



Top things to do in Cape Town

Cape Town, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Cape Town is full of things to do and experience. This top things to do in Cape Town list highlights those that you shouldn't miss. It's not without reason that many tour sites list Table Mountain, Cape Point Nature Reserve, Robben Island and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Add to these basics a few of the local gems, enjoy the highlights of the Cape Townian lifestyle, and remember to experience some of the finest restaurants in the world. This list will lead you on your way to making the most out of your time in Cape Town.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Cape Town



Constantia Uitsig Wine Estate

Exquisite Wines



Penguins at Boulders Beach

Beach with Jackass Penguin colony



Cape Point Nature Reserve

Africa's bountiful South Western tip



Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

Expansive botanical garden



Table Mountain

The mountain that is the heart of the City



Kalk Bay - St. James

Relaxed fishing harbour and hippie towns



Llandudno Beach

Small hidden beach



Chapmans Peak Drive

Scenic drive along the Atlantic coast



Robben Island

Famous political prison

Day 1 - Cape Town

QUICK NOTE

contact:

tel: +27 21 794 1810
fax: +27 21 794 1812
<http://www.constantia-uitsig.com/>

location:

Spaanschemat River Road,
Constantia
Cape Town Western Cape
7848

1 Constantia Uitsig Wine Estate

DESCRIPTION: Constantia Uitsig, known until 1940 as Constantia View, was the home of the Lategan family for five generations. Their ancestors arrived in South Africa in 1735. Constantia Uitsig had been a portion of Simon van der Stel's original grant of Groot Constantia. In 1894 Willem Lategan married Antoinette Bredell of Schoemanshoek, and with her inheritance he built the present homestead of Constantia Uitsig. In 1988 the farm was purchased by David and Marlene McCay. Together they have restored the farm to its former glory, and Constantia Uitsig now boasts award winning wines, three world-renowned restaurants, a private cricket oval, spa and a 16-roomed luxury hotel. In 2006 fifty percent of the wine estate was bought by a consortium. Just 20 minutes from the heart of the city, Constantia Uitsig is truly Cape Town's own vineyard. The breathtaking rural beauty of a valley, where vineyard rows stretch up the mountainside, is just one of many compelling reasons to visit. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Constantia Uitsig Wine Estate.

location:

Boulders Beach Drive,
Cape Town Western cape
7975

2 Penguins at Boulders Beach

DESCRIPTION: Standing at just below a foot tall, the diminutive African penguins waddling onto shore, jumping into the sea or just sunbathing are quite a sight to see. Along the southern Cape Peninsula, just past Simonstown, there are several turnoffs for the Boulders Beach area. The second turnoff has the fewest tour buses and leads to a walkway above penguin nesting areas, to a beach where one can swim with penguins, or to another more secluded beach with fewer penguins but nice sheltered swimming areas and boulders. © NileGuide

contact:

tel: +27 (0)21 701 8692
fax: +27 (0)21 701 8773
<http://www.capepeninsula.co.za/>

location:

Off Main Road
Cape Town Western Cape
7848

3 Cape Point Nature Reserve

DESCRIPTION: The southern tip of the Cape Peninsula is allocated to the Cape Point Nature Reserve. The most famous feature within the reserve is the actual point itself along with the lighthouses that mark its location for sailors. However, at 78 square kilometers and stretching along 40 kilometers of coastline, the rest of the Cape Point Nature Reserve definitely deserves more thorough exploration by visitors. In addition to unique flora, the Reserve is home to numerous species of antelope, ostriches, tortoises, and baboons. © NileGuide



south african national park

hours:

7a-6p M-F

contact:

tel: +27 21 799 8899
fax: +27 21 797 6570
www.sanbi.org/frames/kirstfram.htm

location:

Rhodes Drive, Newlands
Cape Town Western Cape
7700

hours:

8a-7p (Sept -March), 8a-6p
(April-August)

4 Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

DESCRIPTION: Settled along the eastern slope of Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens hosts over 22,000 indigenous plants. Just 15 minutes away from Cape Town city centre, the Botanical Gardens are extraordinarily natural in design and blend straight in to the mountain. There is a tea shop and picnic sites for those wanting to enjoy a leisurely visit and paths from the Garden leading straight onto Table Mountain for the more active. In summer, there are Sunday Summer concerts on the lawn; arrive early, enjoy the Garden, set up a picnic spot and enjoy the music. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: +27 21 424 0015
fax: +27 21 423 0402
http://www.tablemountain.net/

location:

Table Mountain Rd
Cape Town Western Cape
8000

5 Table Mountain

DESCRIPTION: Standing guard over Cape Town, Table Mountain defines the city. For early seafarers, the Mountain signified arrival at this port of call. For the original inhabitants of the area, the Mountain was the source of myth and intrigue. For modern day Cape Tonians, Table Mountain is the heart of daily life. At 1086 meters and home to 1400 species of flora, Table Mountain is a spectacular nature reserve surrounded by a city. With hundreds of routes to ascend, the Mountain can keep an avid hiker and climber busy for years. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: +27 21 426 4260

location:

