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South Africa Experience

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: South Africa Experience **Trip Code:** SAXP **Duration:** From 2 weeks

Trip Highlights

- A week behind the scenes at a Big 5 reserve? Errr, yes please!
- Garden Route = stunning. You'll love it!
- Learn to surf in the epic Jeffreys Bay
- Get your adventure on at Tsitsikamma National Park
- Kick back and relax in the beautiful Knysna
- Top off your incredible trip with time in Cape Town



Overview

South Africa is an epic country - which is perfect for travellers to explore. Between our Big 5 reserve in Port Elizabeth and the cool Cape Town lies the ridiculously good Garden Route, which is known as one of the best road trips in the world, so guess what? We want to take you along this incredible journey, and trust us when we say you'll see SO much in the two weeks!

You'll start off your journey by becoming a wildlife ranger on our South African private game reserve, where you'll get the chance to see the Big 5 and take a look at life behind the scenes of a reserve. You'll be helping out with a load of activities at the programme, which could include anything from day to day care of the animals (particularly the younger ones, we have resident lion cubs at our place!) along with fence patrols, getting rid of alien plants which have invaded, reintroducing incredible African plant species and helping out the resident rangers with their duties. Be prepared to roll your sleeves up, it's hard work but truly awesome and a real once in a lifetime experience.

Week two is all about the Garden Route folks, so be prepared to ramp it up! Ride the waves on a surfing lesson in Jeffrey's bay, wander through the incredible forests of Tsitsikamma National Park, chill out in the stunning Knysna and pay a visit to Oudsthoorn – the Ostrich capital of the world. Before you know it we'll be in Cape Town, which is packed full of awesome things to do. We couldn't recommend going up to the top of Table Mountain enough (the views are awesome) - but in your free time, you should definitely see the penguins of Boulders Bay and Cape Point too!

Looking for a 2 week adventure? Consider it done!

Destination Info

If you're looking for an absolutely MASSIVE adventure, then we reckon this is it. During your two weeks in the incredible South Africa, you'll go on safari and work on a Big 5 game reserve, travel along the Garden Route, stay in some incredible places (Surfers Paradise, anyone?) and visit one of our favourite cities in the world - Cape Town!

From amazing food to white sandy beaches, cities like Cape Town to incredible wildlife on Big 5 reserves, SA has everything, and we want to show you as much as we can in 2 weeks!

Itinerary



Day 1: Arrive Port Elizabeth Airport, South Africa

Welcome to South Africa, gang! On arrival at Port Elizabeth Airport, you'll be met by the RG team and taken to the awesome game reserve which you'll be calling home for the next week. Today, you'll also be given a detailed orientation by our team to let you know the ins and outs of the next 2 weeks. Got any questions? They'll be plenty of time to ask them here!

Day 2 – 7: Big 5 volunteering

For the first week of the South Africa Experience, you'll be volunteering at a private Game Reserve between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. The work is completely varied at the reserve, and you'll be doing everything from caring for the animals, going on game drives, eradicating alien plant species, game monitoring and helping with the maintenance. Trust us, after this epic week you'll know what life in the African bush is like and better still, you may have seen all of the Big 5!

As part of the Experience you'll be given the opportunity to take an Elephant Ride in a private reserve near Port Elizabeth too, which is an absolutely incredible experience. In the evenings, we'll crack on with even more activities: expect for us to whip out the Braai (South African BBQ to you and me!), have a close encounter with local reptiles, and star gazing. You're going to love it!



Day 8 - 9: Port Elizabeth

Hey up, Port E! Over the next two days we'll call Port Elizabeth our base - and with its long sandy beaches and awesome nightlife, you're bound to have a wicked time!

You'll have a load of free time in Port Elizabeth, where you can take advantage of loads of the cool stuff the city has to offer. The Boardwalk is a really cool place to hang out (there are loads of great restaurants), a township tour or a boat trip out to the Indian Ocean. If you're feeling a bit lazy, you could just snooze on the beach! In the evenings we'll head out to the bars, so expect a lively night out!

Day 10: Jeffreys Bay – Surfers Paradise

Next stop, Jeffreys Bay or to the locals - Surfers Paradise! We can't really explain with words how COOL this place is - with ridiculously long sandy beaches, this is the perfect place to ride the waves and have a go at surfing. For all of you shopaholics, there will also be time for you to visit the Billabong and Quiksilver Factory shops to hunt out a bargain (swimwear galore here!). Another night out, anyone?

