mysterious graffiti artist are free. Follow a Banksy Walking Tour around Bristol ([www.visitbristol.co.uk](http://www.visitbristol.co.uk)) to see some of his most famous pieces, like the Grim Reaper on a houseboat.

## 4. Festivals

The world-famous Edinburgh Fringe Festival ([www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com)) every

August has hundreds of free shows, from drama and comedy to cabaret and spoken word. The Notting Hill Carnival ([www.thenottinghillcarnival.com](http://www.thenottinghillcarnival.com)) also takes place in August, and there's the Cardiff Summer Festival ([www.cardiff-festival.com](http://www.cardiff-festival.com)), which is known for its street theatre, music and funfair rides.

## 5. Explore on bicycle

Britain's scenic cycle routes ([www.sustrains.org.uk](http://www.sustrains.org.uk)) are only an hour from London. The Crab and Winkle Way is a leafy, 11-kilometre route that follows a former railway line and links the cathedral city of Canterbury with the oyster-fishing village of Whitstable.

## 6. Scotland's heritage sites

Scotland's Doors Open Days ([www.doorsopendays.org.uk](http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk)) on

September weekends allow visitors free access to more than 800 buildings and heritage sites across Scotland.

## 7. Free guided walks

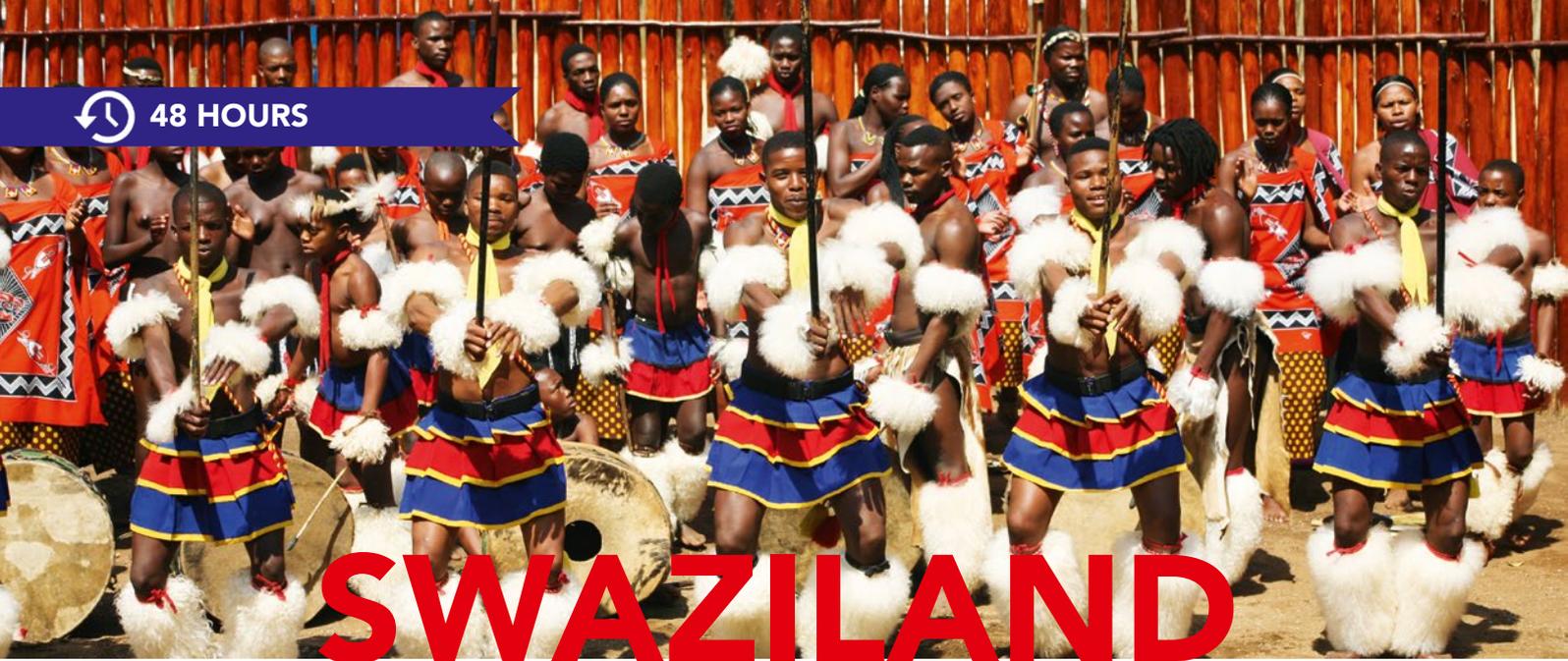
Tie your shoelaces and take in the iconic Royal Crescent in the Georgian city of Bath in southwestern England. When you go further north, choose between culture and architecture by getting the free Manchester walking Tours app.

## 8. Natural wonders

In Scotland, hike up Ben Nevis ([www.visitbritain.com/ben](http://www.visitbritain.com/ben)), which is the UK's highest mountain or try to spot Nessie in nearby Loch Ness ([www.visitbritain.com/nessie](http://www.visitbritain.com/nessie)). In Wales, only a short drive from Cardiff, you'll find Rhossili Bay ([www.visitswanseabay.com](http://www.visitswanseabay.com)), which regularly tops the world's best beaches lists. 

For more info go to: [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com) and [www.visitbritainshop.com](http://www.visitbritainshop.com), which offer online, value-for-money pricing on travel, transport and sightseeing for when you plan your budget trip to Great Britain.





# SWAZILAND

Although the Kingdom of Swaziland is Africa's smallest country at no more than 200 kilometres from north to south and 130 kilometres from east to west, **Iga Motylska (@igamotylska)** discovers it's a land of adventure and cultural experiences.

## Must see

The small landlocked country is one of the few remaining executive monarchies in Africa. It's perhaps best known for its annual Umhlanga Festival or Reed Dance. Swazis sojourn to the capital, Mbabane, for the eight-day festival in late August or early September, when around 40 000 traditionally dressed women cut reeds to present to the Queen Mother (Indlovukazi) for the repair of her royal residence and then dance and sing for the king.

If you miss it then Mantenga Nature Reserve in the Ezulwini Valley, which translates to Valley of Heaven, offers cultural dancing and tours of Swazi households at Mantenga Cultural Village and you can also walk to Mantenga Waterfall nearby.

The Malkerns Valley reverberates with music from around the world during the annual three-day MTN Bushfire Festival, when some of Africa's most renowned musicians and performers take to three stages here. This family-friendly music festival is ideal for a long weekend away in May.

You can also visit the Swazi Candle factory in the Malkerns Valley, where craftsmen bring coloured wax

to life in the shape of animals, marine creatures and birds. Other arts and crafts such as batik, hand-woven mohair items, wooden sculptures and curios are on sale at the outdoor market.

If you drive through the Oshoek border post, visit another popular shopping attraction – the Ngwenya Glass factory, where on weekdays you can watch glassblowing from 100% recycled glass. Handmade souvenirs are sold at the neighbouring craft market stalls and their restaurant doesn't disappoint.

## Must do

Stay at the traditional en suite beehives in Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary in the Ezulwini Valley for an unsurpassable experience. While the huts' grass structure is constructed in the traditional manner you'll be surprised when you see their interior. Since the reserve's establishment five decades ago it's prevented the local

extinction of a number of animal species. The following morning, rise with the sun and embark on a walking, cycling, horseback or self-drive tour of the park in the hope of spotting some of its 51 animal species and 200 bird species.

Another unmissable experience is the country's only treetop canopy tour at Malalotja Nature Reserve. You'll whizz above Sihlotswane Gorge and tackle a 50-metre-long suspension bridge over Majolomba River. The longest zip-line is more than 300 metres.

A 4 000-year-old piece of Swazi history is found in the overhangs at Nsangwini Rock Shelter. This example of San rock art is narrated by community members of the Nsangwini community, who look after and manage it. Then end the day with a sundowner cruise along the waters of nearby Maguga Dam with a Sibebe in hand. 



For more information about travelling to Swaziland visit the official website: [www.thekingdomofswaziland.com](http://www.thekingdomofswaziland.com) and click on the 'travel guides' tab and 'how to get there' drop-down tab, also contact your local embassy.

# Swaziland's *hidden gems*



Whether it is your first time in the Kingdom of Swaziland or not, the grand landscapes can always take your breath away. Although Swaziland is the smallest country in the Southern hemisphere, the Kingdom more than makes up for its lack of size, with a hugely diverse range of attractions and activities. Regardless of age or interest, Swaziland has an adventure that awaits you.



Swaziland Tourism Authority – South Africa  
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# ADOPTING CHANGE

You don't have to be at the frontlines of conservation to make a positive impact on the environment. You can make a difference without leaving the house writes

Dawn Jorgensen (@DawnJorgensen).

Being inspired by the work of conservationists and communities across the globe, and sharing the knowledge in a bid to create awareness, is a start. But is it enough? How can altruistic keyboard warriors make a lasting difference? Here are some simple ways to invest in change.

## 1. Adopt an orphaned elephant

It's frightening to imagine, but it's true – every 15 minutes an elephant is killed. And in Kenya, a country once recognised as a protector of these gentle

giants, more than seven tonnes of ivory was seized last year, according to [worldelephantday.org](http://worldelephantday.org). Today, anybody who buys ivory has blood on their hands.

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) was founded in 1977 to offer hope for the future of these threatened elephant populations that bear the cost of human greed.

Over the years, they have successfully hand-raised 150 infant elephants and achieved their conservation goal of reintegrating them into the wild.

Of the babies currently in care at Nairobi's DSWT, 80% are victims of poaching, the rest of human-wildlife conflict. But even these lucky few that are given a second chance don't always pull through, as the trauma of separation and loss is often too great for them. But passion and hard work prevail and the DSWT continues to break boundaries as the most successful orphan elephant rescue and rehabilitation programme in the world.

You can adopt an elephant for \$50 a year: [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org)



## 2. Fund a project on Kiva.org

Kiva is a clever, forward-thinking way of supporting emerging entrepreneurs and social programmes around the world. Currently with borrowers in more than 80 countries on five continents, Kiva allows you to lend money to low-income startups and students. You find the project that interests you, be it agricultural, tech or educational in the country of your choice and fund it.

Field partners do incredible work screening borrowers and their mission is to connect. They share one thing: the desire to improve people's lives through safe and fair access to credit.

Lenders browse and choose an entrepreneur they wish to fund. Then the lenders transfer their funds to Kiva through PayPal. And once the project is off the ground, you have the choice of further investing or being repaid your foundation capital and moving on to the next idea.

Minimum contribution of \$25, which you get back: [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org)



## 3. Plant trees for travel

For the frequent flyer there's always a tinge of guilt as one tries to ignore the fact that long-haul flights produce on average twice as much emissions per mile travelled per passenger than cars. In fact, a Boeing 747 uses about four litres of fuel every second, or 150 000 litres of fuel on a 10-hour flight. Unlikely to give up the speed or ease of air travel, we can turn to something good and tangible instead. Greenpop have

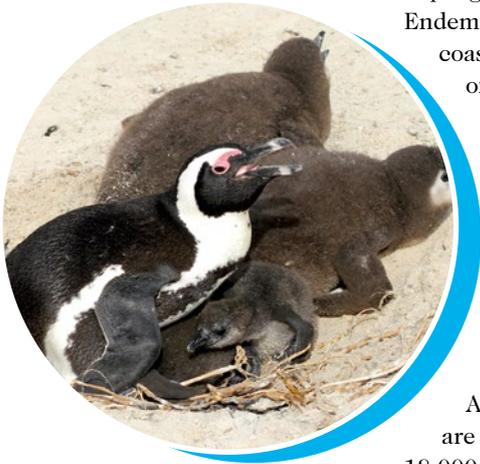


implemented their Trees For Travel initiative, where you can sponsor a tree and ease your air-mile-cloaking conscience. Trees sequester carbon, provide habitats and reduce air and water pollution.

One tree costs R120, so try to plant one every time you fly: [www.greenpop.org/gift-trees](http://www.greenpop.org/gift-trees)

#### 4. Sponsor a penguin house

African penguins are in trouble. Endemic to the South African coast and with a lifespan of between 10 and 15 years, populations are steadily declining. In 1900, it was estimated that about 1.5 million birds lived on Dassen Island, an uninhabited South African island in the Atlantic Ocean. There are now only around 18 000 breeding pairs left in the world.



The reasons for the rapid decline in population are egg and guano harvesting as well as the reduction of their food source due to overfishing and pollution. When guano is removed, penguins are forced to nest in the open on rocky island surfaces, at the mercy of the elements and predators, leaving them at high risk of extinction.

One solution comes in the form of artificial nests that provide vitally important shelter for breeding penguins on Dyer Island near Gansbaai. They are designed to mimic natural guano burrows and increase the survival chances for adults and chicks.

Sponsor a penguin home for R500: [www.dict.org.za](http://www.dict.org.za)

#### 5. Adopt a chimpanzee at the Jane Goodall Chimpanzee Sanctuary

We have Jane Goodall to thank for creating awareness around the plight of the chimpanzee in central and eastern Africa. Her influence is far reaching. In 2006, she opened Chimp Eden Chimpanzee Sanctuary on the 1 000-hectare Umhloti Nature Reserve outside Nelspruit.

