Cape Town, The Winelands & The Peninsula

A guide on what to do and where to go when visiting Cape Town & The Winelands region
Welcome to the Cape

Scenically beautiful, Cape Town is a compelling mix of trendy modern and old-world elegance. Glamorous hotels, world-class dining and stunning vistas merge seamlessly with dynamic student suburbs and vibrant nightlife. Malay and African heritage are evident in the cuisine, traditions and entertainment while the architecture reveals a strong Dutch, German and English flavour and style. Contemporary art is proudly displayed in a variety of galleries and modern boutique hotels, and wine bars and brandy tasting lounges will appeal to the fashionable set. For the well-heeled the finest in opera, ballet, drama and music can be appreciated in style.
Top Destinations in Cape Town, the Winelands & the Peninsula

Cape Town

Not So Long Ago...

By today’s standards, South Africa’s documented history reaches back into the fairly recent past. It’s a fascinating story of a mix of people struggling for survival, independence and dominance, in typical human fashion. From these clashes and squabbles was born a style which is uniquely Capetonian – edgy, individual and utterly enthralling.

But before it all, stood a mountain - unchanged and imposing.

The Table Mountain cable car rotates 360 degrees as it rises and descends the mountain, offering stunning views. From the summit, you are king of the world, with breath-taking vistas extending out over the city and beaches and towards the Cape of Good Hope.

Going Up?

A hike up Table Mountain is an option if you are feeling active. We recommend hiring a guide for this 5 hour excursion. Alternatively get to the cable car early – fickle weather and large crowds can ruin plans, so take the first available opportunity. Look out for rock hyraxes (dassies) while up there – would you believe these small mammals are close relatives to elephants?

In 1652 a vegetable garden and an orchard were set up to supply the passing Dutch East India Company trade ships on their routes between Europe and India. Company’s Gardens is a well-maintained green oasis in the heart of the city. The Iziko South African National Gallery, located in the gardens began in 1871 with 45 paintings by Thomas Butterworth Bayley and now boasts a superb collection of international and local, modern and contemporary work.

The flat-roofed, star-shaped Castle of Good Hope looks more like a fort than a castle and was built around 1670 by the Dutch East India Company. It was a formidable defensive system which was never attacked. For many years, the citadel was the centre of colonial life, and a picture of early Cape Town emerges on a visit.

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In a tribute to a past practice dating back to 1806, the SA navy fires the “Noon Day Gun”, during the week, signaling midday. Two canons salute skyward, at Lion’s Battery, on Signal Hill. The loud boom is the Cape’s oldest tradition - and one by which you can set your watch. The hill itself is a popular city viewpoint and sundowner spot where glorious sunsets can be appreciated.

Established by British entrepreneur and empire builder, Cecil John Rhodes, in 1895, the exquisite Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens sprawl across 528 hectares and disappear into the natural forest of Table Mountain National Park. In the summer months, the gardens give the birds a bit of sound competition by playing host to a variety of sunset concerts – rock, philharmonic, Carols. The Rhodes Memorial is a monument to this former prime minister, built on the slopes of Table Mountain after his death in 1912. A tour of the Groote Schuur Estate his former residence, and now the
President’s Cape Town residence will offer further insights into the controversial Rhodes.

**A Carpet of Colour**
Awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status, Kirstenbosch esteems the endemic ‘fynbos’ plant species, so unique to the Cape. It is home to three types of fynbos, including those from the Protea family – SA’s national plant.

**The Broken Past**
Intricately woven into the tapestry of modern Cape life is a rich history of the populace, which stretches back through the ages, roots buried in far flung continents.

Descendants of the people of Malaysia, Sri-Lanka, Indonesia and India, originally brought to the Cape as slave laborers, settled in the Bo-Kaap in the 1700s. Known for its winding cobblestone streets and colourful Georgian-style houses, this is where the Malay Muslim community finds its origins. In the 19th c **District Six** was a vibrant community of artisans, immigrants, labourers and freed slaves. By the following century, more than 60 000 South Africans had been forcibly removed to outlying areas in terms of the Group Areas Act, and Apartheid policies. Their homes were destroyed. The District Six Museum is a haunting testament to the country’s darker times.

South Africa’s own Alcatraz, **Robben Island** was a maximum security prison for political prisoners deemed a danger to the state. Most notoriously, this was where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for 27 years, prior to his release as apartheid came to its demise. Visually disturbing, the island’s barren cells, bars and hard labour quarry mines retain a lingering sense of hopelessness, an integral part of its history. It was once used as a lunatic asylum, a leper colony in 1845, and the British also imprisoned rebellious Xhosa chiefs here. Now a symbol of freedom, democracy and the triumph of the human spirit, the Robben Island Museum and world heritage site is inspirational when you consider the unifying icon and leader who was never broken by such a place.

The Robben Island ferry departs from the Clock Tower at the V&A Waterfront – it’s a 30 minute boat transfer.

**A History of Hardship**
A short boat cruise takes you to Robben Island, which is just over 7 kms from the Cape Town harbour. It is here, in the prison cell where South Africa’s most beloved legend, Nelson Mandela, spent so many years, that you can get a sense of the despair the inmates must have felt. It is difficult to imagine how anyone could rise above the horror of incarceration to become arguably the most iconic and compassionate leader of our era.