Day 11: Tsitsikamma area – Trekking and adventure

Prepare to have your socks blown right off, the Tsitsikamma National Park is absolutely incredible! You will be staying just outside the National Park in hostel accommodation- but your park entrance fee will be covered for you and as a group you'll be taken on some of the best forest walking trails (remember to bring some decent footwear for this bit!). There are a number of optional activities available in the park, you could take part in one of the really cool tree top safaris or you could try white water rafting, or jump along the famous suspension bridge trail?



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Day 12: Knysna – Chill out on the Quays

The next point of call is Knysna, a really pretty town along the Garden Route and a real highlight. Home to the famous Knysna quays and picturesque lagoon; as a group we will take a boat trip (weather permitting) out to 'The Heads' which are two sandstone cliffs marking the point where the Noatzie River meets the Indian Ocean, and we'll travel through the lagoon. Smartphones and cameras at the ready; it's time to go Instagram crazy!

After the boat trip, you'll have free time to explore this cute town, visit the famous quays and get involved with some amazing optional adventure activities - why not try your hand at paragliding (and get a bird's eye view of this stunning section of the Garden Route!); snorkelling, guided nature walks, horse riding. If you're looking for somewhere awesome to eat, we recommend the East Head cafe - it's sat near one of the heads and the view is incredible!

Day 13: Oudtshoorn – Lots to explore

From Knysna, we travel inland to Oudtshoorn, the Ostrich capital of the world - wahay! The group will have the choice of a spot of cave exploration in Cango Caves or taking a trip to the local Wildlife Ranch where you'll have the chance to get to know these crazy birds! Please note that, as we're always incredibly fair at Real Gap, the majority vote on the day will decide which of the two places we visit!



Day 14: Cape Town – The greatest city on Earth?

Today we leave Oudtshoorn and re-join the amazing Garden Route on our way to Cape Town. It's a pretty long drive but the views are out of this world, so there's no way you'll get bored on this trip! The Garden Route is known as one of the best road trips in the world, so the journey is definitely something you should tick off of your bucket list!

A trip up Table Mountain is a necessity when you visit Cape Town, and today we'll go up the cable car and get to see the gorgeous Cape Town in all its glory. *(Please note that this excursion is subject to the cable car being operational - in the event that the cable car is closed an alternative excursion to Robben Island will arranged).*

The food in South Africa is out of this world (but you'll already know that by now!) so on your last night, the group will all go out for one final meal. This is usually followed by a night out, South African style! Wahay!

Day 15: Cape Town – The final day

Today is your last day. Boo! We recommend you pack your last day with loads of activities... we massively recommend a walk along V&A waterfront (there's a Topshop and Zara in the massive shopping centre there!), take a trip to Robben Island, visit the Two Oceans Aquarium or travel a little further afield and visit the Cape of Good Hope (a National Park with amazingly good views).

A transfer back to the airport is not included as you may like to stay on in Cape Town for a few more days to make the most of this impressive city has to offer. If you are travelling home today though, we can arrange something for you - just let us know!

Accommodation

During the first week of your programme you will be staying in a comfortable volunteer lodge at the project site, in shared single sex dormitory bedrooms with bathrooms. The lodge is fully furnished and has a number of communal facilities including lounge area, kitchen, table tennis, table football, tennis court, cricket field and an entertainment room with satellite television.

After your volunteer placement you will be touring the Garden Route, throughout the journey from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town you will be staying in Backpackers Hostels, in shared dormitory rooms.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

During the volunteering section of at the beginning of our programme there is an internet facility available at the project site for volunteers to use during designated times at a nominal fee. However please note that the internet connection can be unreliable at times and can vary from day to day; unfortunately this is down to the network providers and out of the control of our team in South Africa, so your patience with the intermittent internet connection will be very much appreciated.

During the second week of the programme you will be able to access the internet at Internet Cafes in the towns, this will be at your own expense.

Telephone

The international dialling code for South Africa it is +27.

To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call from either country, dial +44 for the UK, +49 for Germany, followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164 / +49 69 22226-475 .

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You will be able to buy a SIM card for your cell phone when you arrive at the airport. (Your phone will need to be Tri-Band and unlocked from your home network – speak to your cellular provider before you leave to make sure). Alternatively you can enable international roaming by speaking to your cellular provider before you leave home.

There is cell phone reception in the area and payphones are available at the town stores, which you will be able to use at your own expense.

Laundry

You will be able to use the laundry facilities at the placement during your first week for a small fee payable locally (60 ZAR per load).

During the second week you may be able to use local laundry services in the towns at your own expense.

Meals

Throughout your first week you will be provided with 3 meals each day. Breakfast is on a self service basis and items such as milk, jam, eggs and bread etc will be provided for you. Lunch and dinner will be prepared for you and normally consists of rice, vegetables, pasta dishes, pap, beans and curries.