Carrying her name, the goal of



the chimpanzee sanctuary is to rescue chimpanzees that have survived the bush meat trade, being orphaned, traded in the illegal pet market, or were used for entertainment in circuses, beach resorts and nightclubs. The chimpanzees at Chimp Eden are the lucky ones, living out their lives in a risk-free environment and being provided with the necessary attention to recover from the trauma they experienced.

Adoption packages start at R600 a year: [www.chimpeden.com](http://www.chimpeden.com)

#### 6. Educate a child

There are many heartwarming projects doing wonderful work in supporting and educating orphaned children throughout Africa, like the Lubasi Home in Livingstone, Zambia. AIDS affects about 30% of adults in Livingstone, leaving many orphans in its wake. Lubasi provides residential care for these orphans and other vulnerable children, who have no family.



Lubasi admits children over five years old and aims to care for them until they are able to sustain themselves or are taken into families. By employing mothers to care of the children, they have developed a homely atmosphere, help with schoolwork and provide communal dining and play areas. One of the things to be admired is how the children are supported through their high school years and encouraged to pursue tertiary education. It is run entirely by volunteers, who raise funds and ask for sponsorship.

It costs \$150 per child per month for food, board and education, but any contribution is welcome: [www.lubasihome.org](http://www.lubasihome.org)

#### 7. Shelter a rescued lion

The Drakenstein Lion Park was established in 1998 to provide lions in distress with a sanctuary where they can live free from abuse and persecution and be treated with the compassion and respect they deserve.

Situated in the Cape Winelands on 20 hectares of adapted lion habitat, the team is committed to improving the quality of life



of lions in captivity locally as well as internationally. They offer the animals a lifelong home or work in conjunction with animal welfare to secure a safe future for individual animals in dire need.

All the animals homed at the park

are captive-bred and hand-reared and cannot be rehabilitated to the wild. They don't offer animal interaction and are opposed to captive breeding. Adoption fees are R1 000 per year: [www.lionrescue.org.za](http://www.lionrescue.org.za)

### 8. Adopt a conscious attitude

There is much to be said for conscious living. After all, small things make a big difference, so you can do a lot simply with the right attitude. Recycle; opt for environmental- and animal-friendly cleaning and beauty products; adopt a more vegetarian diet, with meat-free days and be sure to eat fish as recommended by the World Wide Fund SASSI sustainability guideline. Limit plastic bag use, avoid straws, pick up litter and avoid using bottled water

where possible. You can also spread the positive word about the many projects worthy of support. That way, the change we think about from home manifests to positive change far beyond it.

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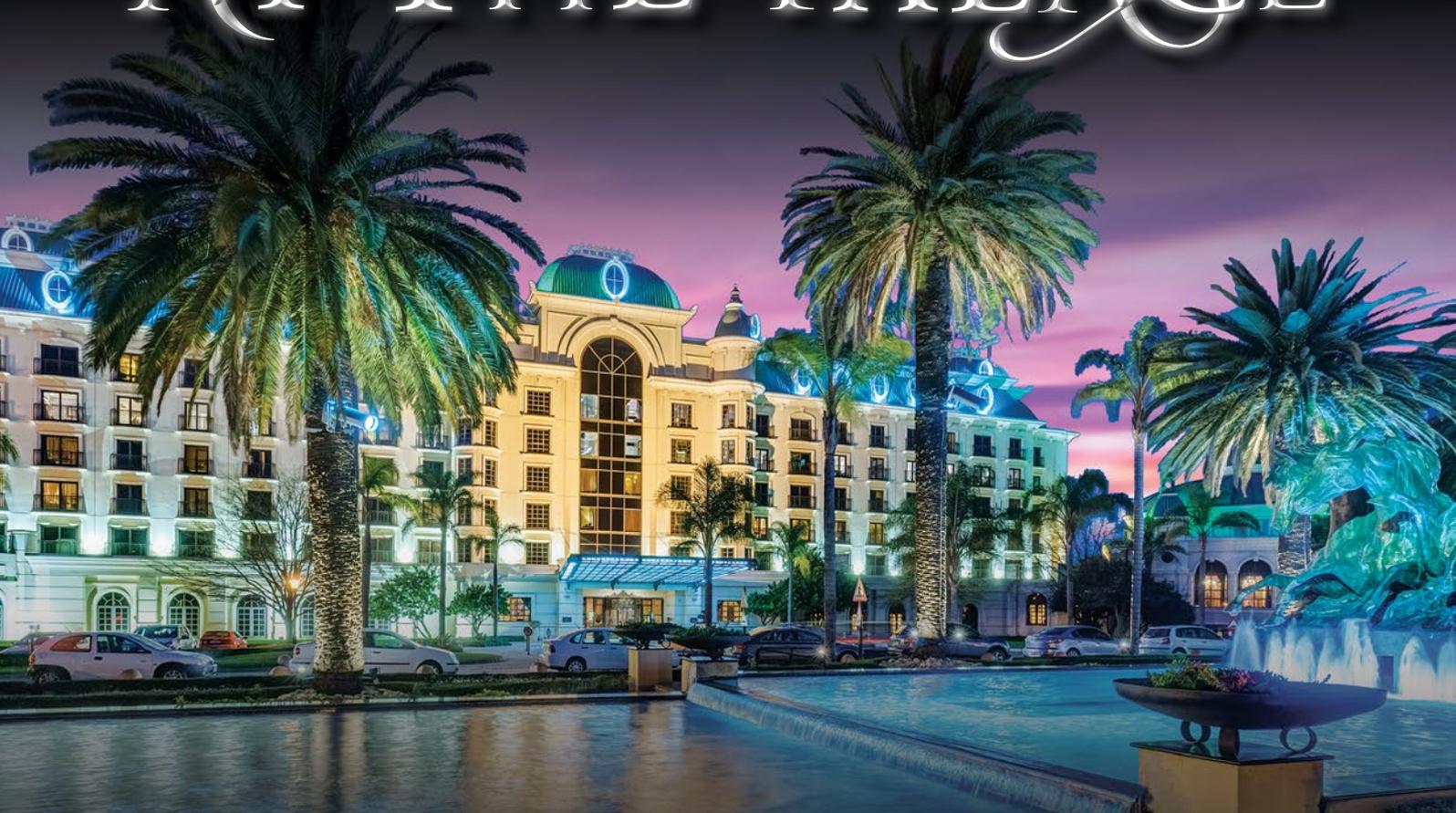
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# REUNION

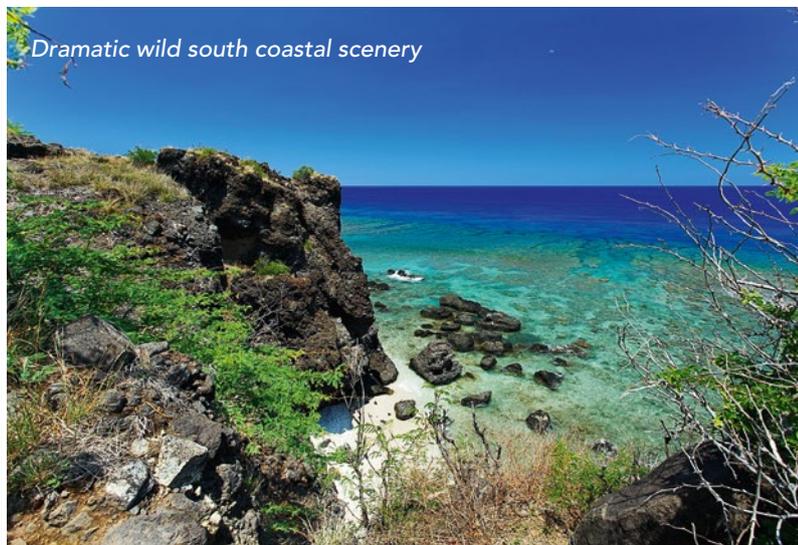
## THE ULTIMATE

*Reunion Island is a microcosm of French and Creole culture that floats in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean and offers adventurous and relaxing activities for all who visit.*

PIC CREDIT: IRT PIERRE CHOUKROUN



*Piton de la Fournaise volcano*



*Dramatic wild south coastal scenery*



*Picturesque town of Cilaos*

# ISLAND EXPERIENCE

PIC CREDITS: IRT SERGE GELABERT, IRT BRUNO TANDRYA

**H**ow does an exotic island escape sound? If you're looking for more than a fly-and-flop kind of holiday then Reunion Island awaits to satiate your cravings for adventure, natural wonder as well as culinary and cultural experiences.

Located in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar and 175 kilometres south west of Mauritius, Reunion Island, or *Ile de la Réunion* as it's called in French, is a mere

four-hour flight from Johannesburg on the island's national carrier, Air Austral. The island is one of the many regions (or departments, as they are called) of France, yet South Africans don't require a visa.

Unlike its Indian Ocean island neighbours, Reunion has a distinctly French vibe that's mixed with dash of charming Creole warmth.

The infrastructure is impressive, thanks to the strict



Typical Creole cuisine



Hell Bourg, quaint mountainous Creole village

European standards the country adheres to, which makes hiring a car easy. Exploring the winding roads of the coastline on a self-drive itinerary is highly recommended and with so much to see, it's one of the best ways to get the most out of your island experience. While the towns and villages you'll come upon are Creole quaint, you'll certainly feel at home in first-world comfort on your travels around the island.

There's so much to see and do on the island, even though it's only 2 500 square kilometres. Either rejuvenate on a beach, be enthralled by jaw-dropping scenery of the rainforested interior or satisfy your need for adrenalin through some of the many adventurous activities on offer.

## 10 Things to see and do on Reunion Island

### 1. Explore

Take a drive and feed your soul with breathtaking scenery.

### 2. Hike

A hiker's paradise, there are many organised hikes for the beginner or the advanced hiker.

### 3. Aerial view

Microlight and helicopter tours are highly recommended.

### 4. Deep-sea fishing

The waters of the Indian Ocean provide a cornucopia for game fishing enthusiasts.

### 5. Canyoning and aquatic hiking

The natural rivers, canyons and pools make Reunion an ideal place for this exhilarating experience.

### 6. Local cuisine

Try the fabulous cuisine from the many restaurants and hotels, or sample the truck stops on the side of the road.

### 7. Cultural experiences

Immerse yourself in the Reunionese Creole culture by visiting some of the smaller villages and meet with the locals.

### 8. Go 'off planet'

Visit the Mars-like landscape on the approach to Piton de la Fournaise volcano.

### 9. On the water

Hit the ocean to spot whales, dolphins and other marine animals.

### 10. Relax

Find a quaint and tranquil mountain spot or park off on one of the many beaches and soak up the atmosphere.



# Touching the heart of the Indian Ocean

**Reunion Island, the haven of your next adventure.**

A volcano, waterfalls, whales, extreme sports: come discover the riches of this unique island. Ready to enjoy a multitude of emotions?

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**AIR AUSTRAL**



Grand Anse beach

Piton de la Fournaise, the island's active volcano which translates to peak of the furnace, garners much attention. It's unique in that it erupts regularly, it last erupted on 11 September 2016, but can be safely viewed from lookout points or from the air on a helicopter flip. The volcano is located on the uninhabited southern side of the island, so during an eruption the lava flows into the ocean, posing no danger to people and creating granitic underwater caves that are popular among scuba divers.

The island's culinary delights, a mixture of French and rustic Creole flavours, will not disappoint as the cuisine is as diverse as the island's people. The *boulangeries* and *patisseries* (bakeries) are said to serve the best croissants outside of Provence! Try the local Bourbon beer, which the locals call 'Dodo' after the colourful extinct bird on its label. Also sample the many rum variants that are made in distilleries found along the western coast of the island.

So, if you're looking for a different kind of island getaway, come to Reunion for an Indian Ocean experience like no other. Charming, surprising and beautiful, Reunion Island will captivate your senses and leave you wanting to return time and time again. *À bientôt!* 📺

#### CONTACTS

Website: [www.en.reunion.fr](http://www.en.reunion.fr)  
 Blog: [blog.welcometoreunionisland.com](http://blog.welcometoreunionisland.com)  
 Facebook: Go to Reunion - SA  
 Twitter: @ReunionTourisme (#gotoreunion)  
 Email: [reunionisland.za@atout-france.fr](mailto:reunionisland.za@atout-france.fr)  
 Air Austral: +27(0)11-326-4443, email: [johannesburg@air-austral.com](mailto:johannesburg@air-austral.com)

## FAST FACTS

- Air Austral flies from Johannesburg to Reunion and back twice a week, on a Sunday and Thursday. Flight time is only four hours.
- Reunion is two hours ahead of South African time.
- No visas are required for South African passport holders (for holiday stays up to 90 days).
- Reunion is a region of France and the currency used is the Euro. Banks and ATMs are available in all towns.
- French is the official language, but communicating in English is possible.
- There's a wide range of accommodation to suit all tastes and budgets.
- The average annual temperature is 24 degrees Celsius (but there's a sharp drop in temperature from the coast to the mountainous interior, take warm clothes for high altitude).
- There is no malaria and no travel vaccinations are required.
- Bring adaptors as all plug points are round two-point (European).
- An international driver's license is necessary for car hire. This is easily obtainable from the AA (Automobile Association of SA). The island is small and the distances short, but the roads do wind and so going slowly is the way to go.





