

## South Africa 2025

You are in for the trip of a lifetime! I've designed this trip to build excitement and wonder each day. Many are surprised to learn South Africa is almost twice the size of Texas. Elevations tower to over 11,000 feet at Mount Mafadi to sea level. While the country is large, it makes up only about 1% of the planet's total land area. Nevertheless, it includes almost 10% of all mammals, fish, and plants. The coastline stretches for over 1,500 miles.

There are 11 official languages recognized by the government. Fortunately, English is almost universally spoken. Rather than just one capital, South Africa has three, including Pretoria, which serves as the executive capital, while Bloemfontein is the judicial capital, and Cape Town is the legislative city. Johannesburg is the largest city, with just shy of 10 million inhabitants. Five South African cities are home to more than 1 million people.

South Africa is so diverse that it is often called "the world in one country." Rugged coastlines, grasslands, and woodlands make it a fantastic country for professional and amateur naturalists. The government is well set up for tourism, with an excellent infrastructure. It is the only genuinely modern country on the continent. You'll be impressed by the quality of service and accommodation. Food and wine are simply world-class. Many past clients have commented the service is beyond anything they've experienced while traveling in the United States.

**Lindani Private Game Reserve**, our first stop after Johannesburg, is a secluded offering where you'll adjust to an entirely different time zone and likely see your first giraffes, zebras, and impalas. This reserve of about 7,500 acres was designed to allow South Africans to affordably go on safari, with very shy leopards the only one of the charismatic (and very expensive) Big 5 present. You can safely walk here to see Big Game, a rare treat in South Africa, where almost every reserve requires your escort with a guard any time you're on foot, including walking from the main lodge to your room at night.

Lindani rests in the Waterburg, an area of hilly terrain within the Limpopo region. The area covers more than 1.5 million acres with an average elevation of almost 2,000 feet. We will drive through the town of Vaalwater, just north of the mountain range. You can expect to see a dry deciduous forest or Bushveld. You will also visit an archaeological site in the Waterberg dating to the Stone Age. The Waterburg is the first region in northern South Africa to be named a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO.

The goal of most people who visit South Africa is to see Big Game. This trip concludes with five full days of bush drives. Thakadu River Camp is outstanding, with astonishingly good food served every meal. You may think it can't get better, but it does.

**Cape Town** is one of the world's most beautiful cities and serves as the legislative capital of South Africa. It is also the oldest South African city and where the parliament meets. You will visit the highlights of Cape Town, including Table Mountain National Park, Cape Point, Kirstenbosch Gardens, and the Victoria and Alfred (V&A) Waterfront.

The Dutch East India Company founded Cape Town in 1652 as a supply station for Dutch ships sailing to East Africa from India and Far Eastern Africa. There were many battles between the British and Dutch for Cape Town in the following 250 years.

**Madikwe Private Game Reserve** provides luxury accommodations in one of the largest game reserves in South Africa, totaling almost 200,000 acres. You will feel like you are on a South African bus as your safari vehicle tracks animals through the backcountry. This fantastic reserve is new, being formed in 1992. The South African government bought denuded land from farmers to establish the reserve. Over the next six years, the government transported over 8,000 animals to the reserve. Rather than tranquilizing a couple of elephants from a herd, they transported entire herds.

More than 30 years later, perhaps too many elephants now inhabit Madikwe. They and the other Big 5 cheetah and African painted dog are often spotted in the reserve. Past trips have seen all the Big 5 in one morning's drive. Over 65 mammals now inhabit Madikwe, with a bird list of over 330 species.

Madikwe rests on the border of Botswana. Your cell phone may ping you with a "Welcome to Botswana message" as we traverse the reserve. The dry season runs from April through October.

I first went to Africa in 1977, and way back then, I thought it was the most incredible place on Earth. I haven't changed my mind since. Your trip will be my 9<sup>th</sup> to this fantastic land. It is a privilege to share a place I hold dearly.

## **Itinerary outline**

### **October 9-22, 2025, from \$8,800**

#### **October 9**

Your flight must arrive in Joburg by this evening. You will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Overnight Premier Johannesburg or similar.

#### **October 10**

After a leisurely breakfast, you'll depart for Lindani Private Game Reserve at 8:30 for the 3.5-hour drive. There are a couple of pit stops along the way. Almost immediately upon entering Lindani, you're craning your neck to spot your first big game. And you quickly spot a small herd of impala. A warthog may dart in front of your vehicle with its tail held straight up. After lunch, you'll take a short drive to see some petroglyphs and pottery of early people. Their shelter seems quite comfortable, though sleeping on a bed of rocks is a little less so. Overnight, Motseng, or similar

#### **October 11**

This morning, Solly (our guide/driver) will pick us up at 6:00 for a Lindani safari. You will surely see giraffes, common zebra, warthog, impala, and kudu. You may also spot a common eland, the world's largest antelope species. Other less common antelopes you hope to spot include Blesbok and red hartebeest.