Harbour Road
Cape Town Western Cape
7975

6 Kalk Bay - St. James

DESCRIPTION: Quaint little towns along the False Bay coast, Kalk Bay and St James surround an operating fishing harbour that lends the antique and coffee shops a tranquil view. In spring, Southern Right whales abound, often brushing against the harbour walls. Kalk Bay makes a great stop for lunch on a tour of the Cape Peninsula or a nice leisurely walking day. © NileGuide



editor

location:

Llandudno
Cape Town Western Cape

7 Llandudno Beach

DESCRIPTION: A small, beautiful, boulder bordered beach along the Atlantic Seaboard, Llandudno beach is a local favorite among the surfers and nature lovers. Its secluded location tends to keep Cape Town's wind away and its lack of cafes and bars keeps the Camps Bay beach scene away. The boulders on the northern side of Llandudno beach offer a fun scenic walk. Llandudno is a great place to watch the sunset over the ocean with the mountain backdrop glowing red. © NileGuide



contact:

tel: +27 21 791 8222
fax: +27 21 790 9169
<http://www.chapmanspeakdrive.co.za/>

location:

Between Hout Bay and Noordhoek
Cape Town Western cape
7806

hours:

depending on conditions

Chapmans Peak Drive

DESCRIPTION: One of the most beautiful drives in the world, Cape Town's Chapmans Peak Drive is a spectacular 10 km coastal drive linking Noordhoek to Hout Bay. In spring (Sept-November) Southern Right Whales can be spotted in Hout Bay. Year round there are stunning views from numerous viewpoints and picnic spots. A trail to Chapman's Peak itself starts just before the highest viewpoint on Chapman's Peak Drive. If the road is closed or if one only wants to access the portion of the road closer to Hout Bay, a complimentary day pass can be acquired from the toll booth. © NileGuide



Chapmans Peak Drive

contact:

tel: +27 21 413 4200
fax: +27 21 419 1057
<http://www.robben-island.org.za/>

location:

Robben Island
Cape Town Western Cape
8001

hours:

Ferries depart every hour
8am-5pm. Tours may
be increased to include
sunset tours in summer,
and decreased in winter or
because of inclement weather
-- please call ahead

8 Robben Island

DESCRIPTION: Temporary "home" to many of South Africa's most famous anti-apartheid activists including Nelson Mandela, Robben Island served as prison, place of learning, and international symbol of apartheid governance. Today, the island is an UN World Heritage Site and has taken on the role of museum with tours led by former prisoners. Access is available by ferry from the Nelson Mandela Gateway at the V and A Waterfront. Book ahead to ensure availability and allocate half a day to the full trip. © NileGuide

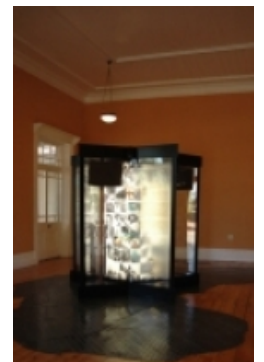


Photo courtesy of Robben Island

Cape Town Snapshot

Local Info

Cape Town is a fascinating mosaic of Asian, European and African traditions. These streams of history flow together in the city but, particularly because of the legacy of the apartheid system, visitors to Cape Town are often amazed by the dramatic contrasts that remain between different areas. Nature, too, creates very different sub-climates around the mountain so the vegetation varies a great deal, as of course do the vistas. The city, however, is connected by fast freeways. Thus, twenty minutes from the wine farms of the leafy Constantia valley you could be on a beach, in the bustling city center or in a shanty township. It is truly fascinating to discover the different areas and experience the diversity of culture in the city.

The Atlantic Seaboard

Camps Bay, Bantry Bay, Llandudno and Clifton are the suburbs of foreign house prices. The impressive apartment blocks built into the mountain sides and the old cottages above the fabulous Clifton Beaches have been snapped up by overseas buyers. Expect to see jet skis on the roof garages. Clifton is very sheltered and the perfect place for a picnic at sunset. Camps Bay is picturesque and there are some excellent restaurants and cafés. This is the place to hang out and be cool, but you will be very cool indeed if you try to swim in the sea; the arctic currents don't know they've reached Africa.

Sea Point/Greenpoint are a little crazy. The Sea Point Promenade is the best microcosm of humanity you could hope to find. Roller bladers, women in saris, guys rugby training, older women with small dogs—it's all here. The mountain backdrop, tall apartments and the open lawns along the crashing sea—it's a perfect place for a sunset walk. The main road has every kind of shop and plenty of restaurants. There is also a small "red light" aspect too. A lively, slightly seedy area, perhaps best compared with Bayswater/Paddington in London. It's worth a visit and many hotels, B&Bs and hostels of all standards are easily found off Main road.

Waterfront

The old docks have been excellently converted into the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, a very large complex of hotels,

restaurants and bars, shops(galore), cinemas(including IMAX), two craft markets and a truly wonderful aquarium. Here you will also find numerous companies offering boat trips, including the Robben Island Ferry, and fun things such as jet skis and helicopter trips. The information desks are helpful and there is VAT refund too. It is a very easy and secure place with lots to do; but just a word on prices, you can find most things cheaper elsewhere, especially jewelry.