AIR AUSTRAL

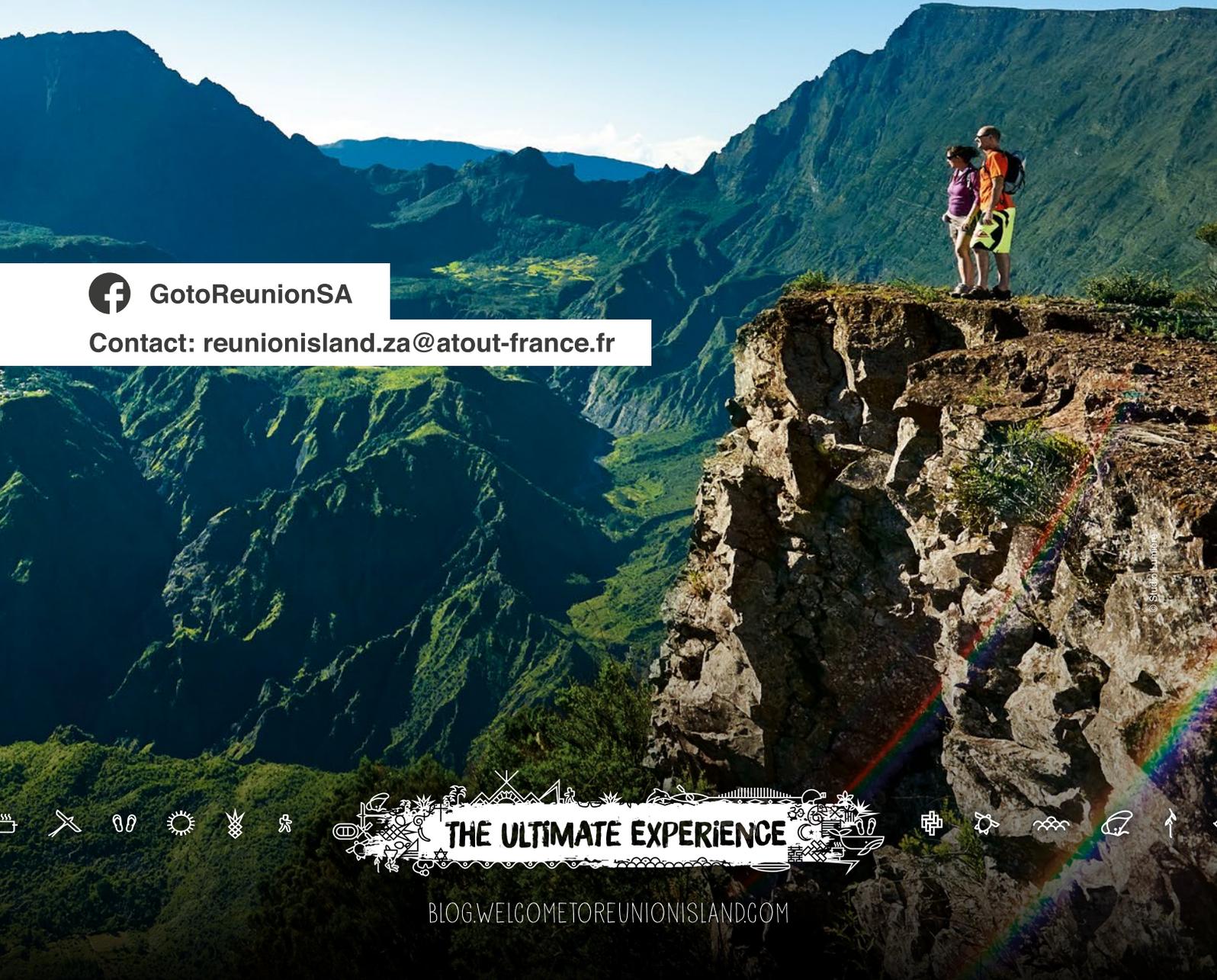
REUNION ISLAND

# THE ULTIMATE IN HIKING



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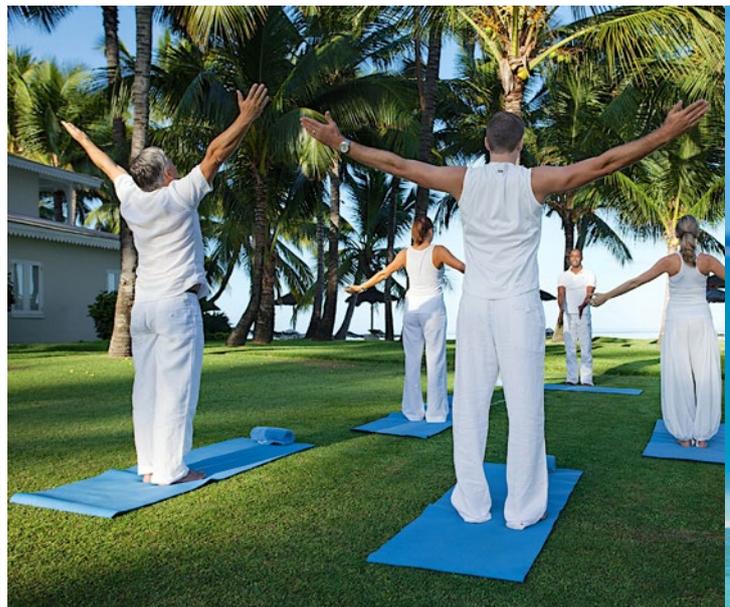


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# RESORT TO RELAXATION

*Sugar cane fields, vanilla plantations and a dash of rum sweeten any stay on Mauritius. Iga Motylska (@igamotylska) gets her first taste of holidaying at a resort, as she visits the west and east coast of this Indian Ocean island.*





“It’ll take you a day to drive around Mauritius along the coastal roads,” says our driver Vishal Beekun on our hour-long drive from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport in the south east of the island to Sun Resorts’ Sugar Beach Golf and Spa Resort in the west.

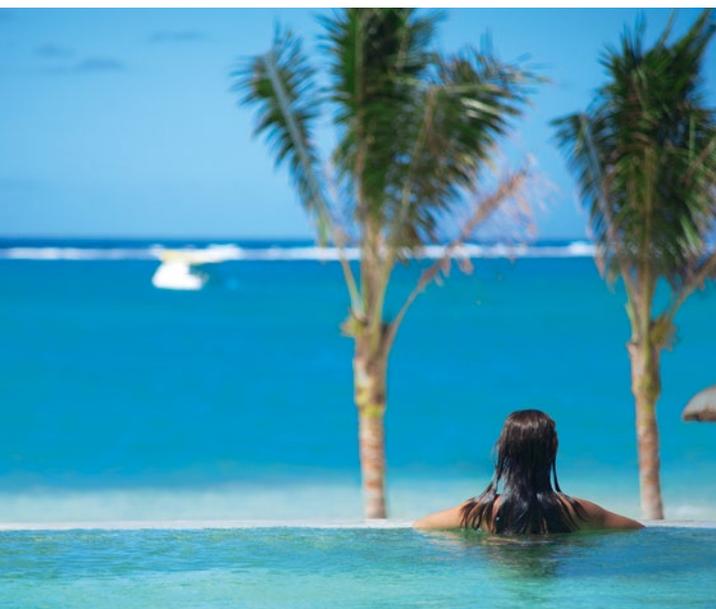
Since the sun has already submerged itself into the Indian Ocean, the mountains outline the jagged landscape that’s so characteristic of this volcanic island. Soon after arriving, I realise that Mauritians have a laid back sense of humour that island life is known for; they have nicknamed some of the most prominent mountains according to their size or shape: God greets us, Lion enralls us, we leave Sleeping Lady to be, and King Kong’s profile is unmistakably similar to the film poster.

It’s over Green Island rum-based cocktails on the wooden beach deck that Viren Govinda Chetty – a former

lecturer of economics at the University of Mauritius and now resort manager at Sugar Beach – narrates the story of the island’s most famous mountain, Le Morne Brabant. This UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site is written into the country’s timeline.

The oral history goes something like this: Escaped slaves (mostly from India, Madagascar, Africa and southeast Asia) used the rugged mountain as a shelter in the 18th and 19th centuries. They settled in caves and on the summit, which were protected by wooded cliffs and hard to access. Today, it remains a symbol of their plight for freedom.

Over a buffet breakfast the following morning, overlooking the pool and with views of the waves beyond, Sugar Beach GM Nicolas de Chalain, whose family has for generations owned the land where Le Morne dives into the





Indian Ocean, brushes it off as a larger-than-life legend. But no matter which version you choose to believe, the Mauritian landscape, its vegetation, culture and history will captivate you.

While it took me three decades to finally stay at a resort, I learn quickly that there's no reason to leave once you're there. There's no chance of getting bored, unless you choose to, and everything you need is at your fingertips, from a range of epicurean restaurants, bars, dance floors and entertainment, to spas, saunas, gyms and sports clubs with tennis courts, beach volleyball and the French pastime of boules. And there are a number of sports and activities on offer, from golf to kayaking, paragliding, deep sea fishing, snorkelling and scuba diving.

I qualified for my open water diver's license in anticipation of coming to Mauritius. But it's also one of the best places to qualify. On our boat trip to the coral reef, dive master and co-owner of Sun Divers at La Pirogue, Esther Rambert, tells me that in the 30-odd years since they opened they have discovered over 20 interesting dive sites, Cathedral, Snake Reef and Tug 2 being the most popular.

I see three white-tipped sharks at Suisse dive site, but Mauritius surpasses expectations like that and you're almost guaranteed to see them as they sleep in a cave during the day. I also tick off lionfish, sweetlips, porcupinefish, pufferfish and porcelain crab from my list, as well as the usual inhabitants of tropical waters – moorish idol, butterfish, angelfish and clownfish.

Back on land, I dry off on a beach lounge as I watch a yoga class, then I drag it into the shade of the palm trees. Later, I try really hard to work up an appetite by

swimming in the infinity pool, because I have learned that resort-life is all about indulgence. There barely seems to be enough time between the buffet breakfasts, lunches, sundowners and dinners. The food is a mix of Creole and international flavours as well as an array of the many nationalities that influence Mauritian culture. The seafood is as fresh as it gets and the variety is hard to beat.

"I'm coming back," I tell Beekun as he drops us off at the airport, "to do that road trip". 📺

## Budget

Mauritius is slightly more affordable than the other Vanilla Islands and the rand stands at roughly one to 2.60 Mauritian rupees. If you upgrade to an all-inclusive package, there's nothing to worry about besides which cocktail to order next.

## Getting there

Air Mauritius and South African Airways fly direct between Johannesburg a number of times each week.

# WHERE TO STAY

Iga stayed at four World Leisure Holidays affiliated resorts around the island to get a sense of Mauritius' diversity.

## Sugar Beach Golf and Resort Spa

Sun Resorts' Sugar Beach and La Pirogue Resort and Spa, which neighbour each other on the western coast, are blanketed in palm trees and indigenous vegetation to give them that tropical paradise vibe you're after. This plantation-style resort is sandwiched between a lagoon and the ocean and while it welcomes families and honeymooners, there are sections that are solely reserved for love birds. All guests receive complimentary access to the 18-hole Tamarina Golf Course, which is only a five-minute drive away.



## La Pirogue Resort and Spa

La Pirogue captures the genuine spirit of Mauritius with its newly renovated thatch-roofed bungalows in the shape of the billowing sails of a pirogue, along the sunset coast. The rooms are set in a circular shape within tropical gardens, each with an ocean view. La Pirogue is asked for by name when it comes to its al fresco seafood grill on the beach, accompanied by sensual sega dance performances. Guests are welcome to use the facilities and eat at the restaurants at the adjoining Sugar Beach Resort.

## Ambre Resort and Spa

This all-inclusive, adults-only resort is attractive to honeymooners and couples for its relaxing atmosphere. The infinity pool beckons you to take a dip on arrival, unless you prefer the various water sports on offer, or want to work out at the fully-equipped gym instead. Sun Resorts' leisure island Ile aux Cerfs – a short drive and boat ride from Ambre and nearby Long Beach – is one of the most visited attractions in Mauritius. Here you can tee off at one of the world's most beautiful golf courses, an 18-hole, 72-par course designed by Bernhard Langer, or go parasailing, tubing and test the horsepower on a speed boat. Later, eat at one of the three restaurants or two bars.



## Long Beach Golf and Spa Resort

This resort is situated along the famous Belle Mare beach and is ideal for those looking to re-energise with its many sports, activities and water sports on offer. It's perfect for younger travellers or families wanting an active holiday that offers something for everyone. The kiddies and teens clubs will keep the youngsters busy with stimulating activities while mom and dad get some downtime. With five restaurants that offer a selection of Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Mauritian cuisine alongside cosmopolitan flavours you'll barely have enough time to work up an appetite.



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# WHERE THE **WILD** THINGS ARE

*Luxury camps, warm hospitality and more game than you can shake a stick at. Come fill your cup in Zambia. By Jo Kromberg*

**A**fter a flight of just over an hour and a half from Johannesburg on South African Airways, we land in Lusaka, Zambia. The midday heat is palpable as we walk across the tarmac to board our tiny Proflight Zambia flight to the Lower Zambezi region.

