

# South Africa

It's no wonder that South Africa draws more visitors than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa. World-class wildlife watching, cosmopolitan cities, stunning natural panoramas and vibrant cultures make the country appealing to almost every taste and budget. Within the space of a day, you can journey from vineyard-clad hillsides in the Western Cape to the vast open spaces of the Kalahari, from Cape Town's waterfront chic to isolated Zulu villages, from elephant spotting in Kruger National Park to the pounding surf and sublime seascapes of the coast. And, unlike many other areas of the continent, it's possible to do all this while still enjoying Western amenities and, for the most part, getting by in English.

Yet, while it's easy to travel around South Africa focusing on the glitz and first-world infrastructure, you'll only get below the surface by seeking out the country's other face – most visible in the sprawling townships where far too many people live stalked by the shadows of hunger, poverty and one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world. Behind its incredible natural beauty, South Africa is the stage for the daily drama of one of the world's greatest experiments in racial harmony. The intensity of this drama surrounds you wherever you go, and will likely be one of the most fascinating and challenging aspects of your travels. And, there's never been a better time to experience this than now, as the colours of the 'rainbow nation' finally begin to fuse.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 1,233,404 sq km
- **Capital:** Pretoria (administrative), Bloemfontein (judicial) and Cape Town (legislative)
- **Country code:** 🇿🇦 27
- **Famous for:** Nelson Mandela, ending apartheid, Zululand, cosmopolitan Cape Town, Big Five wildlife
- **Languages:** English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Sepedi, Setswana, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, Venda, Xhosa, Xitsonga, Zulu
- **Money:** Rand
- **Phrases:** *Dumela* (hello; Sotho/Swati, Zulu), *howzit* (hello; English), *sala hantle/sala kahle* (goodbye; Sotho/Swati, Zulu)
- **Population:** 46.9 million



## HOW MUCH?

- **Bottle of wine** US\$9
- **Car hire per day** US\$40
- **Kilo of mangoes** US\$0.80
- **Kruger National Park entry per person** US\$16
- **Surfboard** US\$200

## LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol** US\$0.70
- **1L of bottled water** US\$0.80
- **Can of Black Label beer** US\$0.95
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$8
- **Roasted mealie (corn)** US\$0.30

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cape Town** (p415) Marvel at the city's majestic setting and take a tippie tour of the area's wineries.
- **Kruger National Park** (p528) Stay in a remote bushveld camp and fall asleep to the sounds of grunting hippos.
- **Drakensberg mountain range** (p516) Hike the peaks of Royal Natal National Park's magnificent Amphitheatre.
- **Wild Coast** (p491) Bum around the spectacular beaches, hidden waterfalls and isolated reserves.
- **Off the beaten track** (p488) Leave everything behind but the sun in the vast and magical Karoo.

## ITINERARIES

- **Two weeks** Using **Johannesburg** (p540) as a gateway, head east to South Africa's most convenient safari showpiece, **Kruger National Park** (p528). The teeming wildlife here and in the neighbouring **private wildlife reserves** (p532) will undoubtedly hold you captivated for at least several days. If time is really tight, get a good taste of things at **Madikwe Game Reserve** (p569) or **Pilansberg National Park** (p569), both easily reached from Johannesburg. From Kruger, head south into KwaZulu-Natal, where the dramatic valleys and peaks of the Drakensberg mountains **Royal Natal National Park** (p518) provide an endless array of captivating hikes. Head up **Sani Pass** (p522) to the Lesotho border for

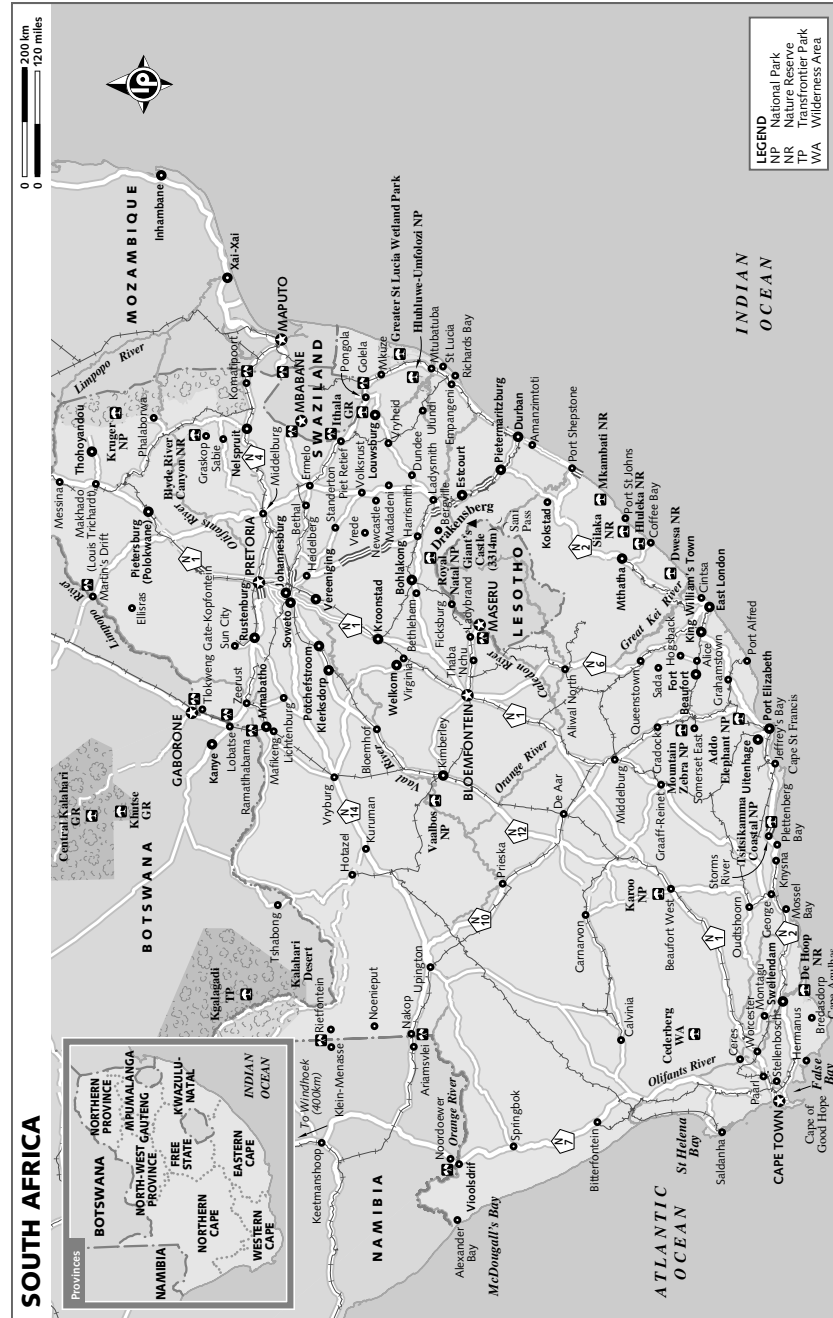
brehtaking views before returning to the throbbing heart of the country to get a taste of township life in **Soweto** (p544).

- **One month** After a few days in **Cape Town** (p415) and a trip to the top of **Table Mountain** (p419), tear yourself away from this wonderful city and head to the fertile valleys of the Winelands, with a night or two in **Stellenbosch** (p438) or **Franschhoek** (p442), and then via the scenic Route 62 through the Little Karoo to **Oudtshoorn** (p448), South Africa's ostrich capital. Possible detours along the way include to **Hermanus** (p444) for whale watching, if the season is right; **Cape Agulhas** (p446) for the thrill of standing at Africa's southernmost point; or **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (p446). Make your way south, joining the N2 along the Garden Route, near **Knysna** (p453), with its sylvan setting, and **Plettenberg Bay** (p456), a relaxed beachside resort town. Recommended stops along the coast include **Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park** (p466) and **Addo Elephant National Park** (p481). Move eastwards through the striking **Wild Coast** (p491), before spending a day or so on the beach in **Durban** (p495). Head north into the heart of **Zululand** (p509) or the **Drakensberg** (p516) or continue north for as much time as possible enjoying the parks, including **Mkhuze Game Reserve** (p515) and **Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park** (p512) before returning to Durban or making your way to Johannesburg for the flight home.

## CLIMATE &amp; WHEN TO GO

South Africa has been favoured by nature with one of the most temperate climates on the African continent, which can be visited comfortably any time. However, depending on what you plan to do, it's worth paying attention to the seasons, which are the reverse of those in the northern hemisphere. Winter (June to September) is cooler, drier and ideal for hiking and outdoor pursuits. Because vegetation is less dense, and thirsty animals congregate around rivers and other permanent water sources, winter is also the best time for wildlife watching. In the eastern highveld, nights are often crisp and clear, with occasional frosts.

Summer (late November to March) brings rain, mists and – in the lowveld – some uncomfortably hot days. Along the Indian Ocean



coast, conditions are sultry and tropical, with high humidity.

More of a consideration than weather are school holidays. From mid-December to January, waves of vacation-hungry South Africans stream out of the cities, with visitors from Europe and North America adding to the crush. The absolute peak is from Christmas to mid-January, followed by Easter. Accommodation in tourist areas and national parks is heavily booked, and prices can more than double. On the plus side, the high summer months offer some great festivals.

Spring (mid-September to November) and autumn (April and May) are ideal almost everywhere. Spring is also the best time to see vast expanses of Northern Cape carpeted with wildflowers.

## HISTORY

South Africa's history extends back to around 40,000 BC when the San people first settled Southern Africa. By the 3rd century AD, Bantu-speaking peoples were well established in South Africa. Competing colonial European powers began settling here in small numbers from the 17th century, mostly in the Cape. Widespread colonial settlement of South Africa began in the 19th century.

## The Great Trek

From the 1820s, groups of Boers dissatisfied with British rule in the Cape Colony trekked off into the interior in search of freedom. From the mid-1830s increasing numbers of Voortrekkers (Fore-trekkers, pioneers) abandoned their farms and crossed the Orange River in a decade of migration known as the Great Trek. Reports from early treks told of vast, uninhabited – or at least poorly defended – grazing lands.

Tensions between the Boers and the government had been building for some time, but the reason given by many trekkers for leaving was the 1833 act banning slavery.

The Great Trek coincided with the *difaqane* (forced migration; see p41) and the Boers mistakenly believed that what they found – deserted pasture lands, disorganised bands of refugees and tales of brutality – was the normal state of affairs. This mistaken assessment gave rise to the Afrikaner myths that the Voortrekkers moved into unoccupied territory or arrived at much the same time as the blacks.

## The Voortrekkers Meet the Zulu

The Great Trek's first halt was at Thaba 'Nchu, near present-day Bloemfontein, where a republic was established. Following disagreements among their leadership, the various Voortrekker groups split apart, with most crossing the Drakensberg into Natal to try and establish a republic there. As this was Zulu territory, the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief paid a visit to King Dingaan, and was promptly massacred by the suspicious Zulu. This massacre triggered others, as well as a revenge attack by the Boers. The culmination came in December 1838 at the Ncome River in Natal. Several Boers were injured, while several thousand Zulus were killed, reportedly causing the Ncome's waters to run red.

After such a 'miraculous' victory (the result of good tactics and vastly superior weaponry) it seemed Boer expansion really did have that long-suspected stamp of divine approval, and the 16 December victory was celebrated as the Day of the Vow until 1994, when it was renamed the Day of Reconciliation.

## The Boer Republics

Several short-lived Boer republics sprang up but soon the only serious contenders were the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The British government, which commanded the strongest forces in the area, wasn't at all sure what it wanted. British officials in Africa often had no idea whether they should be restraining Boers, protecting blacks, enforcing British treaties or carving out new British colonies.

The Orange Free State was intermittently at war with the powerful Basotho people – sometimes with British assistance, sometimes without. Finally, in 1871, the British annexed Basotholand. The Transvaal Republic's problems were mostly internal, with several leaders and breakaway republics threatening civil war until Paul Kruger (president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek; ZAR – South African Republic, 1883–1900) settled the issue with a short, sharp campaign in 1864.

The financial position of the republics was always precarious and their economies depended entirely on cattle. Most trade was by barter. Just when it seemed that the republics, with their thinly spread population of fiercely independent Boers, were beginning to settle into stable states, diamonds were discovered near Kimberley in 1869. Britain stepped in quickly and annexed the area.

The Boers were disturbed by the foreigners, both black and white, who poured in following the discovery and were angry that their impoverished republics were missing out on the money the mines brought in.

Meanwhile, Britain became nervous about the existence of independent republics in Southern Africa, especially as gold had been found in the Transvaal. The solution, as usual, was annexation and in 1877 the Transvaal lost its independence.

## Anglo-Boer Wars

After the annexation, the Transvaal drifted into rebellion and the First Anglo-Boer War, known by Afrikaners as the War of Independence, broke out. It was over almost as soon as it began, with a crushing Boer victory at the Battle of Majuba in early 1881, and the republic regained its independence as the ZAR.

With the discovery of a huge reef of gold in the Witwatersrand (the area around Johannesburg) in 1886 and the ensuing explosive growth of Johannesburg itself, the ZAR was suddenly host to thousands of *uitlanders* (foreigners), black and white.

With little experience of towns, none of cities, and a deep suspicion of foreign ways, Kruger's ZAR government did its best to isolate the republic from the gold rush. The foreigners paid taxes but were not allowed to vote.

In 1899 the British demanded that voting rights be given to the 60,000 foreign whites on the Witwatersrand. Kruger refused, demanding that British troops massing on the ZAR borders be withdrawn by 11 October – if they weren't, he asserted, he would consider the republic to be at war.

The British, confident that their vastly superior numbers of experienced troops would win swiftly, took him on. Shocked to find that the Boers were no pushover, the British fell into disarray until reinforcements arrived. Lords Roberts and Kitchener led an army of 450,000 men against the 80,000 Boers from the ZAR, the Free State and the Cape. The Boers gave way rapidly and by 5 June 1900 Pretoria, the last of the major towns, had surrendered.

It seemed that the war was over but instead it entered a second, bitter phase. Commando raiders denied the British enemy control of the countryside. There was no possibility that the British could be defeated, but maintaining an occupying army would be an expensive proposition for them.

Without an enemy army to face, just commandos who could instantly become innocuous farmers, the British decided to exact reprisals. If a railway line was blown up, the nearest farmhouse was destroyed; if a shot was fired from a farm, the house was burnt down, the crops destroyed and the animals killed. The women and children from the farms were collected and taken to concentration camps – a British invention. By the end of the war 26,000 people, mainly children, had died of disease and neglect in the camps.

On 31 May 1902 the Peace of Vereeniging was signed and the Boer republics became British colonies.

## British Rule

The British response after their victory was a mixture of appeasement and insensitive imperialism. It was essential for the Boers and British to work together. The nonwhites were scarcely considered, other than as potential labour, despite the fact that they constituted about 80% of the combined population of the provinces.

Political awareness was growing, however. Mohandas (later Mahatma) Gandhi was working with the Indian populations of the Natal and Transvaal, and men like John Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and Abdullah Abdurahman laid the foundations for new nontribal, black political groups.

Hard-up Boers flooded into the cities to find a world dominated by the English and their language. Worst of all, they were forced to compete for jobs with blacks. Partly as a backlash to this, Afrikaners came to be seen as the *volks taal* (people's language) and as a symbol of Afrikaner nationhood.

The former republics were given representative government in 1906–7, and moves towards union began almost immediately.

## Union of South Africa

The Union of South Africa was established on 31 May 1910. The British High Commission Territories of Basotholand (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Swaziland and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were excluded from the Union.

English and Dutch became the official languages – Afrikaans was not recognised as the official language until 1925.

The first election was held in September 1910. The South African National Party (soon known as the South African Party, or SAP), a



diverse coalition of Boer groups under General Louis Botha and the brilliant General Jan Smuts, won the election and Botha became the union's first prime minister.

General Barry Hertzog raised some of the most divisive issues, championing Afrikaner interests, advocating separate development for the two white groups and independence from Britain. He and his supporters formed the National Party (NP).

Soon after the union was established a barrage of repressive legislation was passed. It became illegal for black workers to strike; skilled jobs were reserved for whites; blacks were barred from military service; and pass laws, restricting black freedom of movement, were tightened.

In 1912, Pixley ka Isaka Seme formed a national democratic organisation to represent blacks. It was initially called the South African Native Congress, but from 1923 it was known as the African National Congress (ANC).

In 1913 the Natives Land Act set aside 7.5% of South Africa's land for black occupancy. No black (and blacks made up over 70% of the population) was allowed to buy, rent or become a sharecropper outside this area. Thousands of squatters were evicted from farms and forced into increasingly overcrowded reserves, or into the cities.

In 1914 South Africa, as a part of the British Empire, was drawn into war with Germany and saddled with the responsibility of dealing with German South West Africa (now Namibia). This involvement on the British side prompted the last major violent Afrikaner rebellion – more than 300 men were killed. After the war, South West Africa became a part of South Africa under 'mandate' from the League of Nations.

### Fusion

In 1924 the NP under Hertzog came to power, with an agenda that included promoting Afrikaner interests, independence and racial segregation. In the 1929 election the *swaartgevaar* (black threat) was made the dominant issue for the first time.

In reality, the NP and the SAP were not so far apart politically and, in 1933, the two formed a coalition (or fusion government), with Hertzog as the prime minister and Smuts as his deputy.

Fusion was rejected by Dr DF Malan and his followers. They formed the Purified National

Party, which quickly became the dominant force in Afrikaner political life. The Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret ultra-nationalistic Afrikaner brotherhood, became the extraordinarily influential force behind the party. From 1948 to 1994 every prime minister and president was a member of the Broederbond.

At the far right, the Ossewa-Brandwag (Sentinels of the Ox-wagon, or OB) became a popular militaristic organisation with strong German sympathies and an obvious affinity with Hitler's doctrine of a master race.

### Apartheid

The NP won the 1948 election on a platform of establishing apartheid (literally, the state of being apart). With the help of creative electoral boundaries it held power right up to the first democratic election in 1994.

Mixed marriages were prohibited and interracial sex was made illegal. Every individual was classified by race. The Group Areas Act enforcing the physical separation of residential areas was promulgated. The Separate Amenities Act created separate public facilities – separate beaches, separate buses, separate toilets, separate schools and separate park benches. The pass laws were further strengthened and blacks were compelled to carry identity documents at all times and were prohibited from remaining in towns, or even visiting them, without specific permission. Thanks to the Dutch Reformed churches, apartheid was even given religious justification.

### Black Action

In 1949 the ANC for the first time advocated open resistance in the form of strikes, acts of public disobedience and protest marches. These continued intermittently throughout the 1950s, with occasional violent clashes.

In June 1955, at a congress held at Kliptown near Johannesburg, a number of organisations, including the Indian Congress and the ANC, adopted a Freedom Charter setting out a vision of a nonracial democratic state.

On 21 March 1960 the Pan African Congress (PAC) called for nationwide protests against the hated pass laws. When demonstrators surrounded a police station in Sharpeville police opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding 160. To people in South Africa and the rest of the world, the struggle had now crossed a crucial line – there could no longer be any doubts about the nature of the white regime.

Soon after, the PAC and ANC were banned and the security forces were given the right to detain people indefinitely without trial. Prime Minister Verwoerd announced a referendum on whether the country should become a republic. A slim majority of white voters gave their approval to the change and in May 1961 the Republic of South Africa came into existence.

Nelson Mandela became the leader of the underground ANC and Oliver Tambo went abroad to establish the organisation in exile. As more black activists were arrested, the ANC and PAC began a campaign of sabotage through the armed wings of their organisations, respectively Umkonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation; usually known as MK) and Poqo (Pure). In July 1963 Nelson Mandela, along with a number of other ANC and communist leaders, was arrested, charged with fomenting violent revolution and sentenced to life imprisonment.

### The Homelands

Verwoerd was assassinated in parliament in 1966 (there was apparently no political motive) and was succeeded by BJ Vorster, who was followed in 1978 by PW Botha. Both men continued to pursue the insane dream of separate black Homelands and a white South Africa.

The plan was to restrict blacks to Homelands that were, according to the propaganda, to become self-sufficient, self-governing states on the traditional lands of particular tribal groups. In reality, they had little infrastructure and no industry and were therefore incapable of producing sufficient food for the burgeoning black population. Under the plan, 13% of the country's total land area was to be the home to 75% of the population.

Intense and widespread suffering was the result as blacks could not even move beyond their Homeland without a pass and explicit permission.

Power proved irresistible to the leaders of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei. Between 1976 and 1981 the collaborators accepted a nominal independence, and they then proceeded to crush all resistance to their rule and to that of the South African government.

### International Conflict

In 1980 Robert Mugabe was elected prime minister of an independent Zimbabwe, and South Africa became the last white-controlled state in Africa. Increasing numbers of Western

countries imposed sanctions and the ANC and PAC received direct support from the governments of black Africa (with the exception of Malawi and Swaziland). South Africa's white governing elite increasingly saw the country as a bastion besieged by communism, atheism and black anarchy.

### Soweto Uprising

On 16 June 1976 the Soweto Students' Representative Council protests against the use of Afrikaans (considered the language of the oppressor) in black schools. Police opened fire on a student march, starting a round of nationwide demonstrations, strikes, mass arrests and riots that, over the next 12 months, took more than 1000 lives.

Steve Biko, the charismatic leader of the Black Consciousness movement, which stressed the need for psychological liberation and black pride, was killed in September 1977. Unidentified security police beat him until he lapsed into a coma – he went without medical treatment for three days and finally died in Pretoria. At the subsequent inquest, the magistrate found that no one was to blame.

South Africa was never the same again – a generation of young blacks committed themselves to a revolutionary struggle against apartheid and the black communities were politicised.

After changes to the constitution in 1983, the powers of the state president were increased and coloureds (mixed race) and Indians were given a token role in government. Blacks were given no role at all.

Violent protest built up steadily over the next two years until, in 1985, the government declared a state of emergency that was to stay in force for the next five years. The media was strictly censored and, by 1988, 30,000 people had been detained without trial. Thousands were tortured.

Botha repealed the pass laws, but this failed to mollify black protesters and created a white backlash. His reforms also failed to impress the rest of the world, and economic sanctions began to bite. Foreign banks refused to roll over government loans and the rand's value collapsed. In late 1989 Botha was replaced by FW De Klerk.

### Reform

At his opening address to the parliament on 2 February 1990 De Klerk announced that he

would repeal discriminatory laws and that the ANC, PAC and Communist Party were legalised. Media restrictions were lifted, and De Klerk undertook to release political prisoners. On 11 February he released Nelson Mandela, after 27 years in jail. During 1990 and 1991 virtually all the old apartheid regulations were repealed.

On 21 December 1991 the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) began negotiations on the formation of a multiracial transitional government and a new constitution extending political rights to all groups.

The Codesa negotiations did not proceed smoothly but both the NP and the ANC were determined that free elections would take place at some time. However, thrashing out the details was complex and the ANC suspected the government of dragging out the process.

The talks, by now a negotiation between the NP and the ANC, excluded the smaller parties, including the predominantly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party, which demanded a federal structure for the new constitution. Right-wing whites, who wanted a *Volkstaat* (literally People's State; a Boer Homeland), joined them in an unlikely alliance.

Now, with white support drifting to the right-wing parties, the National Party needed to hurry negotiations. A compromise was reached and both sides accepted a five-year, post-election interim government of national unity.

### Free Elections

Across the country at midnight on 26–27 April 1994, 'Die Stem' (the old national anthem) was sung and the old flag was lowered. Then the new rainbow flag was raised and the new anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika' (God Bless Africa), was sung.

The ANC won 62.7% of the vote, less than the 66.7% which would have enabled it to overrule the interim constitution. As well as deciding the national government, the election decided the provincial governments, and the ANC won in all but two of the provinces. The National Party won 20.4% of the vote, enough to guarantee it representation in cabinet.

### Rewriting History

After the elections, focus turned to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (1994–99), which worked to expose crimes of the apartheid era under the dictum of Archbishop Desmond Tutu: 'Without forgiveness there

is no future, but without confession there can be no forgiveness'. Many stories of horrific brutality and injustice were heard by the commission, offering some catharsis to people and communities shattered by their past.

The commission operated by allowing victims to tell their stories and perpetrators to confess their guilt, with amnesty on offer to those who made a clean breast of it. Those who chose not to appear before the commission would face criminal prosecution if their guilt could be proven. Yet, while some soldiers, police and 'ordinary' citizens have confessed their crimes, it seems unlikely that the human-rights criminals who gave the orders and dictated the policies will present themselves (PW Botha is one famous no-show), and it has proven difficult to gather evidence against them.

### Free Elections – Round Two

In 1999, South Africa held its second democratic elections. In 1997 Mandela had handed over ANC leadership to his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, and there was speculation that the ANC vote might therefore drop. In fact, it increased to put the party within one seat of the two-thirds majority that would allow it to alter the constitution.

The NP, restyled as the New National Party (NNP), lost two-thirds of its seats, as well as official opposition status to the Democratic Party (DP) – traditionally a stronghold of liberal whites, with new force from conservatives disenchanted with the NP, and from some middle-class blacks. Coming in just behind the DP was the KwaZulu-Natal-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), historically the voice of Zulu nationalism. While the IFP lost some support, its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, held onto power as the national Home Affairs Minister.

### South Africa Today

While Mbeki is viewed with far less affection by the ANC grassroots than the beloved 'Madiba' (Mandela), he has proven himself a shrewd politician, maintaining his political pre-eminence by isolating or coopting opposition parties. The 2004 national elections were won decisively by the ANC with 70% of the votes, with Mbeki at the helm, and today the ANC continues its dominance in daily political life.

Yet it has not been all clear sailing. In the early days of his presidency, Mbeki's effective

denial of the AIDS crisis invited global criticism, and his conspicuous failure to condemn the forced reclamation of white-owned farms in neighbouring Zimbabwe unnerved both South African landowners and foreign investors.

In the coming years – in addition to choosing a successor for Mbeki, who has announced that he will step down in 2009 – attention is likely to focus overwhelmingly on crime, economic inequality, overhauling the education system and, especially, AIDS. With an estimated 4.5 million South Africans affected – more than in any other country in the world – this scourge threatens to eclipse all of South Africa's other problems.

In recent years, efforts by AIDS activists and NGOs have focused on urging the government to make anti-retroviral drugs available for treatment for all AIDS sufferers, and on reducing the major social stigma associated with infection. While huge strides have been made – with many provinces now providing widespread access to treatment – there is still a long way to go.

## THE CULTURE

### The National Psyche

More than a decade has passed since South Africa's first democratic elections, and the country is still finding its way. While the streets pulsate with the same determination and optimism that fuelled the liberation struggle, the beat is tempered by the sobering social realities that are the legacy of apartheid's long years of oppression and bloodshed. Freedom has also brought with it a whole new set of challenges.

Unemployment, crime and HIV/AIDS are the top concerns of most South Africans today, and the nation is fast becoming a society divided by class rather than colour. The gap between rich and poor is vast – one of the highest in the world, according to World Bank statistics. Manicured suburbs rub shoulders with squalid townships where clean drinking water is a scarce commodity, and palatial residences overlook cramped tin-roofed shanties. Violent crime has stabilised at unacceptably high levels, and a generation that saw almost daily brutality and uncertainty during its formative years is now coming of age. Although the formal racial divisions of apartheid have dissolved, shadows and old ways of interacting remain, and suspicions and distrust still run high.

While crime continues to grab headlines and undermine South Africa's reputation as a tourism destination, it's important to keep it in perspective. The slowly and often fitfully emerging new South Africa is a unique and refreshing place to visit, and one of the most inspiring and hope-filled places that you'll find anywhere on the continent. Visiting is a rare chance to experience a nation that is rebuilding itself after profound change. As a backdrop to all this is the stunning natural magnificence, and the remarkably deep bond that most South Africans feel for their land.

South Africa has the highest incidence of reported rape in the world, with approximately 52,000 cases reported to the police annually, and a woman is assaulted every 26 to 60 seconds on average. Some women's groups say the real figures are much worse, because many women are too afraid to report the crime. Even more saddening is the fact that at least 20% – some places the figure is closer to 40% – of reported rapes and attempted rapes are of girls below 18 years of age.

### Daily Life

It's difficult to present a unified picture of everyday life in South Africa. Many middle-class and wealthy families live in heavily secured homes and spend their leisure time in equally fortified shopping centres. Guards patrol the walkways and shops to keep criminals at bay, there's still a lingering sense of fear and loss connected with the passing of the old regime, and conversations are peppered with gloomy predictions about the government and the future.

Life is very different for the millions of South Africans who are still living in poverty. Tiny matchbox houses are home to large extended families, clean drinking water remains a luxury in some areas, and health facilities are not uniformly available.

Yet, township life is vibrant and informal. People gather on street corners and in local bars known as 'shebeens'. Weddings are big events, and frequently spill onto the streets with plenty of dancing. If you're passing by, don't be surprised if you're encouraged to join in.

Unfortunately, funerals are becoming one of the most common gatherings in South Africa, and on weekends, cemeteries are routinely crowded with mourners. Many of those who are dying are youth, and people spend their time attending the funerals of one relative after the next.

### MOVERS & SHAKERS: NELSON MANDELA

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is without doubt one of the global leaders of the millennium. Once vilified by South Africa's ruling whites and sentenced to life imprisonment, he emerged from 27 years of incarceration calling for reconciliation and forgiveness, and was able to rally together all South Africans at the most crucial of times.

Mandela, son of a Xhosa chief, was born on 18 July 1918 in the small village of Mveso on the Mbashe River. When he was young the family moved to Qunu, south of Umtata in what is now Eastern Cape. Here he grew up living a typical rural life, while at the same time being groomed for a future position in the tribal leadership. After attending school at the University College of Fort Hare, Mandela headed to Jo'burg, where he soon became immersed in politics. He also finished his law degree and, together with Oliver Tambo, opened South Africa's first black law firm. Meanwhile, in 1944, together with Tambo and Walter Sisulu, Mandela formed the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC), which worked to turn the ANC into a nationwide grassroots movement. During the 1950s, Mandela was at the forefront of the ANC's civil disobedience campaigns. Various arrests and detention followed. After the ANC was banned in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, Mandela advocated establishing its underground military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. In 1964, Mandela was brought to stand trial for sabotage and fomenting revolution in the widely publicised Rivonia Trial. After brilliantly arguing his own defence, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, and spent the next 18 years in the infamous Robben Island prison, before eventually being moved to the Victor Verster prison near Paarl, from where he was later released.

Throughout his incarceration, Mandela repeatedly refused to compromise his political beliefs in exchange for freedom, saying that only free men can negotiate. Among other things, he rejected offers of release in exchange for recognising the independence of the Transkei (and thereby giving tacit approval of the legitimacy of the apartheid regime).

On 18 February 1990, Mandela was released and in 1991 he was elected president of the ANC. From this position, he continued the negotiations (which had started secretly while he was in prison) to demolish apartheid and bring an end to minority rule. In 1993, Mandela shared the Nobel peace prize with FW de Klerk and, in the first free elections the following year, was elected president of South Africa. In his much-quoted speech, 'Free at Last!', made after winning the 1994 elections, he focused the nation's attention firmly on the future, declaring, 'This is the time to heal the old wounds and build a new South Africa'.

In 1997, Mandela – or Madiba, his traditional Xhosa name – stepped down as ANC president, although he continues to be actively involved in politics as an elder statesman.

Thousands of households in South Africa are now headed by children whose parents have died from AIDS. AIDS is the leading cause of death in South Africa (it accounts for about 30% of deaths nationwide). Sometimes the only survivors from an entire family are the eldest children, who were born before their parents became infected. A large number of grandparents who have nursed and lost their adult offspring to AIDS are also looking after their orphaned grandchildren, many of whom are also HIV-positive.

### Population & People

During the apartheid era, the government attempted to categorise everyone into one of four major groups – easily enough said, perhaps, but disastrous to implement. The clas-

sifications – as African (at various times also called 'native' and 'Bantu', and sometimes now also 'black'), coloured, Asian or white – were often arbitrary and highly contentious. They were used to regulate where and how people could live and work, and became the basis for institutionalised inequality and intolerance.

Today, these times are fading into history, although now discrimination based on wealth is threatening to replace racial discrimination. Yet the apartheid-era classification terms continue to be used. While we've also used these terms in this chapter, they work only to a certain extent, and within each of the four major categories are dozens of subgroups that are even more subjective and less clearly defined.

Most of the 'coloured' population lives in Northern Cape Province and Western Cape.

Cape Muslims are South Africans of long standing. Although many were brought to the early Cape Colony as slaves, others were political prisoners from the Dutch East Indies. Most South Africans of Indian descent live in KwaZulu-Natal.

Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Free State are the Afrikaner heartlands. People of British descent are concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape.

The Homelands no longer have any political meaning and were never realistic indicators of the area's cultural diversity, however it's still useful to have some idea of where the Homelands were and who lived (and still live) in them. Zulus are the largest group (seven million), followed by the Xhosa (six million) and the various Northern Sotho peoples, most of whom are Tswana. The smallest group are the Venda (500,000).

Superficially, urbanised European culture doesn't seem to differ much from other Western countries. However, the unique experience of the white people of Africa has given them a self-awareness that has raised culture to an issue of central importance. Those of Afrikaner and British descent form distinct subgroups.

South Africa's Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg (Jo'burg) and Pretoria, is the most densely populated and urbanised

province. At the other end of the scale is the rural and underdeveloped Eastern Cape, where up to 20% of adults have never received any formal schooling.

Millions of immigrants from across the continent make their way to South Africa to take advantage of the country's powerhouse economy. Many of these who are considered illegal live in Jo'burg's impoverished inner city, causing resentment among some South Africans who accuse the outsiders of taking jobs and creating crime.

### SPORT

South Africans are sports fanatics, and after decades of being shut out of international competition, the national teams are now hungry for glory. Football, followed by rugby and cricket, is the most popular spectator sport. The majority of football fans are black, while cricket and rugby attract predominately white crowds, although this is slowly changing.

South African rugby, in particular, is still struggling to shake its reputation as a whites-only domain, despite the inclusion of black players and officials. Development programmes are nurturing talent across the colour divides, and both rugby and cricket are now played regularly in Soweto and in some other townships. Victory in the 1995

### ABUSING RIGHTS OF ADMISSION *Simon Richmond*

Because of its recent history of apartheid, racial discrimination remains a prominent issue in South Africa, one that nearly everyone is sensitive about. When a Cape Town newspaper, the *Cape Argus*, recently ran an investigation into whether backpacker lodges were using race-based criteria when they accepted guests, what they found was disturbing. Two undercover reporters – one young black man, one young white woman – were sent to six of the city's lodges; at three the black reporter was told the lodge was full, while his white counterpart was offered a room.

The lodges that had refused entry to the black reporter defended their rights to decide whom to grant admission to. Such rights of admission policies are common – not just in backpacker lodges, and not just in South Africa. The security and comfort of existing guests has to be respected, and we acknowledge the necessity for establishments to make split-second decisions on whether a potential customer should be allowed entry or not – and how difficult it is to get this right all the time.

From the *Cape Argus's* investigation and other reports sent to Lonely Planet it would seem that rights of admission policies are occasionally abused. In particular, if you're a black or coloured South African male, the chances of you being refused entry are likely to be higher than if you're a black or coloured South African female, a white South African or an overseas visitor. This could happen whether you just turn up at a hostel or make an advance booking.

Establishments rated by the South African Grading Council can be stripped of their stars if found to be racially discriminating against guests. We urge all travellers who experience racial discrimination to share their stories with both local tourism authorities and us – such information is taken into account for upcoming guides.



Rugby World Cup was a turning point, and the image of President Nelson Mandela celebrating while wearing a Springboks jersey became a symbol of reconciliation.

In 2010, South Africa will host the football World Cup. The big local match is the Soweto Derby, pitting Jo'burg's 'Orlando Pirates' and 'Kaizer Chiefs' teams against each other. Wherever you are in the country, if a local invites you to a game, don't miss it. And if you're in the townships, watch for football stars cruising the streets in their expensive cars, enjoying their pop-star status among their fans.

## RELIGION

Around 75% of South Africans identify themselves as Christians. Major South denominations include the Nederduitse Gereformeerde (NG) or Dutch Reformed Churches, which have a national congregation of more than 3.5 million people and more than 1200 churches across the country, and the considerably more flamboyant Zion Christian Church (ZCC), with an estimated four million followers. Every year more than one million ZCC members gather at Zion city near Polokwane in Limpopo Province during festivals at Easter and in September.

Despite their disproportionately large social influence, Muslims, Hindus and Jews combined make up less than 6% of South Africans. The rest of the population are atheist, agnostic and a small number of people who follow traditional African beliefs.

Up to two-thirds of South Africa's Indians have retained their Hindu faith, and today most of the country's Hindus are of Indian descent. Islam has a small but growing following, particularly in the Cape. The Jewish community is estimated to be around 100,000, mostly in Jo'burg.

African traditional believers are a small group, although their traditions and practices have a significant influence on the cultural fabric and life of the region. The use of *muti*, or traditional medicine, is widespread, even among those who practise Christianity.

## ARTS

For information on music in South Africa and the region, see p52.

## Literature

Many of the first black South African writers were missionary-educated, including Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, who was also the first

Secretary-General of the ANC. In 1930, his epic romance, *Mhudi*, became one of the first books published in English by a black South African.

In 1948, Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* became an international bestseller. Today, this beautifully crafted, lyrical tale of a black priest who comes to Jo'burg to find his son is still one of the country's most widely recognised titles. Another Paton classic is *Too Late the Phalarope*, which looks at the Afrikaner psyche and the inhumanity of apartheid.

During the 1950s, *Drum* magazine became the focal point of lively satire, fiction and comment, and routinely drew attention as a major anti-apartheid mouthpiece, eventually launching the careers of numerous prominent journalists and authors.

In the 1960s, future Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer began publishing her first books, but her most famous novel, *July's People*, was released in 1981, and depicts the collapse of white rule.

It was also in the 1960s and into the '70s that Afrikaner writers like Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink began to gain prominence as powerful voices for the opposition. Brink's classic novel, *A Dry White Season*, portrays the lonely struggles of a white South African who discovered the truth about a black friend who died in police custody. Another Brink title, *The Rights of Desire*, is a tale of post-apartheid South Africa.

The 1970s also gave rise to several influential black poets, including Mongane Wally Serote, a veteran of the liberation struggle. His work, including the moving epic poem 'No Baby Must Weep', served as a rallying force for those living under apartheid.

John Maxwell (JM) Coetzee was also published in the 1970s, although it wasn't until two decades later that he gained international acclaim. His novel *Disgrace* – a powerful, brittle and complex look at South African social realities – was released in 1999 and won Coetzee his second Booker Prize. Coetzee won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

One of the most prominent contemporary authors is Zakes Mda, who – with the publication of *Ways of Dying* in 1995 – made a successful transition from poetry and plays to become an acclaimed novelist. His most recent book, *The Whale Caller* (2005), takes a somewhat sceptical look at the optimism surrounding the new South Africa.

## Visual Arts

South African art had its beginnings with the San, who left their distinctive designs on rock faces and cave walls throughout the region. When European painters arrived, many of their early works centred on depictions of Africa for colonial enthusiasts back home, although with time, a more South Africa-centred focus developed.

Black artists were sidelined for many decades. Gerard Sekoto was one of the first to break through the barriers. At about the same time that Sekoto was gaining prominence, a Sophiatown neighbour, John Koenakeefe Mohl, began spearheading artistic instruction and schooling for young black artists. In 1960, he was one of the founding members of the Artists' Market Association, which was set up to provide a showcase for young talent – today continued in Artists Under the Sun.

## Theatre & Dance

During the colonial era, South African theatre was dominated by European and American plays staged for local audiences. But home-grown playwrights, performers and directors gradually emerged, particularly in the 1930s, when theatre began to gain popularity in the townships. One of the first black South African writers to have his work published in English was Herbert Dhlomo, who won acclaim for his 1936 drama *The Girl Who Killed to Save*.

Athol Fugard played a crucial role in developing and nurturing black theatrical talent by establishing troupes in Port Elizabeth and Jo'burg during the 1950s. By the 1960s and '70s, theatre and politics were inextricably intertwined and several artists were arrested and others had their work banned. The innovative two-man show *Woza Albert!*, portraying Jesus Christ arriving in apartheid-era South Africa, won rave reviews and international acclaim.

In 1974, run-down buildings at Jo'burg's old 'Indian' fruit market were converted to become the Market Theatre, with patrons and performers defying the apartheid government's notorious Group Areas Act to ensure that it become an all-race venue. Today, the Market Theatre is still one of the best-known performance spaces in the country (see p549).

## ENVIRONMENT The Land

South Africa spreads over 1,233,404 sq km – five times the size of the UK – at the tip of the

African continent. On three sides, it's edged by a windswept and stunningly beautiful coastline, winding down the Atlantic seaboard in the west, and up into the warmer Indian Ocean waters to the east.

Much of the country consists of a vast plateau averaging 1500m in height, and known as the highveld. To the east is a narrow coastal plain (the lowveld), while to the northwest is the low-lying Kalahari Basin. The dramatic Drakensberg Escarpment marks the point where the highveld plummets down towards the eastern lowlands.

## Wildlife ANIMALS

South Africa is home to one of the most magnificent groupings of wildlife on the planet. You probably have a better chance of seeing the Big Five – the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion – in South Africa than anywhere else. On even just a short visit to the country's parks you are almost guaranteed to see dozens of creatures, and the chance to spot the big cats and great herd animals is one of the region's prime attractions. See the boxed text, p61 for tips on wildlife viewing.

The best time for wildlife watching is the cooler, dry winter (June to September) when foliage is less dense, and animals congregate at waterholes, making spotting easier. Summer (late November to March) is rainy and hot, with the animals more widely dispersed and often difficult to see. However, the landscape turns beautiful shades of green around this time and bird life is abundant.

South Africa hosts over 800 bird species, including the world's largest bird (the ostrich), its heaviest flying bird (Kori bustard), and vividly coloured sunbirds and flamingos. Also here in abundance are weavers, who share their huge city-like nests with pygmy falcons, the world's smallest raptors.

Bird-watching is good year-round, with spring (August to November) and summer the best.

## Endangered Species

The black rhino is the highest-profile entry on South Africa's threatened species list (good places to spot these include Mkhuzo Game Reserve, p515 and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, p512), and the riverine rabbit is the country's most endangered mammal. The wild dog

(seen with luck in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park) is also endangered, as is the roan antelope.

Endangered bird species include the gracefull wattle crane and the blue swallow. The African penguin and the Cape vulture are considered threatened.

## PLANTS

Over 20,000 plant species sprout from South Africa's soil – an amazing 10% of the world's total, although the country constitutes only 1% of the earth's land surface.

Dozens of flowers that are domesticated elsewhere grow wild here, including gladiolus, proteas, birds of paradise and African lilies. South Africa is also the only country with one of the world's six floral kingdoms within its borders.

In the drier northwest, there are succulents (dominated by euphorbias and aloes), and annuals, which flower brilliantly after the spring rains, and are one of Northern Cape's major tourist attractions.

In contrast to this floral wealth, South Africa has few natural forests. They were never extensive, and today only remnants remain. Temperate forests occur on the southern coastal strip between George and Humansdorp, in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg and in Mpumalanga. Subtropical forests are found northeast of Port Elizabeth in the areas just inland from the Wild Coast, and in KwaZulu-Natal.

In the north are large areas of savanna, dotted with acacias and thorn trees.

## National Parks & Reserves

South Africa has close to 600 national parks and reserves, collectively boasting spectacular scenery, impressive fauna and flora, excellent facilities and reasonable prices. Many are enclosed within fences, intended to minimise conflict between the animals and their human neighbours. Yet, due to the vast spaces, you'll generally only see the fences when you drive through the park gates – the wildlife itself is satisfyingly and completely wild. Visiting the parks and reserves will likely be the highlight of your visit. The most famous feature wildlife, while others are primarily wilderness sanctuaries or hiking areas.

When on safari, it's worth remembering that wildlife tourism is one of the main sources of revenue for conservation efforts in South Africa. The money you spend in

national parks and reserves is ploughed back into these areas, thus ensuring that future visitors will be able to collect their own unforgettable memories.

The majority of the larger wildlife parks are under the jurisdiction of the **South African National (SAN) Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org), except for those in KwaZulu-Natal, which are run by **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com). Several other provinces also have conservation bodies that oversee smaller conservation areas within their boundaries. **Komatiland Eco-Tourism** (☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatitourism.co.za) oversees forest areas, promotes ecotourism and manages several hiking trails around Mpumalanga. Other useful contacts include **Cape Nature Conservation** (☎ 021-426 0723; www.capenature.org.za) and the **Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectb.co.za).

All South African national parks charge a daily entry ('conservation') fee. Amounts vary; see individual park listings for detail. One way to save is to consider purchasing a Wild Card from SAN Parks. There are different versions of the card, including one for foreign tourists which gives you 10 days' entry into any one park for US\$107 (US\$188 per couple, US\$241 per family). This isn't much of a saving for some of the less expensive parks, but if you're planning at least five days in Kruger National Park (where the daily entry fee is US\$16), it's worth buying. SAN Parks also has cards targeted at different park clusters. For details on acquiring a Wild Card, see www.wildinafrica.com.

In addition to its national parks, South Africa is also party to several transfrontier parks joining conservation areas across international borders. These include Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (p121), combining Northern Cape's old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park with Botswana's Gemsbok National Park; and the ambitious Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which spreads nearly 100,000 sq km (larger than Portugal) across the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Private wildlife reserves also abound and while entry to these generally costs more than their public equivalents, you can often get closer to the animals.

In total, just under 7% of South African land has been given protected status. The government has started teaming up with private landowners to bring private conservation land under government protection, with the goal

## TOP PARKS & RESERVES

Location Park	Features	Activities	Best Time to Visit	Page
<b>Cape Peninsula</b> Table Mountain National Park	rocky headlands, seascapes; water birds, bonteboks, elands, African penguins	hiking, mountain biking	year-round	p419
<b>Western Cape</b> Cederberg Wilderness Area	mountainous and rugged; San rock paintings bizzare sandstone formations, abundant plant life	hiking	year-round	p457
<b>Mpumalanga/Limpopo</b> Kruger National Park	savanna, woodlands, thornveld; the Big Five and many more	vehicle safaris, guided wildlife walks	Jun-Oct	p528
Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve	canyon, caves, river; stunning vistas	hiking, kloofing	year-round	p536
<b>Northern Cape</b> Augrabies Falls National Park	desert, river, waterfalls; klipspringers, rock dassies; striking scenery	hiking, canoeing, rafting	Apr-Sep	p464
Richersveld National Park	mountainous desert; haunting beauty klipspringers, jackals, zebras, plants, birds	hiking	Apr-Sep	p465
<b>Eastern Cape</b> Addo Elephant National Park	dense bush, coastal grasslands, forested kloofs; elephants, black rhinos, buffaloes	vehicle safaris, walking trails, horse riding	year-round	p481
Tsitsikamma National Park	coast, cliffs, rivers, ravines, forests; Cape clawless otters, baboons, monkeys, rich birdlife	hiking	year-round	p466
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b> Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park	lush, subtropical vegetation, rolling savanna; rhinos, giraffes, lions, elephants, lots of birds	wilderness walks, wildlife watching	May-Oct	p512
Greater St Lucia Wetland Park	wetlands, coastal grasslands; elephants, birds, hippos	wilderness walks, vehicle/boat safaris	Mar-Nov	p513
Mkhuzo Game Reserve	savanna, woodlands, swamp; rhinos and almost everything else; hundreds of bird species	guided walks, bird walks, vehicle safaris	year-round	p515
uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park	awe-inspiring Drakensberg escarpment; fantastic scenery and wilderness areas	hiking	year-round	p516
<b>Free State</b> Golden Gate Highlands National Park	spectacular sandstone cliffs and outcrops; zebras, jackals, rheboks, elands, birds	hiking	year-round	p565

of ultimately increasing the total amount of conservation land to over 10%.

## Environmental Issues

South Africa is the world's third most biologically diverse country. It's also one of Africa's most urbanised, with approximately 60% of the population living in towns and cities. Major challenges for the government include managing increasing urbanisation and population growth while protecting the environment. The picture is complicated by a distorted rural-urban settlement pattern – a grim legacy

of the apartheid era – with huge population concentrations in townships that generally lack adequate utilities and infrastructure.

Land degradation is one of the most serious problems, with about 25% of South Africa's land considered to be severely degraded. In former homeland areas, years of overgrazing and overcropping have resulted in massive soil depletion. This, plus poor overall conditions, is pushing people to the cities, further increasing urban pressures.

Water is another issue. South Africa receives an average of only 500mm of rainfall



annually, and droughts are common. To meet demand, all major South African rivers have been dammed or modified. While this has improved water supplies to many areas, it has also disrupted local ecosystems and caused increased silting.

## FOOD & DRINK

It's only since the dismantling of apartheid that anyone has talked of South African cuisine as a unified whole. Earlier, the Africans had their mealie pap (maize porridge), the Afrikaners their boerewors (spicy farmer's sausages), and the Indians and Cape Malays their curries. Today, along with divisions in other aspects of life, the culinary barriers are starting to fall.

Awaiting the visiting gastronome is a fusion of influences: hearty meat and vegetable stews that resulted when the Dutch encountered the bush; the seemingly endless variety of maize dishes that have been at the centre of African family life for centuries; a sprinkling of *piri-piri* (hot pepper) from Mozambique; and scents of curry and coriander that have wafted over the Indian Ocean from Asia.

Perhaps more than anything else, it's the braai (barbecue) – an Afrikaner institution that has broken across race lines – that defines South African cuisine. It's as much a social event as a form of cooking, with the essential elements boerewors and beer. The Winelands and Cape Town remain the best places to eat well.

## BILTONG & BOEREWORS

Your first introduction to traditional Afrikaner cuisine is likely to be *biltong* (dried meat) or *boerewors*. If you're having trouble getting used to boerewors, it could be that you're eating *braaiwors* (barbecue sausages), an inferior grade. *Potjiekos* (pot food) traditionally features stewed meat and vegetables that has bubbled away for hours in a three-legged pot over hot coals.

## CAPE CUISINE

Often referred to as Cape Malay cuisine, Cape cuisine has its roots in the mixing of the 'Malay' slaves (many of whom were from Madagascar and Indonesia) with the Dutch settlers. Often stodgy and overly sweet, it's nonetheless well worth trying. The central feature is a mixture of Asian spices and local produce. Dishes to watch for include bobotie (traditional Malay dish of delicately flavoured curry with a topping of beaten egg baked to

a crust, served with stewed fruits and chutney), *waterblommetjie bredie* (water-flower stew; meat stewed with the flower of the Cape pondweed) and *malva* (apricot pudding).

## CURRIES

Along with Mahatma Gandhi, India's other great export to South Africa has been the curry. Durban is the place to go for the spiciest curries. Curries are also popular in Cape cuisine, though they're usually not as spicy. If you're in Durban and hungry for a quick bite try a filling *bunny chow* (curry-to-go; half a loaf of bread, scooped out and filled with curry).

## MEALIE PAP

Mealie pap is the most widely eaten food in South Africa. It's thinner or stiffer (depending on where you eat it), bland and something of an acquired taste. However, it's ideal if you want something filling and economical, and can be quite satisfying served with a good sauce or stew.

## BEER

Beer is the national beverage. There are numerous reasonable brands, including Castle, Black Label and Namibia's all-natural Windhoek. In the Cape provinces try Mitchell's and Birkenhead's. Lager-style beer comes in cans or dumpies (small bottles) for around US\$1.10. Bars serve long toms (750ml bottles) for around US\$1.40. Draught beers are uncommon.

## WATER

Tap water is generally safe in South Africa's cities. However, in rural areas (or anywhere that local conditions indicate that water sources may be contaminated), stick to bottled water and purify stream water.

## WINE

South African wine debuted in 1659. Since then, it's had time to age to perfection, and is both of a high standard and reasonably priced. Dry whites are particularly good – try Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Colombard and Chenin Blanc – while popular reds include Cabernet Sauvignon, pinotage (a local cross of Pinot and Cinsaut, which was known as Hermitage), Shiraz and Pinot Noir.

Wine prices average from around US\$8 in a restaurant or bottle store. Most restaurants stock a few varieties in dinkies (250ml bottles).

# CAPE TOWN

☎ 021 / pop 3,140,600

Good looking, fun-loving, sporty and laid-back. If Cape Town was in the dating game that's how her profile would read. And – for once – it's all true. The Mother City occupies one of the world's most stunning locations, with an iconic mountain slap-bang in its centre. As beautiful as the surrounding beaches and vineyards can be, as cosmopolitan and lively as its cultural scene, it's the rugged wilderness of Table Mountain, coated in a unique flora, that is the focus of attention.

Complementing this natural beauty is Cape Town's eye-catching way with design and colour – in everything from the brightly painted façades of the Bo-Kaap and the Victorian bathing chalets of Muizenberg, to the contemporary Afro-chic décor of the many excellent guesthouses, restaurants and bars. The city's multiethnic population is proof of South Africa's 'rainbow nation' and a visual record of the city's tumultuous recorded history of over 350 years.

It's a place of extremes, with the wealth of Camps Bay and Constantia side by side with the poverty of townships such as Khayelitsha. Even in the townships and the deprived coloured areas of the city – home to the vast majority of Capetonians – there are huge differences in lifestyle and many great examples of civic pride and optimism to balance against the shocking crime and HIV/AIDS statistics. Discovering the Mother City's true diversity and spirit is all part of getting the most out of a visit here.

## HISTORY

Long before the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie; VOC) established a base here in 1652, the Cape Town area was settled by the San and Khoekhoen nomadic tribes, collectively known as the Khoesaaan. The indigenous people shunned the Dutch, so the VOC was forced to import slaves from Madagascar, India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia to deal with the colony's chronic labour shortage. Women were in even shorter supply, so the Europeans exploited the female slaves and the local Khoesaaan for both labour and sex. In time the slaves also intermixed with the Khoesaaan. The offspring of these unions formed the basis of sections of today's coloured population and also helps

explain the unique character of the city's Cape Muslim population.

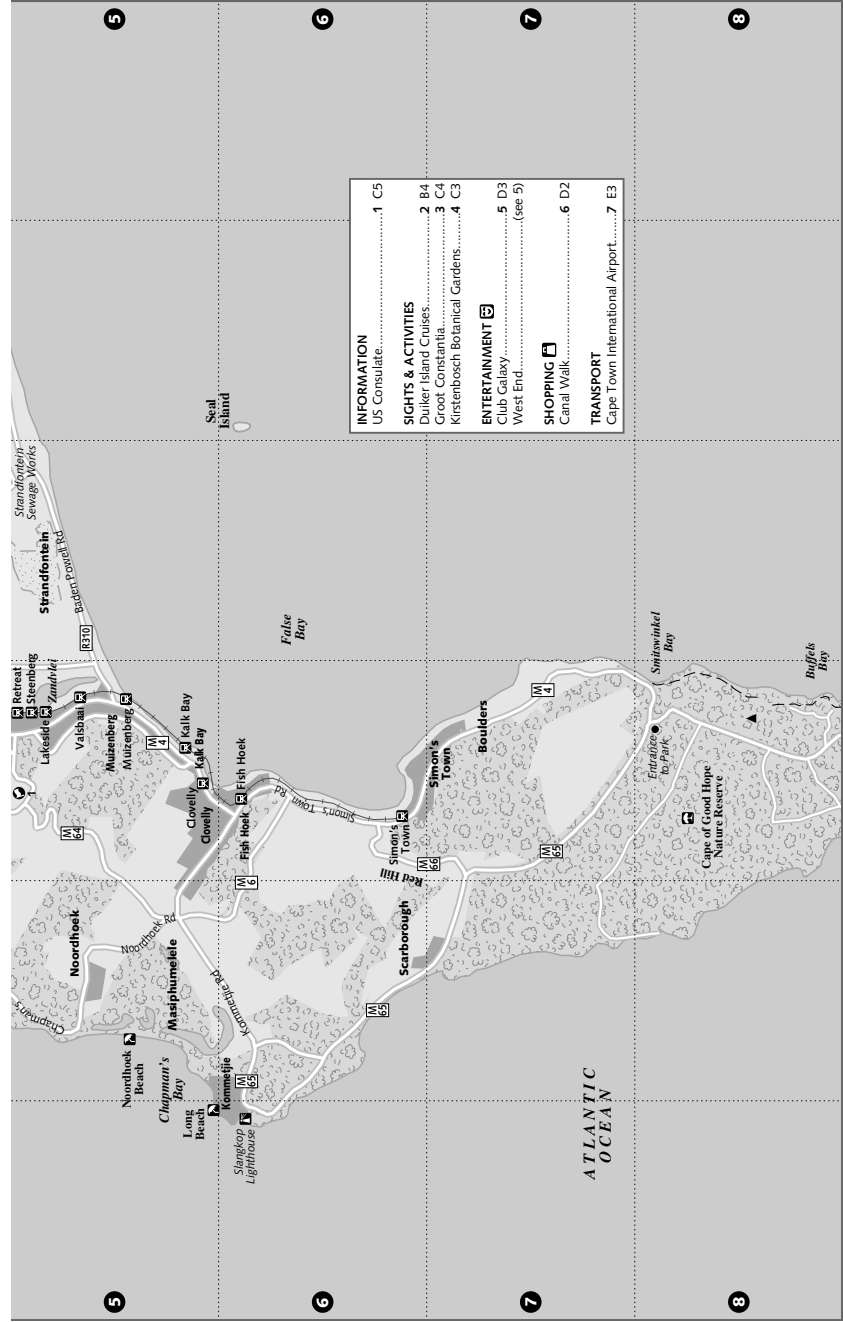
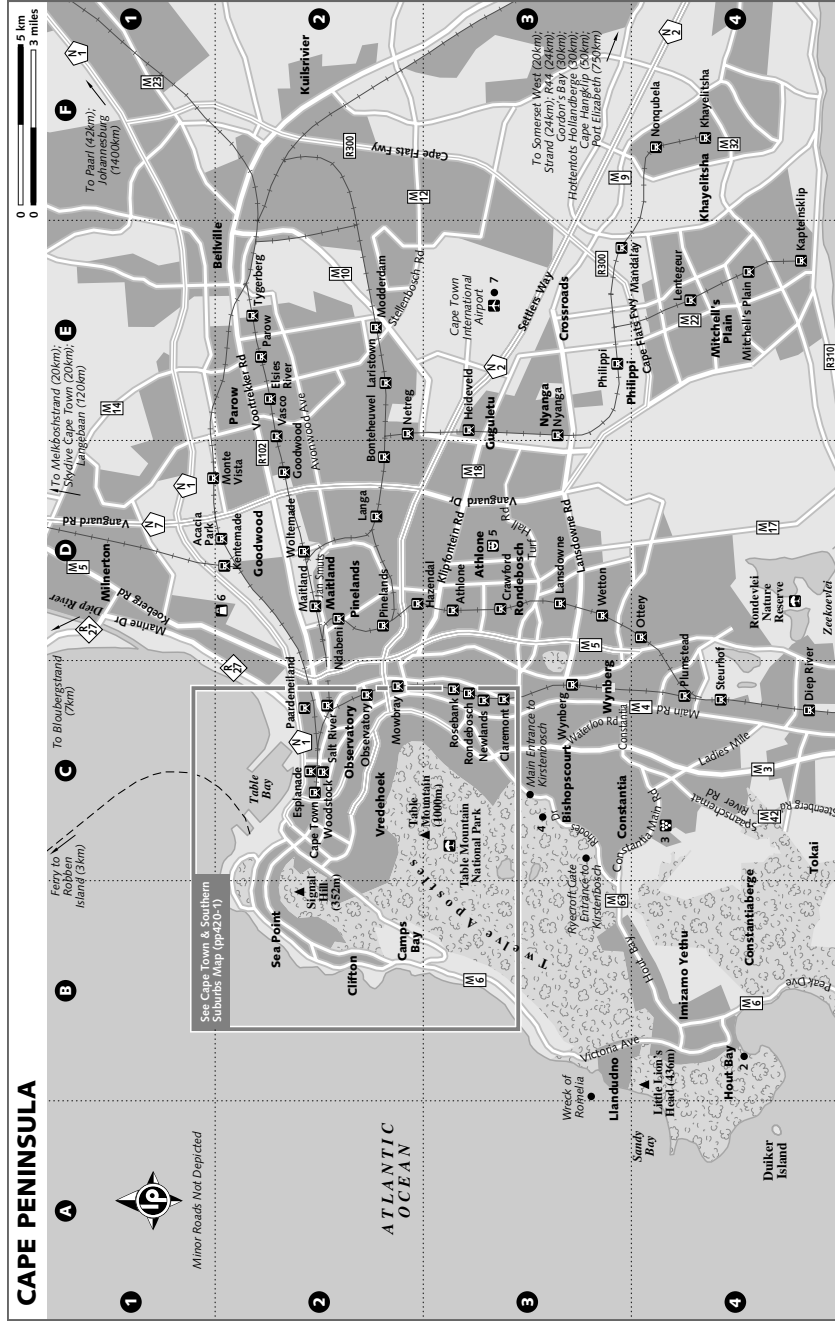
In the 150-odd years of Dutch rule, Kaapstad, as the Cape settlement became known, thrived and gained a wider reputation as the 'Tavern of the Seven Seas', a riotous port used by sailors travelling between Europe and the East. But by the end of the 18th century the VOC was almost bankrupt, making Cape Town an easy target for British imperial interests. Following the British defeat of the Dutch in 1806 at Bloubergstrand, 25km north of Cape Town, the colony was ceded to the Crown on 13 August 1814. The slave trade was abolished in 1808, and all slaves were emancipated in 1833.

The discovery and exploitation of diamonds and gold in the centre of South Africa in the 1870s and 1880s led to rapid changes. Cape Town was soon no longer the single dominant metropolis in the country, but as a major port it too was a beneficiary of the mineral wealth that laid the foundations for an industrial society. The same wealth led to imperialist dreams of grandeur on the part of Cecil John Rhodes (premier of the Cape Colony in 1890), who had made his millions at the head of De Beers Consolidated Mines.

An outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901 was blamed on the black African workers (although it actually came on boats from Argentina) and gave the government an excuse to introduce racial segregation: blacks were moved to two locations, one near the docks and the other at Ndabeni on the western flank of Table Mountain. This was the start of what would later develop into the townships of the Cape Flats.

In 1948 the National Party stood for election on its policy of apartheid and narrowly won. In a series of bitter court and constitutional battles, the limited rights of blacks and coloureds to vote in the Cape were removed and the insane apparatus of apartheid was erected. This resulted in whole communities, such as District Six, being uprooted and cast out to the bleak Cape Flats.

The government tried for decades to eradicate squatter towns, such as Crossroads, which were focal points for black resistance to the apartheid regime. In its last attempt between May and June 1986, an estimated 70,000 people were driven from their homes and hundreds were killed. Even this brutal attack was unsuccessful in eradicating the towns, and the government accepted the inevitable and began to upgrade conditions.



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Hours after being released from prison on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela made his first public speech in decades from the balcony of Cape Town's City Hall, heralding the beginning of a new era for South Africa. Much has improved in Cape Town since – property prices keep booming and the city centre is a safer and more pleasant place to shop, work and live, with the development of ritzy loft-style apartments in grand old structures such as Mutual Heights.

Full integration of Cape Town's mixed population, however, remains a long way off, if it's achievable at all. The vast majority of Capetonians who live in the Cape Flats remain split along race lines and suffer horrendous economic, social and health problems, not least of which are the HIV/AIDs pandemic and high levels of drug-related crime. At the most recent local elections in March 2006, among the issues that helped the Democratic Alliance receive a higher percentage of the vote than the ruling African National Congress (ANC) were local government corruption, the rolling power outages in the city and lack of funds for the overstretched fire brigade.

## CLIMATE

Great extremes of temperature are unknown in Cape Town, although it can be relatively cold and wet for a few months in winter (between June and August) when temperatures range from 7°C to 18°C. Spring weather from September to November is unpredictable. December to March is hot, although the average maximum temperature is only 26°C with the strong southeasterly wind (known as the Cape Doctor) generally keeping things bearable. From March to April, and to a lesser extent in May, the weather remains good and the wind is at its most gentle.

## ORIENTATION

Cape Town's commercial centre – known as the City Bowl – lies to the north of Table Mountain and east of Signal Hill. The inner-city suburbs of Gardens, Oranjezicht and Tamboerskloof are all within walking distance of it. Nearby Signal Hill, Green Point and Sea Point are other densely populated seaside suburbs.

The city sprawls quite a distance to the northeast (this is where you'll find the beachside district of Bloubergstrand and the enormous Canal Walk Shopping Centre). To the south, skirting the eastern flank of the mountains and

running down to Muizenberg at False Bay, are leafy and increasingly rich suburbs including Observatory, Newlands and Constantia.

On the Atlantic Coast, exclusive Clifton and Camps Bay are accessible by coastal road from Sea Point or via Kloof Nek, the pass between Table Mountain and Lion's Head. Camps Bay is a 10-minute drive from the city centre and can easily be reached by public transport, but as you go further south, the communities of Llandudno, Hout Bay and Noordhoek are better explored with your own car or bike.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

The main mass-market bookshop and newsagent is CNA, with numerous branches around the city.

**Clarke's Bookshop** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5739; www.clarkebooks.co.za; 211 Long St, City Bowl) Stocks an unsurpassed range on South Africa and the continent.

**Exclusive Books** Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 0905; Victoria Wharf); Cavendish Sq Mall (Map pp420-1; Claremont); Lifestyles on Kloof (Map p431; Kloof St) Has an excellent range, including some books in French.

### Emergency

In an emergency call ☎ 107, or ☎ 112 if using a mobile phone. Other useful phone numbers:

**Ambulance** (☎ 10177)

**Fire brigade** (☎ 021-535 1100)

**Mountain Rescue Services** (☎ 021-948 9900)

**Police** (☎ 10111)

### Internet Access

Cape Town is one of the most wired cities in Africa. Most hotels and hostels have internet facilities and you'll seldom have to hunt far for an internet café. Rates are pretty uniform at US\$1.40 per hour.

**Catwalk TV** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 8999; www.catwalk.co.za; 16 Burg St, City Bowl; ☎ 24hr) Central and handy.

### Medical Services

**Christian Barnard Memorial Hospital** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-480 6111; www.netcare.co.za; 181 Longmarket St, City Bowl) The best private hospital; reception is on the 8th floor.

**Groote Schuur Hospital** (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-404 9111; capegateway.gov.za/gsh; Main Rd, Observatory)

**SAA-Netcare Travel Clinic** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-419 3172; 11th fl, Picbal Arcade, 58 Strand St, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) For vaccinations and travel health.

## Money

Money can be changed at the airport, most commercial banks and at Cape Town Tourism (below). Rennie's Travel (below), the local agent for Thomas Cook, has foreign-exchange offices.

There are ATMs all over town.

**American Express** City Bowl (☎ 021-425 7991; Thibault Sq); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 3917; V&A Hotel Mall, Waterfront)

## Post

**General post office** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-464 1700; Parliament St, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has a poste restante counter.

## Tourist Information

**Cape Town Tourism** (www.tourismcapetown.co.za) City Centre (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-487 6800; cnr Castle & Burg Sts, City Bowl; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Oct-Mar, 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-405 4500; Clock Tower Centre; ☎ 9am-9pm) At this impressive and well-run centre, you'll find advisers who can book accommodation, tours and rental cars. At the City Centre branch you can also get advice on Cape Nature Conservation Parks (☎ 021-426 6723) and the National Parks & Reserves (☎ 021-423 8005). There's also an internet café and a foreign-exchange booth.

## Travel Agencies

**Africa Travel Centre** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 5555; www.backpackers.co.za; Backpack, 74 New Church St, Tamboerskloof) Books all sorts of tours and activities, including day trips, hire cars and extended truck tours of Africa.

**Atlantic Tourist Information Centre** (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-434 2382; www.arokan.co.za; 242 Main Rd, Three Anchor Bay) Gay-run tour company and travel agent.

**Rennie's Travel** (www.renniestravel.co.za) City Bowl (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 7154; 101 St George's Mall); Sea Point (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-439 7529; 182 Main Rd); Waterfront (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 3744; Victoria Wharf) Handles international and domestic bookings and is the agent for Thomas Cook travellers cheques. It can arrange visas for neighbouring countries.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Cape Town remains one of the most relaxed cities in Africa, which can instil a false sense of security. Thefts are most likely to happen when visitors do something stupid like leaving their gear on a beach while they go swimming.

Paranoia is not required, but common sense is. There is tremendous poverty on the penin-

sula and the 'informal redistribution of wealth' is reasonably common. The townships on the Cape Flats have an appalling crime rate and unless you have a trustworthy guide or are on a tour they are not places for a casual stroll.

Stick to the roads when you walk around the city, and always listen to local advice. There is safety in numbers.

Swimming at any of the Cape beaches is potentially hazardous, especially for those inexperienced in surf. Check for warning signs about rips and rocks and only swim in patrolled areas.

## SIGHTS

### Table Mountain National Park

Covering some three quarters of the peninsula **Table Mountain National Park** (www.tmnp.co.za) stretches from flat-topped Table Mountain (*Hoerikwaggo*, its indigenous Khoesaaan name means 'mountain in the sea') to Cape Point. For the vast majority of visitors the main attraction is the 1086m-high mountain itself, the top of which can easily be accessed by the **Cableway** (☎ 021-424 5148; www.tablemountain.net; adult oneway/return US\$8/16, child US\$4/6; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Feb-Nov, to 10pm Dec & Jan), which runs every 10/20 minutes in high/low season.

The views from the revolving cable car and on the summit are phenomenal. Once you're at the top there are souvenir shops, a café and some easy walks to follow. The Cableway doesn't operate when it's dangerously windy, and there's little point going up if you are simply going to be wrapped in the cloud known as the 'tablecloth'. The best visibility and conditions are likely to be first thing in the morning or in the evening. For details of climbing the mountain see p427.

If you don't have your own transport, Rik-kis (small, open vans; see p437) will drop you at the cable car from the city centre for US\$2; a nonshared taxi will cost around US\$7.

### Robben Island & Nelson Mandela Gateway

Prisoners were incarcerated on **Robben Island** (☎ 413 4220; www.robben-island.org.za; adult/child US\$20/10; ☎ hourly ferries 9am-3pm, sunset tour 5pm Dec & Jan) from the early days of the VOC right up until 1996. Now a museum and UN World Heritage Site, it is one of the most popular destinations in all of Cape Town.

While we heartily recommend going to Robben Island, a visit here is not without





its drawbacks. Most likely you will have to endure crowds and being hustled around on a guided tour that at a maximum of two hours on the island (plus a 30-minute boat ride in both directions) is woefully short. You will learn much of what happened to Mandela and others like him, since one of the former inmates will lead you around the prison.

The standard tours, which have set departure and return times when you buy your ticket, include a walk through the old prison, as well as a 45-minute bus ride around the island with commentary on the various places of note. If you're lucky, you'll have about 10 minutes to wander around on your own. We recommend heading straight to the prison's A-section to view the remarkable and very moving exhibition 'Cell Stories'. In each of 40 isolation cells is an artefact and story from a former political prisoner.

Tours depart from the **Nelson Mandela Gateway** (Map pp424-5; admission free; ☎ 9am-8.30pm) beside the Clock Tower at the Waterfront. Even if you don't plan a visit to the island, it's worth dropping by the museum here, with its focus on the struggle for freedom. Book at the Nelson Mandela Gateway departure point or at Cape Town Tourism (see p419) in the city. At holiday times all tours can be booked up for days.

### City Bowl

The commercial heart of Cape Town, City Bowl is squeezed between Table Mountain, Signal Hill and the harbour. Immediately to the west is the Bo-Kaap and the Waterkant, and to the east Zonnebloem (once known as District Six).

### DISTRICT SIX MUSEUM

If you see only one museum in Cape Town make it the **District Six Museum** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-466 7200; www.districtsix.co.za; 25A Buitenkant St; adult/child US\$2/1.30; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Sat). Note that almost all township tours stop here first to explain the history of the pass laws. This emotionally moving museum is as much for the people of the now-vanished District Six as it is about them. Displays include a floor map of District Six on which former residents have labelled where their demolished homes and features of their neighbourhood once stood.

You can also arrange a **walking tour** (☎ 021-466 7208; per person US\$7, 10 people minimum) of the old District Six.

### CASTLE OF GOOD HOPE

Many are surprised to find a **castle** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-787 1249; www.castleofgoodhope.co.za; entrance on Buitenkant St; Mon-Sat adult/child US\$2.70/1.30, Sun US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 9am-4pm, tours 11am, noon & 2pm Mon-Sat) in Cape Town. Built between 1666 and 1679 to defend the city, this stone-walled pentagonal structure is commonly touted as the city's oldest building. A tour is worthwhile, but you can quite easily find your own way around. A key ceremony at the castle gate – when the keys to the gate are handed over in an orchestrated ceremony – is held at 10am Monday to Friday.

### COMPANY'S GARDENS

These shady green **gardens** (Map p432; ☎ 7am-7pm) in the heart of the city are a lovely place to relax during the heat of the day. The surviving six hectares of what started as the vegetable patch for the Dutch East India Company are found around Government Ave.

### HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Although it sounds unlikely, visiting South Africa's **parliament** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-403 2266; www.parliament.gov.za; Parliament St; admission free; ☎ tours by appointment Mon-Fri) can be fascinating, especially if you're interested in the country's modern history. Opened in 1885, the hallowed halls have seen some pretty momentous events, including when president Hendrik Verwoerd, architect of apartheid, was stabbed to death in 1966. You must present your passport to gain entry.

### LONG STREET

Whether you come to browse the antique shops, secondhand bookstores and the streetwear boutiques, or to party at the host of bars and clubs that crank up at night, a stroll along Long St (Map pp428-9) is an essential element of a Cape Town visit. The most attractive section, lined with Victorian-era buildings with lovely wrought-iron balconies, runs from the junction with Buitensingel St north to around the Strand.

### SIGNAL HILL & NOON GUN

Once also known as Lion's Rump, as it's attached to Lion's Head by a 'spine' of hills, Signal Hill (Map pp428-9) separates Sea Point from the City Bowl. There are magnificent views from the 350m-high summit, especially at night.

At noon Monday to Saturday, a cannon known as the Noon Gun (Map pp428-9) is

fired from the lower slopes of Signal Hill. Traditionally this allowed the burghers in the town below to check their watches. It's a stiff walk up here through the Bo-Kaap – take Longmarket St and keep going until it ends.

### SLAVE LODGE

One of the oldest buildings in South Africa, dating from 1660, **Slave Lodge** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-460 8240; www.museums.org.za/slavelodge; 49 Adderley St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) has a fascinating history. Until 1811 the building was home, if you could call it that, to as many as 1000 slaves, who lived in damp, insanitary, crowded conditions. Up to 20% died each year. The slaves were bought and sold just around the corner on Spin St.

The museum today is increasingly devoted to the history and experience of slaves and their descendants in the Cape, although the displays on the 2nd floor, including artefacts from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, hark back to the building's former use as the Cultural History Museum.

### BO-KAAP MUSEUM

Giving some insight into the history and lifestyle of the people of the Bo-Kaap is this small but engaging **museum** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-481 3939; www.museums.org.za/bokaap/index.html; 71 Wale St, Bo-Kaap; adult/child US\$0.70/0.30; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat). It's worth a stroll around the area (during the day) to admire the traditional architecture.

### Gardens & Around

Rising up Table Mountain's slopes are the ritzy suburbs of Gardens, Tamboerskloof, Oranjezicht and Vredehoek. Most of the major sights here are clustered around the Company's Gardens (opposite).

### SA NATIONAL GALLERY

South Africa's premier **gallery** (Map p432; ☎ 021-467 4660; www.museums.org.za/sang; Government Ave, Gardens; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70, Sat by donation; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a must for art lovers. The permanent collection harks back to Dutch times and includes some extraordinary pieces, but it's often contemporary works that stand out the most.

### SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH MUSEUM & CAPE TOWN HOLOCAUST CENTRE

The **South African Jewish Museum** (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 1546; www.sajewishmuseum.co.za; 88 Hatfield St, Gardens;

adult/child US\$4.70/0.30; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, to 2pm Fri) is one of the most imaginatively designed and interesting of the city's museums. Entry is through the beautifully restored Old Synagogue (1862).

In the same complex you'll also find the **Cape Town Holocaust Centre** (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 5553; www.museums.org.za/ctholocaust; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, to 1pm Fri). Although small, the centre packs a lot in with a considerable emotional punch.

### Green Point & Waterfront

Cape Town's prime Atlantic Coast suburbs start at the Waterfront, from where you depart for Robben Island (p419). Near here you'll also find Green Point, which has lately seen development of a shopping and dining complex.

### VICTORIA & ALBERT WATERFRONT

Commonly referred to as just the **Waterfront** (www.waterfront.co.za), this tourist-oriented precinct offers masses of shops, restaurants, bars, cinemas and other attractions, including cruises of the harbour (see p426). Its success is partly down to the fact that it remains a working harbour still used by tugs, harbour vessels of various kinds and fishing boats; there are always seals splashing around or lazing near the docks.

Recent developments at the Waterfront include the millionaires' playground of the **V & A Marina** with some 600 apartments and 200 boat moorings, and the construction of **Nobel Square** (Map pp424-5; Dock Rd). Check out the larger-than-life statues of South Africa's four Nobel Prize winners: Nkosi Albert Luthuli, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and former presidents FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela.

### Atlantic Coast

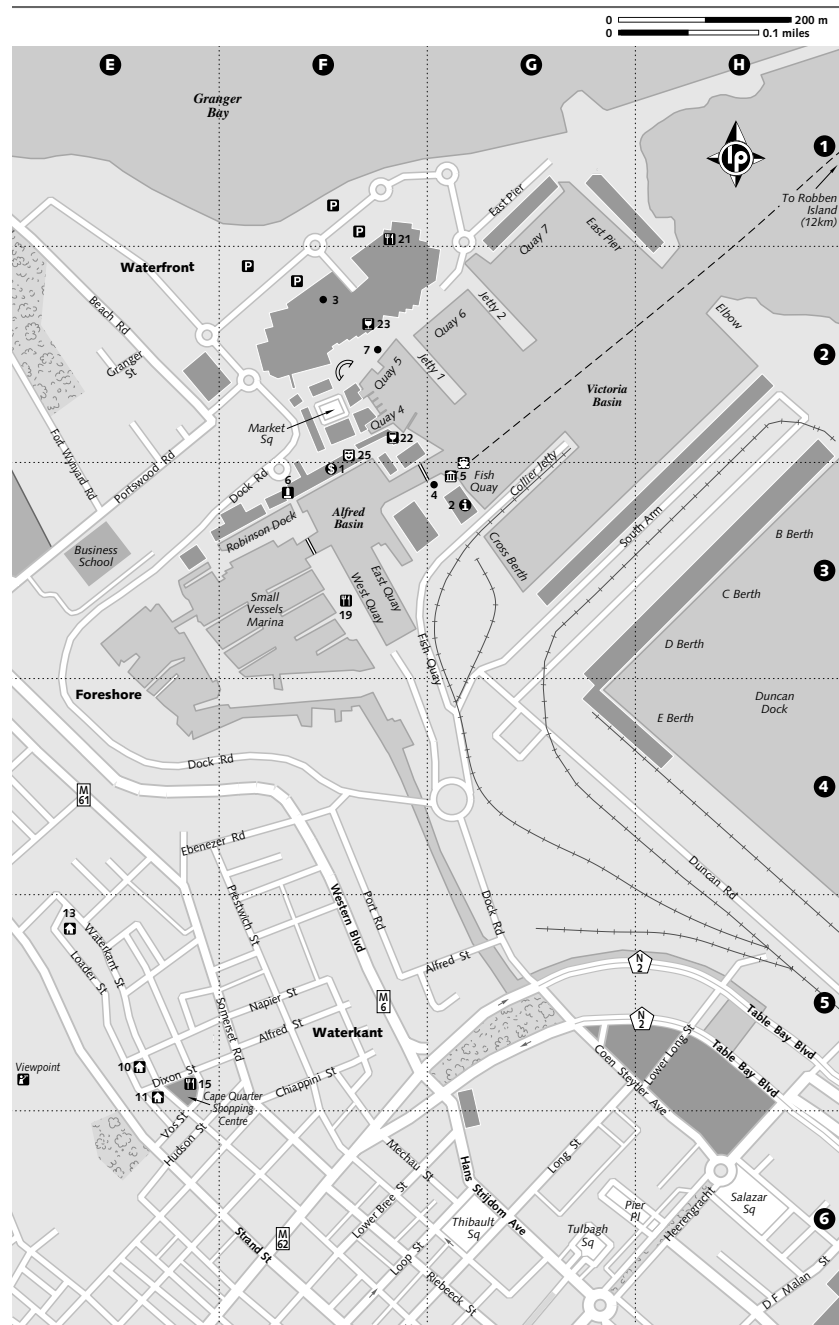
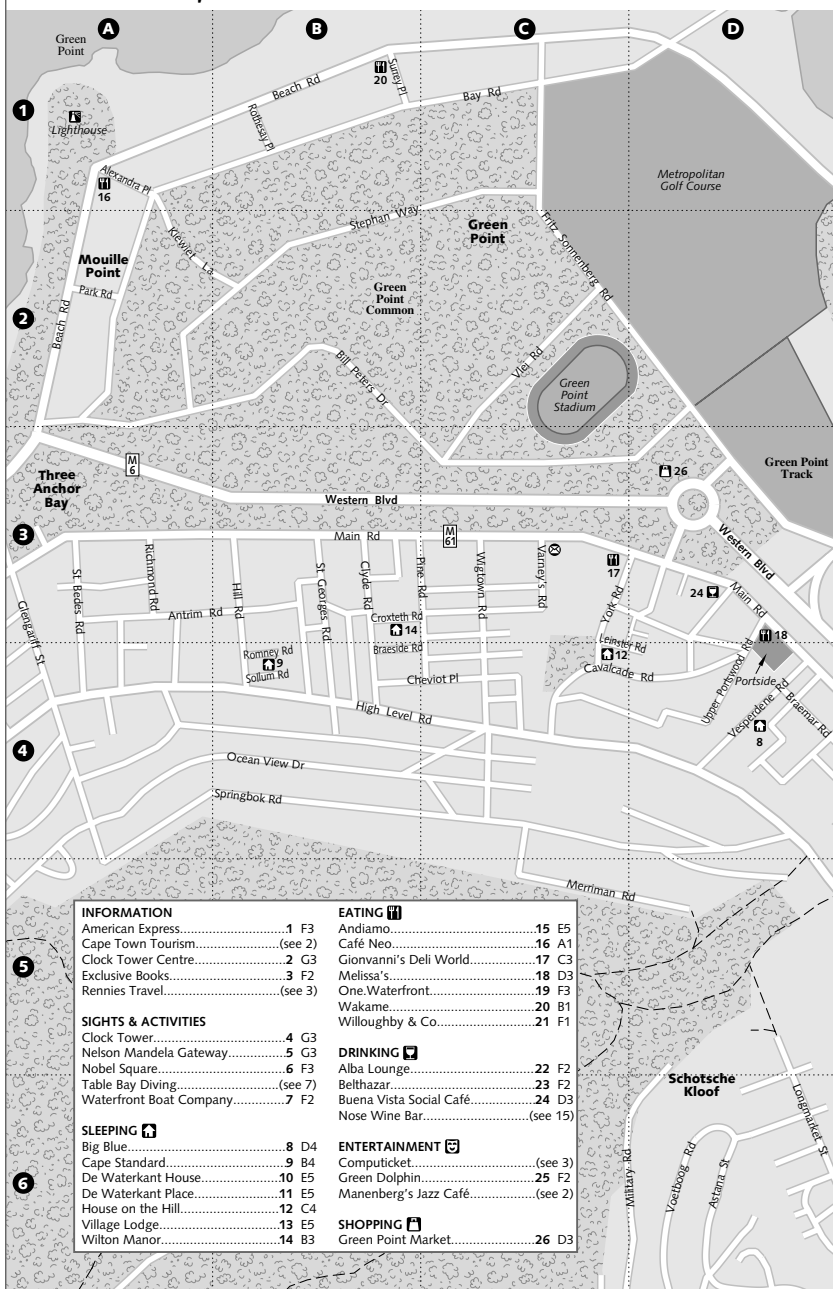
Cape Town's Atlantic Coast is all about spectacular scenery and soft-sand beaches. Strong winds can be a downer and although it's possible to shelter from the summer southeasterlies at some beaches, the water at them all, flowing straight from the Antarctic, is freezing. From Sea Point (best visited for its excellent outdoor swimming pavilion), you can head down to Clifton and Camps Bay.

### CLIFTON BEACHES

Giant granite boulders split the four linked beaches at Clifton (Map pp420-1), accessible by steps from Victoria Rd. Almost



**GREEN POINT, WATERKANT & WATERFRONT**





always sheltered from the wind, these are Cape Town's top sunbathing spots. Local lore has it that No 1 and No 2 beaches are for models and confirmed narcissists, No 3 is the gay beach and No 4 is for families.

### CAMPS BAY BEACH

With the spectacular Twelve Apostles of Table Mountain as a backdrop, and soft white sand, Camps Bay (Map pp420–1) is one of the city's most popular beaches. It's within 15 minutes' drive of the city centre so can get crowded, particularly on weekends. The beach is often windy, and the water is decidedly on the cool side.

### LLANDUDNO & SANDY BAY BEACHES

Surfing at Llandudno (Map pp416–17) on the beach breaks (mostly rights) is best at high tide with a small swell and a southeasterly wind.

Nearby is Sandy Bay (Map pp416–17), Cape Town's nudist beach and gay stamping ground. It's a particularly beautiful stretch of sand and there's no pressure to take your clothes off if you don't want to. Like many such beaches, Sandy Bay has no direct access roads.

### Southern Suburbs

Heading west around Table Mountain and Devil's Peak will bring you to the Southern Suburbs, beginning with the bohemian, edgy areas of Woodstock and Observatory and moving through to Rondebosch, Newlands and wealthy Constantia, home to South Africa's oldest vineyards and wine estates.