City Centre

All the diversity of Cape Town is meshed into the city centre. It is a surprisingly small area and is best covered on foot—but be prepared to fend off hawkers and some street children. Keep your wits and your wallet about you and don't stay out after dark. St. George's Mall and Greenmarket Square are the undisputed heart of Cape Town; abuzz with vibes, sounds and crafts of Africa, all mixed up with European heritage. In contrast, The Company Gardens are beautifully peaceful and historically very interesting: Take a walk along Government Avenue, past Parliament, and spend some time in the South African Museum; it is great fun. The Mount Nelson Hotel is at the top—the perfect place for high tea.

It is worth driving around the Grand Parade: The Castle of Good Hope and the City Hall are important buildings, and Adderley Street also has many of the grandest buildings in Cape Town. Just above the city center is the Bo-Kaap—see the brightly colored homes and notice the Malay influences.

At night, the center empties out of all but street people; it is best seen by day. The exception is the top of Long Street which is abuzz with nightlife, and check out the cafés and restaurants of upper Kloof Street nearby in Gardens.

The Southern Suburbs, Constantia & Hout Bay

If you love rugby or cricket head for Newlands and there is a large, up-market shopping centre nearby in Claremont, Cavendish Square. On the mountain slopes you will find the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, a definite "must see." Around the corner is Constantia; here are some historic and wonderful wine

farms(such as Groot Constantia and Klein Constantia), a very impressive shopping mall and some of the best restaurants in the country. There is an extensive walking trail across the Constantia valley.

On the other side of the mountain explore Hout Bay, the land of very horsey, independent-minded people living in a fabulous valley. The fishermen in the harbor are a highly spirited bunch. You can take sea trips from here(see the seals on Duiker Island). If the Chapman's Peak drive is open, it is a must-do—magnificent.

The South Peninsula

The south peninsula is mountainous and largely a National Park plus some very charming seaside towns, notably the very British Simon's Town, the fishing village at Kalk Bay, gorgeous Noordhoek and Kommetjie and rustic Scarborough. The beaches are fabulous(and the penguins think so, too); check out the little guys at Boulders Beach near Simon's Town. The water is much warmer on the eastern side of the peninsula. Cape Point and its massive Nature Reserve are within easy reach and it is worth taking some time to explore the reserve. For a famous picture stop go to the colorful beach huts at St James and Muizenberg.

The Winelands

The winelands are an extensive area of wine and fruit farms in a mountain setting less than an hour from Cape Town. There is a certain charm and dignity to the area and some very pretty towns. There are many wine farms, in all styles and sizes, but the taste and price are bound to please. Check out a variety of big and small wine farms in different areas, but beware of weekend closing. Don't miss the restaurants of Franschoek and spending time exploring the great beauty of Stellenbosch.

The Townships

To get some valuable insight into South Africa's political history and cultural diversity take a township tour(specialist companies include African Dawn and Grassroutes). For many people this turns out to be the unexpected high point of their visit to Cape Town; the resilience, enterprise and hope of these poor communities is very inspiring and the stories of the past are a sobering insight into social planning gone mad. It is

Cape Town Snapshot continued

not recommended that you try to tour the townships on your own, take an organized tour with a specialist company.

The Northern Suburbs

Predominantly Afrikaans, modern and suburban, these areas lie along the N1 freeway. The classic view of Table Mountain is best viewed from Blouberg. Century City is set to rival the Waterfront as Cape Town's major leisure complex. The Durbanville Hills may of interest to wine enthusiasts and the Tygervalley Center for those born to shop.
©

History

Cape Town is a unique city—a blend of Asia and Europe in Africa. It is dominated by, and owes its existence to, the steep and coarse grizzled and gnarled slopes of Table Mountain that tower 1,000m above the sea, surrounding it on three sides. A sandstone soil and small mountain streams gave life to prehistoric peoples and animals living on its slopes. The City also attracted sailors and farmers of the trading nations and today has a population city of 3 million people descended from every corner of the world.

Long before the Himalayas or the Rockies were formed, Table Mountain began to rise out of the sea (by isostasy) at the southwestern tip of Africa. The emerging relief has been checked and scarred by the erosion of sea, wind, rain, fire and ice. Today Table Mountain is a fantastic array of buttresses and ravines, most famously evident in the "Twelve Apostles." Homo Erectus saw similar sights 750,000 years ago—and left abundant stone tools for our museums. The fossilized footprints of "Eve," 117,000 years old, are one of the finest relics found near Cape Town.

Relatives of the Bushmen, the Khoi, were maintaining a hunter/gatherer and herding economy around the mountain when in 1503 the first European saw, and then climbed Table Mountain. He was a Portuguese Admiral, Antonio de Saldanha, and he was navigating the route to India bravely pioneered by his compatriots Bartolomeu Diaz (1488) and Vasco de Gama (1497).