As we approach our destination from the sky, a range of hills makes its appearance on the one side, while the Zambezi River snakes below us like a giant dark blue and black python.

At just over 4 000 square kilometres, the Lower Zambezi National Park stretches in a narrow swathe from the Chongwe River in the west to the Luangwa River in the east. The park is home to all of the major species in the valley, with excellent sightings of elephant, buffalo, lion and leopard a regular occurrence.

After a smooth landing, our guide George drives us the 20 minutes or so to Chongwe River Camp. On arrival, our hosts Sisi and Flossie start a trend of warm hospitality we were to see for the rest of our stay in Zambia. Our suite is mesmerising and after a light lunch, George takes us on a canoe ride, where we see cavorting monkeys, elephants, crocodiles, hippos and about 30 species of birds.

We retire to the fireside after dinner as the crimson moon, huge and languid, peers slowly above the river like a blood red balloon and then rises into full bloom.

Much later, I creep into my enormous bed with its percale linen duvet and I dream of Africa.

I wake up with the mystic river as my view from the bed and jump out, refreshed and as eager as a child to experience the next adventure. After brunch, we laze around in the main area of the camp for the afternoon (where high tea is served and Wi-Fi is available) before

setting off on a boat cruise again. George slowly navigates his way around dozens of hippos in the river. Suddenly, I hear a wave crashing behind me and I turn just in time to see the massive jaws of a furious, four-tonne hippo giving chase metres behind us. George puts the boat into warp speed. "It's a bad-tempered one, that," he chuckles as we try to dislodge our white knuckles from the railings, gasping for breath.

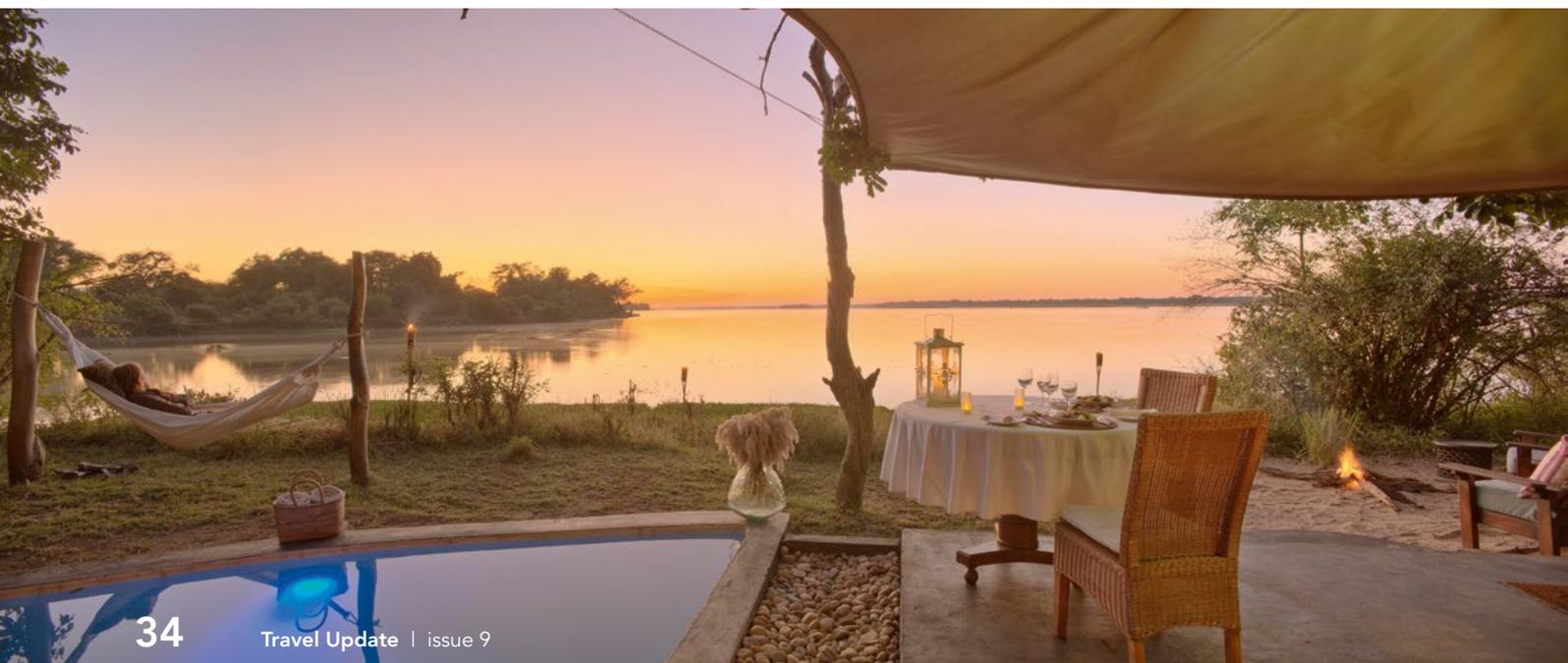
The night drive after dinner presents a tremendous black sky adorned with a billion stars, vast and unending. The Milky Way is clearly visible, flowing through the dark firmament like silky vanilla magma. The bush teems with animals big and small and we spot hippos, buffaloes, elephants and a rarely seen porcupine.

Too soon, we have to leave the Chongwe team and board Proflight back to Lusaka the next afternoon. From here, it's on into the deep, wild heart of Zambia – the South Luangwa National Park. It is one of the greatest wildlife sanctuaries in the world and not without reason. The concentration of animals around the Luangwa River and its oxbow lagoons is among the most prolific in Africa.

The Luangwa River is the most intact major river system in Africa and the lifeblood of this 9 059 square kilometre park. There are 60 animal species and over 400 bird species. The only notable exception is the rhino, poached to extinction.

We arrive at Mchenja Bush Camp as the sun throws long shadows across the pristine bush. The camp sits beneath a grove of ebony trees on the banks of the Luangwa River. It is one of the most isolated and far-flung camps in the valley.

The haunting cry of a fish eagle breaks the dawn the next morning. I open the flap door onto my deck and the





ZAMBIA 





river reveals itself in the pink colours of dawn. We set off on a two-hour hike through the bush, with trusted guide Innocent. We encounter elephants and a few smaller creatures as we delight in Innocent's explanations of plants, dung and animal tracks. A surprise brunch is set up on the edge of the river to complete the experience. On our game drive later we encounter a herd of buffalo and then there they are!

It is the same pride of lions from the previous evening, explains Innocent. There are 14, including cubs, dozing indolently in the late afternoon sun. After a sundowner stop, we spot a leopard and a lone hyena, and as we drive back to camp in the dark, the lions make their appearance again, stalking a puku (an antelope similar to an impala).

The night silence is pierced by ferocious growls and snarls as the lions pounce. We watch in stunned silence as this show of the merciless cycle of life and death in Africa plays out some 20 metres away from us. The cubs are just as brutal as the adults as they try to snatch whatever piece of the prey they can, but they are unceremoniously swiped away by the older ones. "That puku didn't know what hit it," says Innocent and we are glad we didn't have to see the animal suffer.

When we say our goodbyes my poetic proclivities leave me lacking, like a joke searching for a punch line, when later I try to describe this corner of Africa.

Journalist Elspeth Huxley once wrote: "Africa is a cruel country; it takes your heart and grinds it into powdered stone – and no one minds." I can suddenly forgive her lack of fetish for geography, because her description is so apt. 📺

### Best time to go:

April to September.

### Where to stay:

#### Chongwe River Camp

We stayed in the Albida Suite, a luxurious, colonial-style tented suite. It sleeps four guests in two spacious, octagonal bedrooms set on either side of a private dining room and lounge area with its own bar fridge, plunge pool and fire pit. It has a spectacular view of the river, looking out over Zambia on the one side and Zimbabwe on the other. Apart from cruising, the camp also does full-day picnic trips and tiger fishing excursions, day and night game drives and walking safaris.

#### Mchenja Bush Camp

Mchenja is a lavish tented camp overlooking a sweeping bend in the Luangwa River. Each of the five octagonal tents has its own en-suite, open-air bathroom plus Victorian-style baths with river views. Guests can choose whether they want to view their wildlife on foot or from an open game viewing vehicle.

### Contact:

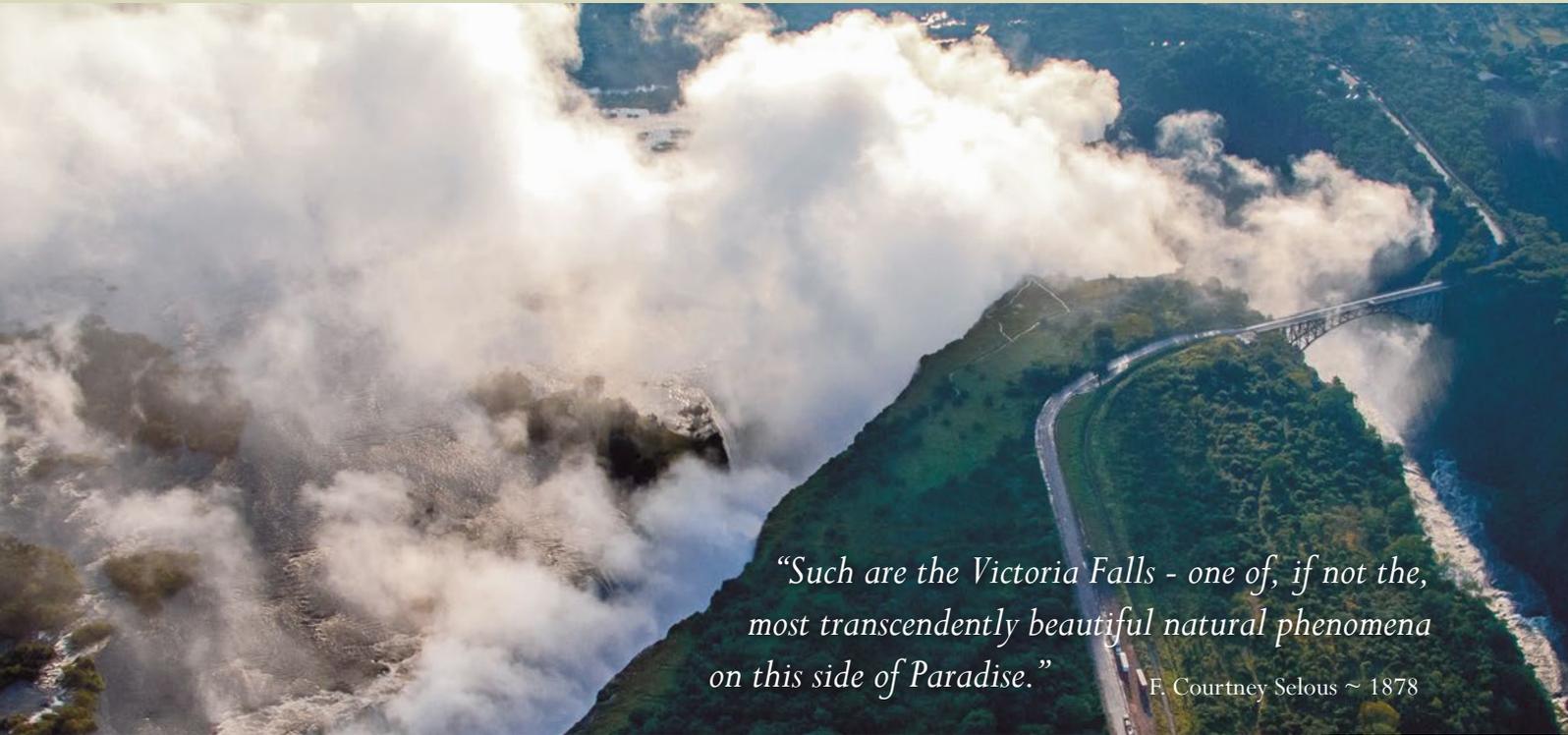
Norman Carr Safaris on: [www.normancarrsafaris.com](http://www.normancarrsafaris.com) or +260-216-246-025.

### Getting there:

South Africans don't require a visa when travelling to Zambia. SAA flies return to Lusaka daily from Johannesburg: [www.flysaa.com](http://www.flysaa.com).



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# ABU DHABI

## MORE THAN JUST A LAYOVER

*The growing capital of the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, is more than just a transit stop between destinations. While you're flying through, take a few days to experience this diverse Middle Eastern city. By Travel Update staff writer*

The poshest hotel in Abu Dhabi has seven stars and a floor reserved for the rulers of countries and governments. We know, because it's marked "Rulers" in the lift, right above the button marked "Palace Suites", where us mere mortals can stay. Mere mortals for \$14,000 a night, that is. You can draw gold from an ATM (yes, a real one) and if you look carefully at the airport, you might spot the same Rolls Royce police car we did.

But this capital city of the United Arab Emirates

is also many other things. With daily flights from Johannesburg and an airport quickly becoming a travel hub for destinations around the world, it's a great stopover for the chance to explore one of the fastest-growing cities in the Middle East, before heading on to your final destination.