### KIRSTENBOSCH BOTANICAL GARDENS

Location and unique flora combine to make Cape Town's **botanical gardens** (Map pp416–17; ☎ 021-799 8783, Sat & Sun 021-761 4916; www.sanbi.org; Rhodes Dr, Newlands; adult/child US\$3.40/0.70; ☞ 8am–7pm Sep–Mar, to 6pm Apr–Aug) among the most beautiful in the world. The 36-hectare landscaped section seems to merge almost imperceptibly with the 492 hectares of *fynbos* (fine bush) vegetation cloaking the mountain slopes.

The gardens are at their best between mid-August and mid-October.

You can hire a rikki (p437) to get you here or hop on the City Sightseeing Cape Town bus (see p430).

### GROOT CONSTANTIA

A superb example of Cape Dutch architecture, **Groot Constantia** (Map pp416–17; ☎ 021-794

5128; www.grootconstantia.co.za; Groot Constantia Rd, High Constantia; tastings incl glass US\$3.40; ☞ 9am–6pm Dec–Apr, to 5pm May–Nov) is set in beautiful grounds. Not surprisingly, it can become busy with tour groups but the estate is big enough for you to escape the crowds, if need be. In the 18th century, Constantia wines were exported around the world and were highly acclaimed. The beautifully restored homestead is now a **museum** (☎ 021-795 5140; www.museums.org.za/groot-con; adult/child US\$1/0.30; ☞ 10am–5pm).

### RHODES MEMORIAL

Modelled after the arch at London's Hyde Park Corner, this impressive **granite memorial** (Map pp420–1) to the mining magnate and former prime minister is on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. There are sweeping views from the memorial to the Cape Flats and the mountain ranges beyond. Behind the memorial there's a pleasant tearoom. The exit for the memorial is at the Princess Anne Interchange on the M3.

### ACTIVITIES

#### Abseiling & Kloofing

**Abseil Africa** (Map pp428–9; ☎ 021-424 4760; www.abseilafrica.co.za; 1 Vredenburg Ln, City Bowl; US\$40) is the one to see if you want to shimmy 112m down a rope off the top of Table Mountain.

Abseil Africa also offer kloofing (canyoning) trips around Cape Town. The sport of clambering into and out of kloofs (cliffs or gorges) also entails abseiling, climbing, hiking, swimming and jumping.

Another reliable operator is Day Trippers (see p430).

### Cruises

#### DUIKER ISLAND CRUISES

From Hout Bay's harbour you can catch regular daily cruises to Duiker Island, also known as Seal Island because of its colony of Cape fur seals. Three companies run these cruises daily, usually with guaranteed sailings in the mornings. The cheapest is **Circe Launches** (☎ 021-790 1040; www.circelaunches; adult/child US\$4.70/1.30).

#### HARBOUR CRUISES

If only to take in the panoramic view of Table Mountain from the water, a cruise into Table Bay should not be missed. **Waterfront Boat Company** (Map pp424–5; ☎ 021-418 5806; www.waterfrontboats.co.za; Shop 7, Quay 5, Waterfront) offers a variety of cruises, including the highly recommended 1½-hour sunset cruises (US\$24).

### Cycling

Thrill-meisters **Downhill Adventures** (☎ 021-422 0388; www.downhilladventures.com; cnr Orange & Kloof Sts, Gardens) offers a variety of cycling trips and adventures. Try a mountain-bike ride down from the lower cable car station on Table Mountain (US\$47).

### Diving

Cape Town offers a number of excellent shore and boat dives, although it's the shark-cage diving in Gansbaai, some 150km southeast of city, that is the big draw.

A couple of good local dive operators:

**Pro Divers** (Map pp420–1; ☎ 021-433 0472; www.prodiverssa.co.za; 88B Main Rd, Sea Point)

**Table Bay Diving** (Map pp424–5; ☎ 021-419 8822; www.tablebaydiving.com; Shop 7, Quay 5, Waterfront)

### Hiking & Rock Climbing

The mountainous spine of the Cape Peninsula is a hiker's and rock climber's paradise, but it's not without its dangers, chief of which is the capricious weather conditions.

**Kabbo African Adventures** (☎ 021-701 0867, 072 024 6537; www.kabbadventures.com) Runs its own version of the Hoerikwaggo Trails. An overnight trip to the mountain costs US\$98, while a summit hike or sunrise/sunset walk is US\$43. **Venture Forth** (☎ 021-556 4150; www.ventureforth.co.za) Enthusiastic guides will tailor a hike or climb to your requirements. The fee of US\$55 includes all refreshments and city centre transfers.

### CLIMBING TABLE MOUNTAIN

More than 300 routes up and down the mountain have been identified, perhaps indicating how easy it is to get lost. Bear in mind that the mountain is over 1000m high and conditions can become treacherous quickly. Unprepared and foolhardy hikers die here ever year.

None of the routes is easy but the **Platteklip Gorge** walk on the City Bowl side is straightforward. It takes about 2½ hours from the upper cableway station to the lower, taking it fairly easy. Be warned that the route is exposed to the sun and, for much of the way, a vertical slog.

Another option, far trickier and recommended for experienced climbers only, is the **Indian Windows** route that starts from directly behind the lower cableway station and heads straight up. The hikers you see from the cable car, perched like mountain goats on apparently sheer cliffs, are taking this route.

In 2005 Table Mountain National Park launched the first of its planned suite of three

**Hoerikwaggo Trails** (www.hoerikwaggotrails.co.za) designed to allow visitors, for the first time, to sleep on the mountain, and eventually to hike 80km or so from the City Bowl to Cape Point.

The three-day Table Mountain Trail is a fully guided hike starting at the Waterfront and proceeding through the City Bowl to the lower northern slopes of the mountain to the summit before descending down the eastern slopes to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (opposite). The trail costs US\$250 per person (based on double occupancy of a room), which includes all meals, portering of luggage and accommodation of a very high standard.

By the start of 2007 the less-pampered Tip to Top Trail should be running. This six-day, five-night hike beginning at Cape Point will involve carrying your own food, gear and sleeping bag, and camping at fixed spots in the national park. By the end of 2007 a luxury version, running in the opposite direction (Top to Tip), and sleeping in comfortable huts, should be available.

### LION'S HEAD

The 2.2km hike from Kloof Nek to the peak of Lion's Head (Map pp420–1) is one of the best you can do in Cape Town and is highly recommended on a full-moon night, when many people gather at the summit to watch the sun go down. Always bring a torch (flashlight).

### THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

You'll need to book to walk the two-day/one-night Cape of Good Hope Trail, which traces a spectacular 33.8km circular route through the reserve. The cost is US\$12 (not including the Cape Point entry fee) with accommodation at the basic Protea and Restio huts at the southern end of the reserve. Contact the reserve's **Buffelfontein Visitors Centre** (☎ 021-780 9204) for further details.

### Surfing & Sandboarding

The Cape Peninsula has plenty of fantastic surfing possibilities, from gentle shore breaks ideal for beginners to 3m-plus monsters for experts only. In general, the best surf is along the Atlantic side. Water temperatures as low as 8°C mean a steamer wet suit and booties are required.

**Kommetjie**, pronounced Kommi-kee, is the Cape's surf mecca, offering an assortment of reefs that hold a very big swell.

And if you don't want to get wet there's always sandboarding, which is like snowboarding except on sand dunes. **Downhill Adventures**

**CENTRAL CAPE TOWN**

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Scale: 0 to 200 m / 0 to 0.1 miles



(Map p432; ☎ 021-422 0388; www.downhilladventures.com; cnr Orange & Kloof Sts, Gardens) offers an introductory surfing course for US\$47. A sandboarding trip to Atlantis, north of the city centre, is US\$67.

## TOURS

Cape Town Tourism (p419) should be your first stop to find out about the many tours on offer in and around the city.

### City & General Bus Tours

The double-decker bus tour **City Sightseeing Cape Town** (☎ 021-511 1784; www.hyltonross.co.za; adult/child US\$12/5.50) is good for a quick orientation on a fine day. The hop-on, hop-off services run at roughly half-hourly intervals between 9.30am and 3.30pm, with extra services in peak season.

**Andulela** (☎ 021-790 2592; www.andulela.com) This innovative company can arrange a number of offbeat adventures.

**Charlotte's Walking Tours** (☎ 083-982 5692; nomthunzie@webmail.co.za) The ebullient Charlotte Swatbooi will take you on a walking tour of the township of Maspumelele, on the way to Kommetjie.

**Day Trippers** (☎ 021-511 4766; www.daytrippers.co.za) Many of the tours include cycling. Most tours cost around US\$52 and include Cape Point, the Winelands and whale-watching (in season).

**Ferdinand's Tours & Adventures** (☎ 021-913 8800, 072-32 2482; ferdinand@telkomsa.net; tours US\$45) This backpacker-focussed Winelands tour takes in at least four wineries and includes lunch.

**Grassroute Tours** (☎ 021-706 1006; www.grassroute.tours.co.za) One of the most experienced operators of townships tours (half/full day US\$39/61).

**Sunpath** (☎ 072-417 6800; www.sunpath.co.za; tours US\$13-44) Offering a series of fascinating tours and hikes around the peninsula. Discover the ancient sunpaths thought to have been used by the indigenous people of the Cape.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

A short list:

**Cape Town New Year Karnaval** (☎ 021-696 9538)

The main parades are held on 31 December and 2 January.

**Cape Town Pride** (☎ 083-274 3579; www.capetownpride.co.za) A 10-day gay and lesbian event in February where the Mother City flies its rainbow colours with pride.

**Cape Town Festival** (☎ 021-465 1242; www.capetownfestival.co.za) This arts festival runs for three weeks from early March throughout the City Bowl and at the Waterfront.

**Cape Town International Jazz Festival** (☎ 021-4122 5651; www.capetowninternationaljazzfestival.com) Cape Town's biggest jazz event, held at the end of March.

## SLEEPING

Remember location is everything here. During school holidays from mid-December to the end of January and at Easter, prices can double and many places are fully booked. Unless otherwise mentioned rates also include breakfast. Parking is often an extra US\$3.40 to US\$5.50 per day.

### City Bowl BUDGET

**Inn Long Street** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 1660; innlongstreet@ataris.co.za; 230 Long St; dm US\$10, d without/with bathroom US\$32/39; P ☎) There's a calm vibe at this backpackers despite it being in the thick of Long St. There's a wrap-around balcony that all rooms access, and a recent paint job and funky lights give it some style.

**Long St Backpackers** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 0615; www.longstreetbackpackers.co.za; 209 Long St; dm/s/d US\$11/16/22) Backpackers dot the length of Long St, but this one remains the best. In a block of 14 small flats, with four beds and a bathroom in each, accommodation is arranged around a leafy, quiet courtyard decorated with funky mosaics.

**St Paul's B&B Guest House** (Map pp428-9; ☎ /fax 021-423 4420; stpaul@absamail.co.za; 182 Bree St; s/d US\$20/34; P) A quiet alternative to a backpackers. The simply furnished and spacious rooms have high ceilings and there's a vine-shaded courtyard where you can relax.

### MIDRANGE

**Cape Diamond Hotel** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-461 2519; www.capediamondhotel.co.za; cnr Longmarket & Parliament Sts, City Bowl; s/d from US\$50/71; P ☎) A great-value new hotel that has kept features of its Art Deco building such as the wood-panelled floors. There's a rooftop Jacuzzi with a view to Table Mountain. Breakfast and parking are extra.

**our pick** **Daddy Long Legs** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 3074; www.daddylonglegs.co.za; 134 Long St; City bowl; r US\$100; ☎) This boutique hotel/art installation is what you get when artists are given free reign to design the boudoirs of their dreams. The results range from bohemian garret to a hospital ward! Favourites include the karaoke room (with a mike in the shower), and the room designed by pop group Freshly Ground. There's nowhere to put your luggage – hey, these are artists not hoteliers! – but a stay here is anything but boring. They also offers super stylish apartments (same price) at 263 Long St, an ideal choice if you crave hotel-suite luxury and want to self-cater.

**Cape Heritage Hotel** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 4646; www.capeheritage.co.za; -12 Bree St; s/d from US\$111/161, ste from US\$178; P ☎ ☎) Gracious service matches the Cape Dutch style of this elegant boutique hotel that's part of the Heritage Square redevelopment of 18th-century buildings.

**Urban Chic** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 2086; www.urbanchic.co.za; cnr Long & Pepper Sts, City Bowl; r US\$167; P ☎ ☎) Rooms with fabulous floor-to-ceiling views towards Table Mountain feature at this stylish new boutique hotel. The ground floor Gallery Bar is currently a very hip watering hole.

### Gardens & Around BUDGET

**Ashanti Lodge** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 8721; www.ashanti.co.za; 11 Hof St, Gardens; camp sites US\$7, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$12/34; guesthouse d US\$50; P ☎ ☎) One of Cape Town's premier party hostels, with much of the action focussed on its lively bar and deck overlooking Table Mountain. For something quieter, opt for the excellent ensuite rooms in two houses around the corner.

**Backpack** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 4530; www.backpackers.co.za; 74 New Church St, Tamboerskloof; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/34/41, s/d US\$40/48; P ☎ ☎) Cape Town's longest-running backpackers remains a relaxed and comfortable place with something for everyone, be it a lively time at the Thursday night African drumming sessions or just chilling out in the chic en-suite rooms.

**Cape Town Backpackers** (Map p432; ☎ /fax 021-426 0200; www.capetownbackpackers.com; 81 New Church St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/24/30; guesthouse s/d US\$37/43; P ☎) The backpacker hostel grows up at this stylish place that offers both pleasant dorms, and a chic guesthouse with ensuite rooms on neighbouring Kohling St.

### MIDRANGE

**An African Villa** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 2164; www.cape-towncity.co.za/villa; 19 Carstens St, Tamboerskloof; s/d from US\$86/108; P ☎) There's a sophisticated and colourful African-Zen look at this appealing guesthouse, sheltering behind the façade of three 19th-century terrace houses.

**Dunkley House** (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 7650; www.dunkleyhouse.com; 38 Gordon St, Gardens; d/ste from US\$94/122; P ☎ ☎) Ultra-stylish guesthouse on a quiet street. All rooms have CD players and satellite TV; there's a plunge pool in the courtyard.

**Hippo Boutique Hotel** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 2500; www.hippopotique.co.za; 5-9 Park La; Gardens; s/d US\$110/162; P ☎ ☎ ☎) This appealing boutique property offers spacious, stylish rooms with a small

kitchen. Gadget lovers will also be pleased with the DVD player and music system.

**Abbey Manor** (Map p432; ☎ 021-462 2935; www.abbey.co.za; 3 Montrose Ave, Oranjezicht; s/d from US\$134/173; P ☎ ☎ ☎) A luxurious guesthouse occupying a grand home built in 1905 for a shipping magnate. Fine linens, antique furnishings, a decent-sized pool and courteous staff enhance the experience.

### TOP END

**Alta Bay** (Map p432; ☎ 021-487 8800; www.altabay.com; 12 Invermark Cres, Higgovale; d US\$282; P ☎ ☎ ☎) Cascading down the hillside, Alta Bay is a haven of tranquillity as well as designer heaven. The six luxury rooms mix locally handcrafted furnishings (including king-size beds) with European artworks.

**Kensington Place** (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 4744; www.kensingtonplace.co.za; 38 Kensington Cres, Higgovale; d with breakfast US\$343; P ☎ ☎ ☎) One of Cape Town's finest boutique properties, with eight spacious and tastefully decorated rooms, all with balconies and beautifully tiled bathrooms. There's also free internet access, fresh fruit and flowers, a small pool and faultless service.

### Waterkant MIDRANGE

**De Waterkant Place** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-419 2476; www.dewaterkantplace.com; 35 Dixon St; s/d from US\$67/81; ☎) This appealing guesthouse with five antique decorated rooms offers good value. Guests are free to use the kitchen and there's a lovely view from the roof.

**Village Lodge** (Map pp424-5; ☎ /fax 021-421 1106; www.thevillagelodge.com; 49 Napier St; s/d US\$100/165; ☎ ☎ ☎) Rooms at this chic guesthouse are smart if somewhat cramped. The rooftop pool is a prime spot for guests to check each other out, as is the lodge's good Thai restaurant Soho.

**De Waterkant House** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-409 2500; www.dewaterkant.com; cnr Napier & Waterkant Sts, Waterkant; s/d US\$63/97; P ☎ ☎) A pleasant B&B in the heart of the gay village, with a plunge pool and rooms with glossy magazine-style furnishings. There's also a wide range of apartments in the area kicking off at single/double US\$88/128.50, as well as popular budget-level 'crash pads' (single/double US\$38/54).

### Atlantic Coast

#### GREEN POINT & WATERFRONT

**Big Blue** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-439 0807; www.bigbluebackpackers.hostel.com; 7 Vesperdene Rd, Green Point; dm/s/d



### GARDENS, ORANJEZICHT & ZONNEBLOEM

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0 300 m  
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with shared bathroom US\$11/30/36, d US\$43; (☎) This brightly painted hostel remains a leading light of the Capetonian backpacking scene – come and enjoy its grand hallway, Zen garden and friendly atmosphere.

**House on the Hill** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-439 3902; www.houseonthehillct.co.za; 25 Leinster Rd, Green Point; d/tr sharing bathroom US\$35/42, d/tr US\$35/52) This self-catering house is a fine alternative to the bigger hostels. Book ahead for the five rooms which are very pleasantly furnished in African style, with the added bonus of a TV and CD player.

**Wilton Manor** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-434 7869; www.wiltonmanor.co.za; 15 Croxeth Rd, Green Point; s/d from US\$74/81; (P) (☎) (☎)) A stylish guesthouse where each of the seven rooms is individually decorated. Guests are free to use the kitchen. The owners also run a budget guesthouse on Croxeth Rd – check the website for further details.

**Cape Standard** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-430 3060; www.capestandard.co.za; 3 Romney Rd, Green Point; s/d US\$100/134; (P) (☎) (☎)) This secluded boutique hotel, one of Cape Town's nicest, offers whitewashed beachhouse chic rooms downstairs, or more elegantly contemporary rooms upstairs.

#### SEA POINT & CAMPS BAY

**Cape Town Backpackers Sea Point** (Map pp420-1; ☎ /fax 021-426 0200; www.capetownbackpackers.com; 1 Rocklands Rd; dm/d US\$12/54; (P) (☎) (☎)) Easily the best budget option in Sea Point, steps away from the seafont. There's a six-bed dorm and three en-suite double rooms with giant rain showers, as well as a spacious communal kitchen.

**Camps Bay Retreat** (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-437 0485; www.campsbayretreat.com; 7 Chilworth Rd, The Glen; s/d from US\$160/203; (P) (☎) (☎) (☎)) This is a splendid option with a choice of 16 rooms in either the main house or the contemporary Deck House, reached by a rope bridge over a ravine. There's also a couple of decent, self-catering rooms (per person US\$51) next to the tennis court.

**O on Kloof** (Map pp420-1; ☎ 021-439 2081; www.oonkloof.co.za; 92 Kloof Rd, Bantry Bay; d from US\$200; (P) (☎) (☎) (☎)) A gorgeous contemporary guesthouse with six spacious rooms. The cheapest rooms don't have full sea views but the good facilities, including a big indoor pool and gym, are ample compensation.

#### EATING

Dining in the Mother City is a pleasure. There are places to suit practically everyone's taste and budget, with a particularly strong selec-

tion of cafés and delis. Don't miss the opportunity to sample some traditional Cape Malay food, and there are several good African restaurants in Cape Town, too.

#### City Bowl & Bo-Kaap

Long St has many great places to eat, plus fantastic street life. Head to the Bo-Kaap to sample authentic Cape Malay dishes in unpretentious surroundings.

#### CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Crush** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 5533; 100 St George's Mall, City Bowl; mains US\$2.80-4) One of the most pleasant and interesting places to eat on St George's Mall, Crush offers freshly squeezed juices, smoothies and tasty wraps.

**Lola's** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 0885; 228 Long St, City Bowl; mains US\$2.80-4; ☎ 8am-midnight) Whether you come for breakfast or a late-night coffee or beer, a visit to pastel-painted Lola's is a rite of passage on Long St. Grab a street table and watch the passing parade.

**Frieda's** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 2404; 15 Bree St, City Bowl; mains US\$4-5; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Jumble-sale chic is the look at this cavernous and highly convivial café in the louche but up-and-coming area at the base of Bree St. They do a fine line in sandwiches, wraps, salads and comfort food such as lasagne.

**Café African Image** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 1857; 48 Church St, City Bowl; mains US\$4-6; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Easily Cape Town's most colourful café, sporting groovy African-print cushions and table cloths. Sample Tanzanian fish curry, African village stew or a range of healthy salads.

**Birds Café** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2534; 127 Bree St, City Bowl; mains US\$5.50) The sophisticatedly rustic style matches the artisan food including delicious homemade pies, strudles and chunky scones.

#### RESTAURANTS

**95 Keerom** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 0765; 95 Keerom St, City Bowl; mains US\$7-13; ☎ 12.30-2pm Mon-Fri, 7pm-11pm Mon-Sat) Bookings are essential for this super-stylish Italian restaurant round the back of Rhodes House. Given the quality of food the prices are very reasonable, particularly for the handmade pastas.

**our pick** **Madame Zingara & Cara Lazuli** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2458; 192 Loop St, City Bowl; mains US\$9; ☎ 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Every night is party night at this bohemian, crowd-pleasing restaurant with two sections. Unless you're a committed

carnivore we'd advise against its infamous whopper stack of beef fillets doused in chilli-chocolate sauce. Magic tricks, tarot-card readings, belly dancing and dressing up in silly hats is all part of the fun.

**Ginja** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2368; 121 Castle St, Bo-Kaap; 1/2/3 courses US\$13/24/26; ☎ 7pm-10pm Mon-Sat) Book well ahead for this dining gem that can conjure up inventive fusion dishes. Upstairs is the more casual Shoga bar and brasserie.

**Royale Eatery** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 4536; 279 Long St, City Bowl; mains US\$8; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Our favourite gourmet burger bar keeps growing, opening a cute satellite branch around the corner on Vredenburg Lane. For something different try the Big Bird ostrich burger.

**Savoy Cabbage** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-424 2626; 101 Hout St, City Bowl; mains US\$9.50-12) The standard bearer of the city's contemporary dining scene remains a great place for inventive cooking, including the chance to try local game meats such as zebra and wildebeest.

**Africa Café** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-422 0221; www.africacafe.co.za; 108 Shortmarket St, City Bowl; set banquet US\$20; ☎ 6.30pm-11pm) A Cape Town institution, the Africa Café is best known for its set feast comprising some 15 dishes from across the continent. The décor and friendly staff, who dance and sing through the restaurant are equally fantastic.

### Gardens & Around

Kloof St offers the best dining selection in Gardens.

### CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Vida e Café** (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 0627; www.caffe.co.za; 34 Kloof St, Gardens; mains US\$2.80; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Capetonians have taken this home-grown chain's freshly brewed coffee, orange juice, Portuguese-style pastries and filled rolls to their hearts. There are other branches all over town.

**Wild Things** (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 3445; 96 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; mains US\$4; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-7pm Sat, 8am-5pm Sun) Specialising in game meats, this deli-café prepares its own biltong, bakes its own pies and offers a range of tempting preserves.

**Mount Nelson Hotel** (Map p432; ☎ 021-483 1000; www.mountnelsonhotel.orient-express.com; 76 Orange St; afternoon tea US\$16; ☎ 2.30-5.30pm) There's always a splendid afternoon tea, including local delicacies such as samosas, as well as the usual finger sandwiches, cakes and scones.

### RESTAURANTS

**Café Gainsbourg** (Map p432; ☎ 021-422 1780; 64 Kloof St, Gardens; mains US\$5.50-7) This minimalist decorated café has expanded its dining area and menu range. It's a great spot for any of the day's meals, with the lamb shank, burgers and salads especially recommended.

**Aubergine** (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 4909; www.aubergine.co.za; 39 Barnet St, Gardens; mains US\$9-17; ☎ 7pm-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Thu) It's about the food here – and it's world class. Innovative dishes, such as warthog confit or salmon trout ice-cream are on the à la carte menu.

**Manna Epicure** (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 2413; 151 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ 8am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun) Join the in set for deliciously simple breakfast or lunch at this trendy café; or try afternoon cocktails and tapas on the street-front veranda.

### Green Point & Waterfront

The Waterfront's plethora of restaurants and cafés have nice ocean views although it's essentially a giant tourist trap. Better value and a less touristy dining experience is on offer a short walk away in Green Point and Mouille Point.

### CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

**Giovanni's Deli World** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-434 6983; 103 Main Rd, Green Point; mains US\$2.80-4; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) Giovanni's can make up any sandwich you fancy and their pavement café is a popular hangout.

**Melissa's** (Map pp424-5; www.melissas.co.za; 1 Portside, cnr Upper Portwood & Main Rds, Green Point; mains US\$4; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun) We love the latest in Melissa's chain of distinguished deli and café emporiums, located on the corner of the trendy Portside complex.

**Café Neo** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 0849; 129 Beach Rd, South Seas, Mouille Point; mains US\$4-5.40; ☎ 7am-7pm) Our favourite seaside café has a relaxed vibe and pleasingly contemporary design.

### RESTAURANTS

**Willoughby & Co** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 6115; Shop 6132 Victoria Wharf, Waterfront; mains US\$8-9.50; ☎ restaurant 11.30am-10.45pm, deli 9am-8.30pm) Huge servings of sushi are the standout from a good-value fish-based menu at this casual eatery and deli, on the ground floor of Victoria Wharf.

**Wakame** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 2377; www.wakame.co.za; cnr of Beach Rd & Surrey Pl, Mouille Point; mains US\$9.50; ☎ noon-10pm) Tucking into Wakame's salt and pepper squid or sushi platter while gazing at the glorious coastal view is a won-

derful way to pass an afternoon. Book for a balcony spot for sunset drinks.

**One Waterfront** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-418 0520; Cape Grace Hotel, West Quay, Waterfront; mains US\$9.50-13) It's the daring combinations of ingredients that catch the eye on the menu, though some of the best dishes are those that keep it simple such as the lovely fishcakes.

### DRINKING

Cape Town didn't become known as the 'Tavern of the Seven Seas' for nothing. Head out on a Friday or Saturday night to Long St, the Waterkant or Camps Bay for an eye-opening experience of how the locals like to party. Most bars open around 3pm and close after midnight, and much later Friday and Saturday.

### City Bowl & Waterkant

**Marvel** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 5880; 236 Long St, City Bowl; ☎ 1pm-4am Mon-Sat) Stuffed as a sardine can, Marvel is a fantastic bar where cool kids of all colours rub shoulders (not to mention practically everything else).

**Gallery Bar** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 2086; cnr Long & Pepper Sts, City Bowl) The chic urban black set gather beneath the Urban Chic Hotel at this sophisticated bar, with windows opening onto Long St and a nice line in cocktails.

**Orchard Bank** (Map pp428-9; www.orchardbank.co.za; 229B Long St, City Bowl) One of Long St's more interesting and laid-back venues, with a roster of events including stand-up comedy.

**Nose Wine Bar** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 2200; www.thenose.co.za; Cape Quarter, Dixon St, Waterkant) First-class wine bar where you can sip your way around 38 of the Cape's best wines. It also serves excellent food and runs wine-tasting courses.

### Gardens & Around

**Relish** (Map p432; ☎ 021-422 3584; 70 New Church St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat & Sun) You'll get panoramic views of Table Mountain and Lion's Head from this trendy place with a wide outdoor deck. The food is good and during happy hour (6pm to 7pm) cocktails are only US\$1.60.

**Café Vespa** (Map p432; ☎ 021-426 5042; www.cafevespa.com; 108 Kloof St, Tamboerskloof; ☎ 9am-midnight) This hipsters' hangout does a mean line in cocktails, coffee and tapas, all of which can be enjoyed on the terrace with a grandstand view of Table Mountain.

**Planet** (Map p432; ☎ 021-483 1000; Mount Nelson Hotel, 76 Orange St, Gardens) Cocktails and champers at

the Mount Nelson's deliciously chic bar – who could resist?

### Green Point & Waterfront

**Alba Lounge** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 3385; 1st fl Hildergards, Pierhead, Waterfront) Easily the most stylish place for cocktails at the Waterfront. The view across the harbour is seductive, the drinks inventive and there's a roaring fire in winter.

**Belthazar** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 3753; Shop 153, Victoria Mall, Waterfront) Offering 600 different South African wines, 170-odd of which you can get by the glass! The restaurant specialises in top-class Karan beef and also does plenty of seafood dishes.

**Mitchell's Scottish Ale House** (☎ 021-419 5074; www.mitchellsbreweries.co.za; East Pier Rd, Waterfront; ☎ 11am-2am) Check all airs and graces at the door of this traditional pub serving a variety of freshly brewed beers and good-value meals.

**Buena Vista Social Café** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-433 0611; Exhibition Bldg, 81 Main Rd, Green Point) The staff mix a nice mojito cocktail at this Cuban-themed bar and restaurant, which takes its inspiration from the famous CD. Come on Sunday if you want to salsa dance.

### ENTERTAINMENT

Check the weekly arts guide in the **Mail & Guardian** (www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/daily/menu-guide.htm) to find out what's going on.

You can book seats for practically anything through **Computicket** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 083-915 8000; www.computicket.com). There is an outlet at the Waterfront as well as other locations throughout the city.

### Cinemas

The big multiplexes can be found in Victoria Wharf at the Waterfront, Cavendish Sq and Canal Walk.

**Labia** (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 5927; www.labia.co.za; 68 Orange St, Gardens; tickets US\$3.40), together with its two-screen **Labia on Kloof** (Map p432; ☎ 021-424 5727) around the corner, is the best cinema for 'mainstream alternative' films.

### Live Music

#### CLASSICAL

The incredibly active **Cape Town Philharmonic** (www.cpo.org.za) leads the way on the Mother City's classical music scene, performing concerts mainly at **City Hall** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-410 9809; Darling St, City Bowl) as well as at Artscape, the Waterfront and elsewhere around the Cape.



Consisting of three different-sized auditoria, the performing-arts complex **Artscape** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-410 9800; www.artscape.co.za; 1-10 DF Malan St, Foreshore) is the hub of classical and theatrical performances in Cape Town. Walking around this area at night is not recommended.

## JAZZ

**Green Dolphin** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 7471; www.greenolphin.co.za; Waterfront; cover US\$3.40) There's a consistently good line-up of artists at this upmarket jazz venue and restaurant (serving decent food). Shows kick off at 8.15pm daily.

**Marimba** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-418 3366; www.marimbasa.com; Cape Town Convention Centre, City Bowl; diners US\$2.80, nondiners US\$4) Yes, they do have a marimba band playing occasionally at this slick Afro-chic venue as well as a packed schedule of other jazz artists. The food is good and the music sets get going at 8pm.

**West End** (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-637 9132; Cine 400 Bldg, College Rd, Ryelands Estate, Athlone; cover US\$4; ☎ 8pm-late Fri & Sat) Mainstream jazz is the name of the game here. This is one of Cape Town's top venues, attracting a well-heeled clientele and top performers.

**Manenberg's Jazz Café** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-421 5639; Clock Tower Centre, Waterfront; cover US\$4-11) Swing to jazz and African jive at this famed club that seems to have survived its move to the Waterfront. On Friday and Saturday it's free to see the bands playing the sundowner set from 5pm to 7pm, but a cover charge kicks in later.

## ROCK/AFRICAN

**Mercury Live** (Map p432; ☎ 021-465 2106; www.mercury.live.co.za; 43 De Villiers St, Zonnebloem; cover US\$2.80-5.50) Cape Town's premier rock venue plays host to top SA bands and overseas visitors. If you don't like the band, there's always the DJ bar Mercury Lounge below and the Shack bar next door.

Otherwise for African bands head to these long-running restaurants:

**Marco's African Place** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5412; 15 Rose Lane, Bo-Kaap; cover US\$1.40; ☎ noon-11pm)

**Mama Africa** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 1017; 178 Long St, City Bowl; cover US\$2, if dining US\$1.40; ☎ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat)

## Nightclubs

The major nightclubs are concentrated in the City Bowl around Long St and in the Waterkant. The big nights are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

**Snap** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 083-940 3983; 6 Pepper St, City Bowl; cover US\$2.80) The Cape Flats comes to the city at this urban African club with a welcoming, predominantly black audience. Dance to music from across Africa.

**Club Galaxy** (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-637 9132; College Rd, Ryelands Estate, Athlone; cover US\$4) Long-time Cape Flats dance venue where you can get down to R&B, hip-hop and live bands with a black and coloured crowd. The equally legendary West End jazz venue is next door.

**Zula Sound Bar** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 424 2442; 194 Long St, City Bowl; cover US\$2.80) Hosts an interesting range of events including live bands, DJs and even open-mike poetry sessions. The long balcony is the place to watch Long St go by.

## SHOPPING

Shops in the city centre and the Waterfront stock most things you'll need, but if you hunger for a suburban mall, visit **Canal Walk** (Map pp416-17; ☎ 0860-101 165; www.canalwalk.co.za; Century Blvd, Century City, Milnerton; ☎ 9am-9pm), the largest mall on the continent, about 5km north of the city centre.

There are craft shops all over town but few of the traditional African items come from the Cape Town area itself. Great buys include the local township-produced items, such as beadwork dolls, toys made from recycled tin cans and wire sculptures.

Browse the markets at **Green Point Market** (Map pp424-5; Western Blvd, Green Point; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Sun) and **Greenmarket Sq** (pp428-9; cnr Shortmarket & Burg Sts, City Bowl; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat). Also check out **African Image** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 8385; www.african-image.co.za; cnr Church & Burg Sts), which has a fabulous range of ancient African artefacts and a lot of township crafts here, as well as wildly patterned shirts. **Monkeybiz** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 0145; www.monkeybiz.co.za; 65 Rose St, Bo-Kaap) sells brilliant, beaded products all made by women in the townships, with the profits going to a HIV/AIDS clinic (held upstairs every Friday).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Cape Town International Airport** (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-937 1200; www.airports.co.za) is 20km east of the city centre, approximately 20 minutes' drive depending on traffic.

Apart from **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 0860 359 722; www.flysaa.com) there are two budget airlines operating out of Cape Town: **Kulula.com**

(☎ 0861 585 852; www.kulula.com) and **1time** (☎ 0861 345 345; www.1time.co.za). All three fly to the major South African cities. The following are the cheapest one-way fares you might pay from Cape Town to Durban (US\$67); East London (US\$80); Jo'burg (US\$93); Port Elizabeth (US\$97); and Upington (US\$96).

## Bus

Four major long-distance bus lines operate out of Cape Town. Their booking offices and main arrival and departure points are at the Meriman Sq end of Cape Town train station (City Bowl).

**Greyhound** (☎ 021-75 6363; www.greyhound.co.za)

**Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za)

**SA Roadlink** (☎ 021-425 0203; www.saroadlink.co.za)

**Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za)

For more information on bus routes and fares, and on the Baz Bus, see p592.

## Minibus Taxi

Most long-distance minibus taxis start picking up passengers in townships, especially Langa and Nyanga, perhaps also making a trip into Cape Town train station if they need more people. The townships are not great places to be wandering around in the early hours of the morning so *do not* go into them without good local knowledge or a reliable local guide. A local-area minibus taxi from Cape Town train station to Langa costs about US\$0.70.

## Train

All trains leave from the main Cape Town train station. It can take a long time to reach the front of the queue at the **booking office** (☎ 021-449 4596; ☎ 7.30am-4.55pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-10.30am Sat).

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Both **Backpacker Bus** (☎ 021-447 4991, 82-119 9185; www.backpackerbus.co.za) and **Homeland Shuttle & Tours** (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 0294, 083-265 6661; www.homeland.co.za; 305 Long St, City Bowl) pick up from accommodation in the city and offer airport transfers for US\$12 per person (US\$16 between 5pm and 8am).

Expect to pay around US\$27 for a non-shared taxi; the officially authorised airport taxi company is **Touch Down Taxis** (☎ 021-919

4659). If there are four of you, consider making a booking with Rikkis (below) who charge US\$17 for hire of the tiny minivan cabs.

## Bus

For local bus services the main station is the **Golden Acre Terminal** (Map pp428-9; Grand Parade, City Bowl). From here **Golden Arrow** (☎ 0800 656 463; www.gabs.co.za) buses run, with most services stopping early in the evening. Buses are most useful for getting along the Atlantic Coast from the city centre to Hout Bay. When travelling short distances, most people wait at the bus stop and take either a bus or a shared taxi, whichever arrives first.

Destinations and off-peak fares (applicable from 8am to 4pm) from the city include the Waterfront (US\$0.40), Sea Point (US\$0.40), Kloof Nek (US\$0.40), Camps Bay (US\$0.60) and Hout Bay (US\$0.90). Peak fares are about 30% higher. If you're using a particular bus regularly, it's worth buying 'clipcards', with 10 discounted trips.

## Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis cover most of the city with an informal network of routes and are a cheap way of getting around. Hail them from the side of the road and ask the driver where they're going.

## Rikkis

A cross between a taxi and a shared taxi are the tiny minivans of **Rikkis** (☎ 021-418 6713; www.rikkis.co.za; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat). These can be booked or hailed on the street and travel within a 5km radius of the city centre. A trip from the main train station to Camps Bay is US\$2; from the City Bowl to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens costs US\$9.50 for the first four people.

Although cheap, Rikkis may not be the quickest way to get around, as there is usually a certain amount of meandering as passengers are dropped off, and they are notoriously slow to turn up to a booking.

## Taxi

It's worth considering taking a nonshared taxi late at night or if you're in a group. Rates are about US\$1.40 per km. There's a taxi rank at the Adderley St end of the Grand Parade in the city, or call **Marine Taxi** (☎ 021-434 0434), **SA Cab** (☎ 0861-172 222; www.sacab.co.za) or **Unicab Taxis** (☎ 021-447 4402).



## Train

Metro commuter trains are a handy way to get around, although there are few (or no) trains after 6pm Monday to Friday and after noon on Saturday. For information contact **Cape Metro Rail** (☎ 0800 656 463; www.capemetrorail.co.za).

Metro trains have 1st- and economy-class carriages only. The difference in price and comfort is negligible, although you'll find the 1st-class compartments to be safer on the whole.

The most important line for visitors is the Simon's Town line, which runs through Observatory and then around the back of Table Mountain through upper-income white suburbs and along the False Bay coast. These trains run at least every hour from around 5am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday (to 6pm on Saturday), and from 7.30am to 6.30pm on Sunday.

Metro trains run some way out of Cape Town, to Strand on the eastern side of False Bay, and into the Winelands to Stellenbosch and Paarl. They are the cheapest and easiest means of transport to these areas; security is best at peak times.

Some economy/1st-class fares include Observatory (US\$0.50/0.70), Muizenberg (US\$0.75/1.10), Simon's Town (US\$1/1.40), Paarl (US\$1.10/1.50) and Stellenbosch (US\$1/1.40).

## WESTERN CAPE

The Western Cape is without a doubt one of the world's premier destinations, a place often so picture-perfect it's hard to describe without using clichés. The diversity of the landscape is unparalleled and the number of adventures to experience almost overwhelming. Dive with sharks, jump out of an airplane, surf some of Southern Africa's best breaks, cruise with whales, eat fresh crayfish at a beachside barbecue, stand at the southernmost tip of Africa and sample some of the world's finest wines.

The region is the country's most popular tourist destination, so at times you may feel a bit like a zebra in a herd travelling around here, particularly along the Garden Route. But it's a magical place, with ample opportunity to flee the crowds. Whichever way you go, however, in the Western Cape there's no escaping the beauty.

## WINELANDS

The Boland, stretching inland and upwards from Cape Town, is not the only wine-growing region in South Africa, but it's certainly the most famous. It's name means 'Upland', a reference to the dramatic mountain ranges that shoot up to over 1500m, on whose fertile slopes the vineyards form a patchwork.

With its centuries-long history of colonial settlement, there's a distinctly European feel to the Boland, particularly in French-themed culinary hot spot Franschhoek (French Corner). Lively student-town Stellenbosch offers the most activities, while Paarl is a busy commercial centre with excellent estates.

## Stellenbosch

☎ 021 / pop 220,000

South Africa's second-oldest European settlement, established on the banks of the Eerste River in 1679, Stellenbosch wears many faces. At times it's a rowdy joint for Stellenbosch University students and at others it's a stately monument to colonial architectural splendour. But most times it's just plain busy, as Capetonians, wine farm workers and tourists descend on its museums, buzzing markets, quality hotels and varied eating and nightlife options.

## INFORMATION

**Fandangos Internet Café** (per hr US\$4) Mill St (☎ 021-887 4628); Drostyd Centre (☎ 021-887 7501; Bird St) Internet access.

**Java Café** (☎ 021-887 6261; cnr Church & Andringa Sts; per hr US\$2) Internet access.

**Rennies Travel** (Mill St) A block from Dorp St, with a Thomas Cook foreign-exchange office.

**Stellenbosch Publicity Association** (☎ 021-883 3584; www.tourismstellenbosch.co.za; 36 Market St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Excellent brochures are available.

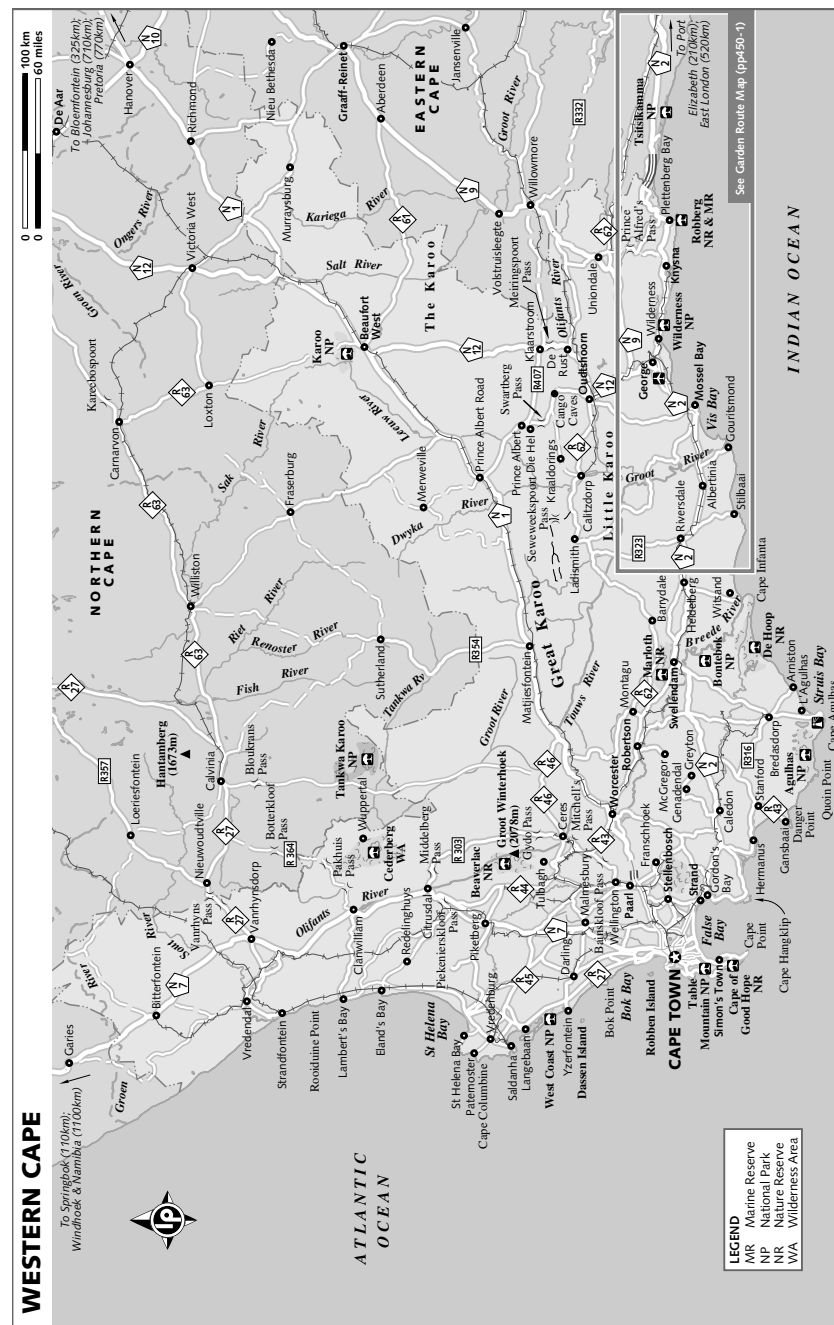
## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

### Village Museum

Charming gardens and a group of exquisitely restored and period-furnished houses dating from 1709 to 1850 make up this must-see **museum** (☎ 021-887 2902; 18 Ryneveld St; adult/child US\$2/1.40; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which occupies the entire city block bounded by Ryneveld, Plein, Drostyd and Church Sts.

### Sasol Art Museum

Featuring one of the country's best selections of local art both famous and emerging, this



**museum** (☎ 021-808 3693; 52 Ryneveld St; adult/child US\$1.20/0.70; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, to 4pm Sat) also contains an irreplaceable collection of African anthropological treasures.

### Braak

At the north end of the **Braak** (Town Sq), an open stretch of grass, you'll find the neo-Gothic **St Mary's on the Braak Church**, completed in 1852. To the west is the **VOC Kruihuis** (Powder House; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm Mon-Fri), which was built in 1777 to store the town's weapons and gunpowder and now houses a small military museum. On the northwest corner is **Fick House**, also known as the Burgerhuis, a fine example of Cape Dutch style from the late 18th century.

### Wineries

There are too many good wineries in the Stellenbosch area to list all of them, so it's sometimes best to drive around and stop on a whim. We do, however, recommend a visit to **Blaauwklippen** (☎ 021-880 0133; www.blaauwklippen.com; tastings US\$3.40; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun), a rustic 300-year-old estate. Also unmissable is **Delaire** (☎ 021-885 1756; www.delairewinery.co.za; tastings US\$1.40; ☎ 10am-5pm), which is known as the 'vineyard in the sky' because of its high-altitude location at the top of the Helshoogte Pass on Rte 310 towards Franschhoek.

The Helderberg area around Somerset West, 20km south of Stellenbosch, has some 20 wineries, including **Vergelegen** (☎ 021-847 1334; www.vergelegen.co.za; Lourensford Rd, Somerset West; admission US\$1.40, tastings US\$0.30-1.40; ☎ 9.30am-4pm), arguably the most beautiful estate in the Cape.

### TOURS

**Easy Rider Wine Tours** (☎ 021-886 4651; 12 Market St) is a long-established company offering good value for a full-day trip at US\$34 including lunch and all tastings.

### SLEEPING

**Stumble Inn** (☎ 021-887 4049; 12 Market St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$8, d with shared bathroom US\$20; ☎ ☎) With a lively and welcoming atmosphere, this place is split over two old houses, one with a pool and the other with a pleasant garden. They also run Easy Rider Wine Tours.

**De Oude Meul** (☎ 021-887 7085; www.deoudemeul.snw.ball.co.za; 10A Mill St; s/d with breakfast US\$50/74;

☎) Above an antiques shop in the centre of town, the accommodation here is very good and reasonable for the price. Some rooms have balconies.

**Stellenbosch Hotel** (☎ 021-887 3644; www.stellenbosch.co.za/hotel; 162 Dorp St; s/d with breakfast from US\$57/95;

☎) A comfortable country-style hotel with a variety of rooms, including those with self-catering facilities and others with four-poster beds. The brasserie is a good spot for a drink.

**Wild Mushroom** (☎ 021-886 9880; 15 Ryneveld St; s/d with breakfast US\$60/105; ☎) Surprisingly quiet for being slap-bang in the middle of Stellenbosch's trendy restaurant zone, this chic multilevelled guesthouse offers plush accommodation.

**De Goue Druif** (☎ 021-883 3555; gouedruif.hypermart.net; 110 Dorp St; s/d with breakfast US\$88/95; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a Cape Dutch building dating back to 1792, this 'Golden Grape' is a charming guesthouse run by a Belgian couple. There is a small gym and sauna.

**Lanzerac Hotel** (☎ 021-887 1132; www.lanzerac.co.za; Jonkershoek Valley; s/d/ste with breakfast US\$230/400/560; ☎ ☎ ☎) This unashamedly opulent place consists of a 300-year-old manor house and winery. Some suites have private pools.

### EATING

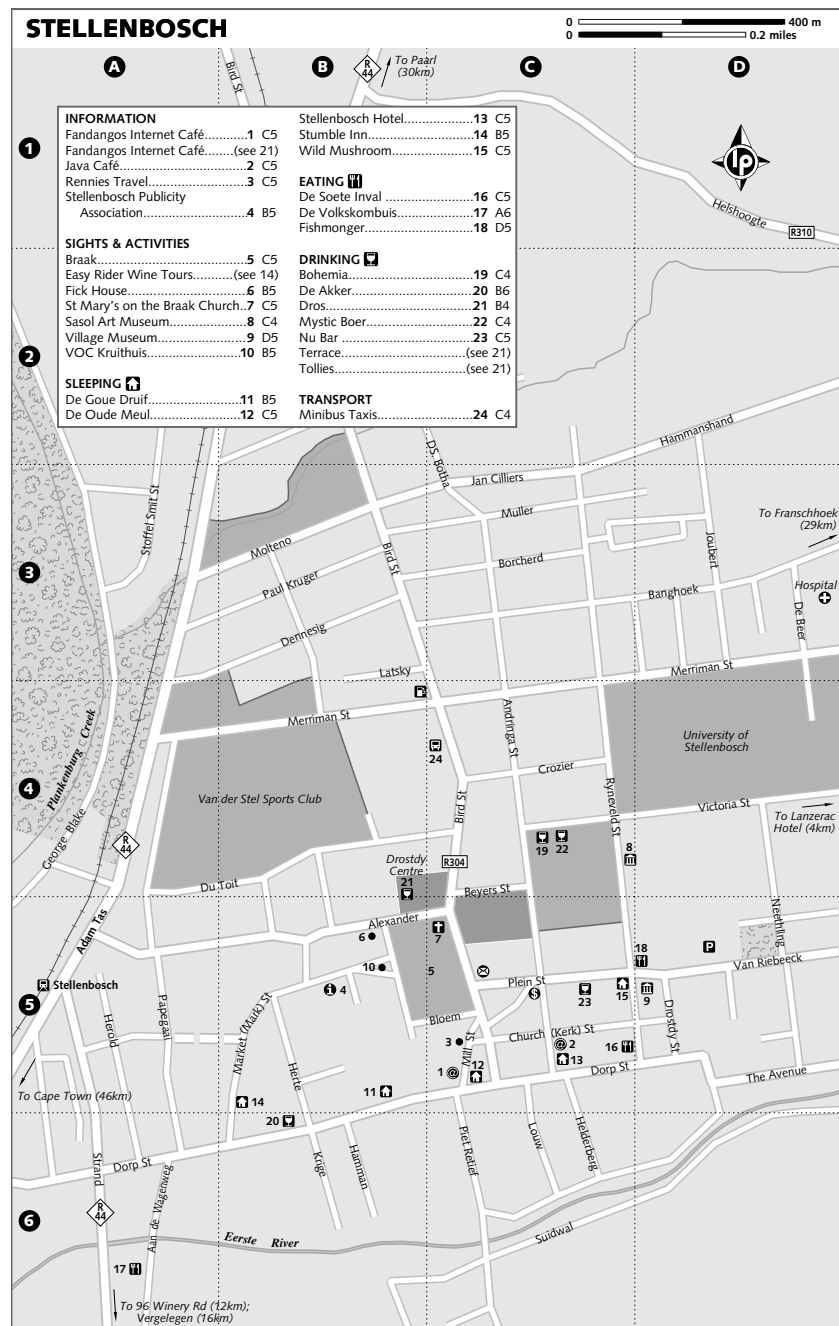
**De Soete Inval** (☎ 021-886 4842; 5 Ryneveld St; mains US\$7; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Known primarily for its choice of 40 different pancakes, this cheerful place also does a fine Dutch-Indonesian rijst-tafel (rice with many dishes) with six dishes for US\$10 or a half portion for US\$7.

**Fishmonger** (☎ 021-887 7835; nr Ryneveld & Plein Sts; mains US\$7; ☎ lunch & dinner) The choice for seafood. It's a snazzily designed place with a relaxed vibe. A platter goes for a reasonable US\$11.

**96 Winery Rd** (☎ 021-842 2945; Zandberg Farm, Winery Rd; mains US\$9.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Off Rte 44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West, this is one of the most respected restaurants in the area, known for its dry aged beef and belief in simply cooked, real food.

**De Volkskombuis** (☎ 021-887 2121; Aan de Wagenweg; mains US\$10; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) A local favourite that's open 365 days a year, this no-frills, atmospheric place specialises in traditional Cape Malay cuisine and features a terrace with fine mountain views.

**Moyo** (☎ 021-119 1100; Spier Estate, Vlotenburg; buffet US\$24; ☎ lunch & dinner) This tourist-pleasing place brings a fantasy vision of Africa to the middle of the Spier wine estate. It's a lot of



fun, with roving musicians and dancers and alfresco dining in tents and up in the trees.

#### DRINKING

**Nu Bar** (☎ 021-886 8998; 51 Plein St) This place has a nightclub feel, with a small dance floor beyond the long bar where the DJ pumps out hip-hop and house.

**Mystic Boer** (☎ 021-886 8870; 3 Victoria St) Cool Afrikaans kids hang out here in surroundings perhaps best described as post-transformation era retro-Boer chic.

**Dros** (☎ 021-886 4856; Drostdy Centre, Bird St), the **Terrace** (☎ 021-887 194; Drostdy Centre, Bird St) and **Tollies** (Drostdy Centre, Bird St), clustered together in the complex just off Bird St and north of the Braak, are among the liveliest bars.

The classic student watering holes include **Bohemia** (☎ 021-882 8375; cnr Andringa & Victoria Sts), and **De Akker** (☎ 021-883 3512; 90 Dorp St), which has an upstairs cellar for live music.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

##### Bus

Long-distance bus services charge high prices for the short sector to Cape Town and do not take bookings. You're better off using **Backpacker Bus** (☎ 021-447 4991; www.backpackerbus.co.za), which charges US\$19 to US\$30 one way and will pick you up from where you are staying.

##### Minibus Taxi

A minibus taxi ride to Paarl is about US\$4 (45 minutes), but you may have to change taxis en route at Pniel.

##### Train

Metro trains run the 46km between Cape Town and Stellenbosch (1st/economy class US\$1.60/\$0.90, about one hour). Note there are no 2nd-class tickets. For inquiries, call **MetroRail** (☎ 0800 656 463). To be safe, travel in the middle of the day.

#### GETTING AROUND

The town is navigable on foot and bicycles, a good way to get around, can be hired from the Stumble Inn (p440) for US\$2.80 per hour or US\$12 for the day.

#### Franschhoek

☎ 021 / pop 13,000

Billing itself as the country's gastronomic capital, the toughest decision you'll face in Franschhoek is where to eat. It certainly has

one of the loveliest settings in the Cape and with a clutch of art galleries, wine farms and stylish guesthouses thrown in, it may feel a little like a tourist theme park. As long as you have transport this a good base from which to visit both Stellenbosch and Paarl.

The **Franschhoek Wine Valley Tourism** (☎ 021-876 3603; www.franschhoek.org.za; Huguenot St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, to 4pm Sun) office can provide a map of the area's scenic walks.

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The engrossing **Huguenot Memorial Museum** (☎ 021-876 2532; Lambrecht St; adult/child US\$0.70/0.30; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) celebrates South Africa's Huguenots and houses the genealogical records of their descendants.

#### Wineries

Many of Franschhoek's wineries are within walking distance of the town centre, but you'll need transport to reach famous **Boschendal** (☎ 021-870 4210; www.boschendal.com; Pniel Rd; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), the classic Winelands estate, which has lovely architecture, food and wine.

#### SLEEPING

**Chamonix Guest Cottages** (☎ 021-876 2494; www.chamonix.co.za; Uitkyk St; cottages per person from US\$27) Pleasant cottages sleeping up to four are set in the middle of the winery's vineyards, a 10-minute walk uphill north of Huguenot St.

**Cottage** (☎ 021-876 2392; thecottage55@iafrica.com; 55 Huguenot St; s/d US\$35/47) There is just one cottage sleeping two, or four at a pinch, but it's a beauty. It's private, quiet, just a few minutes' walk from the village centre and now has self-catering facilities.

**Le Ballon Rouge** (☎ 021-876 2651; www.ballon-rouge.co.za; 7 Reservoir St East; s/d with breakfast US\$70/90; ☎ ☎ ☎) A small guesthouse with good-quality rooms and stylish suites all opening out to a patio. It also has a popular restaurant.

**La Fontaine** (☎ 021-876 2112; www.lafontaine.franschhoek.co.za; 21 Dirkie Uys St; s/d with breakfast US\$80/100; ☎) Offering a quieter accommodation alternative off the town's main drag, this is a stylishly appointed family home featuring 12 spacious rooms with wooden floors and mountain views.

**Le Quartier Français** (☎ 021-876 2151; www.lequartier.co.za; 16 Huguenot St; d from US\$320; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is one of the best places to stay in the Winelands. Set around a leafy courtyard and

pool, guest rooms are very large with fireplaces, huge beds and stylish décor. There's also the fine restaurant, Ici, here.

#### EATING

**Goederust** (☎ 021-876 3687; Main Rd, La Motte; mains US\$4-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch) A new take on Cape farm-kitchen food is served in this charming old-fashioned farm-restaurant set in a pleasant garden. The spicy calamari salad (US\$5.50) is a knockout, as are the filled pancakes.

**Ici** (☎ 021-876 2151; 16 Huguenot St; mains US\$7-38; ☎ lunch & dinner) This Franschhoek stalwart is now split into two dining options: a stylish bistro offering food such as zebra carpaccio; and a set-menu restaurant offering a four-course meal (US\$38). The hotel's bar does lighter meals for around US\$8.

**Topsi & Company** (☎ 021-876 2952; 7 Reservoir St; mains US\$8-11; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This place is quirky and very relaxed, and renowned chef Topsis Venter pops out from her open kitchen to serve the totally delicious food and chat with guests; BYO wine.

**La Petite Ferme** (☎ 021-876 3016; Franschhoek Pass Rd; mains US\$11; ☎ noon-4pm) A must-visit for foodies who hanker for romantic views, boutique wines and smoked, deboned salmon trout, its delicately flavoured signature dish.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The best way to reach Franschhoek is in your own vehicle. Some visitors choose to cycle here from Stellenbosch, but roads are winding and can be treacherous. Shared taxis run from Stellenbosch (US\$1.10) or Paarl station (US\$1.20).

#### Paarl

☎ 021 / pop 165,000

Less touristy and more spread out than Stellenbosch, Paarl is a large commercial centre, surrounded by mountains and vineyards, on the banks of the Berg River. It's not really a town to tour on foot but there is still quite a lot to see and do, including vineyards within town limits. There are some great walks in the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve, some excellent Cape Dutch architecture and some significant monuments to Afrikaner culture.

#### INFORMATION

**Paarl Tourism** (☎ 021-863 4937; www.paarlonline.com; 86 Main St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun) Information on the whole region.

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

##### Paarl Museum

This **museum** (☎ 021-872 2651; www.museums.org.za/paarl/museum; 303 Main St; adult/child US\$0.70/donation; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) is housed in the Oude Pastorie (Old Parsonage), built in 1714. It has a fascinating collection of Cape Dutch antiques and relics of Huguenot and early Afrikaner culture.

##### Afrikaans Language Museum

Paarl is considered the wellspring of the Afrikaans language, a fact covered well by this interesting **museum** (☎ 021-872 3441; www.taalmuseum.co.za; 11 Pastorie Ave; adult/child US\$1.40/0.30; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat).

##### Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve

The three giant granite domes that dominate this popular reserve and loom over the western side of town apparently glisten like pearls if they are caught by the sun after a fall of rain. The reserve has mountain  *fynbos* , a cultivated wildflower garden, and numerous walks with excellent views over the valley.

##### Bainskloof Pass

This is one of the country's great mountain passes, with a superb caravan park halfway along. It's a magical drive, which, if you have the lungs for it, would be even better experienced on a bicycle. Rte 303 runs from Wellington across Bainskloof to meet Rte 43, which runs south to Worcester and north to Ceres.

There are several nearby walks, including the five-hour **Bobbejaans River Walk** to a waterfall. You need to buy a permit (US\$4), which is available from the Cape Nature Conservation desk at Cape Town Tourism (see p419).

#### SLEEPING

**Manyano Centre** (☎ 021-872 2537; manyano@eject.co.za; Sanddrift St; dm with full board US\$15) An enormous YMCA-style accommodation complex with spartan three-bed dorms; you'll need to bring a sleeping bag. Call in advance, especially on weekends. Huguenot train station is closer than the main Paarl station.

**Berg River Resort** (☎ 021-863 1650; bergr@mweb.co.za; camp sites US\$25, d chalets US\$70; ☎) An attractive municipal campground beside the Berg River, 5km from Paarl on the N45 towards Franschhoek. Facilities include canoes, trampolines and a café.



**Bakkies B&B** (☎ 021-873 5161; www.bakkiesbb.co.za; Bainskloof Rd; s/d US\$23/38; 🏠 📶 🚰) This place offers good-value, well-equipped rooms out on the Bainskloof Rd and is an excellent budget base for exploring the area. Lunch and dinner need to be booked, and a daily breakfast (US\$5.50) is offered.

**Rodeberg Lodge** (☎ 021-863 3202; www.rodeberg.lodge.co.za; 74 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$39/62; 🏠 📶 🚰) Good rooms are sensibly located away from the busy main road, and breakfast is taken in the conservatory, opening onto a leafy garden.

### EATING

Several of the local vineyards have restaurants or do picnic lunches and they are among the best places to eat.

**Kostinrichting** (☎ 021-871 1353; 19 Pastorie Ave; mains US\$4; 🍷 lunch Mon-Sat) Ideal if you're looking for a pleasant central café. It's in a Victorian building that once was a school, and has an attached crafts shop.

**De Malle Madonna** (☎ 021-863 3925; 127 Main St; mains US\$5.50-9; 🍷 breakfast & lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed & Sun) Mediterranean comfort food is the emphasis at this breezy café-bistro and the biltong and glazed beetroot salad (US\$5.50) is a winner.

**Marc's Mediterranean Cuisine & Garden** (☎ 021-863 3980; 129 Main St; mains US\$8-10; 🍷 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) A light and bright place with food to match and a Provence-style garden to dine in.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Bus

All the major long-distance bus companies offer services going through Paarl, so it's easy to build it into your itinerary. The bus segment between Paarl and Cape Town is US\$15, so consider taking the cheaper train to Paarl and then linking up with the buses.

#### Train

Metro trains run roughly every hour between Cape Town and Paarl (1st/economy class US\$2/1.10, 1½ hours, Monday to Friday). Note there is no 2nd class. The services are less frequent on weekends. Take care to travel on trains during the busy part of the day.

You can travel by train from Paarl to Stellenbosch: take a Cape Town-bound train and change at Muldersvlei.

## THE OVERBERG

All roads heading east from Cape Town suddenly and unforgivably come against a mountainous barrier, forcing you to hit the lower gears. Once you're up and over the top, you're 'over the mountain', the literal meaning of Overberg.

Roughly the region south and west of the Franschoek Range, and south of the Wemmershoek and Riviersonderend Ranges, which form a natural barrier with the Breede River Valley, the Overberg is reached from Cape Town via the N2 (quicker) or via Rte 44 from Strand, a breathtaking coastal drive. The first major stop is Hermanus, a seaside resort famous for the whales that frequent its shores.

This region's wealth of *fynbos* is unmatched; most species flower somewhere in the period between autumn and spring.

### Hermanus

☎ 028 / pop 24,700

Hermanus (pronounced 'Hair-maan-es') was founded as a fishing village, and while it retains vestiges of its heritage, its proximity to Cape Town (122km) has made it a day-tripper's paradise, in part thanks to the fact that it is considered the best land-based whale-watching destination in the world. As a result, the town has become highly commercialised and crowded, particularly during the **Hermanus Whale Festival** (www.whalefestival.co.za) in September and during school holidays in December and January.

There is respite to be found at the appealing beaches, most east of the town centre, and the surrounding rocky hills offer good walks and a nature reserve protecting some of the prolific *fynbos*.

### INFORMATION

**Hermanus Tourism** (☎ 028-312 2629; www.hermanus.co.za; Old Station Bldg, Mitchell St; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) East of the town centre.

**Internet City** (☎ 028-312 4683; Waterkant Bldg, Main Rd; per hr US\$2.80; 🕒 8am-8pm) Offers reliable and speedy internet connections.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Between June and November, southern right whales come to Walker Bay to calve. There can be up to 70 whales in the bay at once and the numbers visiting seem to grow every year. Humpback whales are also sometimes seen.

Whales often come very close to shore and there are some excellent vantage points from the cliff paths that run from one end of Hermanus to the other. The best places are Castle Rock, Kraal Rock and Sievers Point.

### Shark Cage Diving

Many operators in Hermanus heavily promote this, but most boats actually depart from Gansbaai, some 53km along the coast (all companies transport you there). Operators use bait to attract the sharks to the cage, which means that these killer fish are being trained to associate humans with food. It's not a pleasant scenario, especially if you're a surfer – attacks on whom have increased of late.

An internationally recognised diving qualification is required in order to take part in the dive, although some allow snorkellers into the cage. The most highly recommended operators are **Brian McFarlane** (☎ 028-312 2766; www.sharkcagediving.net; trips US\$110) and **Shark Lady Adventures** (☎ 028-313 3287; www.sharklady.co.za; 61 Marine Dr; trips US\$135).

### Walking

The **Cliff Path Walking Trail** meanders from town along the sea to Grotto Beach, a long narrow surf beach with excellent facilities. The walk takes about 1½ hours and along the way you'll pass Kraaiwater, a good whale-watching lookout, and Langbaai and Voelklip beaches. The 1400-hectare **Fernkloof Nature Reserve** (☎ 028-313 8100; Fir Ave; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm) is worth a visit if you are interested in *fynbos*.

### SLEEPING

**Hermanus Backpackers** (☎ 028-312 4293; moobag@mweb.co.za; 26 Flower St; dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$28; 🏠 📶 🚰) This is a smashing place with clued-up staff, great décor and facilities, including a reed-roof bar. Free breakfast is served in the morning.

**Moby's Traveller's Lodge** (☎ 028-313 2361; www.mobys.co.za; 9 Mitchell St; dm US\$11, s/d with shared bathroom US\$27/35; 🏠 📶 🚰) Travellers give this place rave reviews. You can party the night away at the big bar or chill out in the awesome rock pool with its own waterfall. There's a daily pub lunch on offer and an internet café (US\$4 per hour).

**Zoete Inval Travellers Lodge** (☎ 028-312 1242; www.zoeteinval.co.za; 23 Main Rd; dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$46) More a guesthouse than a hostel, this is a quiet place with good ameni-

ties (including a Jacuzzi) and neatly furnished rooms.

**Potting Shed** (☎ 028-312 1712; www.thepottingshedguesthouse.co.za; 28 Albertyn St; s/d with breakfast from US\$40/59; 🏠 📶 🚰) An excellent-value guesthouse that's drawn glowing reader reviews. The neat rooms are comfortable, but the bathrooms are shower-only.

**Auberge Burgundy** (☎ 028-313 1202; www.hermanus.co.za/accom/auberge; 16 Harbour Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$99/132; 🏠 📶 🚰) This is a wonderful place, built in the style of a Provençal villa, with fine facilities, wrought-iron balconies and unique art on the walls.

**Marine Hermanus** (☎ 028-313 1000; www.marine-hermanus.co.za; Marine Dr; s/d with breakfast from US\$230/377; 🏠 📶 🚰) Right on the sea with immaculate grounds and amenities, this place is as posh as a five-star hotel should be. The hotel has two restaurants, both sea-facing, open for dinner only.

### EATING

**Savannah Café** (☎ 028-312 4259; Village Theatres Bldg, Marine Dr; mains from US\$5.50; 🍷 breakfast & lunch) Enjoy a 'Whale of a Breakfast' – eggs, juice, coffee, bacon, chips, mushrooms and boerewors, or a sweet pastry while staring at the sea. There's also a decent selection for vegetarians, vegans and diabetics.

**Marimba Café** (☎ 028-312 2148; 9 Royal La off Main Rd; mains US\$6-11; 🍷 dinner) The lively atmosphere matches the eclectic menu at this rather unkempt but recommended restaurant and bar, where you can eat traditional African dishes from around the continent.

**Bientang's Cave** (☎ 028-312 3454; Marine Dr; mains US\$7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Nestled in the cliffs beside the water in an actual seaside cave, this restaurant's remarkable setting overshadows the only so-so food.

**Casa do Zé** (☎ 028-313 0377; 12 Mitchell St; mains US\$8; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A quaint Portuguese restaurant specialising in fresh grilled fish and the famous LM (Lourenço Marques) prawns.

**Burgundy Restaurant** (☎ 028-312 2800; Marine Dr; mains US\$8-13; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Housed in one of the oldest buildings in town, with garden and sea views, this highly acclaimed restaurant serves up mostly seafood.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

All three hostels run a shuttle service (US\$2.80) to the Baz Bus drop-off point;

otherwise there are no regular bus services to Hermanus from Cape Town.

## L'Agulhas

☎ 028

Once described, somewhat cruelly, as 'nothing more than a seagull and a mussel', the settlement of L'Agulhas does unfortunately offer little for the visitor in and of itself, but **Cape Agulhas**, just south of town, is the southernmost point of Africa.

On a stormy day the low, shattered rocks and crashing seas can be atmospheric. Otherwise, there's no real reason to linger longer than it takes to snap a photo and peek at the nearby **lighthouse**, the second-oldest in South Africa.

## De Hoop Nature Reserve

Covering 36,000 hectares, plus 5km out to sea, is **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (☎ 028-425 5020; bredasdorp@capenature.org.za; admission US\$2.80, camp sites US\$13, 4-person cottages from US\$44; ☎ 7am-6pm). One of Cape Nature Conservation's best reserves, it includes a scenic coastline with stretches of beach, dunes and rocky cliffs, plus a freshwater lake and Potberg Mountain. Fauna includes the Cape mountain zebra, the bontebok (antelope) and a wealth of bird life. The coast is an key breeding area for the southern right whale.

Although there are numerous day walks, an overnight mountain-bike trail and good snorkelling along the coast, the reserve's most interesting feature is the five-day **Whale Route** (per person US\$94). Covering 55km, it offers excellent opportunities to see whales between June and December. Accommodation is in modern fully equipped self-catering cottages. The trail needs to be booked in advance, and only groups of at least six are accepted.

Those just looking to spend the night in the reserve can choose from a variety of sleeping options, including basic cottages and a 10-person beach house. Accommodation prices include entrance fees into the reserve.

The reserve is about 260km from Cape Town. The only access to the reserve is via Wydgelëe on the Bredasdorp to Malgas road. At Malgas a manually operated *pont* (river ferry) on the Breede River still operates (between dawn and dusk).

## Swellendam

☎ 028 / pop 30,000

Rapidly growing Swellendam, dating back to 1776, offers an unbeatable combination of

location, beauty and history. It's a disarming town, dotted with old oaks and surrounded by rolling wheat country and mountains, which makes a great base for exploring the Overberg and the Little Karoo. It's also a handy stopover between Cape Town and the Garden Route.

The town backs up against a spectacular ridge, part of the 1600m Langeberg Range, and is particularly impressive on a cloudy day when the mist rolls in over the mountains.

## INFORMATION

**Swellendam Tourism Bureau** (☎ 028-514 2770; Voortrek St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) In the old mission on the main street.

## SIGHTS

The main sight in town is the excellent **Drostyd Museum** (☎ 028-514 1138; 18 Swellengrebel St; adult/child US\$1.60/0.30; ☎ 9am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3.45pm Sat & Sun). The centrepiece is the beautiful *drostyd* (residence of an official) itself, which dates from 1746. The museum ticket also covers entrance to the nearby **Old Gaol**; the **Gaoler's Cottage** and a watermill; and **Mayville**, another residence dating back to 1853, with a formal Victorian garden.

Take a picture of the **Dutch Reformed Church** (Voortrek St) in the centre of town; Swellendam residents swear it's the third-most-photographed site in the Southern Hemisphere!

## ACTIVITIES

Swellendam has adventures for all ages, budgets and tastes. A good place to sort yourself out is at **Bontebok Tours & Travel** (☎ 028-514 3650; info@bontebok.co.za; 23 Swellengrebel St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), which seems to arrange just about anything.

Popular day trips include De Hoop Nature Reserve (US\$40), day wine trails (US\$40) and mountain-bike hire (US\$12 per day).

For permits to walk in **Marloth Nature Reserve** in the Langeberg Range, 3km north of town, contact the **Nature Conservation Department** (☎ 028-514 1410; day permits US\$2) at the entrance to the reserve.

## SLEEPING

**Swellendam Backpackers Adventure Lodge** (☎ 028-514 2648; backpack@telkomsa.net; 5 Lichtenstein St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom US\$23) Set on a huge plot of land with its own river, 15 horses and Marloth Nature Reserve a stone's throw away, this is an excellent hostel

with enthusiastic management. Homemade dinners (around US\$5.50) are mouth-watering and gigantic. The Baz Bus will drop you right outside.

**Cypress Cottage** (☎ 028-514 3296; www.cypresscotage.info; 3 Voortrek St; s/d US\$34/67; ☎ ☎) There are five individually decorated rooms in this 200-year-old house with a gorgeous garden and a saltwater pool.

**Rooijs Van de Kaap** (☎ 028-514 3001; www.rooijevandekaap.com; 5 Drostyd St; s/d US\$43/59; ☎) Take a swim with a mountain view. This Cape country inn has 10 cosy rooms and an excellent restaurant (mains US\$9.50 to US\$11) serving Cape Malay dishes and wood-fired pizzas.

**Braeside B&B** (☎ 028-514 3325; www.braeside.co.za; 13 Van Oudtshoorn Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$47/67; ☎) This quiet, gracious Cape Edwardian home boasts a beautiful garden, fantastic views and knowledgeable, friendly hosts.

**De Kloof** (☎ 028-514 1303; www.dekloof.co.za; 8 Weltevrede St; s/d with breakfast US\$120/202; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) One of Swellendam's swankiest options, set in an estate dating back to 1801, the De Kloof is a supremely stylish guesthouse with a surprisingly personal touch and free daily wine tastings.

## EATING

**La Belle Alliance** (☎ 028-514 2252; 1 Swellengrebel St; mains US\$2.80-7; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This appealing tearoom, a good spot for lunch, is in an old Masonic lodge with shaded outdoor tables beside the Koringlands River.

**Old Gaol Coffee Shop** (☎ 028-514 3847; Old Gaol Complex, Swellengrebel St; light meals US\$4; ☎ lunch) This is a wonderful little coffee shop, offering delicious snacks, traditional breads, excellent service and high-quality African curios.

**Mattsen's Steak House** (☎ 028-514 2715; 25 Swellengrebel St; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) The delicious pizzas here are large enough for two.

**Koorlands Restaurant** (☎ 028-514 3567; 5 Voortrek St; mains US\$10; ☎ dinner) An eclectic menu of mostly African meat – everything from crocodile to ostrich – is served in an intimate candlelit setting.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Intercap, SA Roadlink, Greyhound and Translux plus the Baz Bus pass through Swellendam on their runs between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, stopping at Bontebok Tours & Travel (see opposite). Bontebok also offers a shuttle to Cape Town (US\$19).

Intercap fares include Cape Town (US\$13, 2½ hours, twice daily) and Mossel Bay (US\$12, two hours).

Minibus taxis depart from the corner of Voortrek and Stasie Sts, by the Caltex petrol station. Service includes Cape Town (US\$1.40, 2½ hours, daily) and Mossel Bay (US\$11, two hours).

The weekly *Southern Cross* train that runs between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops in Swellendam.

## Bontebok National Park

Some 6km south of Swellendam is **Bontebok National Park** (☎ 028-514 2735; adult/child US\$8/4, camp sites US\$10, d cottages US\$27; ☎ 7am-7pm Oct-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep), set aside to ensure the preservation of the endangered bontebok, the unusually marked antelope that once roamed the region in large numbers.

The park falls within the coastal  *fynbos*  area and is on the banks of the Breede River, where swimming is possible. In the late winter and early spring, the veld (grassland) is covered with flowers. In addition to the bonteboks there are rheboks, grysboks, duikers, red hartebeests and mountain zebras. Bird life is abundant.

## ROUTE 62

This area, promoted as the longest wine route in the world, provides an excellent hinterland alternative to the N2 for travel between Cape Town and the Garden Route. Breathtaking mountain passes and intensively cultivated valleys, perfectly preserved 18th-century towns and vast stretches of semi-arid plains dotted with ostriches provide eye-candy, while delectable wine, country cafés, charming B&Bs and even a hot-springs resort enchant the palate and relax the body.

The Little (Klein) Karoo is east of the Breede River Valley and is more fertile and better watered than the harsher Great Karoo to the north.

The towns in this region are presented in the order they would be reached driving the route from Cape Town.

## Montagu

☎ 023 / pop 9500

Populated by artists, dreamers and other escapees, country hospitality is spread thick in picturesque, invigorating Montagu. Founded in 1851, it's a good place to go if you want to

escape the 21st century and get a brief taste of the Little Karoo.

There are some 24 restored national monuments, including fine examples of Art Deco architecture, but it's Montagu's splendid range of activities – hot springs, hikes, hearty meals in old-world buildings – that have turned it into a top Route 62 destination.

The **Tourism Bureau** (☎ 023-6142471; www.tourismmontagu.co.za; 24 Bath St; ☹ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm & 3–5pm Sun) office is extremely efficient and helpful.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Water from the **hot mineral springs** (☎ 023-6141150; admission US\$3.40, parking US\$2; ☹ 8am–11pm) finds its way into the concrete pools at the Avalon Springs Hotel, about 3km from town. Heated to 43°C, energising and renowned for their healing properties, the pools are lively on weekends.

A great way to get here is to hike along the 2.2km **Lover's Walk Trail**, which starts at the car park at the end of Barry St. Pick up the *Hiking Trails* leaflet from the tourism bureau. The route leads past Montagu's top rock-climbing spots and can get tricky (and wet).

Interesting displays and some good examples of antique furniture can be found at the **Montagu Museum** (☎ 023-6141950; 41 Long St; adult/child US\$0.40/0.10; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat & Sun) in the old mission church.

**Joubert House** (☎ 023-6141774; 25 Long St; adult/child US\$0.40/0.10; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat, 10am–12pm Sun), a short walk away, is the oldest house in Montagu (built in 1853) and has been restored to its Victorian finery.

For hikers, the **Bloupoint Trail** is 15.6km long and can be walked in six to eight hours; it traverses ravines and mountain streams, and climbs to 1000m. The **Cogmanskloof Trail** is 12.1km and can be completed in four to six hours. Both trails start from the car park at the end of Tanner St. To hike either trail costs US\$2.40 per person. The tourist bureau handles bookings for overnight cabins near the start of the trails.

### SLEEPING

**De Bos** (☎ 023-6142532; www.debos.co.za; Bath St; camp sites per person US\$4, dm US\$6, s/d US\$16/23; ☹) A genuine farm-stay for backpackers – there's a river, chickens and pecan-nut trees in this 7-hectare property, where colourful old workers' cottages have been converted into self-catering cottages (US\$27).

**Airlies Guest House** (☎ 023-6142943; www.airlies.co.za; Bath St; s/d with breakfast US\$52/79; ☹) Quaint accommodation in a roomy thatched-roof house with spacious wood-floored rooms looking out on the mountains. The hosts are obliging and the breakfast excellent.

**Kingna Lodge** (☎ 023-6141066; www.kingnalodge.co.za; 11 Bath St; s/d US\$54/81; ☹) Each room at this elegant guesthouse is uniquely decorated but all come with marble bathrooms and fireplaces. The five-course dinners (US\$20) draw rave reviews.

**7 Church Street** (☎ 023-6141186; www.7churchstreet.co.za; 7 Church St; s/d with breakfast US\$54/81; ☹) A luxury guesthouse in a charming Karoo building with a manicured garden and an ideal location just a few minutes' walk from both the hot springs and hiking trails.

### EATING

**Succulent Café** (20 Bath St; mains US\$2.80–8; ☹ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Streamlined design, quality coffee, a solid vegetarian menu and fresh ingredients characterise this breezy café loved by local artists. There's internet access (US\$6 per hour), too. Closed Monday nights.

**Jessica's** (☎ 023-6141805; 47 Bath St; mains US\$8–12; ☹ dinner) Named after the family dog, Jessica's serves up inventive bistro dishes, such as butternut ravioli and pan-fried springbok strips, in a cosy atmosphere.

**Josephine's** (☎ 023-6143939; 63 Bath St; mains US\$8–12; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat) A local favourite, with seasonal menus and plenty of fresh fish specials. We love the burgundy-and-pumpkin colour theme.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Translux** (☎ 021-4493333; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at Ashton, 9km from Montagu, on the run between Cape Town (US\$16, 2½ hours, daily) and Port Elizabeth (US\$23, six hours, daily).

**Munnik's** (☎ 021-6371850; per person US\$9.50; ☹ Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) runs a shuttle between Montagu and Cape Town. It'll also take you on to the hot springs for an extra US\$1.40.

Local minibus taxis leave from the **OK Supermarket** (Bath St) near the corner of Market St and run to Cape Town (US\$15, 3½ hours) and Oudtshoorn (US\$5.50, 2½ hours).

### Oudtshoorn

☎ 044 / pop 85,000

That it bills itself as the ostrich capital of the world is no overstatement. These birds

have been bred hereabouts since the 1870s, and at the turn of the 20th century fortunes were made from the fashion for ostrich feathers. Oudtshoorn boomed, and the so-called 'feather barons' built the grand houses that lend the town its distinct atmosphere today.

The town still turns a pretty penny from breeding the birds for meat and leather, and the ostriches also pay their way with tourists – you can buy ostrich eggs, feathers and biltong all over town – but more importantly Oudtshoorn is a great base for exploring the different environments of the Little Karoo, the Garden Route (it's 55km to George along the N12) and the Great Karoo.

The helpful **Oudtshoorn Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-2792532; www.oudtshoorn.com; Baron van Rheeede St; ☹ 7am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat & Sun) is next to the CP Nel Museum.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Extensive displays about ostriches, as well as Karoo history, make up this large and interesting **CP Nel museum** (☎ 044-2727306; 3 Baron van Rheeede St; adult/child US\$1.40tt/3; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat). Included in the ticket price is admission to the **Le Roux Townhouse** (☎ 044-2723676; nr Loop & High Sts; ☹ 9am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri), as good an example of a 'feather palace' as you're likely to see.

Everyone loves a meerkat, but none with as much devotion as Grant McIlrath, the so-called Meerkat Man of Oudtshoorn. On his **meerkat experience** (☎ 044-2723077; www.meerkatmagic.com; minimum donation US\$40; ☹ sunset & sunrise) at a natural meerkat colony a few kilometres west of town, you will get to see up close how these curious, highly intelligent creatures communicate and live. If you have only one wildlife encounter in the Western Cape, make it this one.

If you're going to one of the ostrich farms north of town or to the Cango Caves, carry on driving and take the **Swartberg Pass** all the way to Prince Albert, then return to Oudtshoorn via the **Meiringspoort Pass**. Both are engineering masterpieces, and halfway down the latter there is a waterfall and small visitor centre.

Named after the Khoesaaan word for 'a wet place', the **Cango Caves** (☎ 044-2727410; www.cango.caves.co.za; admission from US\$7; ☹ 9am–4pm) are heavily commercialised but impressive. There's a choice of tours on offer. The caves are 30km north of Oudtshoorn.

### SLEEPING

**Oasis Shanti** (☎ 044-2791163; oasis@mailbox.co.za; 3 Church St; camp sites per person US\$4.70, dm US\$8, d with shared bathroom from US\$24; ☹) Friendly and well run, this recently refurbished hostel is in a large house with a spacious braai and swimming pool area, and shady camping spots.

**Backpackers Paradise** (☎ 044-2723436; www.backpackersparadise.hostel.com; 148 Baron van Rheeede St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9, r from US\$24, d with bathroom US\$34; ☹) In a large old house, this excellent hostel has a separate dorm-bed annexe and free ostrich-egg breakfasts. There's an adventure centre attached.

**Kleinplaas Resort** (☎ 044-2725811; kleinpls@omweb.co.za; 171 Baron van Rheeede St; camp sites US\$16, 4-person chalets US\$51; ☹) A terrific caravan park, with a restaurant and a big pool.

**Oakdene Guesthouse** (☎ 044-2723018; www.oakdene.co.za; 99 Baron van Rheeede St; s/d US\$53/84; ☹) Elegant cottage furniture, wooden floors, ostrich eggs, and quality linen make each room special. There's lush gardens and an excellent pool.

**Adley House** (☎ 044-2724533; www.adleyhouse.co.za; 209 Jan van Riebeeck Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$70/95; ☹) Rooms, all with private entrance, in the 1905 'Feather Palace' have bags of charm, though the separate add-on ones less so. There's a couple of pools and a beautiful outdoor braai and bar area.

### EATING

As you'd expect, most places serve ostrich in one form or another.

**Jemima's** (☎ 044-2720808; 94 Baron van Rheeede St; mains from US\$7; ☹ lunch Fri, dinner daily) Jemima's delights both the palate and the eyes, but it's the food that ultimately takes centre stage. The Cape Malay dishes are legendary.

**De Fijne Keuken** (☎ 044-2726403; 114 Baron van Rheeede St; mains US\$7–9.50; ☹ lunch & dinner) The funky atmosphere is just another good mark for this highly recommended restaurant. There's loads of outdoor seating, and the varied menu includes ostrich cooked every way imaginable, and a large selection of pastas.

**Kalinka** (☎ 044-2792596; 93 Baron van Rheeede St; mains US\$8–11; ☹ lunch & dinner daily, breakfast Sat & Sun) A stylish bistro with an imaginative menu interspersed with Russian delights thanks to skilful chef Olga's love for Muscovite ingredients.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Intercape** (☎ 0861-287287; www.intercape.co.za) has service to Jo'burg (US\$43, 1¼ hours, daily).



Otherwise you can take a **Translux bus** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za) to Mossel Bay (US\$7, one hour, daily) and from there you can get to multiple destinations (see opposite).

The Baz Bus stops at George, from where you can arrange a transfer to Oudtshoorn with Backpackers' Paradise (US\$4.70).

Every Saturday the *Southern Cross* train leaves for Cape Town at 5pm.

