

Day 1 En route

Days 2 to 4 Cape Town and its magnificent vicinities

“The whole town,” Captain Cook wrote in 1771 about Cape Town, “may be consider’d as one great Inn fitted up for the recreation of all comers and goers.” The great voyager may as well have been writing this week: Cape Town is one of the world’s jazziest, most fascinatingly multicultural and downright beautiful cities, a magnet for discerning goers and comers from six continents. We’ll have an electrically relaxed few days to explore this dynamic, cosmopolitan city, based from the incomparable One&Only, set on the bustling Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, looking up at Table Mountain, which we will summit via the famed Aerial Cableway, a spectacular bit of engineering in service to an even more spectacular view. We’ll drive down the grand and wild Cape Peninsula to the Cape of Good Hope, around which much of the world’s history once turned. And we’ll motor into the Cape Winelands for tasting and leisurely lunch-taking, and view imbibing in one of the most salubrious spots in a region rich with human and natural splendour.

Days 5 & 6 Phinda Private Game Reserve

We fly northeast across South Africa’s gargantuan geographies to the private Phinda Reserve’s seven distinct habitats— woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, rolling hills, rivers, seasonal marshes and pans, and a hauntingly beautiful sand forest— Africa’s last sand forest— all home to a superb wildlife medley (which includes the Big Five and 436 bird species). We’ll settle, depending on the season, into one of two outstanding camps at Phinda Private Game Reserve: either the Phinda Forest Lodge, set in that marvelous sand forest, with “glass bubble” suites that bring us into cozy contact with the sweetly enveloping sand forest, or the Phinda Mountain, set on a hilltop with wraparound views of the verdurous Lebombo foothills. Each lodge features beguiling infinity pools, festive outdoor dining under South Africa’s intense but friendly stars, birdsong and the twittering of bush babies, and deep tranquility as we rest up from our game driving forays into Phinda’s remarkable microregions.

Days 7 to 9 Resplendent and private Sabi Sand Reserve

The very private, very beautiful Sabi Sand Game Reserve is one of our favourite African places. Adjacent to Kruger National Park, the 240 square-mile Sabi Sand is home to all of Kruger’s famously rich roster of animals, who wander freely between Sabi Sand and the much more humanly thronged national park. Much is rightfully made— by us and by just about every Africa-lover— of the Big Five superstars, who are all here in their charismatic glory. But Sabi Sand’s 140 or so other animal species are equally fascinating: cheetahs, relentlessly crafty hyenas, giraffes, Op Art zebras, and ebullient Cape wild dogs, to mention just a few. Our domicile for two nights is the Tengile River Lodge, set in a riverside forest, soothingly intimate (with only nine, thoughtfully luxurious suites, each with a private plunge pool), conveniently modern (and solar-powered), a lovely place from which to explore a surpassingly lovely corner of Africa.

Days 10 & 11 Victoria Falls, gargantuan and thrilling

“Poor Niagara,” Eleanor Roosevelt supposedly said upon viewing Brazil and Argentina’s Iguazu Falls. Had she gazed on Victoria Falls—the greatest curtain of water on earth, 60 tumultuous feet higher than its South American rival—the famously articulate First Lady might have been struck speechless. Victoria Falls is a waterfall like no other, and during our stay at the legendary Royal Livingstone Hotel we’ll get to know the Falls, helicoptering over them on the famed Flight of Angels, savouring early-morning, coffee-sipping views from our room’s veranda of the almost 1,000 feet of mist that rise from the watery cauldron to lazy afternoon sundowners near its dramatic precipice, contemplating what the greatest travel writer of all time, Richard Halliburton, called “a hurricane of bursting water. . . that seems to fall up, not down.”

Days 12 & 13 Homeward bound from Johannesburg

We fly from Livingstone to Johannesburg, and on to a day room in the InterContinental at Johannesburg's airport, and connect with our international flight home, arriving on Day 13.