So instead of grinding your teeth through another marathon trip of flights and transit stops, book a few days' layover in Abu Dhabi to experience some of the things this diverse destination has to offer.



## The Grand Mosque

The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is a treat for the senses, most of all, your sense of wonder. The mosque, named after the founding father of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, is one of the largest in the world. Under its 82 domes, it can house over 40 000 worshippers, most of them on the largest Persian rug in the world. Huge Swarovski chandeliers, plated in 24-carat gold, hang like bright, colourful flowers from the ceiling and you find yourself dropping to a whisper as you walk beneath them.

You have to take your shoes off before you enter and though you can keep your socks on, don't. Walk through this wonder barefoot to feel the cool marble tiles and soft carpet on your skin.

## Saadiyat Island

Saadiyat is dedicated to cultural attractions. Well, mostly. There's the large exhibition and visitor centre, Manarat Al Saadiyat, with two galleries hosting non-permanent exhibitions and a permanent one on the island's past and future.

A Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum are under construction. The Louvre, once completed at the end of this year, will span 9 200 square metres and will display many works of art for which there is no space at the Paris museum.

The island also has a public beach where you can dip in the Gulf, several holiday resorts and a Gary Player golf course sitting like a bright green blob of paint almost at its centre.

Brunch is big in Abu Dhabi and the St Regis Saadiyat Island Resort recently won the title of Best Brunch in the UAE. If you're in the city on a Friday, visit the St Regis Saadiyat to fill your to fill your hump with both cultural and culinary delights.

## Yas Island

At the other side of the attraction spectrum, but only 20 minutes by taxi from Saadiyat, lies Yas Island, dedicated to adventure and outdoor activities. It is here where you'll find the famous Ferrari World theme park and Abu Dhabi's Formula 1 racetrack.

You've probably noticed superlatives like 'biggest', 'highest' or 'longest' feature in descriptions of things built in the UAE. True to form, Ferrari World is the biggest indoor theme park in the world and home to the world's fastest roller coaster, Formula Rossa. You know you're in trouble when you're asked to hand in all loose objects at the entry gate. And when you're handed a pair of tight plastic goggles before you board, your heart beats like Jenson Button's on the final straight.

The metal snake rips away to reach a tunnel-vision-inducing 240 km/h and a g-force of 4.8. It's so fast, most people forget to scream, ending instead with action photos that look as though they were snapped in a wind tunnel.

There's a long list of other attractions at Ferrari World, ranging from a Ferrari Gallery (yes, the world's largest outside Italy) to more rides, restaurants and a climbing gym for small children. Next door is a huge mall with plenty of international brands and eateries.





ABU DHABI



“ Superlatives like ‘biggest’, ‘highest’ or ‘longest’ feature in descriptions of things built in the UAE. ”



If you can splash out, buy a premium ticket (\$85 for those under 1.1m and \$105 for those over) to skip the queues at Ferrari World. Or get a Yas Park Pass, which includes Ferrari World and Yas Waterworld, where you can take even more fun rides, this time in, on and through water. Before daylight runs out, head over to Yas Beach. Entry is free if you're staying at one of the island's hotels (there are also shuttle buses from the hotels). It's definitely the place to go if you're into sports activities – the adventure company Noukhada offers kayaking, sailing and stand-up paddling.

Here's a tip: Yas Express is a free bus service from all the island's hotels, so you don't have to pay for any transport or rent a car if you stay on the island.

### Arabian Nights

To see a different side of life in Abu Dhabi, take a full-day tour to Arabian Nights Village. Driving there is an experience – from the surprisingly green city, you enter a seemingly endless desert surrounding it. Outside the car

## When you go

- Abu Dhabi Tourism: [www.visitabudhabi.ae](http://www.visitabudhabi.ae)
- The Grand Mosque: [www.szgmc.ae/en](http://www.szgmc.ae/en)
- Saadiyat Island: [www.saadiyat.ae](http://www.saadiyat.ae)
- Yas Island: [www.yasisland.ae](http://www.yasisland.ae)
- Arabian Nights: [www.arabiannightsvillage.com](http://www.arabiannightsvillage.com)
- Etihad Airways operates daily flights from Johannesburg via Abu Dhabi to major destinations around the world. You get a luggage allowance of two bags of up to 23kg each in economy class and 32kg in business and first class: [www.etihad.com/en-za](http://www.etihad.com/en-za)

windows, skyscrapers and mosques are replaced by rolling dunes, sandy roads and herds of camels. About an hour later, you arrive at the isolated Arabian Nights, built to resemble a traditional Emirati village in the middle of a wide dune valley.

During the day, you can do various desert activities – camel or quad bike rides, dune bashing with experienced drivers and sandboarding down huge dunes. At night, you get a taste of Bedouin life as you kneel around traditional knee-high tables for a buffet of Arabian food and entertainment. When you've had your fill of hummus and lamb kofta, order a hookah

pipe and sit back while a musician plucks the strings of his oud or a belly dancer twirls the crowd into laughs and applause. It's a door-to-door service – one of their Land Cruisers will pick you up at your hotel in the morning and drop you off again at night. 

*Travel Update travelled as a guest of the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority.*



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# CRUISIN' CROATIA

Between Roman ruins and azure beaches lies Croatia, a country with an old soul and a young heart, moving from a turbulent past to become an enticing, affordable tourism destination.

By Linda Markovina (@moving\_sushi)

**A**ncient cobblestone steps stretch up from the hillside, winding their way through compacted alleys. They twist and turn past the shutters and doorways of an ancient fort city, set high along the mountainside ridges of the Croatian island of Cres, overlooking the Adriatic Sea.

Inhabited for close to 4 000 years, legend has it that the Croatian version of *Romeo and Juliet* was played out from this high vantage point. Where once ancient Romans walked the road to Pernut, sheep now bleat as they guzzle the aromatic shrubs dotted around the only family-run restaurant in the village of Lubenice.

### On the up

Just over four million inhabitants are scattered in and around the 6 278 km-long coastline of Croatia. The rand sits at 2.40 to the kuna, which makes a European holiday possible without bank-breaking costs. And the tourists are flocking in, with the 6% growth from 2014 to 2015 predicted to rise.

It's easy to see why. There are many layers to this country that reveal themselves in subtle ways and it is as easy to stumble across jaw-dropping scenery as it is to use free Wi-Fi hotspots across the countryside.

Zagreb, the capital, is a vibrant and buzzing city where residents and well preserved historical buildings like Stone Gate exist side-by-side in the hills of Gri and Kaptol. Catch a ride on the funicular that separates the downtown shopping area, modern restaurants and museums – like the outdoor Archeological Museum, The National Theatre and the Museum of Broken Relationships – from the upper town. Turn a corner and you stumble upon a sight like the roof of St. Mark's Church, the towering Cathedral of the Assumption, which stands as the tallest building in Croatia, or a quaint local beer bar with rock tunes and smoke drifting through half-closed windows.

Then, let yourself be tempted by the wonderful produce on sale at the outdoor Dolac Market, and gorge on cured *pršut* ham hung in rows in the indoor section. It's been frequented by Zagrebians for years.

Cafe culture has become popular, especially in the hot summer months where eating and drinking on the streets and in the shops has become a must-do. As the evening lights turn on, *Tkalčićeva* Street comes alive with buskers and tourists as well as locals fill the bars and spill out onto the streets to dance and drink the night away.

### Beyond the city lights

While Zagreb has bloomed, it's along the coastline that Croatia really comes into its own, with 1 244 islands and islets that stretch into the crystal clear blue of the Adriatic Sea.





## When you go

**Flights:** Turkish Airlines has the most direct flights from Johannesburg to Zagreb via Istanbul. Croatian Airlines, British Airways, Air France, Qatar Airways and KLM fly to Zagreb via various European and international destinations.

**Visa requirement:** Citizens of the UK, EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not require visas for up to 90 days, all other nationalities require a visa.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Jägerhorn: [www.hotel-jagerhorn.hr/en](http://www.hotel-jagerhorn.hr/en)

Esplanade Hotel: [www.esplanade.hr](http://www.esplanade.hr)

Chillout Hostel: [www.chillout-hostel-zagreb.com](http://www.chillout-hostel-zagreb.com)

Hotel Kimen: [www.hotel-kimen.com/en](http://www.hotel-kimen.com/en)

Hotel Kazbek: [www.kazbekdubrovnik.com/default-en.html](http://www.kazbekdubrovnik.com/default-en.html)

**Don't miss:** Lunch in Valun at sunset, the oceanside vendors of Cres, picnics in Maksimir Park in Zagreb, Plitviče Lake outside of main tourism season, the Secrets of Grič tour (during summertime in Zagreb), hiking Medvednica Mountain, taking a drive to Beli. And it goes without saying that Dubrovnik and Split are best enjoyed outside of the peak summer months.

**Unique festivals:** Sali Donkey Racing: [www.dugiotok.hr/en/offer-festivities](http://www.dugiotok.hr/en/offer-festivities)

**Cest Is d'Best:** [www.cestisdbest.com/engleski/index\\_engl.html](http://www.cestisdbest.com/engleski/index_engl.html)

**Rijeka Summer Nights Festival:** [www.visitrijeka.eu/What\\_To\\_Do/Annual\\_Events/Rijeka\\_Summer\\_Nights](http://www.visitrijeka.eu/What_To_Do/Annual_Events/Rijeka_Summer_Nights)

**Sinjska Alka:** [www.dalmacija.net/sinj/sinj\\_1.htm](http://www.dalmacija.net/sinj/sinj_1.htm)

**Karlovac Beer Festival:** [www.karlovac-touristinfo.hr/en/info/beer-festival-karlovac](http://www.karlovac-touristinfo.hr/en/info/beer-festival-karlovac)

**Marunada in Opatija:** [www.visitopatija.net/en/gastronomy/marunada](http://www.visitopatija.net/en/gastronomy/marunada)

Outside the majestic city walls of Dubrovnik and the popular gothic and baroque buildings of Split, life slows down to a leisurely ocean pace. Ice-cold glasses of *Karlovačko* and *Ožujsko* beers are sipped in cafés overlooking village docks, while plates of *Crni Rižoto* (squid risotto) are enjoyed as the sails of passing yachts decorate the horizon.

Everyone here has access to some kind of ocean-going vessel; be it a small dingy, a super yacht or simply an inflatable inner tube. The water is refreshingly cold, a perfect respite from the hot summer sun.

There are many ways to travel around Croatia. There's an extensive network of buses that reaches every small village around the mainland and the outer islands of the Dalmatian coastline can be reached via a network of ferries.

I was drawn to the road, traversing the countryside from Zagreb to the island of Cres by car, allowing time for detours to the sights en route at my leisure. I decided to extend my time at the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site of *Plitviče* National Park, where 16 interconnected lakes peaking out through forest and azure limestone waters.

Driving with all the windows down, we stopped on the side of the road as the smell of roasted suckling pig caught our attention. Although the seaside harbour of *Mali Lošinj* beckoned over the next hill, we couldn't stop ourselves from pulling over.

A cook was preparing four of the pigs that graze around the open land of his house, as the rest of his family served up *blitva* and beers.

This is Croatian life. Yes, bullet holes still dot the sides of buildings, openly displaying the scars of a country that was ravaged by a war that cost thousands of lives and made refugees of

millions of people. But Croatia has emerged into a thriving amalgamation of modern and old. There is a story behind every stone, and a proud people who remain traditional, but filled with the energy of a young, ambitious new generation of Croats, who are turning the country into a holiday destination as unique as its people. 🇭🇷

# THE GREAT ESC-APE

After its genocide, Rwanda has risen to become the best place to live in Africa, according to a recent survey. Jo Kromberg thinks it's a top travel destination too.

I've seen many wonderful places, met many formidable, inspirational people and found myself in many unusual situations. But never have I been to a place quite like Rwanda.

It's the rainy season, and the midday view from the air reveals the capital Kigali as an emerald green, hilly and wet place. Rwandair sets us down perfectly after an easy three-and-a-half-hour journey from Johannesburg.

Kigali is beautiful, with verdant tropical hills, well-maintained roads and fascinating Art Deco buildings. And it's clean. In fact, Rwanda has the enviable distinction of being the cleanest country in Africa. This is because, as our driver Amos tells us proudly, every last Saturday of the month sees one and all take to the streets to clean up the place. Everyone, including the president. "Do you like your president?" I ask Amos innocently. "Oh my God! Of

course," he replies approvingly.

Somehow taking the Lord's name in vain doesn't seem like such a mortal sin if it is expressed in your third or fourth language. President Paul Kagame has restored pride and prosperity in a country that experienced genocide just over two decades ago. But more about that later. In the meantime, we play a game called Spot The Rubbish. Nobody wins.

## Into the heat

The weather is pleasantly balmy as we enter the five-star Kigali Serena Hotel. It is a delightful place, indistinguishable in luxury, service and food from any five-star hotel in the world. The tropical heat slaps us across the jowls the next morning at the Kigali Memorial Centre, built on a site where over 250 000 people are buried. My mind cannot compute the atrocities that took



place here while the world did nothing. Starting in the early hours of 17 April 1994, almost one million Rwandans were savagely slaughtered in just three months.