## GARDEN ROUTE

The Garden Route is perhaps the most internationally renowned South African destination after Cape Town and the Kruger National Park, and with good reason. Within a few hundred kilometres, the range of topography, vegetation, wildlife and outdoor activity is breathtaking.

Roughly encompassing the coastline from Mossel Bay in the west to just beyond Plettenberg Bay in the east, it caters to all kinds of travellers. Backpackers are taken care of with plenty of hostels, and midrange and top-end folks will be pleased with the range of swanky hotels and charming guesthouses.

You can hike in old-growth forests, bike through wildlife reserves, commune with monkeys, chill out on superb white beaches and canoe in lagoons. Inland, the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma Ranges, which are between 1000m and 1700m high and crossed by some spectacular road passes, split the coast from the semidesert Karoo. The towns most commonly used as bases are Knysna and Plettenberg Bay, though we prefer less crowded Wilderness and Buffalo Bay.

In recent years development has spiralled seemingly out of control, and at times you might feel like you're a cog in a huge tourist machine. All in all, the Garden Route is great, but if you leave South Africa without having seen it, it isn't a disaster. If you leave having seen nothing else, it might be.

## Mossel Bay

☎ 044 / pop 78,000

Once one of the jewels of the Garden Route, Mossel Bay was marred by rampant industrial sprawl in 1980s. Following a clean-up (and an aggressive marketing campaign), the town is enjoying a revival, thanks in large part to its historic buildings, excellent places to stay, plenty of activities, the only north-facing beach in the country and some top surf spots.

The **Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-691 2202; Market St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) is extremely helpful.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The highlight of the **Bartholomeus Dias Maritime Museum complex** (☎ 044-691 1067; Market St; admission US\$0.80; ☎ 8.30am-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3.45pm Sat & Sun) is the replica of the vessel that Dias, the first European to visit the bay, used on his 1488 voyage of discovery.

There are regular boat trips on the **Romonza** (☎ 044-690 3101) and the **Seven Seas** (☎ 044-691 3371) to Seal Island from the harbour behind the train station. The trips last one hour and cost around US\$8. In late winter and spring

the *Romonza* also runs special whale-watching trips (US\$54, two hours).

**Shark Africa** (☎ 044-691 3796; sharkafrica@mweb.co.za; Ochrebaan Sq, Market St; trips US\$160) organises cage dives and snorkelling to view great white sharks.

If you're interested in seeing how the other three-quarters live, contact **Meet the People** (☎ 083-262 2307; 4-hr tour US\$55), which offers home visits with traditional meals in nearby Tarka and KwaNonqaba townships – immensely preferable to the zoolike township tours offered in larger cities.

## SLEEPING

**Mossel Bay Backpackers** (☎ 044-691 3182; www.gardenrouteadventures.com; 1 Marsh St; camp sites per person US\$7.50, dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom US\$30; ☎ ) Close by the beach at the Point and the bars on Marsh St, this long-established place is reliable and well run. It offers a pool and bar and an impressive new and fully equipped kitchen. A higher-end guesthouse is attached.

**Park House Lodge & Travel Centre** (☎ 044-691 1937; www.park-house.co.za; 121 High St; dm US\$12, d with shared bathroom from US\$30; ☎ ) This place in an 1860s stone mansion is friendly, smartly decorated and has beautiful pond-filled gardens, though the doubles are hardly quiet since the shared bathrooms are located between the rooms.

**Santos Express** (☎ 044-691 1995; www.santosexpress.co.za; Santos Beach; dm US\$10, s/d with breakfast & shared bathroom US\$14/28) The location of this converted train, right beside the beach, can't be beat, but the compartments sleeping two or four

are undeniably cramped. There's an attached bar-restaurant (mains US\$5.50 to US\$8) with a very large menu, overlooking the water.

**Protea Hotel Mossel Bay** (☎ 044-691 3738; www.proteahotels.com/mosselbay; Market St; s/d from US\$93/120; ☎ ) One of the more individual of the Protea chain's hotels, this is a characterful refurbishment of the old post office building. Its restaurant (breakfast/lunch/dinner US\$5.50/6/11) has a large seafood, meat and pizza menu.

## EATING

Marsh St is the party strip in Mossel Bay. Take a cruise and see what tickles your fancy.

**Pavilion** (☎ 044-690 4567; Santos Beach; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) In a 19th-century bathing pavilion (hence the name), this is a fine choice for a beachside meal. The menu offers just about everything.

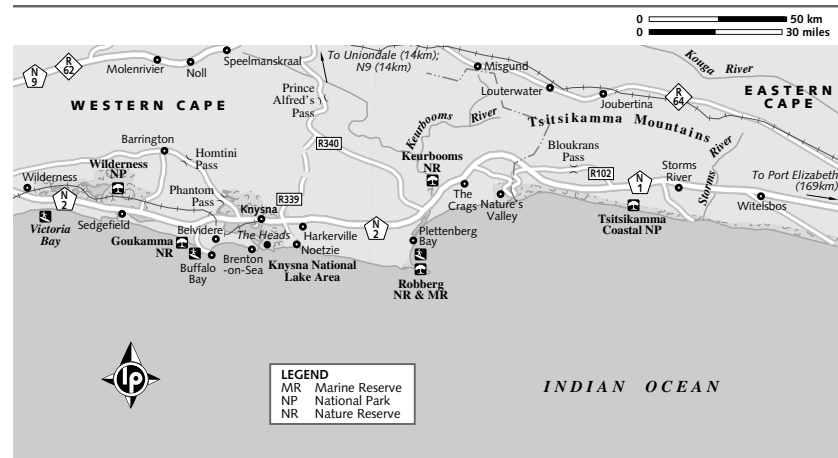
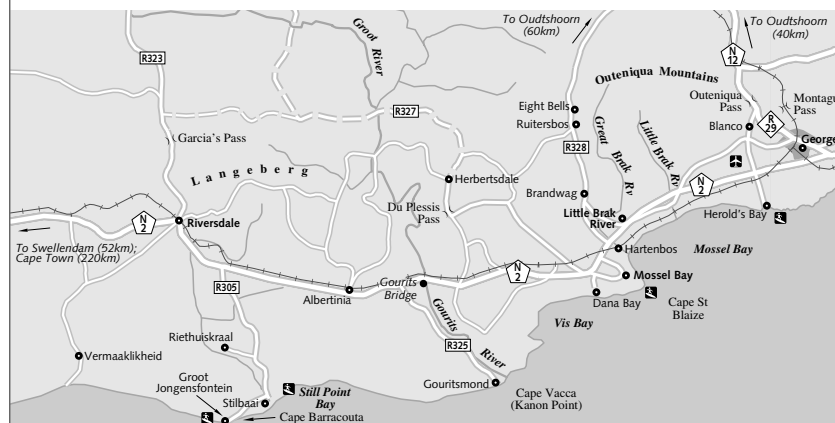
**Jazzbury's** (☎ 044-691 1923; 11 Marsh St; mains US\$5.50-9.50; ☎ dinner) Jazzbury's has beefed up its traditional African dishes, so now you can try *mopane* worms and Cape Malay food as well as the more common ostrich, beef and seafood creations.

**Kingfisher** (☎ 044-690 6390; Point Rd; mains US\$6-13; ☎ lunch & dinner) Locals love the seafood dishes and ocean views dished up here. You can choose between sushi, seafood platters, fish and salads.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Mossel Bay is off the highway, so long-distance buses don't come into town; they drop you at the Voorbaai Shell petrol station,

## GARDEN ROUTE



7km away. The hostels can usually collect you if you give notice. The Baz Bus will drop you in town.

Greyhound, Intercape and Translux buses stop here on their Cape Town to Port Elizabeth services. Intercape fares from Mossel Bay include Knysna (US\$15, 1½ hours, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (US\$15, 2½ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$17, 7¾ hours, twice daily) and Port Elizabeth (US\$15, 5½ hours, twice daily).

## George

☎ 044 / pop 170,000

George, founded in 1811, is the largest town on the Garden Route yet remains little more than an important commercial centre with little to keep visitors for long. It has some attractive old buildings, but it's 8km from the coast and for most people its chief draw is the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train.

Check out **George Tourism** (☎ 044-111 9295; www.tourismgeorge.co.za; 124 York St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) for help on accommodation.

## SIGHTS

The starting point and terminus for journeys on the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train is the **Steam Train Museum** (☎ 044-111 8295; admission by donation; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat), just off Courtenay St. It's worth visiting in its own right. Some 11 locomotives and 15 carriages, as well as many detailed models, are retired here.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**French Lodge International** (☎ 044-874 0345; www.frenchlodge.co.za; 29 York St; s/d with breakfast US\$67/108; 🍷 🍷) French style meets bush-lodge chic at this friendly hotel – possibly the best deal in town. Rooms are in thatched-roof rondavels, with satellite TV and a bathroom with a six-jet Jacuzzi.

**Fancourt Hotel** (☎ 044-804 0000; www.fancourt.com; Montagu St, Blanco; d from US\$363; 🍷 🍷) This is the area's most luxurious place, about 10km from the town centre, and has four 18-hole golf courses. The hotel and country club has a range of top-notch accommodation options, a health spa and a few restaurants.

**Reel n' Rustic** (☎ 044-884 0707; Courtenay St; mains from US\$7; ☎ lunch & dinner) Specialising in Creole and Cajun steaks and seafood, this is one of the best restaurants hereabouts, with another popular branch in nearby Wilderness.

**Het Vijfde Seizoen** (☎ 044-870 7320; 3 Maitland St, Blanco; mains US\$7-9.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Continental European and traditional South African cuisine combine for buffet breakfasts, lunches on the terrace and atmospheric candlelit dinners at this well-appointed eatery just outside George.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Kulula** (www.kulula.com) and **Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 0861-737 737; www.flynationwide.co.za) fly to **George airport** (☎ 8044-76 9310), which is about 15km west of town.

Bus services stop in George on their route between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth and on their runs between Johannesburg and the Garden Route. Greyhound services stop in St Mark's Sq behind the Geronimo Spur steakhouse situated on the main street, while Intercape and Translux stop at the train station located 2km south of the tourism office. Intercape fares include Knysna (US\$13, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (US\$1.40, 45 minutes, twice daily), Plettenberg Bay (US\$13, 1½ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$17, five hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$15, 6½ hours, twice daily), Bloemfontein (US\$38, 10 hours, daily) and Johannesburg (US\$50, 16 hours, daily).

The Baz Bus drops off in town and you can call the hostels in Oudtshoorn for shuttle services there.

The weekly *Southern Cross* train between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn stops here.

## Wilderness

☎ 044

The name says it all: dense old-growth forests and steep hills run down to a beautiful stretch of coastline of rolling breakers, miles of white sand, bird-rich estuaries and sheltered lagoons. All this has made Wilderness very popular but thankfully it doesn't show. The only drawback is everything is quite widely scattered, making life very difficult if you don't have a vehicle.

## INFORMATION

**Internet Café** (☎ 044-877 0951; 5 Wilderness Centre; per hr US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm)

**Wilderness Tourism Bureau** (☎ 044-877 0045;

Milkwood Village, George Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 3-5pm Sun) This office is just off the N2 as you pull into the village. Takes reservations for the *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train.

## ACTIVITIES

Wilderness is jam-packed with activities. You can try **Eden Adventures** (☎ 044-877 0179; www.eden.co.za; Wilderness National Park) if you're looking to rent a canoe (US\$15 per day) or try your hand at abseiling (US\$32) and kloofing and canyoning (US\$32). The company also organises tours of the area.

The beach here is beautiful, but be warned: a strong rip means bathing is not advised.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Fairy Knowe Backpackers** (☎ 044-877 1285; www.redcard.co.uk/fairyknowe; Dumbleton Rd; camp sites per person US\$8, dm US\$11, d with shared bathroom US\$32; 🍷) Overlooking a river, set in spacious, leafy grounds, this 1874 farmhouse has yellowwood floors and some original fittings. The bar and café are in another pretty little building some distance away. The Baz Bus comes to the door and the steam train stops just along the lane.

**Village B&B** (☎ 044-877 1187; George Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$24/40) Without a doubt the best-value B&B in town, all rooms are three minutes from the beach, and have décor best described as 'African cute'.

**Interlaken** (☎ 044-877 1374; www.interlaken.co.za; 713 North St; d with/without breakfast US\$70/59; 🍷) Rave reviews from readers, and we can't argue: this is a well-run guesthouse offering a choice between B&B doubles or self-catering units, all with magnificent lagoon views. Delicious dinners are served.

**Palms Wilderness Guest House** (☎ 044-877 1420; www.palms-wilderness.com; George Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$120/132; 🍷) Blending perfectly into the surrounding landscape, this luxurious place, only a two-minute walk from the beach, is a good choice. Its restaurant is highly recommended (mains US\$11).

**Wilderness Grille** (☎ 044-877 0808; George Rd; mains US\$3.40-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sit outside among the trees and murals in the garden area. There is an interesting selection of steaks, from blackened sirloin to Cajun, as well as decent pizzas.

## Wilderness National Park

This **national park** (☎ 044-877 1197; adult/child US\$8/4; ☎ 8am-5pm Jan-Nov, to 7pm Dec) covers a unique system of lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries that are vital for the survival of many species. The rich bird life includes the beautiful Kny-sna lourie and many species of kingfisher.

There are several nature trails taking in the lakes, the beach and the indigenous forest. The lakes offer anglers, canoeists, windsurfers and sailors an ideal venue.

There are two similar **camp**s (camp sites US\$20, d rondavels with shared bathroom US\$28, d forest cabins US\$47) in the park, Ebb & Flow North and Ebb & Flow South. It's possible to walk to the park from Wilderness.

## Buffalo Bay

☎ 044

Buffalo Bay, 17km west of Knysna, is distinctly un-Garden Route: a long, almost deserted surf beach, only a tiny enclave of holiday homes, a beach-shack backpackers and a nature reserve. That's about it, and it's more than enough.

**Wild Side Backpackers** (☎ 044-383 0609; dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom US\$24, meals US\$4-7) is one of the best hostels in the country, at least in part because of its legendary parties. There's not much luxury but tons of atmosphere and attitude.

## Knysna

☎ 044 / pop 54,000

Perched on the edge of a serene lagoon and surrounded by forests, Knysna's (pronounced 'ny-znah') sylvan setting, gay-friendly vibe, good places to stay, eat and drink, and wide range of activities, mean it has plenty going for it. But if you're after something quiet and undeveloped, you should look elsewhere, particularly in season, when the number of visitors swells and getting around can be hell.

There's an **arts festival** in late September and early October and an **oyster festival** in July, while in May the town confirms its gay-friendly credentials with the **Pink Loerie Festival** (www.pinkloerie.com).

## INFORMATION

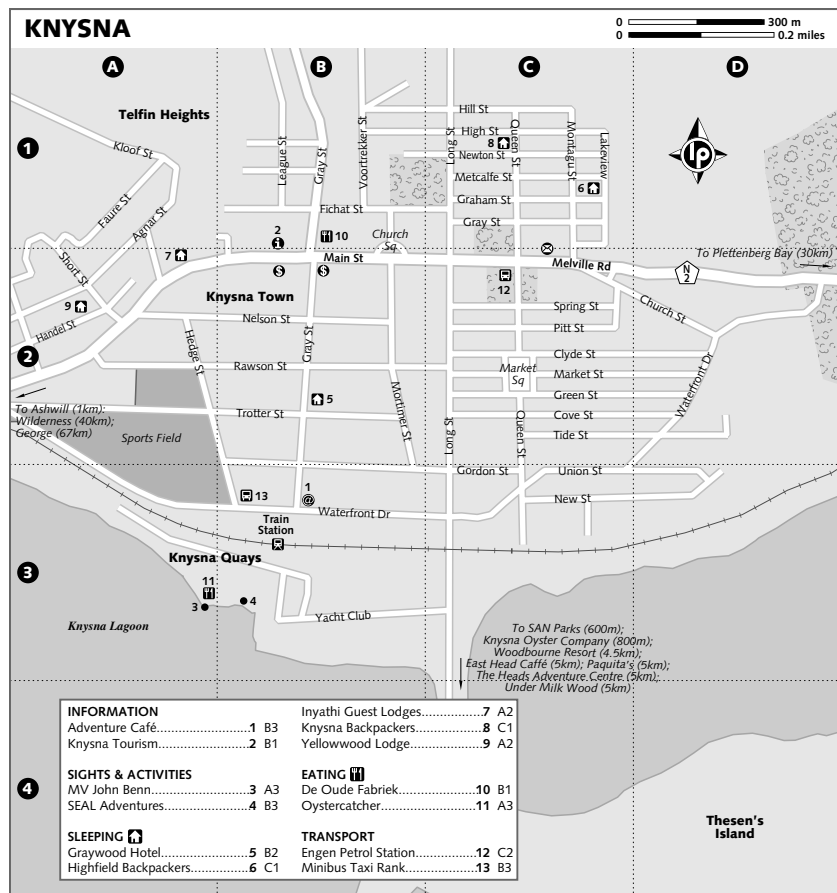
**Adventure Café** (☎ 044-382 4959; 1 Gray St; per hr US\$5.50; ☎ 9am-7pm) High-speed internet access.

**Knysna Tourism** (☎ 044-382 5510; www.tourismknysna.co.za; 40 Main St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat year-round, plus 8.30am-1pm Sun Dec, Jan & Jul) Look for the enormous elephant skeleton in the storefront.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

### Knysna Lagoon

Although regulated by **SAN Parks** (☎ 044-382 2095; www.sanparks.org; Long St, Thesen's Island), Knysna Lagoon (13 sq km) is not a national park or wilderness area. Much is still privately owned,



and the lagoon is used by industry and for recreation. The lagoon opens up between two sandstone cliffs, known as the Heads. There are good views from a lookout on the eastern head, and a private nature trail on the western head.

The best way to appreciate the lagoon is to take a cruise. The **MV John Benn** (☎ 044-382 1697; www.featherbed.co.za; Waterfront; adult/child US\$11/4.70, with lunch US\$34/15; ☎ departs 10am, 11.30am & 12.30pm) riverboat offers the recommended Featherbed cruise, a four-hour affair that includes lunch and takes you to the privately owned **Featherbed Nature Reserve**, where you'll be driven around.

### Township Tours & Homestays

Sprawling above and behind town is the township of Concordia, best visited on an excellent

tour run by **Eco Afrika Tours** (☎ 082-925 0716; tours US\$27) or **The Heads Adventure Centre** (☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads; tours US\$34). Homes here are built mostly with timber from the nearby forests. The two-hour tours are led by local guides and take you through the usual township sites but then add a twist. You'll also get to visit the Grass Routes neighbourhood, the largest community of Rastafarians in the country.

If you want to stay overnight in either the Rastafarian community or in the township, contact Glendyrn at Knysna Tourism.

### Knysna Forest Trails

There are excellent hikes in the Knysna forests, and you can book walking trails and collect maps and information at the regional

office of **SAN Parks** (☎ 044-382 2095; www.sanparks.org; Long St, Thesen's Island). Overnight hikes cost US\$6 per day including the use of trail huts.

### Other Activities

There are plenty of other activities on offer in the area; start by making inquiries at **The Heads Adventure Centre** (☎ 044-384 0831; the Heads). Among the possibilities are boat and short-entry scuba dives (US\$11 to US\$16) to some of South Africa's best spots. Snorkelling equipment can be rented for US\$12.

Quad-biking trips in the Featherbed Nature Reserve are available with **SEAL Adventures** (☎ 044-382 5599; Shop 1, Protea Hotel, Knysna Quays; 2½hr trip US\$38; ☎ departs 11am & 3.30pm). The company also runs an Awesome Foursome adventure trip – quad biking, abseiling, canoeing and cliff-jumping for US\$54.

### SLEEPING

#### Budget

**Knysna Backpackers** (☎ 044-382 2554; knyback@netactive.co.za; 42 Queen St; dm US\$9.50, d with shared bathroom from US\$24) You'll find mainly dorm beds at this large and spruce Victorian house on the hill a few blocks up from the main street. It's quieter and more relaxing than other places.

**Highfield Backpackers** (☎ 044-382 6266; www.highfieldbackpackers.co.za; 2 Graham St; dm US\$9.50, d without/with bathroom from US\$27/34) Located in a spacious old house, Highfield, with its focus on attractive doubles with brass beds, feels more like a B&B. *Potjiekos* dinners are often served.

**Woodbourne Resort** (☎ 044-384 0316; w48@mweb.co.za; George Rex Dr; camp sites US\$16, chalets from US\$44) Here you'll find spacious, shaded camping and simple chalets with TVs. It's a quiet place a little way out of town. Follow the signs to the Heads.

#### Midrange

**Yellowwood Lodge** (☎ 044-382 5906; www.yellowwoodlodge.co.za; 18 Handel St; s/d from US\$54/108; ☎ ☎) A traditional and sumptuously decorated guesthouse, Yellowwood boasts a lovely garden setting and views of the lagoon. There's one room with air con.

**Inyathi Guest Lodges** (☎ 044-382 7768; www.inyathi-sa.com; 52 Main St; s/d from US\$59/77) This is the most imaginatively designed guesthouse in Knysna, with accommodation in uniquely decorated timber lodges – some with Victorian bath tubs, others with stained-glass windows.

**Graywood Hotel** (☎ 044-382 5850; reservations@thegraywood.co.za; cnr Gray & Trotter Sts; s/d US\$64/85; ☎ ☎) The recently rebranded Graywood, the former Caboose Hotel, has rooms about the size of sleeping compartments. Still, the upgrading is impressive and the furnishings top-notch.

#### Top End

**Under Milk Wood** (☎ 044-384 0745; www.proteahotels.com; Waterfront Dr; cottages from US\$245; ☎ ☎) A poetically named place, this is a series of highly impressive self-catering log cabins on the shores of Knysna Lagoon.

**Phantom Forest Eco-Reserve** (☎ 044-386 0046; www.phantomforest.com; s/d US\$270/323, dinner US\$30; ☎ ☎) This 137-hectare private ecoreserve 6km west of Knysna overlooks the lagoon and comprises 14 cleverly designed and elegantly decorated tree houses. At least visit for the award-winning six-course Pan-African dinner served from 6.30pm to 8.30pm daily; booking is essential.

#### EATING

**Oystercatcher** (☎ 044-382 9995; Knysna Quays; tapas US\$4.70; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Oystercatcher is a relaxed place serving four sizes of farmed oyster, and other seafood tapas dishes, in a great waterside setting.

**Knysna Oyster Company** (☎ 044-382 6941; www.mbendi.co.za/koyster; Thesen's Island; mains from US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) This company, opened in 1949, grows its own oysters out in the lagoon; you can take a tour of the processing plant and have a tasting of a cultivated and wild oyster for US\$2.80 at its restaurant afterwards.

**Paquita's** (☎ 044-384 0408; the Heads; mains from US\$5.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Seafood, steaks, pizza and pasta are available at this ideally located restaurant and bar next to the Heads right on the water. There's also a Sunday carvery.

**East Head Caffé** (☎ 044-384 0933; the Heads; mains US\$5.50-7; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Our favourite breakfast spot. There's an outdoor deck overlooking the lagoon and ocean, and the smoked salmon, eggs and cream cheese breakfast (US\$5) is scrumptious.

**De Oude Fabriek** (☎ 044-382 5723; cnr Main & Gray Sts; mains US\$6-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) Despite its shopping centre setting, this restaurant is a convivial spot to sample some interesting South African dishes – game meat, crocodile and Knysna oysters are all on the menu.



**GETTING THERE & AWAY****Bus**

The major companies, **Translux** (☎ 021-449 3333; www.translux.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 021-75 6363; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za), all stop at the **Engen petrol station** (Main St); Baz Bus will take you where you want. For travel between nearby towns on the Garden Route, you're better looking for a minibus taxi than travelling with the major bus lines, which are expensive on short sectors. Intercape fares include George (US\$11, one hour, twice daily), Mossel Bay (US\$12, 1¼ hours, twice daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, 3¼ hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$20, eight hours, twice daily) and Jo'burg (US\$52, 17 hours, daily).

**Minibus Taxi**

The main minibus taxi stop is at the Shell petrol station next to the tourist office. Routes include Plettenberg Bay (US\$2.80, 30 minutes, daily) and Cape Town (US\$20, 7½ hours, daily).

**Train**

The historic *Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe* steam train runs between Knysna and George daily except Saturday and public holidays.

**Plettenberg Bay**

☎ 044 / pop 34,000

Plettenberg Bay, or 'Plett' as it's more commonly known, is a resort town through and through, with mountains, white sand and crystal-blue water making it one of the country's top local tourist spots. As a result, things can get very busy and somewhat overpriced, but the town retains a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and has very good-value hostels. The scenery to the east in particular is superb, with some of the best coast and indigenous forest in South Africa.

**INFORMATION**

**Computer Shop & Internet Café** (☎ 044-533-6007; First National Bank Bldg, Main St; per hr US\$4; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Internet access.

**Plett Tourism** (☎ 044-533 4065; www.plettenberg-bay.co.za; Melville's Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar year-round, plus 9am-1pm Sat April-Oct)

**ACTIVITIES**

Apart from lounging on the beaches or hiking on the Robberg Peninsula (see opposite) there's a lot to do in Plett.

Boat trips to view dolphins and whales in season are available with **Ocean Blue Adventures** (☎ 044-533 5083; www.oceanadventures.co.za; Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St) and **Ocean Safaris** (☎ 044-533 4963; Milkwood Centre, Hopewood St). Trips cost about US\$39 for 2½ hours on 12-person boats.

**Equitrialing** (☎ 044-533 0599), located 11km east of Plett on the N2, offers horse riding through the forest for US\$15 per hour. **Dolphin Adventures** (☎ 072-751 1798) has sea kayaking (US\$34, 2½ hours).

Those wanting to try surfing can take a lesson through the **International Surf School** (☎ 082-636 8431; 3½hr lesson US\$40), which caters to all levels of surfers. It doesn't have an office, so just phone.

**SLEEPING**

**Albergo for Backpackers** (☎ 044-533 4434; www.albergo.co.za; 8 Church St; camp sites per person US\$7, dm US\$10, d with shared bathroom US\$30; ☎ ) Well run and friendly, Albergo can organise just about anything. Try for the upstairs dorm with huge windows and stellar ocean views from the balcony.

**Nothando Backpackers Hostel** (☎ 044-533 0220; info@nothando.co.za; 5 Wilder St; dm US\$10, d with/without shared bathroom US\$31/28) Our choice for best budget option in town, this spotless and spacious, YHA-affiliated, award-winning hostel is owner-run and it shows. There's a happening bar area with satellite TV, yet you can still find peace and quiet in the large grounds.

**Abalone Beach House** (☎ 044-535 9602; beachhouse@global.co.za; 50 Ifafi Properties, Keurboomstrand; d with shared bathroom US\$24; ☎ ) It's a hop to the beach from this great hostel run by friendly people. Surf and boogie boards can be hired (US\$1.40). It's about 6km east of Plett.

**Periwinkle Guest Lodge** (☎ 044-533 1345; www.periwinkle.co.za; 75 Beachy Head Dr; d with breakfast from US\$155) This bright, colourful beachfront guesthouse offers individually decorated rooms, all with great views – you might even be able to spot whales and dolphins.

**Plettenberg** (☎ 044-533 2030; www.plettenberg.com; 40 Church St; s/d from US\$200/350; ☎ ☎ ☎ ) Built on a rocky headland with breathtaking vistas, this five-star palace is pure decadence, with fantastic rooms, a spa and a first-class restaurant. The (heated) pool here alone is worth the stay.

**EATING**

**Miguel's** (☎ 044-533 5056; Melville Corner Shopping Centre, Main St; breakfast/dinner US\$4/11; ☎ breakfast,

lunch & dinner) A modern place with an eclectic menu, it's bright and airy with floor-to-ceiling windows and patio seating.

**Cranzgot's Pizzeria** (☎ 044-533 1660; 9 Main St; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This perennial favourite serves mouthwatering pizzas, pastas and char-grilled steaks.

**Cornuti Al Mare** (☎ 044-533 1277; 1 Perestrella St; mains US\$7-9.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) A stylishly decked out Italian oyster bar with hearty pizzas and refreshing cocktails served on a sun terrace. Try the homemade spinach and cream-cheese ravioli (US\$6).

**Pansy Shell** (☎ 044-533 6016; Old Nick Shopping Centre; mains US\$8; ☎ dinner) This formal restaurant gets rave reviews for its steaks, seafood and overall ambience.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

All the major buses stop at the Shell Ultra City on the N2; the Baz Bus will come into town. **Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) sample fares from Plett include: George (US\$12 1½ hours, three times daily), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, three hours, twice daily), Cape Town (US\$20, eight hours, twice daily), Jo'burg (US\$52, 18 hours, daily), Graaff-Reinet (US\$26, 5½ hours, daily) and Bloemfontein (US\$40, 12 hours, daily).

If you're heading to Knysna (US\$1.20, 30 minutes) you're better off taking a minibus taxi – services leave from the corner of Kloof and High Sts.

**Robberg Nature & Marine Reserve**

This **reserve** (☎ 044-533 2125; admission US\$2.80; ☎ 7am-5pm Feb-Nov, to 8pm Dec & Jan), 9km south-east of Plettenberg Bay, protects a 4km-long peninsula with a rugged coastline of cliffs and rocks. There's a great circular walk approximately 11km long, with rich intertidal marine life and coastal-dune  *fynbos* , but it's very rocky and not for the aged or anyone with knee problems! To get here head along Robberg Rd, off Piesang Valley Rd, until you see the signs.

**WEST COAST & SWARTLAND**

If you're keen to do the Western Cape the way locals do it, head north of Cape Town and explore the jagged coastline, rugged, desolate mountains and windswept hills of the West Coast and Swartland, a peaceful and undeveloped getaway. You'll come across quiet whitewashed fishing villages, beautiful

lagoons, hidden camping spots in dramatic valleys and a country town serving up a big dish of South African cabaret all within a few hours from the Cape Peninsula.

**West Coast National Park**

Encompassing the clear, blue waters of the Langebaan Lagoon and home to an enormous number of migratory wading birds is the **West Coast National Park** (☎ 022-772 2144; admission flower/nonflower season US\$4/2.70; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 6am-8pm Oct-Mar). The park covers around 18,000 hectares and is made up of a peculiar mix of semi-independent zones, some of which are only leased by the national park authorities.

The park protects wetlands of international significance and important seabird breeding colonies. Wading birds flock here by the thousands in summer. The offshore islands are home to colonies of jackass penguins.

The park is famous for its wildflower display, which is usually between August and October. Several animal species can be seen in the part of the park known as the Postberg section, which is open from August to September.

The park is only about 120km from Cape Town, 7km south of Langebaan. The return trip from Langebaan to the northern end of the Postberg section is more than 80km. The rainy season is between May and August.

**Olifants River Valley**

The scenery changes dramatically at the Piekenierskloof Pass; coming north on the N7 you suddenly overlook the intensively cultivated Olifants River Valley. On the valley floor are some acclaimed wineries and co-ops, immaculately maintained by a huge labour force. The eastern side is largely bounded by the spectacular Cederberg Range. Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, to the southwest and northwest of the wilderness area, are the two main towns in the region.

**CEDERBERG WILDERNESS AREA**

Bizarrely shaped weathered sandstone formations, San rock art, craggy and rugged mountains and green valleys all make the desolate Cederberg a must-see. The peaks and valleys extend roughly north-south for 100km, between Citrusdal and Vanrhynsdorp. A good proportion is protected by the 71,000-hectare Cederberg Wilderness Area, which is

administered by the Porterville offices of **Cape Nature** (☎ 022-931 2088; www.capenature.org.za).

Spring is the best time to see the wildflowers, although there's plenty of interest at other times of the year. There are small populations of baboons, rheboks, klipspringers and grysboeks; and predators such as caracals, Cape foxes, honey badgers and the elusive leopard.

### Orientation & Information

The Cederberg is divided into three excellent hiking areas of around 24,000 hectares. Each area has a network of trails. However, this is a genuine wilderness area with a genuine wilderness ethos. You are *encouraged* to leave the trails, but it's up to you to survive on your own.

There's no real season for walking; from May to the end of September expect rain and possibly snow. From December to April there's likely to be very little water.

A Cape Nature permit (adult/child US\$2.70/1.30) is required if you want to walk, and the number of visitors per hiking area and maximum group size is limited. Apply well in advance. Outside school holidays and weekends you may be able to get one on the spot.

The entrance to the Algeria Camping Ground closes at 4.30pm (9pm on Friday). You can only collect your permit (if you haven't already organised it in Cape Town or had it posted to you) during office hours, so if you're arriving on Friday evening you'll need to make arrangements.

There are no eating places in the area so you will need to bring your own food.

### Sleeping

See Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, both following, for places to stay outside the Cederberg Wilderness Area.

**Kleinkliphuis** (☎ 027-482 2564; camp sites US\$3.40, dm US\$7, cottages per person US\$13) Another option is this charming place near the Pakhuis Pass on Rte 364, about 15km northeast of Clanwilliam. It's a small country home in attractive grounds, with excellent self-catering huts.

**Algeria** (☎ 027-482 2404; 6-person camp sites US\$13, d cottages US\$51) This is the main camping spot, with exceptional grounds in a beautiful, shaded site alongside the Rondegat River. There are swimming holes and lovely spots to picnic and fully equipped stone cottages for

noncampers. Rates do not include the park entry fee. If Algeria is full, call Cape Nature (☎ 022-931 2088) for other camping areas.

### Getting There & Away

The Cederberg Range is about 200km from Cape Town, accessible from Citrusdal, Clanwilliam and the N7.

Public transport into Algeria is nonexistent. It takes about two days to walk from Citrusdal to Algeria, entering the wilderness area at Boskloof. The Chief Nature Conservator's office in Citrusdal has information on this route.

### Citrusdal & Around

☎ 022 / pop 9000

The small town of Citrusdal is a good base for exploring the Cederberg. August to September is wildflower season, and the displays can be spectacular. This is also one of the best times for hiking.

The **tourism bureau** (☎ 022-921 3210; www.citrusdal.info; 39 Voortrekker St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) can help you find accommodation and provide information on mountain biking and hiking trails.

There are several interesting and beautiful places to stay in the surrounding mountains including the **Elephant Leisure Resort** (☎ 022-921 2884; d US\$64; 🏡 🍷 🍷), a serene spot 9km outside Citrusdal and the hard to reach but impossible to forget camping spot of **Beaverlac** (☎ 022-931 2945; Beaverlac Nature Reserve; camp sites US\$4).

Intercity buses stop at the petrol station on the N7 highway outside town. Destinations include Cape Town (US\$18, three hours) and Springbok (US\$19, five hours).

### Clanwilliam & Around

☎ 027 / pop 37,000

The adjacent dam and some adventurous dirt roads into the Cederberg make the compact town of Clanwilliam a popular weekend resort. Well-preserved examples of Cape Dutch architecture and trees line the main street.

The **information centre** (☎ 027-482 2024; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sat) is at the top end of the main street, across from the old *tronk* (jail in Afrikaans), which doubles as the town's museum.

A 120-year-old banyan tree looms over **Saint du Barry** (☎ 027-482 1537; 13 Augusburg Dr; s/d with breakfast US\$40/67; 🏡 🍷 🍷), a pleasant thatched-roofed guesthouse with a charming garden.

All the buses that go through Citrusdal also go through Clanwilliam. It's about 45 minutes between the two. Minibus taxis running between Springbok (US\$15, five hours) and Cape Town (US\$12, three hours) go through Clanwilliam, stopping at the post office.

## NORTHERN CAPE

Covering nearly a third of the country, the vast and sparsely populated Northern Cape surely is South Africa's last great frontier. With a restless air of untamed energy, this is a place where the Africa of storybooks comes alive. In this land of stark contrasts the red sands of the Kalahari tumble into the

churning, inky waters of the desolate Atlantic Coast; while the Karoo's strange-shaped *kopjes* (small, rocky hills) collide with the sun-scorched lunar landscape of Namaqualand, where roads dissolve into an oblivion of endless space and burst into a miraculous sea of technicolour wildflowers in spring. Lions stalk prey across crimson plains in remote Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park at dawn, and in the evening big, orange-ball sunsets made for Hollywood movies steal the show.

The Northern Cape is one of only two provinces in South Africa (the other is Western Cape) where coloureds, and not blacks, make up the majority of the population. Afrikaans is the most widely spoken language with about 66% of the province speaking it.





## KIMBERLEY

☎ 053 / pop 166,000

Kimberley is the epicentre of the region. An old diamond town with a chequered past, it's also the capital of the Northern Cape and definitely worth a few days' pause. Step inside one of the atmospheric old pubs with their dark smoky interiors or spend a night in one of the old-world hotels and you'll feel you've been transported back to the rough-and-ready diamond heyday of the late 1800s.

By 1872 there were an estimated 50,000 miners in the vicinity and Cecil John Rhodes had arrived on the scene (he would later buy out all claims and found one of the world's most powerful diamond conglomerates, De Beers Consolidated Mines Company) and would change the course of the country's history.

After a long slog across the Karoo the relatively bright lights of Kimberley are a welcome sight. The Big Hole is amazing and the Galeshewe Township is inextricably linked with the history of the struggle against apartheid – although unfortunately at the time of research the once highly regarded tours were no longer running.

### Orientation & Information

The town centre is a tangle of streets inherited from the days when Kimberley was a rowdy shantytown.

Kimberley's most noticeable tall building is Harry Oppenheimer House, south of the centre, where South Africa's diamonds are graded and valued. The **Diamantveld Visitors Centre** (☎ 053-832 7298; tourism@kbymun.org.za; 121 Bultfontein Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) has good maps and can arrange tours of the area.

### Sights

#### THE BIG HOLE

The area surrounding the largest manually dug hole in the world was undergoing renovations worth US\$4 million when we stopped by. When completed, the touristy complex, dubbed the **Big Hole Project** (☎ 053-833 1557; West Circular Rd), will have numerous hotels, restaurants, shops, a cinema and a giant diamond display. Phone for admission prices and opening hours. As for the Big Hole itself, you'll be able to view it through a glass-enclosed complex with interactive displays and underground experiences. At 800m deep, water now fills it to within 150m of the surface,

which still leaves an impressive void. Diamond mining stopped here in 1914, but not before 14.5 million carats of diamonds were carted away.

The complex will also incorporate the already excellent **Kimberly Mine Museum**, set up as a reconstruction of Kimberley in the 1880s. It also includes a diamond-digging area perfect for the kids.

The renovations were scheduled to conclude in November 2006.

### GALESHEWE TOWNSHIP

The satellite township of Galeshewe rates with Soweto as an important source of activists in the struggle against apartheid. Unfortunately, at the time of research organised township tours were no longer operating, however this could easily change. The township is not particularly dangerous, and if you have transport and go during the day you'll likely be met more with smiles than trouble.

### WILDEBEEST KUIL ROCK ART TOURISM CENTRE

Built with a grant from the government to help create jobs for the poor local communities and promote a renewed understanding of the Khoesaaan past, this **tourism initiative** (☎ 053-833 7069; www.museumsonc.co.za/wildebeestkuil.htm; Barkly West Rd; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 9am-5pm) is worth visiting for the cause alone. There are 10 rock-art displays on the property. Each is marked and you will be given headphones and a cassette player before you start out on the self-guided walking tours. Also check out the 20-minute film on the Xun and Khwe peoples. The centre is 10km west of town.

### Tours

**De Beers Tours** (☎ 053-842 1321; tours US\$2; ☎ 9am & 11am Mon-Fri) offers group visits to the diamond treatment and recovery plants at Bultfontein Mine, 5km east of the centre on the city's outskirts.

**Diamond Tours Unlimited** (☎ 053-861 4983; www.diamondtours.co.za; tours from US\$20) offers a variety of tours including battlefield trips, diamond digs and city-sightseeing trips.

**Underground tours** (☎ 053-842 1321; tours US\$11; ☎ 9.30am Mon, 8am Tue-Fri), also run by De Beers, takes you deep under the earth to get a feel for the life of a miner. The tours depart from the visitors centre at the mine gate.

### Sleeping

**Big Hole Caravan Park** (☎ 053-830 6322; West Circular Rd; camp sites US\$3.40, plus per person US\$2; 🚽) Cool off in the swimming pool on a hot day or lounge in the grass under shady trees; either way this centrally located camp site is an appealing spot.

**Stay-A-Day** (☎ 053-832 7239; 72 Lawson St; s/d from US\$15/24) It doesn't have much atmosphere and the rooms are tiny, but it's also sparkling clean and you'll feel good knowing profits go towards an orphaned children's home. Most rooms share bathrooms.

**Savoy Hotel** (☎ 053-832 6211; 15 Old De Beers Rd; r from US\$40) An old-fashioned hotel that charms with cosy well-loved rooms and the soft-spoken gracious ambience of a time long past. An old-style restaurant is attached.

**Bishop's Lodge** (☎ 053-831 7876; www.bishopslodge.co.za; 9 Bishops Ave; r from US\$40; 🚽 🚿) Modern and spotless inside, the self-contained flats come with sitting rooms, TV and full kitchenettes; cheaper doubles are in the main house.

**Edgerton House** (☎ 053-831 1150; 5 Edgerton Rd; r US\$135; 🚽 🚿) Exquisite furniture, African hospitality and a tea garden make this charming guesthouse the best luxury option in Kimberley.

### Eating

**Umbertos** (☎ 053-832 5741; 229 Du Toitspan Rd; mains US\$4.70-11; ☎ lunch & dinner) Big hearty portions of Italian food and pizza are served along with loads of ambience and a rooftop patio.

**Star of the West Hotel** (☎ 053-832 6463; North Circular Rd; mains US\$4.70; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Step back into Kimberley's mining heyday at this atmospheric city staple that serves up hearty pub grub.

**Barnato's** (☎ 053-833 4110; 6 Dalham Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat, lunch Sun) Known for its creative gourmet menu, elegant atmosphere and professional service, posh Barnato's is a favourite with locals and tourists alike.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

**SA Express** (☎ 011-978 5315; www.saexpress.co.za) has regular direct services from Jo'burg (US\$135, 1½ hours). **SA Airlink** (☎ 054-838 3337; www.saairlink.co.za) has a direct service to Cape Town (US\$200, two hours).

#### BUS

**Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za) stops in Kimberley on its run between Jo'burg/Pre-

toria (US\$19, seven hours, daily) and Cape Town (US\$31, 10 hours, daily). **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) have similar fares and routes.

Book tickets for all three companies through **Tickets for Africa** (☎ 053-832 6043), at the Diamantveld Visitors Centre. Buses stop at the Shell Ultra City long-distance bus terminal on the N12.

### MINIBUS TAXI

The main minibus taxi area in Duncan St is around the Indian shopping centre in the city centre. Destinations from Kimberley include Bloemfontein (US\$7, 2½ hours), Kuruman (US\$10, two hours), Jo'burg (US\$16, seven hours), Upington (US\$10, four hours) and Cape Town (US\$18, 10 hours).

### TRAIN

The *Trans Karoo* runs daily between Cape Town (US\$20, 18 hours) and Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$11, nine hours) via Kimberley; the *Diamond Express* runs overnight between Jo'burg/Pretoria and Bloemfontein via Kimberley (US\$11, nine hours, three times weekly); and the *Trans Oranje* between Cape Town and Durban (US\$16, 18 hours, weekly) takes a slow and circuitous route via Kimberley.

### Getting Around

The Kimberley airport is about 7km south of the city centre. A taxi costs about US\$20.

Kimberley has one surviving antique tram (one way/return US\$1/1.90) that departs from the terminus near the town hall every hour on the hour (9am to 4pm daily) and runs to the Big Hole complex.

A minibus taxi around town costs about US\$0.20.

### UPINGTON

☎ 054 / pop 53,000

On the banks of the Orange River, orderly and prosperous Upington is a good place to catch your breath on either end of a long Kalahari slog. Wide boulevards slightly cluttered with supermarkets and chain stores line the centre of town, but step onto one of the side streets and you'll enter a world where lazy river views and endless rows of trees create a calm and quiet atmosphere perfect for an afternoon stroll (if the heat is not too stifling).



The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 054-332 6046; greenkal@mweb.co.za; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is in the Kalahari Oranje Museum.

## Sleeping

**Eiland Holiday Resort** (☎ 054-334 0286; tourism@kharahais.gov.za; camp sites US\$8, r from US\$20; 🏠) The town's cheapest option offers a range of huts and bungalows and shaded camping spots on tranquil grounds adjacent to the eastern bank of the river.

**Affinity Guesthouse** (☎ 054-331 2101; www.affinityguesthouse.co.za; 4 Budler St; s/d US\$38/51; 🏠) Right on the river, this place is great value for money. The rooms are small, but very comfortable with firm mattresses.

**Riviera Garden Lodge** (☎ 054-332 6554; 16 Budler St; d with breakfast US\$54; 🏠) The gardens at this friendly lodge with two cosy rooms are a fairy-tale creation, and run all the way down to the river.

**Le Must River Residence** (☎ 054-432 3971; www.lemustupington.com; 14 Budler St; s/d from US\$80/95; 🏠) The classiest of the Le Must franchises, this guesthouse has impeccable service and facilities and luxuriously decorated rooms.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**SAAirlink** (☎ 054-838 3337; www.saaairlink.co.za) flies to/from Jo'burg (US\$260, daily) and to/from Cape Town (US\$260, Sunday to Friday). Hotels in Upington usually provide a free taxi from the airport.

### BUS

For tickets go to the **Intercape Mainliner office** (☎ 054-332 6091; Lutz St). Buses run to Jo'burg and Pretoria (US\$35, 10 hours, daily), Windhoek, Namibia (US\$34, 12 hours, four times weekly) and Cape Town (US\$30, 10½ hours, four times weekly).

### CAR RENTAL

There's an agent for **Avis** (☎ 054-332 4746) at Upington airport. There is a **Europcar** (☎ 082-426 8489) agent inside the River City Inn. Both rent 4WDs for about US\$130 per day, and compact cars for US\$54.

### MINIBUS TAXI

You'll find minibus taxis near the Checkers supermarket near the corner of Mark and Basson Sts. Fares from Upington include Jo'burg (US\$23, 10 hours), Cape Town (US\$24, 10

hours) and Windhoek (US\$23, 10 hours). There's usually at least one bus per day.

**VIP Taxis** (☎ in Port Nolloth 027-111 8780) operates a weekday taxi service from Port Nolloth to Upington, via Springbok. It costs US\$11 to travel from Upington to Springbok.

## KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

If you have the means (a vehicle), a visit to the otherworldly **Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park** (☎ 054-561 0021; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$16/8) is more than worth the effort it takes to get there. The scenery in this magical place is phenomenal. Even the drive in, a seemingly endless jostle down dusty crimson roads, is an invigorating trip, evoking images of the grand African safaris of lore. Once inside, the sight of a giant black-maned lion napping under the shade of a camel thorn tree in a land of shifting red and white sands is an awesome experience.

Proclaimed a national park in April 1999, Kgalagadi is the result of a merger between the former Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park in South Africa and the Mabuasehube-Gemsbok National Park in Botswana, making it one of the largest protected wilderness areas in Africa.

Although the countryside is described as semidesert, it is richer than it appears and supports large populations of birds, reptiles, rodents, small mammals and antelopes. These in turn support a large population of predators. Most of the animals are remarkably tolerant of cars, allowing you to get extremely close.

## Orientation & Information

Visitors are restricted to four gravel/sand roads. Make sure to take one of the roads linking the rivers for unobstructed views of the empty expanses of the Kalahari. Visitors must remain in their cars, except at a small number of designated picnic spots.

The best time to visit is in June and July when the days are coolest (below freezing at night) and the animals have been drawn to the bores along the dry river beds. September to October is the wet season and if it does rain, many of the animals scatter out across the plain to take advantage of the fresh pastures.

All the rest camps have shops where basic groceries, soft drinks and alcohol can be purchased; these are open from 7am until 30 minutes after the gates close. Petrol and diesel



are available at each camp. There are public phones, a pub, a swimming pool and a good information centre.

The gate opening hours generally follow the rising and setting sun. Gates open between 5.30am and 7.30am and shut between 6pm and 7pm.

The minimum travelling time from the entrance gate at Twee Rivieren to Nossob rest camp is 3½ hours; to Mata Mata rest camp it's 2½ hours. No driving is permitted after dark.

If you want to venture into the Botswana side of the park, this is only possible via a 4WD trail. Make arrangements with the **Botswana Department of Wildlife & National Parks** (☎ 09-267 580774) in Gaborone.

## Wildlife

About 215 species of bird have been spotted in the park, including the secretary bird, the kori bustard and the sociable weaver. There are also 19 predator species, including dark-maned Kalahari lions, cheetahs, leopards, wild dogs, hyenas, jackals, bat-eared foxes and suricates. The most numerous species is the springbok.

## Sleeping & Eating

Inside the park there are three rest camps and six luxury wilderness camps. All can be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria). The park's only restaurant (Lion's Den Restaurant) is at Twee Rivieren.

All of the rest camps have **camp sites** (per 2 people US\$15, extra person US\$5) without electricity and with shared ablutions facilities. The camps also have a range of huts, bungalows and cottages equipped with bedding, towels, cooking and eating utensils, and with kitchens and bathrooms.

**Twee Rivieren Rest Camp** (6-bed cottage per 2 people US\$70, extra adult/child US\$15/7; 🏠) is the closest camp to the park's entrance, and the one that offers the most facilities. It is also the only rest camp with a swimming pool and air-con.

The six wilderness camps give you the opportunity to really get off the beaten path. None is fenced, which means animals can wander in at will, although a ranger is on duty at all times. Make sure to stock up on petrol and drinking water before visiting. **Kalahari Tent Camp** (2-person desert tents US\$93, 3-person tents US\$110, honeymoon tents US\$110; 🏠) is the most accessible of the wilderness camps and is also the most luxurious.

Outside the park there are a few interesting options near the road to the Twee Rivieren gate, including the **Kalahari Trails Nature Reserve** (☎ 054-122 ask for 91634; www.kalahari-trails.co.za; camp sites US\$8, s/d from US\$23/340).

## Getting There & Away

It's a solid, 385km, six-hour drive from Kuruman to Twee Rivieren. The drive from Upington to Twee Rivieren gate is 250km with about 60km on dirt roads.

We've had several letters from travellers who wrecked their cars on this trip. Petrol is not available between Upington and Twee Rivieren.

It's important to carry water, as you may have to wait a while for help if you break down.

## UPINGTON TO SPRINGBOK

The N14 southwest of Upington follows the course of the Senqu (Orange) River and passes through oases of vineyards and the quaint and quiet little towns of Keimos and Kakamas. The turn-off to Augrabies Falls National Park is just west of Kakamas.

With big grassy lawns where springbok graze between self-contained cottages, **Die Werf** (☎ 054-461 1634; s/d US\$29/48; 🍷 🍷) is the best sleeping option in Keimos. Die Werf is on the N14.

In Kakamas, the **Kalahari Gateway Hotel** (☎ 054-431 0838; www.kalaharigateway.co.za; Main Rd; s/d US\$37/52; 🍷 🍷) has massive rooms and a zebra-themed restaurant (mains from US\$7, pizzas US\$4).

## Augrabies Falls National Park

☎ 054  
The Khoesaa people called it 'Aukoerbis', meaning place of great noise. And when the waterfall for which this park (☎ 054-452 9200; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$8/4; 🌅) is named is fat with rainy season run-off, its thunderous roar is nothing short of spectacular. You won't find any big animals here, but the place doesn't suffer for it. The park, set in a rocky mosaic around an 18km ravine through which the Senqu (Orange) River flows, has a harsh climate.

The three-hour, 9km **Dassie Trail** is well worth doing, particularly if your time is short. It involves clambering over rocks through some magical landscape. The popular three-day, 40km **Klipspringer Hiking Trail** (US\$17) runs along the southern bank of the Senqu (Orange) River and the **Gariep 3-in-1 Route** includes canoeing, walking and mountain biking.

Accommodation in the park can be booked through the **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria), or you can take your chance and just show up. Options include **camp sites** (per 2 people US\$15, extra person US\$5) and a variety of **self-contained chalets** (from US\$57).

The friendly **Augrabies Falls Backpackers** (☎ 054-451 0177; www.kalahari.co.za; camp sites per person US\$4, s/d US\$10/20) has a chilled-out atmosphere and is about 10km before Augrabies Falls National Park on the road from Kakamas.

## NAMAQUALAND

In the Northern Cape's rugged northwestern corner the roads stretch on forever, traversing the unspoilt expanses of ever-shifting scenery that is Namaqualand and the Hantam Karoo. The region is huge – a wild void stretching from the Namibian border in the north to the west coast's bleak beaches, then south towards Vanrhynsdorp in the Western Cape before merging with Bushmanland in the east. This is a land of immense sky and stark country, where you can drive for ages without seeing another car.

## Springbok

☎ 027 / pop 10,400

Springbok lounges in a valley surrounded by harsh rocky hills that explode with colour in flower season. Outside of flower season there's little to see or do, although the town's remoteness is alluring. The air always feels fresh, the desolate landscape is endearing and step outside at night and it will be thoroughly still.

From an edgy frontier town, Springbok has been transformed into a busy service centre for the copper and diamond mines in the region. The **Tourism information office** (☎ 027-718 2985; Voortrekker St; 🕒 7.30am-4.15pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) has loads of information about flowers, attractions and drives in the area.

## SLEEPING

**Cat Nap Accommodation** (☎ 027-718 1905; Voortrekker St; dm US\$11, r from US\$40; 🍷) Cat Nap has a good vibe, in part because of the beautiful photographs and artwork adorning the walls of the spacious old home. Backpackers can shack up in dorm beds in the barn.

**Annie's Cottage** (☎ 027-712 1451; annie@springbokinfo.com; 4 King St; s/d from US\$25/50; 🍷) Each of the 10 rooms is decorated differently, but all are lovely. The pool and garden area is quaint with fountains, trees, flowers and benches.

**Blue Diamond Lodge** (☎ 027-718 2624; 19 Union St; s/d with breakfast US\$36/54; 🍷) An attractive place north of the centre with neat units set around a swimming pool.

**Old Mill Lodge** (☎ 027-718 1705; 69 Van Riebeeck St; d/tr US\$54/67) Pleasantly situated in a peaceful garden up against the rocks on a quiet side street, the rooms here are plush and done up with modern art.

## EATING

**Springbok Restaurant** (☎ 027-712 1321; 37 Voortrekker St; mains US\$2.80-7; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner; 🍷)

Don't let the mounted animal heads cluttering the walls destroy your appetite; the steaks, pizza and burgers are good.

**Titbits Restaurant** (☎ 027-718 1455; cnr Namaqua & Voortrekker Sts; mains US\$3.40-7; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place does have a certain titillating atmosphere with loads of tasty options, including sandwiches, steak, pasta, pizzas and breakfast choices.

**BJ's** (☎ 027-718 2270; cnr Van der Stel & Hospital Sts; mains US\$4.70-7; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🍷) This classy basement joint with a cellar vibe serves tasty, and very reasonably priced, steak cooked exactly how you like it.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Intercape** (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has buses to Cape Town (US\$28, 7½ hours, twice weekly) that leave from opposite the Springbok Lodge near the *kopje*. Buses leave for Windhoek, Namibia (US\$44, 12 hours, four times weekly) at 6.45pm from the same spot.

Springbok is a popular jumping-off point for Namibia and Richtersveld National Park. For 4WD hire, stop by **Cat Nap Accommodation** (☎ 027-718 1905; Voortrekker St); it rents vehicles for US\$100 per day, or US\$120 per day including camping equipment.

**Van Wyk's Busdiens** (☎ 021-559 1601) runs a daily door-to-door minibus taxi to Cape Town (US\$20, five hours) and Kamieskroon (US\$6, one hour). Ordinary minibus taxis run to Cape Town (US\$20, five hours, daily) and Port Nolloth (US\$5.50, 2½ hours, five times weekly).

**VIP Taxis** (☎ 027-111 8780) runs from Springbok to Upington (US\$11, four hours, Monday to

Friday), departing from the Masonic Hotel (across the street from the Springbok Hotel).

## Goegap Nature Reserve

Don't miss this semidesert **nature reserve** (☎ 027-712 1880; admission US\$1.40; 🕒 7.45am-4.15pm), famous for its extraordinary display of spring flowers and a nursery of 200 amazing Karoo and Namaqualand succulents at the **Hester Malan Wildflower Garden**.

There are a couple of driving routes around the reserve, but you'll see more on one of the circular walks (4km, 5.5km and 7km). There are two incredible **mountain-biking routes** (14km and 20km); bring your own bikes. There's a biking permit fee of US\$0.90 per person.

## Vioolsdrif

This town is at the border post with Namibia on the N7, 677km north of Cape Town. The short drive from Steinkopf, with its views of the Senqu (Orange) River carving its way through desolate mountains, is spectacular. The border is open from 7am to 7pm.

**Peace of Paradise** (☎ 027-761 8968; camp sites US\$20, s/d US\$27/40) is 22km west of Vioolsdrif on the banks of the Senqu (Orange) River. It's very pleasant with hot showers, clean toilets and electricity for campers, and you can cool off with a swim in the river.

## Kamieskroon & Around

☎ 027

Out amid the tumbleweed and scrub brush, forgotten-looking Kamieskroon sits in the heart of wild country. Craggy mountains and boulder-strewn hills surround this remote and desolate place.

## WORTH THE TRIP

Within a mountainous desert – a spectacular wilderness of jagged rocky peaks, grotesque rock formations, deep ravines and gorges – the enormous (185,000 hectares) **Richtersveld National Park** (☎ 027-831 1506; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$11/5.50; 🕒 7am-6pm) is a special place. It's especially spectacular during the spring flower season, when the park turns into a technicolour wonderland. The hiking possibilities in this surreal, almost lunar-like landscape, are excellent (though demanding).

In the northern loop of the Senqu (Orange) River, the park is the property of the local Nama people who continue to lead a semitransitional, seminomadic pastoral existence.

There is a brand-new rest camp at **Sendelingsdrift** (2-person camp sites US\$15, chalets from US\$56; 🍷 🍷), which is surprisingly luxurious for such a remote area. There are also two remote wilderness camps (chalets and cabins US\$56) where you must bring your own water.

Most of the park is virtually inaccessible without a properly equipped 4WD vehicle and maybe a local guide.



The **town clerk** (☎ 027-672 1627; Voortrekker St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) serves as the tourist information office.

About 18km southwest of Kamieskroon is the newly established **Namaqua National Park** (☎ 027-672 1948; www.sanparks.org; admission US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm Jul-Oct) where the shrubland and old wheat fields burst into flower in spring. Note that the park is only open during flower season and that it has no sleeping or eating facilities.

Just off the N7 (follow the signs), you'll find the comfortable and popular **Kamieskroon Hotel & Caravan Park** (☎ 027-672 1614; www.kamieskroonhotel.com; camp sites per person US\$6, s/d US\$20/34; 📶).

Kamieskroon is 80km south of Springbok on the N7. **Van Wyk's Busdiens** (☎ 021-559 1601) runs a bus service to Springbok (US\$6, one hour, daily).

## EASTERN CAPE

At once semidesert, forested, mountainous and subtropical, for its relative size the Eastern Cape has a remarkable range of differing climates, topographies and vegetation. Your entry into the province is likely to be along the N2 highway from Cape Town, where you'll be struck by the beauty of the Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park, before the landscape flattens out past Cape St Francis and Jeffrey's Bay (famous for their surf), through Port Elizabeth and the Sunshine and Shipwreck Coasts to East London. Yet just inland to the north are the rolling hills of the former British stronghold of Grahamstown and surrounding 'settler country', which itself soon gives way to the desolate majesty of the semi-arid Karoo, dotted with intriguing towns such as Graaff-Reinet. Beyond East London, as far as Port Edward just over the border in KwaZulu-Natal lies the spectacular, subtropical Wild Coast, and to the north the dramatic mountain ranges of the North-Eastern Highlands.

### History

In the 19th century, Trekboers (nomadic pastoralists descended from the Dutch) clashed with the Xhosa eight times along the Great Kei River, and just about everywhere in a guerrilla conflict with the British. Later the area would become a wellspring of resistance heroes including activists such as President Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko,

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo.

Xhosa culture dominates the former apartheid 'homelands' of Transkei (the Wild Coast) and Ciskei, nominally independent republics that were used as a dumping ground for economically unviable populations.

### NATURE'S VALLEY TO PORT ELIZABETH

☎ 044

Nature's Valley is a small village nestled in yellowwood forest next to a magnificent beach in the west of Tsitsikamma National Park. This is where the Otter Trail ends and the Tsitsikamma Trail begins (see p468) but if you don't want to walk for that long, there are plenty of shorter hikes possible in the area.

A lovely place to stay is **Nature's Valley Rest Camp** (☎ 042-281 1607, bookings ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 1-2 person camp sites US\$1.40, forest huts d US\$35) on the edge of a river east of town.

There's no public transport to Nature's Valley, although the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) will drop off or pick up here on request.

### Tsitsikamma National Park Area

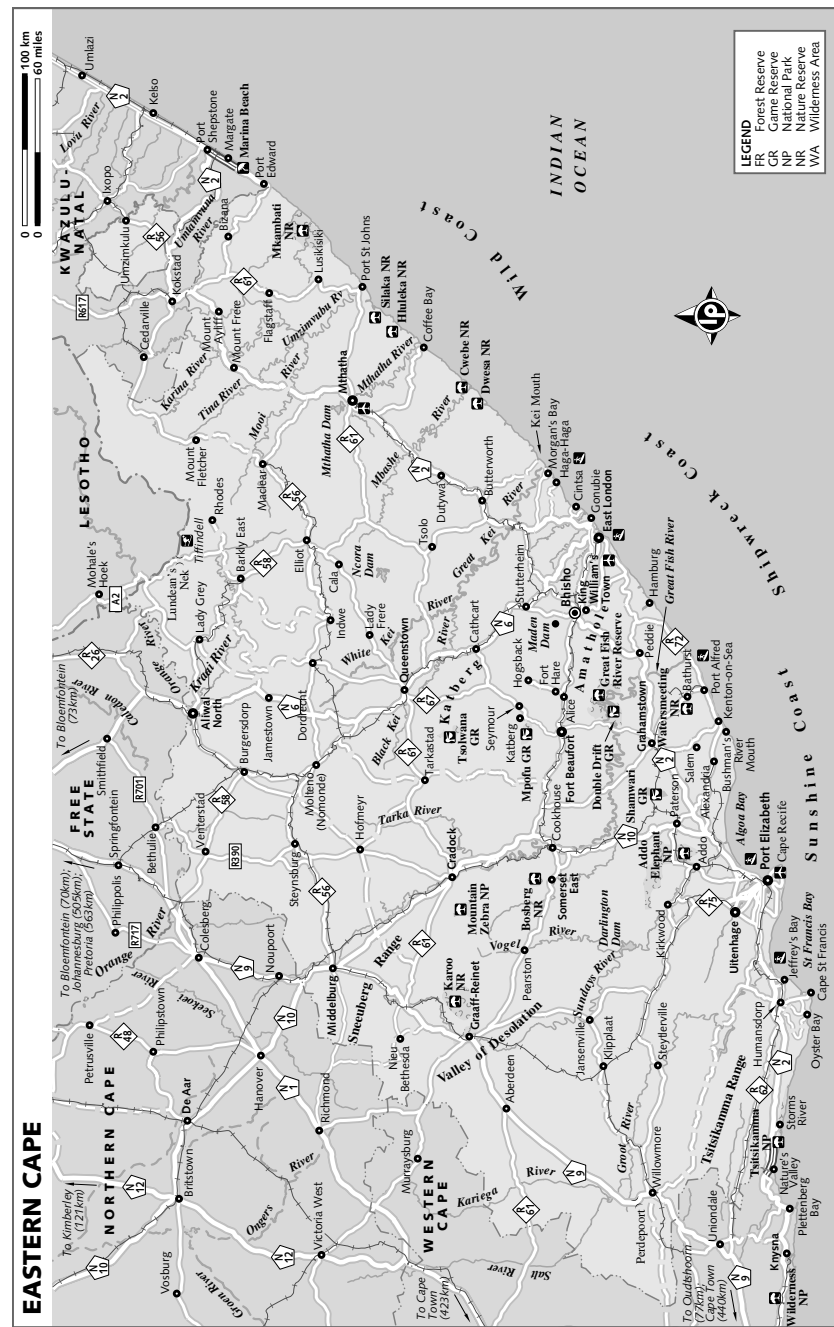
This **park** (adult/child US\$11/6) protects 82km of coast between Plettenberg Bay and Humansdorp, including the area 5km out to sea. Located at the foot of the Tsitsikamma Range and cut by rivers that have carved deep ravines into the ancient forests, it's a spectacular area to walk through.

Elusive Cape clawless otters, after which the Otter Trail is named, inhabit this park; there are also baboons, monkeys and small antelopes. Bird life is plentiful.

Several short day walks give you a taste of the coastline. The waterfall circuit (four hours) on the first part of the Otter Trail is recommended.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The main information centre for the national park is Storms River Mouth Rest Camp (p468), 68km from Plettenberg Bay, 99km from Humansdorp and 8km from the N2. The park gate is 6km from the N2. It's 2km from the gate to the main camp, which is open 24 hours. You can also pay park entrance fees and get information at Nature's Valley Rest Camp (see above).





**OTTER, TSITSIKAMMA & DOLPHIN TRAILS**

The 42km **Otter Trail** (per person US\$70) is one of the most acclaimed hikes in South Africa, hugging the coastline from Storms River Mouth to Nature's Valley. The walk, which lasts five days and four nights, involves fording a number of rivers and gives access to some superb stretches of coast. A good level of fitness is required for the walk.

Book the trail through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-426 5111). The trail is usually booked up one year ahead. There are often cancellations, however, so it's always worth trying. Single hikers are not permitted.

Accommodation is in six-bed rest huts with mattresses but without running water. Camping is not allowed.

The 64km **Tsitsikamma Trail** commences at Nature's Valley and ends at Storms River, running parallel to the Otter Trail but taking you inland through the forests. This hike also takes five days and four nights, although it's considered to be easier than the Otter Trail. You only need to pay accommodation costs for the hiking **huts** (per person per night US\$9.50).

Book both the trail and accommodation through the **Forestry Department** (☎ 042-281 1712), or contact Nature's Valley Rest Camp (p466) for information.

The **Dolphin Trail** (www.dolphintrail.co.za; per person US\$363) is ideal for hikers who don't want to carry heavy equipment or sleep in huts. Accommodation on this three-night, four-day hike, which runs from Storms River Mouth to the banks of the Sanddrif River, is in comfortable hotels, and luggage is carried on vehicles between overnight stops. To book, contact **Tsitsikamma National Park** (☎ 042-281 1607) or visit the trail's website.

**SLEEPING**

**Storms River Mouth Rest Camp** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; camp sites/forest huts/family cottages US\$19/31/99) This camp offers forest huts, chalets, cottages and 'oceanettes'; all except the forest huts are equipped with kitchens, bedding and bathrooms.

**Tsitsikamma Falls Adventure Park** (☎ 042-280 3770; www.tsitsikammaadventure.co.za; Witelsbos; s/d with breakfast from US\$24/49) A family-run guesthouse about halfway between Nature's Valley and Jeffrey's Bay, and near a beautiful waterfall.

**Misty Mountain Reserve** (☎ 042-280 3699; www.misty-sa.co.za; chalets per person US\$54, 4-person cottage US\$135). A great place to stay if hiking the Dol-

phin Trail, Misty Mountain has luxury wooden cottages or chalets with wonderful views.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Greyhound, Intercape and Translux buses run along the N2, from where it's an 8km walk to Storms River Mouth. The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Nature's Valley on request.

**Storms River**

☎ 042

Storms River is an odd little hamlet with tree-shaded lanes, a few places to stay and an outdoor centre. From the N2 the Storms River signpost points to this village which lies outside the national park. The turn-off is 4km east of the turn-off to the national park, which is signed as Storms River Mouth (or Stormsrivermond in Afrikaans).

**Tsitsikamma Tourism Information Office** (☎ 042-280 3561; www.tsitsikamma.net) at the PetroPort petrol station, 4km east on the N2, provides information.

Most activities on offer are organised by **Storms River Adventures** (☎ 042-281 1836; www.stormsriver.com; Darnell St, Storms River). These include a tree canopy slide (US\$53) and an overnight bush experience (all equipment provided) at the Konga Bush Eco-Camp (US\$47). The world's highest bungee jump (216m) is at the **Bloukrans River Bridge** (☎ 042-281 1458; www.faceadrenalin.com; per jump US\$78), 21km west of Storms River.

If you're after a post-bungee rest try **Tube 'n Axe** (☎ 042-281 1757; tube-n-axe@telkomsa.net; cnr Darnell & Saffron Sts; camp sites US\$7, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/27; ☑). Another option is **Ploughman's Rest** (☎ 042-281 1726; www.ploughmansrest.co.za; 31 Formosa St; s/d with breakfast US\$28/53), a friendly B&B.

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Storms River, but there's no other public transport to the village.

**Jeffrey's Bay**

☎ 042 / pop 25,000

A far cry from its origins as a sleepy seaside town frequented by young families, 'J-Bay' takes its place as one of the world's top surfing destinations. Boardies from all over the planet flock here to ride waves such as the famous Supertubes, once described as 'the most perfect wave in the world'. June to September are the best months for experienced surfers, but novices can learn year-round.

(Continued from page 468)

Development is raging at a furious pace, with shopping in the myriad clothing stores almost overtaking surfing as the main leisure activity, but so far the local board-waxing vibe has been retained. The biggest surf crowd comes to town every July for the Billabong Pro championship.

**INFORMATION**

**Atlantic Internet Café** (☎ 042-293 2399; Da Gama Rd; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) For Internet access.

**Jeffrey's Bay Tourism** (☎ 042-293 2923, fax 293 2924; Da Gama Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

**SLEEPING**

**Peggy's Place** (☎ 042-293 2160; pegjbay@yahoo.com; 8a Oriibi St; camp sites/dm/d US\$4.70/7/27) A wonderfully rustic, friendly place in a comfortable old house on the outskirts of town, near the surf area and justifiably loved by readers.

**Island Vibe** (☎ 042-293 1625; ivibe@lantic.net; 10 Dageraad St; camp sites/dm/d US\$5.50/9.50/24) The most popular backpackers in town, Island Vibe is a couple of kilometres south of the city centre. Activities on offer include surf lessons (US\$24), plus of course plenty of drinking and partying. The new beautifully decorated beach house has double rooms (US\$34) only and a separate kitchen.

**Cristal Cove** (☎ 042-293 2101; www.cristalcove.co.za; 49 Flame Cres; dm US\$8, d from US\$20; ☑) Offering a choice of either new en-suite, sea-facing doubles or neat rooms within self-catering flats, Cristal Cove is a chilled-out backpackers with a personal touch.

**Lazee Bay** (☎ 042-296 2090; lazeebay@worldonline.co.za; 25 Mimosa St; d with breakfast US\$40; ☑) One of J-Bay's best guesthouses, up on a hill above Da Gama Rd, is memorable for its funky décor and great sea views. There's a pool deck, a braai area and a bar.

**Supertubes Guesthouse** (☎ 042-293 2957; supertubes@agnet.co.za; 10/12 Pepper St; s/d with breakfast US\$47/67, s/d luxury rooms with breakfast US\$70/108; ☑) A stalwart of J-Bay accommodation, this is right in the prime surfing spot and provides luxurious accommodation.

**EATING**

**Sunflower Café** (☎ 042-293 1682; 20 Da Gama Rd; mains US\$5.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, breakfast & lunch Sun & Mon) This bright, cheerful and friendly

café prepares some healthy and vegetarian options.

**Tapas Lapa Seaside** (☎ 042-292 0119; Marina Martinique; mains US\$7-11; ☎ dinner) Tapas Lapa is just across the car park from the seashore, so the sand on the floor has to be shovelled in! Meals feature decent seafood, and there's a bar next door.

**Die Walkipper** (☎ 042-293 9478; Marina Martinique; seafood platters US\$16; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) This alfresco restaurant specialising in seafood, and crocodile and ostrich steaks, is just metres from the lapping sea at the Marina Martinique beach.

**Getting There & Away**

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops daily at hostels in both directions. A fare from Jeffrey's Bay to Cape Town costs US\$51 and takes 12 hours; Port Elizabeth to Jeffrey's Bay costs US\$9.50 and takes two hours. The **Sunshine Express** (☎ 021-293 2221) runs door-to-door between Port Elizabeth and Jeffrey's Bay (US\$1.40, one hour).

**PORT ELIZABETH**

☎ 041 / pop 1.5m

Port Elizabeth, the Eastern Cape's biggest town and its major transport hub, seems to have something of an identity crisis. It's known by South Africans as 'PE', by locals as the 'friendly city', by marketers as part of the 'Sunshine Coast' and by local government as the core of 'Nelson Mandela Bay', an area incorporating the city centre, a nearby industrial area and the huge, sprawling townships that surround both. Its buildings are a hodgepodge of styles and have a dishevelled charm: monuments at once to its growth period (1880s) and boycott-era stagnation (1970s).

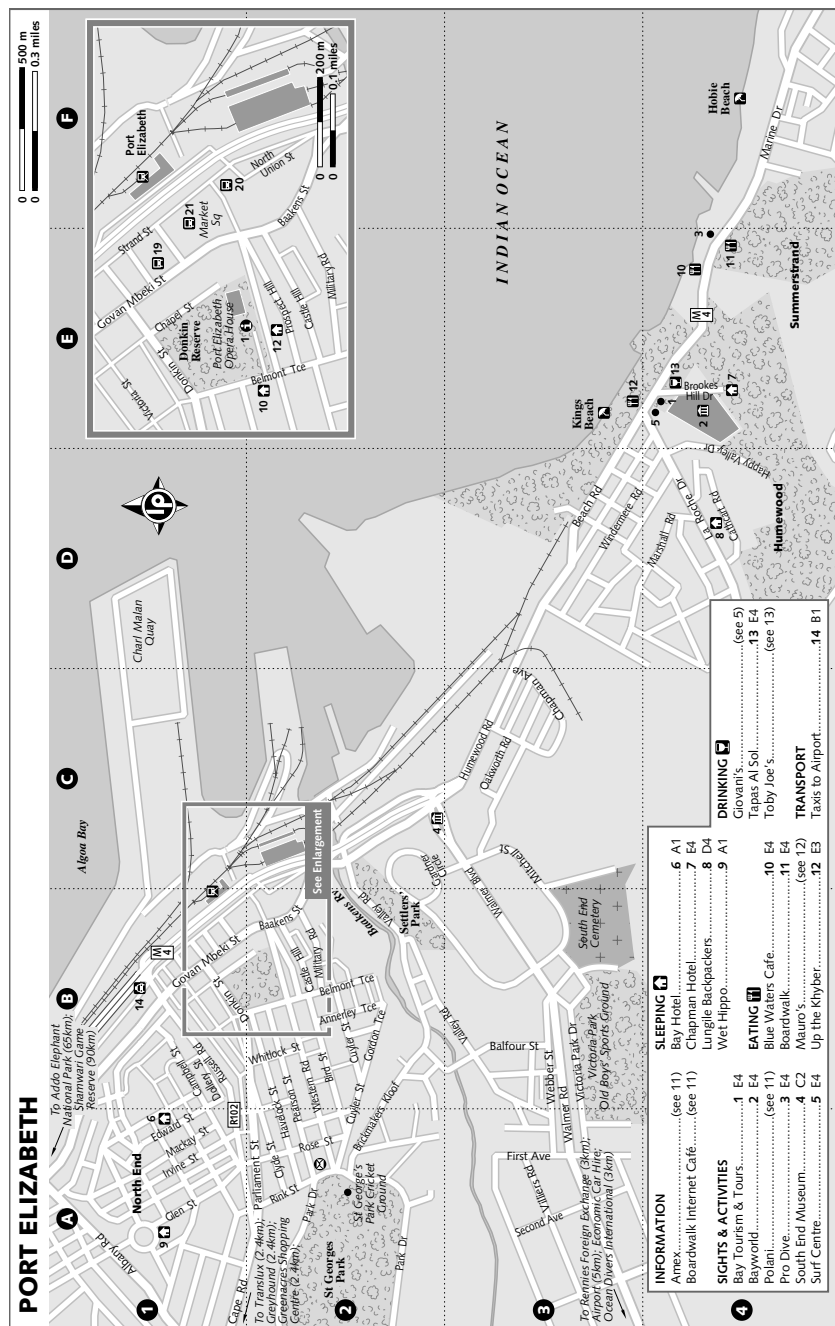
While many travellers consider Port Elizabeth no more than a charmless, convenient place to stop for a rest and stock up on supplies before moving onward, it does offer some of the Eastern Cape's best bathing beaches.

**Information**

**Amex** (☎ 041-583 2025; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun)

**Boardwalk Internet Café** (☎ 041-583 4725; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand; per hr US\$5.50; ☎ 9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) For Internet access.

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<b>INFORMATION</b>	AirMax.....(see 11)	<b>SLEEPING</b>	Bay Hotel.....6 A1	<b>DRINKING</b>	Giovanis.....(see 5)
Bay Tourism & Tours.....7 E4	Boardwalk Internet Café.....(see 11)	Chapman Hotel.....7 E4	Lungile Backpackers.....8 D4	Tapas Al Sol.....13 E4	Toby Joe's.....(see 13)
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Bay Tourism & Tours.....1 E4	Blue Waters Cafe.....10 E4	Wet Hippo.....9 A1	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	Taxis to Airport.....14 B1
Bayworld.....2 E4	Polani.....(see 11)	Boardwalk.....11 E4			
Pro Dive.....3 E4	South End Museum.....(see 12)	Mauro's.....4 C2			
Surf Centre.....5 E4		Up the Khyber.....12 E3			

**Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism** (☎ 041-585 8884; www.nmbt.co.za; Donkin Reserve; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat & Sun) Has an excellent supply of information and maps.

**Rennies Foreign Exchange** (☎ 041-368 5890; Walmer Park Shopping Centre; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) About 3km from the town centre.

## Dangers & Annoyances

The city centre can be dangerous at night – take a taxi if you're going out. The main beachfront, however, is considered one of the safest in the country.

## Sights

### SOUTH END MUSEUM

This small but fascinating museum (☎ 041-582 3325; admin@semuseum.co.za; cnr Walmer Blvd & Humewood Rd; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) records multicultural Port Elizabeth, a vibrant district once known as South End. The apartheid bulldozers put an end to the neighbourhood during forced removals between 1965 and 1975 under the infamous Group Areas Act.

### BAYWORLD

One of the best and largest museum complexes in the country, **Bayworld** (☎ 041-584 0650; www.bayworld.co.za; Beach Rd; adult/child US\$4.20/2; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 1.45-4.30pm) incorporates the Port Elizabeth Museum, an oceanarium and a snake park.

## Activities

The wide sandy beaches to the south of central Port Elizabeth make the town a major watersports venue. Kings Beach stretches from the harbour breakwater to Humewood Beach; both beaches are sheltered.

Good diving sites around Port Elizabeth include some wrecks and the St Croix Islands, a marine reserve. Contact either **Ocean Divers International** (☎ 041-581 5121; www.odipe.co.za; 10 Albert Rd, Walmer) or **Pro Dive** (☎ 041-583 5316; www.prodive.co.za; Shark Rock Pier, Beach Rd, Summerstrand; per dive US\$37).

The **Surf Centre** (☎ 083-656 8429; Marine Dr, Humewood; surfboards/body boards per day US\$13/4) sells and hires surfboards and body boards. Its surf school will teach you how to use them for US\$20 per day.

## Tours

**Bay Tourism & Tours** (☎ 041-584 0622; www.baytours.co.za; Beach Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) runs local tours, in-

cluding trips to Addo Elephant National Park (US\$74) and city/townships (US\$34).

There are several cross-cultural township tours, which give the opportunity to visit squatter camps and shebeens. The cost is from US\$27 to US\$34 per person for a half-day tour and includes a light lunch or dinner. Contact **Calabash Tours** (☎ 041-585 6162; calabash@iafrica.com), **Tanaqua Tours** (☎ 041-452 7692) or **Molo Tours** (☎ 082-970 4037).

For a sunset yacht cruise, including a fish barbeque, contact **Polani** (☎ 041-583 2141; info@polani.co.za; the Boardwalk, Marine Dr, Summerstrand). Boats go towards Cape Recife, and there's a good chance of seeing dolphins en route. The US\$16 price tag doesn't include drinks.

## Sleeping

Most of Port Elizabeth's fairly unexciting hotel choices are lined up along the beachfront.

## BUDGET

**Lungile Backpackers** (☎ 041-582 2042; lungile@netactive.co.za; 12 La Roche Dr, Humewood; camp sites/dm/tw/d with shared bathroom US\$5.50/9/22/24; ☎) Port Elizabeth's most popular backpackers is contained in an airy Swiss-style home minutes from the beachfront. There are also some handsome stone-flagged doubles with their own bathrooms (US\$26).

**Wet Hippo** (☎ 041-533 6260; www.wethippo.com; 14 Glen St, Richmond Hill; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$8/22; ☎) Port Elizabeth's newest backpackers is pretty smart, with a sunny kitchen, a big pool and a pretty garden, all set in a leafy suburban street far from the hustle of the beachfront.

**Port Elizabeth Backpackers** (☎ 041-586 0697; pebakpak@global.co.za; 7 Prospect Hill; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$10/24; ☎) This friendly, laid-back hostel is in a 100-year-old building within walking distance of places to eat and drink up on the headland.

## MIDRANGE

**Bay Hotel** (☎ 041-585 1558; info@bayberry.co.za; 7 Lutman St; s/d with breakfast US\$34/51) An upmarket place that feels more like a B&B than a hotel, with very reasonable rates for elegant rooms with plenty of character. It also has an attractive restaurant (mains US\$5.50) and bar attached.

**Edward Protea Hotel** (☎ 041-586 2056; edward@pehotels.co.za; Belmont Tce; s/d US\$55/74) The Edward Protea Hotel, in the heart of the city, is a



gracious, old-style Edwardian hotel with comfortable rooms and charming colonial décor.

**Chapman Hotel** (☎ 041-584 0678; www.chapman.co.za; 1 Lady Bea Cres, Brookes Hill, Summerstrand; s/d with breakfast US\$62/74; ♿ ♿ ♿) The family-run Chapman, overlooking the sea south of the city centre, is an upmarket choice with a waterfall horizon pool. Modern rooms have private balconies with sea views.

## Eating

Most of Port Elizabeth's best cafés are in the Boardwalk casino complex in Summerstrand, at the far end of Beach Rd. The atmosphere is a bit artificial, but here you can at least sip a cappuccino in peace away from the plastic fast-food joints of the beachfront.

**Blue Waters Cafe** (☎ 041-583 4110; Marine Dr, Summerstrand; mains US\$4-12; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A bright, lively café-restaurant with lots of seafood platters, salads and pasta.

**Up the Khyber** (☎ 041-582 2200; MacArthur Leisure Centre, Beach Rd; mains US\$6-9; ☺ lunch & dinner) Next door to Mauro's, Indian food at this classy restaurant has recently taken a back seat to the usual steaks and burgers.

**Mauro's** (☎ 041-582 2700; MacArthur Leisure Centre, Beach Rd; mains US\$7-11; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) Mauro's is something of an anomaly among the bucket-and-spade kitsch of the beachfront – a Californian-style trendy bistro.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Wednesday seems to be the biggest night in the pubs and clubs, although Friday and Saturday are popular as well.

**Toby Joe's** (☎ 041-584 0082; Brookes Pavilion, Beach Rd, Humewood; ☺ Tue-Sun) Port Elizabeth's current hot spot for the young is this cavernous pub, filled to bursting every night. There are live DJs at weekends, karaoke on Thursday, and Sunday deck parties on the wooden terrace.

**Giovanni's** (☎ 041-586 3189; Dolphin's Leap Centre) A buzzy, trendy bar-diner with a long cocktail menu, loud music and American diner-style booths to cosy up in.

**Tapas Al Sol** (☎ 041-586 2159; Brookes Pavilion, Beach Rd, Humewood) No tapas here, but live bands play most nights and the Sunday afternoon deck party is legendary.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**SAA** (☎ 041-507 1111) has daily flights between Jo'burg (US\$175 return), Durban (US\$150),

Cape Town (US\$160) and Port Elizabeth. **SA Airlink** (☎ 0861-359 722) flies daily from Port Elizabeth to East London (around US\$100), Durban (US\$120) and Cape Town (US\$120). **Kulula** (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) flies daily to Jo'burg. Return fares start at around US\$120.

### BUS

**Greyhound** (☎ 041-363 4555) buses depart from opposite Checkers at Greenacres Shopping Centre, around 3km from Humewood. **Translux** (☎ 041-392 1333) also operates out of the Greenacres Shopping Centre. **Intercape** (☎ 041-586 0055) only accepts telephone bookings.

The 12-hour or so trip to Cape Town averages around US\$24. The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs daily from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town (US\$110 one way – hop-on, hop-off).

All three bus companies service Jo'burg. Via East London the 15-hour trip averages around US\$45.

Translux runs to Durban daily (US\$38, 15 hours) via Grahamstown (US\$10, 2½ hours), East London (US\$17, five hours), Mthatha (US\$23, nine hours) and Port Shepstone (US\$32, 13 hours). Greyhound runs to Durban daily (US\$40, 15 hours). Intercape runs between Port Elizabeth and East London daily (US\$16, six hours).

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday from Port Elizabeth to Durban, and returns on Monday, Wednesday Thursday, Saturday and Sunday; it's US\$97 for a one-day hop-on, hop-off ticket.

### CAR

All the big car-rental operators have offices situated in Port Elizabeth or at the airport, including **Avis** (☎ 041-581 4291), **Budget** (☎ 041-581 4242) and **Imperial** (☎ 5041-81 1268). Also try **Economic Car Hire** (☎ 041-581 5826; 104 Heugh Rd, Walmer).

### MINIBUS TAXI

**J-Bay Sunshine Express** (☎ 042-293 2221) minibus taxis run between Jeffrey's Bay, Port Elizabeth and other coastal areas.

### TRAIN

The **Shosholoz Meyl** (☎ 0860-008 888; www.spoornet.co.za) runs overnight to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$49/33, 18 hours) via Bloemfontein.

## Getting Around

The **airport** (Allister Miller Rd, Walmer) is about 5km from the city centre. Taxis (US\$9) and hire cars are available at the airport.

