

South Africa: Cape Town & the Garden Route

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Dramatic scenery, magnificent wildlife, a vibrant culture, a prominent role in modern history—South Africa has it all. And you'll experience it up close, by bicycle. Stunning mountain and coastal views line your path as you venture from vibrant Cape Town into wine country, with its distinctively French ambiance. Roll on through flower-filled valleys and along riverbeds trilling with bird life, follow the celebrated Garden Route and explore scenic lagoons and passes. Home-hosted meals, a guided township tour, a wine tasting, and more give you a peak into South African life.

Cultural Highlights

Ride a cablecar to the top of Table Mountain for spectacular views

Inhale the fragrance of a riot of flowers at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, and picnic on the grounds

Encounter firsthand the challenges confronting post-apartheid South Africa on a guided township tour

Delight in a unique penguin colony

View surfers and kiteboarders on a scenic coastal roll

Experience the French flair of the Franschhoek Valley winemaking region and enjoy a private tasting

Find out why Franschhoek is considered the "food and wine capital" of South Africa

Learn about the world's largest bird on a tour of an ostrich farm

Savor a traditional South African braai, or barbeque

Experience the celebrated Garden Route, a truly spectacular stretch of coastline bordering the Indian Ocean

Experience everyday life over dinner in a local family home

Listen for the call of the "Bird of Eden" as you cycle serene passes lined with indigenous forest

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills. The VBT van support shuttle is always available for those who would like assistance. This tour is good for beginner to experienced cyclists.

Tour Duration: 11 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 13 - 26

Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 03:15

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jan 77°/63°, Feb 78°/63°, Mar 76°/60°, Apr 72°/56°, Oct 69°/54°, Nov 72°/58°, Dec 75°/61°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jan 0.6, Feb 0.6, Mar 0.8, Apr 1.6, Oct 0.1, Nov 0, Dec 0.7

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Cape Town, South Africa

Depart from home for South Africa. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

Please note: Passports for travelers to South Africa should contain at least two completely blank (unstamped) visa pages each time entry is sought. These pages are in addition to the endorsement/amendment pages (as many as four) typically found at the back of U.S. passports. While South African statutes require only one completely blank visa page, this rule has been applied inconsistently by South African immigration officials. In addition, any trips to neighboring countries would necessitate another blank page upon return. Travelers lacking adequate blank pages in their passport may be refused entry into South Africa, fined and returned to their point of origin at their own expense.

DAY 2: Arrive in Cape Town, South Africa / Transfer to hotel / Meet Trip Leaders / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

VBT Air Package guests: Upon arrival in South Africa at the Johannesburg airport, claim your luggage, then clear customs. A VBT representative will meet you outside the customs area in the international arrivals terminal and direct you to the adjacent domestic terminal, where you will need to check in with your luggage for your connecting flight to Cape Town. Please utilize the carts for transporting your luggage. Upon arrival in Cape Town, a VBT representative will meet you outside the luggage claim area for your transfer by minibus (approximately 30 minutes) to your hotel. The remainder of the day is yours to explore Cape Town at leisure.

If you are going to be delayed for more than 15 minutes at the Lost & Found desk due to delayed or lost luggage, please contact our One Call travel assistance to advise of your delay, and they will contact our transfer service.

VBT Pre-Trip Extension guests: This morning, you have an opportunity for one last game drive followed by breakfast before your transfer to the airport. Upon arrival in Cape Town, a VBT representative will meet

you and assist with your transfer to the hotel. The remainder of the day is yours to explore Cape Town at leisure.

All guests arrive in Cape Town today. Your Trip Leaders, who will be wearing VBT staff garments, will be available in the hotel in the early evening for informal introductions.

Hotel: More Quarters

DAY 3: Cable car ride to summit of Table Mountain / Cycle along Table Mountain / Welcome dinner

After breakfast, shuttle to the Table Mountain Cableway, where you'll visit the top of Table Mountain, Cape Town's iconic, flat-topped mountain, and admire magnificent views of the Cape Peninsula. Once back down the cableway, continue to Tafelberg Road, perched high above the city. After a safety briefing, orientation and bike-fitting session with your Trip Leaders, you'll embark on a warm-up ride along the base of Table Mountain. The ride offers some rolling terrain. As you pedal, you'll be treated to spectacular views of Table Bay and the Cape Town "City Bowl."