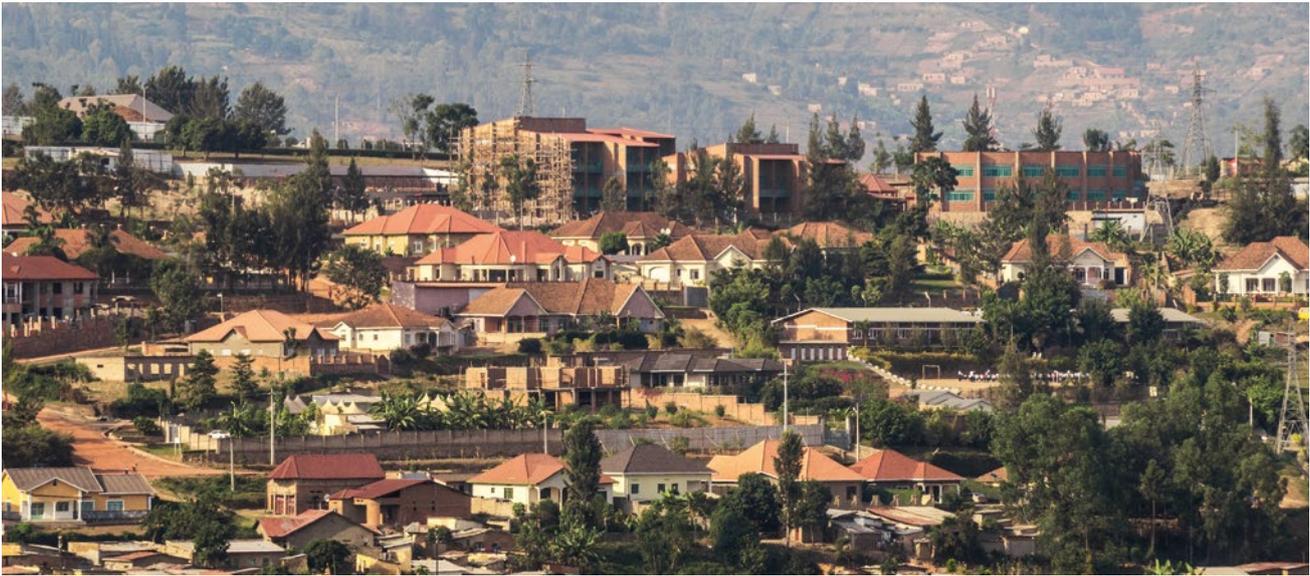
The tour begins with a video of survivors relating their stories. Ordinary people were driven to betray and even kill their own, living in mortal fear of the Interahamwe militia, backed by the Hutu government, leading up to and during the Rwandan Genocide. “My mom was a nurse. My dad was a teacher. I am the only survivor,” says one man, his eyes haunted by the memory. “The neighbour’s son told the militia to pick out my mom’s children. They were slaughtered with machetes right there and then. I ran away, but could hear the screams of my brother and sisters.” Another woman tells how the militia killed people hiding at the Gisimba orphanage. “There was just chaos, screaming and crying, blood flowing. People baptised each

other in blood. That was the last time I saw any of my family alive.” She was a child of 10.

As I walk through the dimly lit museum with its shocking photographs of terror and death on the walls, together with human skulls in glass cases, I am deeply disturbed. But the conclusion of the story affects me profoundly. It reads simply: “This is about our past and our future. Our nightmares and dreams, our fear and our hope. Which is why we begin where we end. With the country we love.”

Our minibus is quiet on the way back, but I leave with a feeling of hope. In modern Rwanda there is no sign of any underlying resentment or anger in the people. And while South Africa had one Nelson Mandela, Rwanda seems to have many.

Manzi Kayihura, managing director of Thousand Hills Expeditions, later tells us Rwanda is still very poor, but there



is no begging and people work. Thatched roofs were banned since they cause fire and disease, and the country aims to provide every child with shoes (for \$1) to further prevent disease. AIDS awareness campaigns and the banning of plastic bags were yet more steps to get this country to the peaceful 11 million strong nation it is today. Now it's one of the fastest growing economies in Central Africa, with a GDP growth of around 8% per year between 2001 and 2014.

### Into the mist

We're off to our abode for the next two nights – the Serena Lake Kivu Hotel on the border between the DRC and Rwanda. We ask Amos about the weather and his answer is unambiguous: “In Rwanda you have two kinds of weather – rain and no rain.” I marvel at the undulating

tropical scenery as we negotiate the countryside, up hills and down mountains.

Amos overtakes trucks on death-defying hairpin bends with gay abandon, but we manage to make our way safely down to Lake Kivu in the approaching dusk, deftly avoiding school children, herds of goats and pigs.

The Lake Kivu Serena Hotel is a sanctuary. It overlooks its private beach and offers 66 luxury hotel rooms with views of the lake, a restaurant with panoramic views, indoor and beachside bars, a luxury pool and the Maisha Health Centre. For dinner we feast on pea soup, seafood brochette with lemon butter sauce and warm apple pie.

An early wake-up call finds me bleary-eyed for the two-hour drive to catch a glimpse of Rwanda's endangered golden monkeys at the Volcanoes National Park. They are sprightly creatures, leaping from tree to tree.

Later, the setting sun dances on Lake Kivu as it plays hide and seek with the black storm clouds and we have front row seats to a spectacle only Africa can offer. In an event so rare I shall put it up there with a millennial surviving for a week without social media, I find myself in the lobby at the unholy hour of 5am for a second consecutive day the next morning. But it's worth it, for today we commune with the great silverback mountain gorilla.

Rwanda is one of three countries where mountain gorillas can be observed in the wild. A rare privilege, since there are only an estimated 800 left in the world. Our guide is the inimitable Francois Bigirimana. He worked with Dian Fossey, the legendary American primatologist portrayed by Sigourney Weaver in the film *Gorillas in the mist*, and is somewhat of a legend.

“Defecate montoon fo see gorirra,” he says, which I would learn apparently means “it's a difficult mountain (to



climb) to see gorillas.” And Francois wasn’t exaggerating. The following two hours provide a death-, gravity- and physics-defying experience as we arduously mudslide – up the mountain. The incline and altitude is a killer for those who, like myself, don’t run marathons before breakfast, and my porter, Anastasia, becomes my new BFF as he helps me up and side-ways, whichever direction really, to ascend from around 700 to 2 700 metres above sea level. We battle fire ants, tropical brush, rain and stinging nettles until we finally come across the rare primates. We spend some precious moments with two females and then the alpha male appears behind a bush, just like in the movies, towering above us.

It is extraordinary, almost surreal, to be so close to these endangered beasts in such a remote part of the world, high on a volcanic mountain in a tropical rain forest. We are told not to look into their eyes and to stay around seven metres away. But truth be told, they dictate the distance. Some people wait a lifetime to see 99 percent of their own DNA in King Kong’s beautiful brown eyes. And within an hour we are gone. But at \$750 per person, is it worth it, some ask? A resounding yes!

### Leaving with a Rwandan smile

Rwanda is the best place to live in Africa, according to a

survey by the US research firm Gallup, which ranks the country 15th globally. Respondents from 143 countries were asked questions about their previous day. Some of these included, ‘Did you feel well-rested today?’ ‘Did you feel respected all day?’ ‘Did you smile or laugh a lot?’

I’d argue it should rank equally high for tourists. Did I feel well-rested? Well no, but that’s because scaling volcanic mountains to grin at gorillas leaves hardly any time for a nap. Respected? Check. Did I smile and laugh a lot? Oh yes! So if you take yourself on only one journey in your short time on earth, let it be Rwanda. 

**Getting there:** Rwandair flies to Kigali from Johannesburg. Visit [www.rwandair.com](http://www.rwandair.com) for more information and reservations.

**Accommodation:**

Serena Hotel Kigali: [www.serenahotels.com/serenakigali/default-en.html](http://www.serenahotels.com/serenakigali/default-en.html)

Serena Hotel Kivu Lake: [www.serenahotels.com/serenalakekivu/default-en.html](http://www.serenahotels.com/serenalakekivu/default-en.html)

**Gorilla tours:** Thousand Hills Expeditions: [www.thousandhillsexpeditions.com/home](http://www.thousandhillsexpeditions.com/home)

# Flying the African dream to new horizons





# POWERFUL LUXURY

With space for up to seven people and a 0 to 100 km/h dash of 7.7 seconds, the new BMW X5 25d delivers space and power, with a huge dollop of luxury.

By staff writer (@travelupdatersa)

**T**he BMW X5 has become somewhat of an icon in the segment for large 5- and 7-seater vehicles. It's been around for close to 20 years and was one of the first vehicles to combine the space of an SUV with the handling and speed of a sporty sedan. For this reason, BMW never called it a Sports *Utility* Vehicle, but a Sports *Activity* Vehicle.

Now in its third generation, the new X5 builds well on this legacy. The diesel engine powering the new X5 25d is 'only' a 2-litre, but delivers a staunch 170kW and 500Nm of torque. Compare that to something equally sporty, like the two-litre diesel Jaguar F-Pace, with 132kW and 430Nm torque, and you can see why the X5's stats are nothing to scoff at.

Your right foot can thank two turbos under the hood for the X5's power, but your wallet will be equally grateful for BMW's Efficient Dynamics. Thanks to that, the X5 is remarkably frugal. The system combines a quick 8-speed gearbox with clever technology – energy gets harvested from the brakes and sent back into the system, the engine automatically switches off and on at intersections and it even tweaks things like power steering to conserve energy. And less energy means less fuel. The manufacturer claims as little as 5.6 litres/100km (under controlled

circumstances), and I managed 9.5 litres/100km in a week of combined city and open-road driving. Not bad at all for a vehicle of this size and power.

## On the road

The first-class interior swaddles you in a snug, but spacious environment with very little road or wind noise. It's also a connected car, and through the Connected Drive system can do just about anything from reading your emails to suggesting the nearest restaurant. It even tells you the weather!

Behind the wheel, it's a joy. The X-Drive system can deliver power to all four wheels individually. This all-wheel drive system, combined with sporty suspension, makes it a soft yet firm and fun drive on tar or gravel. And with ground clearance of 209mm, there are few gravel roads in South Africa you won't enjoy – in comfort and luxury.

## Take a drive!

To enjoy the X5's handling, power and comfort, we drove from Cape Town to Wellington, through the curvy Bainskloof Pass and Slanghoek Valley, and back to Cape Town over Du Toitskloof Pass.



## Specifications

Engine: 1995cc, four cylinder twin turbo diesel.  
 Power: 170kW @ 4 400 r.p.m.  
 Torque: 500Nm @ 2 000 r.p.m.  
 Fuel consumption: 5.6l/100km  
 CO<sup>2</sup> (g/km): 146  
 Price: R945 700



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Cape Town from the N1/N7 exit to Moreson = 43.2km

Durbanville to Moreson = 49.2km (via Philadelphia)

Malmesbury to Moreson = 9.7km



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# FROM VILLAIN TO VICTIM

Great white sharks have long been portrayed as the villains of the deep. But instead of being feared, they should be respected and protected, writes Rachel Moncrieff-Robinson (@tipsygypsy\_SA).



**M**any of us remember the 1975 Steven Spielberg movie *Jaws* that had people scuttling out of the waves faster than you can say “shark!” Sadly, the movie seemed to have a far greater and more chilling consequence – a magnificent apex predator and ancient custodian of the ocean became vilified. By 2009, great whites were listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

While no accurate global population numbers are available, it’s been estimated that between 3 000 and 5 000 great white sharks remain in our oceans. A recent study, done over seven years and involving analysis of over 5 000 photographs of shark dorsal fins by Dr Sara Andreotti (PhD), a marine biologist at the University of Stellenbosch, revealed that the great white population in South Africa sits at around 500.

While the study caused controversy in scientific circles due to seemingly low numbers, another national study in collaboration with White Shark Research Group scientists is underway. The alarming facts from the research is the genetic analysis (not the shark numbers) which indicates there are around 300 breeding individuals, while 500 breeding individuals are needed to prevent inbreeding.

This will inevitably result in a reduction in numbers and, to Andreotti, their numbers might already be too low to ensure their survival. Add to this slow growth, late sexual maturity and a low estimated reproductive rate and we face a catastrophe in the making.

Whether or not the actual number of great white sharks is higher than estimated, they face a constant

reduction. And if they become extinct, the balance of the ocean will be adversely affected. Sharks target the sick and slowest individuals of a prey population, preventing the spread of diseases. They also curb an increase in the population of meso-predators (smaller sharks and marine mammals that they feed on, such as seals). With fewer great whites, we’ll see a sharp reduction in fish stocks by these smaller predators, which will affect our fishing industry and ultimately, us.

## Remove the fear, remove the nets

Most people won’t think twice about going for a hike, even though they could be bitten by a snake. The chances of being nabbed by a shark are equally slim when swimming in the ocean, yet our beaches are lined with gill nets to keep sharks out. These

nets, which stretch from Richards Bay to Port Edward, also entangle turtles, dolphins and rays. According to Precious Shamase, public education officer at the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board, the 22km of nets are cleared Monday to Friday, enabling the release of a reasonably high proportion of the catch. However, between 2010 and 2014 the average live release of sharks caught in the nets was only 15.7%.