## PORT ELIZABETH TO KEI RIVER Addo Elephant National Park

This **national park** (☎ 042-223 0556; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$11/5; ☺ 7am-7pm) is 72km north of Port Elizabeth, near the Zuurberg Range in the Sundays River Valley. Following a recent expansion, Addo now encompasses around 120,000 hectares of malaria-free wildlife viewing.

The park protects the remnants of the huge elephant herds that once roamed Eastern Cape. When Addo was proclaimed a national park in 1931, there were only 11 elephants left. Today there are more than 300 in the park, and you'd be unlucky not to see some. A day or two at Addo is a highlight of any visit to this part of the Eastern Cape, not only for the elephants but for the zebras, elands, kudus, warthogs, myriad birds and even lions and hyenas, relatively new introductions to the park.

### INFORMATION

The park is closed if there has been heavy rain. There is a well-stocked **shop** (☺ 8am-7pm) at the park headquarters, 7km from the village of Addo on Rte 335. Midsummer heat can be intolerable.

For optimum wildlife-spotting, pick up one of the **'hop-on rangers'** (US\$7) at the gate, who can give you advice on where to go and explain what you're looking at in interesting detail. The park's own **vehicle** (2hr drive per person US\$20) can also be used for elephant-spotting drives.

### SLEEPING

**Addo Rest Camp** (bookings ☎ 042-223 0556; www.sanparks.org; camp sites/safari tents/forest cabins with shared bathroom US\$14/35/47, 4-person chalets US\$52) Some of the accommodation overlooks a waterhole where elephants come to drink. Addo also has a bush camp (one to four people US\$59) and bungalows (one to four people US\$16) in the northern section of the park.

**Homestead B&B** (☎ 042-233 0354; homestead@webmail.co.za; camp sites US\$3.40, backpackers s/d US\$14/24, B&B s/d US\$34/67; ♿) Homestead has a few backpackers' rooms and self-catering units, as well as camping, alongside the normal B&B accommodation.

**Chrislin** (☎ 042-233 0022; www.africanhuts-addo.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$60/95; ♿) This place has friendly owners and very pretty African-style huts on a working citrus farm. A big braai dinner can be provided for US\$1.40 per person.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The park is signposted from the N2. Alternatively you can travel via Uitenhage on Rte 75.

### Port Alfred

☎ 046 / pop 32,500

Port Alfred is an odd little place that's one part unkempt seaside town and the other part upmarket holiday resort, making it at once an exemplar of the province's lack of funds and an island of style and serenity. Which face it wears depends largely on the season: off-peak it's staid and quiet except on weekends, when students from Grahamstown come to lounge on the beach and drink in the pubs. In season (mid-December to January) it bustles with life as people arrive from other parts of the province to soak up the holiday atmosphere, and prices surge.

### ACTIVITIES

If you're into equestrian endeavours, contact **Fish River Horse Safaris** (☎ 046-675 1271; www.fishriverhorsesafaris.co.za; 2½hr trails US\$24, 5hr trails US\$70).

For **surfers**, there are good right- and left-hand breaks at the river mouth. There's also an 8km **walking trail** through the Kowie Nature Reserve. For the more aerobically fit, **Rufanes River Trails** (☎ 041-624 1469) has mountain-bike trails.

The two-day **Kowie Canoe Trail** (☎ 041-624 2230; per person US\$11) is a fairly easy 18km canoe trip upriver from Port Alfred, with an overnight stay in a hut.

**Keryn's Dive School & Maximum Exposure** (☎ 046-624 4432; keryn@compushop.co.za; NAUI scuba-diving course US\$200) offers diving courses between May and August.

### SLEEPING

**Bretton Beach Crest** (☎ 046-624 1606; www.brettonbeach.co.za; Freshwater Rd; self-catering cottages from US\$32) A charming collection of self-contained beach cottages 3km from the Kowie River mouth with wonderful sea views and neat rooms.

**Medolino Caravan Park** (☎ 046-624 1651; www.caravanparks.co.za/medolino; 23 Stewart Rd; camp sites US\$1.40, 2-/4-bedroom chalets US\$43/57) This park, in town off Princes Ave, is near both Kowie River



and Kelly's Beach. The chalet rates double in high season.

**Residency** (☎ 046-624 5382; www.theresidency.co.za; 11 Vroom Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$35/62) The Residency is a gracious B&B in a magnificently restored Victorian house built in 1898. A big breakfast is served on the wide veranda every morning.

**Halyards Hotel** (☎ 046-84 3300; www.riverhotels.co.za; Royal Alfred Marina, Albany Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$70/95; ♿ ♿) This comfy waterfront hotel with attractive Cape Cod-style architecture has large well-equipped rooms overlooking the harbour.

## EATING

**Guido's Restaurant** (☎ 046-624 5264; West Beach Dr; mains US\$2.80-6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Guido's is a trendy pizza-and-pasta restaurant on the beach. Though service is slow the ambience is lively.

**Buck & Hunter** (☎ 046-624 5960; Main St; mains US\$4.70-7; ☺ lunch & dinner, closed Sun Feb-Nov except Easter) The Buck & Hunter is a pub-restaurant serving game dishes, such as kudu and ostrich, and more than 35 types of pizzas to a macho clientele.

**Butler's** (☎ 046-624 3464; 25 Van der Riet St; mains US\$6-13; ☺ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Widely considered one of the country's best restaurants, Butler's imaginative, oft-changing menu always features a great fish and seafood selection.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) stops at Station Backpackers (off Pascoe Crescent) on its run from Port Elizabeth (1½ hours) to Durban (12 hours) on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

The **minibus taxi rank** (Biscay Rd) is outside the Heritage Mall. There are daily services to Port Elizabeth (US\$7), Grahamstown (US\$3) and East London (US\$9). Local daily services include Bathurst (US\$1.20).

## Shipwreck Coast

The coast between the Great Fish River and East London is also known as the Shipwreck Coast, as it is the graveyard for many ships. The 64km **Shipwreck Hiking Trail** (per person per night US\$5.50) leads from the Great Fish River to the Ncera River, but it is possible to do any section as there are several easy entry and exit points. This is one of the few walking areas in South Africa where hikers can set their own pace and

camp more or less where they choose. They are rewarded with wild, unspoilt sections of surf beach and beautiful estuaries. The trail must be booked through **Wild Coast Reservations** (☎ 043-743 6181) in East London

## East London

☎ 043 / pop 980,000

The country's only river port, with a good surf beach and a spectacular bay that curves round to huge sand hills. Few cities in the world can be as equally populous and dour as East London, yet a strange, inescapable malaise hangs over the town. Unless you're a surfer (or a shark), there isn't really much to keep you here, though it can be a good base for moving on to holiday spots along the Sunshine or Wild Coasts. The main downtown street is Oxford St, with the city centre extending from about Argyle St south to Fleet St.

Its Khoesaaan name means 'Place of the Buffalos', and the whole area has been named 'Buffalo City' by the tourism authorities.

## INFORMATION

### Internet Access

**Cyber Lounge** (☎ 083-375 9040; 58 Beach Rd, Nahoon; per 21min US\$2.80; ☺ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6.30pm Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 3-6pm Sun)

### Tourist Information

There are two tourist offices in East London, both in **King's Tourist Centre** (cnr Longfellow & Aquarium Rds) on the beachfront and both not especially helpful.

**Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectourism.co.za; ☺ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Covers the wider area.

**Tourism Buffalo City** (☎ 043-722 6015; www.visitbuffalocity.co.za; ☺ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Deals with matters relating to the city and neighbouring townships.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The eastern end of Eastern Beach and the area around Nahoon River mouth are not considered safe to walk on. Take care on the Esplanade and get a taxi home from anywhere in East London after dark. Watch out for pickpockets if you end up in the area around Buffalo St and the minibus taxi ranks.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **East London Museum** (☎ 043-743 0686; Dawson Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☺ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-5pm Sat,

11am-4pm Sun) displays the stuffed original of a coelacanth, a strange-looking fish that until 1938 had been thought to have been extinct for 50 million years. Other exhibits at the museum include trace-fossil human footprints and a living beehive.

If you have children, there's the small **East London zoo** (☎ 043-722 1171; adult/child US\$2/1.20; ☺ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sun) at Queen's Park, and a small **aquarium** (☎ 043-705 2637; Esplanade; adult/child US\$2/1.20; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Sun) on the beachfront.

The best **surfing** is at Nahoon Reef at the southern end of Nahoon Beach.

## SLEEPING

**Sugarshack Backpackers** (☎ 043-722 8240; www.sugarshack.co.za; Eastern Esplanade, Eastern Beach; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$4.70/9/22; ♿) With the beach just metres away, the surf's always up at this lively backpackers. Activities on offer include cliff jumping (US\$3.40), and surf lessons (US\$10) are always available. Private wooden garden cottages are also available.

**Niki Nana Backpackers** (☎ 043-722 8509; www.nikinana.co.za; 4 Hillview Rd; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$6/9/22; ♿) This backpackers is small but perfectly formed, with comfy inside spaces plus a private garden with a large swimming pool and braai area. Meals can be arranged on request.

**East London Backpackers** (☎ 043-781 1122, 084-782 7780; www.elbackpackers.co.za; 11 Quanza St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$8/14/20, d US\$24; ♿) This well-maintained place is much quieter and less vibey than Sugarshack, but has spacious and clean chilling areas and dorms, a braai area and a plunge pool. There are also good-quality doubles with their own bathroom.

**Mike's Guest House** (☎ 043-743 3647; mikes@his.co.za; 22 Clifford St; s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$16/24, s/d US\$27/36) Unfortunately up a rather dubious-looking road near the beachfront, this spick and span guesthouse is terrific value for money, if a bit characterless.

**Gonubie Caravan Park** (☎ 043-705 9748; fax 740 5937; Beachfront, Gonubie, camp sites/2-bedroom chalets low season US\$9/43, high season US\$19/70) A great escape from the city, with log cabin-style chalets right on the beachfront of rustic outer suburb Gonubie, 20km from town.

**White House** (☎ 043-740 0344; www.thewhitehousebandb.co.za; 10 Whitthaus St, Gonubie; s/d with breakfast US\$40/53; ♿) A stylish guesthouse with glass windows for panoramic views of cliffs and sea –

you can watch whales and dolphins passing by while you're having breakfast!

## EATING

**Buccaneers** (☎ 043-743 5171; Eastern Esplanade; mains US\$2-5; ☺ lunch & dinner) Next to Sugarshack Backpackers, this down-to-earth pub serves steaks, toasted sandwiches and pizzas to soak up the alcohol.

**Guido's** (☎ 043-743 4441; Esplanade; mains US\$2.80-5.50; ☺ lunch & dinner) This chain Italian, complete with faux-Grecian columns and a water feature, is a good standby for pizza and pasta.

**Le Republik** (☎ 043-722 0076; King's Tourist Centre, cnr Longfellow & Aquarium Rds; mains US\$5.50-8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This bright, noisy diner above the tourist office offers good hearty food and elevated seaside views.

**Strandloper Café** (☎ 043-735 4570; 95 Old Transkei Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) This very elegant, simple and classy restaurant specialises in seafood, with dishes such as paella and Cajun fish of the day. There's a good wine list and a couple of veggie options too.

**Smokey Swallows** (☎ 043-727 1349; Devereux Ave; mains US\$8-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) A perfect cross-section of East London life, frequented by everyone from the emerging black middle class to jazz aficionados disappearing in a fog of pipe smoke. There are frequent live acts.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

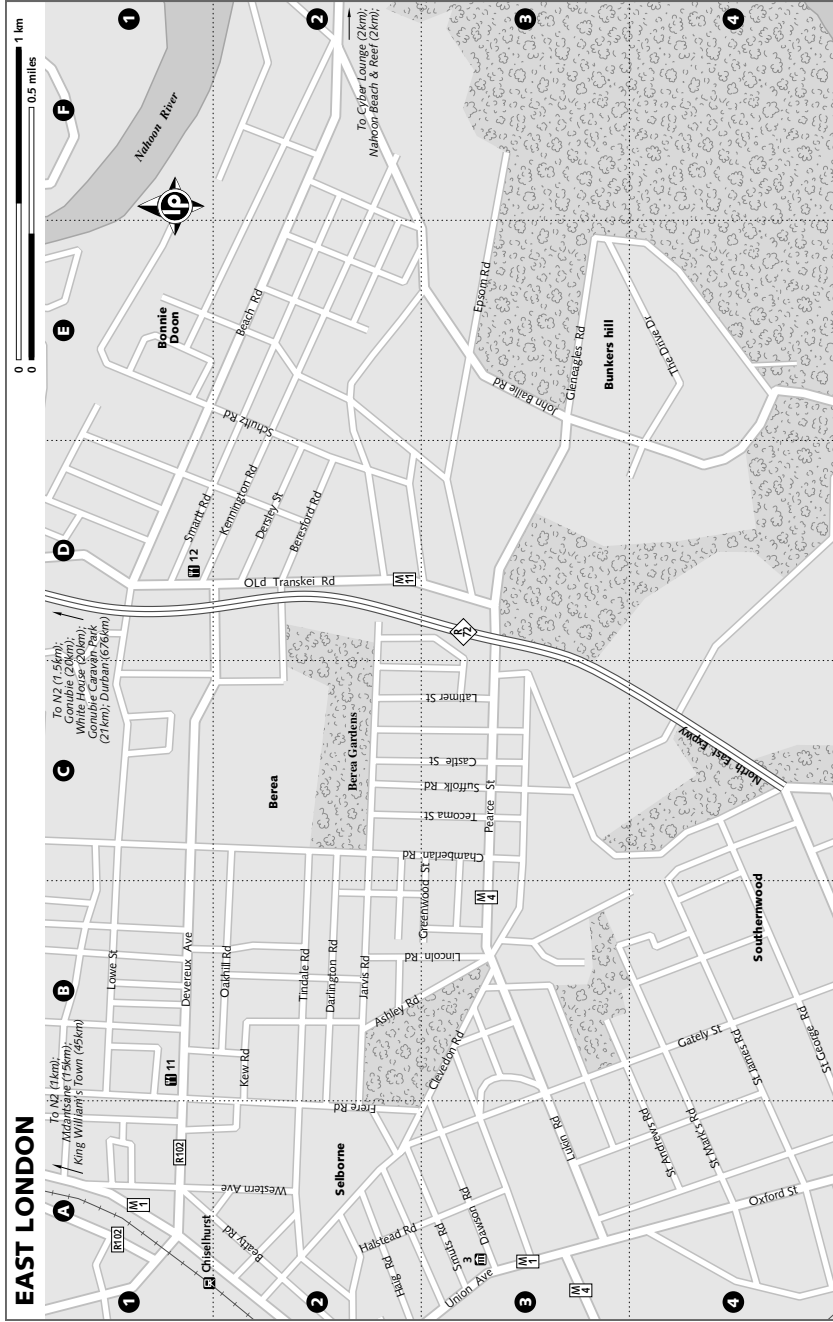
The airport is 10km from the centre. **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 043-706 0203) has an office at the airport and flies from East London daily to Port Elizabeth (around US\$95), Durban (around US\$150) and Cape Town (around US\$250).

### Bus

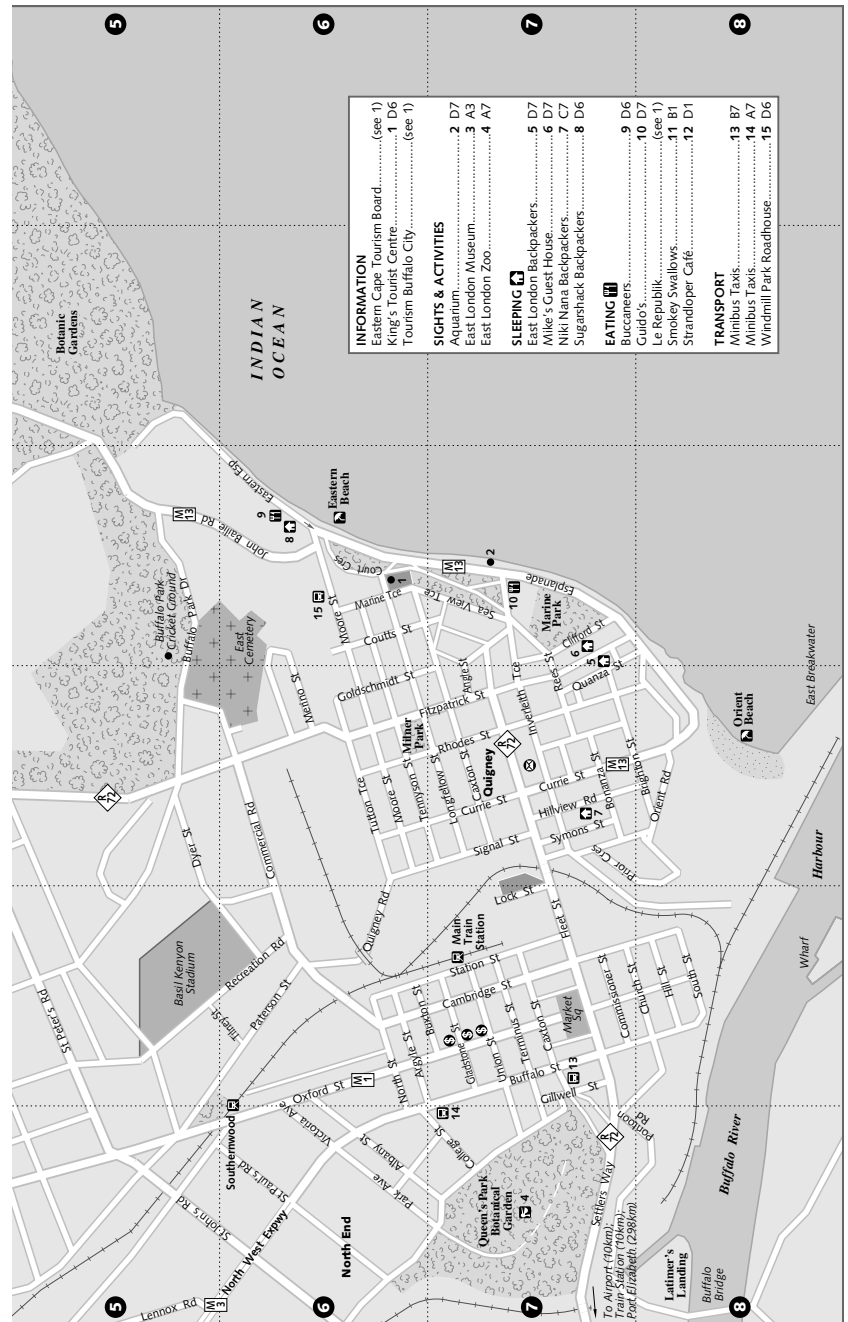
Translux, Greyhound and SA Connection stop at the **Windmill Park Roadhouse** (Moore St). Intercap buses stop at the **main train station** (Station St) and at the airport.

**Translux** (☎ 043-700 1999; www.translux.co.za) has daily buses to Mthatha (US\$17, four hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$25, four hours), Durban (US\$26, 10 hours), Cape Town (US\$40, 15 hours) and Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$38, 14 hours).

**Greyhound** (☎ 043-743 9284; www.greyhound.co.za) has a daily bus between Durban (US\$27, 10 hours) and Cape Town (US\$46, 16 hours) via Port Elizabeth (US\$19, 5½ hours).



**EAST LONDON**



<b>INFORMATION</b>	Eastern Cape Tourism Board.....(see 1)	1 D6
King's Tourist Centre.....(see 1)	Tourism Buffalo City.....(see 1)	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Aquarium.....2 D7	
East London Museum.....3 A3	East London Zoo.....4 A7	
<b>SLEEPING</b>	East London Backpackers.....5 D7	
Mike's Guest House.....6 D7	Niki Nana Backpackers.....7 C7	
Sugarhack Backpackers.....8 D6		
<b>EATING</b>	Buccaneers.....9 D6	
Guidos.....10 D7	Le Republik.....(see 1)	
Smoky Swallows.....11 B1	Strandloper Café.....12 D1	
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	Amibus Taxis.....13 B7	
Amibus Taxis.....(see 1)	Windmill Park Roadhouse.....15 D6	

**Intercape** (☎ 043-743 9284; www.intercape.co.za) has daily buses from East London to Cape Town (US\$43, 7½ hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$17, five hours).

**SA Connection** (☎ 086-110 2426) has buses weekly to Jo'burg (US\$44) and a twice-weekly connection to Cape Town (US\$47).

The **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) runs from Port Elizabeth to Durban via East London Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. It runs in the other direction Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. It picks up from hostels.

### Minibus Taxi

On the corner of Buffalo and Argyle Sts are long-distance minibus taxis to destinations north of East London. Nearby on the corner of Caxton and Gillwell Sts are minibus taxis for King William's Town, Bhisho and the local area. The following are sample fares: King William's Town (US\$2, one hour), Butterworth (US\$4.70, three hours), Mthatha (US\$9.50, five hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$11, six hours), Jo'burg (US\$30, 15 hours) and Cape Town (US\$32, 18 hours).

### Train

The overnight **Shosholoza Meyl** (☎ 0860-008 888) *Amathole* from East London to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$45/32, 18 hours) departs daily via Bloemfontein.

### GETTING AROUND

Most city buses stop at the **city hall** (Oxford St). For information on times and routes, contact **Buffalo City Municipal Buses** (☎ 043-705 2666).

## SETTLER COUNTRY & AROUND

This section covers the area around Grahams-town, the heart of Settler Country, as well as most of the old Ciskei Homeland.

### Grahamstown

☎ 046 / pop 100,000

Grahamstown is the capital of Settler Country. The town's genteel conservatism and its English-style prettiness belie a bloody history. The town centre has some fine examples of Victorian and early Edwardian building styles, with beautiful powder-blue and lemon-yellow shop fronts.

Socially, the students from Rhodes University dominate the town. But as established artists settle here and the population ages, a

new side of Grahamstown is developing, as evidenced by a sudden breed of beautiful people fraternising a raft of newly opened, trendy restaurants and chic bars.

Visit the nearby townships for a glimpse into the culture of the Xhosa – once rulers of the region, they were defeated by British and Boer forces after a fierce struggle.

### INFORMATION

**Go Sure Travel** (☎ 046-622 2235; marianl.gbstravel@galileosa.co.za; Pepper Grove Mall, cnr African & Allen Sts) Handles bookings for all local travel and cashes travellers cheques (no commission charged).

**Makana Tourism** (☎ 046-622 3241; www.grahams-town.co.za; 63 High St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) This office is an agent for Translux buses and also has internet access (US\$4 per hour).

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Grahamstown is rightly proud of its museums, four of which are administered by the **Albany Museum Group** (☎ 046-622 4450; www.ru.ac.za/albany-museum). The most interesting is the wonderfully eccentric **Observatory Museum** (Bathurst St; adult/child US\$1.10/0.70; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

Also under the Albany aegis is **Albany History Museum** (Somerset St; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which details the history and art of the peoples of the Eastern Cape.

There's also the **National English Literary Museum** (Beaufort St; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), which contains the first editions of just about every work by famous South African writers.

The best examples of preserved Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts are **Grocott's Mail**, still a working newspaper office, and **Birch's Gentlemen's Outfitters**.

For a taste of local student life, head to the **Dam** up Grey St on the way out of town. It's a place to chill out and have a swim, and on Fridays there are drumming sessions.

### TOURS

**Umthathi** (☎ 046-622 4450; www.umthathi.co.za; Station Bldg, High St), with an office in the old train station building, organises township visits including a traditional Xhosa meal (US\$7), and visits to a herbal nursery in Rhini township.

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Grahamstown bills itself as 'Africa's Festival Capital', with events of various kinds happening

several times a year. The biggest is the hugely popular **National Arts Festival** (☎ 046-603 1103; www.nafest.co.za) and its associated Fringe Festival which run for 10 days at the beginning of July. Accommodation at this time can be booked out a year in advance, and nights can be freezing.

### SLEEPING

**Old Gaol Backpackers** (☎ 046-636 1001; Somerset St; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/14/23) This former jail – now a national monument – offers the chance to feel like an inmate, complete with fingerprinting upon registration. The cells are all considerably more comfortable than in their previous incarnation, though you'll probably spend most of your time in the atmospheric bar anyway.

**Lantern Hill** (☎ 046-622 8782; www.lanternhill.co.za; 2 Thompson St; s/d US\$37/51) Superbly refurbished recently, this friendly B&B has cosy and comfy wooden-floored rooms with TV and safe.

**137 High Street** (☎ 046-622 3242; 137highstr@xsinet.co.za; 137 High St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/64; ☎ ☎) Well-situated within walking distance of museums and shops, this guesthouse in a charming Georgian cottage also has a private courtyard and a restaurant.

**Cock House** (☎ 046-636 1287; www.cockhouse.co.za; 10 Market St; s/d with breakfast US\$52/89) Named after one of the 1820 settlers, today this building houses a hugely popular guesthouse with comfortable rooms in converted stables and a pretty garden. The rustic restaurant (three-course menu US\$15) is highly regarded.

**7 Worcester Street** (☎ 046-622 2843; www.worcestertstreet.co.za; 7 Worcester St; s/d with breakfast US\$70/150; ☎ ☎) This luxurious guesthouse is filled with sumptuous period furniture and priceless artworks. Three-course dinner is available for US\$16.

### EATING

**Gino's Italian Restaurant** (☎ 046-622 7208; 8 New St, entrance via Hill St; mains US\$3.40-5; ☎ lunch & dinner) Grahamstown's most popular student restaurant is a very average pizza and pasta joint with an attached bar.

**Trading Store** (☎ 046-622 9987; 131 High St; mains US\$4.70; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sun, dinner Wed, Fri & Sat) A supremely stylish New York-style café that serves bistro food and has live jazz and an outdoor cocktail bar.

**Calabash** (☎ 046-622 2366; 123 High St; mains US\$7-9.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Calabash offers traditional South African food and specialities

like Xhosa hotpots and *pap en wors* (maize meal and sausage).

**Maxwell's** (☎ 046-622 5119; cnr Somerset St & High St; mains US\$9.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Offering excellent service and hearty lunches of self-styled 'colonialised' food, Maxwell's is deservedly gaining attention.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses depart from the **terminus** (cnr High & Bathurst Sts). The **Bee Bus** (☎ 082-652 0798) runs to Port Elizabeth and Port Alfred from Sunday to Friday, and **Mini Lux** (☎ 043-741 3107) runs to East London and Port Elizabeth from Sunday to Friday. Check with the tourist office for prices and times.

**Intercape** (☎ 046-622 2235; www.intercape.co.za) stops in Grahamstown on its daily run between Cape Town (US\$32, nine hours) and East London (US\$15, 2½ hours).

**Translux** (☎ 046-622 3241; www.translux.co.za) buses stop at the terminus on the daily run between Cape Town (US\$31, 15 hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$10, two hours) and Durban (US\$38, 12 hours), via East London and Mthatha.

**Greyhound** (☎ 046-622 2235; www.greyhound.co.za) buses also stop at the terminus on their way to Durban (US\$36, 13 hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$9.50, two hours).

You'll find minibus taxis on Raglan St, but most leave from Rhini township. Destinations include Fort Beaufort (US\$3.40, two hours), King William's Town (US\$4.70, three hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$4.70, 2½ hours) and East London (US\$4.70, four hours).

### King William's Town

☎ 043

Established by the London Missionary Society in 1826, King William's Town (known as 'King') was a colonial capital and an important military base in the interminable struggle with the Xhosa. The main reason for a visit is the excellent **Amathole Museum** (☎ 043-642 4506; 3 Albert Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), one of the finest in the region, with an excellent Xhosa Gallery featuring in-depth explanations of Xhosa culture, mysticism and history.

It's probably better to stay in East London and visit for the day.

### Bhisho

pop 171,000

Bhisho, once capital of Ciskei, is now the administrative capital of Eastern Cape. The



centre of Bhisho was built to house Ciskei's bureaucrats and politicians, so there is a compact bunch of suitably grandiose and ugly public buildings, which are now in the service of the new provincial bureaucracy.

Regular minibuses travel from the King William's Town train station to Bhisho.

### Amathole & Katberg Mountains

The area north and west of King William's Town is partly degraded grazing land and partly rugged mountains with remnant indigenous forest. There are some good walks. When the mists are down on the Amathole Mountains, the forests take on an eerie silence.

The easiest way into this area is via King William's Town or Queenstown. Daily **City to City** (☎ 011-773 2762) buses stop in Katberg, Seymour and Alice on the Jo'burg–King William's Town run. There are occasional minibus taxis too.

The 121km, six-day **Amathole Trail** (per person US\$24) ranks as one of South Africa's top mountain walks, but is pretty tough and should only be attempted if you are reasonably experienced and fit.

The trail must be booked with the **Department of Water Affairs & Forestry** (☎ 043-84 5433; www.dwaf.co.za; 9 Chamberlain St, King William's Town).

### HOGSBACK

☎ 045 / pop 1500

Improbably located 1300m up in the beautiful Amathole Mountains, about 100km north-west of Bhisho, the small village of Hogsback has enjoyed a recent renaissance. Its English climate (four distinct seasons), organic food, and mind-boggling views of mountains and forested valleys in all directions, make it an ecodestination *par excellence*.

There are some great walks, bike rides and drives in the area. Snow falls, though rarely heavy, in 11 out of 12 months. Be prepared for rain at any time, and in winter for temperatures that can drop to -1°C.

**Away with the Fairies** (☎ 045-962 1031; hogsback1@iafrica.com; Hydrangea Lane; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$5.50/9.50/23; 🏠) is a majestic little getaway with a superb view of Hogsback Ridge.

Another option is the **Edge** (☎ 045-962 1159; info@theedge\_hogsback.co.za; Bluff End; self-catering cottages from US\$47; 🏠), a collection of 12 stunningly decorated cottages strung out along the mountain's edge.

The easiest way to get to Hogsback without a car is by shuttle bus from the Sugarshack Backpackers (p483) in East London, Buccaneer's Backpackers (p492) in Cintsas (Chintsa), or Old Gaol Backpackers (p487) in Grahamstown (US\$6 one way).

### THE KAROO

The Karoo is pure magic. It's a vast semi-arid plateau (its name is a Khoesaaan word meaning 'land of thirst') that promises stunning sunsets and starscapes and delivers. Here you'll feel simultaneously dry at the mouth (for the mercury can hit 45°C in summer), slack at the jaw (the landscape is spare, violent and beautiful) and *tiny* – the horizons have been known to send agoraphobics scrambling for the nearest metropolis.

Perhaps the best thing about the Karoo, though, is the way life moves slowly, and how off the main highways you can drive for hours without seeing another car. If you've had your fill of the Garden Route, head over the Swartberg Pass and unwind here.

The Karoo covers almost one-third of South Africa's total area and is demarcated in the south and west by the coastal mountain ranges, and to the east and north by the mighty Orange River. It's often split into the Great Karoo (north) and the Little Karoo (south), but it doesn't respect provincial boundaries and sprawls into three provinces, though for our purposes it's all covered here.

### Graaff-Reinet

☎ 049 / pop 43,300

Town nicknames are often no more than marketing slogans, but that Graaff-Reinet is often referred to as the 'jewel of the Karoo' is no exaggeration – it's a safe, exquisite, fascinating town that should not be missed.

It's the fourth-oldest European town in South Africa, and it has a superb architectural heritage with more than 220 buildings designated as national monuments. These range from Cape Dutch houses, with their distinctive gables, to classic flat-roofed Karoo cottages and ornate Victorian villas. Added to all this beauty is a charming small-town quirkiness, some excellent-value accommodation and a variety of eccentric local characters who add to the benignly surreal feel of the whole place.

The wild and beautiful Karoo Nature Reserve is within walking distance of Graaff-Reinet.

### INFORMATION

**Graaff-Reinet Publicity Association** (☎ 049-892 4248; www.graaffreinet.co.za; Church St; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat & Sun) Offers an abundance of maps and information about the area.

**Karoo Connections** (☎ 049-892 3978; www.karoo.tours.co.za; Church St) Internet access next to the publicity association.

### SIGHTS

The **Hester Rupert Art Museum** (☎ 049-892 2121; Church St; adult/child US\$0.70/0.40; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat & Sun) was originally a Dutch Reformed Mission church, consecrated in 1821. The beautiful interior space and permanent collection of paintings and sculptures are refreshingly contemporary.

The **Old Library** (☎ 049-892 3801; cnr Church & Somerset Sts; adult/child US\$0.70/0.50; ☎ 8am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 9am–4pm Sun) houses a collection of photographs, historical clothing, rock paintings and fossils from the Karoo.

**Reinet House** (☎ 049-892 3801; Murray St; adult/child US\$0.90/0.30; ☎ 8am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 9am–4pm Sun), the Dutch Reformed parsonage built between 1806 and 1812, is a beautiful

example of Cape Dutch architecture and the rear courtyard has one of the largest grapevines in the world.

### TOURS

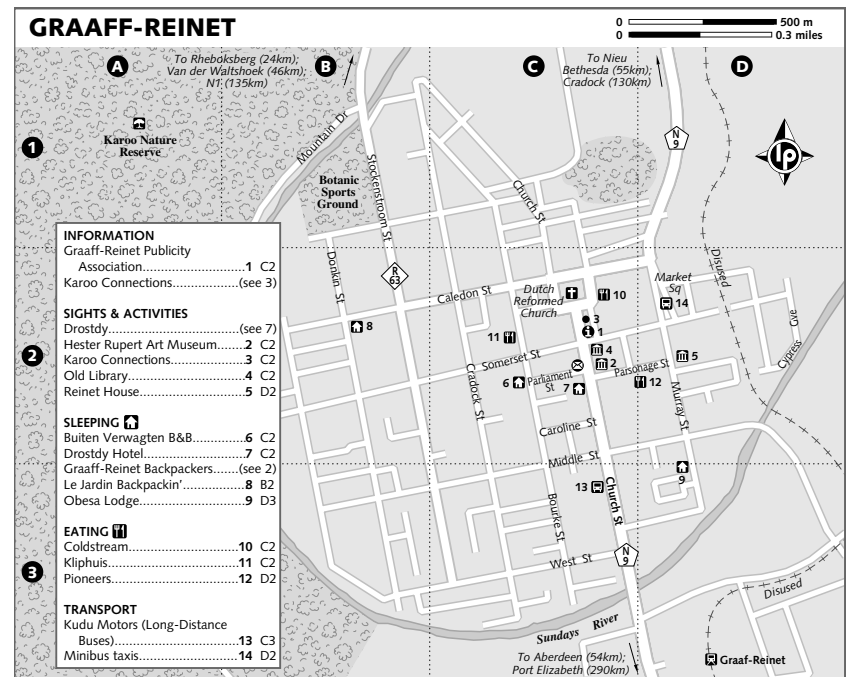
Several readers have recommended **Irhafu Tours** (☎ 082-844 2890) for its three-hour township tour (US\$10), which gives an insight into both Xhosa culture and history and modern township life. The company can also organise homestays and group meals.

**Karoo Connections** (☎ 049-892 3978; www.karoo.tours.co.za; Church St) operates tours in the area including to the Karoo Nature Reserve (US\$19). It can also arrange township walks, wildlife drives, nature walks and city tours.

### SLEEPING

**Le Jardin Backpackin'** (☎ 049-892 5890, 082-644 4938; cnr Donkin & Caledon Sts; s/d with shared bathroom US\$12/24; 🏠) Welcoming Le Jardin provides homely rooms and a large garden for excellent prices. The owners are mines of information about the area's attractions.

**Graaff-Reinet Backpackers** (☎ 049-892 5334; cnr Church & Parsonage Sts; dm US\$11, d/tr/q with shared bathroom



US\$27/36/46; 📞) This newer backpackers benefits from its location but is still second best in the budget stakes thanks to its subdued atmosphere, though the rooms are airy and bright.

**Obesa Lodge** (📞 082-588 5900; www.graaffreinet.co.za; 64 Murray St; s/d without breakfast US\$19/31, 2-bedroom cottages US\$47; 📞 📺) With cheerfully designed psychedelically coloured cottages with names like Moody Blues and Bad Mama, Obesa is a change of pace from staid B&Bs.

**Buiten Verwagten B&B** (📞 049-892 4504; www.buitenverwagten.co.za; 58 Bourke St; s/d with breakfast from US\$46/65; 📞 📺) The beautiful Buiten Verwagten, surrounded by a lovely garden, has charming rooms, some with self-catering facilities.

**Drostdy Hotel** (📞 049-892 2161; www.drostdy.co.za; 30 Church St; s/d US\$55/86; 📞) The main part of this beautiful old hotel is in Graaff-Reinet's restored *drostdy*. Guests stay in restored mid-19th-century cottages and the courtyard café is particularly enchanting.

## EATING

**Pioneers** (📞 049-892 6059; 3 Parsonage St; light meals US\$1.40-4, mains US\$8; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This café-restaurant serves so-so sandwiches but delicious cakes and big cooked breakfasts. There's streetside seating, tourist info, an internet café and a small curio shop.

**Coldstream** (📞 049-891 1181; 3 Church St; mains US\$6-8; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) An excellent restaurant in a converted family home specialising in local variations on old favourites, such as the beloved 'trio' platter of beef, ostrich and kudu or springbok.

**Kliphuis** (📞 049-892 2345; 46 Bourke St; mains US\$5.50-9; 📞 breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch & dinner Sun) With the Sunday carvery of Karoo lamb or venison a speciality, and grease-free dishes such as moussaka and quiche, it's no wonder Kliphuis is one of Graaff-Reinet's best.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Long-distance buses stop at **Kudu Motors** (Church St). The Publicity Association office acts as the Translux agent. Translux stops here on the run from Cape Town (US\$34, 8½ hours) to Queenstown (US\$19, three hours) via Cradock (US\$16, 1½ hours) and on the way to Port Elizabeth (US\$27, three hours).

**Intercape** (www.intercape.co.za) passes through Graaff-Reinet daily on its run to Jo'burg (US\$42, 11 hours).

Minibus taxis leave from Market Sq. Major destinations are Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Jo'burg.

## Karoo Nature Reserve

A donation in 2005 from the World Wildlife Fund has meant that the 16,000 hectares of the Karoo Nature Reserve is to become a national park under the auspices of SAN Parks.

There are plenty of animals, but the real draw is the spectacular rock formations and great views overlooking the town of Graaff-Reinet and the plains. The park is subdivided into three main sections: the wildlife-viewing area to the north of the dam; the western section with the Valley of Desolation, a hauntingly beautiful and rugged place; and the eastern section with the overnight hiking trail.

You'll need to have your own car to get around the reserve, or contact Karoo Connections in Graaff-Reinet for a tour. Accommodation (except on the overnight trail) is only available in Graaff-Reinet.

## Prince Albert & Around

📞 023 / pop 2500

To many urban South Africans, Prince Albert – a charming village dating back to 1762 and dozing at the foot of the Swartberg Pass – represents an idyllic life in the Karoo. Despite being surrounded by very harsh country, the town is green and fertile, thanks to the runoff from the mountain springs. A system of original water channels runs through town and most houses have a sluice gate, which they are entitled to open for a set period each week.

If you have your own transport and are short on time, you can easily visit on a day trip from Oudtshoorn or even from the coast.

Contact the helpful **tourist information office** (📞 023-541 1366; www.patorism.co.za; Church St; 📞 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) for more information.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Prince Albert is a good base for exploring the Karoo and hiking on the more than 100km of trails in the Swartberg Nature Reserve. Overnight walks have to be booked through **Cape Nature** (📞 044-279 1739; Queen's Mall, Baron van Rhee de St, Oudtshoorn).

There's a good drive east to **Klaarstroom**, a tiny *dorp* (small town) along the foot of the mountains. The road runs along a valley, beneath the Groot Swartberg Range, which is

cut by dramatic gullies, clefts and waterfalls. On Rte 407 between Prince Albert (40km) and Klaarstroom (10km), **Remhoogte Hiking Trail** can be walked in about five hours but there is a camping place on the trail.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Lodge** (📞 023-541 1267; www.saxecoburg.co.za; 60 Church St; s/d from US\$24/49; 📞 📺) This place offers lovely rooms with satellite TV, and its owners are a great source of information and offer guided hikes in the area.

**Karoo Lodge** (📞 023-541 1647; www.karoolodge.com; 66 Church St; s/d from US\$30/61; 📞 📺) This lodge is an owner-run guesthouse with a large garden and beautiful antique furniture. Hosts George and Elsabe are terrific, and very knowledgeable about the area.

**Swartberg Hotel** (📞 023-541 1332; www.swartberg.co.za; 70 Church St; s/d with breakfast US\$51/75; 📞 📺) Swartberg is a three-star country inn; you can choose from thatched-roof huts or rooms in the main hotel. There are amazing gardens to relax in and the hotel organises area activities. The attached coffee shop (mains US\$2.40 to US\$5) and Swartberg Arms restaurant (mains US\$4) are popular with locals.

**Karoo Kombuis** (📞 023-541 1110; Karoo Kitchen; 18 Deurdrift St; mains US\$8; 📞 dinner Mon-Sat) As good a reason to come to Prince Albert as any, this excellent restaurant serves traditional home-cooked dishes with panache.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most people visit by driving over one of the area's passes from Oudtshoorn, or from the N1 between Cape Town and Jo'burg. There is no direct bus or train service to Prince Albert; the closest drop-off point is at the train station on Prince Albert Rd, 45km northwest of Prince Albert. Private taxis from there cost US\$7, but most places to stay will pick you up from the train station.

## Karoo National Park

Just 5km north of Beaufort West, the **Karoo National Park** (📞 023-415 2828/9; www.sanparks.org; adult/child US\$8/4, camp sites US\$14, d cottages US\$55; 📞 5am-10pm), proclaimed in 1979, covers 33,000 hectares of impressive Karoo landscapes and representative flora and is run by SAN Parks.

The park has 61 species of mammal, the most common of which are dassies (agile,

rodent-like mammals, also called hyraxes) and bat-eared foxes. The antelope population is small but growing. Mountain zebras have been reintroduced, as has the odd black rhino. There are a great many reptiles and birds.

Facilities include a shop and restaurant. There are two short nature trails and an 11km day walk. There are also vehicle routes and day or overnight 4WD guided trails.

Accommodation is either at pleasant camp sites or in Cape Dutch-style cottages.

Public transport will take you to Beaufort West, from where you will need to either hike in or catch a taxi from town; however the rest camp is 10km further into the park.

## WILD COAST

With its rugged cliffs plunging into the sea, remote coves sheltering sandy beaches and a history of shipwrecks and stranded sailors, the aptly named Wild Coast is a place for adventure and intrigue.

The Wild Coast stretches for 350km from East London to Port Edward. Dotted along its shore are tiny Xhosa settlements and the occasional holiday resort or backpacker hostel.

You may hear some people refer to the area as the 'Transkei', which was the name of the apartheid-era homeland that once covered this part of the country. 'Transkei', however, still bears the stigma of an area once feared for its crime rate and its extreme poverty.

Whatever the name for the region, the Xhosa people are some of the friendliest you'll meet anywhere in South Africa, and chances are you'll be invited inside a few of their brightly painted homes which dot the landscape.

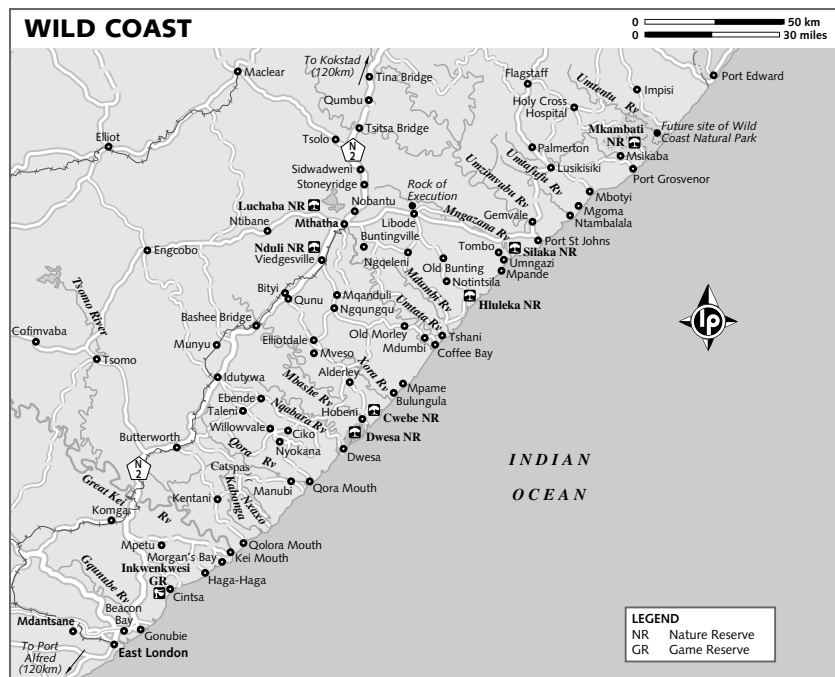
This is the place to forego the bus or your car for a while and make use of the walking paths that connect the coastal villages. The five-day walk between Port St Johns and Coffee Bay is the most popular route.

If you plan to hike or drive around inland on the Wild Coast, always ask permission before camping. Don't drive after dark, and remember that most of the roads here don't appear on maps, and signposts are few and far between.

## Cintsa (Chintsa)

📞 043 / pop 2000

Heading up the N2, the sea spray starts to hit your face at an unspoilt stretch of white-sand beach called Cintsa, 38km from East London.



Cintsa comprises two small, pretty villages, Cintsa East and Cintsa West. It's definitely the best place on this part of the coast to hang out for a few days (or weeks). Also in the area is the private, upmarket **Inkwenkwezi Game Reserve** (☎ 043-734 3234; www.inkwenkwezi.com; morning/afternoon game drive US\$67/53; 🐘 8am-4pm), which contains four of the Big Five (only elephants are missing).

### SLEEPING

**Buccaneer's Backpackers** (☎ 043-734 3012, 734 3749; www.cintsa.com; Cintsa West; camp sites/dm/d with bathroom US\$6/10/24; 🐘 🐘) Something of a rarity, 'Bucks' is a sort of all-inclusive holiday resort for backpackers offering every imaginable outdoor activity through the excellent African Heartland Tours based here. The dorm rooms are comfortable and safari tents (US\$20) and cottages (US\$38) are also available.

**Crawfords Lodge & Cabins** (☎ 043-738 5000; www.crawfordscabins.co.za; Cintsa East; s/d with breakfast US\$40/74, self-catering cottages US\$60; 🐘 🐘) This midrange mini-resort has 23 cottages plus three B&B apartments. It's close to the pool, has good beach access and tennis courts.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

To reach Cintsa from East London, take Exit 26 (East Coast Resorts) off the N2. Go over the overpass and follow the road for 1km to the Cintsa East turn-off. The Cintsa West turn-off is another 16km further on.

### Morgan's Bay & Kei Mouth

☎ 043 / pop 2200

Along the coast from Cintsa, and reached by turning off the N2 onto Rte 349, is the village of Morgan's Bay, a good place for some peace and quiet and for beachcombing and surfing. Prices skyrocket and places get booked solid between mid-December and mid-January.

Just after Morgan's Bay and slightly more developed, **Kei Mouth** (www.keimouth.co.za) is the last resort before the beginning of the Wild Coast, which is reached by taking the **pont** (vehicle ferry; per car US\$6; 🕒 7am-6pm) across the Great Kei River.

**Yellowwood Park** (☎ 043-841 1598, 043-841 1319; camp sites US\$6 plus US\$1.40 per person; hut shelters s/d US\$7/12), located about 1km from Morgan's Bay, is a tranquil and ecofriendly camp site,

surrounded by indigenous forest and frequented by birds and monkeys. Lifts can be arranged from East London.

Alternatively, the **Morgan Bay Hotel** (☎ 043-841 1062; www.morganbay.co.za; r with breakfast & dinner low/high season US\$42/49; 🐘 🐘) is a light and airy family hotel with a Mediterranean feel and a bar serving pub grub. There's also a **camp site** (camp sites low/high season US\$8/29) next door.

### Strandloper Trails

The 60km, five-day **Strandloper Hiking Trail** (trail US\$30) and the one-night **Strandloper Canoe Trail** (bookings ☎ 043-841 1046; strandloper@net4u.co.za) runs between Kei Mouth and Gonubie, just outside East London. It's a fairly easy trail, but good fitness is required. The Strandlopers (Beach Walkers) were a Khoesaaan tribe who lived on the coast but disappeared as a distinct group after white settlement. You'll need a copy of the tide tables published in the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper in East London, as there are several estuaries to cross.

There are four overnight huts and the cost of staying in these is included in the booking fee. Camping on the beach is prohibited, but most of the coastal hotels have camp sites.

### Coffee Bay

☎ 047 / pop 600

No one is sure how tiny Coffee Bay got its name, but there is a theory that a ship wrecked here in 1863 deposited its cargo of coffee beans on the beach. These days, this once remote hamlet is a backpackers' mecca, with two busy hostels and a couple of more upmarket hotels in the village centre. In between, a few hopeful locals hover, trying to sell *dagga* (marijuana), curios and day trips.

Coffee Bay itself is a fairly scruffy place, but the surrounding scenery is dramatic, with a beautiful kilometre-long beach set in front of towering cliffs. The two backpacker hostels, Bomvu Paradise and the Coffee Shack, run all sorts of day trips, including **horse riding** (2hr treks about US\$20), **guided hikes** (from US\$7), **cultural visits** (from US\$8) and **surfing trips** (US\$8).

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Bomvu Paradise** (☎ 047-575 2073; www.bomvubackpackers.com; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$4/9/22) This is the more hippified of the two backpackers in Coffee Bay. It's a soulful place, with yoga instruction, organic meals and drum sessions. The dorms and rooms are comfort-

able and funky and the staff very efficient and friendly.

**Coffee Shack** (☎ 047-575 2048; www.coffeeshack.co.za; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$5.50/9.50/27; 🐘) Just across the road from Bomvu, the Coffee Shack has a definite party vibe, with regular live local music in the evenings. There are dorms in the main block but the rondavels across the river offer a little more privacy. If you're coming from elsewhere on the Wild Coast, the hostel offers a shuttle service – the first pick-up is free.

**Ocean View Hotel** (☎ 047-575 2005; www.oceanview.co.za; s/d with half board US\$55/81, without sea views US\$47/70; 🐘 🐘 🐘) Ocean View has good-quality, bungalow-style rooms, with a deck overlooking the ocean. There is a restaurant (set dinner US\$11) and seafood snacks are served in the bar in the evenings.

You can buy mussels, crayfish and other seafood from locals and there's a well-stocked grocery store.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you're driving to Coffee Bay, take the sealed road that leaves the N2 at Viedgesville. A mini-bus taxi from Mthatha to Coffee Bay costs US\$3 and takes one hour. The backpacker hostels meet the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323) at the Shell Ultra City, 4km south of Mthatha.

### Port St Johns

☎ 047 / pop 2100

The deliciously laid-back Port St Johns is a magnet for hippy types both young and old. This idyllic little town on the coast at the mouth of the Umzimvubu River has tropical vegetation, dramatic cliffs, great beaches, no traffic jams and absolutely no stress. Many travellers, lulled by the clinking of wind chimes and the sound of the waves, succumb to the famous 'Pondo Fever' and stay for months.

### SLEEPING

**Amapondo Backpackers** (☎ 047-564 1344, 083-315 3103; www.amapondo.co.za; Second Beach Rd; camp sites/dm/d with shared bathroom US\$6/10/24) Four kilometres from the town centre, this is a beautiful and peaceful hostel with a great view of an idyllic beach and an array of activities on offer. Meals (breakfast US\$2.80 to US\$5, dinner US\$3.40 to US\$7) are available and the bar gets lively at night.

**Cremorne Hotel** (☎ 047-564 1113; www.cremorne.co.za; camp sites US\$7, cabins without bedding per person



US\$12, s/d with breakfast US\$65/97; 📞) Clean, comfortable rooms and rustic fishermen's cabins are on offer at this friendly, family hotel, in a spectacular location over the ferry from town on the banks of the Umzimvubu River. There's a cosy pub and a restaurant.

**Island Backpackers Lodge** (📞 047-564 1958; www.theislandbackpackers.co.za; 4 Berea Rd; dm/d/tr with shared bathroom US\$9.50/24/30; 📞) During the day this hostel is an island in a sea of calm, but at night it comes alive as a popular Israeli restaurant (dishes US\$4.70 to US\$7) and nightspot. Island also has laundry service, movies, book swap and a splash pool.

**Gwyneth's Barn & Ekuphumleni** (📞/fax 047-564 1506; off Pussfoot Lane, First Beach; d with shared bathroom US\$30, 2-bedroom cottage US\$47-59) A raised walkway connects an adorable group of wooden cottages to a shared braai area, kitchenette and a dreamy outdoor shower. Each room is beautifully decorated, with scented candles and fluffy towel. Accommodation is also available in other buildings on the property.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most backpacker places will pick you up from the Shell Ultra City, 4km south of Mthatha (where the Baz Bus stops) for around US\$6, but it's essential to book ahead. There are also regular minibus taxis to Port St Johns from here (US\$4, two hours) that drop you at the roundabout.

If you're driving, there is a good sealed road to Lusikisiki and then 17km of dirt road. The road from Mthatha to Port St Johns is sealed.

### NORTH-EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Roughly comprising the out-of-the-way area that stretches from the lush valleys of the Wild Coast to the sharply ascending peaks of Lesotho, the North-Eastern Highlands enjoys the best of both worlds: stunning scenery and tourist scarcity. Summer brings excellent hiking and fishing, while snowfalls in winter provide the opportunity to ski (albeit on mostly artificial pistes). In the more remote parts, you'll need your own vehicle.

#### Rhodes & Tiffindell

📞 045  
Grassy, gorgeous Rhodes is a heavenly place: the top (in all senses of the word) place to visit in the Highlands and what locals jokingly refer to as 'the centre of the universe'.

Tiffindell (2800m), around 23km up a mountain pass (4WD only) from Rhodes, is a purpose-built winter sports resort. Its snow-making facilities mean that a season of 95 days (late May to mid-August) is possible here. Enjoy an après-ski or two in Ice Station 2720 (elevation: 2720m), South Africa's highest pub.

The **Ben Macdhui Hiking Trail** (📞 045-974 9305; 3-night trail with accommodation per person US\$27) is a sometimes-rough three-day hike that includes accommodation in a cottage, on a guest farm and in a hiker's hut. This is considered one of South Africa's best hikes (especially at these prices).

#### SLEEPING & EATING

**Rhodes Campsite & Caravan Park** (📞 045-974 9290; camp sites US\$5.50) The village camp site is in a great spot under shady trees right in the middle of the village. Inquire at Walkerbouts Inn for the key.

**Rhodes Hotel** (📞 045-974 9305; www.rhodesvillage.co.za; s/d with full board US\$44/89, self-catering cottages per person from US\$14) Rhodes' only hotel is a charming establishment that looks very much as it would have a century ago. Rooms are comfy, with wooden floors and antique furniture and there's a restaurant (mains US\$7).

**Walkerbouts Inn** (📞 9045-749290; www.walkerbouts.co.za; per person with full board US\$47) Walkerbouts is a cosy guesthouse with a convivial bar and hearty country breakfasts. Meals are available in the evenings.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The road to Rhodes from Barkly East, through the exquisite Mosheshesford, is rough but fine for 2WD cars (60km, 1½ hours), but don't attempt the route from Maclear unless you have a 4WD. The road to Tiffindell is now 2WD friendly, but Walkerbouts Inn does organise a shuttle (US\$15 return).

#### Aliwal North

📞 051 / pop 28,500

Aliwal North was in the early 20th century a major tourist drawcard because of its thermal spas; today it's a rather obscure and somewhat tatty town. The original **spa complex** (admission US\$2; 🕒 6am-10pm) has dwindled to a few grubby swimming pools, but the surrounding countryside is still ravishing. Contact the **Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (📞 051-633 3567; www.ectourism.co.za; 97 Somerset St) for information.

**Conville** (📞 051-633 2203; www.conville-farm.com; s/d with breakfast US\$24/43), an exquisite 1906 farmhouse, sits in stunning gardens overlooking a lake just outside town, and inside it's all rather grand, with brass beds and antique furniture.

A daily City to City bus stops here on the Jo'burg to Queenstown run. Translux, Greyhound and Intercape stop at Nobby's Restaurant (on the N6 near the junction with the Rte 58). The minibus taxi and local bus stop is on Grey St, near the corner of Somerset St.

## KWAZULU-NATAL

Rough and ready, smart and sophisticated, rural and rustic, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is as eclectic as its cultures, people and landscapes. It has its metropolitan heart in the port of Durban and its nearby historic capital, Pietermaritzburg. The beaches along this coast attract local holiday-makers and visitors wishing to soak up the sand, sea, surf and sun. Head north and you enter Zululand and the Elephant Coast, home to some of Africa's most evocative traditional settlements and cultural sites, where Zulu culture and heritage are proudly displayed. The region also boasts alluring national parks and isolated, wild coastal reserves.

Head northwest of Durban, and you enter another realm: the historic heartland where the history of the province was thrashed out on the Battlefields during the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer Wars. The province's border in the far west, the heritage-listed uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Range, features awesome peaks, unforgettable vistas and excellent hiking opportunities.

#### HISTORY

Battled over by Boers, Brits and Zulus, Natal was named by Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, who sighted the coastline on Christmas Day 1497, and named it for the natal day of Jesus. It took the British Empire more than 300 years to set its sights on the region, proclaiming it a colony in 1843. Briefly linked to the Cape Colony in 1845, Natal again became a separate colony in 1856, when its European population numbered less than 5000.

The introduction of Indian indentured labour in the 1860s – sections of the province still retain a subcontinental feel – and the

subsequent development of commercial agriculture (mainly sugar) boosted development, and the colony thrived from 1895, when train lines linked Durban's port with the booming Witwatersrand.

The recorded history of the province up until the Union of South Africa is full of conflict: the *difaqane* the Boer-Zulu and the Anglo-Zulu Wars, which saw the Zulu kingdom subjugated; and the two wars between the British and the Boers.

Just after the 1994 elections, Natal Province was renamed KwaZulu-Natal, in recognition of the fact that the Zulu homeland of KwaZulu comprises a large part of the province. From that time, Ulundi (the former KwaZulu capital), and Pietermaritzburg (the former Natal homeland capital) enjoyed joint status as capital of the KwaZulu-Natal until 2005, when Pietermaritzburg was named the province's official capital.

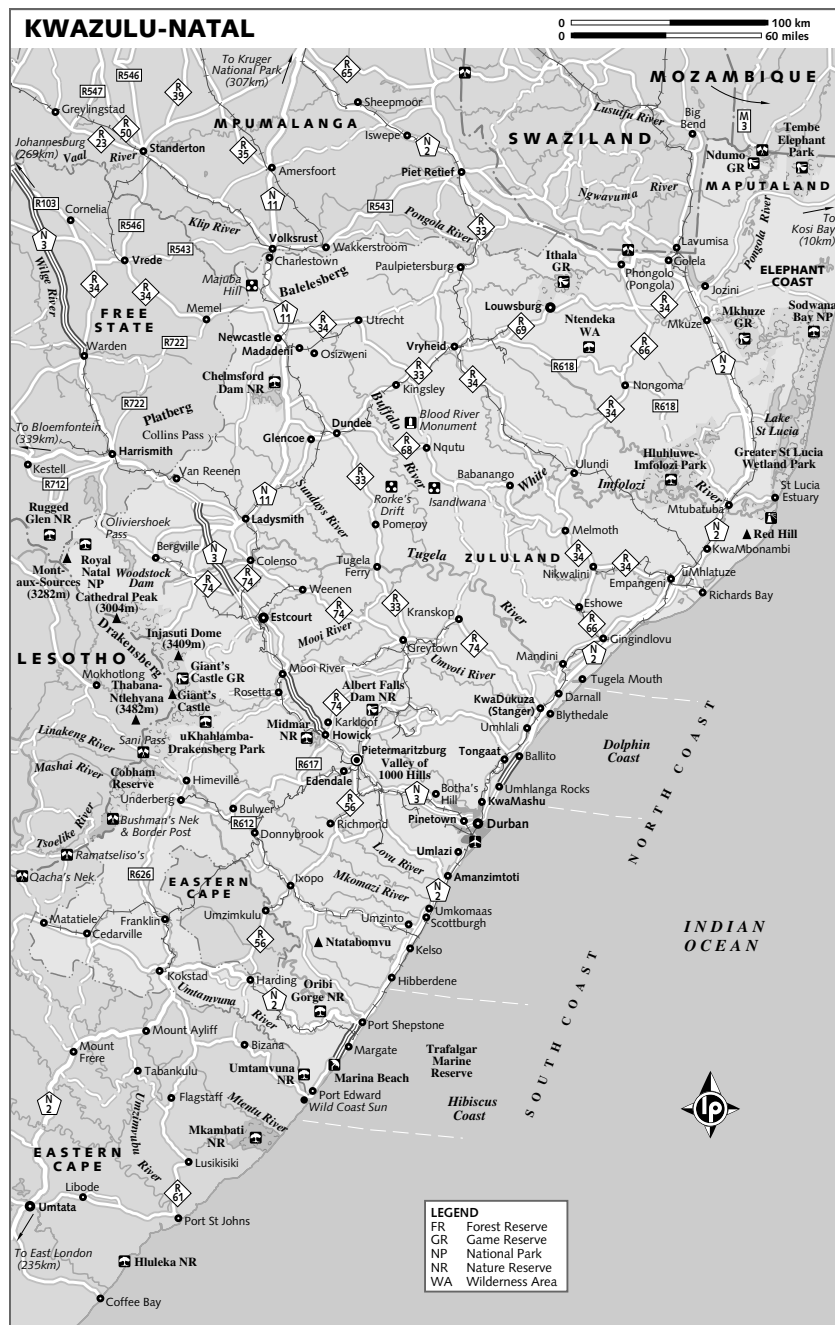
#### DURBAN

📞 031 / pop 3.5 million

Durban is like a maturing adolescent: sophisticated, sinful and ever-changing. Stretching along a swathe of butter-yellow sand, South Africa's third-largest city has always been known as one of the country's great escapes, offering a lively, if slightly tacky, prepackaged seaside holiday. But this has changed over the past few years. More recently, Durban is frequented as much for its stylish cafés, good shopping and cultural offerings.

The beachfront, with its multikilometre stretch of high-rise hotels and snack bars, remains a city trademark and the city centre, peppered with some grandiose colonial buildings and fascinating Art Deco architecture, throbs to a distinctly African beat. Home to the largest concentration of people of Indian descent in the country, Durban also boasts a distinctive Asian twang, with the marketplaces and streets of the Indian area teeming with the sights, sounds and scents of the subcontinent.

Today, much of Durban's seafront looks the worse for wear and the centre's streets have lost some shimmer, especially when the sun goes down. While the beachfront is still a favourite spot (the popular uShaka Marine World, casino and the Point developments have added some safer beach zones to those that were previously no-go areas), many visitors, wary of the city's increasing reputation for



crime, and seeking more than surf, sun, sea and sand, base themselves at the more sedate suburbs. These are chock-a-block with accommodation options, shopping malls, funky bars and stylish eateries.

## History

Natal Bay, around which Durban is located, provided refuge for seafarers at least as early as 1685, and it's thought that Vasco da Gama anchored here in 1497.

In 1837 the Voortrekkers crossed the Drakensberg and founded Pietermaritzburg, 80km northwest of Durban. The next year, after Durban was evacuated during a Zulu raid, the Boers claimed control. It was reoccupied by a British force later that year, but the Boers stuck by their claim. The British sent troops to Durban but they were defeated at the Battle of Congella in 1842.

The Boers retained control for a month until a British frigate arrived and dislodged them. The next year Natal was annexed by the British and Durban began its growth as an important colonial port city, although there were still elephants roaming the Berea Ridge into the 1850s.

In 1860 the first indentured Indian labourers arrived to work the canefields. Despite the inequitable system – slave labour by another name – many more Indians arrived, including, in 1893, Mohandas Gandhi.

## Orientation

Marine Pde, which fronts the beach, is one of Durban's seaside focal points. Formerly derelict, the Point, which runs along the spit south of Marine Pde, is slowly being revived. The area's huge uShaka Marine World theme park has its own patrolled beach; sections of Point Rd and adjoining streets should still be avoided.

West St starts as a mall, but further west it becomes one of central Durban's main streets. The City Hall and the centre of town are about 1km west of the beach, straddling West and Smith Sts.

On the western side of the city centre, around Grey and Victoria Sts, is the Indian area. There is a bustle and vibrancy here that is missing from most commercial districts in South Africa.

Near the Indian area, especially around Berea train station, thousands of Zulu have set up camp in an extraordinarily jumbled

'township' right on the city centre's doorstep. Most of these people are near-destitute and live in appalling conditions.

Northwest of the city, starting at a ridge and spreading beyond, is the area known as Berea. This incorporates the beginning of the wealthier suburbs (including Greyville, Morningside, Musgrave and the suburb of the same name, Berea), rich with pubs, clubs, eateries and hostels.

Suburbs have sprawled all the way up the coast to Umhlanga Rocks, a big resort and retirement town. A fair proportion of Durban's mainly black population lives in townships surrounding the city. These include Cato Manor, Richmond Farm, KwaMashu, Lindelani, Ntuzuma and the Greater Inanda area.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 10177)

**General emergency** (☎ 031-361 0000)

**Main police station** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 10111; Stanger Rd) North of the city centre.

**Police office** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 3399; Marine Pde) Near Funworld on the beach.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Most hostels offer internet access. Charges start at about US\$5.50 per hour. Other options:

**Internet café** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 6998; 1st fl, Workshop, Aliwal St; per hr US\$3.40; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) In the city centre.

**Internet café** (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 7733; Photoworld, Shop 323, Musgrave Centre; per hr US\$4.50; ☎ 9am-6pm)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Entabeni Hospital** (Map p498; ☎ 031-204 1200, 24hr trauma centre 031-204 1377; 148 South Ridge Rd, Berea) The trauma centre charges US\$80 per consultation.

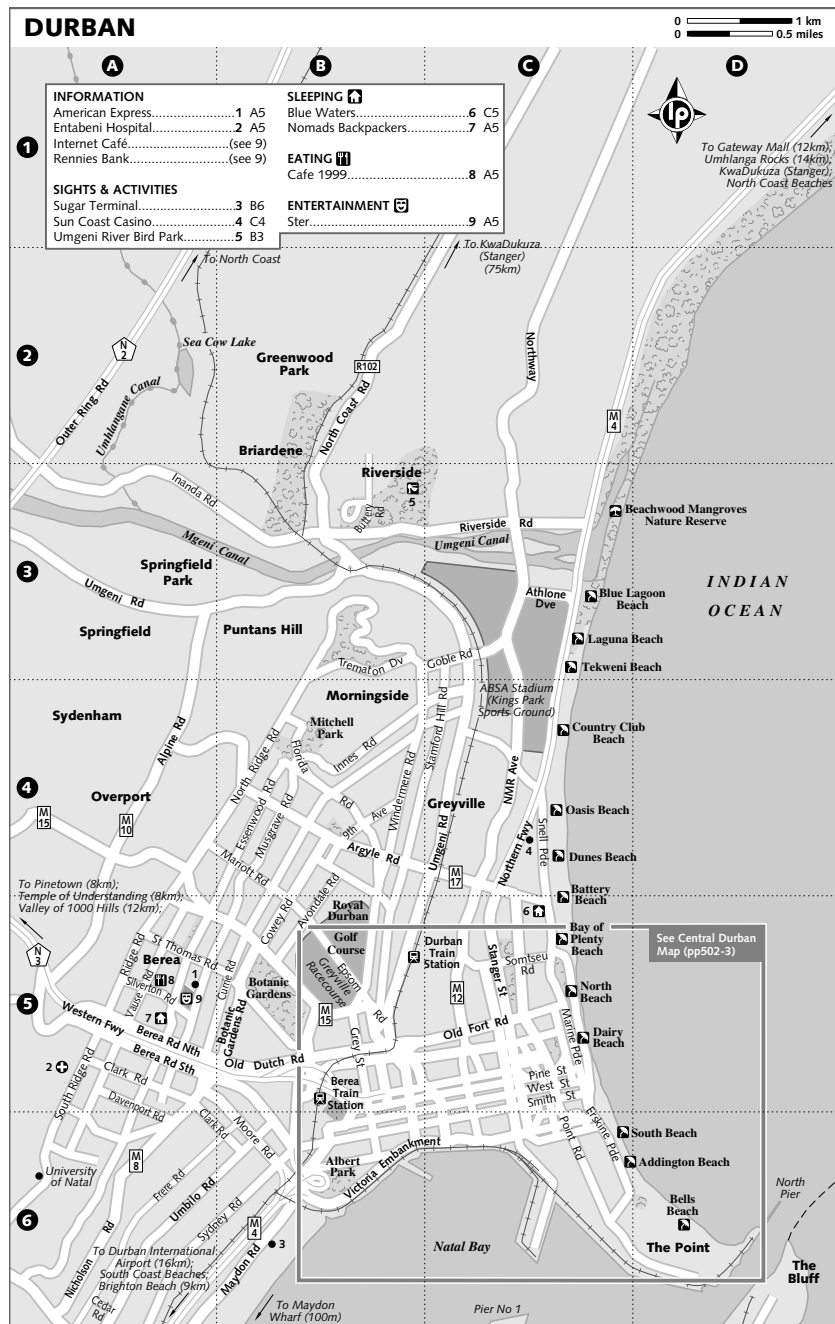
**Travel Doctor** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-360 1122; durban@traveldoctor.co.za; International Convention Centre, 45 Ordnance Rd; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) For travel-related advice.

### MONEY

There are banks with ATMs and change facilities across the city. These include Standard Bank, FNB and Nedbank.

**American Express** Central Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-301 5541; 11th fl, Nedbank Bldg, Durban Club Place; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am Sat); Musgrave





Centre (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 8733; FNB House, 151 Musgrave Rd, Musgrave)

**Rennies Bank** Central Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 5722; ground fl, 333 Smith St); Musgrave Centre (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 7833; Shop 311, Level 3, Musgrave Centre; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 11.30am Sat)

## POST

**Main post office** (Map pp502-3; cnr West & Gardiner Sts; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has a poste restante service.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Durban Africa** Tourist Junction (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.durbanexperience.co.za; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Covers Durban; Airport (☎ 031-408 1000; ☎ 7am-9pm) In the arrivals hall; Marine Pde (☎ 031-332 2595; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Next to Joe Kool's; uShaka Marine World (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-337 8099; ☎ 9am-6pm).

### KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority Information

**Office** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-366 7516/7; www.zulu.org.za; ground fl, Tourist Junction) Deals with the whole province and offers a smorgasbord of reference and promotional brochures.

**Tourist Junction** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; 160 Pine St, cnr Soldiers Way; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) The main tourist information centre is in the old train station (built in 1894).

There are various booking agencies in the Tourist Junction complex, including the following:

**KZN Wildlife** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.kzn.wildlife.com; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Here you can reserve accommodation in KZN Wildlife parks and reserves.

**SAN Parks Board** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4934; www.sanparks.org; 1st fl, Tourist Junction) Takes accommodation bookings for national parks across the country.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Muggings and pickpockets are a problem around the beach esplanade and some central areas. Particular care should be taken around Point Rd and the area behind the esplanade. Avoid South Beach and areas around the Wheel Shopping Centre. Extra care should also be taken around the train station and the informal settlements nearby.

Many areas including the centre and beachfront are potentially dangerous (especially at night) and central Durban becomes a ghost town as people head to the suburbs for entertainment. Always catch a cab to nightspots (and with a group) if possible.

If you have a car, make sure you park it in a locked garage after dark – 'smash and grabs' have been increasing occurrences.

## Sights BEACHFRONT

If you dip into the city's summer surf and sun, you have a playground of more than 6km of warm-water beaches (protected by the requisite shark nets). The 'Golden Mile' Beaches run from Blue Lagoon (at the mouth of the Umgeni River) to uShaka Marine World on the Point. The 'private' beaches near the casino and uShaka Marine World are accessed through the venues themselves.

But Durban's beachfront ain't for everyone. To some, its smorgasbord of bars and restaurants and hectic holiday atmosphere are garish and tacky. If you do take the plunge, always swim in patrolled areas, which are indicated by flags.

**uShaka Marine World** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 6675; www.ushakamarineworld.co.za; Addington Beach, the Point; Wet'n'Wild adult/child/senior US\$8/6/6, Sea World US\$11/7.50/10; ☎ 9am-6pm high season, 10am-5pm low season) is a massive new investment in improving the southern beachfront area. Divided into several areas (Sea World, Wet'n'Wild World and uShaka Beach), the park boasts one of the world's largest aquariums, the biggest collection of sharks in the southern hemisphere, a seal stadium, Africa's largest dolphinarium, two classy restaurants, enough freshwater rides to make you seasick, and a beach featuring activities from surfing lessons to kayaking and more.

The **Promenade** is the pedestrianised tourist superhighway running up the beach from Smith St north of uShaka. On the other side of the road, mainly on Marine Pde, you will find the canyon of high-rise hotels, bars, restaurants and nightclubs typical of seaside cities from Florida to Queensland's Gold Coast.

In summer, rickshaws ply their trade along the beachfront, many sporting exotic Zulu regalia. A 15-minute ride costs about US\$3.40 (plus US\$1.40 for a happy snap).

The glitzy nouveau Art Deco of **Sun Coast Casino** (Map p498; ☎ 031-328 3000; www.suncoastcasino.co.za; Snell Pde) is popular among the locals and features slot machines, cinemas and some well-attended restaurants. The casino's **Sun Coast Beach** (admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is a safe and pleasant spot to lie and bake. It has lawn, deck chairs and brollies.



**VICTORIA EMBANKMENT**

Maydon Wharf, which runs along the south-western side of the harbour and south of Victoria Embankment, contains the **Sugar Terminal** (Map p498; ☎ 031-365 8153; 51 Maydon Rd; adult/concession US\$1.80/90; 🕒 tours 8.30am, 10am, 11.30am & 2pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am, 10am & 11am Fri), which offers an insight into the former importance of the sugar trade.

A little further north, **Wilson's Wharf** (Map pp502-3; www.wilsonswarf.co.za) is a reasonably hip waterside development, with a clutch of decent eateries, boat-charter outfits, shops and a theatre.

**BAT Centre** (Map pp502-3; Maritime Pl) is a colourful bohemian arts centre housing upmarket art and craft shops, artists' studios, occasional live music, and a bar-restaurant all cut through with a lively trans-Africa theme.

Durban's **harbour** is the busiest in Southern Africa (and the ninth busiest in the world). There are several restaurants at the Point, at the southern end of the beachfront. The Point is an old area on a spit of land between the harbour and the ocean; there are plans to widen the channel mouth in 2007. Point Rd, leading down to the Point, runs through a notoriously dodgy area and is definitely unsafe at night.

**CITY CENTRE**

Dominating the city centre is the opulent 1910 Edwardian neobaroque **City Hall** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-311 2137; Smith St). In front of the hall is Francis Farewell Sq. Upstairs is the **Art Gallery** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-311 2264; City Hall; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun), an outstanding collection of contemporary South African works, especially Zulu arts and crafts. Also in the same building is the **Natural Science Museum** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-311 2256; City Hall; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun), boasting an impressive display of stuffed birds and insects, plus African animals.

The excellent **KwaMuhle Museum** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-311 2237; 130 Ordinance Rd; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun), in the former Bantu Administration building, has a permanent display with good oral history tapes on the 'Durban System' by which whites historically subjugated blacks.

On the eastern side of the main post office on West St is **Church Square** (Map pp502-3), with its old vicarage and the 1909 **St Paul's Church** (Map pp502-3).

**INDIAN AREA**

The big **Juma Mosque** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-306 0026; cnr Queen & Grey Sts; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 11am Sat) is the largest in the southern hemisphere; call ahead for a guided tour. **Madrasa Arcade** (Map pp502-3) is next to the mosque between Grey St and Cathedral Rd near the Catholic Emmanuel Cathedral.

At the western end of Victoria St, **Victoria St Market** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-306 4021, Victoria St; 🕒 6am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun) offers a typically rip-roaring, subcontinental shopping experience, with more than 160 stalls selling wares from across Asia. It's the main tourist attraction in the area, but watch your wallet. Most Muslim shops close between noon and 2pm on Friday.

**Alayam Hindu Temple** (Map pp502-3; Somtseu Rd; 🕒 7am-6pm) is the oldest and biggest in South Africa. It's away from the main Indian area, on Somtseu Rd, which runs between Stanger St and NMR Ave.

**GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BERA**

The 20-hectare **Botanic Gardens** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-309 1170; Sydenham Rd; admission free; 🕒 7.30am-5.15pm 16 Apr-15 Sep, to 5.45pm 16 Sep-15 Apr) is a pleasant place to wander. On weekends local bridal parties galore pose with their petals for the photographers.

**NORTH & WEST DURBAN**

**Umgeni River Bird Park** (Map p498; ☎ 031-579 4600; Riverside Rd; adult/child US\$2.80/2; 🕒 9am-5pm), on the Umgeni River, makes for a relaxing escape from the throng. You can see many African bird species in lush vegetation and aviaries.

**Temple of Understanding** (☎ 031-403 3328; Bhaktiedanta Sami Rd; 🕒 10am-1pm & 4-8pm), situated 8km west of Durban, is the biggest Hare Krishna temple in the southern hemisphere. Follow the N3 towards Pietermaritzburg and then branch off to the N2 south. Take the Chatsworth turn-off and turn right towards the centre of Chatsworth.

**Activities****DIVING & FISHING**

**Underwater World** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 5820; www.underwaterworld.co.za; 251 Point Rd) organises dives to sites around Durban over the weekend (from US\$19).

Dozens of outfits offer sport-fishing charters across Durban. The bar **Cool Runnings** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 084-701 6912; 49 Milne St; per day from US\$400

offers a laid-back, distinctly Jamaican-style experience.

**SURFING**

For surfers, Durban has a multitude of good surfing beaches with any number of breaks. **Surf Zone** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 5818; Ocean Sports Centre, North Beach; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun) rents out boards (US\$9.50/14 per half/full day) and offers lessons (US\$24 per hour).

**WHITE-WATER RAFTING**

The Umkomaas River and mighty Tugela River are *the* rafting places in KwaZulu-Natal. The Umkomaas offers some of the best white-water rafting, especially from November to April, when you can rip through Grade II-IV rapids. **180° Adventures** (☎ 031-566 4955; www.180.co.za) offers rafting on both rivers (from US\$84 for Tugela and from US\$47 for Umkomaas).

**CRUISES**

The luxury yacht **African Queen** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 032-943 1118; Durban Yacht Harbour; US\$20; tours 10am & 1pm) cruises dolphin waters for three hours. Several other boat and charter trips can be arranged from Wilson's Wharf.

**Sleeping**

Durban Africa's accommodation website, www.bookabedahead.co.za, allows you to browse and book online.

Despite what you think when you see the hotel-lined beachfront promenade, much of Durban's accommodation is in the western and northwestern suburbs. Unless you are in Durban for the sun and sand alone, accommodation in the suburbs is better value than the beachfront options.

**BEACHFRONT**

**Parade Hotel** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-337 4565; www.paradehotel.co.za; 191 Marine Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$44/59; 🍷) The Parade Hotel is a bit old, with a slightly dowdy array of 1970s salesroom furniture and saggy mattresses, but it's charming Art Deco dining room resembles a 1950s ballroom. Request a sea-facing room.

**Blue Waters** (Map p498; ☎ 031-368 3877; www.bluewatershotel.co.za; 175 Snell Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$88/97; 🍷) At the northern end of the beachfront away from the madding Promenade crowd, Blue Waters is a classic hotel. All the rooms have balconies, quilted bedheads, and velvet chairs.

**Southern Sun Garden Court – Marine Parade** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-337 3341; www.southern.sun.com; 167 Marine Pde; s/d with breakfast US\$95/115; 🍷 🍷 🍷) One of Southern Sun's four beachfront offerings, this comes from the steel-and-glass school of architecture, with modernish décor and uncluttered rooms.

**Protea Hotel Edward Durban** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-337 3681; www.proteaahotels.com/edwarddurban; 149 Marine Pde; s/d US\$112/125; 🍷 🍷 🍷) King of the sea-front hotels, this is classic and comfortable, with fresh-polish smells and full-on décor with piped music to match.

**VICTORIA EMBANKMENT**

**Durban Manor** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-366 0700; fax 031-366 0701; 93-96 Victoria Embankment; s/d with breakfast US\$52/77; 🍷 🍷) Housed in the former Durban Club, one of the city's finest and most opulent colonial-era landmarks, Durban Manor is an impressive jumble of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

**CITY CENTRE**

**City Lodge** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 1447; www.citylodge.co.za; cnr Brickhill & Old Fort Rds; s/d US\$75/93; 🍷 🍷) This secure place offers motel styling and slick service though little charm.

**Royal Hotel** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-333 6000; www.theroyal.co.za; 267 Smith St; s/d with breakfast US\$220/292; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This five-star institution overlooking City Hall is one of the city's most historical and swankiest offerings and has hosted royalty and Nelson Mandela.

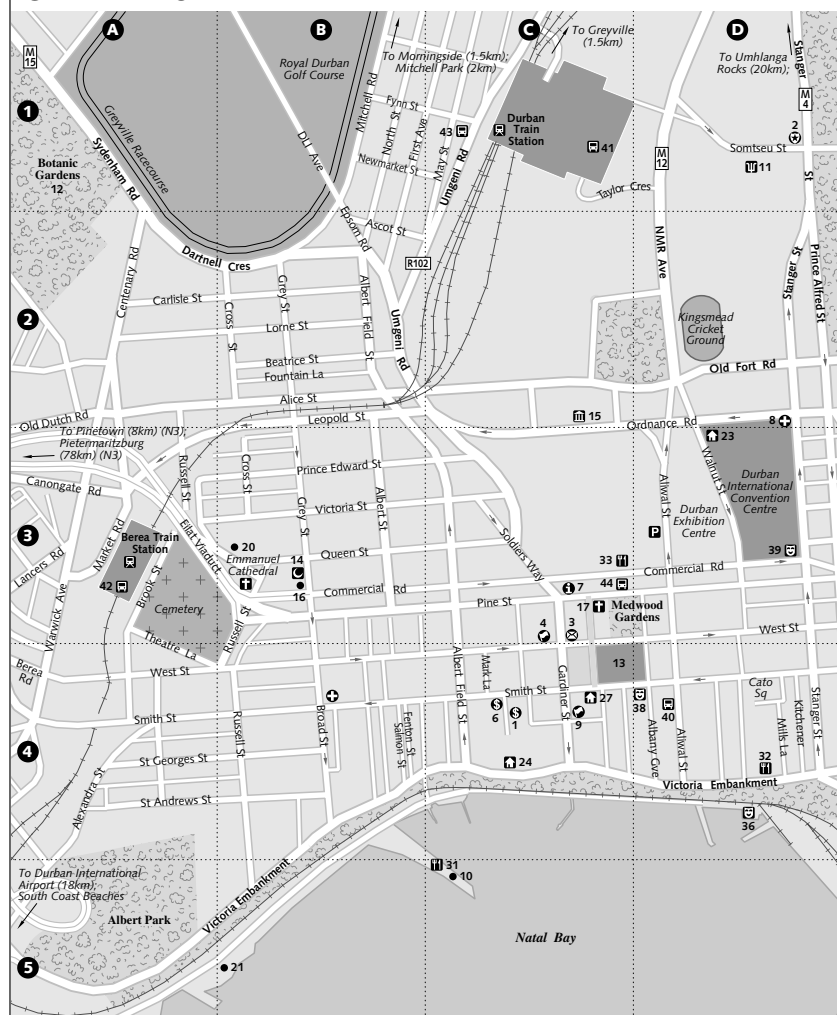
**Durban Hilton International** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-336 8100; www.hilton.com; 12 Walnut St; r with breakfast US\$245; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Glitzy and chic, this slick, modern behemoth is arguably Durban's most exclusive hotel, with crowds of business travellers and local movers-and-shakers filling the downstairs bar.

**GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BERA**

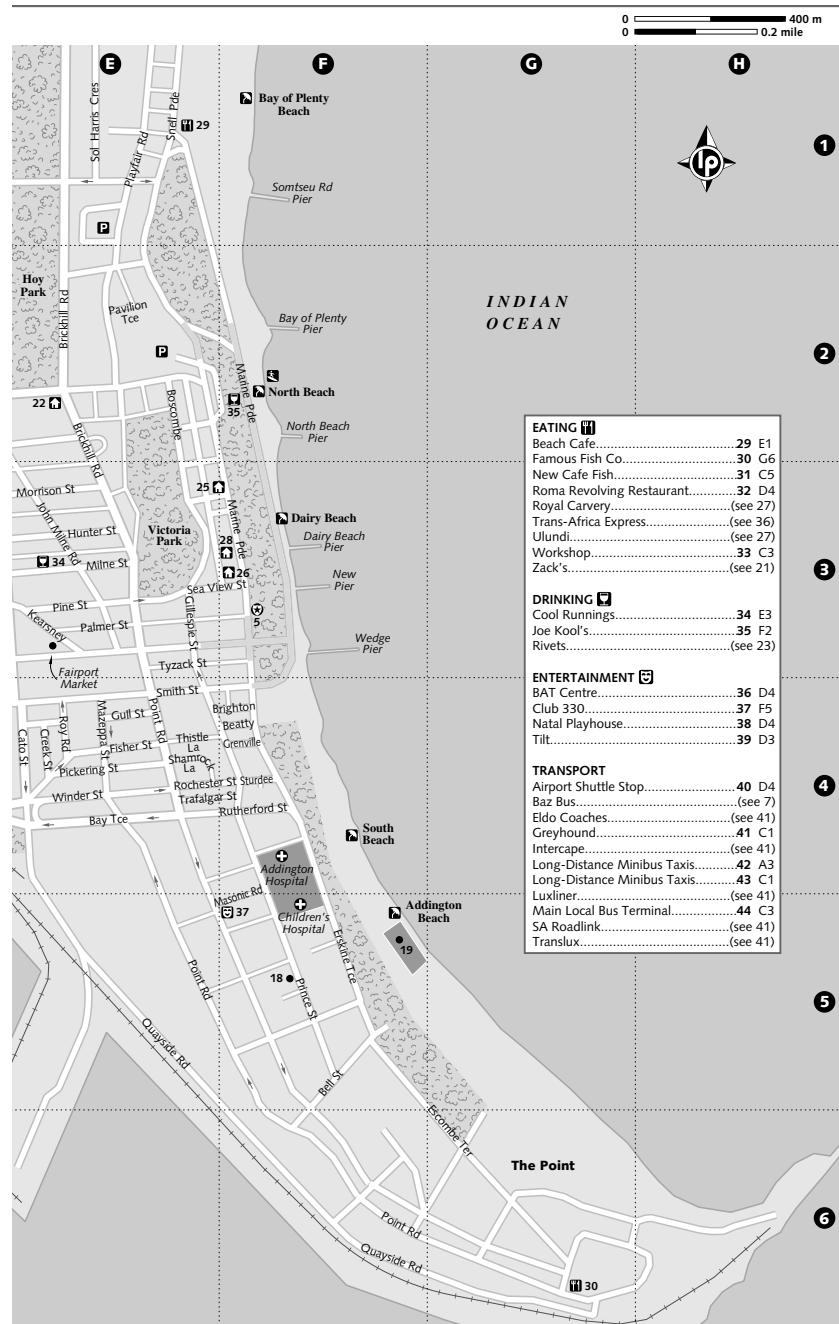
**Hippo Hide Lodge & Backpackers** (Map p505; ☎ 031-207 4366; www.hippohide.co.za; 2 Jesmond Rd, Berea; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/16/24; 🍷 🍷) There's not much room to swing a hippo in this cosy hide, but it pulls in the punters with its friendly, informal style and high standards. It's out on a limb in terms of location but the staff will help you organise outings.