After lunch, back at Motseng, you'll have a short break before boarding a safari vehicle with Solly again. He'll share stories of the South African bush, including many about the local plants. The safari day will conclude with your first sundowner. As you slowly return to Moteseng, Solly will use a night light, hoping to spot nocturnal animals like armadillo, honey badger, spotted genet, and civet. You'll also stop under a tree where super-cute bush baby are often spotted. Overnight, Motseng, or similar

#### **October 12**

Paul will greet us at Motseng at 6 this morning for a three-hour bird walk. (You won't be on your feet for three hours but drive to the best birding spots.) One highlight will be birding the stunning grounds of Lindani's owners. You'll gently stroll the grounds, seeing birds with names, most of which will be foreign to you.

After breakfast, Steve will lead you on a hike to the reserve. You'll learn a bit about how to read the tracks of animals. You return to Motseng in time for lunch, then have several hours at your leisure. In the early evening, Solly will drive us to Makgethelo, a beautiful picnic area and a fantastic way to end our four days at Lindani. Overnight, Motseng, or similar

#### **October 13**

Our shuttle picks us up at 8:00 at Lindani for the journey back to Johannesburg and our 12:45 flight to Cape Town, arriving at 2:45. As you approach one of the world's most beautiful cities, the views from the plane are jaw-dropping. You'll get a shuttle to Sea Point, an affluent Cape Town suburb, where you'll spend the next six nights. Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 14**

You'll head to Strandfontein Water Treatment Plant this morning. This is an excellent spot for seeing Lesser and Greater Flamingos and many other waterbirds. T Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 15**

You'll have a change of pace today and head to wine country. Your journey includes wine pairings for breakfast, lunch, and dessert. The mountains provide an incredible backdrop, making this among the world's most beautiful wine-growing areas. Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 16**

Today is a day on your own exploring Cape Town. (You will be provided a list of options before the trip begins so we can book you on your activity of choice.) Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 17**

Today offers a full day of exploring the Cape of Good Hope. You'll stop at Boulder's Beach for an African penguin viewing before continuing to Cape Point, all within Table Mountain National Park. The scenery here is remarkable, with one vista after another. You're sure to see Common Ostrich. One of the most beautiful antelope, the bontebok, is also a common sighting. Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 18**

After breakfast, you'll head to Table Mountain National Park. The views 3,000 feet above Cape Town are amazing. Birds you should spot include Orange-breasted Sunbird, Rock Kestrel, Alpine, and African Swift, among many others. Before lunch, you travel to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, where the fantastic plantings are matched with fantastic bird sightings. Malachite, Southern Double-collared, Amethyst Sunbird, the endemic Cape Sugarbird, and several raptor species are some targets. Overnight Sundown Manor or similar

**October 19**

This morning, you'll fly back to Johannesburg before hopping on a shuttle for your flight to Madikwe Private Game Reserve, where your group will step back into time in luxury tents (with air conditioning) on the east side of the reserve. **Overnight Thakadu Tent Camp or similar**

**October 20**

You'll enjoy your first full day of safari. The game is plentiful on this side of this massive reserve (almost 200,000 acres). You'll likely spot rhinos, lions, and a dazzling variety of big game. Maybe you'll even spot a predator on the hunt. Part of the magic is the mystery of what you'll see. **Overnight Thakadu Tent Camp or similar**

**October 21**

You'll have your last safari at Thakadu, and after a beautiful breakfast, you'll board your safari vehicle for the journey to the midpoint of Madikwe. You'll be met by your guide for the next three days from the five-star Impodimu Lodge. The more open terrain here is more suitable terrain for cheetahs to hunt. The giant African painted dog pack also resides on this half of the reserve. **Overnight Impodimu Guest Lodge or similar**

**October 22**

Your routing is similar to what you experienced at Thakadu. You'll have early wakeups, a game drive, lunch, an afternoon game drive, and dinner. **Overnight Impodimu Guest Lodge or similar.**

By this point in the trip, you're getting a little pickier about what game you hope to see. Today is the first of two full days of drives on the western side of Madikwe. Our driver will ask what game we've not seen and will concentrate on those animals. **Overnight Impodimu Guest Lodge or similar**

### **October 23**

Today marks your last full day of bush drives. Often, these trips are totally stress-free, as you've seen the "Big 5" plus painted dogs and cheetahs. But will we get to see a predator on the hunt? What birds might capture your fancy? I promise you; the excitement of these drives never wanes. **Overnight Impodimu Guest Lodge or similar**

### **October 24**

You enjoy one last game drive before a leisurely breakfast, returning to Johannesburg for your night flight home.

## **Victoria Falls Extension Only**

October 25

After your trip back to Johannesburg, you'll spend one more night at an airport hotel. This allows you to catch a morning flight to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

October 26

You'll board an early morning flight to Zimbabwe, where you'll be met at the airport and transported to your hotel for the next two nights. An absolutely breathtaking flight of a helicopter over Victoria Falls awaits.

October 27

This morning, you will take a foot tour of Victoria Falls from the front view. The water will flow so powerfully that you may see nothing but mist, thus the need for the helicopter view. In the afternoon, you'll drive back to Zimbabwe to look at the falls from the top of the falls. Your day concludes with a magical sunset dinner tour on the mighty Zambezi River.

October 28

We'll arrive back in Johannesburg at around 3 in the afternoon, in plenty of time to catch your night-flight home.