As the new route from Europe to the East flourished, so more sailors saw the Mountain and its peninsula. Francis Drake in 1580 described it as "the Fairest Cape

in the whole circumference of the globe." The British, in particular, developed trade with the Khoi but no European settlement was developed. However, in 1647 a Dutch ship, the Haarlem, was wrecked in Table Bay and its large crew marooned for a year. Their survival convinced the Dutch East India Company that it was safe enough, and the land sufficiently fertile, to justify building a permanent supply station at the Cape. Thus, on Christmas Eve 1651, Jan van Riebeeck, a commander in the Company (out of favour following allegations of fraud), was dispatched from Amsterdam with three ships and a daunting task to establish a station at the Cape capable of supplying passing ships with fresh food and wine.

Van Riebeeck arrived in April 1652, constructed a wooden fort and laid out the Company gardens, part of which remain to this day. He set to work on vine growing and produced wine within four years (February 2nd 1659). Work soon began on a stone Castle and a parade ground that can still be seen. Subsequent Governors, in particular, Simon van der Stel (1679-1699), expanded the settlement dramatically. Huguenot refugees from France helped to develop the areas of Franschoek, Stellenbosch, Paarl and Wellington as notable wine growing regions.

The Company provided slaves from the East to help with the work; indeed, slaves sometimes outnumbered Europeans in the settlement. The influence of Asia can be seen in the architecture of Cape Town, the taste of its spicy food, the style of its music and festivals, even in the grammar of the Afrikaans language that evolved in Cape Town from Dutch. Asian blood is also evident in much of Cape Town's population.

Cape Town became known as "the tavern of the seas," a welcome half-way house on the long journey between North and East. Her strategic importance was (and remains) crucial to world trade and with the threat of Napoleon seizing the settlement, the British garrisoned the elegant Dutch town in 1795.

Under Imperial British rule the city grew. Among the whitewashed Dutch buildings large colonial, neo-classical buildings were arranged. The old farmlands became suburbs and, with the discovery of diamonds in the hinterland, the docks and city expanded rapidly. Cecil John

Rhodes (1853-1902) made his home in Cape Town, buying vast tracts of the mountain slopes that today are public forests, the Botanical Garden at Kirstenbosch and the highly acclaimed University of Cape Town.

Following the formation of the modern South Africa in 1910, Cape Town became, and remains, the nation's Legislature. The iniquitous apartheid laws drafted in that Parliament limited black migration to the city and divided white people and those of mixed racial descent. The mountain slopes became leafy "white" suburbs while the townships on the sandy plain were variously designated for "colored" and "black." The racial division of suburbs ended in 1990, but racial and socio-economic differences between areas remain marked. A huge migration of black people followed the easing of racial laws, and the city has grown vastly in the last decade and is now one third Xhosa (Mr. Mandela's tribal group).

The city center has changed too, particularly the reclamation of land and subsequent development of the foreshore in the 1940s. The highly successful development of complexes such as the Waterfront, followed in the 1990s. Many new hotels and the refurbishment of traditional attractions such as the Cable Car, Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens and Cape Point have positioned the city as one of the world's emerging prime tourist destinations and an important growth point in Southern Africa.
©

Hotel Insights

Most visitors prefer not to stay in the centre of Cape Town since there are more attractive areas in the surrounding suburbs, and the city is well served by fast freeways. Families may wish to be within walking distance of the Waterfront, while others may prefer to be near beaches. The Winelands, Hout Bay and Constantia offer very beautiful surroundings and the South Peninsula would be perfect for those who don't want to rush around. Gardens is very convenient.

Beaches

There are over 100 beaches around the Cape Peninsula but the "classic" beaches are in Camps Bay and Clifton.

Cape Town Snapshot continued

Accommodation in these areas is priced at the higher end of the scale. Staying a few minutes' away in Sea Point will save you a lot of money and cost you little time.

The classic view of Cape Town (two peaks with the "Table Top" between) is from Blouberg beach, which is a little far out but has a great view.

Anywhere in the South Peninsula will be within easy reach of beaches such as the vast Muizenberg beach, Noordhoek, Kommetjie, Fishhoek and Scarborough. This area is relaxed and very pretty, but also affordable and within easy reach of Cape Point. The seaside villages and harbours are most attractive. However, it will take an hour to get to the city center and a little more to the winelands so this area suits those who want to "chill out." Monkey Valley in Noordhoek is a popular place to stay, so too are the guesthouses of Kommetjie and Simon's Town.

Hout Bay has a good beach, in a very beautiful setting, and some lovely places to stay. Great fish is to be had in the harbour and horse-riding is very popular too. It is in easy (and magnificent) contact with Cape Town but is, of course, more expensive.

Waterfront & Sea Point/ Green Point

The Waterfront complex will suit any age or person but families, in particular, will appreciate the array of shops, restaurants and entertainment in the Waterfront. The Cape Grace, The Table Bay and the Radisson Hotel Waterfront are very fine five star hotels. At the other end of the price range the Breakwater Lodge is excellent value for money.

Near to the Waterfront are Green Point, a busy area but very well located, and the next suburb, Sea Point. They are well positioned and Sea Point has a superb promenade for sunset walks. It also has many restaurants and shops, although the area can be a little seedy. There is a very great deal of accommodation of all standards available, so if you arrive at the airport and need a place to stay head for Green Point/Sea Point.