**Gibela Backpackers Lodge** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 031-303 6291; www.gibela.co.za; 119 Ninth Ave, Morningside; dm/s/d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$12/24/34; 🍷 🍷) Housed in a stylish terracotta-coloured 1950s

**CENTRAL DURBAN**



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building with a Tuscan feel, this place has tasteful ethnic décor and a friendly feel in a secure location. The delicious breakfasts are a highlight.

**Nomads Backpackers** (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 9709; www.durban.co.za/nomads; 70 Essenwood Rd, Berea; dm US\$8, d with/without bathroom US\$27/22; ☎ P) An organised and neat, yet relaxed kind of joint, and one that likes to party. If the pool or the hostel's 'Bambooz' bar is not your thing, then you're a jump away from the cinemas and cappuccino bars of the Musgrave Centre.

**Madeline Grove B&B** (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 5425; www.madeline.co.za; 116 Madeline Rd, Morningside; s/d with breakfast US\$40/61; ☎ P) This large mansion is configured into various comfortable self-contained apartments both upstairs and down. The separate poolside room is popular among waterbabies.

**La Bordello** (Map p505; ☎ 031-309 6019; www.beanbagbohemia.co.za; 47/49 Campbell Ave, Morningside; s/d US\$54/81; ☎ P) In former times, this boutique hotel was a house of ill-repute. Nowadays it's owned by the Bean Bag Bohemia team, who do good trade with the beautiful people who enjoy its plush Moroccan interiors, aromatherapy oils and breakfast in its small fountain court.

**Quarters** (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 5246; ceres@threecities.co.za; 101 Florida Rd; s/d US\$111/158; ☎ P) Right in the throbbing heart of Durban's most fashionable eating and drinking quarter, this attractive boutique hotel balances colonial glamour with small-scale home comforts. The cosy rooms have balconies, and the restaurant is one of the best in the area.

## Eating

### BEACHFRONT & THE POINT

While the beachfront is chock-a-block with cheap and cheerful diners, you'll be hard-pressed to find much more than the usual spread of burgers, pizza and candy floss. Several of the beachfront hotels house some passable restaurants.

**Beach Cafe** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 082-762 9223; Bay of Plenty Beach; mains US\$3.50-6; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Durban's hot new beach hang-out. Soak up the sun in a sun lounge (hire per day US\$3.40), or chill out with a cocktail on the restaurant deck, overlooking the beach and life guards.

**Famous Fish Co** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 1060; King's Battery, the Point; mains US\$10-26; ☎) lunch & dinner; ☎) This reliable fish restaurant is something of a Durban institution, with a dreamy view of the sea and cargo ships.

## VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

**Zack's** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 1677; Wilson's Wharf, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$3.60-10; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Offering café-style dining, this stylish (chain) eatery serves up good bistro fare washed down with a blast of fresh sea air.

**Trans-Africa Express** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 0804; 1st fl, BAT Centre, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$3.80-13; ☎) lunch & dinner) Upstairs at the Bat Centre, with terrace views over the docks, this restaurant serves taste-tempting meals from Madagascar to Morocco.

**New Cafe Fish** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 5062; 31 Yacht Mole, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$6-27; ☎) lunch & dinner) Looking like an upside-down ship, this uniquely designed restaurant serves seafood dishes as appealing as its views.

## CITY CENTRE

Takeaway places around Victoria St Market (p500) have good Indian snacks including *bunny chow*. For daytime munchies follow your nose to near the main post office where there's usually someone with a braai cooking sausages, or try one of the fast food chains at the Workshop (Map pp502-3).

**Roma Revolving Restaurant** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 3337; 32nd fl, John Ross House, Victoria Embankment; mains US\$7-13; ☎) lunch & dinner; ☎) One of the few central restaurants surviving in Durban, this reasonably priced Italian eatery offers stunning views over Durban.

The **Royal Hotel** (☎ 031-333 6000; www.theroyal.co.za; 267 Smith St) has several renowned restaurants (closed Sundays): **Ulundi** (Map pp502-3; mains US\$5-8) is the place to sample a Bombay fish curry or a lamb dish; and the **Royal Carvery** (Map pp502-3; buffet US\$17) has a buffet for both lunch and dinner.

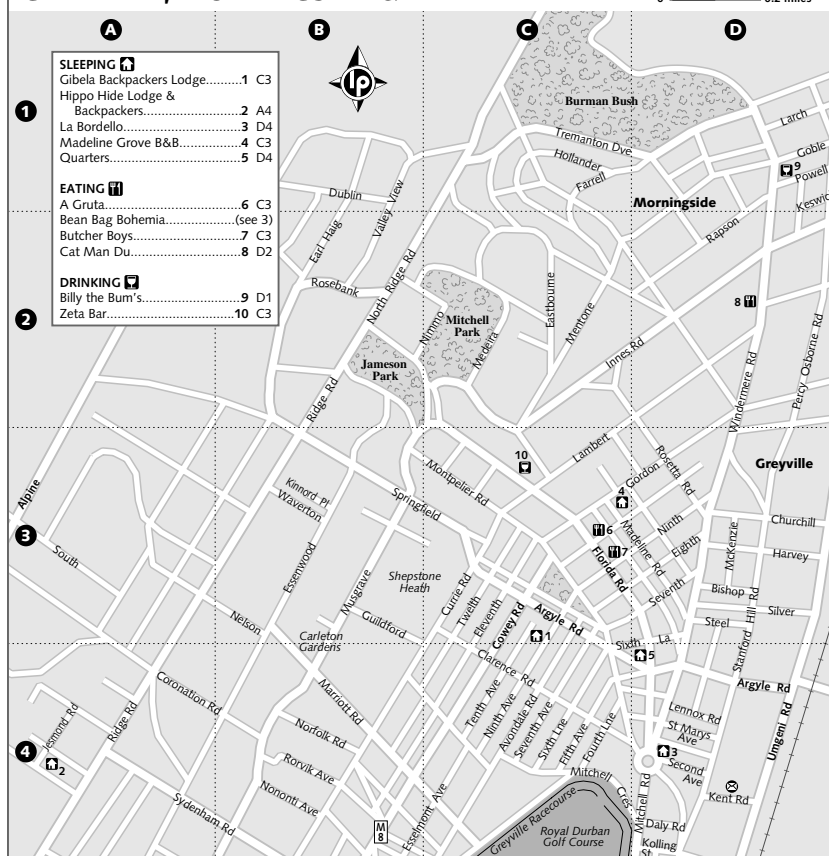
## GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BERA

The adjoining arteries of Florida and Windermere Rds are the best places to start foraging for a meal.

**Bean Bag Bohemia** (Map p505; ☎ 031-309 6019; 18 Windermere Rd; mains US\$4-10; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) The food and flavours are as creative as the mosaics, chandeliers and gothic décor of the artistically hip restaurant (upstairs) and downstairs café-bar.

**Cat Man Du** (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 7893; 411 Windermere Rd; mains US\$4-13; ☎) lunch & dinner) This groovy diner-come-cocktail bar serves international fusion-style tucker in bar-like surrounds.

## GREYVILLE, MORNINGSIDE & BERA



Carnivores might like the kudu fillet in red wine (US\$11) and vegetarians are extremely well catered for.

**Cafe 1999** (Map p498; ☎ 031-202 3406; Silvervaux Centre, Silverton Rd, Berea; mains US\$6-13; ☎) lunch & dinner) The place to eat for trendy Durbanites. This buzzing restaurant serves creative fusion food which comes in 'bitparts' – 'titbit' and 'bigbit'. Try the crispy roast duck on vanilla-seed risotto (US\$7/11).

**A Gruta** (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 8675; 200C Florida Rd; mains US\$6-18; ☎) lunch & dinner; ☎) If you're not heading on to Mozambique (or Portugal for that matter), this is a great place to sample the flavours of Iberia.

**Butcher Boys** (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 8248; 170 Florida Rd; mains US\$8-12; ☎) lunch & dinner; ☎) A stylish

joint serving 'steak as you like it', Butcher Boys is popular with business people and the 'in' group.

## Drinking

The best options are found in the suburbs.

**Zeta Bar** (Map p505; ☎ 031-312 9436; 258 Florida Rd) Voluptuous red-plush seats and curvy soft lines provide the backdrop for this lounge lizard's favourite.

**Billy the Bum's** (Map p505; ☎ 031-303 1988; 504 Windermere Rd, Morningside) Attracting a crowd of Durban's upwardly mobile, this suburban cocktail bar is reliably raucous.

**Cool Runnings** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-368 5604; 49 Milne St) This (in)famous place has a truly Rasta bohemian feel and it stays open until 6am.



Come late as it fills up after 11pm and catch a cab – this is *not* an area to walk around.

**Joe Kool's** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 9697; Lower Marine Pde, North Beach) The inevitable finish line for any day on the beach, this venerable night-spot cooks up a cocktail of cold beer, big-screen TV, dance music and feisty crowds. Sunday night is party night.

**Rivets** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-336 8100; Durban Hilton International, 12 Walnut St) As glossy as you'd expect a bar in the guts of the Hilton to be, Rivets boasts Thursday jazz nights, chichi décor, a contingent of the beautiful set and pricey cocktails.

## Entertainment

Many events, from the Natal Sharks games to Shakespeare performances, can be booked through **Computicket** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 083-915 8000; 1st fl, the Workshop, Commercial Rd; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat).

## CINEMAS

There are cinemas in all of the major malls: **Imax** (☎ 031-566 4415; Gateway Mall, Umhlanga Ridge) Big-screen action in the Gateway Mall. **Ster** Musgrave Centre (Map p498; ☎ 0860-300 222; www.sterkinetor.com; Musgrave Centre, Musgrave Rd); Gateway Mall (☎ 031-566 3222; Gateway Mall, Umhlanga Ridge)

## LIVE MUSIC

**KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra** (☎ 031-369 9438; www.kznp.o.co.za) The orchestra has an interesting spring concert programme with weekly performances in the City Hall.

**BAT Centre** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-332 0451; www.batcentre.co.za; 45 Maritime Pl, Victoria Embankment) One of Durban's more interesting haunts, this venue features everything from DJs on Friday and Sunday evenings, regular drum circles, and top-flight jazz musicians.

**Rainbow Restaurant & Jazz Club** (☎ 031-702 9161; 23 Stanfield Lane) In Pinetown, 8km west of the centre, Rainbow is considered the centre of the jazz scene and still the preferred local haunt. It features concerts and headline acts on the first or last Sunday of the month.

## NIGHTCLUBS

**Tilt** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-306 9356; 11 Walnut Rd) This place shares DJs with the Hilton's Rivets bar. Friday is often the big one, with quality music from deep house to chunky bass.

**Club 330** (Map pp502-3; www.330.co.za; 330 Point Rd) Clubbing in a point-blank sense. In-your-face

full-on rave scene and throb city, depending what level you're on. This is not an area to walk around.

## THEATRE

**Natal Playhouse** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-369 9444; www.playhousecompany.com; Smith St) Opposite the City Hall, Durban's central theatre has dance, drama and music most nights.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Durban International Airport** (☎ 031-451 6666) is off the N2, 16km south of the city. Several airlines link Durban with South Africa's other main centres. Prices quoted (internet fares) are for the cheapest available one-way fares and may cost less than prices quoted by travel agents.

**1time** (☎ 0861-345 345; www.1time.co.za) A no-frills airline offering some great deals to Jo'burg (US\$41).

**Kulula** (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) A no-frills competitor to 1time, it links Durban with Jo'burg (US\$61), Cape Town (US\$77) and Port Elizabeth (US\$68).

**Nationwide Air** (☎ 0861-737 737; www.nationwideair.co.za) Flies at least once daily to Jo'burg (US\$60), Cape Town (US\$80) and Port Elizabeth.

**South African Airlink** (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-978 1111; www.saaairlink.co.za) Flies daily to Port Elizabeth (US\$57), Bloemfontein (US\$201) and Nelspruit (US\$260).

**South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 031-978 1111; www.flysaa.com) Flies at least once daily to Jo'burg (US\$105), Port Elizabeth (US\$128), East London (US\$128), Cape Town (US\$195), George (US\$200) and Nelspruit (US\$103).

### BUS

The popular and useful **Baz Bus** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 9099; www.bazbus.com; 1st fl, Tourist Junction; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) has an office next to Durban Africa. The seven/14-day (US\$115/220) passes allow you to travel in any direction and as often as you like within the time period.

Long-distance buses leave from the bus stations near the Durban train station (Map pp502-3). It's safest to enter from NMR Ave, not Umgeni Rd. The following long-distance bus companies have their offices here:

**Eldo Coaches** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-307 3363) has three buses daily to Jo'burg (US\$18 to US\$23, eight hours).

**Greyhound** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 083-915 9000; www.greyhound.co.za) has daily buses to Richards Bay (US\$1.40, 2½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$26 to US\$30, eight hours), Cape Town (US\$63, 22

to 27 hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$44, 15 hours) and Port Shepstone (US\$16, 1½ hours).

Buses also run daily to Pietermaritzburg (US\$12, one hour), Estcourt (US\$13, 2½ hours), Ladysmith (US\$19, four hours) and Newcastle (US\$23, 5½ hours).

**Intercape** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) has several daily buses to Jo'burg (US\$26 to US\$30, eight hours), Cape Town (US\$66, 23 hours), Gaborone (via Jo'burg; US\$47, 15½ hours) and Maputo (via Jo'burg; US\$31, 15 hours).

**Luxliner** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 9090; www.intercity.co.za) has daily services from Durban to Margate (US\$11, 2½ hours), Jo'burg International Airport and Park Station (US\$24, 8½ hours) and Pretoria (US\$24, nine hours).

**SA Roadlink** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-307 5424; www.saroadlink.co.za) has double-decker buses to Cape Town (via Bloemfontein; US\$62, 23 hours), Jo'burg (US\$26, 6½ hours) and Port Elizabeth (via Mthatha and East London; US\$40, 15 hours).

**Translux** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-308 8111; www.translux.co.za) has daily buses to Jo'burg (US\$27 to US\$28, eight hours) and Cape Town (US\$63, 27 hours). City to City buses, operated in partnership with Translux, go to destinations across the country.

### CAR

Most major car-rental companies also have offices at the airport:

**Around-about Cars** (☎ 021-422 4022; www.aroundaboutcars.com)

**Avis** (☎ 031-304 1741, 086-102 111)

**Budget** (☎ 086-101 6622)

**Comet Car Rental** (☎ 031-903 4994; www.cometcar.co.za) Has some reasonable deals.

**Imperial** (☎ 031-337 3731)

### MINIBUS TAXI

Some long-distance taxis leave from stops in the streets opposite the Umgeni Rd entrance to the train station (Map pp502-3). Others running mainly to the south coast and the Wild Coast region of Eastern Cape leave from the Berea train station (Map pp502-3). To Jo'burg it costs US\$18. The areas in and around the minibus taxis' ranks are unsafe and extreme care should be taken if entering them.

### TRAIN

**Durban train station** (Map pp502-3; ☎ 0860-008 888) is huge. Use the NMR Ave entrance, 1st level.

The local inner-city or suburban trains are not recommended for travellers; even hardy travellers report feeling unsafe.

Long-distance services are another matter – they are efficient and arranged into separate male and female sleeper compartment for Jo'burg (1st-/2nd-class US\$34/22, 12½ hours), and the *Trans Orange*, which makes a weekly run (phone the station for the departure day) to Cape Town (US\$87/59, 38 hours).

The **Rovos** (www.rovosrail.co.za) is a luxury steam train on which, for a mere US\$1100 starting price, you can enjoy old-world luxury on a three-day choof from Durban to Pretoria via Swaziland and Kruger National Park.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Some hostels run their own taxi shuttle services for clients at competitive prices. By taxi, the same trip should cost about US\$20. The **Airport Shuttle Bus** (☎ 031-465 1660) departs the airport regularly to the beach and city centre's major hotels (US\$4). Buses return to the airport on the hour between 5am to 10pm from the corner of Aliwal and Smith Sts (Map pp502-3).

### BUS

The main bus terminal and information centre (Map pp502-3) for inner-city and metropolitan buses is on Commercial Rd across from the Workshop.

**Durban Transport** (☎ 031-309 5942) runs the bus services Mynah and Aqualine. Mynah covers most of the beachfront and central residential areas. Trips cost around US\$0.40. The larger Aqualine buses run through the outer-lying Durban metropolitan area.

### TAXI

A taxi between the beach and Florida Rd, Morningside costs about US\$4. **Mozzie Cabs** (☎ 0860-669 943) runs a reliable 24-hour service.

## AROUND DURBAN

A pleasant and hassle-free (if slightly kitsch) getaway from the steamy streets of Durban, the **Valley of 1000 Hills** (also known as the Umgeni Valley) runs from the city's western outskirts to Nagle Dam, east of Pietermaritzburg. The area abounds in touristy craft shops and eateries, but the rolling hills, sleepy villages and traditional Zulu communities make for

an interesting visit. You can drive on the Rte 103, which begins in Hillcrest, off the M13 freeway, or head to Hillcrest from the N3 between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Surprisingly, Route 2 of the 1000 Hills experience is one of the region's best kept secrets. The 600-hectare **Krantzkloof Nature Reserve** (adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 6am-6pm year-round) has a variety of stunning gorge, wetland and grassland walks of between one to six hours' duration. Maps of self-guided trails (US\$0.70) are available from the security guard.

## SOUTH OF DURBAN

The South Coast is a 160km-long string of sea-side resorts and suburbs running from Durban to Port Edward, near the Eastern Cape border. There's a bit of a Groundhog Day feel about this mass of shoulder-to-shoulder getaways along the N2 and Rte 102, albeit a pleasant one. The region is a surfers' and divers' delight (the latter because of the Aliwal Shoal), and in summer there ain't much room to swing a broly. The stunning Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve, close to Port Shepstone, provides beautiful forest walks, eating and accommodation options.

The South Coast's first official town is Amanzimtoti, a huge resort and residential area about 10km from Durban International Airport. Further south, other major centres are Umkomaas, Scottburgh, Park Rynie and Hibberdene. The area from Hibberdene to Trafalgar is called the Hibiscus Coast. Information is available from **Hibiscus Coast Tourism** (☎ 039-312 2322; www.hibiscuscoast.kzn.org.za; Panorama

Pde, Main Beach, Margate; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun).

Port Shepstone is the South Coast's industrial administrative centre, but has some pleasant surrounding areas, while 10km south, frantic Margate is the claustrophobic holiday hub. Port Edward is the last main centre in the region.

## Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve

☎ 039

This **nature reserve** (☎ 039-679 1644; www.kznwildlife.com; admission US\$1.40, camp sites US\$4, 2-bed huts US\$15; ☎ 6am-6pm) is inland from Port Shepstone, off the N2. The spectacular gorge, on the Umzimkulwana River, is one of the highlights of the South Coast with beautiful scenery, animals and birds.

**Wild 5 Extreme Adventures** (☎ 082-566 7424) is based at the Oribi Gorge Hotel. It offers a 100m Gorge Swing (read bungee jump) off Lehr's Falls (US\$40), abseiling (US\$27) and white-water rafting (US\$47). These are 11km off the N2 along the Oribi Flats Rd.

To overnight in the area, check out the **Oribi Gorge Hotel** (☎ 039-687 0253; www.oribigorge.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$58/89; 🍷), a large pine place close to a viewing area of the gorge.

## Margate & Around

☎ 039 / pop 34,000

The south coast's tourist mecca is loud and lively, with a string of bars and clubs pumping up the volume, and a knot of hotels putting up the visitors. This claustrophobic concrete jungle's string of chain restaurants and shops ensures that it's not a 'glamour'

## SOUTH COAST DIVING

The highlight of this strip is the Aliwal Shoal, touted as one of the 10 best dive sites in the world. Named after the wrecked ship, the *Aliwal*, which ran aground on the reef in 1849, other ships have since met a similar fate here. Today, the shoal's ledges, caves and pinnacles are home to everything from wrecks, rays, turtles, 'raggies' (ragged-mouth sharks), tropical fish and soft corals.

Numerous operators along the South Coast offer day dives and four-day courses with dives, equipment hire and air-tank refills. Rates range from US\$230 to US\$250.

**Aliwal Dive Charters** (☎ 039-973 2542; www.aliwalshoalscubadiving.co.za; Umkomaas) On the main road past the village.

**La La Manzi Dive Charters** (☎ 039-973 1345; www.divealiwal.co.za; Umkomaas) On the main road past the village.

**Quo Vadis** (☎ 039-978 1112; www.raggiecave.com; Scottburgh) Based at the Cutty Sark Hotel, and recommended for its charters.

**Sea Fever Dive Centre** (☎ 039-973 1328; www.seafever.co.za; Umkomaas) Towards the front of the village facing the sea.

resort, but it's fun if you're into the bump-and-grind brand of beach life. Nearby Ramsgate is a quieter version of Margate, with a nice little beach.

## SLEEPING

**Sunlawns Hotel** (☎ /fax 039-312 1078; Uplands Rd, Margate; per person with breakfast US\$28; 🍷 🍷) This long-established hotel has delightful old-English charm. There is a Ladies Lounge and pub, as well as a good-sized pool.

**Wailana Beach Lodge** (☎ 039-314 4606; www.wailana.co.za; 436 Ashmead Dr, Ramsgate; r per person with breakfast from US\$47; 🍷 🍷) This svelte guest-house, 200m from the sea in nearby Ramsgate, has five 'designer' bedrooms with contemporary, individual styling and private sun decks, leafy gardens and a bar.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **Margate Mini Coach** (☎ 031-312 1406; www.margate.co.za/minicoach) links Durban and Margate twice daily (US\$11 single, US\$15 for a same-day return). Book through **Hibiscus Coast Tourism** (☎ 039-312 2322; www.hibiscuscoast.kzn.org.za; Panorama Pde, Main Beach, Margate; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun).

**Luxliner** (☎ 039-317 4628; www.luxliner.co.za) has an office in Hibiscus Coast Tourism, and runs regular buses between Margate and Jo'burg (US\$34, 10 hours).

## NORTH OF DURBAN

The stretch of coast from Umhlanga Rocks north to the Tugela River is a profusion of upmarket timeshare apartments and retirement villages with some pleasant beaches. The section from Zimbali, slightly north of Umhlanga, to the Tugela is known as the Dolphin Coast because of the bottlenose dolphins that favour the area.

**Dolphin Coast Publicity** (☎ 032-946 1997; www.dolphincoast.co.za; Ballito Dr; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) is near the BP petrol station, just where you leave the N2 to enter Ballito. It books B&Bs and lists other accommodation.

The North Coast is home to a fascinating mix of peoples: descendants of former colonialists, Indians, French Mauritian sugarcane growers and indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent, plus colourful Zulu cultures.

Metropolitan buses run between Durban and Umhlanga Rocks, and buses and minibus taxis also run between Durban and

KwaDukuza (Stanger) and several other inland towns.

## Umhlanga Rocks

☎ 031

The buckle of Durban's chichi commuter belt, Umhlanga (the 'h' is pronounced something like a 'sh') is a cosmopolitan mix of upmarket beach resort, moneyed suburbia and small malls.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Natal Sharks Board** (☎ 031-566 0400; www.shark.co.za; 1A Herrwood Dr; audiovisual & dissection adult/child US\$2.80/1.60; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sun) is a research institute dedicated to studying sharks, specifically in relation to their danger to humans. There are audiovisual presentations and shark dissections at 9am and 2pm Tuesday to Thursday. The public can accompany the Sharks Board personnel on their boat trips. The institute is about 2km out of town.

## Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve

The **Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve** (admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm) is on a river mouth just north of town. Despite its small size (26 hectares) there are many bird species. The trails lead through stunning dune forest, across the lagoon and onto the beach.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Oyster Box** (☎ 031-561 2233; www.oysterbox.co.za; 2 Lighthouse Rd; s with breakfast US\$72-107, d per person US\$58-84; 🍷 🍷 🍷) In the shadow of Umhlanga lighthouse, this spot exudes colonial-era grace with an old-school atmosphere that offers an antidote to Umhlanga's concrete towers.

**Beverly Hills Sun Intercontinental** (☎ 031-561 2211; www.southernsun.com; Lighthouse Rd; s & d US\$370; 🍷 🍷 🍷) They didn't pull out the stops on the exterior, but this top-notch classic is deliciously stylish on the inside.

There's a huge choice of eating options for breakfasts, lunches and dinners and many pleasant pavement cafés.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Metro buses 716 and 706 run between Umhlanga and Durban.

## ZULULAND

Evoking images of wild landscapes and tribal rhythms, this beautiful swathe of KwaZulu-Natal offers a different face of South

Africa, where fine coastline, mist-clad hills and traditional settlements are in contrast to the ordered suburban developments around Durban. Dominated by the Zulu tribal group, the region offers a fascinating historical and contemporary insight into one of the country's most enigmatic, and best-known, cultures. Intense poverty and all the social problems that come with it are still commonplace.

The region is most visited for the spectacular Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park and its many traditional Zulu villages. Here, you can learn about Zulu history and the legendary King Shaka.

### Umhlathuze (Richards Bay & Empangeni)

☎ 035 / pop 115,000

Umhlathuze incorporates the industrial port of Richards Bay and the nearby town of Empangeni, and is a mass of modern suburbia, aluminium smelters and a web of roads linking very little. Bird-watchers may be rewarded by the 350 or so bird species that favour the surrounding lakes and marshes, but for most visitors there are better places to spend your time.

Greyhound buses run daily to Durban (US\$1.40, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$30, eight hours).

### Eshowe

☎ 035 / pop 14,700

Situated around a beautiful indigenous forest and surrounded by green rolling hills, Eshowe typifies idiosyncratic Zululand. The centre has a rural, rough-and-tumble atmosphere, but the suburbs are leafy and quiet. It is well placed for exploring the wider region and there are many decent attractions and accommodation options on offer.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Fort Nongqayi Museum Village** (☎ 035-474 1141; zhm@umlalazi.org.za; Nongqayi Rd; adult/child US\$2.80/4; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) includes access to the Zululand Historical Museum, the Vukani Zulu Basketry Collection, Zululand Missionary Museum, and the Museum Crafter's Market, where local crafts are sold.

From the museum you can also walk to **Mpushini Falls** (40 minutes return), but note that bilharzia has been reported here in the past.

When war approached, King Shaka is said to have hidden his wives in the thick stand of forest that now makes up the 200-hectare **Dlinza Forest Reserve** (☎ 035-474 4029; www.zbr.co.za/boardwalk; admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm Sep-Apr, 8am-5pm May-Aug). There is prolific bird life as well as some walking trails.

The 100m-long **Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk** (www.zbr.co.za/boardwalk; adult/child US\$3.40/0.70) offers some great views of the canopy and bird life. This is the start of the Prince Dabulamanzi Trail, a three-day circuit through nature reserves and rivers. **Entumeni Nature Reserve** (☎ 035-474 5084; admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm) is larger than Dlinza, and preserves indigenous mist-belt forest in a sugar-cane region. It's 16km west of town, off the road to Entumeni and Nkandla.

### SLEEPING

**Amble Inn** (☎ 035-474 1300; ambleinn@corpdial.co.za; 116 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$30/42) Filling the guts of an old British Army brothel, this place offers slightly shabby but spacious backpacker charm, complete with a giant gargoye.

**George Hotel & Zululand Backpackers** (☎ 035-474 4919; www.eshowe.com; 38 Main St; s/d with breakfast US\$33/47; 📺 📶) March into this attractive, whitewashed building with rooms that ooze colonial-era pretensions. There's a separate backpackers (camp sites US\$7, dorm/single/double with shared bathroom US\$10/18/24), as well as the George's microbrewery and 101 activities on tap.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis leave from the bus and taxi rank (downhill from KFC near the Osborne/Main Sts roundabout – go across the bridge and to the right) to Empangeni, (US\$4, one hour), Gingindlovu (US\$0.90) and Melmoth (US\$2.80, 45 minutes), the best place to catch taxis deeper into Zululand.

### Nkwalini Valley

Shaka's kraal (fortified village), KwaBulawayo, once loomed over this beautiful valley but today Nkwalini is regimented with citrus orchards and cane fields rather than Zulu warriors. From Eshowe head north for 6km on Rte 66, and turn right onto Rte 230 (a dirt road that will eventually get you to Rte 34).

Across the road from the KwaBulawayo marker is **Coward's Bush**, now just another marker, where warriors who returned from

battle without their spears, or who had received wounds in the back, were executed.

### Shakaland & Simunye

☎ 035

Created as a set for the telemovie *Shaka Zulu*, the Protea-managed **Shakaland** (☎ 035-460 0912; www.shakaland.com; Nandi Experience US\$26; ☎ display 11am) beats up a touristy, but entertaining, blend of perma-grin performance and informative authenticity. The Nandi Experience (Nandi was Shaka's mother) is a display of Zulu culture and customs; the Zulu dance performance is said to be the best in the country. You can also stay overnight at the four-star **hotel** (s/d with Nandi Experience & full board US\$155/132).

Shakaland is at Norman Hurst Farm, Nkwalini, 3km off Rte 66 and 14km north of Eshowe.

**Simunye Zulu Lodge** (☎ 035-450 3111; s/d with dinner, bed & breakfast US\$185/277), a collection of cottages, beehive huts and rondavels, is owned by renowned 'white Zulu' Barry Leitch. It's located between Melmoth and Eshowe, and nestled at the bottom of cliffs on the banks of the Mfuli River. Guests meet local Zulus and learn about their traditional and contemporary culture.

### Ulundi & Around

☎ 035 / pop 15,200

Once the hub of the powerful Zulu empire and until recently joint capital of KZN (with Pietermaritzburg, which gained pre-eminence), Ulundi has lost much of its heart and its small centre (cum-shopping mall) has a temporary and merely functional feel. For Zulu fanatics, however, there are still plenty of historic sites to explore in the immediate area.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Established as Cethswayo's capital in 1873, **Ondini** (High Place; ☎ 035-870 2050; admission US\$2; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) was razed by British troops after the Battle of Ulundi (July 1879), the final engagement of the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War. The royal kraal section of the Ondini site has been rebuilt and you can see where archaeological digs have uncovered the floors of identifiable buildings.

Also located at Ondini is the **KwaZulu Cultural-Historical Museum** (incl in Ondini admission; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun), with good exhibits on Zulu history and culture. It also

has one of the country's best collections of beadwork on display.

The **Emakhosini Ophathe Heritage Park** (Valley of the Kings; admission free; ☎ 8am-4pm) is of great significance to the Zulu. The great *makhosi* (chiefs) Nkhosinkulu, Senzangakhona (father of Shaka, Dinga and Mpande) and Dinizulu are buried here. A monument, the **Spirit of eMakhosini**, sits on a hill.

### SLEEPING

**uMuzi Bushcamp** (☎ 035-450 2531; d with breakfast US\$53) Inside the Ondini complex is this privately run group of traditional beehive huts. The owners seemed to have capitalised on the location; the price stings for what you get.

**Holiday Inn Garden Court** (☎ 035-870 1012; 📺 📶 📷) Catering to passing dignitaries and bureaucrats, this offers the predictably safe comforts of a chain hotel. Ask about the weekend specials.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The minibus-taxi park is opposite the Holiday Inn, with services to destinations including Vryheid (US\$5.50, 1½ hours) and Eshowe (US\$6, 1½ hours).

### THE ELEPHANT COAST

Not far from the top of the scribbled list marked 'Places I Must See in South Africa', the tourism authority-labelled Elephant Coast (which incorporates the northern region known as Maputaland) is a phenomenal stretch of natural beauty, with a fabulously diverse mix of environments and wildlife. The Elephant Coast is bound in the south by the Imfolozi River just below the St Lucia Estuary, and to the northwest by the Lebombo Mountains.

### KwaMbonambi

☎ 035

KwaMbonambi (often called Kwambo) is a tiny town off the N2, between Empangeni and Mtubatuba. Some believe that KwaMbonambi means 'Place of the Gathering of Kings', while others believe it means 'Place of the Blacksmith', as Shaka's spears were made here. Nowadays it's a place where very little happens, although it's close to the wildlife parks.

**Cuckoo's Nest** (☎ 035-580 1001; www.cuckoo-nest.com; 28 Albizia St; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/22; 📺 📶), especially the tree house (US\$20), has lost



some of its perkiness since the former owners moved on, but it's spacious and friendly and a pleasant stopover if stuck.

### Mtubatuba & Around

☎ 035

For travellers, the only real reason to visit this chaotic place is that minibus taxis run through here on their way south to Durban (US\$9.50, two hours) north to Phongolo (US\$11 to US\$14, two hours; via Hluhluwe and Mkuze) and west into Zululand. Coming from those destinations, Mtubatuba is the stop for St Lucia (St Lucia Estuary is 25km east; take Rte 8 by minibus taxi).

On the southern side of Mtubatuba is Riverview, a neat town with a sugar mill. Here, **Wendy's B&B Country Lodge** (☎ 035-550 0407; www.wendybnb.co.za; 3 Riverview Rd, Riverview; r with breakfast US\$76; 🍷) drips with soft furnishings and old-fashioned homey charm.

### Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park

☎ 035

**Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park** (☎ 035-550 8476; www.kzn.wildlife.com; adult/child US\$9.50/4.70; 🕒 5am-7pm Nov-Feb, 6am-6pm Mar-Oct) is one of South Africa's best-known and most evocative parks. Covering 96,000 hectares, the park has lions, elephants, rhinos (black and white), leopards, giraffes and wild dogs. The land is quite hilly except on the river flats: the White Imfolozi River flows through Imfolozi, and the Black Imfolozi forms the northern border of the park; the Hluhluwe River bisects Hluhluwe, and the dam on it attracts wildlife.

The **Centenary Centre** (🕒 8am-4pm), a wildlife-holding centre with an attached museum and information centre, is in the eastern section of Imfolozi.

The wildlife drives here are very popular. **Hilltop Camp** (☎ 035-562 0848) offers morning and night drives, while **Mpila Camp** offers night drives only. The drives are open to resort residents only and cost US\$20 per person.

Bear in mind that the reserves are in a (low-risk) malarial area and there are lots of mosquitoes – come prepared.

### WILDERNESS TRAILS

One of Imfolozi's main attractions is its trail system, in a special 24,000-hectare wilderness area (note: trails are seasonal). The **Base Trail** (three nights/four days, US\$363) is, as the name suggests, at a base camp.

The **Short Wilderness Trail** (two nights/three days, US\$200) is at satellite camps, which have no amenities (bucket shower) but are fully catered. Similar is the **Extended Wilderness Trail** (three nights/four days, US\$300) but guests must carry their gear for 7km into camp. On the **Primitive Trail** (four nights/five days, US\$240), you carry equipment, help prepare the food (provided) and hikers must sit up in 1½-hour watches during the night.

### SLEEPING & EATING

You must book accommodation in advance through **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kzn.wildlife.com) in Pietermaritzburg or at Durban's **Tourist Junction** (☎ 035-304 4934; 160 Pine St, cnr Soldiers Way; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). Last-minute bookings – those made 48 hours ahead – should be made direct with the camp site.

**Hilltop Camp** (☎ 035-562 0848; rest huts/chalets per person US\$31/63, 2-bed units with full board per person US\$63) This is the signature resort on the Hluhluwe side, with stupendous views, a restaurant and a much-needed bar. Try one of the smaller and more sedate accommodation centres in Imfolozi for more peace and quiet.

**Muntulu Bush Lodge** (8-bed bush lodges per person US\$70) is perched high above the Hluhluwe River; and **Munywaneni Bush Lodge** (8-bed bush lodges per person US\$63, minimum US\$418) is secluded and self-contained. There's also a fully hosted and catered nine-bed lodge at **Mtwazi Lodge** (per person incl wildlife drives & walks, price on application).

The main accommodation centre on the Imfolozi side is spectacular **Mpila Camp** (4-bed rest huts per person US\$29, 2-bed safari camps per person US\$33) in the centre of the reserve and **Masinda** (9-bed lodge per person incl wildlife drives & walks US\$240), near the Centenary Centre, is fully hosted and catered.

Be warned: all accommodation options are billed per person but are subject to a minimum charge.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The main entrance, Memorial Gate, is about 15km west of the N2, about 50km north of Mtubatuba. The second entrance, the Nyalazi Gate, is accessed by turning left off the N2 onto the Rte 618 just after Mtubatuba to Nonogoma. The third, Cengeni Gate, on Imfolozi's western side, is accessible by road (tarred for 30km) from Ulundi.

### Greater St Lucia Wetland Park

☎ 035

The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, a Unesco World Heritage Site, stretches for 280 glorious kilometres, from the Mozambican border near Kosi Bay in the north of Maputaland, to Mapeplane (Maphelana), at the southern end of Lake St Lucia. With the Indian Ocean on one side, and a series of lakes on the other (including Lake St Lucia), the 328,000-hectare area is made up of a jigsaw of reserves and protects five distinct ecosystems, offering everything from offshore reefs and beaches, to lakes, wetlands, woodlands and coastal forests. The ocean beaches pull big crowds during the holiday season.

Lake St Lucia itself is Africa's largest estuary. Despite its past healthy water levels, it is currently at its lowest level for 50 years, due to a severe drought. Controversy surrounds a long-term solution to the management of the lake, with both animal and plant species being affected by the changing ecological factors.

Remember that unless specified, all KZN Wildlife accommodation must be booked at **KZN Wildlife** (☎ in Pietermaritzburg 033-845 1000, ☎ in Durban 031-304 4934) with 48 hours' notice. Within 48 hours, try your luck directly with the lodges and camp sites.

### ACTIVITIES & TOURS

Most hostels rent snorkelling equipment and run or can organise tours through tour operators. Many of these have offices based in St Lucia Estuary and are useful first stops for information.

### Birding

**Zululand Birding Route** (☎ 033-753 5644)

### Boat Tours

**St Lucia Tours & Charters** (☎ 035-590 1259; www.zululink.co.za; cnr MacKenzie & Katonkel Rds; 🕒 6.30am-6pm) In St Lucia Estuary.

### Canoeing

**St Lucia Kayak Safaris** (☎ 035-590 1555)

### Hiking

Hiking is awesome around the region. The main trails are all in the Eastern Shores area (see p514) and are guided walks.

### Horse Riding

**Bhangazi Horse Safaris** (☎ 035-550 4438)  
**Exodus Adventures** (☎ 083-349 8575)

### Turtle Tours

**Bhanga Nek** (☎ 082-968 3766)

**Euro Zulu Safaris** (☎ 035-590 2173)

**Shaka Barker** (☎ 035-590 1162)

### Whale Watching

**Advantage Tours** (☎ 035-590 1259)

### Wildlife Drives

**Leisure EcoTours** (☎ 035-590 1075)

**Shaka Barker Tours** (☎ 035-590 1162)

### ST LUCIA ESTUARY

St Lucia Estuary, the park's main resort town and the region's gateway, is a good place in which to get your bearings of the region. In high season, this pleasant village is a hotbed of activity as the population swells from 600 to the thousands. Hippos sometimes amble down the town's quieter streets (beware, these are not cute).

### Information

**Internet café** (☎ 035-590 1056; 310 MacKenzie St; per hr US\$4; 🕒 7am-10pm) At BiB's International Backpackers.

**KZN Wildlife** (☎ 035-590 1340; fax 035-590 1343; Pelican Rd; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm) Offers information on the reserves.

**St Lucia Tours & Charters** (☎ 035-590 1259; www.advantagetours.co.za; cnr MacKenzie St & Katonkel Rd; 🕒 6.30am-6pm) Offers plenty of information and tour bookings.

### Sleeping

In St Lucia Estuary itself, you can camp at three sites run by **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000, 590 1340; www.kznwildlife.com; Pelican St). The pretty **Sugarloaf** (per person US\$7) is on the estuary, as are **Eden Park** (per person US\$9), near the KZN Wildlife office, and **Iphiva** (per person US\$7), off MacKenzie St.

**BiB's International Backpackers** (☎ 035-590 1056; www.bibs.co.za; 310 MacKenzie St; camp sites US\$6, dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/20, d US\$27; 🍷 🍳 🍷) Occupying a series of sprawling buildings, the rooms are tarnished but the atmosphere makes up for it: BiB's offers all the backpacker staples – a busy bar, a huge (serviced) kitchen for cooking, and organised fun.

**Santa Lucia Guest House** (☎ 035-590 1151; www.santalucia.co.za; 30 Pelican St; s/d with breakfast US\$39/78; 🍷 🍳 🍷) This highly acclaimed B&B with friendly and hospitable owners adds some old-fashioned luxury to the usual standard fare.

**Hippo Hideaway** (☎ 035-590 1025; www.hippo-hideaway.co.za; 70 MacKenzie St; s/d US\$70/76; 🏠 🚽 🚿) This smart place caters to the better-heeled traveller: the small complex of self-catering apartments is spanking new and sparkling clean.

### Getting There & Away

The **Baz Bus** (📍 in Durban 031-304 9099; www.bazbus.com) drops backpackers off several times a week. If you're not doing tours out of St Lucia Estuary, the only way of getting around is to have your own wheels.

### EASTERN SHORES (MFABENI) RESERVE

☎ 035

Two kilometres north of St Lucia Estuary, on the eastern side of the lake, is the boom gate for the **Eastern Shores (Mfabeni) Reserve** (☎ 035-590 1202; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/2/4.70; 🕒 5am-7pm), which has the sea on its eastern flank. This section of the park has an excellent selection of wildlife, and a variety of ecosystems to explore. Fourteen kilometres north of the boom gate are the **Mission Rocks**, where you will find the **ranger station** (☎ 035-590 1202) for the hiking trails. At low tide, the Mission Rocks are covered in rock pools containing a fabulous array of sea life.

### Hiking Trails

By far the best way to see this section of the park is to hike one of the trails. Reservations should be made and you should check in at the Mission Rocks ranger station.

The **Mziki Trail** (☎ 035-590 1202; per person per night US\$9.50) is a guided, three-day trail of about 40km. You must bring your own food.

The **Emoyeni Trail** (☎ 035-590 1202; per person US\$7) is a guided, 65km long, five-day excursion. You must bring your own food, cooking equipment, sleeping bag and tent.

### CAPE VIDAL

☎ 035

This beautiful **coastal camp** (☎ 033-845 1000, 590 1224; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/2/4.70; 🕒 6am-6pm) takes in the land between the lake and the ocean, north of Cape Vidal itself. Some of the forested sand dunes are 150m high and the beaches are excellent for swimming.

There is KZN Wildlife accommodation at the **Bhangazi Complex** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites US\$10, 5-8-bed log cabins

per person US\$32, 8-bed bush lodge US\$47), near Lake Bhangazi.

From St Lucia Estuary head north, past the Crocodile Centre and through the entrance gates. Cape Vidal is approximately 35km further on.

### FANI'S ISLAND & FALSE BAY PARK

Both Fani's Island and False Bay Park desperately needs the rainbird to sing. Due to a drought lasting several years, there is no water in the lake and the area has been closed. It will reopen as soon as there is sufficient rainfall. Check with KZN Wildlife – there are two excellent camps.

### SODWANA BAY

☎ 035

Spectacular Sodwana Bay, a sheltered recess at the very northern tip of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, isn't a whole lot more than sand, sea and silence. And that's its appeal. The spread-out village of Sodwana Bay is also here, but the two nearby parks – Sodwana Bay National Park and Ozabeni – provide most of the highlights. This little slice of paradise offers stunning coastal scenery, guided walking trails and some serious deep-sea game fishing. It's possibly best known on the tourist trail for its scuba diving and its diversity of underwater marine life.

**Sodwana Bay National Park** (☎ 035-571 0051; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/2; 🕒 6am-6pm) is located on the coast, east of Mkuze. There are some animals, and the dunes, swamps and offshore coral reefs are well worth visiting, but the area can become very congested during holidays. Between November and February there are turtle-viewing tours (US\$20 per person).

If you opt for accommodation in the park's massive camp-site area (some of the lodges are also here), you pay a one-off charge of US\$6 at reception; day visitors pay US\$0.70.

For a more peaceful look at a similar ecosystem, head south to the adjoining **Ozabeni** (☎ 035-571 0268; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/2; 🕒 6am-6pm), which runs all the way down to Lake St Lucia. Bird-watchers are in for a treat here.

**Orca Launches** (☎ 035-571 5000, 083-654 7204; www.orcasafaris.co.za; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat), on the main street of the village, organises a host of activities from snorkelling to turtle tours (activities from US\$20 per person).

The nearest ATM is in Mbazwana, 14km west.

### Sleeping & Eating

**KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Ozabeni camp sites per person US\$4, Sodwana Bay National Park camp sites/5-bed cabins per person US\$19/30) Offers camping at Ozabeni, and hundreds of camp sites and cabins at Sodwana Bay National Park.

**Coral Divers** (☎ 035-571 0290; coraldivers@mweb.co.za; Sodwana Bay National Park; s/d with shared bathroom from US\$25/40; 📍 🚿) This Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) resort is a factory-style operation, nevertheless it has cabins in a lovely setting, satellite TV, a pool and a bar. For US\$20, staff will pick you up from Hluhluwe.

**Sodwana Bay Lodge** (☎ 035-571 0095; www.sodwanadelodge.com; s/d with half board US\$100/164) This slick resort, with neat boardwalks, banana palms and thatched roofs, caters to high-life divers, offering combinations of dive packages (from US\$190 per person sharing). It's on the main road through the village.

### Getting There & Away

Minibus taxis run from the N2 up to the small town of Jozini. From there to Sodwana Bay you shouldn't have trouble finding transport (taxis) as it's a fairly densely populated region.

### Tongaland

The area north of Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park up to the Mozambique border was settled by Mozambique's Tsonga people. It's a distinct ecological zone: flat and hot with sandy soil and sluggish rivers harbouring crocodiles and hippos. Forests of huge figs spread inland, especially along the Pongola River. Nearer the coast, palms grow among salt pans and thornveld (thorny vegetation areas).

### MKHUZE GAME RESERVE & AROUND

☎ 035

A possible trip highlight is the **Mkuze Game Reserve** (☎ 031-845 1000, 573 9001; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$4.70/2.40/4.70; 🕒 6am-6pm). Established in 1912, this reserve, covering some 36,000 spectacular hectares, is a well-kept 'secret'. It lacks lions, but just about every other sought-after animal is represented, as well as more than 400 species of birds.

Better still, the reserve has hides at water holes, which offer some of the best wildlife viewing in the country. Morning is the best time. It's 15km from Mkuze. Wildlife drives (US\$12) are available.

**KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Nhlonhlela bush lodge US\$27, Mantuma rest huts/2- & 4-bed safari camps & chalets per person US\$13/33) offers a bush lodge at Nhlonhlela, and a variety of accommodation at Mantuma. Minimum charges apply.

The town of Mkuze is west of the Lebombo range on the N2. **Ghost Mountain**, south of the town, was an important burial place for the Ndwandwe tribe; occasionally human bones, which date from a big battle between rival Zulu factions in 1884, are found near Ghost Mountain.

**Ghost Mountain Inn** (☎ 035-573 1025; www.ghostmountaininn.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$70/126; 🏠 🚽 🚿) is an old-school colonial with a modern and luxurious touch. A massive indoor-outdoor lounge area with blooming gardens, tennis courts and drives to the Mkuze Game Reserve all add to the appeal.

### TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK

☎ 035

Heading back to the N2 from Kosi Bay, South Africa's last free-ranging elephants are protected in the sandveld (dry, sandy belt) forests of **Tembe Elephant Park** (☎ 035-592 0001; www.tembe.co.za; adult/child/vehicle US\$4/2/4.70; 🕒 6am-6pm) on the Mozambique border. There are now about 160 elephants in the area, many of them the last survivors of elephant herds from the Maputo Elephant Reserve, saved from Mozambique's civil war. The park also boasts the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and black rhino).

**Tembe Lodge** (☎ 035-592 0545; www.tembe.co.za; r with full board & activities from US\$200; 📍) offers accommodation in secluded safari tents built on wooden platforms. In the centre of the camp there is a large dining area, a shaded pool and braai facilities.

Only 4WD vehicles are allowed to drive through the park itself.

### NDUMO GAME RESERVE

☎ 033

A little further west, the **Ndumo Game Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 035-591 0004; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$4.70/2.40/4.70; 🕒 5am-7pm) is beside the Mozambique border and close to

the Swaziland border, about 100km north of Mkuze. On some 10,000 hectares, there are black and white rhinos, hippos, crocodiles and antelope species but it is the bird life on the Pongola and Usutu Rivers, and their flood plains and pans, which attracts visitors. It's known as a 'mini Okavango'.

Wildlife-viewing and bird-watching, guided walks (US\$6) and vehicle tours (US\$1.40) are available.

Fuel and limited supplies are usually available 2km outside the park gate. Camping and rest huts are offered by **KZN Wildlife Accommodation** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites per person US\$7, 2-bed rest huts per person US\$27).

### Coastal Forest Reserve

This reserve stretches from Mozambique in the north to Sodwana Bay in the south, and includes Lake Sibaya, Kosi Bay, Bhanga Nek, Black Rock, Rocktail Bay, Manzengwenya, Mabibi and Nine-Mile Beach. The reserve is administered by KZN Wildlife.

### LAKE SIBAYA NATURE RESERVE

Protecting the largest freshwater lake in South Africa, **Lake Sibaya Nature Reserve** (www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/4.70; ☎ 6am-6pm) covers between 60 and 70 sq km, depending on the water level. It lies very close to the coast, and between the eastern shore and the sea is a range of sand dunes up to 165m high. There are hippos, some crocs and a large range of bird life. The lake is popular for fishing.

There is currently no accommodation in the reserve. The main route to the reserve is via the village of Mbazwana, south of the lake, either from Mkuze or from Mhlosinga, off Rte 22.

### KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE

☎ 033

The jewel of the Elephant Coast, **Kosi Bay Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 035-592 0234; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child/vehicle US\$2.80/1.40/2; ☎ 6am-6pm) features a string of four lakes that tip down the hillside into an estuary lined with some of the most beautiful (and quietest) beaches in South Africa. A coral reef offers excellent snorkelling just offshore. There are hippos, Zambezi sharks and some crocs in the lake system, and more than 250 bird species have been identified here.

The 44km **Kosi Bay Trail** (4 days per person for group of 10 US\$47, minimum charge US\$470) is a self-catered,

guided hike around the Kosi estuarine system, stopping each night in remote camps.

There are camp sites and basic cabins in the reserve, but very little else. **KwaNgwanase** is the nearest service centre, some 10km west of the reserve. There are two entrances to the reserve – Kosi Bay Camp (7km north of KwaNgwanase) and Kosi Bay Mouth (19km north of KwaNgwanase).

### Sleeping & Eating

Most lodge accommodation is dispersed around the region's sandy dunes and often away from the water. In many cases, 4WDs are needed to negotiate the sandy tracks.

**I Gwala Gwala Lodge** (☎ 084-588 0564; camp sites US\$7, s/d US\$20/40) Around 1km from the parks board office on the Kosi Bay Camp access road, this excellent place offers transfers to all beaches, picks up from Mkuze and organises snorkelling, dolphin swims, and diving. Accommodation is in basic chalets.

**Utshwayelo Campsite** (☎ 033-592 9626, 073-134 3318; camp sites per person US\$8) This quiet, community-run camp site offers camping right by the parks board office on the Kosi Bay Mouth access road. You can walk to one of the country's best beaches in 20 minutes.

**Maputaland** (☎ 033-592 0654; maputaland@polka.co.za; Posbus 757, KwaNgwanase; s/d with breakfast US\$47/80) These 10 modern chalets have all the mod cons including DSTV, bar and restaurant, plus large mozzie nets.

### Getting There & Away

To get here, take the Jozini turn-off from the N2 and head towards Ndumo Game Reserve, but turn hard right (east) just before Ndumo village – you might need a 4WD.

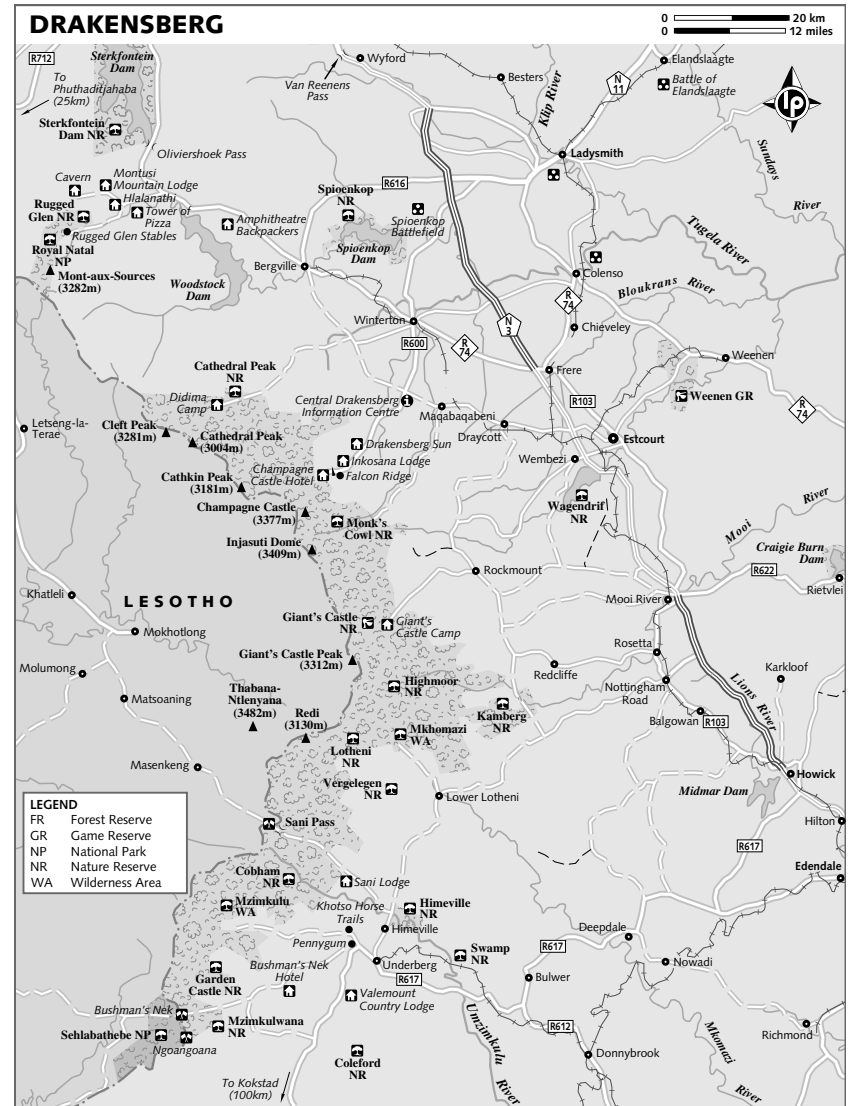
### UKHAHLAMBA-DRAKENSBERG PARK

The tabletop peaks of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Range, which form the boundary between South Africa and the mountain kingdom of Lesotho, offer some of the country's most awe-inspiring landscapes. This vast 243,000-hectare sweep of basalt summits and buttresses was formally granted World Heritage status in November 2000, when it was renamed uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park. Today, some of the vistas are so recognisably South African that they have become tourist-brochure clichés. If any landscape lives up to its airbrushed, publicity-shot alter ego, it is the jagged, green sweep of the Drakensberg.

Drakensberg means 'Dragon Mountains'; the Zulu named it Quathlamba, meaning 'Battlement of Spears'. The Zulu word is a more accurate description of the sheer escarpment but the Afrikaans name captures something of the Drakensberg's otherworldly atmosphere. People have lived here for thousands of years – this is evident by

the many San rock-art sites – yet many of its peaks were first climbed little more than 50 years ago.

There's no single road linking all the main areas of interest so you're better off selecting one (or a few only) places rather than spending most of your time behind a wheel in search of sites and sights.





## Information

In general, you must book all KZN Wildlife accommodation (except camping) in advance through either the Pietermaritzburg or Durban KZN Wildlife branches. There are also several local information offices:

**Central Drakensberg Information Centre** (☎ 036-488 1207; www.cdic.co.za; Thokoziisa; ☹ 9am-6pm)

Based in the Thokoziisa complex, 13km outside Winterton on Rte 600, this private enterprise is extremely helpful.

**Okhahlamba Drakensberg Tourism** (☎ 036-448 1557; www.drakensberg.org.za; Tatham Rd, Bergville; ☹ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Covers the northern and central Drakensberg.

**Southern Drakensberg Escape Tourism Centre** (☎ 033-701 1471; www.drakensberg.org; Clocktower Centre, Old Main Rd, Underberg; ☹ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Covers the southern region from Underberg, Himeville and Sani Pass.

## When to Go

If you want to avoid most of the sharp frosts and, on the heights, snowfalls, you should visit in summer, although this is when most of the rain falls and views can be obscured by low cloud. However, what you lose in vistas you'll gain in atmosphere, as the stark and eerie peaks are at their best looming out of the mist.

Much of the rain falls in sudden thunderstorms so you should always carry wet-weather gear. Cold snaps are possible even in the middle of summer.

## Royal Natal National Park

☎ 036

Spanning out from some of the range's loftiest summits, the 8000-hectare **Royal Natal Park** (☎ 036-438 6310; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/2; ☹ 5am-7pm) has a presence that far outstrips its relatively meagre size, with many of the surrounding peaks rising as high into the air as the park stretches across. With some of the Drakensberg's most dramatic and accessible scenery, the park is crowned by the sublime Amphitheatre, an 8km wall of cliff and canyon, which is equally spectacular from below or from up on high. Here the Tugela Falls drop 850m in five stages. Looming up behind is Mont-aux-Sources (3282m), so called because the Tugela, Elands and Western Khubedu Rivers rise here; the last of these eventually becomes the Orange River and flows all the way to the Atlantic.

Other notable peaks in the area are Devil's Tooth, the Eastern Buttress and the Sentinel.

Rugged Glen Nature Reserve adjoins the park on the northeastern side.

The park's **visitors centre** (☹ 8am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm) is about 1km in from the main gate. There's also a shop selling basic provisions. Fuel is available in the park.

## WILDLIFE

With plentiful water, a range of more than 1500m in altitude and distinct areas such as plateaus, cliffs and valleys, it isn't surprising that the park's flora is extremely varied. Broadly speaking, much of the park is covered in grassland and small yellowwood forests in the valleys. At higher altitudes grass yields to heath and scrub.

Royal Natal is not as rich in wildlife as Giant's Castle and other sections of the Drakensberg but there is still quite a lot to be seen. Of the six species of antelope, the most common is the mountain reedbuck. Hyraxes are everywhere, as are hares. Royal Natal also has a large population of baboons, the feeding of which has become a growing problem.

## ROCK ART

There are several San rock-art sites, although Royal Natal's are fewer and not as well preserved as those at Giant's Castle; the latter has many more rock shelters and caves, and has suffered less from vandalism. The notable sites are Sigubudu Shelter, north of the road just past the main gate, and Cannibal Caves, on Surprise Ridge, outside the park's northern boundary.

## HIKING TRAILS

Except for the **Amphitheatre-to-Cathedral** (62km, four to five days) and the **Mont-aux-Sources** (20km, 10 hours) hikes, most of the 25-odd walks in Royal Natal are day walks. The hike to the summit starts from the Mahai camp site and takes you up to Basotho Gate.

If you plan to camp on the mountain, you should book with the **QwaQwa tourist officer** (☎ 058-713 4415). Otherwise there's a basic hut on the escarpment near Tugela Falls. There's no fee for the hut, but an overnight hiking permit costs US\$4.

## HORSE RIDING

Just outside the park gates, the **Rugged Glen Stables** (☎ 036-438 6422) organises a wide range of horse-riding activities, including two-day trails.

## CLIMBING

The park has become a mecca for climbers. You must apply for a permit from the KZN Wildlife office before you attempt a climb; unless you are experienced, it may not be granted.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Thendele** (☎ 033-845 1000; chalets per person US\$43-47) The park's main camp has a variety of accommodation, including some reasonable two-bed chalets.

You can also camp at **Mahai** (☎ 033-845 1000, 438 6303; fax 033-438 6231; camp sites per person US\$8) inside the park, or in the nearby **Rugged Glen Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 438 6303; fax 438 6231; camp sites per person US\$8).

The following places are all outside the park.

**Amphitheatre Backpackers** (☎ 036-438 6106; amp hibackpackers@worldonline.co.za; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/d US\$10/22) Facing out over the Amphitheatre, this recently relocated backpackers is 21km north of Bergville. On offer are tours to Lesotho (US\$35) and a rock-climbing wall is in the works. Note, there are no locks on the dorm room doors.

**Hlalanathi** (☎ 036-438 6308; www.hlalanathi.za.net; camp sites per person US\$7, 2-/4-bed chalets US\$52/93; ☹) With a location lifted straight from an African chocolate-box lid, this pretty resort offers camping and excellent accommodation on a finger of land overlooking the Tugela River.

**Tower of Pizza** (☎ 036-438 6480; towerofpizza.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$28/50; mains US\$3.50-7; ☹ lunch & dinner; ☹) Yep, there really is a tower, where very good oven-fired pizza is prepared. It also offers comfortable cottages and internet access.

**Cavern** (☎ 036-438 6270; www.cavernberg.co.za; s/d with full board US\$93/124) North of Royal Natal, this award-winning resort offers family-friendly service in lush forest surrounds.

**Montusi Mountain Lodge** (☎ 036-438 6243; www.montusi.za.net; s/d with half board US\$140/260; ☹ ☹ ☹) With oodles of bush-lodge exclusivity, this opulent place blends a thatch-and-fireplace homeliness with plenty of five-star comforts. The turn-off is just after the Tower of Pizza.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The road into Royal Natal runs off the Rte 74, about 30km northwest of Bergville and about 5km from Oliviershoek Pass.

## Bergville

☎ 036

Small and a little rough around the edges, Bergville is nevertheless a useful jumping-off point for the northern Drakensberg.

The **Drakensberg Inn** (☎ 036-448 2946; www.drakensberginn.com; 3 Tatham Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$31/57) is a slightly plain, small town inn with a nice terrace restaurant.

Bergville's swankier option is the **Sanford Park Resort** (☎ 036-448 1001; sanfordparklodge@mweb.co.za; s/d with half board US\$70/112; ☹), which offers cosy rooms in thatched rondavels or in a creaking, 150-year-old farmhouse.

You'll have to get to Ladysmith and take a minibus taxi from there (US\$2.80, 45 minutes). A daily Greyhound bus stops at Estcourt and Ladysmith.

## Central Berg

Crowned with some of the Drakensberg's most formidable peaks – Giant's Castle Peak (3312m), the Monk's Cowl (3234m) and Champagne Castle (3377m) are found here – the Central Berg is a big hit with climbers. But with dramatic scenery aplenty, this beautiful region is just as popular with those who prefer to admire their mountains from a safe distance.

Seven kilometres from the Drakensberg Sun turn-off is **Falcon Ridge** (☎ 082-774 6398; adult/child US\$4/1.40; ☹ talks 10.30am), with awesome falcon-, kite- and eagle-flying demonstrations and talks.

## WINTERTON

☎ 036

Quaint and sedate, this peaceful little town is the gateway to the Central Drakensberg and makes a pleasant stopover. **Winterton Museum** (☎ 036-488 1885; Kerk St; admission by donation; ☹ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) offers an excellent insight into San rock art, Zulu history and the Battle of Spioenkop.

Doubling as the town's favoured nightspot, the **Bridge Lodge** (☎ 036-488 1554; thebridge@futurenet.co.za; Main Rd; s/d US\$20/35) has a pleasant thatched restaurant and dowdy rooms. Another alternative is the **Lilac Lodge** (☎ 036-488 1025; www.wheretostay.co.za/lilacldodge; Springfield Rd; s/d with breakfast US\$24/48), a string of cottages and units, set on an expanse of lawn.

There are minibus taxis to Cathedral Peak (US\$1.10, 30 minutes), Bergville (US\$0.80, 15 minutes) and Estcourt (US\$1.60, 45 minutes).

**CATHEDRAL PEAK NATURE RESERVE**

☎ 036

A beautifully photogenic area in the shadow of the ramparts of Cathedral Peak, **Cathedral Peak Nature Reserve** (☎ 036-488 8000; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/1.80; ☞ 6am-6pm) includes the Bell (2930m), the Horns (3005m) and Cleft Peak (3281m). Cathedral Peak is a long day's climb (10km, seven hours return) but other than being physically fit, no special ability or equipment is required.

The **park office** (☎ 036-488 8000; www.kznwildlife.com), in Didima Camp, sells permits for the scenic drive (4WD only) up Mike's Pass (per person/vehicle US\$2/4.70) and arranges guides.

One of KZN Wildlife's swankiest offerings, **Didima Camp** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; camp sites per person US\$6, chalets per person US\$44-49; ☞ ☞) has a thatched lodge boasting huge views, a restaurant, and a range of excellent self-catering chalets. There is also camping near the main gate. The art centre here offers an excellent multimedia insight into San rock art.

**MONK'S COWL NATURE RESERVE**

☎ 036

**Monk's Cowl Nature Reserve** (☎ 036-468 1103; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm), another stunning slice of the Drakensberg, offers superb hiking and rock climbing. Within Monk's Cowl are the two peaks Monk's Cowl and Champagne Castle.

The **park office** (☎ 036-468 1103; camp sites per person US\$9.50) is 3km beyond Champagne Castle Hotel, which is at the end of Rte 600 running southwest from Winterton. The office takes bookings for camping and overnight hiking (US\$4 per person).

The **Inkosana Lodge** (☎ 036-468 1202; www.inkosana.co.za; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$11/34, thatched rondavels with/without en suite US\$25/17; ☞), one of the best backpackers in KZN, boasts an indigenous garden and clean rooms. Excellent cuisine and heaps of activities and walks are on offer. It's on Rte 600, en route to Champagne Castle.

One of the better-known resorts in the area is the **Champagne Castle Hotel** (☎ 036-468 1063; www.champagnecastle.co.za; s/d with full board US\$92/157; ☞), conveniently located in the mountains at the end of the road to Champagne Castle Peak. Staff will collect you from Estcourt (US\$16) and Durban (US\$54).

**Giant's Castle Game Reserve**

☎ 036

Rising up to Injasuti Dome (3409m), South Africa's highest peak, **Giant's Castle Game Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 353 3718; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$3.40/1.80; ☞ 5am-7pm) is one of the Drakensberg's loftiest – even its lowest point sits at 1300m above sea level. Established in 1904, mainly to protect the eland, it is a rugged, remote and popular destination, with huge forest reserves to the north and south and Lesotho's barren plateau over the escarpment to the west.

Limited supplies (including fuel) are available at Giant's Castle Camp and there's a kiosk selling limited provisions.

**WILDLIFE**

The reserve is mainly grassland, wooded gorges and high basalt cliffs with small forests in the valleys and swathes of wildflowers in the spring.

Altogether there are thought to be about 60 mammal species, the rarest is a small, short-tailed rodent called the ice rat, which lives in the boulders near the mountain summits.

The rare lammergeier, or bearded vulture, which is found only in the Drakensberg, nests in the reserve. The **Lammergeier Hide** (☎ 036-353 3718; giants@kznwildlife.com; per person US\$20, minimum US\$65; ☞ May-Sep) is the best place to see the vultures.

**ROCK ART**

Giant's Castle Game Reserve is rich in San rock art, with at least 50 sites. It is thought that the last San lived here at the beginning of the 20th century.

You can see the paintings at **Main Cave** (adult/child US\$3.40/0.70; ☞ 9am-4pm), 2km south of Giant's Camp (a 30-minute walk), which can only be visited as part of a tour that departs from Giant's Camp.

**Battle Cave** (admission US\$3.40) is near Injisuthi and must be visited on a self-guided tour; it's an 8km walk each way. The cave's name reflects the paintings here, which record a clash between San groups.

**HIKING**

Trails begin at Giant's Camp and lead to Meander Hut (5.5km, two hours), on a cliff above the Meander Valley; Giant's Hut (10.5km, four hours), under Giant's Castle itself; and Ban-

nerman's Hut (11km, 4½ hours), close to the escarpment near Bannerman's Pass.

Hikers can stay at **mountain huts** (US\$4), for which you'll need sleeping bags and cooking utensils. The fee for the huts is a one-off 'hiking fee'.

There are other trails as well, but for each trail you must fill in the rescue register before setting out.

**SLEEPING**

There are several accommodation centres inside the reserve, as well as trail huts and caves for hikers. Note that hikers are not allowed to light fires, so you'll need to bring a stove. There's a small shop at reception with basic supplies only.

**Injasuti Huttet Camp** (☎ 033-845 1000, 036-431 7849; camp sites per person US\$6.50) This secluded and pleasant spot on the northern side of the reserve has camp sites. It is accessed from Loskop, northwest of Estcourt.

**Giant's Castle Camp** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; mountain hut per person US\$4, chalet per person US\$42-47) The main camp has two-, four- and six-bed chalets and four- and eight-bed mountain huts. Book through KZN Wildlife in Pietermaritzburg or Durban.

There are several places outside the reserve, on and around Rte 600.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The roads from both Mooi River and Estcourt are sealed – do not take the unsealed back roads as they can become unpassable and in the past, robberies have been reported.

Infrequent minibus taxis run from Estcourt to villages near the main entrance (KwaDlamini, Mahluthshini and KwaMankonjane) but these are still several kilometres from Giant's Castle Camp.

**Southern Drakensberg Wilderness Areas**

Best accessed from the pleasant towns of Himeville and Underberg, the Southern Berg boasts one of the region's highlights: the journey up to Lesotho over the Sani Pass. It is also renowned as a serious hiking area and as well as some great walks, including the fabulous Giant's Cup Trail, the region also offers a smorgasbord of wilderness areas.

**KAMBERG NATURE RESERVE**

Southeast of Giant's Castle and a little away from the main escarpment area, **Kamberg Na-**

**ture Reserve** (☎ 033-267 7251; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40, 2-bed huts US\$27; ☞ 6am-6pm) has a number of antelope species and guided rock-art walks.

You can get there from Rosetta, off the N3 south of Mooi River, travelling via either Nottingham Road or Redcliffe.

**HIGHMOOR NATURE RESERVE**

The park office of **Highmoor Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-845 1000, 033-263 7240; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; camp sites per person US\$5.50; ☞ 6am-6pm) is off the road from Rosetta to Giant's Castle and Kamberg. Turn off to the south just past the sign to Kamberg, 31km from Rosetta.

Camp sites are available.

**LOTHENI NATURE RESERVE**

**Lotheni** (☎ 033-702 0540; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) has a Settlers' Museum and some very good day walks.

**KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; camp sites US\$7, 3-bed chalets per person US\$24) offers camp sites and chalets.

The access road runs from the hamlet of Lower Loteni, about 30km northeast of Himeville or 65km southwest of Nottingham Road. The roads aren't great and heavy rain can close them.

**MKHOMAZI & VERGELEGEN NATURE RESERVES**

The **Mkhomazi Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-266 6444; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) is one of the few places where you can hike for days without seeing anyone else. The **Vergelegen Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-702 0712; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm) has trout fishing. There are no established camp sites in the area, but you can camp on hikes (US\$4). The turn-off is 44km from Nottingham Road, off the Lower Lotheni to Sani Pass road, at the Mzinga River. From there the area is another 2km.

**COBHAM NATURE RESERVE**

The Mzimkulu Wilderness Area and the Mzimkulwana Nature Reserve are in **Cobham Nature Reserve** (☎ 033-702 0831; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☞ 6am-6pm). The park office is about 15km from Himeville on the D7; it's a good place to get information on the many hiking trails, some with trail huts (US\$8 per person). Basic camp sites (US\$5.50 per person) are available.

**GARDEN CASTLE**

The park office of **Garden Castle** (☎ 033-701 1823; www.kznwildlife.com; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; camp sites per person US\$5.50, huts per person US\$8; ☒ 6am-6pm) is 30km west of Underberg – carry along the road past Khotso Horse Trails.

This reserve incorporates beautiful **Bushman's Nek Valley**, dominated by the 3051m Rhino Peak. The area has many sandstone buttresses and rock-art sites and a good (long) day walk.

Overnight hikers can use trail huts, camp sites or even caves.

**SANI PASS**

☎ 033

The drive up the Sani Pass is a trip to the roof of South Africa: a spectacular ride around hairpin bends into the clouds to the kingdom of Lesotho. At 2865m, this is the highest pass in the country and the vistas (on a clear day!) are magical. There are hikes in almost every direction and inexpensive horse rides are available. Amazingly, this is also the only road link between Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal.

At the top of the pass, just beyond the Lesotho border crossing, is the Sani Top Chalet. Various operators run 4WD trips up to the chalet. You need a passport to cross into Lesotho. The border is open daily from 8am to 4pm on the South African side (until 5pm on the Lesotho side).

At the bottom of the pass you can sleep at the **Sani Lodge** (☎ 033-702 0330; www.sani-lodge.co.za; camp sites US\$6; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9/11, 2-bed rondavels US\$30) which besides accommodation offers a range of fabulous tours and activities and insider tips about the region through its tour company.

**GIANT'S CUP TRAIL**

Without doubt, the Giant's Cup Trail (68km, five days and five nights), running from Sani Pass to Bushman's Nek, is one of the nation's great walks. Any reasonably fit person can walk it. Early booking (up to nine months ahead, through **KZN Wildlife** (☎ in Pietermaritzburg 033-845 1000) is advisable. Fees are based on the composition of the hiking party.

Highlights include the **Bathplug Cave** with San rock paintings and the breathtaking mountain scenery on day four. Accommodation is in limited **shared huts** (adult/child per trail US\$9/7). No firewood is available so you'll need

a stove and fuel. Sani Lodge is almost at the head of the trail; arrange for the lodge to pick you up from Himeville or Underberg.

**BUSHMAN'S NEK**

☎ 033

This is a South Africa–Lesotho border post (no vehicles!). From here there are hiking trails up into the escarpment, including to Lesotho's Sehlabathebe National Park. You can trot through the border and into Lesotho on horseback.

Accommodation options include **Silverstreams Caravan Park** (☎ 033-701 1249; www.silverstreams.co.za; camp sites per person US\$12), which has camp sites right next to the border, and the **Bushman's Nek Hotel** (☎ in Pinetown 031-701 9999; r with half board US\$40), east of the border post.

**Underberg**

☎ 033 / pop 1500

Clustered in the foothills of the southern Drakensberg, this small farming town fills up in summer, when Durbanites head to the peaks for a breath of the fresh stuff. It has good infrastructure, and is the place to go for money, shopping and to organise activities in the region. The more sedate Himeville, just down the road, is also a pleasant place to stay.

**Sani Pass Tours** (☎ 033-701 1064; www.sanipasstours.com; Clocktower Centre, Old Main Rd; day tours per person US\$38; ☒ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat & Sun) offers day tours up the Sani Pass, as well as packages tailored to more specialist interests.

The cosy, thatched farmhouse **Valemount Country Lodge** (☎ 033-701 1686; www.valemountafrica.com; s/d with breakfast US\$52/92) oozes graceful charm, and has 48 hectares of grounds to explore. It's 8km from Underberg on the Kokstad road.

**Sani Pass Carriers** (☎ 033-701 1017; spc@y.co.za) runs minibuses to Underberg from Kokstad (US\$17, 1½ hours) on Monday and Thursday, and daily except Sunday to Pietermaritzburg (US\$15, two hours). Minibus taxis run to Himeville (US\$0.40, 10 minutes) and Pietermaritzburg (US\$4, 1½ hours) and you might find one running to the Sani Pass Hotel.

**Himeville**

☎ 033

A skip and a jump from Underberg, Himeville is a prettier, more-sedate jumping-off point for the southern Drakensberg. The **Himeville**

**Museum** (☎ 033-702 1184; admission by donation; ☒ 9am-12.30pm), one of the best rural museums in the country, contains an incredible array of bric-a-brac.

For accommodation, the **Himeville Arms** (☎ 033-702 1305; www.himevillehotel.co.za; Main Rd; dm US\$13, s US\$36-39, d US\$65-70) is a homey inn, with cosy bar, comfy rooms and lashings of rustic, village-green atmosphere.

About the only regular transport from Himeville is minibus taxis to Underberg (US\$0.70, 10 minutes).

**THE MIDLANDS**

The Midlands run northwest from Durban to Estcourt, skirting Zululand to the north-east. This is mainly farming country with little to interest visitors. The main town is Pietermaritzburg. West of Pietermaritzburg is picturesque, hilly country, with horse studs and plenty of European trees.

**Pietermaritzburg**

☎ 033 / pop 457,000

Billed as the heritage city, and KZN's administrative and legislative capital (previously shared with Ulundi), Pietermaritzburg's (usually known as PMB) grand historic buildings hark back to an age of pith helmets and mid-day martinis. Today, these proudly house museums and refurbished hotels. By day, the city is vibrant: its large Zulu community sets a colourful flavour and the Indian community brings echoes of the subcontinent to its busy streets. A large student population adds to the city's vitality.

**INFORMATION**

**IDS Computers** (☎ 342 7135; Victoria Centre, 157 Victoria Rd; per hr US\$2.80) For internet access.

**KZN Wildlife Headquarters** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com; Queen Elizabeth Park, Duncan McKenzie Dr; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Provides information and accommodation bookings for all KZN Wildlife parks and reserves.

**Pietermaritzburg Tourism** (☎ 033-345 1348; www.pmbtourism.co.za; 117 Commercial Rd; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Has excellent information on the city and surrounds.

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

One of the city's finest sights is the **Tatham Art Gallery** (☎ 033-342 1804; fax 394 9831; Commercial Rd; admission free; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a fine collection of French and English 19th- and early-

20th-century works housed in the beautiful Old Supreme Court. The nearby, colonial-era **City Hall** (nr Church St & Commercial Rd) is the largest load-bearing red-brick building in the southern hemisphere.

For trekker relics, head to the **Voortrekker Museum** (☎ 033-394 6834; nr Longmarket & Boshoff Sts; adult/student/child US\$0.40/0.20/0.10; ☒ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat). Afrikaner icons on display include Retief's prayer book and water bottle, and a replica of a trek wagon.

Back in the centre, there are two **Hindu temples** at the northern end of Longmarket St. The main **mosque** is nearby, on East St. A **statue of Gandhi**, who was famously ejected from a 1st-class carriage at Pietermaritzburg station, also stands defiant opposite the **old colonial buildings** on Church St.

**SLEEPING**

**Umphiti Backpackers** (☎ 033-394 3490; umphiti@mweb.co.za; 317 Bulwer St; dm US\$10, d from US\$23; ☒) The many wagging tails reflect the warm welcome at this friendly, if a little dog-eared, bohemian place. Offers a wealth of information and activities.

**Prince Alfred Street Backpackers** (☎ 033-345 7045; www.chauncey.co.za; 312 Prince Alfred St; s/d US\$11/23) This bright place, with multicoloured mosquito-net extravaganzas and ethnic adornments, is one of the most stylish renovated backpackers around and handy to the centre.

**Duvet & Crumpets** (☎ 033-394 4133; www.duvetandcrumpets.co.za; 1 Freeland Pl; s/d without breakfast US\$27/40; ☒) In a quiet, leafy location, this place offers a combo of unpretentious, clean rooms and self-catering units.

**Torwood Lodge** (☎ 033-390 1072; www.torwood.co.za; tw US\$57; ☒) With a quaint rural setting and a landscaped rock pool, this excellent out-of-town option is great for those seeking city days and rustic nights. It's 10km out of town; the owners are happy to pick you up or lead the way.

**Redlands Hotel & Lodge** (☎ 033-394 3333; www.guestnet.co.za; nr Howick Rd & George McFarlane Lane; s US\$74-104, d US\$91-119; ☒) Swiss and stately, this elegant place offers contrived but tasteful colonial-style surrounds and personal service.

**EATING**

**Artist's Palette** (☎ 033-342 8327; Commercial Rd; lunch US\$3.40-5; ☒ breakfast & lunch) Upstairs at the Tatham Gallery, this arty little café whips up





☎ 6am-6pm; 📶) is based on the Spioenkop Dam on the Tugela River. The reserve is handy for most of the area's battlefield sites and not too far from the Drakensberg for day trips into the range. Animals include white rhinos, giraffes, various antelope species and over 270 bird species. There's a swimming pool, horse riding and vulture hide.

Inside the reserve in a valley, **iPika** (camp sites per person US\$7, bush camp per person US\$20) offers camp sites and one four-bed tented bush camp.

**Spion Kop Lodge** (☎ 036-488 1404; www.spionkop.co.za; r per person with full board US\$120, 4-/6-person cottages US\$120/132), overlooking the Spioenkop battlefield, is a luxury 'barracks' with converted barn dining room.

The reserve is northeast of Bergville but the entrance is on the eastern side, 13km from Winterton off the Rte 600. You will need a car to get here. If coming by car, the Spioenkop battlefield is accessed from the Rte 616 (not the Rte 600; follow the signs).

## Ladysmith

☎ 036

Ladysmith was named after the wife of Cape governor Sir Harry Smith, but it could well have had a much more colourful moniker; her actual name was Lady Juana Maria de los Dolores de Leon Smith.

The town achieved fame during the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War, when it was besieged by Boer forces for 118 days. More recently, it has hit the world headlines as the home-place of the vocal group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Apart from the historical aspect - several buildings in the city centre were here during the siege - Ladysmith is a pleasant place to walk around.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The excellent **Siege Museum** (☎ 036-637 2231; adult/child US\$0.30/0.10; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), next to the town hall in the Market House (built in 1884), was used to store rations during the siege.

There's also the small **Cultural Museum** (☎ 036-637 2231; 25 Keate St; adult/child US\$0.30/0.10; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri), with some dusty displays including a room dedicated to Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Outside the town hall are two guns, **Castor** and **Pollux**, used by the British in defence of Ladysmith. Nearby is a replica of **Long Tom**, a Boer gun capable of heaving a shell 10km.

## TOURS

Two highly recommended guides who specialise in the Anglo-Boer War and are based out of Ladysmith are **Elizabeth Spiret** (☎ 036-637 7702, 072-262 9669; lizs@telkomsa.net) and **John Snyman** (☎ 036-631 0660).

## SLEEPING

**Boer & Brit** (☎ 036-631 2184; fax 036-637 3957; 47-49 Convent Rd; s/d US\$23/30; 📶) True to its name, this straightforward pleasant B&B (and its dogs) welcomes all travelling types. It has a little slice of jungle for a garden and might let you set up camp if you're trying to save the pennies.

**Buller's Rest Lodge** (☎ 036-637 6154; www.bullersrestlodge.co.za; 61 Cove Cres; s/d with breakfast US\$44/59; 📶 📶) You'll want to dig in long-term at this smart thatched abode. There's snug rooms with battlefields artefacts, scrumptious home cooking and views of the Drakensbergs from the sundeck.

**Royal Hotel** (☎ 036-637 2176; royalhotel@intekom.co.za; 140 Murchison St; s/d with breakfast US\$44/77; 📶 📶) Enjoy these historical digs and old school pub which combine old-style grandeur with some 1980s renovations (shagpile carpet).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus tickets can be purchased from Shoprite/Checkers in the Oval Shopping Centre. Buses depart from the Caltex petrol station on Murchison Rd, and connect Ladysmith with Durban (US\$20, four hours), Jo'burg (US\$26, six hours), Pretoria (US\$26, seven hours) and Cape Town (US\$52, 19 hours).

## Minibus Taxi

The main taxi rank is east of the town centre near the corner of Queen and Lyell Sts. Taxis bound for Jo'burg are nearby on Alexandra St. Some destinations are Newcastle (US\$4.70, one hour), Durban (US\$10, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$15, five hours).

## Train

The *Trans Oranje* (Durban to Cape Town) and the daily *Trans Natal* (Durban to Jo'burg/Pretoria) both stop here, but at inconvenient times.

## Majuba Hill

The first Anglo-Boer War ended abruptly with the British defeat at Majuba Hill, 40km north of Newcastle, in early 1881. The site

(adult/vehicle US\$0.50/1.40; 🕒 7am-5pm) is off the N11. The more remote Laing's Nek battlefield is signposted and Schuinshoogte battlefield is also in the vicinity.

Peace negotiations took place at **O'Neill's Cottage** at the foothills near Majuba. The cottage, used as a hospital during the battle, has a photographic display.

## Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift

☎ 034

If you have seen *Zulu*, the film that made Michael Caine a star, you will have doubtless heard of Rorke's Drift, a victory of the misty-eyed variety, where on 22-23 January 1879, 139 British soldiers successfully defended a small mission station from around 4000 Zulu warriors. Queen Victoria lavished medals on the survivors and the battle was assured its dramatic place in British military history.

For the full picture, however, you must travel 15km across the plain to Isandlwana, the precursor of Rorke's Drift, where only hours earlier the Zulus dealt the Empire one of its great battlefield disasters by annihilating the main body of the British force in devastating style. Tellingly, *Zulu Dawn* (1979), the film made about the Battle of Isandlwana, never became the cult classic *Zulu* (1964) is now.

Ideally, the two battlefields should be visited together. Start at the **Isandlwana Visitors Centre** (☎ 034-271 8165; adult/child US\$2/0.70; 🕒 8am-4pm), where there is a small museum. Spread out from the base of Isandlwana hill, white cairns and memorials mark the spot where each British soldier fell.

