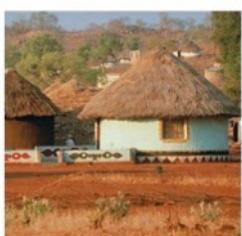


CULTURE, NATURE & SAFARI the full experience

This is the ultimate tour for those that want to explore the diverse culture and nature of South Africa's wild north! Here people are still living very traditional lives, and have a close relationship to their ancestors and cultural beliefs. The diverse geography, with high plateaus and lowlands, mountains and rivers, gives the area a fantastic and diverse habitat: from vast plains to tropical plantations, indigenous forests and bushveld. You will discover ancient civilizations, experience a normal day in a village, meet talented artists that use traditional methods and believes to create their masterpieces and spend time with a group of ladies that harvest salt from sacred wells using traditional methods. You will also experience the African bush and its wildlife in an intimate setting, where you can hear the lions roar at night while you are having dinner in the flickering lights of oil lamps.

This is a tour that lets you meet people to understand their way of life, and get close to nature and wildlife on foot and in open vehicles. You will get closer, experience more and leave with memories that will last a lifetime! It is a jam-packed itinerary that is perfect for those that want to maximise their holiday.



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DAY 1

Start in Johannesburg and drive north. You will pass the outskirts of the large cities Johannesburg and Pretoria, and once they are behind you the vegetation will change into vast expanses of grassy plains, dotted with shrubs, acacias and euphorbias. There are plenty of petrol stations along the way, where you can stop to stretch your legs, buy a coffee and a snack and use the bathroom. Once you have passed Polokwane, the road narrows and soon you are driving through villages where you need to watch out for people, cows and goats. Now you really feel that you are in Africa!

Depending on your preferences (and availability), you will be staying at either Kurisa Moya or Graceland Eco Retreat. Whichever place you choose; you will be given a warm welcome upon arrival. Depending on the time, you may have time to go for a walk before your delicious home cooked dinner.

Transport: 350km

Accommodation: Graceland EcoRetreat <http://gracelandeco.co.za/> or Kurisa Moya <http://www.krm.co.za/>

Meals: dinner



DAY 2

Today, you will visit one of the nearby villages together with a local guide. This is not a pre-organised show but rather a glimpse into everyday life. Whatever is happening, you will join in. Perhaps there is a football game or a wedding, maybe you'll help to fetch water and take the goats to their grazing land. You will also visit the sangoma (traditional healer) who will tell you more about her calling and how she heals both physical and mental ailments with the help of the ancestors and herbal remedies. You will also get a taste of the local food at one of the homes in the village. Expect wild spinach, beans, pap (a porridge made from maize flour), mopane worms (caterpillars), chicken feet and tripe (don't worry, your hosts are used to tourists having delicate stomachs, and won't be offended if you don't taste everything).

In the afternoon you drive to your next destination: Nahakwe Lodge. The journey goes down into the fertile Kudu River Valley, where tropical fruits such as avocado and mango grow in abundance, and then north into the African bushveld. Nahakwe is owned by the local community of Mamaila Kolobetona Traditional Authority, and an important provider of employment and income in the area.

Transport: 300km

Accommodation: Nahakwe Lodge <https://www.nahakwe.co.za>

Meals: breakfast and dinner (plus the tasting during the village tour),

Activities: village tour



DAY 3

After breakfast, make your way to the nearby village to meet your guide for the day. Ribolla Art Route connects a large number of artists in the area who work in different fields but all have a love for local tradition at heart. During this day, you will meet talented wood carvers and sculptors, listen to the local marimba band and learn how to make your own African batik cloth. Lunch is at one of the village taverns, where you can relax with a cold drink and watch life go by. This will undoubtedly be a day to remember, and you will probably leave with a mind full of memories, as well as a few souvenirs.

In the afternoon, you continue to your next destination: either Baleni Camp (see option 1) or Modjadjí Camp (see option 2).

Transport: 150km

Accommodation:

Beleni Camp <https://www.tfpd.co.za/cultural-camps/beleni-cultural-camp> OR

Modjadjí Camp <https://www.tfpd.co.za/cultural-camps/modjadji-cultural-camp>

Note that these camps are self-catering, but dinner and breakfast can be ordered at an additional cost

Meals: breakfast and lunch

Activities: Ribolla Art Route



DAY 4 (option 1)

Baleni Camp is located in a forested area with a very rich birdlife. This is the home of the Tsonga people, who still live in harmony with nature and worship ancient beliefs.

In the early morning, you will depart together with a local guide for a nature walk. S/he will explain about the trees, plants and birds in the area. After a little while, you reach the area of the sacred well, where hot, mineral-rich water bubbles up to the surface. Your guide will instruct you in the correct manner to behave around this spiritually important place. Further along, the spring deposits a lot of salt in the mud along the dry river bed. Here, the Baleni women have harvested salt according to ancient traditions for generations and you will spend time with them to learn about their work. Before leaving, you will also be able to purchase some of the salt to take home (it is excellent both for cooking and for invigorating baths).

After the excursion, you leave Baleni and set your sights on Timbavati Private Nature Reserve. You will arrive in time for afternoon tea before it is time to go on your first game drive which also includes a "sundowner" (a drink) in the bush to watch the sun set. The last part of the drive will be in the dark, and your guide has a strong torch so that he can spot nocturnal animals. Once back in camp, gather by the fire with your fellow guests and then enjoy a delicious dinner.

