

# Gems of Discovery

## GEMS OF DISCOVERIES – UNIQUELY SOUTH AFRICA

### What makes South Africa unique?

Every country has natural beauty, intriguing history and people, interesting products and sightseeing, but what makes it unique? We've delved into this land of contrasts and would like to introduce you to some of our gems that make South Africa unique.



### NATURAL BEAUTY

- ❖ The Panorama Route in the Mpumalanga province is undoubtedly one of the best ways to travel to the Kruger National Park. This scenic drive leads through the rugged mountain range of the northern Drakensberg in the Mpumalanga province and passes the north-eastern part of the Great Escarpment. The inland plateau declines abruptly and steeply and opens up fantastic views of the plains of the Lowveld a thousand metres below. Along the drive you will stop at the **Blyde River Canyon**, the largest green canyon in the world with views worth framing.
- ❖ One of the most popular activities in South Africa is a game viewing safari and with the fences being torn down between the game parks in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, a game reserve of 35,000km<sup>2</sup> is being created which will be **the largest conservation area** in the world called The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. Expect game viewing like you've never seen before!
- ❖ **Table Mountain** in Cape Town has been voted the 2<sup>nd</sup> best view in the world, but most importantly it is one of the seven wonders of the geological world. Standing at just over 580 feet, Table Mountain dominates the city's skyline and can be seen as far as 130 miles out to sea. A view that cannot be missed!
- ❖ A **'frogging safari'** is an exciting new way of spending time out in nature by trying to catch, identify and release these amphibians in an attempt to gain valuable information about the health of our environment. This is strictly an after-dark affair and you'll be armed with a net, bag and headlamp, ready to do your bit for conservation. Enjoy a 'frogging safari' at the Dunes Country House in Saint Francis Bay or Jock Safari Lodge in Kruger National Park to name but two.



## PRODUCTS and SIGHTSEEING

- ❖ South Africa has the oldest **wine industry** outside of Europe and the Mediterranean, featuring Chardonnays, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cinsault, Riesling, Shiraz, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinotage varietals. Why not travel along the Cape Route 62, which is the longest wine route in the world to get your wine fix? The Cape Route 62 meanders between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn, offering the shorter, scenic alternative to the N2 highway. The ever changing colours of the majestic mountains, scenic passes, rivers, vineyards and orchards, as well as the multitude of attractions, will offer you an unforgettable adventure.
- ❖ The **Mohair** Meander is a route that winds through the historic towns of Beaufort West, Graaff Reinet and Jansenville, eventually leading to the official capital of the mohair industry, Port Elizabeth. South Africa is currently the biggest producer and exporter of mohair world-wide and visitors to this region can visit several world class museums and mohair production facilities, including the renowned Jan-Paul Barnard factory in Alicedale.
- ❖ Many South Africans are very proud of the **traditional South African food**. From biltong (dried meat), mielie pap and sheba (maize porridge and tomato sauce) to Milktart (custard pie) we have a strong affinity to good, wholesome food. One of the most well known traditional dishes is Bobotie, an authentic Cape Malay dish. This slightly spicy dish made with minced meat and baked with an egg topping goes well with rice, a dose of fruit chutney, some chopped banana, and a sprinkling of coconut. Visit Cellars Hohenhort in Constantia, Cape Town for an authentic Cape Malay Culinary experience.
- ❖ Visit Hermanus, the **whale-watching** capital of South Africa from June to November when the Southern Right Whales are highly visible along the Cape south coast. Seeing these marine giants in their natural environment is an experience that you won't want to miss.