The scenery around Rorke's Drift is beautifully rugged and the **Rorke's Drift Orientation Centre** (☎ 034-642 1687; adult/child US\$2/0.70; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun), on the site of the original mission station, is excellent. The Zulu know this site as Shiyane, their name for the hill at the back of the village.

## SLEEPING

**Rorke's Drift Lodge** (☎ 034-642 1805; www.rorkesdriftlodge.co.za; Rorke's Drift; s/d with half board US\$39/77; 📶 📶) With wonderful views over the battlefields, this hospitable place is 5km up a rough track from the Rorke's Drift Orientation Centre. The lodges organise tours of the battlefields.

**Fugitives' Drift Lodge** (☎ 034-642 1843; www.fugitives-drift-lodge.com; Fugitives' Drift; s/d with half board US\$389/589; 📶 📶 📶) This opulent private

wildlife reserve is dripping in colonial-style class and military memorabilia. There are rooms in a slightly less-glamorous guesthouse (single/double US\$250/297). It's about 10km from Rorke's Drift.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The battle sites are both southeast of Dundee (Isandlwana is 70km and Rorke's Drift is 42km) and accessible from Rte 66. A dirt road connects Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift.

## Blood River Monument

☎ 034

On 16 December 1838 a small force of Voortrekkers avenged the massacre of Piet Retief's diplomatic party by crushing an army of 12,000 Zulus. More than 3000 Zulus died - the river ran red with their blood - while the Voortrekkers sustained barely a few casualties. The Battle of Blood River became a seminal event in Afrikaner history, seen as proof that the Boers had a divine mandate to conquer and 'civilise' Southern Africa. Afrikaners still visit the site on 16 December, but the former 'Day of the Vow' is now the 'Day of Reconciliation'.

The battle site is marked by a full-scale bronze re-creation of the 64-wagon *laager* (wagon circle). The monument and the nearby **Blood River Museum** (☎ 034-632 1695; adult/child US\$2/0.70; 🕒 8am-4.30pm) are 20km southeast of the Rte 33; the turn-off is 27km from Dundee and 45km from Vryheid.

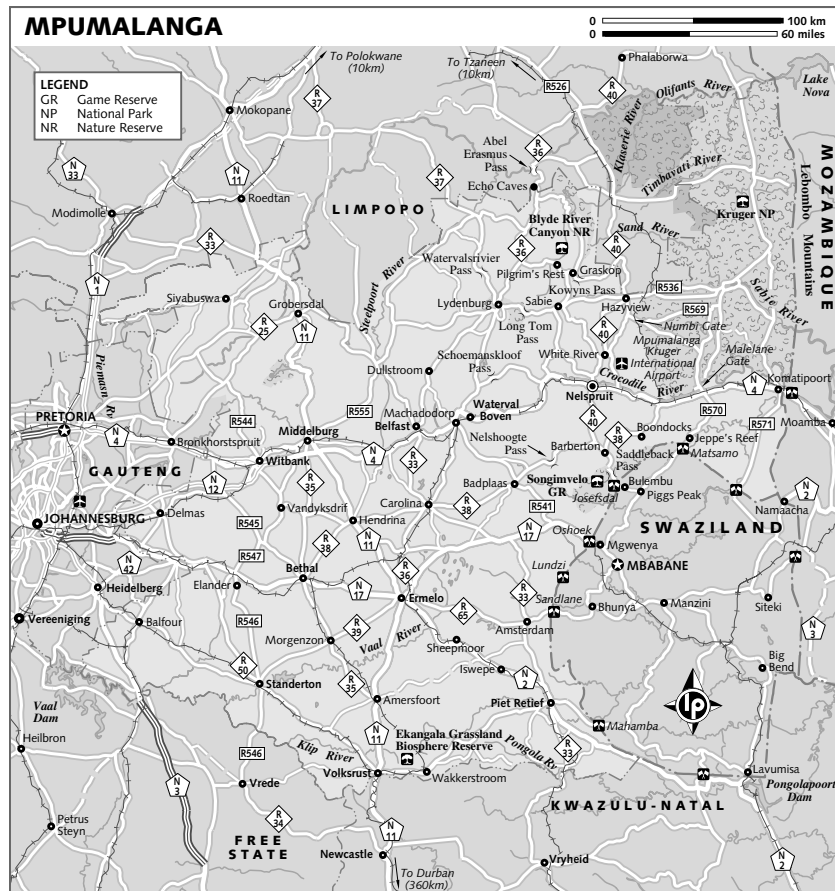
The **Ncome Museum** (☎ 034-271 8121; admission by donation; 🕒 8am-4.30pm), on the other side of the river, offers the Zulu perspective of events.

# MPUMALANGA

From the sluggish flow of the Crocodile River to the relaxed rhythm of its old mining towns and peaceful silence of its nature reserves, unassuming Mpumalanga (Place of the Rising Sun; pronounced M-poo-ma-lan-ga) adheres to a quieter pace of life.

This inland province, South Africa's smallest, is where the plateaus of the highveld begin their spectacular tumble onto the lowveld plains at the dramatic Drakensberg Escarpment. Many travellers zip through on their way to Kruger National Park, but it's well worth setting aside a few days to explore the historic towns, roaring waterfalls and some of the best hiking trails in South Africa.





## EASTERN LOWVELD

It's in Mpumalanga's hot, dry eastern lowveld that you'll get a taste for bygone days, when vast bush-covered expanses were the playing fields for the ancestors of the animals that now roam Kruger National Park. While the area lacks the drama and scenic splendour of the Drakensberg Escarpment, it has numerous attractions. These include its location at Kruger National Park's doorstep and a laid-back, untouristed pace away from major towns.

### Kruger National Park

Try to imagine a national park the size of Israel, with huge tracts of acacia, sycamore figs and bushwillow interrupted by open savanna, rushing rivers and the occasional rocky bluff.

Now fill it with lions, leopards, elephants, Cape buffaloes and black rhinos (the Big Five), plus cheetahs, giraffes, hippos and many species of smaller animals, and you'll start to have some notion of what it's like to visit Kruger National Park.

Kruger is one of the world's most famed protected areas – known for its size, history of conservation, diversity of wildlife and ease of access. It's a place where the drama of life and death is played out on a daily basis. One morning you may spot a pride of lions feasting on a recent kill and the next day you might spot a newborn impala struggling to take its first steps.

The park has an extensive network of sealed roads and comfortable camps, but if you pre-

fer to keep it rough, there are also 4WD tracks, and mountain bike and hiking trails. Even when you stick to the tarmac, the sounds and scents of the bush are never more than a few metres away.

Additionally, as long as you avoid weekends and school holidays, or stick to areas north of Phalaborwa Gate and along gravel roads, it's easy to travel for an hour or more without seeing another vehicle.

Southern Kruger is the most popular section of the park, with the highest animal concentrations and the easiest access. Kruger is at its best in the far north, around Punda Maria and Pafuri. Here, although animal concentrations are somewhat lower, the bush setting and wilderness atmosphere are all-enveloping.

### ORIENTATION

Kruger is a long, narrow wedge bordered by Mozambique to the east, Limpopo Province to the west and Mpumalanga to the west and south. It averages about 65km across, and is about 350km long. Rimming the park to the west, and sharing the same unfenced terrain, is a chain of private wildlife reserves.

Terrain ranging from the flat to the gently undulating covers the majority of the park, with the Lebombo Mountains rising up to the east along the Mozambique border. Major rivers flowing across Kruger from west to east include the Limpopo, Luvuvhu, Shingwedzi, Letaba, Olifants, Timbavati and Sabie.

There are 10 *heks* (entry gates). On the park's southern edge are **Malelane** (☎ 013-735 6152) and **Crocodile Bridge** (☎ 013-735 6012). Both are readily accessible from the N4 from Jo'burg. The **Numbi** (☎ 013-735 5133), **Phabeni** (☎ 013-735 58-12) and **Paul Kruger** (☎ 013-735 5107) gates are easily accessed from Hazyview (turn off the N4 before Nelspruit); Paul Kruger Gate is the closest to Skukuza, Kruger's main rest camp. **Orpen** (☎ 013-735 6355), to the west, is convenient if you're coming from the Blyde River area. **Phalaborwa** (☎ 013-735 6509) is nearest to Polokwane; **Punda Maria** (☎ 013-735 6870) is reached via Makhado (Louis Trichardt); and **Pafuri** (☎ 013-735 6888), in the far north, is accessed from Thohoyandou in the Venda region. In addition, it is now possible to enter Kruger from Mozambique at the Giriyyondo Gate, which doubles as an international border crossing (visas are available on both sides).

## INFORMATION

### Bookings

Accommodation can be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.parks-sa.co.za; 643 Leyds St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria). It's also possible to book directly through tourism offices in Nelspruit, Cape Town and Durban.

Except in the high season (school holidays, Christmas and Easter) and weekends, bookings are advisable but not essential.

### Entry

Day or overnight entry to the park costs US\$16/8 per adult/child, with significant discounts available for South African citizens and residents, and for South African Development Community (SADC) nationals. The SAN Parks Wild Card (see p412) also applies to Kruger.

Bicycles and motorcycles are not permitted to enter the park. During school holidays you can stay in the park for a maximum of 10 days, and at any one rest camp for five days (10 days if you're camping). Throughout the year, park authorities restrict the total number of visitors within the park.

Entry gate opening times vary slightly according to the season, and are currently as follows:

Month	Gates/camps open (am)	Gates/camps close (pm)
Jan	4.30/5	6.30
Feb	5.30	6.30
Mar	5.30	6
Apr	6	6
May-Aug	6.30	5.30
Sep	6	6
Oct	6/5.30	6
Nov & Dec	5.30/4.30	6.30

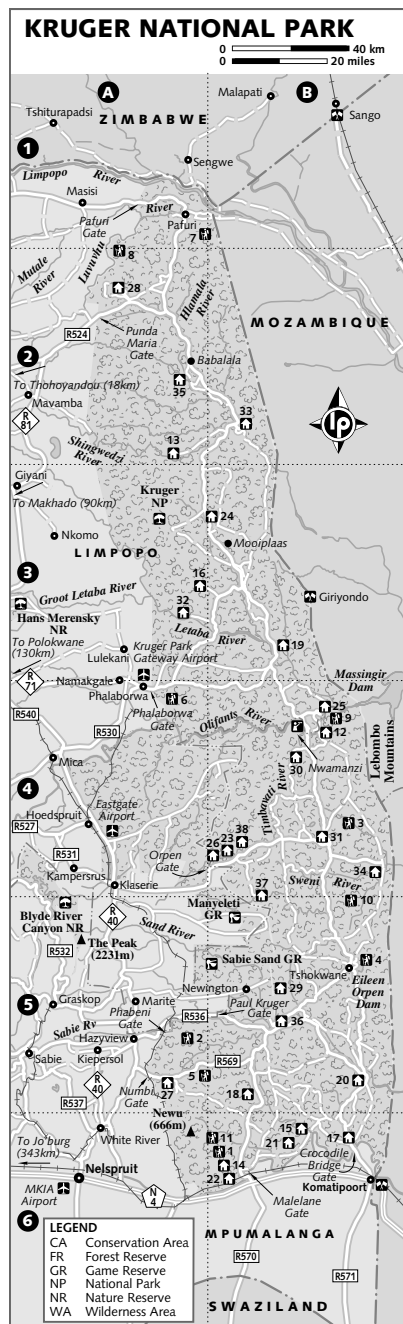
It's an offence to arrive late at a camp and you can be fined for doing so (the camps are fenced).

### Wildlife

Impalas, buffaloes, Burchell's zebras, blue wildebeests, kudus, waterbucks, baboons, vervet monkeys, cheetahs, leopards and other smaller predators are all widespread. Bird life is prolific along the rivers and north of the Luvuvhu River.

Rainfall is highest (700mm a year) in the southwestern corner between the Olifants and



**TRAILS**

Bushman Trail.....	1	B6
Madlabantu Adventure Trail.....	2	A5
Mananga Adventure Trail.....	3	B4
Metsimetsi Trail.....	4	B5
Napi Trail.....	5	A5
Nonokani Adventure Trail.....	6	A4
Northern Plains Adventure Trail.....	7	A1
Nyalaland Trail.....	8	A2
Olifants Trail.....	9	B4
Sweni Trail.....	10	B5
Wolhuter Trail.....	11	B6

**SLEEPING**

Balule Satellite Camp.....	12	B4
Bateleur Bushveld Camp.....	13	A2
Berg-en-dal Rest Camp.....	14	B6
Biyamiti Bushveld Camp.....	15	B6
Boulders Bush Lodge.....	16	A3
Crocodile Bridge Rest Camp.....	17	B6
Jock Safari Lodge.....	18	B5
Letaba Rest Camp.....	19	B3
Lower Sabie Rest Camp.....	20	B5
Lukimbi Safari Lodge.....	21	B6
Malelane Satellite Camp.....	22	B6
Maroela Satellite Camp.....	23	B4
Mopani Rest Camp.....	24	B3
Olifants Rest Camp.....	25	B4
Orpen Rest Camp.....	26	B4
Pretoriuskop Rest Camp.....	27	A5
Punda Maria Rest Camp.....	28	A2
Rhino Post Camp.....	29	B5
Roodewal Bush Lodge.....	30	B4
Satara Rest Camp.....	31	B4
Shimuwini Bushveld Camp.....	32	A3
Shingwedzi Rest Camp.....	33	B2
Singita Lebombo Lodge.....	34	B4
Sirheni Bushveld Camp.....	35	A2
Skukuza Rest Camp.....	36	B5
Talamati Bushveld Camp.....	37	B4
Tamboi Satellite Camp.....	38	B4

**TRANSPORT**

Avis.....(see 36)

Crocodile Rivers. This terrain is particularly favoured by white rhinos and buffaloes, but is less favoured by antelope and, therefore, by predators.

The eastern section of the park, to the south of the Olifants River on the plains around Satara rest camp and south to the Crocodile River, experiences reasonable rainfall (600mm). In this region there are large populations of impalas, zebras, wildebeests, giraffes and black rhinos. Joining them are predators, particularly lions, who prey on impalas, zebras and blue wildebeests.

North of the Olifants River the rainfall drops below 500mm and the dominant tree is mopani. The mopani is a favoured food of elephants, which are most common north of Olifants River, and is also eaten by tsessebes, elands, roans and sables.

Perhaps the most interesting area is in the far north around Punda Maria and Pafuri, which has a higher rainfall (close to 700mm at Punda Maria) than the mopani country. There is woodland, bushveld, grass plains and, between the Luvuvhu and Limpopo Rivers, a tropical riverine forest. It's arguably one of the best birding areas on the continent.

Note that even outside the park borders there are still areas that support wildlife. The most prominent among these areas is along the Crocodile River on the southern border.

**ACTIVITIES**

Although it's possible to get a sense for Kruger in a day, the park merits at least four to five days, and ideally at least a week. Allow plenty of time for simply sitting still – preferably by a water hole, river or lake. Bush walks and drives can be booked from the gate and camps.

**4WD Trails**

The longest and most established of Kruger's 4WD trails is the **Lebombo Motorised Eco Trail**, a rough, rugged 500km 4WD route along the eastern boundary of the park. The trail lasts five days and costs US\$668 per vehicle (maximum of four people per vehicle). You'll need to provide your own vehicle, food and drink. Only five vehicles are permitted at a time on the trail (plus the vehicle of the ranger who accompanies you).

There are also four shorter trails, all averaging about four hours, and costing US\$62 per vehicle plus a US\$14 refundable deposit. They (and the points where you can reserve them) are: **Northern Plains Adventure Trail** (Shingwedzi camp); **Nonokani Adventure Trail** (Phalaborwa Gate); **Mananga Adventure Trail** (Satara camp); **Madlabantu Adventure Trail** (Pretoriuskop camp). All are closed after rains, and can only be booked on the morning of the day that you want to drive.

**Bush Walks**

Better than the drives are guided morning and afternoon **bush walks** (morning/afternoon per person US\$30/24), which are possible at all the larger camps, including Satara, Skukuza, Lower Sabie and Pretoriuskop. All walks are accompanied by armed rangers. You have a better chance of seeing wildlife on the move in the morning.

**Wilderness Trails**

Kruger's wilderness walking trails are one of the park's highlights, and a major attraction of the Southern African safari experience. They are done in small groups (maximum eight people), and guided by highly knowledgeable armed guides. The walks are not particularly strenuous, covering about 20km per day at a modest pace.

Most wilderness trail walks last two days and three nights, with departures on Wednesday and Sunday afternoon. They cost US\$340 per person, including accommodation in rustic, pleasant huts, plus food and equipment. The walks should be booked well in advance. No children under 12 are allowed. Make bookings through central reservations (p529).

**TOURS**

At the budget level, the best places to contact are the backpacker lodges in Hazyview (see p535), Nelspruit (see p533) and Graskop (see p538) all of which can organise tours into Kruger from about US\$60 per day, plus entry fees and meals. Another good budget option is **African Routes** (☎ 031-563 5080; www.africanroutes.co.za), which also includes Swaziland and the Drakensberg in its Kruger itineraries.

**Wildlife Safaris** (www.wildlifesaf.co.za) has four-day panorama tours taking in the Blyde River and Kruger for US\$570 per person, including half board.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

Most visitors stay in one of the park's 12 rest camps. These offer camping, plus a range of huts, bungalows and cottages and several other styles of accommodation, as well as shops, restaurants and other facilities. Several of the rest camps have satellite camps, which are set some distance away, and are much more rustic, without any facilities.

Huts (around US\$32 to US\$39 for two people) are the cheapest option, with shared ablutions and communal cooking facilities; bungalows (around US\$64 to US\$72 for two people) range from simple to luxurious; cottages (about US\$121 for up to four people) are the next step up in both comfort and price.

Some camps also offer the option of staying in safari tents (about US\$32 for two people), all of which are furnished and have a refrigerator and fan.

For those with tents or caravans, camping (camp sites for one to two people US\$14) is

available at many rest camps; booking is not generally necessary.

There are swimming pools at Pretoriuskop (a converted natural rock pool), Berg-en-dal, Lower Sabie, Skukuza, Mopani and Shingwedzi; banks at Skukuza and Letaba; and an ATM at Skukuza. Wildlife drives and bush walks can be arranged at all of the rest camps.

There are also five bushveld camps (smaller, more remote clusters of self-catering cottages without shops or restaurants) and two bush lodges, which are set in the middle of the wilderness, and must be booked in their entirety by a single group. Prices range from US\$106 to US\$120 for four people, plus US\$25 per additional person, to a maximum of six people.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there's very luxurious accommodation in many of the private reserves bordering Kruger to the west (right). Another possibility is to stay outside the park. For budget travellers, the best places for this are Hazyview (p535) and Nelspruit (opposite).

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

### Air

**SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 1111; www.saairlink.co.za) has daily flights linking both Jo'burg and Cape Town with Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport (MKIA) near Nelspruit (for Numbi, Malelane and Crocodile Bridge Gates), and with Kruger Park Gateway Airport in Phalaborwa (2km from Phalaborwa Gate). Some one-way fares and flight times: Jo'burg to Phalaborwa (US\$175, one hour); Jo'burg to MKIA (US\$160, one hour); Cape Town to MKIA (US\$300, 2¼ hours).

**South African Airways** (☎ 086-035 9722, 011-978 1111; www.flysaa.com) flies six times weekly between Durban and MKIA (US\$190, 1½ hours), while **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za) flies daily between Jo'burg and Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport (US\$175, 1½ hours), with connections to Cape Town.

### Bus & Minibus Taxi

For most visitors, Nelspruit is the most convenient large town near Kruger, and is well served by buses and minibus taxis to and from Jo'burg (see p534). Numbi Gate is about 50km away, and Malelane Gate about 65km away. Phalaborwa, in the north on the edge of Kruger, is the gateway for northern Kruger.

### Car

Skukuza is 500km from Jo'burg (six hours) and Punda Maria about 620km (eight hours). **Avis** (☎ 013-735 5651; www.avis.co.za) has a branch at Skukuza, and there is car rental from the Nelspruit, Hoedspruit and Phalaborwa airports.

Most visitors drive themselves around the park, and this is the best way to experience Kruger. There are petrol stations at the biggest camps.

### Train

The **Komati** (p596) runs from Jo'burg via Nelspruit to Komatipoort (1st/2nd/economy class US\$25/17/9), which is about 12km from Kruger's Crocodile Bridge Gate.

### Private Wildlife Reserves

Spreading over a vast lowveld area just west of Kruger is a string of private reserves that offer comparable wildlife-watching to what you'll experience in the park. The main reserves – Sabie Sand, Manyeleti and Timbavati – directly border Kruger (with no fences), and the same Big Five populations that roam the park are also at home here.

There are around 200 lodges and camps in the private reserves and most are pricey – from around US\$270 to over US\$800 per person sharing, all-inclusive. (Prices listed here are based on the high season rate.)

The private reserves offer among Africa's best opportunities for safari connoisseurs, and are the place to go for those who want to experience the bush in the lap of luxury. Note that many of these places like to call themselves 'game reserves'. They're not. They are simply lodges inside a designated wildlife reserve.

Because of the personalised safari attention, rangers can train you in the art of wildlife watching before you head to Kruger for a self-guided trip. There are hundreds of operators running tours into the private parks so it's worth talking to a travel agent to help you find a good deal. The better-known reserves include those within the large **Sabie Sand Game Reserve** (<http://sabi.krugerpark.co.za>), **Londolozi Private Game Reserve** (☎ 011-119 4300; www.londolozi.com; all-inclusive r from US\$1100; 🚰 🚰) and **Mala Mala Game Reserve** (☎ 011-442 2267; www.malamala.com; all-inclusive r from US\$800; 🚰 🚰). There are many more lodges and smaller reserves in this area. Hoedspruit has emerged as the gateway to the private lodges.

### Nelspruit

☎ 013 / pop 235,000

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga's largest town and provincial capital, sprawls along the Crocodile River Valley in the steamy, subtropical lowveld. There are some good, affordable accommodation options and plenty of restaurants, making it a good place to sort out your stuff while you consider the next direction of your plunge.

### INFORMATION

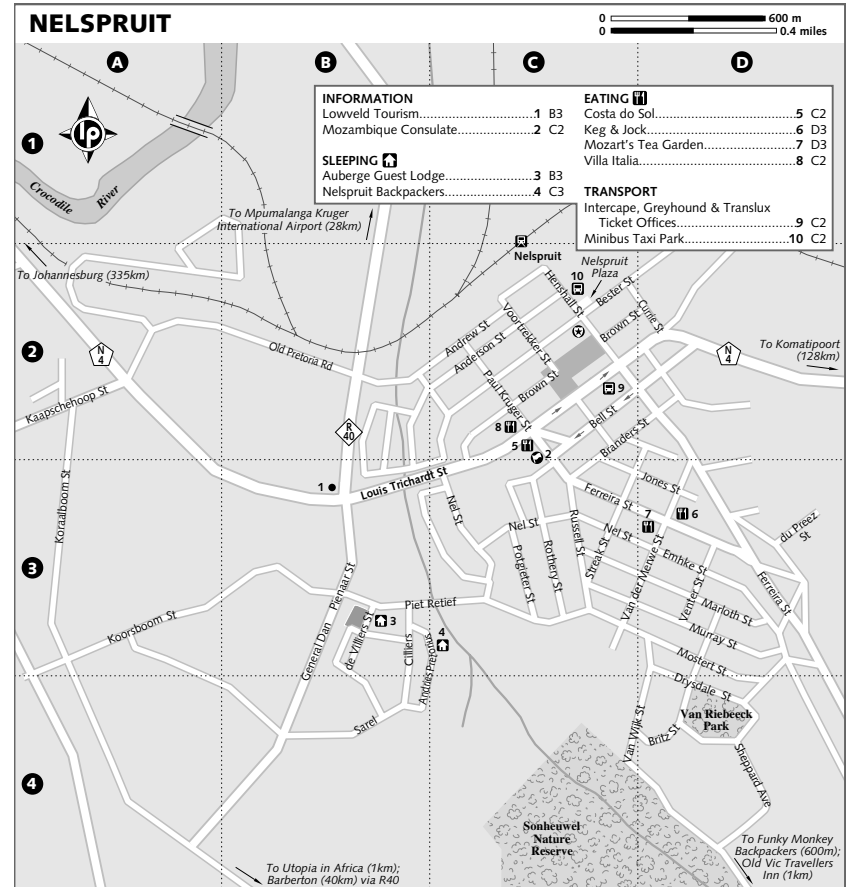
**Lowveld Tourism** (☎ 013-755 1988/9; www.lowveld.info; cnr General Dan Pienaar & Louis Trichardt St; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) This helpful office at Nelspruit Crossing Mall takes bookings for all national parks.

**Mozambique Consulate** (☎ 013-752 7396; mozconns@mweb.co.za; 32 Bell St; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) Does same-day visa processing for US\$11 – half the price of a visa at the border.

### SLEEPING

**Nelspruit Backpackers** (☎ 013-741 2237; nelback@hotmail.com; 9 Andries Pretorius St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24; 🚰 🚰) Among Nelspruit's backpackers, this one best combines service, comfort and location. Rooms have recently been upgraded. It's a Baz Bus stop and its travel wing, Mbombela safaris, can organise itineraries in the area.

**Funky Monkey Backpackers** (☎ 083-310 4755; www.funkymonkeys.co.za; 102 Van Wijk St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9.50, s/d with shared bathroom US\$18/24;





☎ ☎) A popular, well-run place in a spacious house, with a pool table, braai area and friendly staff. It's a little far from town, but it is a Baz Bus stop, and pick-ups from the bus terminal can be arranged.

**Auberge Guest Lodge** (☎ 013-741 2866; www.aubergeguestlodge.com; 3 de Villiers St; s/d with breakfast US\$38/52; ☎) A quiet, well-maintained guest-house with comfortable rooms in the main house, and a small yard.

**Old Vic Travellers Inn** (☎ 013-744 0993; www.krugerandmore.co.za; 12 Impala St; dm US\$12, d with/without bathroom US\$40/34, 4-person self-catering cottages US\$57; ☎ ☎) A friendly, somewhat upscale backpackers, with self-catering facilities or meals on request, tents for rent and lots of information on the area. It's about 3km south of the centre near a Baz Bus stop.

**Utopia in Africa** (☎ 013-745 7714; www.utopiainafrica.com; 6 Daleen St; s/d with breakfast US\$57/97; ☎ ☎) An exquisite guest villa with thoughtful décor and friendly service. This one overlooks the Sonheuwel Nature Reserve.

## EATING

**Villa Italia** (☎ 013-752 5780; cnr Louis Trichardt & Paul Kruger Sts; mains US\$4.70-8; ☎) lunch & dinner) This long-time local favourite serves a wide range of good pastas, pizzas and other Italian fare.

**Costa do Sol** (☎ 013-752 6382; cnr Louis Trichardt & Paul Kruger Sts; meals US\$5.50-7; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A quaint little Portuguese place opposite Villa Italia featuring seafood, good soups and classic Portuguese cuisine.

**Keg & Jock** (☎ 013-755 4969; Ferreira St; mains from US\$4; ☎) lunch & dinner) Probably the best late-night hang-out in Nelspruit, the Keg & Jock is a lively place with good pub food and a street-side patio. There's live music on Wednesday and Friday nights.

**Mozart's Tea Garden** (☎ 013-755 2287; cnr Ferreira & Van der Merwe; light meals US\$3.40-5; breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Offering a wide variety of healthy foods, Mozart's is a good place to go if you are on a diet. Of course, there's also a few fattening items on offer if you are not.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

### Air

**Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport** (MKIA; code MQP; ☎ 013-753 7500; www.kmiaairport.co.za) is the closest commercial airport. There are daily flights with **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 013-750 2531; www.flysaa.com) and **SAairlink** (☎ 013-750 2531; www.saairlink.co.za) to Jo'burg (US\$160; one

hour), Cape Town (US\$275; 2½ hours) and Durban (US\$240; 1½ hours).

**Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 086-173 7737; www.nationwideair.co.za) flights also connect Nelspruit several times weekly with Jo'burg and Cape Town.

### Bus

**Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) connects Nelspruit with Jo'burg/Pretoria and Manzini (Swaziland), and stops at all the backpackers in town.

**Intercape** (☎ 086-1287 287; www.intercape.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 013-753 2100; www.greyhound.co.za) and **Translux** (☎ 013-755 1453; www.translux.co.za) all operate daily between Jo'burg (and Pretoria) and Maputo (Mozambique) via Nelspruit. Among these, Greyhound offers the best service and charges US\$20 to US\$24 for Jo'burg or US\$19 to Maputo. The **ticket offices** (Louis Trichardt St) are together opposite Promenade Mall.

### Minibus Taxi

The local bus and minibus taxi park is behind Nelspruit Plaza. Minibus taxi destinations and fares include White River (US\$0.90, 20 minutes), Barberton (US\$1.80, 40 minutes), Sabie (US\$2, one hour), Hazyview (US\$2.30, one hour), Graskop (US\$3.40, 1½ hours), Komatipoort (US\$6, two hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, five hours).

**City Bug** (☎ 013-741 4114; www.citybug.co.za) operates a convenient shuttle service in town for US\$2.80 per person door-to-door. It also has a chauffeur service to/from Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, a weekly shuttle to Durban (US\$51 per person one way) and a three-times-daily shuttle between Nelspruit and OR Tambo International Airport (US\$24 per person).

### Train

The *Komati* (see p596) runs daily between Jo'burg and Komatipoort via Nelspruit.

### Hazyview

☎ 013 / pop 20,000

Strung out along Rte 40, the town of Hazyview acts as a service centre and gateway for nearby Kruger National Park. There are reasonable facilities, but consider it little more than an overnight stop before the early morning dash to the Phabeni (12km), Numbi (15km) or Paul Kruger (47km) Gates.

For information stop by the **Big 5 Country tourist office** (☎ 013-737 7414, in Perry's Bridge 013-737 8191; www.big5country.com; ☎) 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) in the Rendezvous Tourism Centre.

### SLEEPING

**Kruger Park Backpackers** (☎ 013-737 7224; www.krugerparkbackpackers.com; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$10, d huts with shared bathroom US\$18; ☎) Another spacious, somewhat rustic place, with trips to Kruger and accommodation in dorms or Zulu huts. It's about 2km south of the four-way stop, and about 500m along the road to Kruger's Numbi Gate.

**Gecko Bushpackers & Campsite** (☎ 013-737 8140; www.gecko-bushpackers.co.za; dm US\$9.50, d with/without bathroom US\$25/23; ☎) Perhaps the most welcoming and cosy backpackers in the area, Gecko is about 2.5km from Hazyview. It has bright dorm rooms, some doubles, shaded camping, a self-catering area and a pool table. Meals can also be arranged.

**Big 5 Backpackers** (☎ 013-737 7534, 083-524 6615; www.big5backpackers.co.za; dm/d US\$10/24; ☎ ☎) This popular backpackers is in a wooded setting with cooking facilities and safaris to Kruger. It's 3km up from the junction of Rte 40 and Rte 538.

**Thulamela** (☎ 013-737 7171; www.thulamela.co.za; s/d cottages US\$70/114) An upscale, comfortable place set in the bush about 13km from Kruger, with majestic views and free-roaming wildlife in the area. To get here, take the Umbhaba turn-off from Rte 40.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

City to City's daily Jo'burg-Acornhoek bus stops at the Shell petrol station in Hazyview (US\$13 from Jo'burg). The backpacker places do organise pick-ups from Nelspruit from about US\$2.

Minibus taxis go daily to Nelspruit (US\$2.80, one hour) and Sabie (US\$2.80, one hour).

### Komatipoort

☎ 013 / pop 4700

This border town is at the foot of the Lebombo Mountains, near the confluence of the Komati and Crocodile Rivers and only 10km away from Kruger National Park's Crocodile Bridge Gate. It's a convenient stop if you're travelling to/from Mozambique or Swaziland.

**Komati River Chalets** (☎ 013-793 7623, 082-347 4669; www.komatiriverchalets.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$35/62, 5-7-person self-catering chalets US\$120/142; ☎ ☎) has plain stucco-and-thatch chalets set around large clipped grounds and a popular pub.

Minibus taxis leave from just off Rissik St near the Score supermarket, and regularly do the run between Komatipoort and Maputo (Mozambique; US\$9, 1½ to two hours). If you're driving on to Mozambique, exit procedures are fairly swift and on the Mozambique side you can buy a visa for US\$24.

### Barberton

☎ 013 / pop 29,500

The splendid town of Barberton dates to the gold rush days of the late 19th century, when it was a boom town and home to South Africa's first stock exchange. However, Barberton's prominence declined and the town plods along in a relaxed country manner.

The helpful **Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 013-712 2121; www.barberton.co.za; Market Sq, Crown St; ☎) 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) in the town centre can assist with accommodation, tours of historic sites and day hikes in the area.

### SLEEPING

**Barberton Chalets & Caravan Park** (☎ 013-712 3323; www.barbertonchalets.co.za; General St; camp sites per person US\$8, caravan sites US\$11, s/d/tr cottages 23/34/43; ☎) This caravan park is conveniently close to the town centre, with lots of shade and grassy areas, camping and self-catering chalets.

**Chill Inn** (☎ 013-712 3477, 082-733 6755; cnr De Villiers & Tate Sts; d US\$20-34) This welcoming hotel has a braai area and double rooms with TV.

**Fountain Baths Holiday Guest Cottages** (☎ 013-712 2707; www.fountainbaths.co.za; 48 Pilgrim St; cottages per person US\$27) This pleasant place has self-catering cottages.

**Kloof House** (☎ 013-712 4268; www.kloofhuis.co.za; 1 Kloof St; s/d with breakfast US\$27/49; ☎) A cosy B&B up a steep hill just southeast of Market Sq, with pleasant rooms, including some with private bathroom, and good views.

### EATING

**Co-co Pan** (☎ 013-712 2653; Crown St; mains US\$3.40-5; ☎) 5.30-9pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-8pm Sun) This casual eatery opposite the museum is a good budget choice, with burgers, salads and other basics.

**Bye Apart Ate** (☎ 013-712 2846; 27 De Villiers St; meals from US\$3.40; ☎) 9am-9pm Wed-Mon, to 5pm Tue)



The theme is a tongue-in-cheek send-off to the old system and what you'll find is a very relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Choose from pasta, steak, pork or lamb chops.

**Victorian Tea Garden & Restaurant** (☎ 013-712 4985; light meals from US\$3.40; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) The gazebo here is a great spot to relax and watch the passing parade. It's next to the tourist information office. The menu features sandwiches and fast food.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

A few minibus taxis stop in town near Shoprite, but it's better to go to the minibus taxi park near Emjindini (3km from town on the Nelspruit road). The fare to Nelspruit is US\$2 (40 minutes). Most departures are in the early morning, by 8am.

### KLEIN DRAKENSBURG

The Drakensberg Escarpment (the section here is known as the Klein Drakensberg or the Transvaal Drakensberg) marks the point where the highveld plunges down over 1000m, before spilling out onto the eastern lowveld. It's one of South Africa's most scenic areas, marked by stunning views and an abundance of adventure activities. It's also prime holiday territory, which means that accommodation is pricier than in some other parts of the country, and invariably fills up during high season. While it's possible to get around via minibus taxi, the going is slow; car hire is the best option for really exploring the area.

### Blyde River Canyon

The Blyde River's spectacular canyon is nearly 30km long and one of South Africa's most impressive natural features. Much of it is rimmed by the 26,000-hectare **Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve** (admission per person US\$2.80), which snakes north from Graskop, following the escarpment and meeting the Blyde River as it carves its way down to the lowveld. Most visitors drive along the edge of the canyon, with stops at the many wonderful viewpoints, but if you have the time, it's well worth exploring on foot.

Heading north from Graskop, look first for the **Pinnacle**, an impressive rock formation jutting out from the escarpment. Just to the north along Rte 534 (a loop off Rte 532) are **God's Window** and **Wonder View** – two viewpoints with amazing vistas and batteries of souvenir

sellars. At God's Window take the trail up to the rainforest (300 steps).

When you return to Rte 532, take a short detour 2km south to the impressive **Lisbon Falls** (or if you are coming back to Graskop, catch it in the afternoon).

The Blyde River canyon starts north of here, near **Bourke's Luck Potholes**. These bizarre cylindrical holes were carved into the rock by whirlpools near the confluence of the Blyde and Treuer Rivers. There's a **visitor's centre** (☎ 013-769 6019), where you can pay the reserve entrance fee and find information about the canyon.

Continuing north past Bourke's Luck Potholes and into the heart of the nature reserve, you'll reach a viewpoint overlooking the **Three Rondavels** – huge cylinders of rock with hut-like pointed 'roofs' rising out of the far wall of the canyon. There are a number of short walks in the surrounding area.

West of here, outside the reserve and off Rte 36, are **Echo Caves** (admission US\$3.40) where Stone-Age relics have been found. The caves get their name from dripstone formations that echo when tapped. Be wary of the volunteer guides that attach themselves to you. Only pay them US\$0.70 even if they demand US\$7 (they will show you a doctored record showing that others paid US\$7. They didn't).

### HIKING

The main route is the popular and very scenic **Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail** (US\$8; 2½ days), which begins at Paradise Camp and finishes at Bourke's Luck Potholes. Bookings should be made through the **Mpumalanga Parks Board** (☎ 013-759 5432; mpbinfo@cs.co.za), or at the booking office at Bourke's Luck Potholes. You'll need to sort out onward transport from the end of the trail.

The short but reasonably strenuous **Belvedere Day Walk** (admission US\$0.70; five hours) takes you in a circular route to the Belvedere hydroelectric power station at Bourke's Luck Potholes; there are some beautiful waterfalls and rock pools on this walk. Bookings should be made at Potholes.

### SLEEPING

It's easy to explore the canyon by car as a day jaunt from Graskop, Sabie or Pilgrim's Rest. If you're continuing further north, a good alternative is to stay in or around the nature reserve.

**Aventura Resort Swadini** (☎ 015-795 5141; www.ventura.co.za; camp sites US\$8, plus per person US\$4, 6-person self-catering chalet US\$70; ☎) Accommodation here is made more appealing by its location at the northern end of the reserve along the Blyde River. The resort can organise hiking, white-water rafting, abseiling and more.

**Rushworth's Trackers** (☎ 015-795 5033; www.trackers.truepath.com; camp sites per person US\$6, r per person with half board US\$39, self-catering r per person US\$20) This is in a good setting just northwest of Swadini, with views over the lowveld. Staff can also help you organise bird-watching and botanical trips. The easiest access is from Hoedspruit in Limpopo province.

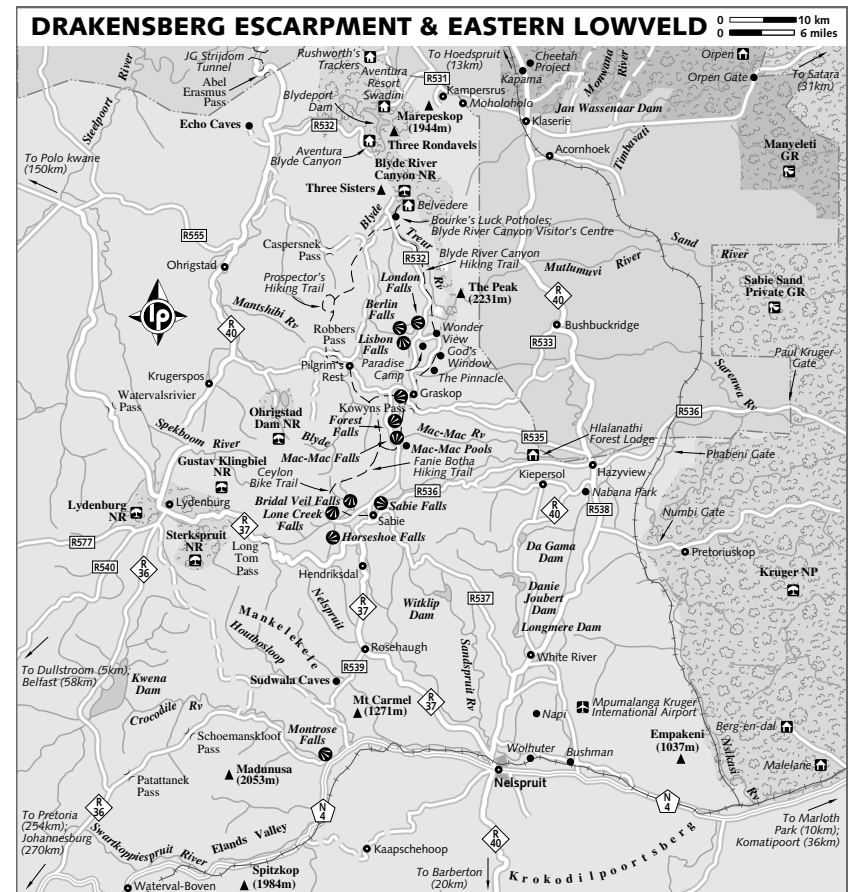
**Aventura Blyde Canyon** (☎ 013-769 8005; www.ventura.co.za; camp sites US\$15 plus per person US\$3; 2-/4-

person self-catering chalets US\$75/93; ☎) This popular resort is located just off Rte 532, and is convenient for discovering the surrounding area. It offers a full range of resort amenities, including a golf course nearby, and horse and hiking trails.

### Graskop

☎ 013 / pop 2000 / elevation 1450m A useful base to explore the dramatic Blyde River Canyon, the quiet town of Graskop is slowly emerging as a tourist destination. The nearby views over the edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment are hard to beat.

The best places for information are the **tourist information office** (☎ 013-767 1833; www.wildadventures.co.za; Pilgrim St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat),



inside Spar supermarket and Green Castle Backpackers.

### SLEEPING

**Green Castle Backpackers** (☎ 013-767 1761; http://home.global.co.za/~graskop; 63 Feufees St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$8, s/d with shared bathroom US\$16/22, with bathroom US\$20/27) Located in an atmospheric old house west of the centre across the train line, Green Castle has a very communal feel and backpacker vibe. The staff can arrange great-value safaris to Kruger National Park.

**Graskop Valley View Backpackers** (☎ 013-767 1112; www.yebo-afrika.nl; 47 de Lange St; camping US\$6, dm US\$9.50, s/d from US\$21/26, self-catering rondavel US\$37; 🍷 🍷) This Dutch-run backpackers has a variety of rooms, plus rondavels, tent sites and a self-catering flat. The owners can organise adventure tours.

**Autumn Breath** (☎ 013-767 1866, 082-877 2811; autumnbreath@cfmail.co.za; Louis Trichardt St; s/d with breakfast from US\$28/49) This quaint B&B has three modern rooms and a charming restaurant downstairs.

**Graskop Hotel** (☎ 013-767 1244; www.graskop.hotel.co.za; cnr Main & Louis Trichardt Sts; s/d with breakfast US\$38/67) This is an efficient and cosy hotel with spacious rooms, bar, restaurant and lounge area. Avoid rooms facing the street as timber trucks roll by in the night.

### EATING

**Harrie's Pancake Bar** (☎ 013-767 1273; Louis Trichardt St; pancakes US\$1.60-4; 🍷 8am-5.30pm) Don't expect a stack of buttermilk pancakes with butter and maple syrup – most are stuffed with a choice of tasty meats or vegetables.

**Southern Breeze** (☎ 082-890 2587; dishes US\$4-7 🍷 dinner) Located in the Magodi Lodge about 1km out of town on the road to Hazyview, this local favourite serves up traditional South African dishes with a Malay influence.

**Boat House** (☎ 013-767 1980; 7 Main St; meals US\$5.50-8; 🍷 8am-9pm Tue-Sun) Designed like the interior of a ship, this newcomer offers English breakfasts and excellent seafood.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The minibus taxi stand (Main St) is at the southern end of town, with daily morning departures to Pilgrim's Rest (US\$1.40, 30 minutes), Sabie (US\$2.40 minutes) and Hazyview (US\$2.40, one hour).

## Sabie

☎ 013 / pop 12,000 / elevation 1100m

Perhaps the most inviting town on Drakensberg Escarpment, Sabie offers a good range of accommodation, easy access to Kruger National Park and activities to keep your pioneer spirit occupied for several days.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The area around Sabie is dotted with beautiful **waterfalls** (admission to each US\$0.70-1.40), including the 70m **Bridal Veil Falls** and the 68m **Lone Creek Falls**. Both are northwest of Sabie off Old Lydenburg Rd. The popular **Mac-Mac Falls** is about 12km north of Sabie off Rte 532 to Graskop. About 3km southeast of the falls are the **Mac-Mac Pools**, where you can swim.

**Hardy Ventures** (☎ 013-751 1693; www.hardyventure.com) and **Sabie Xtreme Adventures** (☎ 013-764 2118; www.sabiextreme.co.za) can help organise abseiling, rafting and bungee jumping.

### SLEEPING

**Sabie Backpackers Lodge** (☎ 013-764 2118; www.sabiextreme.co.za; Main St; camp sites per person US\$5.50, dm US\$9, d with shared bathroom US\$20; 🍷 🍷) This popular establishment has a busy 'backpacker vibe' with lots of activities and all the usual amenities, including cooking facilities and a pub. It's also the base for Sabie Xtreme Adventures.

**Billy Bongo Backpackers** (☎ 072-370 7219, 072-720 2130; www.billybongo.co.za; Old Lydenburg Rd; camp sites per person US\$6, dm US\$9.50, s/d US\$11/22) This place, with a handful of clean doubles and dorm rooms, has a definite party atmosphere and can arrange adventure tours by day and bongo drumming sessions by night.

**Merry Pebbles** (☎ 013-764 2266; www.merrypebbles.co.za; camp sites per person US\$11; cabins s/d US\$20/51; 4/8-person chalets US\$110/162) Just north of town off Old Lydenburg Rd, Merry Pebbles is a large camping site in shaded, spacious grounds on the banks of the Sabie River.

**Sabie Townhouse** (☎ 013-764 2292; www.sabietownhouse.co.za; Power St; s/d US\$44/90; 🍷) This upscale B&B is a good choice for a treat, with arched windows, plush rooms with private entrances, and a quiet location.

### EATING

**Petena's Pancakes** (☎ 013-764 1541; Main St; pancakes US\$2.80; 🍷 9am-5.30pm) Dine on your choice of sweet or savoury pancakes in a cosy setting.

**Wild Fig Tree** (☎ 013-764 3098, 013-764 2239; markuren@soft.co.za; 6 Third Lane; meals US\$4.70-12; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place features local specialities such as biltong pâté, ostrich fillet, grilled crocodile, and warthog stew.

**Smokey Train Diner** (☎ 013-764 3445; Main St; mains about US\$5.50; 🍷 lunch & dinner) An Afrikaner diner in a refurbished train car, Smokey's menu features *potjiekos* (stew cooked in a three-legged pot) and other Afrikaner dishes, plus a range of standards.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are daily buses from Jo'burg to Nelspruit, from where you can get minibus taxis to Sabie (US\$2.80, one hour between Nelspruit and Sabie). Minibus taxis also run frequently to/from Hazyview (US\$2.80, one hour). The transport stand (Main St) is behind Spar supermarket.

### Pilgrim's Rest

☎ 013 / pop 600

Tourist shops, craft stalls and historic buildings are the fabric of tiny Pilgrim's Rest, located a short detour off the main route between Sabie and Graskop. Founded in 1873 when gold was discovered nearby, when the stuff finally fizzled out in 1972 the town was sold to the government as a ready-made historical village (it's now a national monument).

There's an **information centre** (☎ 013-768 1060; Main St, Uptown; 🍷 9am-12.45pm & 1.15-4.30pm) at the museums building, and an ATM just down the road.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The town's three main **museums** (☎ 013-768 1060; total admission US\$1.40) feature a printing shop, a restored home and a general store. More interesting is historic **Alanglade** (☎ 013-768 1060; admission US\$2.80; 🍷 tours 11am & 2pm Mon-Sat), a former mine-manager's residence at the northern edge of town furnished with period objects from the 1920s. Just east of town along the Graskop road is the open-air **Diggings Museum** (guided tours adult/child US\$1.40/0.70) where you can see how gold was panned. Visits are arranged through the information centre.

### SLEEPING

**Pilgrims Rest Caravan Park** (☎ 013-768 1427; pilgrimscamp@mweb.co.za; camp sites per person US\$5.50, 2-person tents US\$19, d with shared bathroom US\$19; 🍷)

The cheapest place in town, with fixed tents, basic rooms and large grounds. It's just past the town centre on the Blyde River.

**Royal Hotel** (☎ 013-768 1100; s/d with breakfast US\$38/62; 🍷) This is the historic centrepiece of the town and a fine example of wooden Victorian architecture. The rooms are elegantly furnished in period style and include brass four-poster beds. Church Bar, adjoining, is a good spot for a drink.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Sporadic minibus taxis run between Pilgrim's Rest and Graskop (US\$1.40, 30 minutes).

## GAUTENG

If Africa, as the cliché goes, is the mother of all life, then Gauteng is a province born of the Western love for her gold-bearing ore. Fast, bustling and a cabaret of contradictions, Gauteng (pronounced 'how-teng') covers just 1.5% of the country's land surface, yet accounts for 34% of its gross domestic product (GDP) and, perhaps more extraordinarily, 10% of the GDP of the whole of Africa.

The laid-back, friendly atmosphere of Pretoria, the country's administrative capital, belies a turbulent past. Fifty or so kilometres down the M1 motorway away is Johannesburg, the provincial capital and third-largest city on the continent. Sprawling and booming, it's a strange conurbation of opulent suburbs set alongside some of the country's starkest urban poverty.

### History

The area now called Gauteng remained a relatively quiet and chiefly rural place right through until 1886, when gold was discovered, and the area was catapulted into the modern age.

Boers, escaping British rule in the Cape Colony, had been here since the mid-19th century, founding the independent Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR; South African Republic) and establishing its capital in the then frontier village of Pretoria. But as the British turned their attentions to the colossal profits being made in the gold mines, it was only a matter of time before the events that led to the 1899–1902 South African War were set in motion.

After suffering severe losses, particularly in British concentration camps, the Boers





conceded defeat, leading to the Treaty of Vereeniging and ultimately the Union of South Africa in 1910. The fledgling city of Jo'burg exploded into life, but little changed for the thousands of black miners. Apartheid would be managed from Pretoria, and the townships surrounding Jo'burg – not least of them Soweto – would become the hub of both the system's worst abuses and its most energetic opponents. Consequently Gauteng, then known as Transvaal, was at centre stage in South Africa's all-too-familiar 20th-century drama.

## JOHANNESBURG

☎ 011 / pop 5.7 million

Jo'burg, or Jozi as it's more commonly known, is without a doubt the great big beating heart

of South Africa and has long played a Jekyll-and-Hyde role in the global consciousness. Often the stage on which the epic of this extraordinary nation has been played out, the colossus of Jo'burg – with all its thrills and foibles – is today a fascinating, multitudinous city, where all the ups and downs of 21st-century South Africa can be witnessed in three, multicolour dimensions.

In the past, the city's darker personality proved the most enduring. The Jo'burg of the newflash was a city where fear and loathing reigned supreme; a city where spiralling gun crime and poverty had manifested itself in a society where one half of the population stagnated, while the other looked on impassively through coils of razor wire.

As ever, there is an element of truth to the stereotypes. Jo'burg does bear the scars of South Africa's turbulent 20th century, and many will take time to heal. Stark inequalities persist, but armed with a new self-confidence – ironically most pronounced in the infamous township of Soweto – Africa's giant hub is beginning to introduce itself to a healthier diet of urban renewal and social regeneration.

## Orientation

Cars are king here, so getting around with one is surprisingly easy and getting around without one can be extremely time-consuming. OR Tambo International Airport (JIA; formerly Johannesburg International) is 25km north-east of the city centre.

The large city centre, which is laid out on a straightforward grid, is dominated by office blocks – in particular the 50-storey Carlton Centre on Commissioner St. There's no reason to stay in the city centre; after the shops close, the centre becomes a virtual ghost town. However, redevelopment of the Newtown cultural precinct, at the northwestern edge of the city, is at the core of an effort to clean up central Jo'burg. North of the city centre, a steep ridge runs west-east from Braamfontein across to the dangerous suburb of Hillbrow. To the northeast of the centre is the equally dangerous Yeoville.

The northern suburbs are predominantly white middle- and upper-class areas, within an arc formed by the N1 and N3 freeways. These suburbs of big houses, big trees and big fences are where most travellers stay. Sterile shopping malls form the centre of most social life. The inner-suburban restaurant enclaves of Melville, Greenside, Parkhurst and Norwood make a refreshing change.

The black townships ring the city and present a stark contrast to the northern suburbs. Conditions within them range from the stereotypically suburban to the appalling. The main township is Soweto (p544), but other big townships surround the city in all directions.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**AIDS line** (☎ 0800 012 322)

**Fire** (☎ 10111)

**SA Police Headquarters** (Map p547; ☎ 10111; Headquarters, Main Rd)

**Rape Crisis Line** (☎ 011-806 1888)

## INTERNET ACCESS

Most of the city's hostels and hotels have internet facilities, charging anything from US\$2.80 to US\$8 per hour. Alternatively, most Jo'burg malls and suburbs have an internet café and wi-fi hot spots are popping up everywhere. **Out of Print Books** (☎ 011-482 6026; 78 4th Ave, Melville; per min US\$0.10; ☎ 10am-9pm), in the centre of Melville, is pricey but open later than most.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Johannesburg General Hospital** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-488 4911; M1/Jubilee Rd, Parktown) Jo'burg's main public hospital.

**Rosebank Clinic** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-328 0500; 14 Sturdee Ave, Rosebank; ☎ 7am-10pm) A private hospital in the northern suburbs.

## MONEY

There are banks with ATMs and exchange facilities at every commercial centre. American Express and Rennie's Travel (an agent for Thomas Cook) have branches at the airport and in major malls.

## POST

There is a poste restante service at the **main post office** (Map p547; ☎ 0800 110 226; Jeppe St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Gauteng Tourism Authority** (Map p547; ☎ 011-639 1600; www.gauteng.net; 1 Central Place, cnr Jeppe & Henry Nxumalo St, Newtown; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) The tourist body's glistening new headquarters are in the middle of the Newtown Cultural Precinct. Staff members are eager but woefully undertrained.

**Jo'burg Tourism Company** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-214 0700; deon@joburgtourism.com; ground fl, Grosvenor Cnr, 195 Jan Smuts Ave, Parktown North; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) A private endeavour; covers the city of Jo'burg.

**SA Tourism** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-895 3000; fax 895 3001; 90 Protea Rd, Sandton; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Can be contacted for general South Africa information.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Pay careful attention to your personal security in Jo'burg. Daylight muggings in the city centre and other inner suburbs, notably Hillbrow, are not uncommon and you must be constantly on your guard. You'd be crazy to walk around central Jo'burg at night – if you arrive after dark and don't have a car, catch a taxi to your final destination.





Minor Roads Not Depicted

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Bruma Lake Market World.....	27 D5
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Crime is a big problem, but it is important to put things in perspective: remember that most travellers come and go without incident and that much of the crime afflicts parts of the city you would have little reason to stray into. It's when using ATMs that you're most vulnerable.

The secret to success is simple: seek local advice, listen to it and remain aware of what's going on around you.

### Sights & Activities CITY CENTRE

The city centre choked and largely died in the mid-1990s, with many white businesses fleeing to the northern suburbs, leaving the district to vanish under a mountain of none-too-promising crime statistics and buildings to turn 'bad'. The area retains its edgy atmosphere today, but regeneration projects in Newtown to the south and university-oriented Braamfontein to the north are gradually helping to boost confidence once more in the heart of the city.

On the Noord St side of Joubert Park (itself a no-go area) is the **Johannesburg Art Gallery** (Map p547; ☎ 011-725 3130; Joubert Park; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). This place has a reputable collection of European and South African landscape and figurative paintings, and exhibitions featuring more adventurous contemporary work and long-overdue retrospectives of black artists.

To get an overview of the hub of Jo'burg, take the lift to the **Top of Africa** (Map p547; ☎ 011-308 1331; 50th fl, Carlton Centre, 152 Commissioner St; adult/child US\$1.40/1; ☎ 9am-7pm). From the quiet remoteness of the observation deck, the sprawling city seems positively serene.

### NEWTOWN

Today, Newtown is at the centre of efforts to rejuvenate the downtown area. Surrounded by museums and cafés, Newtown's cultural precinct, which occupies the newly brushed-up **Mary Fitzgerald Square** (Map p547; named after South Africa's first female trade unionist), is a good place to start a tour.

At the heart of the cultural precinct, **Museum Africa** (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 5624; museumafrica@joburg.org.za; 121 Bree St; adult/child US\$1.10/0.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), next to the Market Theatre complex has several excellent exhibitions, including ones on the Treason Trials (1956-61) and Sophiatown.

The nearby **Market Theatre** complex (see p549), with its shows, bars and restaurants, is an excellent place to while away a few hours between museum visits.

Looming over Newtown is the **Nelson Mandela Bridge** (Map p547; www.blueiq.co.za). Officially opened by Nelson Mandela on 20 July 2003 (two days after his 85th birthday), the 295m, cable-stayed bridge is the longest of its kind in Southern Africa.

The **SAB Centenary Centre** (Map p547; ☎ 011-836 4900; 15 President St; admission US\$1.40; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) unlocks the secrets of the country's brewing industries and there is a re-creation of a 1965 Soweto shebeen.

### HILLBROW & CONSTITUTION HILL

Crowned by the looming, 269m **Telkom Tower** (Map pp542-3; Goldreich St), Hillbrow was once among the liveliest and most interesting suburbs in the city, becoming one of the first districts in Jo'burg where blacks and whites were officially allowed to live side by side. These days, however, it has a reputation for very real lawlessness and a trip into its guts,

without an extremely savvy guide, is not recommended.

Inspiring, impressive **Constitution Hill** (Map p547; ☎ 011-381 3100; www.constitutionhill.co.za; Kotze St; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Mon) is slowly becoming one of the city's – if not the country's – chief tourist attractions. Built within the ramparts of the **Old Fort**, which dates from 1892 and was once a notorious prison, the development focuses on South Africa's new **Constitutional Court**, itself a very real symbol of the changing South Africa with cases heard in all 11 official languages.

### SOUTHERN SUBURBS

The **Apartheid Museum** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-309 4700; www.apartheidmuseum.org; cnr Gold Reef Rd & Northern Parkway; adult/child US\$3.40/1.60; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) details South Africa's era of segregation with chilling accuracy. This remains one of South Africa's most evocative museums, using film, text, audio and live accounts to provide a colourful insight into the architecture, implementation and eventual unravelling of the apartheid system.

### SOWETO

No township in South Africa, even the world, has as much political and historical meaning as Soweto, born of an idea as simple and soulless as the acronym devised for its name – South-Western Townships. This sprawling conurbation of the country's migrant labour force and their descendants is the biggest, most political, troubled and dynamic township too, and has of late embarked on a journey of self-discovery that is as much about the future as the past. Tourists now flood into the area, attracted by some of the most poignant landmarks in South Africa's narrative and, after an initial exodus, local blacks are also returning, intent on forging a new identity for their community.

And so the face of this sprawling community – anything from 2.3 million (the latest official figure) to 4 million (local estimates) people live in Soweto – is changing. Large sections of the township are still characterised by desperate poverty, while others, such as Diepkloof Extension and Orlando West, are indicative of the growth of a new moneyed class. Against the Western media's beloved image of Soweto as a crime-ridden wasteland, the sprinkler-fed lawns of these middle-class suburbs are pleasant stereotype squashers.

Soweto is by far the most visited township in the country, so don't feel that coming here as a tourist is either unsafe or inappropriate. Most visitors still come on a tour, but moves are being made to improve signposting (a perennial problem), and the infrastructure is now such that a self-guided tour is not out of the question – although heed local advice carefully. If you choose to do this, stick to the area surrounding Vilakazi St and Hector Pieterse Sq.

If you are on a tour and want extra flexibility while avoiding the aloofness, take a tour as far as Vilakazi St (the greatest danger is getting hopelessly lost on the way into Soweto) and then rely on your guesthouse owner to get you safely between the various attractions. See opposite for tours operating from Jo'burg.

Most transport in and out of Soweto is by motor vehicle, usually by one of the minibus taxis (US\$1.50 one way) that arrive in Diepkloof or Orlando from the taxi rank near Joubert Park in the Jo'burg city centre.

### Tours

**Imbizo Tours** (☎ 011-838 2667) Specialises in tours to Jo'burg's gritty townships, including half-day tours to Alexandra (per person US\$40), perhaps the city's grimmest township, and Soweto (per person US\$42).

**Taste of Africa** (☎ 082-565 2520) Offers something different from the zoo-like township tours, with a cheap shuttle (US\$8) from Melville to Soweto. It also offers tours where you can meet locals, drink in a shebeen, watch backyard theatre, milk a cow, listen to jazz and even visit a local healer.

**Walks Tours** (☎ 011-444 1639; www.walktours.co.za; per person from US\$16) Offers regular weekend walking tours around parts of Jo'burg.

### Sleeping

Some of the places to stay in central Jo'burg are excellent value but that's because crime has scared away customers; you're better off in the 'burbs. Yeoville was for years a backpacker favourite but is no longer. All hostels have either closed or relocated to safer areas.

### MELVILLE & NORWOOD

Melville is located northwest of central Jo'burg and Norwood is to the north.

**Pension Idube** (☎ 011-482 4055; idube@mail.com; 11 Walton Ave, Auckland Park; d without/bath with breakfast US\$36/45; ☎) This positively unpretentious place bedecked in zebra motifs can't be beaten for its combination of comfort, price and location. It serves inexpensive meals and has a patio that is the launch pad for some excellent brags.

**Thulani Lodge** (☎ 011-482 1106; www.thulanilodge.co.za; 85 Third Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$54/67; ☎) Despite its top location just metres from Melville's nightlife, Thulani manages to offer peace and quiet in a series of small, neat rooms clustered intimately around a sparkling swimming pool.

**Die Agterplaas** (☎ 011-726 8452; agterplaas@icon.co.za; 66 Sixth Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$57/72; ☎) Oozing 'old' Melville grace, this colonial-era villa has lashings of comfy class, with Oregon pine flooring, a sun terrace and plenty of old-school bric-a-brac for décor.

**Garden Place** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-485 3800; 53 Garden Rd, Orchards; s/d with breakfast US\$60/101; ☎) It's slightly away from Grant Ave, but offers clean and comfortable rooms, superior service and facilities for overnighters, longer stayers, business people and even newlyweds.

### NORTHERN SUBURBS

#### Budget

**Inchanga Ranch Resort** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-708 2505; www.inchangaesort.co.za; 51 Inchanga Rd, Craigavon; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/s/d US\$10/27/34, cabins from US\$20; ☎) A wonderful country retreat just minutes from the shops and casino of Montecasino. Accommodation is in cute private A-frame huts with animal-print linens.

**Sleek Backpackers** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-787 8070; www.sleekhostel.150m.com; 477 Jan Smuts Ave, Randburg; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$11/14/27; ☎) A converted house is now a small hostel run with a personal touch. Dorms and doubles are basic but clean. It's in a handy location about halfway between the city centre and Fourways.

**Backpackers Ritz** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-325 7125; www.backpackers-ritz.co.za; 1A North Rd, Dunkeld West; dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$11/24/35; ☎) Certainly not 'The Ritz', this backpackers is in a characterful old mansion a safe hop-and-a-skip from Hyde Park Mall, and plenty of bars and restaurants. Curiously the dorm rooms are very large and the doubles a bit cramped.

#### MIDRANGE

**Craighall House** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-326 0326; craighallhouse@mweb.co.za; 10 Alexandra Ave, Craighall; s/d with breakfast US\$40/67; ☎) Well located more or less halfway between Rosebank and Sandton, this guesthouse has neatly designed rooms each with private entrance and patio, a beautiful garden and swimming pool.

**Don Suites Apartments at Rosebank** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-880 1666; fax 880 3366; 10 Tyrwhitt Ave, Rosebank; s/d with breakfast US\$72/88; ☎) This is the only black-owned hotel chain in the land and it offers excellent rooms.

**Quatermain Hotel** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-290 0900; www.quatermain.co.za; 137 West Rd South, Morningside; s/d incl breakfast US\$103/143; ☎) This is one of Jo'burg's best midrange accommodation options with stylish fittings, excellent service and a great location near the glitz of Sandton. Its award-winning restaurant, the Courier, is another huge bonus.

#### Top End

**Ourpick Melrose Arch Hotel** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-214 6666; 1 Melrose Sq, Melrose Arch; s/d with breakfast from US\$236/392 ☎) This is certainly not the cheapest place to stay in town. Worse, it has none of the old Jo'burg charm of suburban

B&Bs, nor the homespun urban African chic of Soweto's guesthouses. But for a taste of everything that is forward-looking, brash and unashamedly positive about contemporary Johannesburg, this is the place to be. Its tasteful, unconventional styling and thoroughly mixed staff and clientele hint at a future South Africa of integration and prosperity. Dare to dream...

**Ten Bompas** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-341 0282; www.tenbompas.com; 10 Bompas Rd, Dunkeld West; r with breakfast US\$320; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A true original, with 10 individually styled, five-star suites, a restaurant with an excellent wine list and floor-mounted televisions in its unisex lobby toilet.

**Saxon** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-292 6000; www.thesaxon.com; 36 Saxon Rd, Sandhurst; r with breakfast from US\$570; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The *ne plus ultra* of impossibly opulent Jo'burg, this gorgeous, all-suite boutique hotel offers no-holds-barred luxury.

### EASTERN SUBURBS

**Diamond Digger's Lodge** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-624 1676; www.oneandonly.co.za; 36 Doris St, Kensington; dm/d with shared bathroom US\$9.50/24; 🍷 🍷 🍷) An excellent backpackers, with every imaginable amenity, including a Jacuzzi, sauna, a big-screen home cinema and a pub for post-tour frolics.

**Purple Palms** (☎ 011-393 4393; info@purplepalms.co.za; 1 Boompeiper Ave, Kempton Park; d without/with shared bathroom US\$30/35 tr US\$44; 🍷 🍷 🍷) In a quiet suburb 10km from the airport, this is a friendly, well-run way station for backpackers passing through Gauteng.

**Emerald Guest House** (☎ 011-394 1198; 19 Halifax St, Rhodesfield, Kempton Park; s/d US\$37/54; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Readers recommend this guesthouse, which is within easy striking distance of the airport and has plenty of home comforts and decent rooms. Airport transfers are offered.

### Eating

Jo'burg is stacked with restaurants to satisfy every whim, craving, occasion and budget. Unfortunately for visitors, especially those without cars, most of the best places are scattered around the northern suburbs.

For self-caterers, head to the glitzy supermarkets in the bowels of every shopping mall for the widest range of produce.

### CITY CENTRE & NEWTOWN

For a cheap meal of *mealie pap* and meat cooked on the braai, try the stalls on and around Diagonal St – just follow your nose.

**our pick Kapitan's** (Map p547; ☎ 011-834 8048; 11A Kort St; mains US\$4-8; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Jo'burg is awash with award-winning restaurants offering just about every world cuisine, but for a taste of the new city in surroundings that reflect its past, there's nothing quite like Kapitan's. It is positively unpretentious (though chef/patron Madanjit Ranchod *does* call it the 'only good Indian restaurant in the country') despite having attracted luminaries (including Mandela) for years. It's one of the few places in town where you'll see young lions black and white drinking with hepcats and grizzly city stalwarts groaning about how it's all gone to the dogs.

**Guildhall Bar & Restaurant** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-833 1770; 88 Market St, Marshalltown; mains US\$4.70-7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Established way back in 1888, you can while away the day in the dark English-style pub below, or sit out on the upstairs balcony and watch the city pass by over a pie and chips.

**Gramadoela's** (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 6960; Bree St, Newtown; mains US\$5.50-12; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🍷) Full of curios and character, this gay-friendly Newtown classic in the Market Theatre complex whips up a mean mix of African and Asian cuisine.

**Moyo's** (www.moyo.co.za; mains US\$7-13; 🍷) Melrose Arch (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-684 1477; 5 Melrose Sq; 🍷 lunch & dinner); Newtown (☎ 011-838 1715; Bree St; 🍷 lunch & dinner); Rosebank (☎ 011-646 0058; Zoo Lake; 🍷 breakfast & lunch) Oozing chi-chi African charm, this busy chain offers an innovative menu of contemporary African eats.

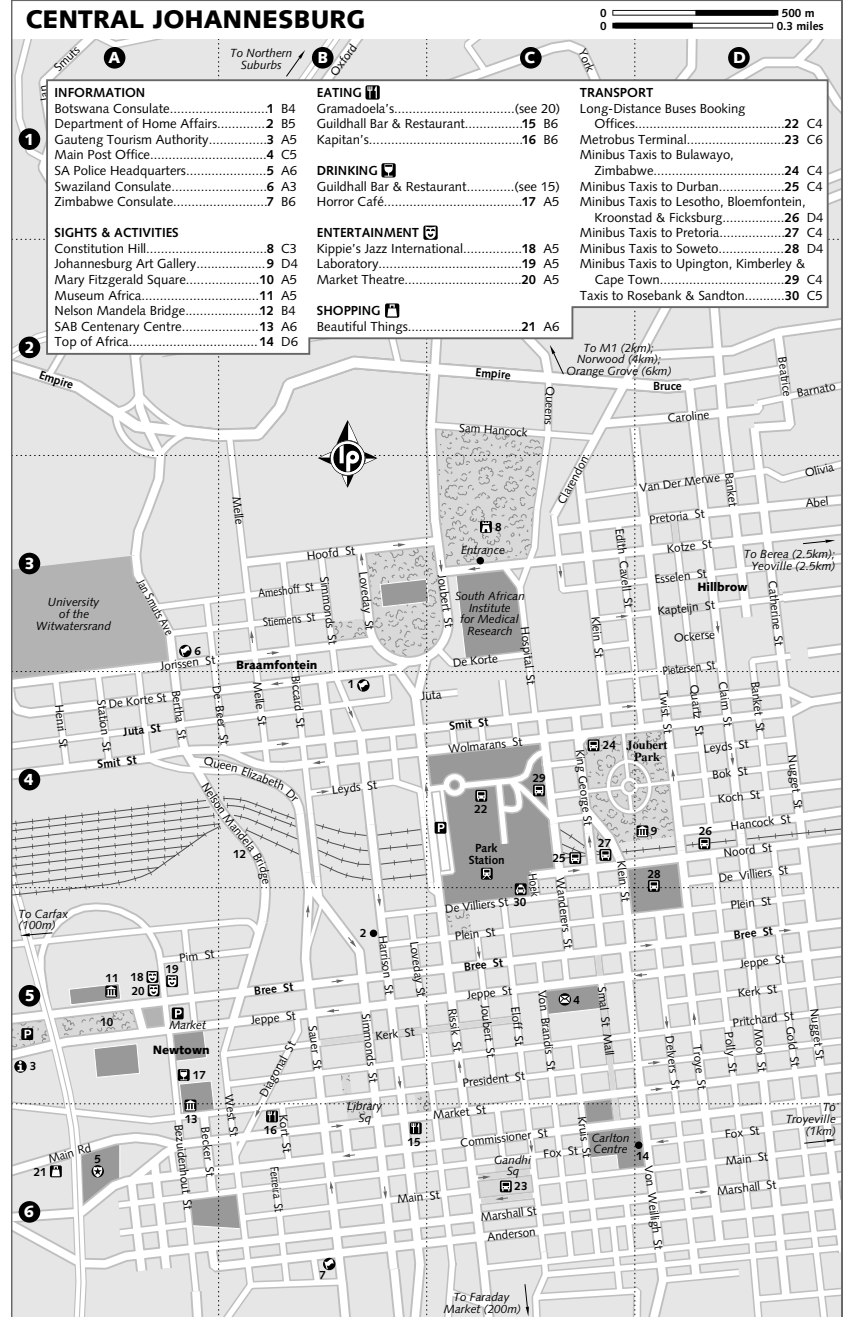
### MELVILLE

Northwest of Braamfontein, Melville has become the trendiest eating strip in Jo'burg. Restaurants and cafés have sprung up in the area around 7th St, known as 'Old Melville', and around the busier Main Rd about 1km away, known as 'New Melville'.

The best food is in Old Melville, where a Bohemian, youthful atmosphere prevails. In the warmer months 7th St takes on a Parisian ambience, with patrons sipping drinks and watching the world go by from pavement tables.

### Cafés & Quick Eats

**Ish Caffé** (☎ 011-482 4320; cnr 7th St & 4th Ave; light meals US\$3.40; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Chic design, yummy breakfas, great cappuccinos and gorgeous staff – what more could you ask for?





**De La Creme** (☎ 011-726 7716; cnr 7th St & 4th Ave; mains US\$5.50-8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) One of Jo'burg's best patisseries, with a daily selection of freshly baked delicious sweet treats such as homemade gateaux, and a full meal menu. It's closed on Monday nights.

**Spiro's Cafe** (☎ 011-482 1162; cnr 7th St & 2nd Ave; mains US\$5.50-9.50; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) With terrace seating outside and huge, comfy sofas inside, this place heaves at breakfast time. Come nightfall, it serves up some tasty restaurant tucker before slowly transforming into a bar.

### Restaurants

**Catz Pyjamas** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-726 8596; cnr Main Rd & 3rd Ave) A fairly sterile place with cheap food but after a long night out this 24-hour restaurant is hard to beat.

**Soulsa** (☎ 011-482 5572; 16 7th St; mains US\$4.70-12; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Funky décor, differing day and night menus featuring fusion South African cooking, and outdoor sofas have made Soulsa a Melville favourite. Breakfast is served on weekends.

**Soi** (☎ 011-726 5775; cnr 7th St & 3rd Ave; mains US\$6-12; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Flash, oh-so-trendy Asian décor gives this place a hip, stylish edge. The Thai and Vietnamese food is fresh and zesty, and there's an attached bar filled with beautiful people.

**Chaplin's** (☎ 011-482 4657; 85 4th Ave; mains US\$11-15; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) This twee little bistro, a veteran of the neighbourhood, whips up some legendary food. European meat and fish dishes predominate.

**Melville Grill** (☎ 011-727 28-12; cnr 7th St & 3rd Ave; mains US\$7-16; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) The only place for a hardcore meat feast, this upmarket steakhouse serves sublime aged cuts in modern surrounds. They also claim to cater for vegetarians.

### NORTHERN SUBURBS

The many eating options in these affluent suburbs are centred on the huge shopping malls that form the core of northern suburbs society.

**Cranks** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-880 3442; Shop 52, Rosebank Mall; mains US\$4.70-8; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) Still going after almost 20 years, Cranks was one of the first Thai-Vietnamese places in Johannesburg. Among the tried-and-tested favourites of the house is fish fillet with lemongrass (US\$6).

**Yum** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-486 1645; www.yum.co.za; 26 Gleneagles Rd, Greenside; mains US\$5.50-27; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☺) A small restaurant with a big reputation. One of the city's most celebrated dining rooms, Yum specialises in innovative fusion cooking. Closed for most of January.

### OTHER SUBURBS

The suburb of Norwood has an enclave of restaurants that has grown and matured into an east Jo'burg version of Melville's 7th St. There are more than 20 bars, restaurants and cafés along Grant Ave, most of which are open every day.

Other places to eat in the eastern suburbs is near Bruma Lake on Derrick Ave, Cyrildene, off Observatory Rd, and there's an established Chinatown (Map pp542-3) with a number of cheap Taiwanese, Korean, Sichuan, Shanghai and Hong Kong style restaurants; most close at about 9.30pm.

### Drinking

Party-loving Jo'burg has a constantly changing mix of bars, pubs and clubs, ranging from the outrageous to the downright conservative. Much of the nightlife is in the northern suburbs, particularly around Melville, Norwood and Rosebank. The area around the cultural precinct in Newtown also has a few decent places.

### CITY CENTRE & NEWTOWN

**Horror Café** (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 6735; 5 Becker St, Newtown) The neon green décor is indeed a horror, but this place is never short of action. Thursdays is reggae night, while Saturday is gay and lesbian night.

**Guildhall Bar & Restaurant** (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 1770; 88 Market St) A great place to soak up some history while stoking the fires with a pint or two of lager. There's an upstairs terrace for people-watching.

### MELVILLE

**Berlin Bar** (Map p547; ☎ 011-482 9345; 6 7th St) With an ultra-cool design and Jo'burg's most tortured artists lounging on its retro furniture, this was definitely Melville's hippest hangout when we swung through town.

**Ratz Bar** (☎ 011-726 2019; 9B 7th St) This cosy place has rats daubed on the walls rather than running across the floors and is only for over-24s. Try one of the tasty and well-priced cocktails (US\$2.40).

**Tokyo Star** (☎ 011-834 9187; 78 4th Ave) Anime chic and loads of plastic characterise this trendy, noisy Tokyo-style bar. Asian snacks such as tempura (US\$3) are served.

**Cool Runnings** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-482 4786; 27A 4th Ave) Reggae is a perennial favourite in Jo'burg, so it is no surprise that this franchise of Jamaican-style bars is popular. A relaxed atmosphere, thumping bass-lines and late, lively nights are a sure thing.

### NORWOOD

**Sundeck Bar** (☎ 011-728 2279; 72 Grant Ave) The upstairs terrace bar at this place is the perfect spot to sip a cocktail and watch Norwood drift by.

**Mo Café** (☎ 011-728 8256; Grant Ave) This camp, retro-style affair offers beautiful people and lashings of orange décor. There's a full food menu for late-night munchies.

**English Pub** (☎ 011-483 1101; cnr Algoner St & Grant Ave) Offering plenty of rough-and-tumble action and an English pub-style ambience, this is a good spot at the weekends for determined drinkers.

### Entertainment

The best entertainment guide is in Friday's *Mail & Guardian*. 'Tonight' in the daily *Star* is also good. For entertainment bookings by credit card, contact **Computicket** (☎ 011-915 8000; www.computicket.com).

### CINEMAS

Huge cinema centres are found across Jo'burg, with one in almost every shopping centre. **Ster-Kinekor** (central bookings ☎ 082 16789; www.sterkinekor.co.za) has the widest distribution of multiplexes, with screens in the Fourways, Westgate, Eastgate, Sandton and Rosebank malls.

### LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

Jo'burg is home to a thriving live music scene, but it's on weekends when Jo'burgers really come out to play and regularly hold enormous raves.

### Classical

**Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra** (☎ 011-789 2733; www.jpo.co.za) The city's budding orchestra stages a regular circuit of concerts, utilising venues from Wits University to City Hall.

### Contemporary

**Carfax** (☎ 011-834 9187; 39 Pim St, Newtown; admission US\$9.50) This industrial space symbolises

integrated Jo'burg and is one of the hottest club tickets in town, with weekend DJs and a house-oriented music scene.

**Kippie's Jazz International** (Map p547; ☎ 011-833 3316; www.kippies.co.za; Bree St, Newtown; admission US\$7) Kippie's is a 'must do' in Jo'burg as it's one of the best places to see South African jazz talent. Gigs kick off on Friday and Saturday nights at around 9.30pm.

**206 Live** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-728 5333; 206 Louis Botha Ave, Orange Grove) Garage, ragga, drum 'n' bass and rock tracks keep the feet tapping here. Next door, 208 keeps the flag flying over the local hip-hop crowd.

### THEATRES

**Market Theatre** (Map p547; ☎ 011-832 1641; www.markettheatre.co.za; Bree St) The Market Theatre is the most important venue for live theatre. There are three live theatre venues – the Main, Laager and Barney Simon Theatres – as well as galleries, a café and the excellent Kippie's Jazz International.

Other theatres include the **Laboratory** (Map p547; ☎ 011-836 0516; Bezuidenhout St), an offshoot of the Market Theatre that acts as a showcase for community talent, with free local theatre shows every Saturday at 1pm.

### Shopping

#### ARTS & CRAFTS

**Rosebank Rooftop Market** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-788 5530) One of the most convenient places to shop for traditional carvings, beadwork, jewellery, books and fertility dolls. Held every Sunday in Rosebank Mall's multilevel car park.

**Beautiful Things** (Map p547; ☎ 011-492 3696; Bus Factory, 2 President St, Newtown; ☺ 10am-4pm) This is a community-run initiative selling arts and crafts from across the country.

**Bruma Lake Market World** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-622 9648; Observatory Rd) This place sells a wide range of crafts and lots of kitsch.

**Faraday Market** (cnr Eloff St & N2) This is an interesting place to wander around, with plenty of *muti* stalls.

### MALLS

Jo'burg prides itself on its malls jammed with Western consumer goods of every description. They are as much a wealthy white habitat as a place to go shopping. A short walk from Newtown, you'll find **Oriental Plaza** (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-838 6752; Bree St, Fordsburg; ☺ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri,

8.30am-3pm Sat), our favourite for a look at the real Jo'burg in all its diversity.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

South Africa's major international and domestic airport is **OR Tambo International Airport** (JIA; ☎ 011-9216262; www.acsa.co.za), formerly Johannesburg International.

For regular flights to national and regional destinations try **South African Airways** (SAA; Map pp542-3; ☎ 0861 359 722; www.flysaa.com), **South African Airlink** (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-961 1700; www.saairlink.co.za) and **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za). All flights can be booked through SAA, which also has offices in the domestic and international terminals of JIA.

Smaller budget airlines, including Comair, Kulula, 1Time and Nationwide, also link Jo'burg with major destinations and often offer much cheapest fares.

### BUS

A number of international bus services leave Jo'burg from the Park Station complex for Mozambique, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The main long-distance bus lines (national and international) also depart from and arrive at the Park Station transit centre, in the northwest corner of the site, where you will also find the booking offices.

Backpackers can now be connected from Jo'burg to the most popular parts of the region (Swaziland, Durban, Garden Route and Cape Town) by **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com). All hostels have timetables and prices.

The most comprehensive range of services to/from Jo'burg is provided by the government-owned lines of **Translux** (☎ 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za) and **City to City** (☎ 0861-589 282). For more information about these, as well as the other major bus lines – **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za), **SA Roadlink** (☎ 011-333 2223; www.saroadlink.co.za) and **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) – see p592.

Except for City to City buses, which start in Jo'burg, all services not heading north commence in Pretoria at the Pretoria station.

### To Cape Town

Intercape, Greyhound and Translux all have at least one bus running daily to Cape Town (US\$51 to US\$63, 19 hours).

Intercape also runs to Cape Town (US\$59, 19 hours) via Upington (US\$35, 10 hours).

From Upington, you can also get an Intercape bus to Windhoek, Namibia (US\$34, 12 hours), but there isn't a direct connection.

SA Roadlink, the newest bus company, offers highly competitive rates from Jo'burg to Cape Town (US\$34, 19 hours). Buses depart daily.

### To Durban & KwaZulu-Natal

Greyhound has four daily buses to Durban (US\$28, eight hours), including slower services that run through Newcastle (US\$26, five hours), Ladysmith (US\$24, 6½ hours) and Estcourt (US\$24, 7½ hours), and then onto Richard's Bay (US\$30, eight hours). Translux has at least one bus a day to Durban (US\$23, eight hours), as does Intercape (US\$17, eight hours).

### To Mpumalanga & Kruger National Park

The nearest large town to Kruger National Park is Nelspruit. Greyhound runs there daily (US\$25, five hours). Note that this service starts in Jo'burg and picks up in Pretoria an hour later. Translux runs to Maputo, Mozambique daily (US\$20, nine hours) via Nelspruit (US\$1.40, five hours).

City to City has some slow, cheap services from Jo'burg to Nelspruit (US\$11, seven hours) and Hazyview (US\$10, eight hours). Hazyview is closer to Kruger than Nelspruit, and has backpackers' hostels that can arrange trips into the park.

Translux also has daily buses running to Phalaborwa (US\$20, 7½ hours), which is a good option if you're staying at a more northerly Kruger National Park camp.

### To the North

At the time of writing, no bus companies were offering services to Zimbabwe. Most now only go as far as Polokwane (Pietersburg). From there you'll have to get a local bus or minibus taxi to get to the border.

Translux does have a daily service as far as Makhado (Louis Trichardt; US\$18, 6½ hours), but this strangely arrives at 2am! It goes via Mokopane (Potgietersrus; US\$17, four hours) and Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$18, 4½ hours). Translux also has services that head east through Limpopo, stopping in Tzaneen (US\$17, 6½ hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$20, 7½ hours).

Greyhound has daily services to Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$19, five hours). Intercape

also heads north to Gaborone, Botswana (US\$20, seven hours).

**North Link Tours** (☎ 015-291 1867) runs buses between Jo'burg and Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$16, 4½ hours) via Pretoria, and the smaller towns en route. From Polokwane, there are connections to Tzaneen and Phalaborwa.

### To the South

Translux operates a daily service to East London (US\$43, 15 hours) via Bloemfontein (US\$20, seven hours). Translux also has five services a week (not on Sunday and Tuesday) from Jo'burg to Port Elizabeth (US\$47, 14½ hours) via Bloemfontein (US\$30, 10 hours) and Graaff-Reinet (US\$40, 14½ hours), and a Tuesday and Sunday service via Cradock (US\$40, 14½ hours).

Intercape has daily services to Port Elizabeth via Cradock (US\$40, 15 hours) and on to Plettenberg Bay (US\$42, 18 hours).

Greyhound has daily buses that travel overnight from Jo'burg to Port Elizabeth (US\$42, 15 hours) and East London (US\$36, 13 hours).

Translux runs to Knysna (US\$36) via Kimberley three times weekly or Bloemfontein four times weekly, then Oudtshoorn, Mossel Bay and George (all US\$38 from Jo'burg); the trip takes 17 hours. Intercape also operates to Knysna for the same price.

### CAR

All the major rental operators have counters at OR Tambo International Airport and at various locations around the city. Many of the main operators offer a limited number of free kilometres and you may end up with a nasty bill when it comes to returning the car.

### MINIBUS TAXI

The majority of minibus taxis already use the new road-transport interchange in Park Station over the train tracks between the Metro Concourse and Wanderers St. Because of the risk of mugging, it isn't a good idea to go searching for a taxi while carrying your luggage.