The Sharks Board also uses bait hooks on drum lines, but they are quick to point out that the bait is only likely to attract those sharks already near the bathing area. They also say that each drum line has only one baited hook with most installations having only four to eight drum lines with each bait weighing about 500g. This is less than 5% of that used in rock and surf angling.

Shamase says further that several initiatives have been implemented or are being evaluated (including a shark-repellent cable) to reduce mortalities without jeopardising bather safety and minimising environmental impact.

In contrast, Cape Town uses Shark Spotters along the Cape Peninsula, primarily along the False Bay coastline. A spotter is placed on the mountain with polarised sunglasses and binoculars. This spotter is also in radio contact with another spotter on the beach. If a shark is seen, the beach spotter is alerted who, sounds a siren and raises a white flag with a black shark. When the siren sounds surfers and bathers are requested to leave the water and only return when the “all clear” signal is given.

Shark spotting initially started in 2004 in Muizenberg on an informal basis, with car guards being asked to keep watch from the mountain overlooking the beach and to warn of any sharks with their cellphones.

Since then, Shark Spotters have expanded to eight beaches and won a silver award in the Cape

Town Mayor’s Portfolio of Urban Sustainability. There are also exclusion nets (not the same as gill nets) in Fish Hoek. These are in place during the day and removed at night, as leaving the nets unsupervised poses a risk for entanglement of marine life other than sharks. The nets are supervised at all times and removed should whales, dolphins or other animals be at risk.

### Knowledge turns into respect

Contrary to belief shark cage diving doesn’t increase shark attacks or shark activity. Marine Dynamics in Gansbaai was the first South African company to only use fish products in chumming practices. Shark cage diving is strictly monitored by the Department of Environmental Affairs, tour operators are not allowed to use shark products, such as livers, for chumming. It doesn’t feed the sharks, it lures them to the boat if they are in the area. Even that isn’t a guarantee as you may wait for a long time and they may only stay for a few minutes. Shark cage diving is likely to turn fear into awe, as people experience the great white’s grace while gaining insight into their behaviour.

### Food for thought

According to Paul Millar, education co-ordinator at Save Our Seas Shark Education Centre in Cape Town, great whites are probably faring better than other sharks, even though shark numbers are generally in decline.

That’s likely because smaller sharks, such as the smooth hound and shortfin mako, are being targeted for their fins and meat. South Africa exports shark fins to Asia, while shark meat often ends up in someone’s “fish” and chips in Australia. An article written by Dave van Beuningen, research assistant/technician for Shark Spotters, highlights how the shark and ray

fishing industries in South Africa are big business, with seafood fraud a massive problem.

Most shark and ray processing is done around Cape Town, with small amounts of products sold locally (either frozen, smoked or as dried shark “biltong”), but the majority is exported. It’s difficult to monitor catches and control shark imports and exports, but South Africa recently established a National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, which includes key issues such as identifying and providing protection to vulnerable shark stocks, minimising the unutilised by-catch of sharks and encouraging the full use of dead sharks.

It seems we not only need to pay attention to the plight of the big guy, but also to the little guys. Our ocean ecosystems need them and depend on us to save them. Encourage net-free beaches, and make sure you know what you’re eating the next time you order fish and chips. 🐟

### Sharks in aquariums

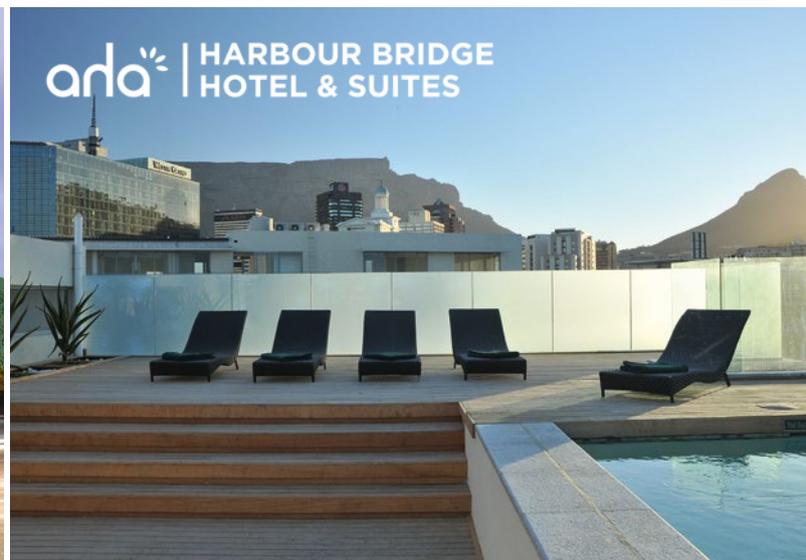
Unlike most animals in captivity sharks survive longer in an aquarium, according to Renée Leeuwener, communications and media executive at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town. Aquariums provide a stable and protective habitat free from threats of predation while parasites are monitored and controlled. Likewise, the quantity and quality of their food supply is also regulated (they feed their sharks every 10 days using hake stuffed with sardines, which are stuffed with vitamins and minerals specially designed for the sharks). However, a great white should not be kept in an aquarium as they need a vast amount of space to swim.

# South Africa



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# HEALTHY OUTLOOK FOR AFRICAN HOTELS

Hotels in Africa's most tourist-friendly countries are poised for profitable years ahead – as long as governments don't mess up and the global economy remains stable. By Lesley Stones (@lesley\_stones)

**A**uditing firm PwC recently released its five-year outlook for Africa's hotel sector *Hotels Outlook 2016–2020*. According to the report, more hotels are being built and the outlook is positive, but ill-advised government action could destroy years of hard work in an instant. The most obvious example is South Africa, where visitor numbers tumbled after disastrous changes to the country's visa regulations.

The number of visitors to South Africa fell from 9.5 million to 8.9 million in 2015 after growing steadily for years. Arrivals from China suffered most, diving by 46%, while Indian visitors fell by 23.5% as new rules forcing foreigners to personally apply for visas at South African embassies meant many simply didn't bother.

"The visa regulations and the global economy had a large impact on that decrease," says Pietro Calicchio, an expert in hospitality and gambling with PwC. Some of the stringent rules were eased after widespread protests

from the tourism trade, and foreign visitors jumped by a healthy 16.8% for January to April 2016 compared to the same period last year. For 2016 as a whole, PwC expects a 12.4% increase from the previous year.

Despite the turmoil, hotel room revenue still climbed by 8.1% in 2015 to R14.2 billion, largely because of a 6.5% rise in average room rate. Room revenue should grow by 11.9% this year to R15.8 billion.

Since the UK is the biggest source of visitors from non-African countries, there's a concern that the economic fallout from Brexit – the UK's withdrawal from Europe – will hit the number of Brits who can afford to travel. Calicchio says it's difficult to predict the impact, but if Britain enters a recession people will have less disposable income. At the moment, however, South Africa remains an attractive destination for British holidaymakers thanks to the favourable exchange rate.

Over the next five years 2 600 new hotel rooms will join the market,

54% of them in Cape Town. Five-star hotels are the best performers occupancy-wise, achieving 79.5% in 2015, with an average cost of R2 370 per room. However, they only account for 5% of hotel beds.

PwC also analyses the hotel industry in Nigeria, Mauritius and Kenya and its latest report added Tanzania for the first time, too. The Tanzanian government is investing heavily in hotels and enthusiastically promoting the country as the leading destination in Africa. But its efforts could be undermined by trying to milk the industry too hard. It added a tourism tax of 18% in July and increasing the cost of accommodation and national park entry fees is likely to dampen visitor numbers.

Overall, however, Tanzania is seeing a very strong economic boom and tourism is contributing 14% to the GDP, Calicchio says, with more than 1.1 million tourists in 2015. Six new hotels will add 600 rooms to the market in the next five years, but with rates already being quite

**South Africa** draws most of its **non-African** visitors from the **UK**, with **407 486** in **2015**. That was up **1.4%** from a disastrous **2014** when the numbers **dipped** by **6.8%**, largely due to damaging **visa regulations**.

**Mauritius** is expected to grow its hotel rooms to **15 600** by **2020**, with room revenue forecast to grow at **10.6%** a year to **€920 million** in **2020**.

**Tanzania's** hotel rooms earned **\$222 million** in **2015** and that's expected to grow by **10.8%** annually to **\$371 million** in **2020**.

Visitors from the **US** dipped by **3.9%** in 2015, **Germany** fell by **6.5%** and **Australia** fell by **10.8%**. Five-star hotels had the highest occupancy rates at **79.5%**.

expensive, PwC expects little growth in occupancy.

Overall, PwC says the outlook for Africa's hotel industry is vibrant and has the potential to create many jobs and boost African economies. What could dent that is the disruptive growth of Airbnb, the private home and bedroom booking service. Airbnb is still in its infancy in Africa, but it's making a serious bid to put more countries on its map. So far the challenge it poses to hotels is very muted, but its impact will become more noticeable as its popularity grows.

Of its 1.5 million global listings only 50 000 are in Africa and the Middle East. Most of those are in South Africa, with half of the country's 20 000 listings based in Cape Town.

About 7 500 of its South African hosts were active in 2015, up 190% from 2014. The number of guests they welcomed hit 134 000, up 250% from 2014, and they stayed an average of 4.9 nights.

Those active hosts earned an average of R28 800, but Airbnb's Managing Director for Africa and Middle East, Nicola d'Elia, disputes that this is money diverted from the hotel sector. "Our Economic Impact Studies show that people who travel on Airbnb stay longer wherever they go and sometimes wouldn't even have taken that trip," he says. "Airbnb makes the travel pie bigger – which is good news for everyone. And the numbers suggest that hotel occupancy over recent years has also developed really positively – so I'd say it's a complementary offer and all of the hospitality industry benefits from more people travelling."

Actually, its statistics show that only 27% of its guests would not have travelled or would not have stayed as long without Airbnb. Which means 73% presumably would have stayed in a hotel if Airbnb hadn't lured them away.

## Tourism: A case study in Cape Town

Airbnb grows the tourism pie, attracting many guests who might otherwise not have come, or been able to stay as long. This case study captures some of Airbnb's impacts to tourism in one of South Africa's capitals, Cape Town.



6

Average length of stay per guest (in nights)

27%

Guests who would not have come or not have stayed as long without Airbnb

92%

Guests who would recommend the listing they stayed in to a friend



50%

Guests who spent the money they saved by staying on Airbnb on food, shopping, etc.



GUEST SPENDING THAT STAYS IN THE LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD (WHERE GUEST STAYED)



The service is also poised to become a threat in other countries. It has properties all over Mauritius, many in Kenya (clustered in Nairobi) and along the coast around Mombasa. Nigeria also has a fair scattering in its main cities.

Hotels in Mauritius have had a tough time in recent years against competition from other Indian Ocean islands. But the country experienced a welcome 11% increase in visitors in 2015, the largest in five years. But a drop in average hotel room rate capped that to a 6.7% increase in room revenue. More than half its visitors come from Europe and 25% come from Africa, with South Africans accounting for 9.5%. Last year, Mauritius enjoyed a surge of 41.4% more Chinese visitors, partly because South Africa's visa restrictions saw them divert to Mauritius instead.

Nigeria's long-term prospects for the hospitality sector remain positive, although Ebola, terrorism and a decrease in oil and gas prices are hitting the industry. The number of

stay nights has dropped by 12% and room revenue has fallen by 3.6% over the past two years.

Various companies are planning to build 27 new hotels in the next five years, so occupancy rates will probably dip to 37.3% due to over-supply. However, room revenue should still grow from \$321 million in 2015 to \$507 million in 2020 due to increases in stay unit nights and average room rates.

Kenya is another country where terrorism is hitting tourism and some hotels have had to close as visitors dried up completely, according to Calicchio. Terrorism and political instability are expected to hit the figures again in 2016 and 2017.

Yet Kenya's hotels managed to grow their revenue for the first time in four years in 2015 by increasing their room rates, despite stay nights falling by 2.8%. PwC expects 16 new hotels to be built in the next five years, which will benefit from a growth in domestic tourism as Kenya's middle-class is steadily on the rise. 

# TRAVEL NEWS

## CITES COP17

CITES (the United Nations' Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments and 180 signatories, which ensures the international trade in and exploitation of wild animals and plant specimens, worth billions of dollars, doesn't threaten their survival. The 17th triennial CITES summit was held in Johannesburg in late September and early October. It was the largest meeting to date, with 3 500 attendees, and 152 governments making decisions on 62 species-listing that were proposed by 64 countries. Here are some of the outcomes.

### RHINO

Swaziland's bid to sell rhino horn to raise conservation funds was rejected, keeping in place the international ban on the sale of rhino horn implemented in 1977.

### ELEPHANT

Namibia and Zimbabwe's bid to sell ivory for the funding of conservation efforts was strongly rejected by Kenya, which has been burning its ivory stockpiles. Ivory sales were banned in 1989, although CITES allowed once-off auctions in southern Africa in 1999 and 2008. CITES, which already regulates cross-border trade, recommended that countries with legal domestic ivory markets close down as they contribute to poaching. Despite this, the southern African elephant was not upgraded to Appendix I status to provide it with added protection.