Please note that the salt harvest experience is only available during winter months

Transport: 200km

Accommodation: Umlani Bush Camp

Meals: Afternoon tea and dinner (all drinks included at Umlani)

Activities: Nature walk, salt harvest experience and afternoon safari



DAY 4 (option 2)

Modjadi Camp is located in the realm of the Rain Queen Modjadi: the matriarchal leader of the Lobedu people. This is one of the few matrilineal dynasties in the world with hundreds of years of unbroken successions of queens. The Rain Queen is believed to have the ability to control clouds and rain, and has been an important figure throughout South Africa's past. Shaka Zulu sent emissaries to ask for her blessings, and Nelson Mandela was close with the former queen Mokope Modjadi.

The camp is surrounded by a dense forest of ancient cycads, and you will spend a few hours exploring the area together with your guide. The Modjadi Cycad is endemic, and does not grow anywhere else in the world but here. The forest is beautiful, with a distinct feeling of mysticism, and your guide (who is from the Lobedu people) will tell you more about the Rain Queen and her forest during your walk.

After your walk, you leave Modjadi and set your sights on Timbavati Private Nature Reserve. You will arrive in time for afternoon tea before it is time to go on your first game drive which also includes a "sundowner" (a drink) in the bush to watch the sun set. The last part of the drive will be in the dark, and your guide has a strong torch so that he can spot nocturnal animals. Once back in camp, gather by the fire with your fellow guests and then enjoy a delicious dinner.

Transport: 200km

Accommodation: Umlani Bush Camp

Meals: breakfast, afternoon tea and dinner (all drinks included at Umlani)

Activities: Nature walk and afternoon safari



DAY 5-6

You will be woken just before sunrise, and after a cup of tea it's time to meet the new day in the bush. After about 3 hours, you return to camp and eat a big breakfast. The rest of the day is free. You may want to sit on the deck and watch the animals at the nearby waterhole, take a dip in the pool or perhaps a nap. After lunch, you depart for your evening game drive just like yesterday.

Timbavati is a private game reserve that shares a fenceless border with Kruger National Park (which lets you experience this vast wilderness without the crowds, and where the vehicles can go off-road to get really close to the animals). This is one of the best areas in South Africa to see the elusive leopard, and also the only place in the world where the white lion roams wild.

Umlani Bush Camp is my favourite camp in the whole country. It is rustic but comfortable, and gives you a real bush experience. There is no electricity (but the office has a generator if you should need to charge your phone or camera) and at night the camp is lit by oil lanterns. The camp is unfenced, meaning that you are staying in the middle of the wilderness (although elephants are discouraged by a high wire as they tend to steal the water pipes).

accommodation: Umlani Bush Camp

Meals: breakfast, lunch & dinner (and all drinks)

Activities: morning and afternoon game drive



DAY 7

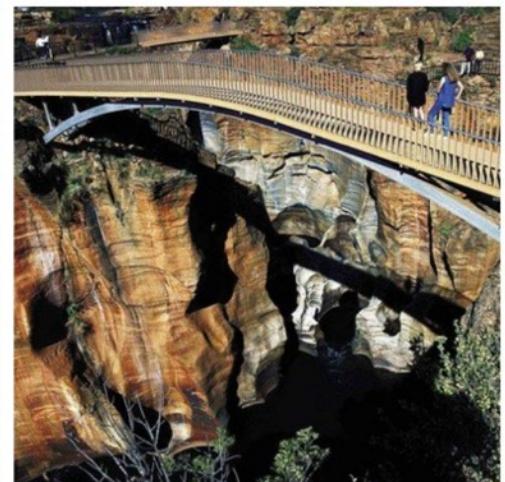
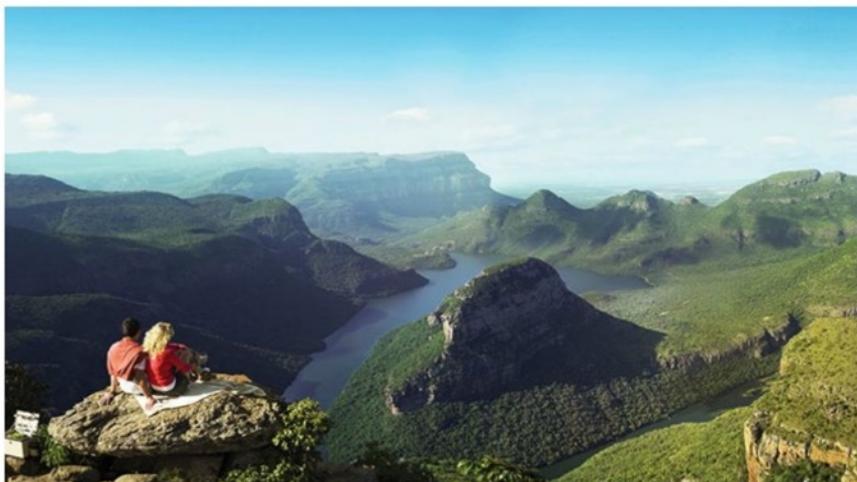
After your morning game drive and breakfast, it is time to head for new adventures. Drive along the Panorama Route to the little town Graskop. Along the way, you have plenty of time to explore the iconic destinations Blyde River Canyon, Three Rondavels, Bourke's Luck Potholes and God's Window. You can also take a short drive to the historic town Pilgrim's Rest, which was established during the gold rush of the mid-19th century.

Transport: 200km

Accommodation: Graskop Hotel <http://www.graskophotel.co.za/>

Meals: breakfast

Activities: morning game drive



DAY 8

Drive back to Johannesburg, and fly on to Cape Town or Port Elizabeth (look at packages starting in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth) or explore Johannesburg.

Transport: 400km

COST: From R18,000 per person

INCLUDES: Accommodation, activities and meals as per program
Maps, directions and information about optional activities
Assistance with restaurant and optional activities reservations

EXCLUDES: Flights
Rental car
Optional activities
Drinks (except at Umlani)
Personal expenses and tips