You can also find minibus taxis going in the direction of Kimberley, Cape Town and Upington on Wanderers St near Leyds St; Bulawayo taxis at the northern end of King George St; Pretoria taxis on Noord St; Lesotho, Bloemfontein (and other Free State destinations) on Noord St, east of Joubert Park; and

Durban taxis near the corner of Wanders and Noord Sts. Fares fluctuate, but rates for trips from Jo'burg include the following:

Destination	Fare (US\$)
Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)	38
Cape Town	47
Durban	26
Gaborone (Botswana)	19
Harrismith	13
Kimberley	23
Komatipoort	22
Manzini (Swaziland)	18
Maputo (Mozambique)	30
Nelspruit	23
Polokwane (Pietersburg)	14
Pretoria	4
Thohoyandou (Venda)	18
Tzaneen	18

### TRAIN

For information on train services to/from Jo'burg and elsewhere in the country, see p595. Tickets can be booked at the **Spooonet** (☎ 0860 008 888) kiosk on the main concourse at Jo'burg's Park Station.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

OR Tambo International Airport (JIA; formerly Johannesburg International) is about 25km east of central Jo'burg in Kempton Park. Between 5am and 10pm, buses run every half hour between JIA and Park Station (US\$11, 45 minutes); contact **Metropolitan Bus Services** (Metrobus; ☎ 011-375 5555; www.mbus.co.za) for details. The area immediately around Park Station is confusing and known for muggings, so heading straight here is not to be advised if you are carrying your bags. The **Airport Link** (☎ 011-884 3957) is another reputable airport shuttle.

Taxis are expensive at around US\$43 one way to the northern suburbs. Meters will generally be used, otherwise agree on a price before you get into the cab. Most hostels will collect you from the airport.

### BUS

**Metropolitan Bus Services** (Metrobus; Map p547; ☎ 011-375 5555; www.mbus.co.za; Gandhi Sq) runs services covering 108 routes in the Greater Jo'burg area. The main bus terminal is at Gandhi Sq, two blocks west of the Carlton Centre, and

fares work on a zonal system ranging from zone one (US\$0.50) to zone eight (US\$1.40). Metrobus prefer you to use its tag system (starter tag US\$6). Travellers buy tags from the bus terminal or Computicket (☎ 011-915 8000; www.computicket.com).

### MINIBUS TAXI

Fares differ depending on routes, but US\$0.70 will get you around the inner suburbs and the city centre and US\$1.20 will get you almost anywhere.

If you do take a minibus taxi into central Jo'burg, be sure to get off before it reaches the end of the route and avoid the taxi rank – it's a mugging zone.

### TAXI

Taxis are an expensive but necessary evil in this city. They operate meters if they work. It's wise to ask a local the likely price and agree on a fare at the outset. From the taxi rank at Park Station a trip to Rosebank should cost around US\$10, and significantly more to Sandton.

Three reputable firms:

**International Taxi** (☎ 011-390 1502)

**Maxi Taxi Cabs** (☎ 011-648 1212)

**Rose's Radio Taxis** (☎ 011-403 9625)

### TRAIN

For inquiries about **Metro** (☎ 011-773 5878) services call, or visit the helpful information office in the Park Station concourse. There has been a very serious problem with violent crime on the Metro system, mostly on lines connecting with black townships. The Jo'burg–Pretoria Metro line should also be avoided.

## PRETORIA

☎ 012 / pop 1.65 million

At once the 'Afrikaner Jerusalem', former headquarters of the apartheid state and site of the presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela, the pretty, laid-back city of Pretoria – the administrative capital – carries a remarkable amount of history for its age.

Ironically, the city that for so long was a byword for white domination is now home to the liberated country's black president. Thabo Mbeki has his office in the Union Buildings, while a black mayor and a black-dominated council hold seat in the less grandiose local government buildings.

Pretoria is just 50km from Jo'burg, and is expected within 15 years to form part of a

megalopolis of 20 million people. Yet it moves at a slower pace than its giant neighbour and remains Afrikaans culturally. Military and educational institutions associated with the capital remain while the tens of thousands of university students drive Pretoria's vibrant nightlife.

### History

The Great Trek reached its logical conclusion in the early 1850s when the British granted independence to the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek north of the Vaal River, and to the, then Orange, Free State between the Orange and Vaal Rivers.

In 1853 two farms on the Apies River were bought as the site for the republic's capital. The ZAR was a shaky institution though. There were ongoing wars with the black tribes and violent disputes among the Boers themselves. Pretoria, which was named after Andries Pretorius, hero of the Battle of Blood River, was the scene of fighting during the 1863–69 Boer Civil War.

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in the late 1880s revolutionised the situation. A small community of farmers suddenly controlled some of the richest real estate in the world and within 20 years the Boers would again be at war with the British. Self-government was again granted to the Transvaal in 1906, and through an unwieldy compromise Pretoria was made the administrative capital. The Union of South Africa came into being in 1910 but Pretoria was not to regain its status until 1961, when the Republic of South Africa came into existence under the leadership of Hendrik Verwoerd.

### Orientation

You will likely arrive in Pretoria by road from Jo'burg, or from OR Tambo International Airport. From Jo'burg, the M1 freeway quietens suddenly, and you'll notice the University of South Africa (Unisa) building, looking like a grounded spaceship. A couple of kilometres further on is the city proper, spreading west to east below a long *koppie*, on the northern side of which stand the Union Buildings.

If you enter the city from the airport, you should hit the eastern edge of Church St, which runs through the main nightlife and restaurant zones of the suburbs of Hatfield, Menlyn, Brooklyn and Arcadia, before heading west to Church Sq, the historic centre of

the city and home to hotels, embassies and the Union Buildings.

### Information

#### EMERGENCY

**Fire** (☎ 10111)

**Metro Emergency Rescue Service** (☎ 10177)

**Police** (☎ 10111) There is a police station on Railway St.

#### INTERNET ACCESS

Most hostels and hotels offer internet facilities, but cheaper alternatives are available.

**Odyssey Internet Cafe** (☎ 012-362 2467; Hatfield Galleries, Burnett St; per 30min US\$2; ☎ 9am–11pm) is a good bet for logging on.

#### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Hatfield Clinic** (☎ 012-362 7180; 454 Hilda St) A well-known suburban clinic.

**Pretoria Academic Hospital** (☎ 011-354 1000; Dr Savage Rd) The place to head for in a medical emergency.

#### MONEY

There are banks with ATMs and change facilities across town.

**American Express** (☎ 012-346 2599; Brooklyn Mall; ☎ 9am–5pm)

**Nedbank** (cnr Burnett & Festival Sts) Next to Hatfield Galleries.

#### POST

**Main post office** (cnr Church St & Church Sq; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat) In an historic building on the main square.

#### TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 012-358 1430; www.tshwane.gov.za; Old Nederlandsche Bank Bldg, Church Sq; ☎ 7.30am–4pm Mon–Fri) is pretty useless and, astonishingly for a city this size, closes on weekends.

Also in Pretoria is the national head office of **South African National Parks** (SAN; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org; 643 Leyds St, New Muckleneuk; ☎ offices 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat; call centre 7.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) for all your wildlife reserve bookings and inquiries.

#### Dangers & Annoyances

Pretoria is certainly safer and more relaxed than Jo'burg. That said, crime is a problem, particularly in the city centre and Sunnyside, with restaurants and other businesses moving to the safer Hatfield and Brooklyn areas. The square roughly formed by Vermeulen,

Du Toit, Boom and Schubert Sts has a bad reputation.

### Sights & Activities

#### VOORTREKKER MONUMENT & MUSEUM

The looming **Voortrekker Monument & Museum** (☎ 012-323 0682; Eeufees Rd; adult/child US\$3.40/1.40, vehicle US\$1.40; ☎ 8am–6pm) is hallowed turf for many Afrikaners. Built between 1938 and 1949 to commemorate the achievements of the Voortrekkers, the structure remains a testament to the Boers' pioneering and independent spirit. In particular, it commemorates the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, during which 470 Boers, under the command of Andries Pretorius, defeated approximately 12,000 Zulus.

The building's inauguration in 1949 was attended by 250,000 people and still remains a powerful symbol of the 'White Tribe of Africa' and their historical relationship to South Africa.

The edifice is surrounded by a stone wall carved with 64 wagons in a traditional defensive *laager*. The building itself is a huge stone cube inspired by the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. Inside, a highly impressive bas-relief tells the story of the trek and of the Battle of Blood River. A staircase and elevator lead to the roof and a great panoramic view of Pretoria and the highveld.

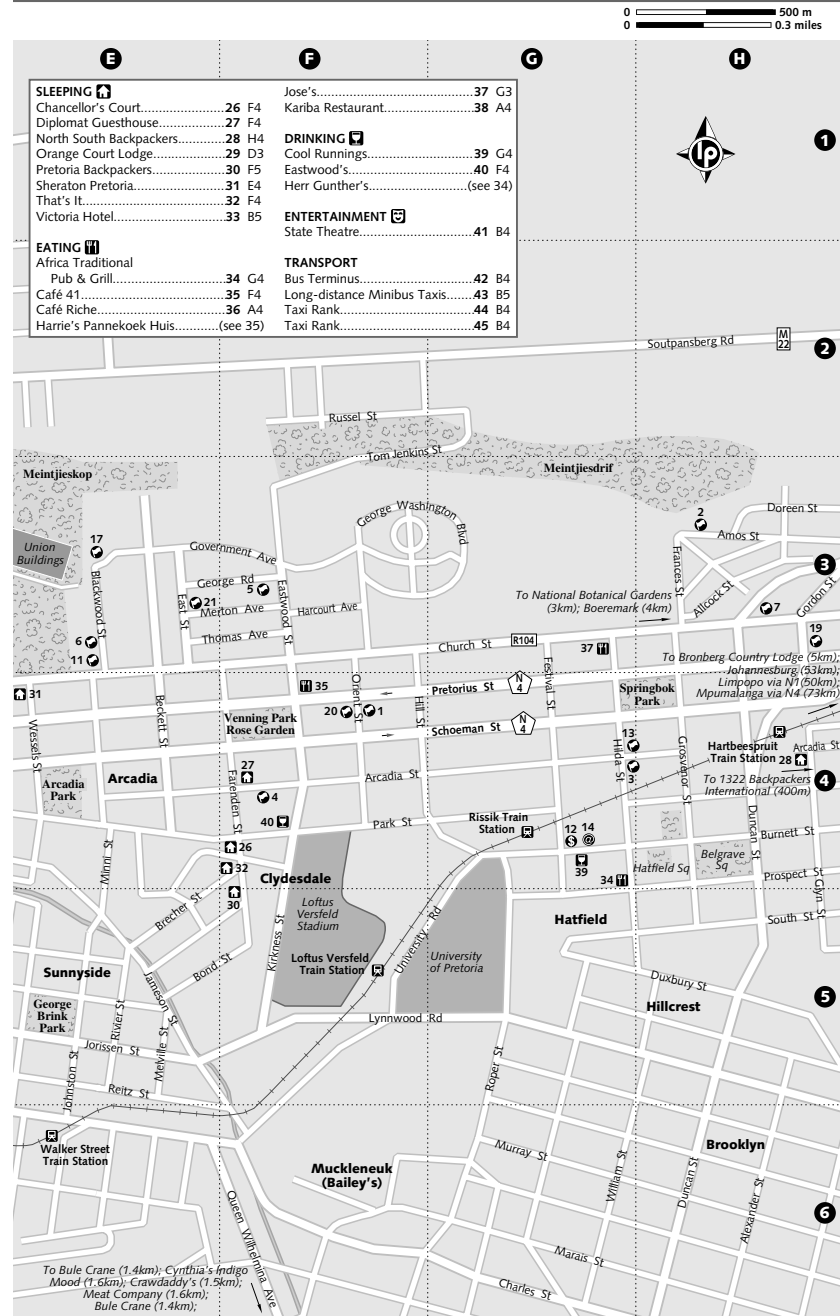
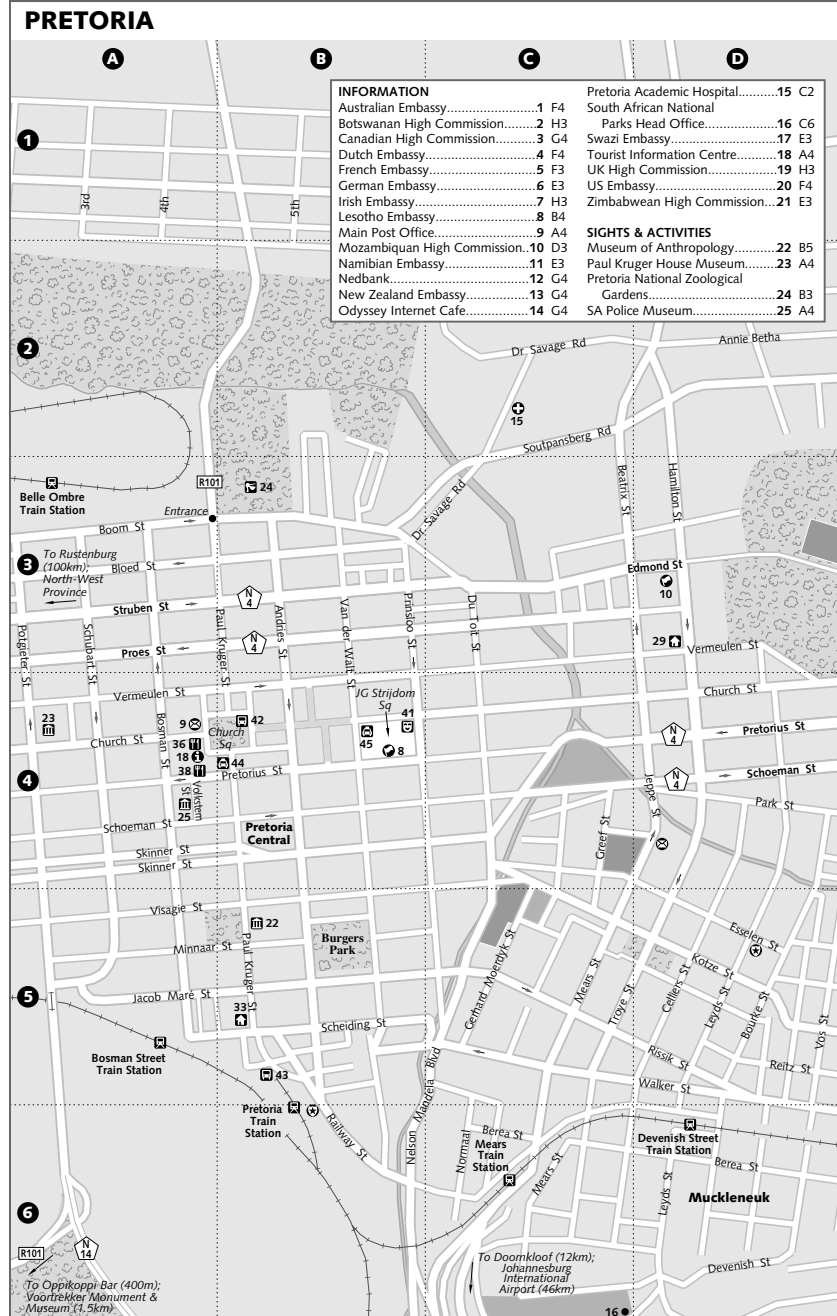
The monument is 3km south of the city. It is possible to catch the Voortrekkerhoogte or Valhalla bus from Kruger St near the corner of Church Sq. Ask the driver to let you off at the entrance road to the monument, from where it's a 10-minute walk uphill.

#### CHURCH SQUARE

At the heart of Pretoria, imposing public buildings surrounds **Church Square**. These include the Ou Raadsaal (Old Government) building on the southern side; the Old Capitol Theatre in the northwestern corner; First National Bank in the northeastern; the Palace of Justice, where the Rivonia Trial that sentenced Nelson Mandela to life imprisonment was held, on the northern side; the Old Nederlandsche Bank building, which adjoins the Café Riche and houses the Tourist Information Centre; and the main post office at the western side.

In the centre, a bronze sculpture of the 'Old Lion', Paul Kruger, looks disapprovingly at office workers lounging on the grass.





**PAUL KRUGER HOUSE MUSEUM**

A short walk west from Church Sq is the **Paul Kruger House Museum** (☎ 012-326 9172; 60 Church St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.70; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri), the former residence of Paul Kruger. It's interesting, but it's difficult to get a feeling for the man among all the bric-a-brac.

**MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

Opposite City Hall, this **museum** (☎ 012-322 7632; Paul Kruger St; adult/child US\$1.40/0.90; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) has dioramas of various indigenous animals and birds. It's not exactly the Kruger, but you can't get malaria either.

**SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE MUSEUM**

The **police museum** (cnr Pretorius & Volkstem Sts; adult/child US\$1.40/0.90; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) is one of the city's better museums, with scores of exhibits covering the turbulent history of the nation's police force.

**PRETORIA NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS**

About 1km north of the city centre is the **zoological gardens** (☎ 012-328 3265; cnr Paul Kruger & Boom Sts; adult/child US\$4.70/3; 🕒 8am-6pm). It's an impressive and pleasant enough spot to while away an afternoon, however the highlight is probably the cable car that runs up to the top of a hill that overlooks the city.

**UNION BUILDINGS**

These buildings are the headquarters of government. The impressive red sandstone structures – with a self-conscious imperial grandeur – are surrounded by expansive gardens and are home to the presidential offices.

**Sleeping**

Hatfield, with its bars and restaurants, has developed into something of a backpacker ghetto and along with Brooklyn and New Muckleneuk, is also the best place to start looking for midrange B&B options. The city also has its fair share of upmarket business and boutique hotels. Again, these tend to be east of the centre.

**BUDGET**

**1322 Backpackers International** (☎ 012-362 3905; www.1322backpackers.com; 1322 Arcadia St, Hatfield; camp sites/dm/s/d US\$6/9/13/16; 📍) A friendly hostel cleverly designed to mimic log-cabin accom-

modation despite its suburban setting. Dorm beds are made of chunky wood and have their own night lights.

**North South Backpackers** (☎ 012-362 0989; info@northsouthbackpackers.com; 355 Glyn St, Hatfield; camp sites/dm US\$6/11, s/d with shared bath US\$18/24; 📍) This hostel is within easy walking distance of the high life of Burnett St, but has a tirelessly convivial buzz of its own. Trimmings include tasty dinners, a savvy travel agency and a pleasant garden.

**Bronberg Country Lodge** (☎ 012-811 0497; www.bronbergbackpackers.co.za; Plot 207, Lynwood Rd, Teyateyanan; camp sites/dm/d US\$7/9.50/28; 📍) On the eastern reaches of Pretoria, this rustic place offers a breath of fresh, country air. It's the perfect spot to escape back into the bush, or reinvigorate weary feet with a soak in the Jacuzzis.

**Pretoria Backpackers** (☎ 012-343 9754; www.pretoriabackpackers.net; 425 Farenden St; dm US\$11, s/d with shared bathroom US\$20/30; 📍) This is a large converted home close to Hatfield with a pleasant garden and fish pond, open-plan chilling area and spacious, wood-floored rooms.

**MIDRANGE**

**That's It** (☎ 012-344 3404; www.thatshit.co.za; 5 Brecher St, Clydesdale; s/d with breakfast US\$42/55; 📍) Located near the corner of Farenden St, this pleasant guesthouse in a leafy suburb has good-sized rooms.

**Chancellor's Court** (☎ 012-344 1404; www.chancellorscourt.co.za; 797 Park St, Clydesdale; s/d US\$47/54; 📍) A well-located, reader-recommended guesthouse with spacious (if somewhat old-fashioned) rooms. It's a good option for groups or families because of the four-bed self-catering family unit (US\$70).

**Orange Court Lodge** (☎ 012-326 6346; orangecourt@absamail.co.za; 540 Vermeulen St; 1-/2-/3-bedroom apt US\$54/108/162; 📍) On the corner of Hamilton St and not far from the Union Buildings, this oasis among the concrete jungle offers serviced apartments, with TV and kitchen.

**TOP END**

**Victoria Hotel** (☎ 012-323 6054; fax 012-324 2426; 200 Scheiding St; s/d with breakfast US\$60/83; 📍) Built in 1894, this gracious, historic place has 10 Victorian-style rooms with all the creature comforts.

**Diplomat Guesthouse** (☎ 012-344 3131; www.thediplomat.co.za; 822 Arcadia St, Arcadia; s/d with breakfast US\$78/103; 📍) An early-20th-century

home and its beautiful garden are the setting for this immaculately designed four-star guesthouse filled with impressive looking furniture.

**Sheraton Pretoria** (☎ 012-429 9999; www.sheraton.com; cnr Church & Wessels Sts; r from US\$109; 📍) Pretoria's glitziest place, it offers all the reliable, spick-and-span Sheraton trimmings and top-notch service.

**Eating**

Most people head to Hatfield, Brooklyn and New Muckleneuk. There are few eating recommendations in the city centre due to safety considerations.

**CITY CENTRE**

**Kariba Restaurant** (☎ 012-326 5654; 1 Parliament St; mains US\$2.80-5.50; 🕒 breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Based in the beautiful former Capitol Theatre, this efficient restaurant is a lunchtime favourite with local business types, thanks largely to its selection of hearty West- and South African dishes.

**Café Riche** (☎ 012-328 3173; 2 Church St; mains US\$4-8; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This is one of Pretoria's more historic eateries, enjoying a choice spot right in the heart of the city's Church Sq.

**HATFIELD & ARCADIA**

**Harrie's Pannekoek Huis** (Harry's Pancake House; ☎ 012-342 3613; Eastwood Sq, Eastwood Rd; mains US\$4-5.40; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) A slick outfit offering something different for the palate – savoury and sweet pancakes with extremely imaginative fillings. We tried the pickled fish and sultana chutney variant.

**Café 41** (☎ 012-342 8914; Eastwood Sq, Eastwood Rd; mains US\$4.70-13; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) A beautifully designed bistro-swift restaurant with a massive menu and style service. There's a large outdoor deck, and a hidden section that makes you forget you're in a shopping village.

**Africa Traditional Pub & Grill** (☎ 012-362 1604; cnr Prospect & Hilda Sts; mains US\$5.50; 🕒 lunch & dinner) An outdoor deck, good food and traditional African beats make this one of the more upbeat, laid-back options in distinctly bourgeois Hatfield.

**Jose's** (☎ 012-430 7778; 235 Hilda St; mains US\$8; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Platters of delicious Mediterranean foods mean you'll understand why this quality eatery is a local favourite. When it's plate-breaking nights (Fridays and Satur-

days), you'll understand why there's so much outdoor seating.

**BROOKLYN & NEW MUCKLENEUK**

**Crawdaddy's** (☎ 012-460 0589; Shop 3, Brooklyn Piazza, cnr Middle & Dey Sts; mains US\$5.50-8; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍) With faux-Louisiana-swamp styling, this surf-and-turf place has a jumping, bar-style atmosphere and no-nonsense steak and seafood tucker.

**Blue Crane** (☎ 012-460 7615; Melk St; mains US\$5.50-11; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍) This restaurant overlooks a lake that is the breeding site for the endangered blue crane, South Africa's national bird. It does Afrikaner *potjiekos* and the pub is great at sundown.

**Cynthia's Indigo Moon** (☎ 012-346 8926; 283 Dey St; mains US\$7-20; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍) A lot of cows laid down their lives to make this menu possible, but the steak is fabulous, the seafood sublime and the atmosphere cosy and stylish. It also has a colossal wine cellar.

**Meat Company** (☎ 012-460 2515; 273 Middle St; mains US\$9-16; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍) The house burger (US\$6) is becoming a local legend at this cavernous paaen to the carnivorous. Vegetarians don't despair: there's an impressive platter of greens (US\$7), too.

**Drinking**

There are several bars and nightspots in trendy Hatfield, catering for all types. Burnett St offers a high density of bars, eateries and clubs, all cut through with lashings of backpacker bravado and student shenanigans.

**Cool Runnings** (☎ 012-362 0100; 1075 Burnett St) Reggae rules the roost at this perennially popular drinking haunt, but anyone's welcome at the party. Nights get hot, steamy and really quite drunken after 10pm.

**Herr Gunther's** (☎ 012-362 6975; Hatfield Sq, Burnett St) A Germanic answer to the Irish bar, this raucous place serves 2L jugs of beer, and sausages to soak them up.

**Eastwood's** (☎ 012-344 0243; cnr Eastwood & Park Sts) This Arcadia institution is packed before, during and after any rugby encounter. It's won the 'best pub in Pretoria' award three years in a row, though clearly not in the integration stakes.

**Oppikoppi Bar** (☎ 082-499 7668) On Magasyn Hill (opposite the Voortrekker Monument), this is one of the best-located pubs in Pretoria. The views over the city are great, particularly at sunset, and the bar offers DIY braais.

## Entertainment CINEMAS

There are several large cinema complexes in Pretoria. The *Pretoria News* lists screenings daily.

**Ster-Kinekor** (central bookings ☎ 082 16789; www.sterkinekor.co.za) also provides listings and makes bookings.

## LIVE MUSIC & NIGHTCLUBS

Despite being home to a large student population, Pretoria's live-music scene can be a bit uninspiring. Check out the *Pretoria News* for the latest listings.

The surrounding townships, especially Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, have plenty of shebeens; these are best visited with a black friend or as part of a tour.

## THEATRES

**State Theatre** (☎ 012-392 4000; www.statetheatre.co.za; cnr Prinsloo & Church Sts) hosts a range of productions – including opera, music, ballet and theatre.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

OR Tambo International Airport is South Africa's international hub, with flights from across the globe. See p752 for information.

### BUS

Most national and international bus services commence in Pretoria before picking up in Jo'burg, unless the general direction is north. Most long-distance buses leave from the **1928 Building** (Scheiding St) in the Pretoria train-station forecourt. You will also find booking and information offices here.

Most **Translux** (☎ 0861-589 282; www.translux.co.za), **City to City** (☎ 0861-589 282), **Intercape** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za), **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) and **SA Roadlink** (☎ 012-323 5105; www.saroadlink.co.za) services running from Jo'burg to Durban, the south coast and Cape Town originate in Pretoria. Services running north up the N1 also stop here – see p550 for full details of these services.

Translux, Greyhound and Intercape fares from Pretoria are identical to those from Jo'burg regardless of the one-hour difference in time. If you only want to go between the two cities, it will cost about US\$6.

**Baz Bus** (Cape Town ☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) will pick up and drop off at Pretoria hostels.

**North Link Tours** (☎ 012-323 0379) also runs from the 1928 Building and heads north to Polokwane (Pietersburg; US\$1.40, 3½ hours), Tzaneen (US\$20, five hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$26, 6½ hours).

### CAR

Many larger local and international companies are represented in Pretoria.

### MINIBUS TAXIS

Minibus taxis go from the main terminal by the train station and travel to a host of destinations including Jo'burg (US\$4).

### TRAIN

**Main Line** (☎ 0860 008 888; www.spoornet.co.za) trains running through Pretoria are the *Trans Karoo* (daily from Pretoria to Cape Town) and the *Komati* (daily from Jo'burg to Komatipoort via Nelspruit). The *Bosvelders* runs north via Polokwane (Pietersburg) to Musina, near the Zimbabwe border. The luxury *Blue Train*, which links Pretoria, Jo'burg and Cape Town originates here.

Pretoria train station is about a 20-minute walk from the city centre. Buses run along Paul Kruger St to Church Sq, the main local bus terminal.

### METRO

Because of high incidents of crime, we don't recommend travelling between Pretoria and Jo'burg by Metro.

## Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

If you call ahead, most hostels, and many hotels, offer free pick-up.

**Get You There** (☎ 012-346 3175) runs shuttles between OR Tambo International Airport and Pretoria day and night about every hour, charging US\$13 to/from hostels and hotels.

### BUS & MINIBUS TAXI

There's an extensive network of local buses. A booklet of timetables and route maps is available from the inquiry office in the main **bus terminus** (☎ 012-308 0839; Church Sq) or from pharmacies. Fares range from US\$0.70 to US\$0.90, depending on the distance.

### TAXI

There are taxi ranks on the corner of Church and Van der Walt Sts, and on the corner of

Pretorius and Paul Kruger Sts. Or you can get a metered taxi from **Rixi Taxis** (☎ 0800 325 807; per km US\$1.10).

## AROUND PRETORIA Smuts' House Museum

General JC Smuts was a brilliant scholar, Boer general, politician and international statesman. An architect of the Union of South Africa, he was the country's prime minister from 1919 to 1924, and 1939 to 1948.

Smuts' home was once known as Doornkloof and has been turned into an excellent **museum** (☎ 012-667 1941; smutshouse@worldonline.co.za; Nelmapius Rd, Irene; adult/child US\$0.70/0.40, picnic garden per car US\$0.70; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun). Surrounded by a wide veranda and shaded by trees, it has a family atmosphere, and gives a vivid insight into Smuts' amazing life.

The house is signposted from both the N14 freeway (US\$3.80) and Rte 21. The most direct route from Pretoria is along Louis Botha Ave to Irene.

## De Wildt Cheetah Research Centre

Just past Hartbeespoort, about 50km north-west of Pretoria, is the highly impressive **De Wildt Cheetah Research Centre** (☎ 012-504 1921; www.dewildt.org.za; Farm 22, Rte 513 Pretoria North Rd; tours US\$25, cheetah runs US\$14; ☎ tours 8.30am & 1.30pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, cheetah runs summer/winter 7am/8am Tue & Fri), famous for its breeding success of rare and endangered animals.

Work began at De Wildt in the 1960s and to a large degree it's thanks to the work done here that the cheetah is now off the endangered species list.

Tours provide a fascinating insight into some of Africa's most endangered predators. In an open truck you'll see cheetahs of different age groups being fed, and learn about their precarious existence in the wild. You can also go on a thrilling cheetah run, but only if you're fit! Bookings for all activities are essential and you should call at least a week in advance.

To get to De Wildt from Pretoria (via Hartbeespoort), take Rte 5131 northwest for 34km – the centre is on the left, about half a kilometre off the main road.

## National Botanical Gardens

Around 9km east of the city centre, the **gardens** (☎ 012-114 3200; Cussonia Ave, Brummeria; adult/child

US\$1.40/0.70; ☎ 6am-6pm) cover 77 hectares and are planted with indigenous flora from around the country.

By car, head east along Church St (Rte 104) for about 8km, then turn right into Cussonia Rd; the gardens are on the left-hand side. Take the Meyerspark or Murrayfield bus from Church Sq.

## FREE STATE

This is a place where farmers in floppy hats and overalls drive rusty bakkies full of sheep over bumpy roads; where giant fields of sunflowers languish by brightly painted Sotho houses. It's true that Free State doesn't hold any trump cards when it comes to South Africa's not-to-be-missed attractions. But if you travel to dig beneath the surface, a journey through the Free State can be a mind-opening experience. In this staunchly Afrikaans region it often seems the clock stopped ticking in the early 1990s. The line between the colours is stark, and dreams of an Afrikaner Arcadia live on. While there's no question that Free State has a long way to travel on the road to racial harmony, progress is happening. Today, even in the smallest rural villages, the once-impenetrable barrier between black and white is beginning to break apart.

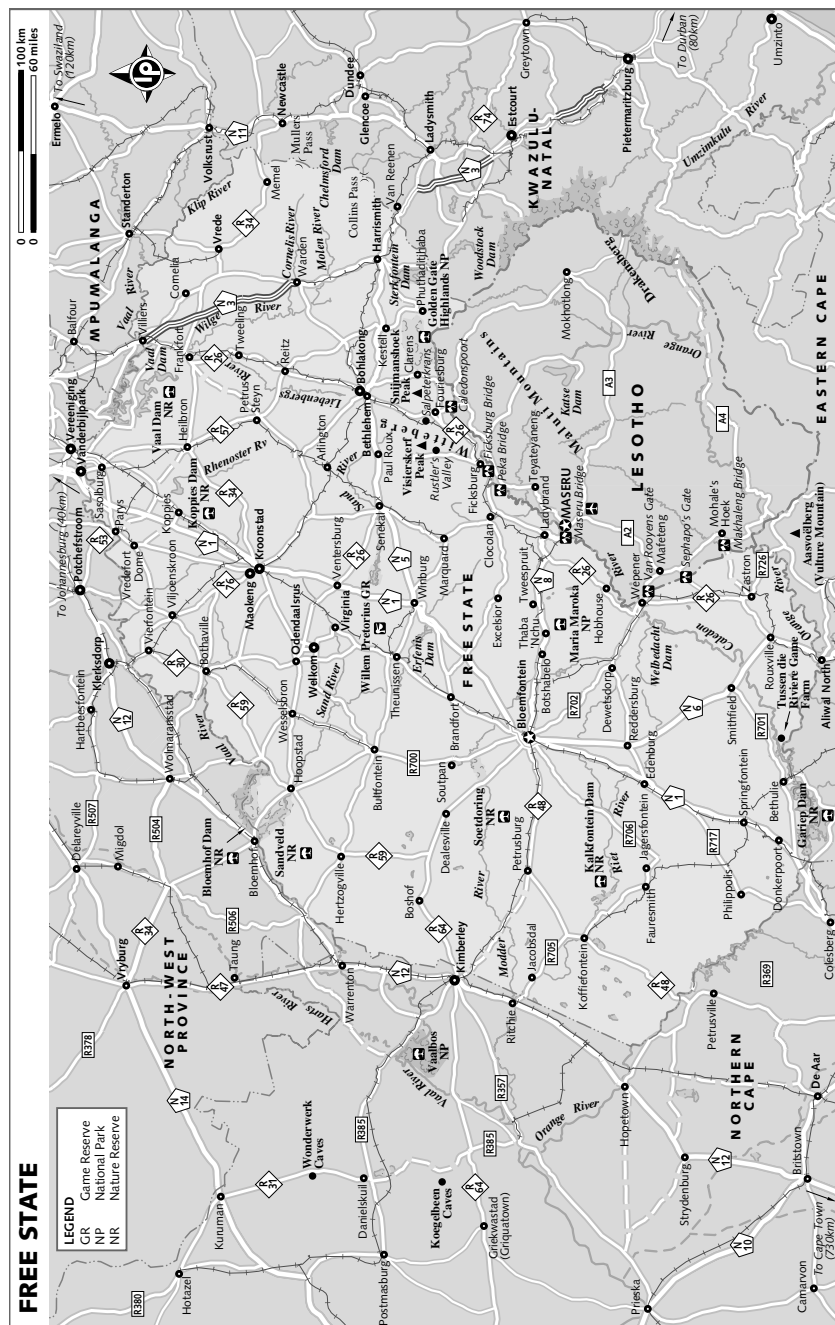
## BLOEMFONTEIN

☎ 051 / pop 480,499

Whether you're coming from Jo'burg or Cape Town, Kimberley or Lesotho, Bloemfontein's location, smack in the middle of the country at the intersection of a few major highways, makes it an ideal place to crash. Easy and safe to navigate, there are sophisticated restaurants and more than a few great pubs to drown the memory of a hard day's drive with icy pints of lager.

As the provincial capital of the Free State and South Africa's judicial capital, tourism in 'Bloem' (as the locals call it) is generally business oriented. But it's also a university town, so when school's in session, nightlife is raging. There's no real reason to go out of your way to visit Bloem, although it has a few interesting sights if you are in the neighbourhood. It's definitely more of a jumping-off point than anything else. However, if you've got some time to kill within city limits this relaxed place boasts a few interesting attractions,





including one of South Africa's most striking galleries.

## History

Originally called Manguang (Place of Cheetahs) by the Tswana people who inhabited it, today the Afrikaans name translates to 'Fountain of Flowers'. Bloemfontein became the capital of the newly minted Orange Free State in 1854. At the time it was a struggling frontier village in constant danger of being wiped out by the soldiers of Sotho king Moshoeshoe. By the end of Johannes Brand's 25-year term as president, however, Bloem had grown into a wealthy city with imposing buildings and rail links to the coast.

## Information

**Connix Internet** (☎ 051-448 5648; Loch Logan Waterfront; per hr US\$4) A flash place in the Waterfront shopping centre, with fast connections and prices to match.

**Free State Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism** (☎ 051-405 4062; fax 051-403 3778; PO Box 264, Bloemfontein 9300) For information about national parks and reserves in the area.

**Information centre** (☎ 051-405 8489; www.bloemfontein.co.za; 60 Park Rd; ☎ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri; to noon Sat) Pick up a walking-tour map.

**Tourist centre** (Park Rd) Long-distance buses arrive here, and there are ticket counters for all major bus companies.

## Sights & Activities

### OLIEWENHUIS ART MUSEUM

One of South Africa's most striking art galleries, the **Oliewenhuis Art Museum** (☎ 051-447 9609; oliewen@nasmus.co.za; 16 Harry Smith St; admission by donation; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun), housed in an exquisite 1935 mansion, holds a collection of works by South African artists.

The museum's café has breakfast and lunch mains for US\$2.80 to US\$4.70 (it's closed on Monday).

### NATIONAL WOMEN'S MEMORIAL & ANGLO-BOER WAR MUSEUM

Commemorating the 26,000 women and children who died in British concentration camps during the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War, the National Women's Memorial depicts a bearded Afrikaner, setting off on his pony to fight the British, bidding a last farewell to his wife and baby, who are to perish in one of the camps. It's a powerful image and one still buried in the psyche of many Afrikaners.

The memorial is in front of the **Anglo-Boer War Museum** (☎ 051-447 3447; Monument Rd; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 2-5pm Sun), which has some interesting displays, including photos from concentration camps set up not only in South Africa, but also in Bermuda, India and Portugal.

### MANGUANG

You can hang out in the shebeens or eat a simple meal at a local dive with people you're unlikely to meet on a trip to the Waterfront or the Mystic Boer (p563) in the vibrant Manguang township. Tours are informal and usually run for as long as you want. They cost about US\$27, with discounts for groups. Book at the Information Centre.

### NAVAL HILL

This was the site of the British naval-gun emplacements during the Anglo-Boer War. On the eastern side of the hill is a large white horse, a landmark for British cavalry during the war.

There are good views from the top of the hill, where you'll also find the **Franklin Game Reserve** (☎ 051-405 8124; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm). Walking is permitted, so get out of the car and hit the trail for a good old-fashioned bush romp.

### WATERFRONT

Yes, Bloemfontein has a Waterfront, modelled on Cape Town's. Although it's a bit tacky, Bloem's Waterfront is more pleasant than a shopping mall. It's outside, set on a small body of water.

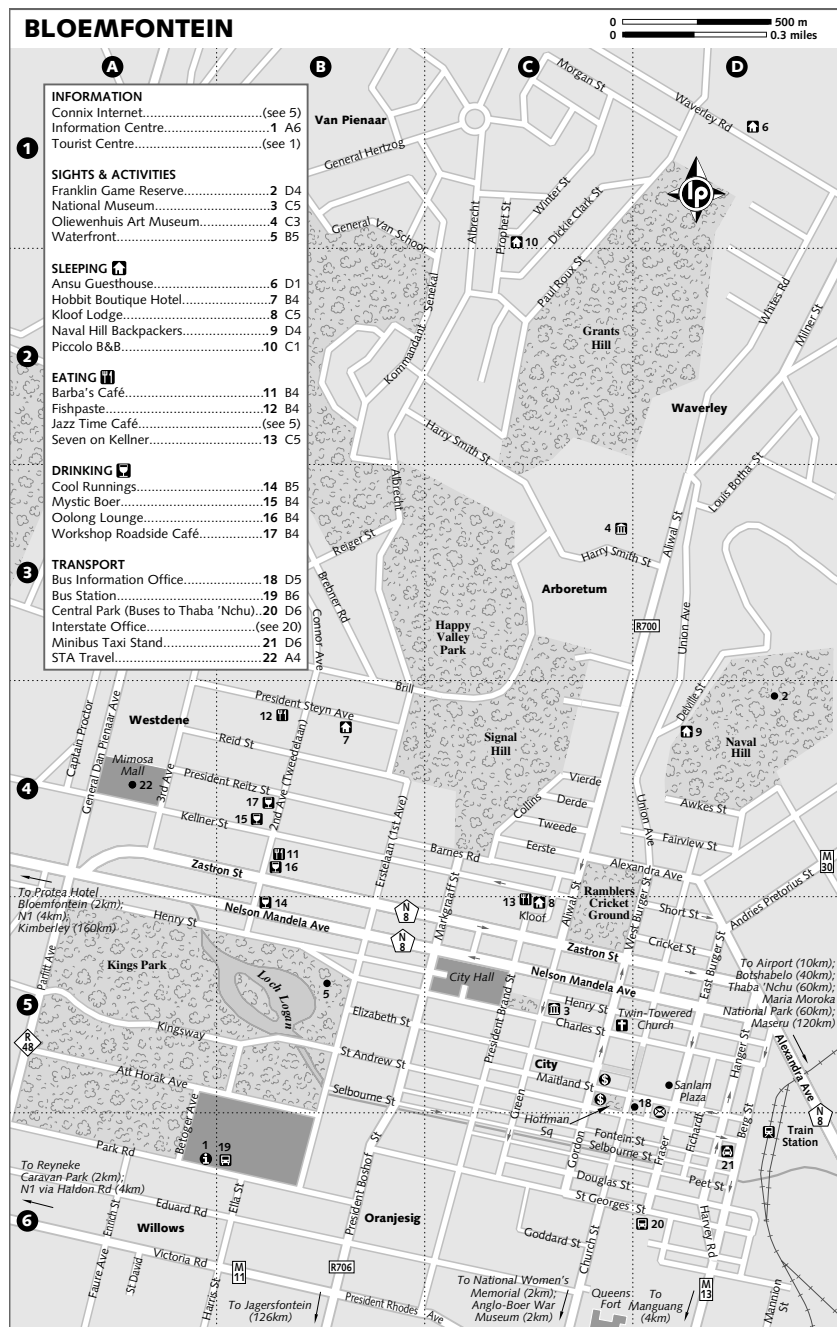
### NATIONAL MUSEUM

A great re-creation of a 19th-century street, complete with sound effects, is the most interesting display at this **museum** (☎ 051-447 9609; 36 Alwal St; admission US\$0.70; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun). There is also a shop and a café here.

### Sleeping BUDGET

**Reyneke Caravan Park** (☎ 051-523 3888; fax 051-523 3887; Petrusburg Rd; camp sites US\$9.50, s/d chalets US\$24/30; ☎) Two kilometres out of town, this well-organised park has a swimming pool, a trampoline and a basketball court. It's a good place for kids.

**Naval Hill Backpackers** (☎ 051-430 7266; www.navalhillbackpackers.co.za; Delville St; dm/d US\$11/24;



## BLOEMFONTEIN

### INFORMATION

- Connix Internet..... (see 5)  
 Information Centre..... 1 A6  
 Tourist Centre..... (see 1)

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Franklin Game Reserve..... 2 D4  
 National Museum..... 3 C5  
 Oliewenhuis Art Museum..... 4 C3  
 Waterfront..... 5 B5

### SLEEPING

- Ansu Guesthouse..... 6 D1  
 Hobbit Boutique Hotel..... 7 B4  
 Kloof Lodge..... 8 C5  
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### EATING

- Barba's Café..... 11 B4  
 Fishpaste..... 12 B4  
 Jazz Time Café..... (see 5)  
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### DRINKING

- Cool Runnings..... 14 B5  
 Mystic Boer..... 15 B4  
 Oolong Lounge..... 16 B4  
 Workshop Roadside Café..... 17 B4

### TRANSPORT

- Bus Information Office..... 18 D5  
 Bus Station..... 19 B6  
 Central Park (Buses to Thaba 'Nchu)..... 20 D6  
 Interstate Office..... (see 20)  
 Mibus Taxi Stand..... 21 D6  
 STA Travel..... 22 A4

(P) This is an über-cool looking hostel with funky industrial décor. Unfortunately, we've had numerous reports from travellers of management giving the distinct impression that guests were intruding on a private party. Places can switch owners faster than guidebooks are published, however, so if the personnel change this has serious kickass backpacker potential.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Ansu Guesthouse** (☎ 051-436 4654; www.ansuguesthouse.com; 80 Waverley Rd; s/d US\$30/35; (P) (P)) The three modern rooms here are light and airy, done up in earthy colours and open onto a leafy garden area where there's a gazebo by the pool.

**Piccolo B&B** (☎ 051-436 1483; kay@imaginat.co.za; 4 Prophet St; r from US\$34; (P)) A perfect choice for families or small groups, Piccolo's offers an African-themed unit that can sleep four and a few other roomy options. The garden is filled with all sorts of birds.

**Kloof Lodge** (☎ 051-447 7603; kloof@global.co.za; 7 Kellner St; s/d US\$40/54; (P) (P) (X)) This rambling place is nothing fancy, but perfectly fine for a night. There's a cosy bar and lounge and a very good restaurant, Seven on Kellner (right), just next door. Ask for the luxury room – it's huge, boasts cooler furniture and costs the same.

**Hobbit Boutique Hotel** (☎ 051-447 0663; www.hobbit.co.za; 19 President Steyn Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$80/108; (P) (P) (P) (P)) Don't be scared off by the local Tolkien society that meets here, the charming, old-world Hobbit is the winner of numerous awards attracting romantics and dignitaries alike. The bedrooms are cottage-style and great views from the outdoor patio.

**Protea Hotel Bloemfontein** (☎ 051-444 4321; bloemf@iafrica.com; 202 Nelson Mandela Ave, Brandweg; s/d US\$87/130; (P) (P) (P)) Part of the Protea Luxury Collection, this upmarket place has all-white Asian-inspired rooms. You can order drinks on the terrace by the long, skinny pool in summer or check out the year-round on-site gourmet restaurant and cocktail bar with a fireplace.

### Eating

**Jazz Time Café** (☎ 051-430 5727; Waterfront; mains US\$2.80-5; (X) lunch & dinner) This hip eatery has an interesting menu featuring zippy zivas – Yemeni-style layered dough wrapped around a variety of fillings (such as Cajun chicken,

feta and avocado), folded and toasted. There are cocktails and jazz recitals of an evening.

**Fishpaste** (☎ 051-430 2662; 31 President Steyn Ave; mains US\$4-5; (X) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Choose from blackened Canadian salmon with green-bean salad, Vietnamese prawn rolls or rolled pork fillet at this trendy, modern restaurant. The bar is buzzy and the prices extremely reasonable.

**Barba's Café** (☎ 051-430 2542; 16 2nd Ave; (X) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Barba's is recommended by locals and rightly so: it's one of Bloem's hidden secrets. The Greek specialities, including chicken souvlaki (US\$5), are delicious. It also has a large cocktail list and live music on Wednesday.

**Seven on Kellner** (☎ 051-447 7928; 7 Kellner St; mains US\$7-8; (X) lunch & dinner) This place does everything from wood-fired pizzas to delicious Middle Eastern and Indian inspired delights. Afterwards, chill on the patio with a bottle of bubbly picked from the extensive wine list.

### Drinking & Entertainment

As a university town, Bloemfontein has a good range of places to drink, party and listen to live music. The corners of 2nd Ave and Kellner St, and Zastron St and Nelson Mandela Ave, bustle with revellers in the evening and compete for the nightlife scene with the Waterfront.

**Mystic Boer** (☎ 051-430 2206; 84 Kellner St) Bloem's most popular pub and live music venue provides an eccentric twist to Afrikaner culture, with psychedelic pictures of long-bearded Boers on the walls. One 'big' band plays per month, plus there are regular gigs by unsigned rock and (sometimes) hip-hop outfits. Pizza and burgers provide the fuel.

**Oolong Lounge** (☎ 051-448 7244; 16A 2nd Ave; (X) Tue-Sat) Bloem's latest hot spot, this ultra hip lounge attracts a trendy young crowd. The super-mod interior is slick and shiny with black leather chairs and space for dancing.

**Cool Runnings** (☎ 051-430 7364; 163 Nelson Mandela Ave; admission US\$7-10) Part of a nationwide chain of Caribbean-themed bar-restaurants, this Cool Runnings has DJs and live bands – mostly rock and blues – at weekends and karaoke on Sunday.

**Workshop Roadside Café** (☎ 051-447 2761; cnr 2nd Ave & President Reitz St) A large, raucous pub with loud music, a big-screen TV and a reputation as a bit of a bikers' hangout, it's a good place to sink a few beers.



## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Bloemfontein airport is 10km from the city centre and there is no transport to/from the airport, except private taxi.

**SAAirlink** (☎ 051-433 3225) and **Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 011 344 7200; www.flynationwide.co.za) connect Bloemfontein with Cape Town (US\$160) and Jo'burg (US\$135) among many other destinations.

**STA Travel** (☎ 051-444 6062; laudep@statravel.co.za; Mimosa Mall) can organise flights.

### BUS

Long-distance buses leave from the tourist centre in Park Rd. **Translux** (☎ 051-408 4888; www.translux.co.za) runs daily buses to Durban (US\$20, nine hours), Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$20, five hours), Port Elizabeth (US\$27, nine hours), East London (US\$24, seven hours), Knysna (US\$36, 12 hours) and Cape Town (US\$43, 10 hours).

**Greyhound** (☎ 051-447 1558; www.greyhound.co.za) runs daily buses to Durban (US\$31, 9½ hours), Pretoria (US\$27, seven hours), Cape Town (US\$48, 12 hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$31, 10 hours).

A bus called **Interstate** (☎ 051-448 4951) runs from the information centre in Bloem to Thaba 'Nchu every hour (US\$1.40). There's also a shuttle bus to Bloem run by the hotels in Thaba 'Nchu daily except Tuesday and Thursday. The ticket price of US\$7 includes vouchers for drinks, food and a game on the casino tables. Book both at the tourist centre.

**Big Sky Buses** (www.bigskycoaches.co.za) operate from the Central Park shopping centre in St Georges St to Maseru in Lesotho (US\$4.70, three hours) at 6.10am and 2.10pm Monday to Friday.

### MINIBUS TAXI

Most minibus taxis leave from opposite the train station for Maseru, Lesotho (US\$6, three hours), Kimberley (US\$7, four hours) and Jo'burg (US\$11, six hours). There's usually at least one bus daily, but times vary.

### TRAIN

The **Shosholozo Meyl** (☎ 0860 008 888; www.spoornet.co.za) *Trans Oranje* travels weekly via Bloemfontein between Cape Town (1st/2nd/economy class US\$52/36/21) and Durban (US\$36/25/15). The *Algoa* runs five times weekly via Bloemfontein between Jo'burg

(1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/7, about seven hours) and Port Elizabeth (US\$32/22/13). The *Amatola* runs five times weekly via Bloemfontein on the run between Jo'burg (1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/7) and East London (US\$28/20/11). The *Diamond Express* runs three times weekly between Bloemfontein and Jo'burg (1st/2nd/economy US\$19/14/12).

## Getting Around

Bloem's public-bus system, Interstate, provides infrequent services that finish early in the evening. The best place for schedules and information is the **Interstate office** (☎ 051-448 4951) in the Central Park shopping centre in St Georges St. There is also a **bus information office** (Hoffman Sq).

## NORTHERN FREE STATE

Gold was discovered in this part of the Free State in April 1938 and a rush started immediately. Now the Free State goldfields produce more than a third of the country's output. Unless you're really interested in mining or yearning to spend a few days on a farm, there's not much to attract travellers to the northern Free State.

## Kroonstad

☎ 056 / pop 106,064

Kroonstad, on the N1, is a typical large, rural Free State town and makes a good base for exploring nearby Koppies Dam Nature Reserve.

The **old market building** (cnr Mark & Murray Sts), opposite the pretty magistrate's building, is a national monument. You can see the **Celliers statue** in the grounds of the impressive **NG Moederkerk** (Mother Church; Cross St). Sarel Celliers is standing on a gun carriage making the Blood River vow.

The 4000-hectare **Koppies Dam Nature Reserve** (☎ 056-722521; ☎ 7am-9pm), located about 70km northeast of Kroonstad on the Rhenoster River, is popular with anglers.

It's easy to find the **Arcadia Guesthouse** (☎ 056-212 8280; arcadia@gcs.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$38/47) in town. The classical theme extends from the rooms to large garden scattered with faux-Greek statues. Dinner can be arranged (US\$8).

There are daily Translux, Intercape and Greyhound services to Jo'burg/Pretoria (US\$20, four hours), East London (US\$30, 10 hours) and Paarl (US\$32, 14 hours). All

buses stop out on the highway at the Shell Ultra City.

## EASTERN HIGHLANDS

Bumped up against the wild and rugged mountains that guard Lesotho's border, this is the most beautiful portion of the Free State and well worth exploring. The region boasts sandstone monoliths towering above undulating golden fields, hippy hideaways, fabulous country retreats and South Africa's newest art destination, trendy little Clarens.

## Golden Gate Highlands National Park

The **Golden Gate Highlands National Park** (☎ 058-255 0012; fax 255 0022; admission per vehicle US\$8) might not boast any of the Big Five, but if you're in the area don't miss spending a sunset here. The scenery from the western approach is pretty tempting – loads of blazing sandstone and rusting old cars – but only stop here for a few moments, then head out into the open and take the turn-off for the Basatho Cultural Village. You'll now be off the main road and in the middle of the grasslands. Pull out a bottle of good South African red and toast the end of another perfect African day.

There are plenty of animals in the park, including blesboks, elands, oribis, grey rheboks, Burchell's zebras, jackals, baboons and numerous bird species, including the rare bearded and Cape vulture. Winters (June to August) in the park can be very cold, with frost and snow; summers (January to March) are mild but rain falls at this time and cold snaps are possible. Buy entry permits at the park reception.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

### Rhebok Hiking Trail

This well-maintained, circular, 33km trail (US\$9.50 per person) is a two-day trek and a great way to see the park. On the second day the track climbs up to a viewpoint on the side of Generaalskop (2732m), the highest point in the park, from where Mont-aux-Sources and the Malutis can be seen. The return trail to Glen Reenen passes Langtoon Dam.

Hikers need to be reasonably fit. The trail is limited to 18 people at a time and must be booked through **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org).

There are also shorter hiking trails in the foothills, ranging from 45 minutes to half a day.

## Basotho Cultural Village

Within the park you'll find the small **Basotho Cultural Village** (☎ 058-721 0300; basotho@dorea.co.za; tours US\$2.80; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun), essentially an open-air museum, peopled by actors depicting various aspects of traditional Sotho life. There's a curio shop and an outdoor restaurant, open for lunch and dinner, serving a few Sotho dishes.

A two-hour guided hiking trail (US\$3.40 per person) explores medicinal and other plants, and a rock-art site. You can stay in two-person self-catering rondavels (US\$54), but bring your own food.

## SLEEPING

**Glen Reenen Rest Camp** (☎ 011-428 9111; 2-person camp sites US\$13, d chalets US\$51) Popular with South Africans on holiday, with well-maintained chalets and camp sites by the river.

**Protea Hotel Golden Gate** (☎ 058-255 1000; www.proteahotels.com/goldengate; s/d around US\$48/67, d chalets US\$63, buffet dinner US\$11; ☎ ) The park's only 'proper' hotel is fabulously located up against red sandstone cliffs, boasting wonderful terrace views and a snug coffee shop.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Minibus taxis run between Bethlehem and Harrismith, via Clarens and Phuthaditjhaba, and go right through the park. Alternatively, with your own vehicle you can approach from Harrismith on Rte 74 and then Rte 712.

## Clarens

☎ 058

The jewel of the Free State, Clarens is one of those places you stumble upon expecting little then find yourself talking about long after you depart. Set against a backdrop of craggy limestone rocks, hunter-green hills, spun-gold fields and the magnificent Maluti Mountains, this town of whitewashed buildings, sophisticated art galleries and quiet shady streets is the perfect bucolic country retreat.

**Mountain Odyssey Tourism** (☎ 058-256 1173; www.infoclarens.com; Main St; ☎ 8am-6pm) is a one-stop shop for all things outdoors. Popular excursions include white-water rafting (US\$51, three hours) and horse riding (US\$24, two hours).

## SLEEPING

**Clarens Inn** (☎ 058-256 1119; schwim@netactive.co.za; 93 Van Reenan St; r per person US\$14) Run by the same



friendly folks that operate Mountain Odyssey Tourism, this is the town's best budget option.

**Lake Clarens Guesthouse** (☎ 058-256 1436; weyer@intercom.co.za; r per person with breakfast from US\$30) This impeccably maintained guesthouse offers buckets of intimate country charm and luxuriously appointed bedrooms. There are fabulous views from the terrace, where you can enjoy a hearty morning breakfast or a cup of late afternoon tea.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are a few minibus taxis to Bethlehem and Harrismith from Clarens – although frequencies and costs weren't exactly clear.

### Fouriesburg

☎ 058

Entirely surrounded by wild, craggy mountains, Fouriesburg occupies a magnificent spot just 12km north of the Caledonspoor border post to Lesotho. Two nearby peaks are the highest in Free State.

Fouriesburg was a stronghold in the Anglo-Boer War and was pronounced the capital of Free State after the British occupied Bethlehem. There are a number of fine old **sandstone buildings** in the town including President Steyn's house.

About 11km outside Fouriesburg, and just 800m from the Lesotho border, **Camelroc Guest Farm** (☎ 058-223 0368; www.camelroc.co.za; dm US\$8, r per person US\$25, chalets from US\$52) sits in a spectacular location against a camel-shaped sandstone outcropping with fine views over the Maluti Mountains. It's a great rustic retreat, offering a variety of sleeping options.

### Rustler's Valley

☎ 051

To journey into the wildly beautiful heart of nowhere, ditch the pavement and head down brown dusty byways to random oases scattered amid this rough-and-ready countryside. This remote valley is located off Rte 26 between Fouriesburg and Ficksburg.

**Rustler's Valley Retreat** (☎ 051-933 3939; www.rustlers.co.za; dm US\$9, r from US\$34; 🏠), the country's original hippy hangout, is an 'experimental area' meaning you'll find people in various altered mental states. There's an on-site restaurant and digs in either dorms or private cottages. A variety of workshops, from drumming to permaculture are taught.

The retreat does pick-ups (US\$2.80) from Ficksburg.

In the same area, just a few kilometres in the other direction, is the **Franshoek Mountain Lodge** (☎ 051-933 2828; www.franshoek.co.za; r per person US\$34; 🏠 🏡), perfect if you're looking for a completely opposite experience. It's a working farm with comfortable sandstone cottages, a terrific round swimming pool, Zulu steam room and great views of the valley.

### Ficksburg

☎ 051

Nestled against the purple majesty of the Maluti Mountains on the banks of the Caledon River, Ficksburg is particularly spectacular in winter when the mountains are topped with whipped-cream dollops of snow.

Ficksburg is the centre of the Free State's cherry industry. There's a **Cherry Festival** (www.cherryfestival.co.za) in November but September and October are the best times to see the trees in bloom. The **Cherry Trail** is a tourist route around the district; get a map from the **tourist office** (☎ 051-933 2130; 🕒: 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) in the Caltex office on the main road.

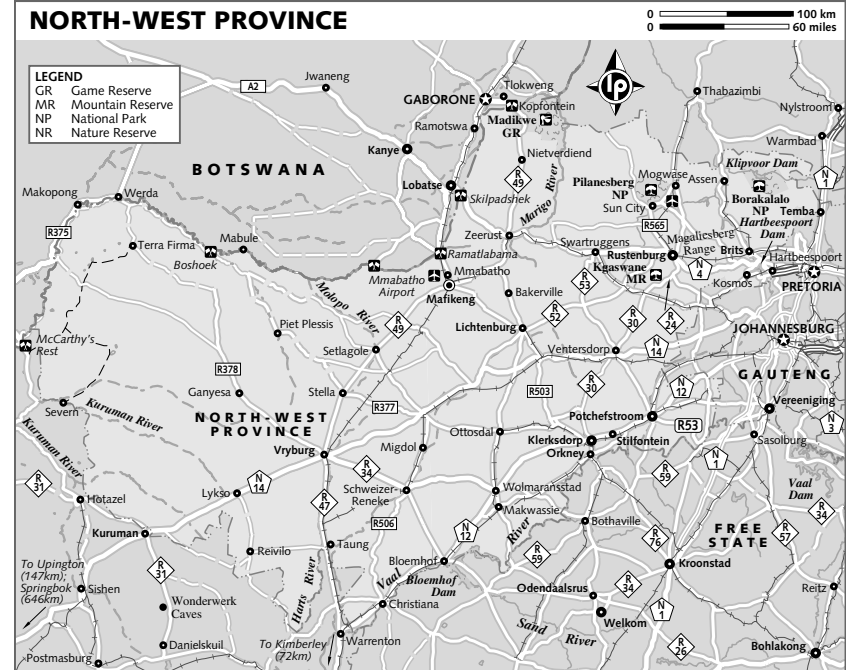
The **Bella Rosa Guesthouse** (☎ 051-933 2623; bellarosa@telkomsa.net; 21 Bloem St; r per person US\$34; 🏠) is in a charming, Victorian sandstone building. The 12 guest rooms are decked out with fine antiques and modern artwork. Dinner can be arranged, and there's a cosy pub with a well-stocked wine cellar.

## NORTH-WEST PROVINCE

With some of its most revered attractions just two hours from Jo'burg, the North-West Province provides the perfect antidote for escaping big-city clutter. Home to some of the country's best-kept secrets, the region offers something for anyone – from music lovers to safari addicts to gamblers.

The Disney-esque Sun City and Lost City casino resorts are South Africa's most opulent and kitschy theme parks. Once an exclusive sanctuary for the white elite, today the apartheid-era's most famous retreat is a multicultural place popular with South Africans of all colours (along with plenty of tourists).

When you tire of artificial beaches, head into the wild. Nearby Pilanesberg National Park is our pick for a quick safari. Further afield, Madikwe Game Reserve is one of



South Africa's best open secrets. Even though it's closer to Jo'burg than Kruger, and teeming with the same animals, it sees far fewer visitors.

### HISTORY

The North-West Province takes in much of the area once covered by the fragmented apartheid homeland of Bophuthatswana (often shortened to 'Bop'), dumping ground for thousands of 'relocated' Tswana people. The nominally independent homeland became famous for the excesses of the white South African men, who visited its casinos and pleasure resorts for interracial encounters with prostitutes, which would have been illegal in South Africa itself.

The North-West Province was the site of a complex and sophisticated Iron-Age civilisation centred on the 'lost city' of Kaditshwene, about 30km north of modern-day Zeerust. The people who lived here had an economy so developed they traded copper and iron jewellery with China. By 1820, when European missionaries first visited the city, it was bigger than Cape Town. In the end the peace-loving

inhabitants of Kaditshwene proved no match for the aggression of the Sotho, displaced by Zulu incursions into the Free State. The city was sacked by a horde of 40,000 people and fell into ruins.

Diamonds were discovered in the province in the 1870s, resulting in an enormous rush to the fields around Lichtenburg. Mining is still important here and there are extensive platinum mines near Rustenburg.

### RUSTENBURG

☎ 014 / pop 123,000

Sitting at the edge of the Magaliesberg Range, Rustenburg is a large and prosperous mining town about 115km northwest of Jo'burg. There's no particular reason to visit, other than it makes a handy base if you're visiting nearby Sun City or Pilanesberg National Park and wanting to stay elsewhere (budget travellers will find this option particularly appealing).

On the way into Rustenburg, you'll find the well-stocked **tourist information centre** (☎ 014-597 0904; Main Rd; 🕒: 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Joan's B&B** (☎ 014-533 3086; joan@joansbnb.co.za; 61 Wildevy Ave, Protea Park; s/d with breakfast US\$20/34) Joan's is a good old-fashioned B&B offering simple but tidy rooms; the owners serve a hearty breakfast.

**Bushwillows B&B** (☎ 014-537 2333; wjmcgill@lantic.net; s/d US\$20/41) This is a lovely option about 12km outside town off Rte 24. Set in natural bush, it's a tranquil B&B and the friendly owner (an artist) knows a lot about South African wildlife.

**Traveller's Inn** (☎ 014-592 7658; travinn@mweb.co.za; 99 Leyds St; s/d with half board US\$40/74) This guesthouse is our top choice in town considering rates include breakfast and dinner and the rooms are comfy and well appointed.

**Karl's Bauernstube** (☎ 014-537 2128; Rte 24; mains US\$2.80-5; ☺; lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat, lunch Sun) An Austrian restaurant offering delights such as smoked warthog and sauerkraut (US\$5.50), and crocodile ragout (US\$4.70).

## Getting There & Away

**Intercap** (☎ 0861 287 287; www.intercape.co.za) stops in Rustenburg daily on its run between Pretoria (US\$15, four hours) and Gaborone, Botswana (US\$20, five hours). The bus stops at the **BP petrol station** (nr Van Staden & Smit Sts), from where you can catch a minibus taxi into town (about US\$0.70).

## SUN CITY

☎ 014

Welcome to Sun City, South African style. At **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za; admission US\$8), the legendary creation of entrepreneur Sol Kerzer, Disneyland collides with ancient Egypt in a demented attempt to look like Vegas. Filled with gilded statues of lions and monkeys, acres of artificial beaches, exploding volcanoes and hundreds upon hundreds of clinking slot machines, there's no question this gambling-centric resort is almost grotesquely gaudy, yet a visit here can also be pretty damn fun.

Started as an apartheid-era haven for wealthy whites, these days one of Sun City's best features is the mix of black, white and especially Asian people who flock here at weekends. Losers at the tables can also console themselves with the thought that they are helping to pay over 3500 salaries.

If you're tired of just hanging around the hostel, Sun City is a pretty good bargain. The

admission fee covers all the main attractions, and you'll also be given 30 'Sunbucks' (equal to about US\$4), which can be spent at the various restaurants, shops or slot machines. Of course if you've got the cash to splash out, this place also boasts one of the world's most luxurious hotels.

## Sights & Activities

The best part of Sun City is undeniably **Lost City**, which is entered over a bridge flanked by life-sized fake elephants, and basically consists of **Valley of the Waves**, a pool with a large-scale wave-making machine, a sandy beach, numerous water slides and other amusement park rides. Every hour or so a voice booms out some nonsense about lost civilisations and earthquakes from a hidden mike, and the bridge shakes while dry ice pours out of either side. It's cheesy, but fun.

You'll find separate smoking and non-smoking casinos in the **entertainment centre**. Done up in a jungle theme with animal murals painted on the dome ceiling, it also houses food courts, shops and movie theatres.

In the heart of Lost City is **Palace of the Lost City**, a hotel that could inspire hallucinations, but to which access is prohibited to all but its lucky – and wealthy – guests.

Eighteen holes at the superb **Gary Player Country Club** or the **Lost City Golf Course** cost US\$67 (US\$47 for hotel guests).

Near the main entrance is **Waterworld**, on the shores of a large artificial lake, which has facilities for parasailing (US\$50), jet skiing (US\$32) and water-skiing (US\$32).

## Sleeping

If the Sun City hotels are too expensive (and you have your own transport), consider staying at Pilanesberg National Park (opposite) or the town of Rustenburg (left) and making the complex a day trip only.

All the following hotels can be booked through **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za) or **Sun International central reservations** (☎ 011-780 7800; www.suninternational.com).

**Sun City Cabanas** (r from US\$160; ☺ ☹) The cheapest option in the complex, is laid-back and aimed at family groups. Rooms are modern with all the typical upmarket conveniences.

**Sun City Hotel** (r from US\$280; ☺ ☹) The most lively of the hotels, with gambling facilities on the premises, as well as a number of res-

taurants, a nightclub and an entertainment centre.

**Cascades** (r from US\$322; ☺ ☹) The Cascades has been displaced by the Palace of the Lost City as the most luxurious hotel in the complex, but the rooms are still easily described as palatial.

**Palace of the Lost City** (r from US\$470; ☺ ☹) This over-the-top property redefines the fantasy of luxury. The rooms are done up with bold-coloured carpets and duvets and hand-painted ceilings but they seem almost unimaginative compared with the awesome public spaces and water-filled botanical gardens.

## Eating

All the hotels have a selection of restaurants. There are plenty of fast-food joints in the entertainment centre. Your 30 Sunbucks will just about get you a burger and a soft drink.

## Getting There & Away

Tiny Pilanesberg Airport is about 9km east of the Sun City complex. **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 1111; www.saairlink.co.za) operates flights six times a week from Jo'burg (US\$70) and three times a week from Cape Town (US\$140). From the airport, you'll need to hire a car or arrange for your hotel to pick you up.

From Jo'burg it's a two-hour drive. The most straightforward route is via Rustenburg and Boshhoek on the Rte 565.

## PILANESBERG NATIONAL PARK

Don't be fooled into thinking this **national park** (☎ 014-555 5356; adult/child US\$2.80/1.40, per vehicle US\$2; ☺ dawn-dusk) is some kind of tacky superannuated zoo just because it's nearly on top of Sun City. In reality, at over 500 sq km it's the fourth-largest national park in South Africa, with impressive scenery, particularly in the area around Mankwe Lake, which is the centre of an extinct 1200-million-year-old volcano.

All the big cats are here, and along with the lions and leopards and cheetahs, you'll also find jackals, hyenas, white and black rhinos, elephants, giraffes, hippos, buffalos, zebras and a wide variety of antelopes. Since early 2000, African wild dogs can be seen here too. The region also has a diverse population of birds.

There is an excellent 100km network of gravel roads, hides and picnic spots, and some good-value accommodation. Since it is no more than 25km from one end of the park to

the other, it is easy to cover the range of different environments in the park and to see a wide variety of animals. On no account should you miss the viewpoints over the crater from Lenong Lookout.

You'll either need to join an organised tour from Jo'burg or Pretoria or have your own transport to visit the park. **Footprints in Africa** (☎ 083-302 1976; www.footprintsinafrica.com; 425 Farenden St, Pretoria) based at the Pretoria Backpackers runs two-day Pilanesberg safaris, that also visit Sun City, starting at US\$160 per person.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Manyane Complex & Caravan Park** (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites US\$19, 2-person safari tent US\$47, d/tr chalet with breakfast from US\$98/152; ☺ ☹) Near Manyane Gate, this complex has posh chalets with high-quality facilities, including a shop and a decent restaurant. Rates include a hearty breakfast buffet.

**Bakgatla Complex** (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites US\$25, d safari tent US\$118, d/tr chalet with breakfast US\$123/132; ☺ ☹) The luxury safari tents at this site northwest of Manyane gate come with full baths and covered porches. Rates include a buffet breakfast.

**Kwa Maritane Lodge** (s/d with breakfast & dinner US\$216/297; ☺ ☹ ☹), **Bakubung Lodge** (s/d with breakfast & dinner US\$216/297; ☺ ☹ ☹) and **Tshukudu Lodge** (s/d with full board US\$472/675; ☺ ☹ ☹), all run by **Legacy hotels** (☎ 011-806 6806; www.legacyhotels.co.za), are the park's three main luxury options; Tshukudu is the most exclusive.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are four gates into Pilanesberg. Enter from the direction of Sun City using either Bakubung Gate to the west (via Rte 556) or Manyane Gate to the northeast (via Rte 556 and Rte 510 if you're coming from Pretoria and Jo'burg).

## Madikwe Game Reserve

One of the largest reserves in South Africa, **Madikwe** (☎ 083-629 8282) comprises 760 sq km of bushveld, savanna grassland and riverine forest on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. The reserve was established in 1991, not only to protect the endangered wildlife, but as a job-creation scheme and a way of providing a more sustainable environment for local people. A massive seven-year translocation operation, called Operation Phoenix, brought more than 10,000 animals into the area. All

of the Big Five, plus the endangered wild dog, are now present, together with over 350 bird species. It's also malaria-free, making it a good option for children. In all Madikwe is one of South Africa's best-kept secrets.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Madikwe is not open to day visitors, so to visit you'll have to book into one of the 24 lodges and camps within the park, all of which do guided wildlife drives in open vehicles.

**Mosethla Bush Camp** (☎ 011-444 9345; www.thebushcamp.com; s/d with full board & shared bathroom US\$216/337) There's nothing fancy about this intimate camp with abodes in open-fronted log cabins, especially since there's no electricity or running water – canvas bucket showers and hot water boilers ensure it's still comfortable. Rates include bush walks, wildlife drives and all meals.

**Jaci's Lodges** (☎ 083-00 2071; www.madikwe.com; s/d with full board around US\$870/1081, children US\$200; ☎ ☑ ☒) For sheer luxury, panache and design flair, Jaci's two lodges – Safari Lodge and Tree Lodge – can compete with anywhere else in Africa.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

It takes about four hours to drive from Gauteng to the reserve gates via the N4 and the Rte 510 from Rustenburg, or Rte 49 from Zeerust. Buses on their way from Gaborone can be prevailed upon to stop in the reserve.

## MAFIKENG

☎ 018 / pop 50,900

Mafikeng and Mmabatho were originally twin towns about 3km apart, but are now combined and Mmabatho is part of Mafikeng. Mmabatho was built as the capital of the 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana, and became famous for the monumental and absurd buildings erected by corrupt Bophuthatswana president, Lucas Mangope.

Today Mafikeng is a friendly and relaxed town with a large middle-class black population. The main reason to visit is the excellent **Mafikeng Museum** (☎ 018-381 6102; cnr Carrington & Martin Sts; admission by donation; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), which has reams of quirky exhibits and photos on the region dating from prehistoric times onward.

For help and information visit the rather grand **Mafikeng Tourism Info & Development Centre** (☎ 018-381 3155; www.tourisminorthwest.co.za;

cnr Litchenburg Rd & Nelson Mandela Dr; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat).

### Sleeping

**Garden View Guest Lodge** (☎ 018-381 3110; cnr North & Havenga Sts; s/d with shared bathroom from US\$20/30; ☎) This is Mafikeng's best option in this price bracket; pay around US\$14 extra and you'll get an en-suite room. All the spick-and-span rooms have a TV, fridge and kitchenette, and there's a very convivial restaurant-bar.

**Ferns Country Lodge** (☎ 018-381 5971; ferns@worldonline.co.za; 12 Cook St; r US\$80; ☎ ☑ ☒) Ferns is stylish and elegant with ultramodern furnishings and a beautiful garden. It's well sign-posted off Shippard St.

**Tusk Mmabatho Resort** (☎ 018-389 1111; mma batho@tusk-resorts.co.za; Nelson Mandela Dr; r US\$120; ☎ ☑ ☒) Mafikeng's luxury option, this opulent resort and casino, 3.5km from the town centre, is a legacy of the old Bophuthatswana homeland.

### Eating

**Café Farma** (☎ 018-381 4906; 17 Nelson Mandela Dr; mains US\$2.80; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) In Era's Pharmacy, this is *the* place for breakfast, light meals and heavy cakes. The atmosphere is buzzing.

**Karibu Restaurant** (☎ 018-386 2222; Nelson Mandela Dr; mains US\$6-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This grand restaurant in the Belvoir Place Hotel does good meals and has delightfully old-fashioned service: the plates come covered with silver domes, which the tuxedoed waiters remove with a flourish.

### Getting There & Around

Many people come through Mafikeng on their way to/from Botswana. Ramatlabama, 24km to the north, is the busiest border post and lies on the main route to/from Gaborone (Botswana).

**SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 1111; www.saairlink.co.za) has flights four days a week to Jo'burg (US\$120) with connections to other cities. The airport is 16km northwest of Mafikeng.

**Mmabatho Buses** (☎ 018-381 2680; Megacity) operates daily services from Megacity to Jo'burg (US\$1.40, six hours).

Long-distance minibus taxis leave from the forecourt of the Mafikeng train station, headed for the Botswana border (US\$0.70, running all day); Zeerust (US\$2); Lobatse (Botswana; US\$2.80); Gaborone (US\$4.70);

and Rustenburg (US\$4). Most leave early in the morning.

City buses run along the route between the **Mafikeng stop** (cnr Main St & Station Rd) and Megacity for a few rand.

## LIMPOPO

Modern Limpopo sits at a key crossroads between Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kruger National Park and Gauteng, and is often considered a doormat into more exotic destinations. But driving along the busy N1 highway that connects these places gives little impression of what gems lie off the beaten path.

Heading north from Jo'burg, southwest Limpopo (the Bushveld) undulates into scrubby hills that are home to several wildlife parks, lodges and resorts, including the hot springs at Bela-Bela. Big Five spotters will be better off heading north to the spectacular Mapungubwe National Park, a World Heritage Site that gives Kruger a run for its money.

East of the N1, the dry landscape gives way to the tropical fruit farms of the Letaba Valley and the intriguing traditional homeland of the Venda people.

### HISTORY

Sites in the area have offered up an archaeological record stretching back more than 500,000 years, while the area that is now Mapungubwe National Park was once the heart of one of Africa's most technologically advanced civilisations, holding sway over an area of 30,000 sq km and enjoying its heyday in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Voortrekkers made this region home in the mid-19th century, establishing their base in Pietersburg (now Polokwane) in 1886. Conflict with the local Ndebele people marked a period of resistance against the settlers.

Around the turn of the 20th century, eastern Limpopo, near the borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe, earned a reputation as a haven for ivory hunters, gunrunners and other outlaws – so much so that it was dubbed 'Crook's Corner'.

The province, which has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, is also a hot spot of racial tension: in 2005 some 35 farms were attacked, leading to the deaths of 13 white farmers.

### THE N1 HIGHWAY

The wide, mostly straight (but heavily tolled) N1 highway running from Jo'burg and Pretoria to the Zimbabwe border divides Limpopo. The province's major towns line this route, including the provincial capital of Pietersburg/Polokwane.

Translux, Greyhound and City to City buses run along the N1, and the *Bosveld* train stops at towns along the N1.

### Bela-Bela (Warmbaths)

☎ 014 / pop 37,200

The small, soporific town of Bela-Bela (Warmbaths) has grown on the back of the hot springs discovered by the Tswana in the early 19th century. Around 22,000L of the warm stuff bubble out of the earth every hour and there's no shortage of folk from the big cities to soak it up.

The **hydro spa** (☎ 014-736 2200; www.aventura.co.za; Voortrekker St; adult/child US\$8/7, 5-10pm adult & child US\$5.50; ☎ 7am-4pm & 5-10pm), at the Aventura Resort, is said to be the second biggest of its kind in the world and certainly sits at the centre of the Bela-Bela universe. Admission is cheaper in the evening.

### Nylsvley Nature Reserve

The 3000-hectare **Nylsvley Nature Reserve** (☎ 014-743 1074; adult/child/vehicle US\$1.40/0.70/2.70; ☎ 6am-6pm), 20km south of Naboom, is one of the country's best places to see birds (there are 426 species listed) and has a basic **camp site** (☎ 014-743 1074; camp sites US\$7). For the reserve, head 13km south on the N1 and turn east on to the road to Boekenhout for 8km.

### Mokopane (Potgietersrus) & Around

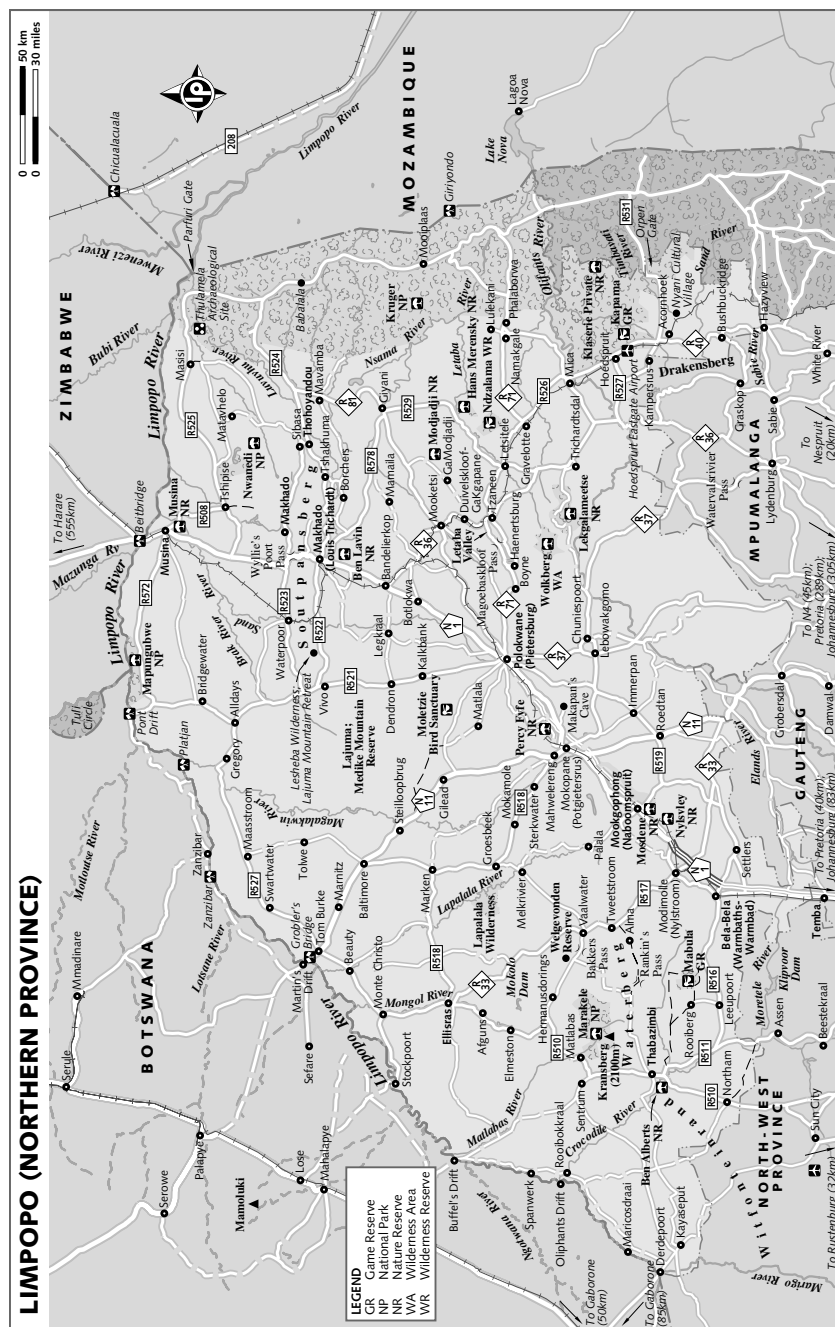
☎ 015 / pop 120,000

This conservative town (they all seem to be up this way), 227km north of Pretoria, was settled early by Voortrekkers, not without resistance from the people already living there. Things are quieter now, and the town is a key base of operations for platinum and diamond mining. The largest citrus farm in the southern hemisphere, the Zedebiela Citrus estate, is nearby.

The **Arend Dieperink Museum** (☎ 015-491 9735; adult/student/child US\$0.40/0.10/0.10; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri), at the back of the Publicity Association, tells the story of the local people's resistance to the Voortrekkers.

**Makapan's Caves** (☎ 015-491 8458; adult/student US\$3.40/2), 23km northeast of Mokopane, is a





palaeontological site of world significance, and has yielded bones of an early human, known as *Australopithecus africanus*, radiocarbon-dated to be three million years old. You must prebook visits with the Mokopane Tourism Association.

### Polokwane (Pietersburg)

☎ 015 / pop 140,000

A rather agreeably sedate cluster of suburban streets surrounding a bustling commercial centre, Polokwane was founded in 1886 by Voortrekkers seeking to escape the usual cocktail of tropical disease and the 'hostile natives'. Much of this conflict now seems to have dissipated and if you are wandering through the backstreets of South Africa's safest provincial capital these days, the biggest risk seems to be getting soaked by an overzealous garden sprinkler.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

**Polokwane Game Reserve** (☎ 015-290 2331; adult/child/vehicle US\$1.60/1.10/2.70; ☞ 7am-4.30pm) is one of the largest municipal wildlife reserves in the country, with 21 wildlife species including zebras, giraffes and white rhinos, plus a 20km hiking trail. It is south of the town centre in Union Park. Camping and chalets are available.

The **Bakone Malapa Northern Sotho Open-Air Museum** (☎ 015-295 2432; adult/child US\$0.40/0.20; ☞ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.30pm), 9km southeast of Polokwane on Rte 37 to Chuniespoort, is devoted to northern Sotho culture and includes an authentic 'living' village where locals produce handicrafts.

### SLEEPING

**Travellers Lodge** (☎ 015-291 5511; incatrav@worldonline.co.za; 43 Bok St; s/d US\$37/39; ☞) Despite the name, this smart, self-catering place doesn't cater to the backpacker market.

**Vivaldi Guest House** (☎ 015-295 6162; vivaldi1@mweb.co.za; 2 Voortrekker St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/52; ☞) Surrounded by a cycad-filled garden and with a soundtrack provided by a brace of talking parrots, this tip-top hideaway offers friendly welcomes and oodles of home comforts.

**Plumtree Lodge** (☎ 015-295 6153; www.plumtree.co.za; 138 Marshall St; s/d with breakfast US\$57/72; ☞) The crowds vote with their feet at this busy little place, where rooms are in twee bungalows and all the couch potato creature comforts come as standard.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Many town names in Limpopo, including the name of the province itself, have been changed in recent years. We list the new name then give the old name in brackets. Unfortunately, while all names have been changed on the official record, some road signs and many local residents have yet to catch up. As a result, travel in the province can be confusing at times.

### EATING

You can find all the usual takeaways in Library Gardens, but the Savannah Centre on Grobler St offers the widest selection of steak-based eats.

**Cock 'n' Bull** (☎ 015-296 0961; Savannah Centre; mains US\$4-7; ☞ lunch & dinner; ☞) This pub-style place serves up steaks the size of a springbok's thighs in yee-har surrounds.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

**SAAirlink** (☎ 015-288 0166; www.saairlink.co.za), with offices at the airport, flies daily to/from Jo'burg (US\$110 to US\$157 one way). **Polokwane airport** (☎ 015-288 0122) is 5km north of town.

#### Bus

**Translux** (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za; cnr Joubert & Thabo Mbeki Sts) runs services to Pretoria (US\$19, 3½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$19, 4½ hours), and Lusaka (US\$47, 24 hours). It also runs the cheaper City to City buses, which serve a number of smaller towns.

**Greyhound** (☎ 011-276 8500; www.greyhound.co.za) links Polokwane with Jo'burg (US\$25, five hours) and Harare (US\$38, 12 hours). Buses stop on Civic Sq.

**North Link Tours** (☎ 015-291 1867; 13 Library Gardens, Hans Van Rensburg St) runs daily (10am) buses between Polokwane and Jo'burg. The bus stops at Mokopane (US\$6, 40 minutes), Mookgophong (US\$5.50, 1¼ hours), Pretoria (US\$1.40, 3½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$16, 4½ hours). Buses depart from outside Library Gardens.

### Minibus Taxi

The main minibus taxi rank is on the corner of President Kruger and Devenish Sts. Fares from Polokwane include Thohoyandou (US\$4, 2½ hours), Makhado (US\$2.80, 1¼ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$14, five hours).