City Centre

During the '90s the city centre became rather unsafe. This situation has improved (with extensive use of surveillance cameras), but it is still not the best area to choose for a relaxing holiday and tends to

be rather quiet at night. The exception is Long Street, which is a great evening "hang-out" for the young at heart, and some inexpensive accommodation is available.

Gardens

Above the city centre is Gardens, which is a leafy and very elegant area. Kloof Road has a fine concentration of restaurants and cafes. There are some beautiful homes and many have been converted into excellent guesthouses. The most historic hotel in Cape Town, the Mount Nelson, is in Gardens and retains a distinctly colonial class.

Constantia

Constantia has long been a favored destination of the rich classes of England. It is leafy and elegant, terribly civilized and properly wealthy. The oldest wine farms are in this area (although it is remarkably close to the center). There are a number of excellent restaurants and some very fine accommodation. Expect high prices.

The Southern Suburbs

Middle-class areas such as Newlands (home of the major sports venues) Rondebosch and Claremont are leafy and well-located for all the attractions. Some visitors may find them too suburban for holiday making.

The Northern Suburbs

As these are predominantly Afrikaans and traditionally conservative, English speakers may prefer not to stay in these suburbs, although areas like Tygervalley and Durbanville are a little more culturally accessible.

The Winelands

It can be a good idea to spend a night or two staying in the winelands, not only to cut out the hour journey from Cape Town but to enjoy the very dignified and certainly spectacular scenery of the area and some excellent restaurants and wine farms. Stellenbosch is very beautiful, charming and sophisticated and the oldest town in South Africa. Paarl is also pretty; the Grande Roche is popular with German visitors. The Franschhoek valley is gorgeous and very French in its style. Here, you will find superb cuisine. Somerset West is a larger town, but also comfortable and well-located. The prestigious Erinvale golf course is on its fringes.

Hermanus

Hermanus is an hour- and a-half from Cape Town. It is famous for whale spotting during the months of July through December. It is a pleasant seaside town with fine coastal walks and some good accommodation. It is well-located for the Walker Bay wine farms and drives into the lovely Overberg region. ©

Restaurants Insights

Unbeknownst by many visitors to Cape Town, there is a superb tradition of cuisine in the city. The Malay slaves transformed the traditional dishes of Europe and Britain into a unique "Cape Malay" style, using the spices from the passing boats. Such dishes include Bobotie and Bredies. However, most restaurants focus upon Mediterranean and Pacific Rim influences. Naturally, fish and other seafood is very important too, and there is a growing number of African restaurants.

Cape Town was always "the tavern of the seas", and is an important wine-growing area to boot, so some good drinking is in order. There is a genuine love of dining and drinking in Cape Town, and you will find local cuisine and various styles from around the world cooked and presented superbly. Many restaurants have beautiful settings and decor. Most visitors are also amazed at how inexpensive it is to eat out. Too good to be true? Just try.

The Atlantic Seaboard

In Camps Bay, Blues is a perennial favorite. Next door, and sharing the same magnificent view over the beach, is Villamoura, a top quality and very popular fish restaurant. On the main road there are also a number of less formal and trendy eateries.

For general fare and family diners the Waterfront and Sea Point Main Road have numerous places to eat. For good Chinese food, try the Fortune Garden on Beach Road in Sea Point. Anatoli's is a popular Turkish Restaurant in Greenpoint, and Beluga's is in "The Foundry" around the corner. On the Waterfront is Emily's, where you will find superb South African cuisine (and a good deal of eccentricity too).

Some of the hotels have excellent restaurants, particularly the Cape Grace,

Cape Town Snapshot continued

the Radisson Waterfront Hotel, and the Mount Nelson in Gardens.

For bars try the Ambassador Hotel in Bantry Bay at sunset. In the Waterfront try the historic Ferrymans, Quay Four, or the Sports Café.

Gardens & Woodstock

Aubergine and the Blue Danube are popular for continental cuisine. The top of Long Street is abuzz in the evenings with all manner of trendy places; for African food and vibes try Mama Africa at number 178. If nothing piques your interest here, try Kloof Street, a minute's drive up the hill, for more cafés and restaurants.

On Church Street in central Cape Town, near Greenmarket Square, Bukhara is an excellent Indian Restaurant.

Constantia

Constantia lays claim to some of the finest dining in South Africa. Amongst which, Buitenverwachting offers superb Haute Cuisine and, more relaxed but just as classy, La Colombe provides excellent Provencal cuisine. A very enjoyable, well priced restaurant and excellent bar is at Peddlars, on the Bend.

The Winelands

Don't miss the restaurants of Franschhoek: Haute Cabrière, Le Quartier Francais and La Petite Ferme are all well regarded, and other restaurants in the area are excellent, too. In Paarl, Bosman's at the Grande Roche Hotel is a very formal and award-winning Haute Cuisine restaurant. The Jonkershuis on the Spier estate offers an excellent and fascinating traditional Cape Malay buffet. The Boschendal Estate offer a famous picnic during the summer months.