### LION

The global trade in bones, claws and teeth of wild lions is prohibited, but an exemption is in place for those taken from South African captive-bred lions. Conservationists argue this legal market incentivises poachers to launder bones from wild lions too in order to sell them in Asia for use in Chinese traditional medicine.

### AFRICAN GREY PARROT

The African grey was placed on Appendix I due to its decline in the wild across central and western Africa due to deforestation and the pet industry.

### PANGOLIN

The Pangolin doesn't draw as much attention as certain bigger animals, but it's the world's most poached mammal. CITES members voted to include all eight pangolin species on Appendix I. Pangolin meat is a delicacy in Asia and its hard keratin scales are also used in traditional medicines.

### SHARKS AND RAYS

The silky shark, nine species of devil ray (related to the manta ray), and three species of thresher shark were placed on the Appendix II listing. Devil ray gill plates are used in China for health tonics. This legislation controls the trade so species aren't threatened due to overharvesting. *Read more about the great white shark on page 55*



## NEW VISA REGULATIONS FOR NEW ZEALAND

South African travellers to New Zealand will require a visitor visa from 21 November 2016. Travellers are advised to apply for a visa at least six weeks before their intended date of travel. South Africans transiting in New Zealand will need to apply for a transit visa before they travel, unless they are going to Australia and already have a visa for that country.



## THE BUSINESS OF WINE AND FOOD TOURISM CONFERENCE

South Africa's inaugural The Business of Wine and Food Tourism Conference to be held at Spier Wine Farm in the Western Cape in early November will be opened by the Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom. He will present his new national wine tourism strategy, as developed from the South African Wine Industry strategic exercise (WISE), at the two-day conference, alongside Tim Harris, CEO Wesgro, who will be speaking on the business of tourism in the Western Cape. The conference will also feature international and local experts, who will share their knowledge on various aspects of regional food and wine travel. It marks the first time that industry players and government from national and provincial level will come together to discuss the promotion of South Africa as an international wine and food tourism destination.



## ACSA TO CUT TARIFFS COME 2017

Airlines and travellers will applaud the 35% decrease in ACSA's tariffs in the new year. "Any decrease will reflect a corresponding decrease in the Passenger Service Charge, which will reduce the cost of an airline ticket departing from an ACSA airport. The impact on travel to, from and within South Africa will be marginal, but it's good news for the traveller," says Chris Zweigenthal, CEO of the Airlines Association of Southern Africa. Meanwhile, ACSA stated that despite reporting a 20% increase in profits to R2 billion, it expects a slump in earnings next year due to the decrease in airport tariffs.



## BLOGGER WE

Blacks Do Swim ([www.blacksdoswim.wordpress.com](http://www.blacksdoswim.wordpress.com)) is a fun blog documenting Hitekani Mbatsana's adventures as she travels to exciting destinations. "The name came about after multiple (perplexing) conversations about travel with people commenting "Oh, but blacks don't usually [insert stereotype]." Surprise, surprise, I'd say, we're multifaceted people, who love to travel, meet people, leap outside our comfort zones at times and tell our own stories. My love for travel has seen me jump off a tower in Soweto, pray in a Buddhist temple in South Korea and road trip across my culturally rich and diverse South Africa". The journey continues.

# EVENTS AND

At home, South Africa's conferencing, eventing and



## So what's a DMC?

A destination management company (DMC) is your best friend if your company is participating in an international event or exhibition. This kind of event management company is your middle man – they know the language and understand the business culture in the country you're going to, have extensive contacts and direct suppliers, can negotiate and sign contracts on your behalf, know what questions and who to ask, and have extensive experience and local expertise in the industry. That means they know who to avoid and are knowledgeable about best practice. And they can get the ball rolling before you even arrive at your destination.

## Do I need a DMC?

A DMC is a meeting planner's guardian angel when organising international, national, or regional conferences, meetings, events or exhibitions. They have all the insider information and are resourceful, when you don't have the time to be.

They have a contact list of speakers, vendors and local

businesses in the industry, and a DMC can offer you discount prices that they've negotiated because they buy in bulk. That can save your company money, as well as time and the hassle of getting numerous quotes. DMCs are more likely to source high quality products and services from reputable companies that they have vetted through experience. Furthermore, they can find the perfect local souvenir for your attendees or business partners.

A DMC saves a meeting planner having to go through unfamiliar logistics in a foreign country or unfamiliar region. They will handle the logistics of deliveries and pick ups, as well as dates due as per your schedule and cancellation fees. Should you wish, your DMC can organise a site visit for key members in your team ahead of the event, too.

Not only that, a DMC can organise your team's airport meet and greet as well as transfers, accommodation, convention registration, and temporary staff such as photographers or hosts. If you have

any VIPs attending, the DMC can host them, which will ensure that they are in good hands. And they can arrange the fun stuff too, like authentic dining experiences in the evenings, entertainment, as well as shopping and sightseeing once the event is completed.

They'll do all of this while keeping your budget in mind or suggesting ways to reduce your costs. Some companies choose to use all the services offered by a DMC, others choose only a few of the most crucial ones.

## Where can I find a reputable DMC?

Contact the Convention Bureau where the event or exhibition will be held and ask them for their annual Meeting Planning Guide, which lists convention facilities and service providers. Otherwise, ask them for recommendations of DMCs whose quality of service they approve of. Contact professional meetings industry associations or ask colleagues in the industry about their positive experiences with DMCs. 

# EXHIBITIONS

exhibition sector is soaring. Here's how to represent abroad.

## FAST FACTS

The total direct spend for business events in South Africa was estimated at **R42.4 billion** in 2015.

The international meetings, conference and exhibition industry supported some **280 555** direct and indirect annual job equivalents in South Africa in 2015.

# TOP 100

The South African conference industry ranks **38th** in the International Congress and Convention Association's **top 100 list** of leading destinations in the world.

South Africa had secured **66 international association conferences and meetings** for the next five years, starting 2017, with **45** bids still pending. The confirmed events will contribute around **R1.4 billion**, attract **108 134 delegates** and generate **311 event days**.



The Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau secured **17 bid wins** for the destination during the 2015-2016 financial year with a potential economic impact of **R370 million**.

Source: Cape Business News

Cape Town has been ranked as Africa's number one convention destination for the past **10 years**.

It's welcomed **270 000** delegates since 2006, with an average of four conference days per event.



## Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa (EXSA)

EXSA serves the South African exhibition and events industry. Find more information and a list of South African organisers, venues and service providers (organised according to service) on EXSA's website directory: [www.exsa.co.za/directory](http://www.exsa.co.za/directory). For a list of upcoming events and exhibitions in South Africa, visit: [www.exsa.co.za/events/showall](http://www.exsa.co.za/events/showall).

# MICE

news

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Franschhoek 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 Franschhoek 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.

In addition, it is an ideal destination for a team building, corporate function or even a fairy tale wedding, boasting 5 world class conference venues, seating from 20 to 120 delegates.

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# ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

By SAACI CEO Adriaan Liebetrau

There's an array of international conference and exhibitions one can attend, not forgetting local ones. But the decision of which ones to attend gives rise to many questions. The biggest of these seems to be around ROI: What will I have to invest and what am I going to get out? And it's not just about the money – you also have to invest time away from the office.

Firstly, consider who is going to attend, as any event will have an element of networking and knowledge transfer. If you don't attend, take time to train your team to gain as much insight and knowledge as possible. And remember the saying "eyes before the badge".

Make your decision by studying the conferences' delegate or buyers

lists beforehand. If you run a small bed and breakfast it may not help to go to an international trade show where big grouping deals are signed. Rather consider a conference that talks about small business.

Once your mind's made up, remember that exhibition stand design should be creative and striking. Stay away from couches, rather opt for working tables for a business set up. Table top meetings are becoming an international trend.

Conference programmes should be innovative, fresh and engaging, so decide which sessions to attend before you travel. If you're attending with colleagues, split up and attend different sessions so you can compare notes afterwards. Also ask the organiser for notes of sessions you didn't manage to attend.

My biggest tip is for business card exchange. We meet someone and exchange business cards, but seldom contact the person when we're back at work. While you're still talking to them, make notes on their business card. Back at the office, sort your business cards into tasks. Edit a standard 'great meeting you' text with what you promised.

We work in a competitive environment. If you want to grow your business, you need to attend local and international events to network, learn, grow and share. 



The 31st annual **SAACI congress** with a theme of 'preparing for multiple futures' will be held on 2-4 June 2017 at the CSIR International Convention Centre, Tshwane.

**Contact:** [www.saacicongress.org](http://www.saacicongress.org) for more information.

## Reynolds MICE Corporate Events

The newly launched Reynolds MICE Corporate Events takes care of all your meetings, incentives, conferencing and event requirements, locally and internationally.  
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## NAIROBI TO OPEN A 10 000-DELEGATE CONVENTION CENTRE

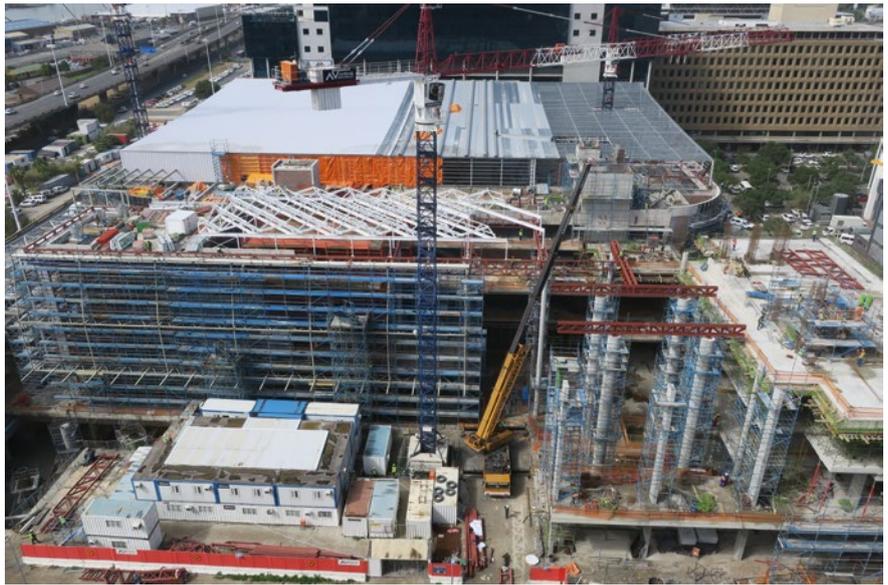
Kenya's capital will soon open the \$561-million Bomas International Convention Centre in Nairobi. The facility will have capacity to host 10 000 delegates, be linked to five hotels and also include exhibition space. Kenyan tourism minister Najib Balala says the new centre will ease pressure on the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC). [TU](#)

## Cape Town wins International Congress on Immunology 2022 bid

The Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) has secured the winning bid to host the 2022 International Congress on Immunology (IUIS2022). Cape Town's hosting bid beat other major competing cities London, Paris, Toronto and Mexico City. It will be the first time that the congress is hosted in Africa and the Western Cape will welcome 6 000 international delegates. Tim Harris, CEO of Wesgro, the official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency for the province, believes that the bid win "enhances Cape Town and the Western Cape's appeal as a business events destination and will be a big boost for our local knowledge economy." [TU](#)

## CTICC TO EXPAND

The R832-million construction on the Cape Town International Convention Centre East is expected to be completed at the end of 2016. The new building will span 31 000 square metres, with 10 000 square metres of conference and exhibition space, which can be divided into six halls, four meeting suites, five meeting pod rooms and two terrace rooms. It'll allow for simultaneous large-scale events. A building management system will control the building's utility usage and lower the cost of resources. A sky bridge will connect CTICC West to CTICC East. "We believe CTICC East will also add to the increase in prospective events and conferences taking place in the City of Cape Town, which will, in turn, boost both leisure and business tourism," says Julie-May Ellingson, the CEO of CTICC. [TU](#)



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# travel update

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# Salt Rock Hotel

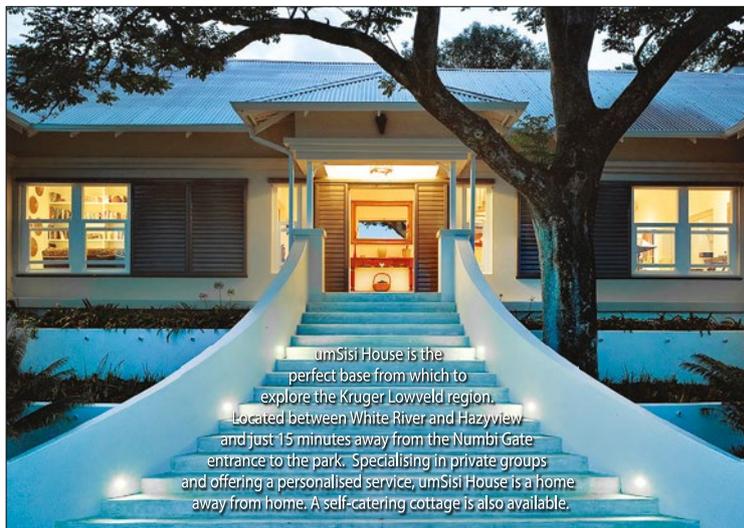
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