## PRODUCTS and SIGHTSEEING continues...

- ❖ Of the 2 400 cheeses submitted by international **cheese** makers at the International Cheese Awards in Dublin in September 2010, 54 were from South Africa. Our fromage professionals walked away with an impressive 14 awards including the only gold to be presented for a Camembert. Other awards include 4 more golds, 5 silvers and 4 bronzes. The following cheese makers have showrooms/farms in the Cape Winelands in the Western Cape where you can sample and buy some of these magnificent 'winners'. Fairview in the Paarl's Roydon Camembert won gold and Lourensford Estate's Healey's Gold in Stellenbosch won silver.
- ❖ Wildlife conservation is a skilled and expensive business. **Conservation tourism** offers a unique insight into the behind-the-scenes aspects of conservation work. Guests have the opportunity to participate in a game capture operation and, in the process, help fund important scientific and conservation work. Kapama Private Game Reserve in Hoedspruit has successfully hosted several of these 'veterinary safaris'.
- ❖ **Rap jumping**, which is basically face-first abseiling, has fast become a popular activity for adventure sport enthusiasts in South Africa. Rap jumping was first used as a military assault tactic, allowing for a far greater peripheral view during the descent than traditional abseiling does. It also requires a lot more bravery to take the initial leap. The Orlando Towers in Soweto, Johannesburg, and the Shongweni Dam Nature Reserve outside Durban, are two of the best venues in the country for rap jumping. Other occasional rap jumping venues include the 24-storey Parktonian Hotel in central Johannesburg and the Golden Gate Bridge in the Free State province.
- ❖ About an hour-and-a-half's drive from Johannesburg, near Pretoria lies De Tweede Spruit Valley a private game reserve. The reserve features horse-riding, game drives around the wildlife sanctuary and also a '**walking with the lions**' experience. The owners starting breeding with lions due to the numbers of Africa's wild lions dwindling from about 250,000 around 30 years ago to 20,000 today. They sell these lions to ethical wildlife reserves in Southern Africa. The basic plan is to rear HIV-free lions and to release them into the wild. One of the ways these lions are introduced to the bush is to take them on short walks. This is the first ways of exposing them to the wild outside their enclosures and a way of igniting natural instincts they haven't needed while in the care of humans who provide food for them. Guests can join the lions on these 'strolls'. Groups include a maximum of ten to 12, with usually no children under 12. You can combine the lion experience with horse-riding and lunch.





### THE PEOPLE, THE HISTORY AND THE LAND

- ❖ Visit **Vilakazi Street in Soweto** where you can see the homes of Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the only street in the world to house two Nobel Peace prize winners.
- ❖ There have been many wars across the decades, but the **Anglo-Boer War** was recorded as Britain's most costly war outside the two World Wars. KwaZulu Natal is home to many of the important sites of this war and a trip to the battlefields will give you not only an interesting history lesson, but a memorable drive through the countryside of KwaZulu Natal. Some of these sites also offer guests an opportunity to overnight in a traditional ox wagon, the accommodation of choice for the Boers.
- ❖ The oldest skeletal remains were found at the **Sterkfontein Caves** in Muldersdrift, Gauteng. Spend an informative day in the Cradle of Humankind, exploring the caves to find out more about ancient civilization and end the day at the Maropeng centre, where the interactive displays will leave you feeling exhilarated about the past, present and future.
- ❖ On a tour to the Garden Route you will inevitably visit the town of Oudtshoorn. Here you must visit the **Cango Caves**, a 3km long sequence of caverns of glittering stalagmites and stalactites, making this the longest underground cave sequence in the world.
- ❖ The **South African Large Telescope** (SALT) in Sutherland is the largest single optical telescope in the southern hemisphere. Experience the beauty of the night sky as you take an unforgettable journey of astronomy with the specialists at this centre.
- ❖ Visit the famous town of Kimberley in the Northern Cape where Kimberley's 'Big Hole' is the **largest hand-dug hole** in the world. This small town also boasts with the world's first drive-in pub; for the thirsty traveler on the go!
- ❖ Visit Cape Town in March and be part of the largest timed cycle race in the world – **The Cape Argus Cycle Tour**. Whether you're a participant or just a spectator Cape Town is the place to be as more than 35,000 cyclist head to the streets!
- ❖ The rainbow nation of South Africa is one of the most **diverse societies** in the world with 12 different cultural groups. Let us welcome you to this unique country in any of our 11 official languages!