This afternoon, you'll enjoy a closer look at South Africa's fascinating flora during a short-included visit to the world-famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Nestled in the foothills of Table Mountain, the garden showcases the staggering diversity of South Africa's indigenous plants, many of which can be found nowhere else on Earth. Marvel at the endless varieties of fynbos on display, a distinct floral kingdom of hardy flowering shrubs found almost exclusively in the Western Cape, including the pointy pedaled King Protea, South Africa's national flower. Enjoy a picnic lunch on the grounds.

You'll also visit the townships this afternoon for a walking tour in Langa, one of Cape Town's oldest townships. Here you will learn, from a local guide, about some of the challenges that many South Africans face in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as about the Xhosa culture. This fascinating window into life in the townships is quite eye-opening. As you'll see, the vibrant streets are full of life and color.

Tonight, gather for a welcome reception, where you'll learn more about what it's like to eat local food and experience true African vibes.

Hotel: More Quarters

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 6.8 miles (11.3 km)

DAY 4: Cape Peninsula Tour / Cycle in Cape Point Nature Reserve

This morning, you'll shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) to Simonstown, where you'll be treated to sweeping views of False Bay. Then, visit the African Penguin Colony at Boulders Beach, a unique conservation effort in an urban area.

Afterward, shuttle to the Cape Point section of Table Mountain National Park, where you'll drive along rolling roads blanketed by pristine fynbos. Your ride takes you out of the National Park to the small community of Scarborough. Here relax and refuel with a hearty lunch at The Whole Earth Café.

In the afternoon, cycle farther to enjoy the wild Atlantic coastline of Scarborough and Misty Cliffs. This stunning section of coast features azure oceans, big waves, surfers, and kite boarders. Transfer back to our hotel in the late afternoon to relax.

This evening is free for you to try one of the local restaurants in Cape Town. Your leaders will help with recommendations.

Hotel: More Quarters

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 12 or 17 miles (19 or 28 km)

DAY 5: Cycle Franschhoek Winelands / Wine tasting at local vineyard

Nestled between towering mountains in the beautiful Cape winelands lies today's destination, the magnificent Franschhoek Valley. After breakfast, transfer (approximately 1 hour) to Franschhoek, long known as the "French Corner," with many of the settlers naming their new farms after the areas in France from which they emigrated. Founded in 1688 by French Huguenot refugees, the town's farms soon became known for producing stellar wines, a reputation that continues to this day. You'll discover why as you cycle through the wine valley, admiring the town's arresting French flair and lush, fertile landscapes. Your ride takes you to a private estate for a wine tasting and lunch.

After lunch, there is the option to cycle farther in the valley, to explore the pristine natural and architectural beauty of Franschhoek or enjoy the facilities at your home for the evening, Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa.

Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant.

Hotel: Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 7.4 and/or 13.7 miles (11.8 and/or 22 km)

DAY 6: View Karoo scenery and mountain passes en route to Oudtshoorn / Local Oudtshoorn ride / Ostrich Tour

After breakfast, board the bus and journey inland to Oudtshoorn (approximately 5-6 hours). En route, stop to browse some village shops in Barrydale and enjoy a hearty lunch in Ladismith. You'll be traveling along scenic Route 62 through the Little Karoo, a sprawling, semi-arid region known for its wildflower-filled valleys and majestic sandstone mountains.

Later this afternoon, arrive at your accommodations near Oudtshoorn, a charming, Victorian-flavored town nestled in the foothills of the Swartberg Mountains. Once you're settled, set off on a short leg-stretching ride exploring this beautiful area and its ostrich farms. Afterwards join Bartel, the owner, on a tour of his ostrich farm, learning all about these fascinating animals.

Dinner is at the lodge this evening.

Hotel: La Plume

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 11.8 or 19.9 miles (19 or 32.3 km)

DAY 7: Ride through Meiringspoort

This morning cycle through picturesque Meiringspoort. Shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) to the village of De Rust, where you will start and end your ride. This is a stunning ride, set in a riverbed flanked by the twisting sandstone formations of the Cape Fold Mountains. It is home to the klipspringer, black eagle and grey rhebuck.

Upon your return to De Rust, enjoy a hearty lunch. Then head back to our lodge and relax on the lovely grounds.

For dinner tonight, you'll enjoy a traditional South African braai, or barbeque, at your lodge.