In terms of wine tasting it is very unfair to single some estates over others—try your luck! You are unlikely to be disappointed. But, to mention some good places to start: Fairview near Paarl; Delaire (mainly for the view); Warwick in the lovely Idas Valley and Cabrière in Franschhoek for excellent champagne-style wines.

Blouberg

At sunset, the Blue Peter Hotel has a popular bar and light food where diners can watch the sun set over Table Mountain.

On the Rocks is a formal restaurant with exceptional views.

©

Nightlife Insights

Cape Town is by its nature a playful city (materialists left for Johannesburg or London long ago). But the diversions of Cape Town tend to be the beaches, sports, mountain walks, day-trips, wine tasting and by evening, sunsets and fine dining. The arts are necessarily constrained by finances and there are few theatres and concert venues. Museums are, equally, strapped for cash, although a few are well worth a visit. However, the love of music (particularly jazz) is very strong and cinema, too, is popular. There are also some venues for nightlife and a theme park. Festivals and special events are frequent, so check when you're in town.

Museums

The SA Museum in the Company Gardens is excellent. The Whale Gallery steals the limelight but the Planetarium and the other exhibits are well done. The Aquarium (in the Waterfront) is superb and highly recommended. The Castle is the oldest building in South Africa and has the excellent William Fehr art collection. The impressive Groot Constantia estate has a grand Manor House that is well worth a visit. Robben Island is now a museum; it was formerly a prison for political activists including Nelson Mandela. Unfortunately, the organisation and quality of tours on Robben Island is sometimes poor.

Art

The best place to see art and antiques is at commercial galleries. Try Church Street near Greenmarket Square in the city centre. Small galleries are also found in most shopping malls. In-Fin-Art on Wolfe Street is a good place to start.

Cinema

Cinemas are located in the shopping malls such as Cavendish Square in Claremont and the Waterfront. One exception is the Labia, an old cinema and landmark in Gardens. Cinéma Nouveau (in Cavendish Square and the Waterfront) feature more arty films. There is an IMAX cinema in the BMW Pavilion in the Waterfront. The standard of cinemas is usually very high.

Theatre & Concerts

There are two main theatre complexes: the Baxter in Rondebosch and the Artscape on the foreshore. They feature the full range of theatre, dance and music. The standard and appeal are variable. During the summer there are excellent concerts at the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden on Sundays (take a picnic) and the Spier Estate in the Winelands. The Theatre on the Bay in Camps Bay is home to light comedy and thrillers. For "fringe" theatre try On Broadway in Greenpoint.

Jazz

Cape Town has a strong passion for jazz, but there are remarkably few regular venues that are easy to get to. The Green Dolphin in the Waterfront is well known, and Café Camissa is in Gardens on Kloof Street. 169 on Long Street is another venue.

Nightlife

To find hip night venues try The Jam on de Villiers Street, the clubs at the bottom of Long Street or La Med at Maiden's Cove near Clifton. The biggest night venue by far is Dockside at Century City. The Drum Café is very trendy and cool (32 Glynn Street).

Theme Park

Ratanga Junction opened in 1999. It has various rides; one of which, "The Cobra," is one helluva ride! There are restaurants, a cinema and entertainment venues. This is a good place for families to have some fun.

Things to Do Insights

Tours of Cape Town cannot be readily undertaken on foot or by public transport. However, there are many companies offering tours very similar to the ones below, using minibuses and qualified guides. These are excellent value for money. Otherwise follow the routes outlined below using a car.

Sir Francis Drake described the Cape Town peninsula as "the fairest Cape in the whole circumference of the globe." With fantastic vistas, lovely bays and coastline, penguins, and the most southwesterly tip of Africa, if you do only one thing in Cape Town, this is it! It is a full day visit—try to get an early start.

Cape Town Snapshot continued

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden

From Cape Town, take the M3(Blue Route) south. You pass the Groote Schuur Hospital(where the first heart transplant took place in 1967), Mostert's Mill(built in 1796 and still in working order), the grand buildings of the University of Cape Town and Newlands forest. At the traffic lights turn right onto Rhodes Avenue. You will come to the famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden on the right. Stop here and take a walk in the gardens—they are spectacular.

Rejoin Rhodes Drive and continue south. At the junction turn right and proceed along Rhodes Drive surrounded by forest. Keep going along the windy road until the far end where you will find a traffic circle. Turn left down the Constantia Nek Road(M41). As the hill levels out you will see a sign pointing right for Groot Constantia. Turn right. You may wish to stop at the small parade of fine shops on your left and visit the Old Cape Farm Stall. Then carry on to the Groot Constantia Estate. Enjoy the old Manor House and some wine tasting near the exit.

Stay on Main Road all the way to the Cape Point Reserve. Once you pass Muizenberg you will see its magnificent beach. Very soon, on the right, you will see Rhodes Cottage. Here, Rhodes died in 1902, you may wish to stop and visit the small museum. Look out on the left for the colourful beach changing-rooms in St James. Along this road you will pass interesting antique and art shops. You may wish to stop at Kalk Bay harbor; when the boats arrive, it becomes a festive fish market.