Vegetarians can be catered for on request. Please note that during the first week the project is an alcohol free environment.

Lunches and dinners are not included during the second week of your programme, but this is a great opportunity to sample the food in the local cafes and restaurants along the way.

What's Included

- Airport pick-up
- Accommodation
- Breakfast every day
- Lunches and dinners from day 1 to 6
- Transport from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town
- Services of a tour guide
- Cap and t-shirts
- Activities as stated in itinerary
- 24 hour emergency support



What's Not Included

- All flights
- Travel Insurance
- Items of a personal nature
- Transportation not related to the programme
- All visas
- Lunches and dinners from day 7 to 15
- Optional activities



What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and, therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels, nor is it exhaustive.

Also, please be aware that the weather can change considerably from winter to summer and you should pack according to when you are travelling to ensure that you have the appropriate clothing.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money in South African Rand
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about)
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do
- International drivers licence

General

- Personal hygiene kit, toiletries and towel
- Binoculars
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Sun cream (high factor needed)
- Sun hat / bandana
- Small torch (head torch is preferable)
- Diary and writing pens
- Camera/batteries/film or memory card
- Water bottle - at least 75cl
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mobile phone - set for roaming
- Personal stereo
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Travel guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide

Clothing

- Clothes for Project work, including shorts and trousers
- Boots or sturdy trainers for project work

- Casual clothes for the second week
- Sets of outdoor, loose fitting cotton clothes with full arm and leg cover for cooler mornings and evenings.
- Shorts/trousers/skirts (well over knee length)
- Set of nice clothes for evenings out
- A pair of hiking boots or sturdy trainers
- Flip flops/sandals
- Working gloves for your project work in week 1
- Swimwear and beach towel
- Bath towel
- Underwear - enough for at least seven days, possibly more
- Pyjamas/nightwear
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Waterproof jacket (a must as it can rain all year round)
- Warm clothes for winter and early mornings

Medical Kit

- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Personal medication e.g prescription drugs/inhalers
- Painkillers
- Contact lenses and solution if necessary
- Plasters
- Lip Balm with SPF
- Tweezers (not in hand luggage)
- Scissors (not in hand luggage)
- Sanitary products for women if necessary
- Mosquito repellent (ensure it contains DEET or equivalent)
- Ear plugs - in case you sleep next to a snorer!

Minimum Age

Minimum age 18 years, maximum decided on participants health.

Minimum Numbers

This trip requires minimum numbers to operate.

Flights

Your flight to South Africa should arrive at Port Elizabeth airport before 5pm on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged to depart from Cape Town airport for your programme end date.

To receive the included transfer from Port Elizabeth Airport airport to your accommodation your flight will need to arrive before 5pm on the programme start date.

Please note: This programme requires a minimum number of participants to run. Please contact us to confirm whether the minimum numbers have been met for your start date, we recommend that you do not book your flights until we have confirmed these numbers

and the programme will be running.

To book your flights, please contact your sales advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

- 1. What are the typical group sizes?**
Groups sizes vary depending on the time of year, but can be anything between 5 and 20 fellow travelers.
- 2. How much spending money would you recommend I take?**
If you are on a tight budget you can get away with £80 Per week. If you want to do lots of extra activities along the way then you will need a bit more.
- 3. What are the average ages of travelers on this trip?**
The majority of participants on this program are aged between 18-30, however it is popular with travelers of all ages.
- 4. I am a first time traveler, and a bit apprehensive about travelling on my own. Do many people do this by themselves?**
The majority of our participants are solo travelers, so you will be one of many in the same position. We e-mail out a buddy list 2-3 weeks before you start, so you can begin to get to know one another beforehand.
- 5. Do I need to take a sleeping bag?**
No, all bedding is provided however if you wish to take one for extra warmth then you can.
- 6. Do I need to take a mosquito net?**
No, you will be in a malaria free area.
- 7. Will there be a safe/safety deposit box available?**
You will have lockable chests as well as boxes in your room where you can lock your valuable items in.

Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

The currency in South Africa is the Rand (R), which is divided into 100 cents. Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10 and 50 cents, and 1, 2 and 5 Rand. Notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 Rand.

US Dollars, Pound Sterling or Euros are the best currencies to bring to change locally. Major credit cards such as Visa or MasterCard are accepted in most towns, cities and petrol stations and ATMs can be found across the country. ATMs in cities are the most likely to give cash advances to cards on the on the Cirrus network.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$7.70
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$1.85
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.04
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.13

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For stays of 90 days or less nationals of the European Union, the USA, Australia and New Zealand can obtain a free entry permit on arrival. All other nationalities should consult their nearest South African Embassy or High Commission for details on entry requirements.