**A Higher Power**
A beautiful place of worship dating back to 1863, the **Great Synagogue** is located in the city centre’s Botanical Gardens. This is the country’s oldest practicing synagogue, and boasts ornate interiors and stained glass. Alongside it the ‘Old Shul’ forms part of the **Jewish Museum**, where rare artefacts and footage reveal the life of the Jewish immigrant, and explain how the community played a role against apartheid.

In honour of its namesake, **St George’s Cathedral** battled its own fire-breathing dragon, the curse of apartheid. For years ‘the People’s Cathedral” played a role in resisting oppression, and today, serves as a base for a vibrant Christian community. Constructed of Table Mountain sandstone, this is the oldest cathedral in South Africa, and although it dates back
Discover South Africa

Southern Peninsula & Coastal Cape Town

Sun, Sea and Salty Air
With its dramatic ocean vistas, sandy beaches and stunning stretches of hill and fynbos-covered mountainside, the coastal landscape of Cape Town and the Southern Peninsula are truly memorable. Side-walk cafes and vibrant promenades fringe glorious turquoise waters – but it’s only the daring, or well ‘sun-baked’ who brave the cold temperatures of the sea.

To the north of the city, Bloubergstrand offers iconic views of Table Mountain, and this (often) windy spot is a favourite haunt of kite-surfers. Hugging the seaboard to the south of the city, the Sea Point promenade and Mouille Point come alive over the weekends with locals walking their dogs or pounding the pavements to keep fit. Further on Bantry Bay’s magnificent houses are built into the cliff face, overhanging the ocean.

This coastline is a siren call to sun-worshippers. Popular beaches holding Blue Flag Status include Clifton’s four beaches and Camp’s Bay - well-supported by trendy locals - and Llandudno, with its laid-back, family atmosphere.

Carved out of the cliffside with striking sea views, the Chapman’s Peak Drive winds between Hout Bay and Noordhoek. At the Hout Bay Harbour, animal lovers can take a boat ride out to Seal Island to watch these amusing creatures in their natural habitat, frolicking in the waves and sunning themselves on the rocks. Next head to Boulders Beach where the main attraction, a colony of Jackass Penguins is endlessly entertaining, exceedingly “whiffy” and just plain cute.

The pretty coastal hamlet of Simons Town has a rich naval history, including some fascinating seafarer
stories, a town museum dating back to 1772 and the South African Naval Museum.

**For King & Country**
Able body seaman, Just Nuisance, was a member of the Royal Navy between 1940 and 1944. Cherished and adopted by the sailors during the war this four-legged mascot received a full military funeral on his death....possibly the only Great Dane to have ever been awarded such an honour.

The Indian and Atlantic Ocean meet at the south-western tip of Africa, in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, home to a variety of wildlife species. Gazing out from the famous viewing point, you have the sense you have reached lands end....and if the Flat Earth Society had the right of it, that would be it!

**The Winelands**
An easy drive from Cape Town, the Winelands’ dramatic mountains stand guard over a quilt of working vineyards, elegant Cape Dutch estates and quaint towns boasting top restaurants, hotels and spas. Sample some of the regions award-winning wine offerings, stroll through exquisitely maintained gardens or explore art galleries and antique shops in the oak-lined streets of the local towns.

The buzzing university village of Stellebosch was named after the Governor of the Cape, Simon van der Stel and, as the historic hub of the Winelands it is surrounded by around 200 wineries. Spier’s treetop dining platform provides a unique experience and world renowned wines Lanzerac, Simonsig, Neethlingshof, Boschendal and Meerlust are a must for wine tastings.

**Franschhoek**, a charming town with French Hugenot heritage is arguably the culinary headquarters of the country and home to the creative genius of a number of resident chefs.

Framed by a majestic backdrop of the Helderberg Mountains, Paarl lies peacefully nestled amongst vineyards laden with the harvest’s finest offerings.

Further afield, and slightly off the beaten track are the wine communities of Tulbagh, Robertson, Wellington and Hemel-en-Aarde.

**A South African Contribution**
Created in 1925, Pinotage is a red wine grape which has become a symbol of the country’s distinctive winemaking tradition. After years of being produced Pinotage was first truly recognized at the 1959 Cape Wine Show where it won champion status, paving the way for further growth and international acclaim.

Enjoy gourmet meals lovingly prepared by experienced chefs and served in lush gardens, or stylish restaurants. Sample local wines and explore the cellars of well-established wine farms. The Winelands is all about stepping back from the hectic pace of modern living, and appreciating the finer things in life in some of the most gorgeous and tranquil locations this country has to offer.

**Check List: Things to Do with the Kids**
Imhoff Farm - Kommetjie
Eagle Encounters - Spier Wine Estate
Cheetah Outreach Centre - Somerset West
Two Oceans Aquarium - V & A Waterfront
Scratch Patch/Mineral World - V & A Waterfront
Cape Point Ostrich Farm - Near Cape Point
World of Birds - Hout Bay
Franschhoek Motor Museum - L’Ormarins Estate
iZiko South African Museum - City Centre