The main road runs on through Simon's Town. Stop in Jubilee square. You may wish to have lunch here and spend time enjoying this old British naval base. You can find details about the town at the information office.

Cape Point Nature Reserve

Resume your journey south. You will pass the Black Marlin on the left; this is a popular lunch stop(book ahead if possible). Perfect stop before heading to the Cape Point Nature Reserve. Enter here. The Reserve is principally dedicated to fynbos, the indigenous flora. At the end of the reserve you will reach Cape Point. Spend time here walking down along the cliffs or up to the

Lighthouse. A good lunch is available at the Two Oceans Restaurant.

As you drive away from the Point you will soon come to a left turn for the Cape of Good Hope. If time allows, take this, the Cape is the south-western tip of Africa and worth the extra 10 minutes' drive to it.

Spier Cellars

The Cape Winelands are world-renowned for superb wines and great beauty. The mountains enclose fine Dutch-style towns developed by the Dutch and Huguenot settlers in the late seventeenth century. They took on the wild landscape and left a fine wine industry, pretty towns and a great heritage.

Depart Cape Town and take the N2 highway, you will pass the airport but keep going until you see the turn off to Stellenbosch(R310). Take this turn off, turn left and after a few miles you will see the Spier Cellars on the right. Spier is a winelands entertainment complex. Wander among the old buildings and visit the Cheetah project. As you wish, have a wine tasting here and visit the extensive wine shop. Rejoin the R310 and continue toward Stellenbosch.

If you are interested in brandy, take the next right and make your way to the Van Ryn Brandy cellar for a fascinating tour of the Distillery. Resume your journey along the R310. When you reach the T junction turn right and follow the road into Stellenbosch.

Stellenbosch

As you approach Stellenbosch turn right into Dorp Street. The variety of architecture and the great oaks and canals of Dorp street are magnificent, but keep your eyes open for signs pointing left to the tourist information. Go there and ask for a walking tour of the town and for free maps of the winelands. The Village Museum is also worth a visit.

Resume the journey, turning right at the end of the road toward Franschhoek. Follow the R45 the length of the beautiful valley until you enter the town. There are many excellent places for lunch in the town and on the pass at its far end. You may wish to walk around the Huguenot Memorial at the end of the high street.

Cabrière Estate

Driving from the Memorial, back down main road, take the first left and follow the signs to the Cabrière Estate(you will follow a farm track). Here, you can sample excellent champagne-style wines. Leave Franschhoek on the R45, retracing your steps, and stay on this road toward Paarl.

At the junction at the end of the R45 turn left and then right into the Agter Paarl road toward the Fairview Estate. The estate will soon be seen on the right. This award-winning estate produces fine wine and goats cheese. See the goat house in the parking area.

Continue along the Agter Paarl road—stop at any of the estates if you are still in the mood for tasting—and at the junction at the end of the road turn left onto the R44. You will come to turnings onto the N1 freeway; turn right toward Cape Town. The journey back to the city takes about 50 minutes.

The Castle of Good Hope

Find a map of the city center from any hotel or information booth. Then follow this route on a journey through the history of the city and some of its most beautiful sights and beaches.

Make your way along Strand Street to The Castle of Good Hope(the oldest building in South Africa). You may wish to park and take a guided tour of the castle and its art collection. Resume down Darling Street past the 1905 City Hall. At the end of the road turn left into Adderley Street. You will see the Great Church on your left(first built in 1700) and the old Slave Lodge on the corner. Pass the Cathedral of St.Mary and turn left into Queen Victoria Street and park. From here explore the Company Garden, walking up to the oldest museum in the country, the South African Museum. It showcases the natural history of South Africa, and early human communities of the sub-continent. It is noted particularly for its whale gallery and collection of Bushman rock art, including the important Linton Panel. This is the only museum in South Africa with an adjoining Planetarium.

St George's Cathedral

Stroll downhill along shady Government Avenue and view the Houses of Parliament. At the bottom you will find St George's Cathedral on the left. Cross the road and walk down St George's Mall, the city's main pedestrian thoroughfare. Turning to the left

Cape Town Snapshot continued

you will find Greenmarket Square where there is a lively market during the week. Visit the Old Town House on the left side of the square and exit via Burg street which adjoins it. The first right is Church Street where you will find art galleries and antique shops. If you turn left at the end of Burg Street you can soon turn right again into Queen Victoria Street to find your car.

Gordon's Bay

This tour is especially recommended when Southern Right Whales calve off the Hermanus coast(July to December). It is best to get an early start to make the most of the day.

When you reach the beach front you may wish to stop and enjoy the magnificent beach. Continue along the coast into Gordon's Bay(you may wish to stop in the harbor). The road continues south along the coast on the Faure Marine(R44)/Clarence Drive. This is a truly marvelous road with views across False Bay to the Cape Peninsula.

Follow the coast around; take some time to explore the villages along the way(such as Pringle Bay), and visit the Harold Porter Botanic Garden in Betty's Bay(on the left of the road). Continue through Kleinmond. After a while, you will come to the junction with the R43; follow the signs to Hermanus. You will soon cross the Bot River. Follow the R43 on to Hermanus.