**Train**

The **Bosveld** (☎ 086-000 8888) passes through Polokwane daily (except Saturday) en route between Jo'burg and Musina. Fares include: Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$15/10, eight hours), Makhado (1st/2nd class US\$9.50/5.50, four hours) and Musina (1st/2nd class US\$14/9.50, 7½ hours).

**Makhado (Louis Trichardt)**

☎ 015 / pop 90,000

Scruffy Makhado is a little hard on the eyes – a stark contrast to the verdant countryside that surrounds it. Treat the town as a springboard to some worthwhile country lodges, nature reserves and hiking trails in the nearby mountains, which boast an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna, including 615 of South Africa's 900 bird species.

For a reliable tour operator, contact **Face Africa** (☎ 015-516 2076; faceafrica@mweb.co.za; per day up to 4 people US\$160) or **Travel Africa Trails** (☎ 082-139 0102; africa@lantic.net; per day up to 4 people US\$189).

**SLEEPING**

**Makhado Municipal Caravan Park** (☎ 015-519 3025; www.caravanparks.co.za/makhado; Grobler St; camp sites per person US\$6) A central camping option.

**Louis Trichardt Lodge** (☎ 015-516 2222; www.ltt lodge.co.za; Hlanganani St; s/d US\$27/36; 🍷 🍷) This welcoming place on the main road has some basic rooms, kitchenette and a braai area.

**Mountain View Hotel** (☎ 015-517 7031; www.mountainviewhotel.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$37/52) This resort-style place, on the road to Musina, has clipped gardens, charming staff and the (often empty) Merry Monk pub. The rooms, however, are a little dowdy.

**Ultimate Guest House** (☎ 015-517 7005; ultimategh@lantic.net; s/d with breakfast US\$42/55; 🍷 🍷) With buckets of quirky character and colourful, individually styled rooms, this beautifully remote place prides itself on its convivial atmosphere and good nature. It's 10km from the centre.

**EATING**

**Cafe d'Art** (☎ 015-516 5760; 129 Krogh St; mains US\$2.80-7; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Kick back in the garden and enjoy a lazy breakfast, lunch or light dinner.

**Ricky's Takeaway** (☎ 015-516 0414; 36 Boabab St; 🍷 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) This place gets absolutely packed with people trying to get hold of locally famous sausages, burgers and sandwiches.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The **Louis Trichardt Travel Agency** (☎ 015-516 5042; 🍷 8am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am Sat), down an alley off Burger St (opposite Bradlows), is the local agent for Greyhound and Translux buses. Most buses linking Makhado with Jo'burg (US\$24, 5½ hours) and Harare (US\$50, 11 hours) stop by the Caltex petrol station on the corner of the N1 and Baobab St.

The train station is at the southwestern end of Kruger St. The **Bosveld** (☎ 086-000 8888) stops here and links Makhado with Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$20/14, 11 hours).

The minibus taxi rank is in the Shoprite supermarket car park off Burger St, a block northeast of Songozwi St.

**Around Makhado (Louis Trichardt)****SOUTPANSBERG HIKING TRAILS**

The two-day, 20.5km **Hanglip Trail** includes a climb up a 1719m peak; it begins at Hanglip forest station. Take precautions against malaria, bilharzia and ticks. Overnight accommodation is in huts and there's a trail fee of US\$5.50 per person per day.

**LESHEBA WILDNERNESS**

Perched in the clouds, **Lesheba Wilderness** (☎ 015-593 0076; www.lesheba.co.za; rondavel/full-board r per person US\$34/115; 🍷 🍷) is an excellent hideaway based on a Venda-style village. Surrounded by wildlife, including rare brown hyenas and leopards, the resort offers self-catering accommodation in rondavels, or a full-board option in bedrooms with cosy fireplaces and outdoor showers. It's 36km west of Makhado on Rte 522.

**BEN LAVIN NATURE RESERVE**

Although somewhat neglected, this **reserve** (☎ 015-516 4534; www.satis.co.za/benlavin; adult/child US\$4/1.40; 🍷 6am-6pm) is still worth visiting for its walking and mountain bike trails. The reserve contains 240 bird species, as well as giraffes, zebras and jackals. A range of **accommodation** (camp sites per person US\$5.50; d hut US\$29, per extra person US\$9; d lodge US\$35, per extra person US\$11) is available.

Take the N1 south from Makhado for about 10km, then take the Fort Edward turn-off to the left. After about 3km, you'll see the entrance gate on your left.

**Musina**

☎ 015 / pop 20,000

The closest town to the Zimbabwe border, Musina is a hot, dusty settlement with a fron-

tier feel to it. The town grew around now-defunct copper mines and the still-active DeBeers Venetia diamond mine, the second largest in the southern hemisphere. The town centre is a sleepy place close to the excellent Mapungubwe National Park.

Stop in at the **Musina Tourism** (☎ 015-534 3500; www.golimpopo.com; National Rd; 🍷 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) office for information on the area. It's in a thatched hut on the way into town on the N1 from Polokwane.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

**Limpopo River Lodge** (☎ 015-534 0204; riverlodge@limpopo.co.za; 6 National Rd; s US\$17-22, d US\$27-38; 🍷 🍷) Inspiration didn't play a role in the planning of this place, and the décor is rather flaky, but the rooms are fine and mercifully cheap for Limpopo.

**Ilala Country Lodge** (☎ 015-534 3220; www.places.co.za/html/2175.html; Rte 572; s/d US\$42/56; 🍷 🍷) This pleasant lodge has some nice self-catering units, surrounded by plenty of bush-style hush and wide, open spaces. It is located 8km from Musina along Rte 572, on the way to Mapungubwe.

**Dongola Ranch** (☎ 015-533 1948; www.dongola.co.za; s/d US\$42/56; 🍷 🍷) Considered one of Limpopo's better private wildlife reserves, Dongola Ranch has a rich variety of wildlife species, including white rhinos, giraffes, leopards and hyenas. It's on the road to Mapungubwe, about 45km out of Musina.

**Buffalo Ridge Spur** (☎ 015-534 1127; National Rd; mains US\$4-8; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner; 🍷 🍷) Corporate cowboy attitude and large platters of steak and ribs feature prominently at this chain restaurant, located near the tourist office.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

The Zimbabwean border at Beitbridge, 14km north of Musina, is open 24 hours. If you are coming from Zimbabwe, there is a large taxi rank on the South African side of the border, 1km from the crossing itself.

**Bus**

**Translux** (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za) buses stop here on their way to Jo'burg (US\$25, 7½ hours) or Harare (US\$34, 10 hours).

**Minibus Taxi**

If you're coming from Zimbabwe and want to take a minibus taxi further south than Musina, catch one at the border as there are many

more there than in Musina. Destinations and fares from Musina include Makhado (US\$4, 1½ hours), Polokwane (US\$5.50, 2½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, 7½ hours). Taxis between the border and Musina cost US\$2 (20 minutes).

**Train**

The daily (except Saturday) **Bosveld** (☎ 086 000 8888) terminates at Musina. It travels (very slowly) to Jo'burg (1st/2nd class US\$25/17, 14 hours) via Makhado and Polokwane.

**Mapungubwe National Park**

The call of the wild is perhaps nowhere louder than in Limpopo's newest attraction, the **Mapungubwe National Park** (☎ 015-534 2014; www.sanparks.org/parks/mapungubwe; adult/child US\$8/4; 🍷 6am-6pm). Opened up to the public in September 2004, this spectacular park covers 28,000 hectares and boasts populations of all of the Big Five, with almost unparalleled opportunities for wildlife-spotting.

Mapungubwe Hill offers an excellent insight into Zimbabwean civilisation and many Iron Age artefacts can be seen in an on-site museum. Short walks (US\$4) and fully catered, three-day trails (US\$240) to the major sites are already available.

At the Leokwe Rest Camp you can **camp** (US\$9.50), or stay in opulent, two-bed **chalets** (US\$54; 🍷 🍷).

The park is at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, north of the Musina to Pontdrift road. It's a 60km drive from Musina on Rte 572.

**VENDA REGION**

Perhaps the most enigmatic section of the Soutpansberg region, this is the traditional homeland of the Venda people, who moved to the area from modern-day Zimbabwe at the start of the 18th century. Long neglected under the apartheid regime, the Venda region is a world away from the South Africa of uptown Jo'burg; here even a short diversion from the freeway takes you through an Africa of mist-clad hilltops, dusty streets and mud huts, a land where myth and legend continue to play a major role in everyday life.

**Thohoyandou & Sibasa**

☎ 015 / pop 50,000

Created as the capital of the apartheid-era Venda Homeland, the city of Thohoyandou



(Elephant Head) blends some impressively functional town-planning with a healthy dose of African chaos, matching a looming shopping centre and adjacent casino resort with all the push-and-shove of the backstreet marketplace. The adjacent town of Sibasa is a few kilometres north. Most public transport leaves from Sibasa.

Thohoyandou is an easy 65km drive to Kruger's Punda Maria Gate, and a good entry/exit point if you plan to explore the park's far north.

Tours to nearby sights, including Lake Funduzi, can be arranged through **Thohoyandou Arts & Culture Centre** (☎ 082-401 9756; Punda Maria Rd, Thohoyandou; ☎ 6am-6pm).

### SLEEPING

**Bougainvillea Lodge** (☎ 015-962 4064; www.bougainvillalodge.com; Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$34/45) As promised by the name, there is plenty of blooming bougainvillea here – and plenty of smiles too.

**Vevisa Lodge** (☎ 015-962 5252; vevisa@iafrica.com; 758 Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$40/44) This place opts for mock-traditional décor, with fake mud walls and thatched roofs, and has clean rooms.

**Tusk Venda** (☎ 015-962 4600; www.tusk-resorts.co.za; Mphephu St; s/d with breakfast US\$70/96; 🚽 🚿) A little slice of Vegas in the heart of Venda, this casino resort looks rather incongruous among the local hustle and bustle. It offers plenty of trimmings and plenty of ways to fritter away a penny or two.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**City to City** (☎ 015-295 5548; www.translux.co.za) buses run from a terminal just up Rte 524 from the centre of Sibasa. Buses leave every morning at 8.30am for Jo'burg (US\$1.40, 8½ hours) and Pretoria (US\$1.40, 7½ hours).

The main minibus taxi rank is in Sibasa. Destinations and fares include Makhado (US\$2.80, 1½ hours) and Jo'burg (US\$1.40, nine hours).

In Thohoyandou, minibus taxis congregate in the car park of the shopping centre near the Tusk Venda. The fare to Sibasa is US\$0.50.

### Nwanedi National Park

The dry northern side of the Soutpansberg Range provides an extremely scenic backdrop to **Nwanedi National Park** (☎ 015-539 0723; adult/vehicle US\$1.40/2; ☎ 6am-6pm), although it's a

contrast to the Venda's lush landscapes. The major walk in the park is to the very scenic **Tshihovhohovho Falls**.

The park has **camp sites** (per person US\$2.80, plus per tent US\$7), and four-person **rondavels** (US\$47). Basic supplies are available and there's a fully licensed restaurant.

You can reach the park from Thohoyandou, entering at the Nwanedi gate; though the road is scenic there's a good chance of getting lost, and there are several kilometres of bad dirt road. It's simpler to come via Tshipise and enter from the west.

### Lake Funduzi

This lake is a sacred site, as its water is believed to have come from the great sea that covered the earth before land was created. The python god, who holds an important place in the rites of the Venda's matriarchal culture and once required human sacrifice, lives here.

The lake is 35km northwest of Thohoyandou, but you can't visit it without permission from the lake's custodians, the Netshiyaha tribe. The easiest way to get permission is to have a tour organised from Thohoyandou or Makhado. Remember that when you approach the lake you must do so with proper respect; turn your back to it, bend over, and view it from between your legs. And try not to look silly doing it.

### THE WATERBERG

The 150km-long Waterberg Range, which makes up part of the Bushveld region, stretches from Thabazimbi in Limpopo's southwest up to the Lapalala River. It is a wild and inspirational place etched by rivers.

The rolling terrain of the Waterberg Range is ideal for exploring on horseback, and several operators and lodges near the town of Vaalwater can set you up with a steed. Each one charges around US\$24 to US\$34 for a two- to three-hour ride. **Horizon Horseback Adventures** (☎ 014-755 4003; www.ridinginafrica.com) offers the greatest variety of options, including an eight-day horse safari in the Dinaka Wildlife Reserve.

The rather isolated **Marakele National Park** (☎ 014-777 1745; www.sanparks.org/parks/marakele; adult/child US\$8/4; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) is in the heart of the Waterberg's spectacular mountain country. Elephants, rhinos and many other large wildlife species and the largest colony of the

endangered Cape vulture in the world (800 breeding pairs) call the park home.

It can be reached from Thabazimbi by sealed road, but in the park itself the roads deteriorate markedly and a 4WD is needed to access some of the best trails. From the north, there is a rough access road 6km past Vaalwater, over the spectacular Bakkers Pass.

The **booking office** (☎ from 8am) is located on the Thabazimbi-Alma road, 3km from where this road intersects with the Matlabas-Rooiberg road.

There is four-bed tented accommodation in the **Tlopi Tent Camp** (d US\$75, extras per person US\$14), located 17km from reception on the banks of the Matlabas River.

### THE EAST

Eastern Limpopo is an attractive, culturally rich area, being the traditional home of the Tsonga, Shangaan and Lobedu people. It's also popular for a north-south traverse through Kruger National Park, or a visit to one of the many private reserves in the Hoedspruit area.

### Letaba Valley

The Letaba Valley is east of Polokwane, between two chunks of the former Lebowa Homeland. The valley is subtropical and lush, with tea plantations and crops of tropical fruits below, and forested hills above.

At Haenertsburg the road splits in two, with the Rte 71 reaching Tzaneen via the steep Magoebaskloof Pass, while the Rte 528 runs along the more genteel George's Valley. Rte 71 is arguably the better drive, and there are plenty of places where you can get out and go for short hikes signposted from the road.

### Magoebaskloof Pass

The Magoebaskloof is the escarpment on the edge of the highveld, and the road here drops quickly down to Tzaneen and the lowveld, passing through plantations and large tracts of thick indigenous forest.

The high summer rainfall means there are a number of waterfalls in the area including **Debengeni Falls** in the De Hoek State Forest.

Two recommended walking trails are the two-day, 21km **Debengeni Falls Trail** and the three-day, 40km **Dokolewa Waterfall Trail**. To book huts on these trails, contact **Komatiland Forestry Association** (☎ 012-481 3615; ecotour@safcol.co.za).

**The Wheelbarrow** (☎ 015-305 3039; www.tzaneen.com/theWheelbarrow; meals US\$4-8; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) is a great place to break up the road trip between Haenertsburg and Tzaneen. You can get good country breakfasts plus locally produced jams and juices. It's on the bottom stretch of Rte 71, near the junction with Rte 36.

### Tzaneen

☎ 015 / pop 81,000

At the hub of a rich fruit-growing area, Tzaneen, the largest town near the Letaba Valley and the second-largest in Limpopo, is perhaps best known for its avocados and mangoes. Surrounded by lush, subtropical hills, this is a pleasant spot with plenty of quiet corners and chances to bike, climb or hike in the nearby mountains.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Satvik Backpackers Village** (☎ 015-307 3920; satvik@pixie.co.za; George's Valley Rd; camp sites US\$5.50, dm/d US\$9.50/24) Less technicolour tacky than many backpackers, Satvik offers a more rustic blend of budget accommodation, with a farm setting and beds in old workers' cottages.

**Fairview River Lodge** (☎ 015-307 2679; www.fairviewlodge.co.za; s/d with breakfast US\$47/69; 🚽 🚿) One of the town's swankiest options, this thatched, four-star place has some very comfortable self-catering chalets and a leafy tropical garden. There are also some basic rooms for US\$27.

**High Grove Lodge** (☎ 015-307 7242; highgrove@tzaneen.co.za; Agatha Rd; mains US\$5.50-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Probably the classiest place in town, High Grove serves decent steaks, salads and a healthy continental breakfast. This is also an upmarket hotel (single/double rooms US\$50/61) with 18 rooms and a pub.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

North Link Tours buses run from Jo'burg (US\$20, six hours) four days a week. You can book tickets at the **Caltex petrol station** (☎ 015-305 2424; Danie Joubert St).

Translux buses run to Pretoria (US\$19, 4½ hours), Jo'burg (US\$19, 5½ hours) and Phalaborwa (US\$1.40, one hour).

Most minibus taxis depart from a rank behind the Tzaneen Mall.

### Modjadji Nature Reserve

Covering just 305 hectares, **Modjadji Nature Reserve** (☎ 082-393 5551; adult/vehicle US\$1.40/2.70;



(🕒 7.30am-6pm) protects forests of the ancient Modjadji cycad. In the summer mists, this place and the surrounding Vulovedu Mountains take on an ethereal atmosphere. The reserve has accommodation in **rondavels** (per person US\$17).

Take the GaKgapane turn-off from Rte 36 about 10km north of Duivelskloof; the turn-off to the reserve is a further 18km.

## Phalaborwa

☎ 015 / pop 109,000

Phalaborwa is a neatly tended stretch of well-watered suburbia – the ‘Beware Hippos’ signs seem rather out of place – with a group of guesthouses and hotels thriving on the back of the town’s proximity to Kruger National Park.

Phalaborwa makes an ideal starting point if you’re intending to explore central and northern Kruger. For people with limited time in South Africa, it is possible to visit Kruger by flying from Jo’burg to Phalaborwa, hiring a car for touring the park and then returning by air to Jo’burg. **Mad Safari Tours** (☎ 072-536 0667; www.madsafari.com; Airport) runs trips into Kruger, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Phalaborwa is also a new gateway to Mozambique as it’s now possible to drive across Kruger and into Mozambique at the **Giriyondo border gate** (☎ 013-735 8919). See p299. This route is only for 4WD vehicles.

You can tour the nearby **copper mine** (☎ 015-780 2911; admission free), said to boast the largest artificial hole in Africa, at 9am on Friday, but you must phone in advance.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Daan & Zena’s** (☎ 015-781 6049; www.daanzena.co.za; 15 Birkenhead St; camp sites per person US\$6, dm/s/d from US\$11/17/27; 🍷 🍴 🛏) Bridging the gap between backpackers and B&B, this place is brought to life by lashings of colourful paint and a friendly atmosphere. It’s a tad crumbly, but it’s a good spot if you’re looking for a comfy bed and a youthful vibe.

**Elephant Walk** (☎ 015-781 5860; www.elewalk.com; 30 Anna Scheepers Ave; camp sites US\$7, dm/s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/19/27, d with private bathroom US\$40) Close enough to Kruger to hear the lions roar, this is a great spot to plan your foray into the park. The owners will pick you up from town and offer an excellent range of reasonably priced tours and activities.

**Sefapane Lodge** (☎ 015-780 6700; www.sefapane.co.za; cnr Koper & Essenhout Sts; s/d with breakfast US\$54/95;

🍷 🍴 🛏) Sefapane has plenty of safari-park styling, a sunken bar, one of the town’s best eateries and a whiff of genuine exclusivity. Accommodation is in rondavels.

**Buffalo Pub & Grill** (☎ 015-781 0829; 1 Lekkerbreek St; mains US\$4-10; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🍷) This tourist-orientated place has a nice terrace for alfresco dining and African trimmings aplenty.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**SAAirlink** (☎ 015-781 5823; www.saairlink.co.za), with an office at the airport, flies daily to Jo’burg (US\$180). The **airport** (☎ 015-781 5823) is 2km north of town.

### Bus

**Sure Turn Key Travel** (☎ 015-781 7761; Shop 42, Phalaborwa Mall, Nelson Mandela St; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is the local agent for Translux and City to City buses. Translux services travel via Polokwane and connect Phalaborwa with Tzaneen (US\$1.40, one hour), Polokwane (US\$1.40, 2½ hours), Makhado (US\$23, four hours), Pretoria (US\$25, six hours) and Jo’burg (US\$23, seven hours). City to City buses travel to Jo’burg (US\$18, 9½ hours) via Middleburg, and are cheaper but slower.

### CAR

Hiring a car is often the cheapest way of seeing the Kruger Park. **Aviss** (☎ 015-781 3169; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun), **Imperial** (☎ 015-781 0376; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun) and **Budget** (☎ 015-781 5404; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat, 4-6pm Sun) all have offices at the airport.

### Minibus Taxi

There aren’t many minibus taxis in this area, and most run from the township of Namakale (US\$0.70, 20 minutes). From here, you can catch connections to Tzaneen (US\$4.70, 1½ hours).

# SOUTH AFRICA DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Whatever your budget, you’ll generally find high standards, often for significantly less than you would pay for the equivalent in Europe, Australasia or North America.

## PRACTICALITIES

- South Africa uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- Access electricity (220-250V AC, 50Hz) with a three-pin adaptor (round pins, though South Africa has its own unique version); these are easy enough to find – check in camping supply stores.
- Best weekly: *Mail & Guardian*. Best daily: the *Sowetan*. Others to look for: the *Sunday Independent*; the *Sunday Times*; the *Johannesburg Star*; and *Business Day*. Check out *Getaway* magazine for travel news.
- Tune the TV to SABC for the news (SABC3 is mostly English). e-TV has a more independent viewpoint. M-Net has movies and sports.
- SABC radio comes in 11 languages. BBC’s World Service is available on short wave, medium wave and (in and near Lesotho) FM.

Prices for accommodation in this chapter are: budget US\$40 and below, midrange US\$40 to US\$100, top end US\$100 and above.

At the budget level, the main options are camping, backpackers hostels and self-catering cottages. The main caveat with places in this price category is that there aren’t enough of them; away from tourist areas sometimes the only budget option is camping.

Midrange accommodation is particularly good value, especially for B&Bs. Expect a private or semiprivate bathroom and a clean, comfortable room. Self-catering accommodation at national parks – usually priced in the budget to midrange category – also tends to be very good value.

At the top end, South Africa boasts some of the best wildlife lodges in the region, as well as classic guesthouses and several superb hotels. Places at this level offer all the amenities you would expect for prices that are similar to, or slightly less than, those you would pay in Europe or North America.

There are significant seasonal price variations, with rates rising steeply during the December–January school break, and again around Easter, when room prices often double, and minimum stays are imposed. Advance bookings are essential during these times. The other school holidays are also often classified as high season, although it’s more common to have ‘midseason’ pricing. Conversely, you can get some excellent deals during the winter low season, which is also the best time for wildlife watching.

Be aware that minimum charges apply at many of the accommodation options with the national parks and at other private parks and lodges.

## ACTIVITIES

Thanks to South Africa’s diverse terrain and favourable climate, just about anything is possible – from ostrich riding to the world’s highest bungee jump. Good facilities and instruction mean that most activities are accessible to all, whatever their experience level.

There are dozens of operators. In addition to the ones listed here, ask other travellers and at hostels. Try to book day or overnight trips as close to your destination as possible.

### Aerial Pursuits

Ideal weather conditions and an abundance of high points from which to launch yourself make South Africa a fine destination for aerial pursuits. A helpful contact for getting started is the **Aero Club of South Africa** (☎ 0861-018 018; www.aeroclub.org.za).

South Africa is one of the world’s best destinations for paragliding, particularly Cape Town’s Table Mountain. **South African Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (☎ 012-668 1219; www.sahpa.co.za) can provide names of operators, and numerous schools offer courses for beginners. In Cape Town, try **Paragliding Cape Town** (☎ 021-554 0592).

Good places to float over the countryside in a hot air balloon include Sabie (p538) and the surrounding Mpumalanga area.

South Africa boasts the world’s highest bungee jump at Bloukrans River Bridge (p468), between Plettenberg Bay and Storms River.

### Bird-Watching

With its enormous diversity of habitats, South Africa is a paradise for bird-watchers. Top spots include the following:

**Cape Peninsula & West Coast** Cape of Good Hope, within Table Mountain National Park (p419), is excellent for seabird-watching, as is West Coast National Park (p457), about 120km to the north.

**Kruger National Park** One of the continent's best areas for birding; the south and the far north are considered the prime areas, and the park is known particularly for its raptors and migratory species. See p528.

**Northern KwaZulu-Natal** Mkhuzo Game Reserve (p515) hosts over 400 species within its 36,000 hectares, and the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513) protects one of the most significant water-bird breeding grounds in Southern Africa.

### Canoeing, Kayaking & Rafting

South Africa has few major rivers, but the ones that do flow year-round offer rewarding canoeing and rafting. Popular ones include the Blyde and Sabie Rivers, both in Mpumalanga province; the waterways around Wilderness (p452) and Wilderness National Park (p453) in the Western Cape; and the Orange River, especially through Au-grabies Falls National Park (p464). There's some serene canoeing at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p513).

Rafting is highly rain-dependent, with the best months in most areas from December/January to April. Good contacts include **Felix Unite** (☎ 021-425 5181; www.felixunite.com), **Hardy Ventures** (☎ 013-751 1693; www.hardyventure.com) and **Intrapid Rafting** (☎ 021-461 4918).

For sea kayaking, try the Cape Town-based **Coastal Kayak** (☎ 021-439 1134; www.kayak.co.za) and the **Sea Kayaking Association of South Africa** (☎ 021-790 5611; www.doorway.co.za/kayak/recskasa).

### Diving

To the west, the main dive sites are around the Cape Peninsula, known for its many wrecks and giant kelp forests. To the east, the main area is the KwaZulu-Natal north coast where – particularly around Sodwana Bay – there's some excellent warm-water diving with beautiful coral reefs and the chance to see dolphins and sometimes whale sharks. There are several sites off the Eastern Cape coast near Port Elizabeth, and many resort towns along the Garden Route have diving schools.

The best time to dive the KwaZulu-Natal shoreline is from May to September, when visibility tends to be highest. In the west, along the Atlantic seaboard, the water is cold year-round, but at its most diveable, with many days of high visibility, between November and January/February.

With the exception of Sodwana Bay during the warmer months (when a 3mm wetsuit will be sufficient), you will need at least a 5mm wetsuit for many diving sites, and a drysuit for some sites to the south and west. Strong currents and often windy conditions mean that advanced divers can find challenges all along the coast.

### Hiking

South Africa is wonderful for hiking, with an excellent system of well-marked trails varied enough to suit every ability. Some trails have accommodation – from camping to simple huts with electricity and running water – and all must be booked well in advance. Many have limits as to how many hikers can be on them at any one time. Most longer trails and wilderness areas require hikers to be in a group of at least three.

Designated wilderness areas, such as Cedarberg Wilderness Area (p457), have off-trail hiking only. Little information is available on suggested routes, and it's up to you to survive on your own.

**KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation** (KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com) controls most trails in KwaZulu-Natal. Elsewhere, most trails are administered by the **SAN Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) or the various Forest Region authorities. To find out about local hiking clubs, contact **Hiking South Africa** (☎ 083-535 4538; www.hiking-south-africa.info).

Shorter hikes, from an hour up to a full day, are possible almost everywhere and require no advance arrangements. Prime areas include the Cape Peninsula near Cape Point and the Drakensberg.

Hiking is possible year-round, although you'll need to be prepared in summer for extremes of wet and heat. The best time is March to October.

### Kloofing (Canyoning)

Kloofing (or canyoning), is a mix of climbing, hiking, swimming and some serious jumping. Places where you can give things a try include Cape Town and along the Drakensberg Escarpment in Mpumalanga. Operators who can sort you out include **Adventure World** (www.adventurevillage.co.za), **Day Trippers** (www.daytrippers.co.za) and **Abseil Africa** (www.abseilfrica.co.za). There's a definite element of risk in the sport, so when hunting for operators, check their credentials carefully before signing up.

### SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP HIKES

Following are some of South Africa's top hiking trails and their booking contacts; more details are given in throughout the chapter.

#### Cape Peninsula & Western Cape

**Hoerikwaggo Trails** (p427; Table Mountain National Park; ☎ 021-465 8515; www.hoerikwaggo.co.za) A series of three trails (one now open, the other two to open soon) that take you from City Bowl over the mountain, and ultimately along the stunningly beautiful Atlantic Coast to Cape Point.

**Whale Hiking Trail** (De Hoop Nature Reserve; ☎ 028-425 5020) Five days of hiking along the coastline in De Hoop Nature Reserve, with the added bonus of whale-watching opportunities in season.

#### Eastern Cape

**Otter Trail** (p468; SAN Parks; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Five days on the coast along the Garden Route (note that this trail is nearly always booked out).

**Tsitsikamma Trail** (p468; Forestry Department; ☎ 042-281 1712) A five-day hike running inland through the forests, parallel to the Otter Trail but hiked in the opposite direction (this trail is rarely booked out).

#### Free State

**Rhebok Hiking Trail** (p565; SAN Parks; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Two days in Golden Gate Highlands National Park.

#### KwaZulu-Natal

**Giant's Cup** (p522; KZN Wildlife; ☎ 033-845 1000) Up to five days in the southern Drakensberg. There are also wilderness trails and guided walks in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi, Mkhuzo and Lake St Lucia parks and reserves.

#### Limpopo

**Hanglip Trail** (p574; Komatiland Eco-Tourism; ☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatiecotourism.co.za) Up to two days in the verdant Soutpansberg Range.

#### Mpumalanga

**Blyde River Canyon Hiking Trail** (p536; Mpumalanga Parks Board; ☎ 013-759 5432; mpbinfo@cis.co.za) Up to 2½ days in the Blyde River Canyon area.

**Kruger National Park** (p531; SAN Parks; ☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) Wilderness trails and guided walks.

#### Northern Cape

**Klipspringer Hiking Trail** (p464; Au-grabies Falls National Park; ☎ 054-452 9200) Three days of stunning scenery along the banks of the Orange River.

**Kodaspiet Trail** (Richtersveld National Park; ☎ 027-831 1506) Two days wandering amid incredible mountain desert landscapes.

### Mountain Biking

There are trails almost everywhere in South Africa. Some suggestions to get you started: the De Hoop Nature Reserve (p446), with overnight and day trails; the ride up (and down) Sani Pass, on the border between South Africa and Lesotho (p522); Citrusdal (p458),

with a network of trails; the area around Cedarberg Wilderness area (p457); and Knysna (p453) and surrounding area, with a good selection of trails. Cape Town is something of an unofficial national hub.

Useful sources of information include **Mountain Bike South Africa** (www.mtbsa.co.za) and

**Mountain Bike South Africa e-zine** ([www.mtb.org.za](http://www.mtb.org.za)). The bimonthly *Ride* is the main South African mountain-biking magazine.

### Rock Climbing

Some of the most challenging climbing is on the close-to-sheer faces of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. The **South African Climbing Info Network** ([www.saclimb.co.za](http://www.saclimb.co.za)) has listings and photos of many other climbing and bouldering sites. For information on regional clubs, contact the **Mountain Club of South Africa** (MCSA; ☎ 021-465 3412; [www.mcsa.org.za](http://www.mcsa.org.za)). **Roc-n-Rope** (☎ 013-257 0363; [www.rocrope.com](http://www.rocrope.com)) is another useful contact.

### Surfing

Most surfers will have heard of Jeffrey's Bay, but South Africa offers myriad alternatives, particularly along the Eastern Cape coast from Port Alfred northwards. The best time of the year for surfing the southern and eastern coasts is autumn and early winter (from about April to July).

For more information check out [www.wavescape.co.za](http://www.wavescape.co.za), and **Zig Zag** ([www.zigzag.co.za](http://www.zigzag.co.za)), South Africa's main surf magazine.

### Whale-Watching

South Africa is considered one of the world's best spots to sight these graceful giants from land, without needing to go out in a boat. Southern right and humpback whales are regularly seen offshore between June/July and November, with occasional spottings also of Bryde's and killer whales. Hermanus (p444) – where southern right whales come to calve – is the unofficial whale-watching capital of the country, complete with a whale crier and an annual Whale Festival.

Other favoured spots include the False Bay shoreline, especially between Cape Point and Muizenberg, and from Gordon's Bay southeast; and Mossel (p450) and Plettenberg (p456) Bays. The whales continue their progress around the Cape and up the KwaZulu-Natal coast, although by the time they reach Durban, they're often considerably further out to sea.

### Wildlife Watching

South Africa's populations of large animals are one of the country's biggest attractions. In comparison with other countries in the region (Botswana and Zambia, for example), wildlife watching in South Africa tends to be

very accessible, with good roads and excellent accommodation for all categories of traveller. It is also comparatively inexpensive, although there are plenty of pricier choices for those seeking a luxury experience in the bush.

### BOOKS

Following is a listing of some books – a mix of fiction and nonfiction – to begin immersing yourself in regional life and culture.

**A Short History of Lesotho from the Late Stone Age to the 1993 Elections** by Stephen J Gill – A concise and readable history of the Mountain Kingdom.

**Country of my Skull** by Antjie Krog – A wrenching recounting of the hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission by a prominent Afrikaans journalist.

**The Heart of the Hunter: Customs & Myths of the African Bushman** by Laurens van der Post – An intriguing accounting of Southern Africa's San people and their culture.

**Indaba, My Children** by Credo Mutwa – An excellent compendium of traditional mythology and folktales.

**No Future Without Forgiveness** by Desmond Tutu – Another, somewhat more hope-filled, chronicling of the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission by its chairman.

**Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life** by Emma Mashinini – A powerful recounting of one woman's struggle against domination and injustice.

**The Wild Almond Line** by Larry Schwartz – A memoir of growing up in a segregated country and being a conscript in the apartheid-era army.

### CHILDREN

South Africa is an eminently suitable destination if you're travelling with children. With its abundance of national parks, beaches, swimming pools and hiking trails, plus a good collection of museums and a handful of amusement parks, it offers plenty to do for travellers of all ages in a generally hazard-free setting. Most South Africans are welcoming to children, and you should have no shortage of offers for assistance. For some help sorting things out, and for equipment rental or purchase, try the Cape Town-based **Tiny Tourists** ([www.tinytourists.com](http://www.tinytourists.com)).

### COURSES

There are numerous language schools for learning Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans, including the following:  
**Interlink Cape Town** (☎ 021-439 9834; [www.interlink.co.za](http://www.interlink.co.za)) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

**Language Teaching Centre Cape Town** (☎ 021-425 3585; [www.language-teaching-centre.co.za](http://www.language-teaching-centre.co.za)) Afrikaans, Xhosa.

**University of Natal** (☎ 031-260 2510; [www.nu.ac.za/departement/default.asp?dept=zuludund](http://www.nu.ac.za/departement/default.asp?dept=zuludund); Durban) Zulu.

**University of the Witwatersrand** (☎ 011-717 4245; <http://sls.uiploy.co.za/index.aspx?Action=AFL>) Zulu.

A good contact if you want to get below South Africa's surface is **TALK** (Transfer of African Language Knowledge; ☎ 011-487 1798; [www.phaphama.org](http://www.phaphama.org)). It organises 'immersion visits' in which you live in a homestay arrangement in either a township or rural area while receiving an hour or so daily of instruction in an African language. Costs vary, but average US\$80 per person for a three-night stay. The main focus is Soweto, but the organisation can also sort out tours and visits in other parts of the country.

### Wine Tasting

Some useful contacts:

**Cape Wine Academy** (☎ 021-889 8844; [www.cape-wineacademy.co.za](http://www.cape-wineacademy.co.za)) Based in Stellenbosch, and runs courses in both Stellenbosch and Cape Town.

**Nose Wine Bar** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 021-425 2200; [www.thenose.co.za](http://www.thenose.co.za); Cape Quarter, Dixon St, Waterkant) Runs wine-tasting courses.

### CUSTOMS

You're permitted to bring 1L of spirits, 2L of wine, 400 cigarettes and up to US\$165 worth of souvenirs into South Africa without paying duties. For more details, contact the **Department of Customs & Excise** (☎ 012-422 4000, 0800 002 870; Private Bag X923, Pretoria 0001). The import and export of protected animal products such as ivory is not permitted.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Crime is the national obsession and, apart from car accidents, it's the major risk that you'll face in South Africa. However, try to keep things in perspective, and remember that despite the statistics and newspaper headlines, the majority of travellers visit the country without incident.

The risks are highest in Jo'burg, followed by some township areas and other urban centres. Daylight muggings are common in certain sections of Jo'burg, and the city's metro train system has had a problem with violent crime. No matter where you are, you can minimise the risks by following basic safety precautions, including the following:

- One of the greatest dangers during muggings or carjackings, especially in Jo'burg, is that your assailants will assume that you are armed, and that you will kill them if you get a chance. Stay calm, and don't resist or give them any reason to think that you will fight back.
- Listen to local advice on unsafe areas.
- Avoid deserted areas day and night, and especially avoid the commercial business district areas of larger cities at night and weekends.
- If you're going to visit a township – and it will certainly be one of the highlights of your visit to South Africa – go with a trusted guide or as part of a tour.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

#### South African Embassies & Consulates

Diplomatic representations abroad include the following. For a full listing see [www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/sa\\_abroad/index.htm](http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/sa_abroad/index.htm).

**Australia** (☎ 02-6273 2424; [www.sahc.org.au](http://www.sahc.org.au); Rhodes Pl, Yarralumla, Canberra ACT 2600)

**Botswana** (☎ 390 4800; [sahcgabs@botsnet.bw](mailto:sahcgabs@botsnet.bw); 29 Queens Rd, Gaborone)

**Canada** (☎ 613-744 0330; [www.southafrica-canada.com](http://www.southafrica-canada.com); 15 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1M8)

**France** (☎ 01 53 59 23 23; [www.afriquesud.net](http://www.afriquesud.net); 59 Quai d'Orsay, 75343 Paris, Cedex 07)

**Germany** (☎ 030-22 0730; [www.suedafrika.org](http://www.suedafrika.org); Tiergartenstrasse 18, Berlin 10785)

**Ireland** (☎ 01-661 5553; [information@saedublin.com](mailto:information@saedublin.com); 2nd fl, Alexandra House, Earlsfort Centre, Earlsfort Tce, Dublin 2)

**Israel** (☎ 03-525 2566; [www.safis.co.il](http://www.safis.co.il); 16th fl, Top Tower, 50 Dizengoff St, 64332, Tel Aviv)

**Kenya** (☎ 020-282 7100; [sahc@africaonline.co.ke](mailto:sahc@africaonline.co.ke); Roshanmaer Place, Lenana Rd, Nairobi)

**Malawi** (☎ 01-773 722; [sahc@malawi.net](mailto:sahc@malawi.net); 3rd fl, Kang'ombe House, Robert Mugabe Cres, Lilongwe)

**Mozambique** (☎ 01-490059, 491614; [sahc@tropical.co.mz](mailto:sahc@tropical.co.mz); Avenida Eduardo Mondlane 41, Maputo)

**Namibia** (☎ 061-205 7111; [sahcwin@iafrica.com.na](mailto:sahcwin@iafrica.com.na); RSA House, cnr Jan Jonker St & Nelson Mandela Ave, Windhoek - 1200)

**Netherlands** (☎ 70-392 4501; [www.southafrica.nl](http://www.southafrica.nl); Wassenaarseweg 40, The Hague 2596 CJ)

**New Zealand** Representation accredited from Australia, see that entry.

**UK** (☎ 020-7451 7299; [www.southafricahouse.com](http://www.southafricahouse.com); South Africa House, Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5DP)

**USA** (☎ 202-232 4400; [www.saembassy.org](http://www.saembassy.org); 3051 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008) Also consulates in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.



**Zimbabwe** (☎ 04-753147; dhacon@mweb.co.zw; 7 Elcombe St, Belgravia, Harare)

### Embassies & Consulates in South Africa

Most countries have their main embassy in Pretoria, with an office or consulate in Cape Town (which becomes the official embassy during Cape Town's parliamentary sessions). Some countries also maintain consulates in Jo'burg and in Durban.

South Africa is a gold mine for travellers hunting for visas for other African countries.

The following list includes some of the more important embassies and consulates; most are open in the mornings only for visa services, usually between 9am and noon.

**Australia** (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 3740; www.australia.co.za; 292 Orient St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

**Botswana** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-430 9640; 24 Amos St, Colbyn); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 1045; 4th fl, Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 011-403 3748; 2nd fl, Future Bank Bldg, 122 De Korte St, Braamfontein)

**Canada** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-422 3000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/southafrica/; 1103 Arcadia St, Hatfield); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 5240; 19th fl, Reserve Bank Bldg, 60 St George's Mall, City Bowl)

**France** Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-425 1600; france@ambafrance-rsa.org; 250 Melk St, New Muckleneuk); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-423 1575; 2 Dean St); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-778 5600; 3rd fl, Standard Bank Bldg, 191 Jan Smuts Ave, Rosebank)

**Germany** Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-427 8977; 180 Blackwood St, germanembassypretoria@gonet.co.za); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-405 3000; 19th fl, Safmarine House, 22 Riebeeck St)

**Ireland** Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 5062; 1st fl, Southern Life Plaza, 1059 Schoeman St); Consulate in Cape Town (☎ 021-423 0431; 54 Keerom St, City Bowl)

**Lesotho** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-460 7648; 391 Anderson St, Menlo Park) Consulate in Jo'burg (☎ 011-339 3653; 76 Juta St, Indent House, Braamfontein) Consulate in Durban (☎ 031-307 2168; 2nd fl, Westguard House, cnr West & Gardiner Sts)

**Mozambique** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-401 0300; 529 Edmond St, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-327 2938, 327 2944; 252 Jeppe St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-426 2944; 3rd fl, Castle Bldg, 45 Castle St); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 0200; Room 520, 320 West St); Consulate in Nelspruit (Map p533; ☎ 013-753 2089; 43 Brown St)

**Namibia** (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-481 9100; secretary@namibia.org.za; 197 Blackwood St, Arcadia, Pretoria)

**Netherlands** Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-344 3910; www.dutchembassy.co.za; 825 Arcadia St); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-421 5660; 100 Strand St, City Bowl)

**New Zealand** (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 8656; Block C, Hatfield Gardens, Arcadia, Pretoria)

**Swaziland** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-344 1910; 715 Government Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 403 7372, 403 2036; 6th fl, Braamfontein Centre, 23 Jorissen St)

**UK** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-421 7500; bh@icon.co.za; 255 Hill St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp428-9; ☎ 021-425 3670; Southern Life Centre, 8 Riebeeck St, City Bowl); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-305 3041; 22 Gardner St)

**USA** Embassy in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-431 4000; http://pretoria.usembassy.gov; 877 Pretorius St, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (Map pp416-17; ☎ 021-421 4280; 4th fl, Broadway Industries Centre, Foreshore); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map pp542-3; ☎ 011-646 6900; 1 River St, Killarney); Consulate in Durban (Map pp502-3; ☎ 031-304 4737; 29th fl, Durban Bay House, 333 Smith St)

**Zimbabwe** High Commission in Pretoria (Map pp554-5; ☎ 012-342 5125; 798 Merton Ave, Arcadia); Consulate in Cape Town (☎ 021-461 4710; 55 Kuyper St, Zonnebloem); Consulate in Jo'burg (Map p547; ☎ 011-838 2156; 17th fl, 20 Anderson St)

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

South Africa hosts dozens of festivals, and there's always something going on somewhere in the country. For other events, see the destination chapters. **South Africa Tourism** (www.southafrica.net) also has listings of festivals around the country.

#### January

**Cape Town New Year Carnival** (Cape Town Minstrel Carnival) Cape Town's longest-running street party is held 1–2 January, with ribald song and dance parades, colourful costumes and general revelry. It's followed by a Jazzathon at the Waterfront.

#### February

**Kavadi Festival** The major Hindu festival, held twice annually (January–February and April–May) in Durban, in honour of the Hindu god Muruga. It's accompanied by the piercing of the body with skewers as a sign of devotion.

#### March

**Cape Argus Cycle Tour** (www.cycletour.co.za) Held in the second week of March, this spin around the Cape

Peninsula is the largest bicycle race in the world, with over 30,000 entries.

**Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival** (☎ 044-203 8600; info@kknk.co.za) Enjoy all things Afrikaans at this festival that aims to seek unity between Afrikaans speakers of all races; held in Oudtshoorn (Western Cape) in late March/early April.

#### April

**Rustler's Valley One World Unity Party** (www.rustlers.co.za) An off-beat music-centred party held around Easter weekend that's an annual highlight for alternative lifestyle lovers of every sort. Rustler's Valley, Free State.

**Splashy Fen Music Festival** (www.splashyfen.co.za) Rock, pop and jazz with a fringe; held in late April at Splashy Fen Farm, about 20km north of Underberg in the foothills of the southern Drakensberg.

#### July

**National Arts Festival** (www.nafest.co.za) Get in touch with South Africa's creative pulse at the country's largest arts festival, held annually in early July at Grahamstown (Eastern Cape).

#### November

**Diwali** The Durban Indian community's three-day Festival of Lights.

### HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** 1 January  
**Human Rights Day** 21 March  
**Good Friday** March/April  
**Easter Sunday** March/April  
**Easter Monday** March/April  
**Family Day** 17 April  
**Constitution or Freedom Day** 27 April  
**Workers' Day** 1 May  
**Youth Day** 16 June  
**Women's Day** 9 August  
**Heritage Day** 24 September  
**Day of Reconciliation** 16 December  
**Christmas Day** 25 December  
**Day of Goodwill** 26 December

### School Holidays

South Africa's major holiday periods are the December–January school holidays as well as the Easter break. Many shops and businesses close, accommodation in national parks and tourist areas is fully booked and peak-season prices are in effect. At the beginning and end of these holiday periods, public transport fills up, as do seats on domestic and international flights, and you'll likely encounter long queues at popular border posts.

The situation is similar during other school holidays, but not as intense. During these times, accommodation prices are often increased, but not by as much.

The provinces stagger their school holidays. They are approximately late March to early April (varying, depending when Easter is); late June to mid-July; late September to early October; and early December to mid-January. For exact dates, see www.saschools.co.za/sas/calendar.htm.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is widely available in South Africa. Many hostels offer email facilities, and there are internet cafés in every major town. Costs average US\$1.40 to US\$4 per hour. Most top hotels have wireless access and/or broadband (for which they should be able to provide the cable).

### MAPS

Some good country maps to look for are Map Studio's *Tourist Map* (1:2,500,000) and the Automobile Association of South Africa (AASA) series of maps covering the entire country. A good place to look for any of these is **Map Studio** (www.mapstudio.co.za), with branches in Cape Town, Durban and Jo'burg. Many bookstores in the CNA chain also usually stock a good selection of road atlases that will be helpful.

For any hiking done away from established trails, a topographical map is highly recommended. Government maps are available from **Maps Unlimited** (☎ 011-882 1741; www.mapoffice.co.za; 10 Rembrandt Park Plaza, cnr Lister & Heine Rds, Rembrandt Park, Jo'burg). Drakensberg maps – essential if you plan on hiking there – are available from KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation (see p580).

### MONEY

South Africa's currency is the rand (R), which is divided into 100 cents. There is no black market for the currency. The coins are one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, and R1, R2 and R5. The notes are R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200. There have been forgeries of the R200 note and some businesses are reluctant to accept them.

The value of the rand has fluctuated wildly in recent years, and is currently on the upswing, although South Africa is still less expensive than Europe and North America.

The best currencies to bring are US dollars, euros or British pounds in a mixture of travellers cheques and cash, plus a Visa or MasterCard for withdrawing money from ATMs.

### ATMs

There are ATMs in all cities in South Africa, most of which give cash advances against cards belonging to the Cirrus network.

### Credit Cards

These are widely accepted in South Africa, especially MasterCard and Visa, and can also be used at many ATMs for cash advances. Nedbank is an official Visa agent and Standard Bank is a MasterCard agent – both have branches across the country.

### Moneychangers

Cash is readily exchanged at banks (First National, Nedbank and Standard Bank are usually the best) and foreign-exchange bureaus in all major cities.

Most banks change travellers cheques in major currencies with varying commissions. Nedbank is associated with American Express, and First National Bank and Nedbank are associated with Visa. Thomas Cook has travellers cheques in rand, though it works out best in the end to buy US dollar cheques.

The Thomas Cook agent in South Africa is Rennies Travel, a large chain of travel agencies, and there are American Express offices in major cities. Neither charges a commission for its own travellers cheques, though you'll usually get a higher rate of exchange from a bank. Rennies also changes other travellers cheques without fees.

Keep at least some of your exchange receipts as you'll need these to reconvert leftover rand when you leave.

### Tipping

Wages are low, and tipping is expected; around 10% to 15% is usual in tourist areas.

### POST

Post offices are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and 8am to noon Saturday. For mailing anything of value consider using one of the private mail services, such as Postnet. Poste restante is available in all major cities.

## TELEPHONE

South Africa has good telephone facilities. Local calls are relatively inexpensive (about US\$0.10 for three minutes), whereas domestic long-distance calls (from about US\$0.30 per minute) and international calls (from US\$0.90 per minute to Europe) can be pricey. Phonecards are widely available. There are also private phone centres where you can pay cash for your call, but at double the rate of public phones. International calls are cheaper after 8pm on weekdays, and between 8pm Friday and 8am Monday. For reverse-charge calls, dial ☎ 0900.

### PHONE CODES

South Africa's country code is ☎ 27. To make an international call from South Africa, dial ☎ 09, followed by the country code, local area code (without the initial zero) and telephone number.

Telephone numbers in South Africa are 10 digits, including the local area code, which must always be dialled, unless you are in the same town. South African area codes are given at the start of each section, or with the telephone number. There are also several four-digit nationwide prefixes (for use within South Africa only) followed by six-digit numbers. These prefixes include: ☎ 0800 (toll free), ☎ 0860 (charged as a local call), and ☎ 0861 (flat-rate calls).

### MOBILE PHONES

The mobile-phone network covers most of the country, and the network operates on the GSM digital system.

The three major mobile networks are **Vodacom** (www.vodacom.co.za), **MTN** (www.mtn.co.za) and **Cell C** (www.cellc.co.za). Hiring a mobile phone is relatively inexpensive, but call charges average about US\$0.40 per minute. An easy alternative is to use your own phone (check ahead that it's compatible), and insert a local prepaid or pay-as-you-go SIM card from one of the three mobile networks.

The main codes for mobile phones are ☎ 082 (Vodacom), ☎ 083 (MTN) and ☎ 084 (Cell C).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The main government tourism organisation is **South African Tourism** (☎ 011-895 3000, 083-123 6789; www.southafrica.net), which has a helpful website with news of upcoming events and links.

For more details on individual provinces, there are provincial tourism organisations, of varying quality. In addition to these, almost every town in the country has at least one tourist office. These are private entities, and rely on commissions (5% is usually built into their hotel rates) for their existence. Also, be aware that many tourist offices will only recommend the services of member organisations (ie those that have paid up).

Provincial tourist offices include the following:

**Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectb.co.za)

**Free State Tourism Board** (☎ 051-447 1362; www.dteea.fs.gov.za)

**Gauteng Tourism Authority** (☎ 011-832 2780; www.gauteng.net)

**KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority** (☎ 031-366 7500; www.kzn.org.za)

**Limpopo Tourism Board** (☎ 015-295 8262, 0860-730 730; www.golimpopo.com)

**Mpumalanga Tourism Authority** (☎ 013-752 7001; www.mpumalanga.com)

**North-West Province Parks & Tourism Board** (☎ 018-397 1500, 293 1611; www.tourismnorthwest.co.za)

**Northern Cape Tourism Authority** (☎ 053-832 2657; www.northerncape.org.za)

**Western Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 021-426 5639; www.tourismcapetown.co.za)

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

South Africa is one of the best destinations on the continent for disabled travellers, with an ever-expanding network of facilities catering to those who are mobility impaired or blind. **SAN Parks** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org) has an excellent and inspirational overview of accommodation and trail accessibility for the mobility impaired at all its parks.

Another helpful initial contact is the **National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa** (☎ 011-726 8040; www.ncppdsa.co.za).

## VISAS

Visitors on holiday from most Commonwealth countries (including Australia and the UK), most Western European countries, Japan and the USA don't require visas. Instead, you'll be issued with a free entry permit on arrival. These are valid for a stay of up to 90 days.

If you aren't entitled to an entry permit, you'll need to get a visa (also free) before you arrive. These aren't issued at the borders, and must be

obtained at a South African embassy or consulate. Allow up to several weeks for processing. South Africa has consular representation in most countries; for a partial listing see p583. The website of the South African High Commission in London (www.southafricahouse.com) has an overview of visa requirements, and lists the nationalities that require visas.

## VISA EXTENSIONS

Applications for visa or entry-permit extensions, and for re-entry visas, should be made at the **Department of Home Affairs** (http://home-affairs.pwv.gov.za), with branches in Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and Pretoria.

## VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer work is possible, especially if you're interested in teaching or wildlife conservation. A good initial contact is **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com), with extensive listings of volunteer opportunities in the country.

Unless you have a UK passport, anyone coming to South Africa to do volunteer work needs to get a work permit. Applications for these should be made through the South African embassy or consulate in your home country; processing usually takes one month.

# TRANSPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

## GETTING THERE & AWAY Entering South Africa

Once you have an entry permit or visa, South Africa is straightforward and hassle-free to enter. Travellers arriving by air are often required to show an onward ticket – preferably an air ticket, though an overland ticket also seems to be acceptable.

If you're coming to South Africa after travelling through the yellow-fever zone in Africa (which includes most of East, West and Central Africa) or South America, you must have an international vaccination certificate against yellow fever. No other vaccinations are mandatory, although there are some you should consider (see p766).

## Air

### AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

The major air hub for South Africa, and for the entire surrounding region, is **OR Tambo**

**International Airport** (JIA or JNB; ☎ 011-921 6262; www.worldairportguides.com/johannesburg-jnb) – formerly Johannesburg International. It has a full range of shops, restaurants, internet access, ATMs, foreign-exchange bureaus and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets.

**Cape Town International Airport** (CPT; ☎ 021-937 1200; www.airports.co.za) receives many direct flights from Europe, and is becoming an increasingly important gateway. It has a forex bureau, and mobile-phone and car-rental outlets.

The smaller **Durban International Airport** (DUR; ☎ 031-451 6758; www.airports.co.za) handles several regional flights, as does **Mpumalanga Kruger International Airport** (MQP; ☎ 013-753 7500; www.kmiairport.co.za) near Nelspruit and the Kruger National Park.

**South African Airways** (SAA; airline code SA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com; hub JIA) is the national airline, with an excellent route network and safety record. In addition to its international routes, it operates regional flights together with its subsidiaries **South African Airlink** (SAAirlink; ☎ 011-978 5313; www.sairlink.co.za) and **South African Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za).

Some other international carriers flying to/from Jo'burg (except as noted):

**Air France** (AF; ☎ 0860-340 340; www.airfrance.fr) Hub: Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris.

**British Airways** (BA; www.britishairways.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-441 8600); Cape Town (☎ 021-936-1200) Hub: Heathrow Airport, London. Also serves Cape Town.

**Cathay Pacific** (CX; ☎ 011-9.500 8-120; www.cathay.com) Hub: Hong Kong International Airport.

**Egyptair** (MS; ☎ 011-3-12 2202, 011-880 4126/9; www.egyptair.com.eg) Hub: Cairo International Airport.

**Emirates Airlines** (EK; ☎ 011-883 8420; www.emirates.com) Hub: Dubai International Airport.

**Kenya Airways** (KQ; ☎ 011-881 9795, 011-571 8817; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi.

**KLM** (KL; ☎ 0860-247 474, 011-881 9696; www.klm.com) Hub: Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam. Also serves Cape Town.

**Lufthansa** (LH; ☎ 0861-842 538, 021-415 3506; www.lufthansa.com) Hub: Frankfurt International Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

**Qantas** (QF; ☎ 011-441 8550; www.qantas.com.au) Hub: Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney.

**Singapore Airlines** (SQ; www.singaporeair.com) Jo'burg (☎ 011-880 8560); Cape Town (☎ 021-674 0601) Hub: Singapore Changi Airport. Also serves Cape Town.

**Virgin Atlantic** (VS; ☎ 011-340 3400; www.virgin-atlantic.com) Hub: London. Also serves Cape Town.

## Bicycle

There are no restrictions on bringing your own bicycle into South Africa. Two helpful sources of background information are the **International Bicycle Fund** (☎ in the USA 206-767 0848; www.ibike.org) and **SA-Cycling** (www.sa-cycling.com).

## Border Crossings

### BOTSWANA

There are 18 official South Africa/Botswana border posts. All are open between 8am and 4pm, and many have longer hours.

**Grobler's Bridge** (☎ 8am-6pm) Northwest of Polokwane/Pietersburg.

**Kapfontein/Tlokweg Gate** (☎ 6am-10pm) North of Zeerust; a main border post.

**McCarthy's Rest** (☎ 8am-4.30pm) Near Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

**Ramatlhabama** (☎ 6am-8pm) North of Mafikeng; a main border post.

**Skilpadshok/Pioneer Gate** (☎ 6am-10pm) Northwest of Zeerust; a main border post.

Some of the more remote crossings are impassable to 2WD vehicles, and may be closed completely during periods of high water. Otherwise, the crossings are hassle-free.

### LESOTHO

All of landlocked Lesotho's borders are with South Africa and are straightforward to cross. The main crossing is at Maseru Bridge, east of Bloemfontein; queues here are often very long exiting Lesotho and, on some weekend evenings, coming into Lesotho.

### MOZAMBIQUE

The South Africa/Mozambique border posts are as follows:

**Giriyondo** (☎ 8am-4pm Oct-Mar, 8am-3pm Apr-Sep) West of Massingir (Mozambique).

**Komatipoort/Ressano Garcia** (☎ 6am-10pm) East of Nelspruit and heavily travelled.

**Kosi Bay/Ponta d'Ouro** (☎ 8am-4pm) On the coast, well north of Durban.

**Pafuri** (☎ 8am-4pm) In Kruger National Park's north-eastern corner.

### NAMIBIA

South Africa/Namibia border posts include those at Nakop/Ariamsvlei (24 hours) west of Upington; at Violsdrif/Noordoewer (24 hours) north of Springbok and en route to/from Cape Town; and at Rietfontein/Aroab (8am to 4.30pm) just south of Kgalagadi

Transfrontier Park. It's not possible to cross the border at Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park itself; Rietfontein is the closest crossing. There's also a border post at Alexander Bay/Oranjemund (6am to 10pm) on the coast, but public access is usually not permitted. Note that Namibian visas are not available at any of these border posts.

### SWAZILAND

There are 11 South Africa/Swaziland border posts, all of which are hassle-free. Note that small posts close at 4pm. The busiest crossing (and a good place to pick up lifts) is at Oshoek/Ngwenya (☎ 7am-10pm) approximately 360km southeast of Pretoria. Some others include the following:

**Golela/Lavumisa** (☎ 7am-10pm) En route between Durban and Swaziland's Ezulwini Valley.

**Josefsdal/Bulembu** (☎ 8am-4pm) Along the unpaved road from Piggs Peak to Barberton (Mpumalanga) and tricky in wet weather.

**Mahamba** (☎ 7am-10pm) The best crossing to use from Piet Retief is Mpumalanga.

**Mananga** (☎ 7am-6pm) Southwest of Komatipoort.

**Matsamo/Jeppe's Reef** (☎ 7am-8pm) Southwest of Malelane and a possible route to Kruger National Park.

**Onverwacht/Salitje** (☎ 8am-6pm) North of Pongola in KwaZulu-Natal.

### ZIMBABWE

The only border post between Zimbabwe and South Africa is at Beitbridge (24 hours) on the Limpopo River. There's lots of smuggling, so searches are thorough and queues often long. The closest South African town to the border is Musina (15km south), where you can change money.

When entering or leaving South Africa, vehicles pay a toll at the border to use the Limpopo Bridge. South Africans need a visa (free) to get into Zimbabwe but can obtain it at the border. Most other nationalities, including Commonwealth and US passport holders, require visas, which are available at the border and payable in US dollars only.

Ignore the touts on the Zimbabwe side trying to 'help' you through Zimbabwe immigration and customs. Despite their insistence, there's no charge for the government forms needed for immigration.

### Bus

Numerous buses cross the borders between South Africa and all of its neighbours. These

are the most efficient way to travel overland, unless you have your own vehicle. Other than sometimes lengthy queues, there are usually no hassles. At the border, you'll need to disembark to take care of visa formalities, then reboard your same bus and continue on. Visa prices are not included in the ticket price for trans-border routes. Many bus lines offer student discounts, upon presentation of a student ID.

It's also possible to travel to/from all of South Africa's neighbours by local minibus taxi. A few routes go direct, though sometimes it's necessary to walk across the border and change vehicles on the other side.

## Car & Motorcycle

If you're arriving in South Africa via car or motorcycle, you will need the vehicle's registration papers, liability insurance and your driving licence. You'll also need a *carnet de passage en douane*, which acts as a temporary waiver of import duty; arrange for this through your local automobile association. South African-registered vehicles don't need a carnet to visit any of South Africa's neighbouring countries.

Border posts generally don't have petrol stations or repair shops; you'll need to go to the nearest large town.

## From Botswana BUS

From Jo'burg/Pretoria, **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) runs daily buses to Gaborone (US\$20, six hours). A cheaper but less safe and less comfortable alternative is one of the minibuses that run throughout the day between Jo'burg and Gaborone (about US\$1.40, six hours) via Mafikeng (North-West Province). In Gaborone, these leave from the northwest corner of the main bus terminal, starting at 6am. In Jo'burg, departures are from Park Station. To do the trip in stages, take a City Link bus from Jo'burg to Mafikeng, from where there are direct minibuses over the border to Lobatse (1½ hours). There are also direct minibuses between Jo'burg and Palapye (Botswana) via Martin's Drift (eight hours).

## TRAIN

There are no cross-border trains, but it's possible to travel the Botswana leg of the journey between Francistown, near the border with



Zimbabwe, and Lobatse, near the border with South Africa, via Gaborone.

### From Lesotho BUS

**Big Sky Coaches** (www.bigskyoaches.co.za) runs two buses daily in each direction between Bloemfontein and Maseru Bridge (US\$4.70, three hours), with express services from Bloemfontein (two hours) on Friday and on Saturday morning, and from Maseru Bridge on Friday and on Sunday afternoon. Tickets are sold at the Big Sky booths at Bloemfontein's Central Park, and on the bus at Maseru Bridge.

Via minibus taxi, the quickest connections are from Bloemfontein to Botshabelo (Mtabelo; US\$4, one hour), and then from there to Maseru (US\$2, 1½ hours). There are also at least three buses weekly between Jo'burg and Maseru (six to seven hours), and daily minibus taxis between both Jo'burg and Ladybrand (16km from the Maseru Bridge border crossing) and Maseru. All these routes will bring you into Maseru coming from South Africa; leaving Maseru, you'll need to go to the South Africa side of Maseru Bridge.

Other useful connections include a daily minibus taxi between Mokhotlong (Lesotho) and Underberg (South Africa) via Sani Pass (see p522); and several taxis daily between Qacha's Nek (Lesotho) and Matatiele (South Africa; about US\$2, 45 minutes). If you are travelling between Jo'burg and northern Lesotho, take a minibus taxi to Ficksburg, cross the border, and then get a minibus taxi on to Butha-Buthe and points north. There are sometimes direct taxis between Jo'burg and Butha-Buthe via Caledonspoor border (about US\$17, five hours).

### CAR

The easiest entry points for car and motorcycle are on the northern and western sides of the country. Most of the entry points to the south and east are unpaved, though all are possible in a 2WD except Sani Pass. You'll need a 4WD to enter Lesotho via Sani Pass; it's possible to exit via this route with a 2WD with sufficient clearance, but a 4WD is recommended.

### From Mozambique BUS

Several large 'luxury' buses run daily between Jo'burg/Pretoria and Maputo via Nelspruit

and Komatipoort (US\$20 to US\$30, eight to nine hours). These include the following:

**Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za)

**Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za)

**Panthera Azul** (☎ 011-618 8811, Maputo 021-302 077, 302 083; www.pantherazul.com)

**Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333; www.translux.co.za)

You can also travel in each direction on these lines between Nelspruit and Maputo, but not between Nelspruit and Jo'burg.

Alternatively, the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com) links Jo'burg/Pretoria, Nelspruit and Durban with Manzini (Swaziland), from where you can get a minibus taxi to Maputo. See p592 for more on the Baz Bus.

Panthera Azul has buses three times weekly between Durban and Maputo (US\$31, 8½ hours), passing through Big Bend (Swaziland) and Namaacha.

Minibuses depart Maputo daily in the morning for the Namaacha/Lomahasha border post (US\$2, 1½ hours) with some continuing on to Manzini (US\$4.50, 3½ hours).

### CAR

For travel to/from Mozambique via the Kosi Bay border, you will need your own vehicle (4WD is necessary on the Mozambique side). Alternatively, most places to stay in Ponta d'Ouro (Mozambique) will arrange transfers for around US\$20. Hitching between the border and Ponta d'Ouro is easy at weekends and also during the South African school holidays.

There's a good tarmac toll road connecting Jo'burg with Maputo via Ressano Garcia, with tolls on the South Africa side between Middelburg and Witbank, at Machadodorp and 45km east of Nelspruit.

### TRAIN

The daily (except Saturday) *Komati* train, operated by Shosholoza Meyl, links Jo'burg and Komatipoort via Pretoria and Nelspruit (1st/2nd/3rd class from US\$25/17/9, 13 to 14 hours). Once at Komatipoort, you can change to the Mozambican train to Maputo (Mtc15,000, economy class only, five hours), but as service on the Mozambique side is so slow, it's much better to take a minibus (US\$3.50, 1½ hours). Even if you take the train the whole way, you'll need to buy the ticket for the Mozambique section at the border.

### From Namibia BUS

**Intercape Mainliner** (www.intercape.co.za) runs four times weekly between Cape Town and Windhoek via Upington (US\$65, 20 hours). It's possible to travel from Jo'burg to Windhoek with Intercape Mainliner (US\$83, 25 hours) on the same days, with a change of bus in Upington.

### TRAIN

The **Trans-Namib** (☎ Namibia 061-298 2175; www.transnamib.com.na) 'StarLine' runs twice weekly between Windhoek and Upington (25 hours).

### From Swaziland BUS

The best connections are on the **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; www.bazbus.com), which runs from Jo'burg/Pretoria to Manzini via Nelspruit, and between Durban and Manzini via the KwaZulu-Natal coast.

Minibus taxis run daily between Jo'burg (Park Station), Mbabane and Manzini (US\$0.90, four hours), between Manzini and Durban (US\$16, eight hours), and between Manzini and Maputo (Mozambique; US\$4.50, 2½ hours). For many routes, you'll need to change minibuses at the border. Most long-distance taxis leave early in the morning.

### From Zimbabwe BUS

At the time of research, bus services between Jo'burg and Zimbabwe were suspended, due in part to fuel shortages.

### TOURS

Dozens of tour and safari companies organise package tours to South Africa including for various special interests (bird-watching, flower-watching etc). Following is a list of possible tour companies:

**Adventure Centre** (☎ 510-94 1879, 800-228 2747; www.adventurecenter.com) Budget to midrange tours

including a 22-day South Africa circuit that takes in bits of Swaziland and Lesotho; it's also the US agent for several overland operators.

**Africa Adventure Company** (☎ 954-491 8877, 800-882 9453; www.africa-adventure.com) Upper-end wildlife safaris, including the private reserves around Kruger National Park, plus other itineraries in Cape Town and the Garden Route.

**African Wildlife Safaris** (☎ 03-9696 2899; www.africanwildlifesafaris.com.au) Customised wildlife safaris in South Africa and neighbouring countries.

**Born Free Safaris** (☎ 800-472 3274; www.bornfreefaris.com) Offers a good range of Cape to Kruger itineraries.

**Guerba** (☎ 01373-826 611; www.guerba.com) Overland tours.

**In the Saddle** (☎ 01299-272 997; www.inthesaddle.com) Strictly for horse aficionados, with various rides in South Africa, including in the Western Cape and in the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park.

**Peregrine Travel** (☎ 03-8601 4444; www.peregrine.net.au) Caters to all budgets, from overland truck tours to upscale wildlife safaris, and including a South Africa and Swaziland cycling itinerary.

**Wilderness Travel** (☎ 015-558 2488, 800-368 2794; www.wildernesstravel.com) Offers various Southern Africa packages, including a two-week Cape Town and Garden Route itinerary.

### GETTING AROUND Air

In addition to being the international flag carrier, **South African Airways** (SAA; ☎ 0861-359 722, 011-978 5313; www.flysaa.com) is the main domestic carrier, with an extensive and efficient route network to major cities. Its subsidiaries, **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 5313; www.sairlink.co.za) and **SA Express** (☎ 011-978 5577; www.saexpress.co.za), also service domestic routes and share SAA's excellent safety record.

Domestic fares aren't cheap. One way to save significantly is to book online.

In addition to SAA and its affiliates, airlines flying domestically include the following:

**1time** (☎ 0861-345345; www.1time.co.za) No-frills flights linking Jo'burg with Cape Town, Durban and East London, George and Port Elizabeth, and between Cape Town and East London. Also offers car rentals.

**Comair** (☎ 0860-435 922, 011-921 0222; www.comair.co.za) Operates British Airways flights within Africa, and has flights linking Cape Town, Durban, Jo'burg and Port Elizabeth.

**Kulula.com** (☎ 0861-585 852; www.kulula.com) Operates no-frills flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth and Mpumalanga Kruger. Also offers airport transfer services and car rentals.

**Nationwide Airlines** (☎ 0861-737 737, 011-344 7200; www.nationwideair.co.za) Operates in partnership with Virgin Atlantic, and has flights linking Jo'burg, Cape Town, Durban, George, Port Elizabeth, Sun City and Nelspruit.

### Bicycle

South Africa offers some rewarding cycling. The Cape Peninsula and the Winelands of the Western Cape are excellent biking areas. The Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape is beautiful

and challenging, while the northern lowveld offers wide plains.

When planning, keep in mind that much of the country (except for Western Cape and the west coast) gets most of its rain in summer (late November to March), in the form of violent thunderstorms. When it isn't raining, summer days can be unpleasantly hot, especially in the steamy lowveld and distances between major towns are often long.

**SA-Cycling** ([www.sa-cycling.com](http://www.sa-cycling.com)) posts cyclists diaries, suggests several routes, and has listings of cycling clubs. Other things to remember are that it's illegal to cycle on highways, and that roads near urban areas are too busy for comfort.

Mixing cycling with public transport doesn't work well, as most bus lines don't want bicycles in their luggage holds, and minibuses don't carry luggage on the roof.

## Bus

Buses in South Africa aren't the deal that they are in many other countries. However, together with the less-appealing minibuses taxis, they're the main form of public transport, with a reliable and reasonably comfortable network linking all major cities. Note that many long-distance services run through the night.

A good alternative to the standard bus lines is **Baz Bus** (☎ 021-439 2323; [www.bazbus.com](http://www.bazbus.com)), catering almost exclusively to backpackers and travellers. It offers hop-on, hop-off fares and door-to-door service between Cape Town and Jo'burg via the Northern Drakensberg, Durban and the Garden Route. It also has a loop from Durban via Zululand and Swaziland to Jo'burg, passing near Kruger National Park. Point-to-point fares are more expensive than on the other major lines, but can work out more economically if you take advantage of the hop-on/hop-off feature. It's also worth checking out their one- and two-week travel passes.

The Baz Bus drops off and picks up at many hostels along the way, and has transfer arrangements with those off the main routes for a nominal extra charge. You can book directly with Baz Bus, as well as with most hostels.

In partnership with Translux, **City to City** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; [www.translux.co.za](http://www.translux.co.za)) has taken over the routes that once carried people from the Homelands to and from the big cities during the apartheid regime.

Services are less expensive than on the other lines, and go to many off-the-beaten-track places, including townships and mining towns. Destinations from Jo'burg include Mthatha, Nelspruit, Hazzyview, Beitbridge (for Zimbabwe), Piet Retief, and various towns in KwaZulu-Natal. Many services originate at Jo'burg's Park Station transit centre, where there are booking counters and an information desk.

Offering an extensive network, with routes and pricing similar to those for Translux, **Greyhound** (☎ 083-915 -1200; [www.greyhound.co.za](http://www.greyhound.co.za)) also has a Jo'burg to Durban route via Zululand and Richards Bay, and offers frequent special deals.

Servicing primarily the western half of the country, plus Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique), **Intercape Mainliner** (☎ 0861 287 287, 021-380 4400; [www.intercape.co.za](http://www.intercape.co.za)) prices are somewhat less than Translux and Greyhound. For longer hauls, it's worth paying more (about 8% above regular fares) for a reclining seat on one of Intercape's new Sleepliner buses.

**SA Roadlink** (☎ 011-333 2223; [www.saroadlink.co.za](http://www.saroadlink.co.za)) is a new line linking Pretoria and Johannesburg with Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Durban and points in between.

The main long-distance bus operator **Translux** (☎ 011-774 3333, 0861-589 282; [www.translux.co.za](http://www.translux.co.za)), has services connecting Cape Town, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mthatha, Nelspruit (en route to Mozambique) and various towns along the Garden Route.

There are no class tiers on any of the bus lines, although Translux, Intercape and Greyhound, as well as SA Roadlink's newer buses would be the equivalent of 'luxury' lines, with air-con and often video and a toilet. City to City's service is no-frills.

Except for the Baz Bus, which has its own pricing structure, fares are roughly calculated by distance, although short runs are disproportionately expensive. Some approximate one-way fares and durations: Jo'burg to Cape Town (US\$59, 19 hours); Jo'burg to Durban (US\$11 to US\$20, eight hours); and Cape Town to Knysna (US\$23, eight hours). Baz Bus one-way fares for hop-on, hop-off service are: Cape Town to Durban via the Garden Route (US\$215); Jo'burg-Swaziland-Durban-Drakensberg-Jo'burg loop (US\$136)

Prices rise during school holidays; all lines offer student and senior citizen discounts, and Intercape has backpacker discounts. Also inquire about travel passes, if you'll be taking several bus journeys, and always check with the bus companies to see if they are running any specials, which can sometimes save you up to 40%.

For the main lines, reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance (72 hours in advance for Intercape Mainliner, and as much in advance as possible for travel during peak periods). It's sometimes possible to get a seat at the last minute, but this shouldn't be counted on.

## Car & Motorcycle

South Africa is ideal for driving, and away from the main bus and train routes, having your own wheels is the best way to get around. If you're in a group, it's also often the most economical. Most major roads are in excellent condition, and off the main routes there are interesting back roads to explore.

The country is crossed by many national routes (eg N1). On some sections a toll is payable, based on distance. There's always plenty of warning that you're about to enter a toll section (marked by a black 'T' in a yellow circle), and there's always an alternative route (marked by a black 'A' in a yellow circle). On alternative routes, signposting is sparse, generally only directing you to smaller towns or giving route numbers, rather than the direction of the next large city. Smaller roads are numbered (eg R44 - shown in this book as Rte 44), and when you ask directions most people will refer to these numbers rather than destinations, so it pays to have a good road map.

## DRIVING LICENCE

In South Africa, you can use your driving licence from your home country if it is in English (or if you have a certified translation), and if it carries your photo; otherwise you'll need an international driving permit, obtainable from a motoring organisation in your home country.

## FUEL

Petrol costs about US\$0.70 per litre for leaded or unleaded in all three countries, and must be paid for in cash. There's no self-service. An attendant will always fill up your tank for you, clean your windows and ask if the oil or

water needs checking, and should be tipped between US\$0.30 and US\$0.70.

Along main routes in South Africa there are plenty of petrol stations, many open 24 hours.

## HIRE

Car rental is relatively inexpensive in South Africa. Most companies have a minimum age requirement of 21 years. Rates start at about US\$40 per day including insurance and 200km free per day. Rental of a 4WD starts at about US\$60. For cheaper rates and unlimited mileage deals, it's best to book and prepay through your agent at home before coming to South Africa.

**Around About Cars** (☎ 0860 422 0422; [www.aroundaboutcars.com](http://www.aroundaboutcars.com))

**Avis** (☎ 0861-113 748, 011-923 3660; [www.avis.co.za](http://www.avis.co.za))

**Budget** (☎ 0861-016 622, 011-398 0123; [www.budget.co.za](http://www.budget.co.za))

**Europcar** (☎ 0800 011 344, 011-574 4457; [www.europcar.co.za](http://www.europcar.co.za))

**Hertz** (☎ 021-935 4800, 011-390 9700; [www.hertz.co.za](http://www.hertz.co.za))

Local car-rental companies are usually less expensive, though they tend to come and go. Also check with backpackers' hostels; many can arrange better deals, from around US\$25 per day or less.

**Imperial** (☎ 0861 131 000, 011-574 1000; [www.imperialcarrental.co.za](http://www.imperialcarrental.co.za))

**Tempest** (☎ 0860-031 666, 011-396 1080; [www.tempestcarhire.co.za](http://www.tempestcarhire.co.za); South Africa)

Renting a camper van is another option, although one-way rentals are often not possible, or attract large fees. Some camper-van rentals include camping gear. Bakkie campers, which sleep two in the back of a canopied pick-up, are cheaper. Two places to try, both in Jo'burg, are **African Leisure Travel** (☎ 011-792 1884; [www.africanleisure.co.za](http://www.africanleisure.co.za)) and **Britz 4x4 Rentals** (☎ 011-396 1860; [www.britz.co.za](http://www.britz.co.za)).

For motorcycle rental, good contacts include **Motozulu** ([www.motozulu.ms](http://www.motozulu.ms)) in Port Shepstone (KwaZulu-Natal), and **Le Cap Motorcycle Hire** (Map p432; ☎ 021-423 0823; [www.lecap.co.za](http://www.lecap.co.za)) in Cape Town.

## INSURANCE

Insurance for third-party damage and damage to or loss of your vehicle is highly recommended, though not legally required

for private-vehicle owners. The AASA is a good contact and Insurance agencies include **African Independent Brokers** (☎ 086-100 1002), **Lions Head Insurance Brokers** (☎ 021-761 8332) and **First Bowring** (☎ 021-425 1460), all based in Cape Town.

### ROAD HAZARDS

South Africa has a horrific road-accident record, with the annual death toll around 10,000 (although some estimates place it at over 15,000). The N1 between Cape Town and Beaufort West is considered to be the most dangerous stretch of road in the country.

The main hazards are your fellow drivers, with overtaking blind and overtaking with insufficient passing room the major dangers. Drivers on little-used rural roads often speed and they often assume that there is no other traffic. There is alcohol breath-testing in South Africa, but given the high blood-alcohol level permitted (over 0.08% in South Africa) drunk drivers remain a danger.

Animals and pedestrians on the roads are another hazard, especially in rural areas. Standard advice is that if you hit an animal in an area in which you're uncertain of your safety, it's best to continue to the nearest police station and report it there. During the rainy season, and especially in higher areas of steamy KwaZulu-Natal, thick fog can slow you to a crawl. In the lowveld, summer hailstorms can damage your car.

### Carjacking

In Jo'burg, and to a lesser extent in the other big cities, carjacking is a problem, though it's more likely if you're driving something flash rather than a standard rental car. The carjackers are almost always armed, and people have been killed for their cars. Stay alert, keep windows wound up and doors locked at night, and keep your taste in cars modest. If you're stopped at a red light and notice anything suspicious, it's standard practice to check that the junction is clear, and run the light. If you do get carjacked, don't resist, just hand over the keys immediately.

### ROAD RULES

Driving is on the left-hand side of the road, as in the UK, Japan and Australia. Seatbelts are mandatory for the driver and front-seat passenger.

There are a few local variations on road rules. The main one is the 'four-way stop' (crossroad), which can occur even on major roads. All vehicles are required to stop, with those arriving first the first to go (even if they're on a minor cross street). On freeways, faster drivers will expect you to move into the emergency lane to let them pass, and will probably flash their hazard lights as thanks. At roundabouts, vehicles already in the roundabout, and those approaching it from the right, have the right of way.

In Johannesburg and other urban areas, you'll encounter car guards – usually otherwise unemployed Africans from elsewhere on the continent who will (most usefully) keep an eye on your parked car while you do your shopping or other errands. Be nice to them (they don't bite) and tip them between US\$0.30 and US\$0.70 for their services.

### Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country. This is especially true in South Africa, particularly in and near urban areas, and it's not a form of travel we can recommend. However, sometimes in rural areas it may be the only way to get somewhere.

### Local Transport

For getting around within a city or town, the main options are city buses, minibus taxis and regular taxis – either shared or private hire. In a few places, such as Cape Town and Durban, you'll have other options such as the rikki (small open vans) and *tuk-tuk* (motorised tricycle), and Cape Town, Jo'burg and Pretoria have metro commuter trains.

### BUS

Cape Town, Jo'burg, Pretoria and several other urban areas have city bus systems. Fares are cheap and routes, which are signboarded, are extensive. However, services usually stop running early in the evening, and there aren't many buses on weekends.

### Minibus Taxi

Minibus taxis run almost everywhere in South Africa – within cities, to the suburbs and to neighbouring towns. They leave when full and, happily – especially if you've travelled elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa – 'full' in South Africa isn't as full as it is in many neighbouring countries. Most accommodate 14 to

16 people, with the slightly larger 'Sprinters' taking about 20.

Minibus taxis have the advantages of an extensive route network and cheap prices. These are outweighed, however, by the fact that driving standards and vehicle conditions often leave a lot to be desired, and there are many accidents. The reputation of minibus taxis has also been tarnished by isolated outbreaks of gangster-style shoot-outs between the various companies competing for business, including incidents where crowded taxis were machine-gunned. Although things have settled down in recent years, minibuses in some areas and on some routes are still considered highly unsafe, and reports of muggings and other incidents remain a regular feature. In other areas – notably central Cape Town, where they're a handy and popular way to get around – they are fine.

Away from train and main bus routes, minibus taxis may be the only choice of public transport. They're also a good way to get insights into local life. If you want to try one, read the newspapers, don't ride at night, and always ask for local advice on lines and areas to avoid before using minibus taxis as transport. As most minibus taxis don't carry luggage on the roof, stowing backpacks can be a hassle.

### Private Taxi

Larger cities have a private taxi service. Occasionally, you'll find a taxi stand, but usually you'll need to telephone for a cab. Prices average about US\$1.10 per kilometre.

### Shared Taxi

In some towns (and on some longer routes), the only transport option is a shared taxi, basically a smaller version of the minibus taxi. These are slightly more expensive than minibus taxis, and comparable in safety.

### Tours

There are dozens of tours available, ranging from budget-oriented overland truck tours to exclusive luxury safaris. The best way to get information on tours geared to budget travellers is from the network of backpackers' hostels around the country. Many have travellers bulletin boards, and some are directly affiliated with budget-tour operators.

Some tour operators to try include the following:

**African Routes** (☎ 031-563 5080; www.africanroutes.co.za) Offers camping and overland itineraries for younger travellers, plus various tours for seniors.

**BirdWatch Cape** (☎ 021-762 5059; www.birdwatch.co.za) A small outfit for twitchers, focusing on Cape Town and surrounding areas.

**Bundu Safari Company** (☎ 011-675 0767; www.bundusafaris.co.za) Budget-oriented tours ranging from one to several days, focusing on Kruger National Park and the surrounding area.

**Cape Town Gourmet Adventure Tours** (☎ 083-693 1151; http://gourmet.cape-town.info) Wining and dining in Cape Town, plus 'wellness' tours and other options in and around Cape Town and the Western Cape.

**Eco-1st** (☎ 021-559 2420; www.eco-tourisminvestments.co.za) Outdoor-oriented 'biodiversity' tours around Cape Town, plus longer itineraries taking in Kruger National Park, the Garden Route and other areas.

**Encompass Africa** (☎ 021-434 9932; encompass.africa@yabo.co.za) A backpacker-oriented outfit offering various itineraries based out of Cape Town.

**Springbok Atlas** (☎ 021-460 4700; www.springbokatlas.com) One of the major coach-tour operators, offering midrange tours along popular routes, including day tours. Aimed at older tourists.

**Thompsons South Africa** (☎ 031-201 3100; www.thompsonssa.com) Midrange and top-end package tours and safaris, including a two-week tour taking in South Africa's main tourist spots.

**Wilderness Safaris** (www.wilderness-safaris.com) Upmarket specialist operator offering high-end luxury safaris and special-interest trips; also operates several luxury bush camps.

### Train

South Africa's Shosholozu Meyl passenger trains are run by **Spoornet** (☎ 011-773 2944; www.spoornet.co.za, click on 'Passengers'), and offer regular services connecting major cities on 'name trains' (some of the main routes are listed, p596). These are a good and safe, albeit slow, way to get around, and more comfortable than taking the bus. The trains are also relatively affordable and, unlike the long-distance buses, fares on short sectors are not inflated.

On overnight journeys, 1st- and 2nd-class fares include a sleeping berth, but there's an additional charge for bedding hire. Alternatively, you can hire a private compartment (which sleeps four in 1st class and six in 2nd class) or a coupe (which sleeps two in 1st class and three in 2nd class) – these are a good way of travelling more securely. Meals are available in the dining car, or in the comfort of your compartment.



Tickets must be booked at least 24 hours in advance (you can book up to three months in advance). Bookings for anywhere in the country can be done at any individual station, or through the **Shosholozza Meyl Reservations Centre** (☎ 0860-008 888, 011-774 4555). For an overview of the South African rails, check out **The Man in Seat 61** ([www.seat61.com/South](http://www.seat61.com/South) ☞ 20Africa.htm).

#### ROUTES

Main routes include the following:

**Algoa** Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth via Bloemfontein; daily; 20 hours.

**Amatola** Jo'burg–East London via Bloemfontein; Sunday to Friday; 20 hours.

**Bosveld** Jo'burg–Musina via Makhado; daily; 17 hours.

**Diamond Express** Jo'burg–Bloemfontein; three times weekly; nine hours.

**Komati** Jo'burg–Komatipoort via Pretoria, Middelburg and Nelspruit; daily; 13 hours; connects to the Komatipoort-Maputo train.

**Trans Karoo** Pretoria/Jo'burg–Cape Town via Kimberly; daily; 28 hours.

**Trans Natal** Jo'burg–Durban via Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg; five times weekly; 13½ hours.

**Trans Oranje** Cape Town–Durban via Kimberley, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad; weekly; 31 hours.

Some 1st-/2nd-/economy-class sample fares: Jo'burg–Durban US\$34/22/13; Cape Town–Pretoria US\$70/47/31; Jo'burg–Port Elizabeth US\$49/33/20. Return fares are double the one-way fares. It's possible to put a vehicle on board the *Trans Karoo* for an extra US\$180.

#### METRO TRAINS

There are metro services in Jo'burg, Cape Town and Pretoria, though most lines aren't recommended for security reasons. The new **Gautrain** ([www.gautrain.co.za](http://www.gautrain.co.za)) may soon connect Jo'burg and Pretoria.