Cultural Considerations

Smoking and Drinking

Smoking and drinking is tolerated in South Africa, although smoking has been banned in public areas such as cinemas, bars and airports. You will find that you will be able to get imported beer cheaply in most establishments and there are many tasty local beers too. South Africa is also famous for wines, so you shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to try some local varieties.

However, please respect other volunteers. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated on the project.

Drugs

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into South Africa. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, South Africa has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including 'soft' drugs like marijuana, are illegal. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling - it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Greeting

Pleasantries are taken seriously and using 'hello' and 'goodbye' can go a long way to making friends and being accepted. Please take the time to learn a few local words and show that you are keen to fit in. There is also a big emphasis on shaking hands. The Western way of doing this will be fine, but you are likely to pick up a few local variations!

On The whole, South Africans are easy-going people - any social errors are unlikely to cause offence, so please do not worry!

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

Tourists can be targeted by pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about Africa and South Africa in particular, before you leave, so that you can be alert for all types of situations. General travel safety rules are below.

- Avoid travelling alone, especially at night
- Find out where the unsafe areas are and avoid them
- When travelling keep all-important documents and valuables in a safe place, like an inner hidden pocket or money belt
- Carry only as much cash as you think you will need for the day

- Don't wear expensive jewellery or watches
- Be wary of people who seem too friendly too fast
- Keep cameras out of sight. Always keep bags and purses in your sight.
- Before swimming, ask how safe the area is

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Swimming

If visiting a beach in South Africa it is important that you take note of any information boards that are located on the beach before entering the water. Most beaches also operate a flag system to indicate whether it is safe to swim or not, it is essential that you take note of any advice given and heed any warnings that are in place as there can be the risk of rip tides, strong currents and Shark attack. If you are unsure whether it is safe to swim in the ocean, speak to the lifeguards or your in-country coordinators.

Language Guide

There are 11 official languages in South Africa; Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, IsiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. There are many other tribal, indigenous languages. However, English is spoken prevalently across the country. In Cape Town, the predominant language is Afrikaans. We suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

English - Afrikaans

Hello - *Hallo*

How are you? - *Hoe gaan dit?*

I'm fine - *Goed dankie*

Thank you (very much) - *Baie dankie*

Please - *Asseblief*

Yes / No - *Ja / Nee*

Goodbye - *Totsiens*

English - Isi Xhosa

Hello - *Molo*

How are you? - *Kunjani?*

I'm fine - *Ndiphilile*

Thank you (very much) - *Enkosi*

Please - *nceda*

Yes / No - *Ewe / hayi*

Goodbye - *Hamba kahle (go well)*

Food & Drink

South Africa Experience

Food in South Africa is delicious. You will be exposed to every different type of meat at every meal, ranging from impala and kudu to ostrich. All can be enjoyed in many different ways, but one of the best ways to taste these meats would be to sample it off a hot braai (barbecue). Be prepared to try something new! If you want to try some more traditional food then go for some Biltong (dried meat) and Boerewors (barbecue sausage).

If you are a vegetarian, do not worry. South Africa is abundant with delicious local vegetables, such as yams and sweet potatoes.

Drinking water from the tap is safe throughout the country, apart from in the more rural areas.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from South African's who use long weekends to get away from the big cities.

To view a list of the public holidays for South Africa, please see the link below:

<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/south-africa/>

Weather

Seasons in South Africa are opposite to those in the northern hemisphere. The climate is varied across the country with warm showery summers and cold winters in the Gauteng Province (Highveld), scorching summers and a slightly less chilly outlook for winter in the Durban area (Lowveld) and the Western Cape hit hardest by winter rains. Karoo's desert-like climate means it's hot and ready to explore all year round but if you want to explore the rest of the country Spring (mid-September to November) and autumn (April and May) are ideal almost everywhere.

Time

South Africa is two hours ahead of GMT.

In Africa, time is not a priority like it is in much of the western world – there is a saying that Africa works to 'Africa Time', which basically means you must exercise a lot of patience! If a boat is due to leave at 12pm, don't be surprised if it still hasn't a couple of hours later... keep an open mind, and arrive 'expecting the unexpected'.

Electricity

In South Africa the electric system is 230 Volts and frequency 50 Hertz. If you bring a device that does not accept this Voltage you will need to use an adapter.

Outlets in South Africa generally accept 1 type of plug:



Three round pins arranged in a triangle



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Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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