Once in Hermanus, follow the main road until you see the Marine Hotel on the right; turn right here and park. There are various places for lunch. After lunch wander along the cliff path, enjoying the tremendous views and, of course, spot whales playing off the coast. You will also find the popular Harbour Museum.

Cape Flats and Table Mountain

Climb the amazing Houhoek pass and soon you will be travelling through the famous Cape apple growing districts of Elgin and Grabouw. Stop at one of the farmstalls along the way. Stop in the car park at the head of Sir Lowrys Pass(it is on the bend) for a wonderful view of the Cape Flats and Table Mountain. Now continue down the pass and all the way back to Cape Town on the N2.

Guided Day Trips Cape Discovery Tours(+27 02 1426 1641/http://www.sa-venues.com/explore/capediscoverytours/)

History Tours Direct Action for Peace and Memory(+27 02 1448 5760/ http://www.sa-venues.com/explore/dacpm/)

Boat Tours Tigger 2 Charters(+27 02 1790 5256/ http://www.sa-venues.com/explore/tigger2charter/)
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Travel Tips

Getting There

By Air

Cape Town International Airport(+27 11 453 9116/ http://www.airports.co.za/home) is the second largest airport in South Africa and offers transportation to destinations throughout the world. The following airlines provide service to Cape Town:

Air France(+27 21 934 8818/ http://www.airfrance.com/) Air Mauritius(+27 21 421 6294/ http://www.airmauritius.com) Air Namibia(+27 21 936 2755/ http://www.airnamibia.com.na) British Airways(+27 21 936 9000/ http://www.british-airways.com/) Egypt Air(+27 21 461 8056/ http://www.egyptair.com.eg/docs/home.asp) Lufthansa(+ 27 21 415 3735/ http://www.lufthansa.com/)

From the Airport

Shuttles& Taxis: Shuttle and taxi providers offer service to and from the airport. Major providers include City Hopper(+27 21 934 4440), Dumalisile(+27 21 934 1660), Legend Tours(+27 21 936 2814), Magic Bus(+27 21 534 9105) and Way 2 Go(+27 21 696 5544).

Car Rentals: Some of the major car rental companies include: Avis(+27 21 934 0330/ http://www.avis.fr) Budget(+27 21 380 3140/ http://www.budget.fr) Europcar(+27 21 934 2265/ http://www.europcar.fr) Hertz(+27 21 386 1560/ http://www.hertz.fr) Cape Town Car Hire(+27 21 386 7699/ http://www.slashcarhire.com)

Train

Numerous train lines service Cape Town. Some of the most popular include the Blue Train, Rovos Rail, Spier Vintage Train, and Outeniqua Choo Tjoe. Train service can usually be booked through the Mainline Passenger Service Call Center(086 000 8888/ http://www.spoornet.co.za).

Car

Three national roads start in Cape Town. The city can be reached via N1, N2, N7, and also via R62.

Sea

Cape Town's port, located in Table Bay, is of historical importance. One of the world's busiest shipping corridors leads through Cape Town.

Getting Around

Public Transport

Three main bus providers service Cape Town. Greyhound(+27 83 915 9000), Intercape Mainliner(+27 21 419 8888), and Translux(+27 21 449 3333) provide transportation to multiple destinations. The Metro Rail(http://www.metrorail.co.za/) provides service throughout the city and beyond.

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Fun Facts

Cape Town Country: South Africa

Cape Town by the Numbers:

Population: 3,497,000 Average Winter Temperature: 26°C/ 79°F Average Summer Temperature: 18°C/ 64°F Most Precipitation: 52 mm/ 2 in Number of Official Languages Spoken: 11 Number of Libraries: 107

Quick Facts:

Electricity: 220/230 volts, 3-pin-plug, model M Time Zone: GMT+2 Country Dialing Code: 27 Area Code: 21

Did You Know?

Cape Town was established in 1652 as a supply outpost for the Dutch East India Company. Since this time, the city has had an extended history of imperial occupation culminating the apartheid state that lasted from 1910 to 1994. Although one of the safest destinations in South Africa, visitors are advised to exercise caution when traveling.

After being released in 1990, Nelson Mandela made a speech of his hopes for an apartheid-free South Africa at Cape Town City Hall.

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Cape Town Snapshot continued

Weather

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature C												
Average High	25	26	24	22	20	19	18	18	19	21	23	24
Average Mean	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Average Low	17	17	16	14	14	12	12	12	13	14	15	17
Temperature F												
Average High	78	79	76	72	68	66	65	64	67	70	74	76
Average Mean	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Average Low	63	63	60	58	56	54	54	53	55	58	60	62
Rainy Days	3	2	3	6	9	9	10	9	7	5	3	3
Rain Fall (cm)	1.6	1.5	2.2	5.0	9.2	10.5	9.1	8.3	5.4	4.0	2.4	1.9
Rain Fall (in)	0.6	0.6	0.9	1.9	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.3	2.1	1.6	1.0	0.8

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