Hotel: La Plume

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 14.5 or 29 miles (23.5 or 46.7 km)

DAY 8: Ride Knysna Lagoon / Drive along the Garden Route

This morning, you'll transfer to the scenic coastal town of Knysna, (approximately 2 hours). The drive bridges the divide between the semi-arid landscape of the Little Karoo and the lush, coastal Garden Route. You'll leave Oudtshoorn and transfer down the Outeniqua Pass, through George, and along the celebrated Garden Route, a truly spectacular stretch of coastline bordering the Indian Ocean. As you pass through the towns of Wilderness, Sedgefield, and Knysna, you'll encounter a diverse landscape ranging from densely forested hills to craggy cliffs and secluded coves.

Your ride today starts at a viewpoint overlooking the bay and explores the town of Knysna. Begin on the outskirts and follow a bike path along the Knysna Lagoon into and through town, onto These Island, and finish at the mouth of the lagoon, Knysna's East Head. You'll enjoy lunch here.

After lunch, you can either shuttle to the hotel or ride back along the lagoon. Check in and settle into your new accommodations.

Dinner is on your own tonight. You might want to try the local pub, or shuttle into Knysna and explore its waterfront.

Hotel: Belvidere Manor

Alternate Hotel: Premier Resort the Moorings

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 14.3 or 24 miles (23.1 or 39 km)

DAY 9: Ride from Rheenendal to Buffels Bay / Picnic lunch at the seaside / Home-hosted dinner

After breakfast, you'll shuttle (approximately 30 minutes) to Rheenendal, just outside of Knysna. Begin your ride here, cycling through rolling farmland and indigenous rainforest, past the historic scene of an old goldmine, and finishing up with a very scenic downhill cruise into Buffels Bay, taking in the views of the Goukamma River estuary and the Indian Ocean.

After a seaside picnic lunch at Buffels Bay, and maybe a dip in the Indian Ocean, you'll shuttle (approximately 30 minutes) back to the lodge in Knysna for a relaxing afternoon overlooking the lagoon

from the awesome gardens of your hotel.

If you wish to do more cycling, you may ride back from Buffels Bay to the railway station you passed on your way in.

This evening, you'll learn more about what it's like to live in South Africa when you join a local family in their home for a memorable home-cooked dinner.

Hotel: Belvidere Manor

Alternate Hotel: Premier Resort the Moorings

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 15.5 or 21.1 miles (24.8 or 33.8 km)

DAY 10: Nature's Valley & Bloukrans Pass Cycle / Lunch in Tsitsikamma National Park

After breakfast, shuttle (approximately 60 minutes) to Craggs to start your ride. Pedal along quiet roads this morning, riding the old road through Nature's Valley Pass and Bloukrans Pass, amid lush indigenous Afro-Montane forest. Experience the peace and quiet of these stunning forest-lined passes and listen for the call of the knysna loerie (the "Bird of Eden"). Celebrate your final ride with lunch in Tsitsikamma National Park overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Shuttle back to your accommodation (approximately 1 hour 40 minutes), with some late-afternoon free time. Perhaps you'll go for a swim or dig into that book as you laze on your shaded patio.

Celebrate your South African sojourn tonight during a festive farewell dinner at your lodge.

Hotel: Belvidere Manor

Alternate Hotel: Premier Resort the Moorings

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 32 miles (52.4 km) - with multiple options to shorten ride length

DAY 11: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Transfer to George / Depart for home or begin your optional Post-trip Extension

VBT Air Package guests: After breakfast, transfer by minibuss (approximately 1 hour) to the airport in George for your flight home.

Please note: Your flight between George and Johannesburg may not be reflected in your air itinerary. Your Trip Leaders will have the details for this flight and will assist with checking you in.

VBT Post-Trip Extension guests: Fly from George to Johannesburg, where you will spend the night at our airport-area hotel. Upon your arrival at O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, a VBT representative meets you and helps you transfer to your nearby hotel. Check in and relax. The representative will advise you at what time you will be picked up for the airport tomorrow.

Post-Trip Extension Hotel: Premier Hotel O.R. Tambo International Airport

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12: Arrive home

VBT Air Package guests: Your flights arrive home this morning.

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Belvidere Manor (Days: 8,9,10)

Overlooking a tranquil cove on the western end of Knysna Lagoon, the historic Belvidere Manor Hotel dates to 1848, when a British Army officer built a Georgian-style residence for his growing family. The family's original farmhouse is now home to a cozy pub featuring locally brewed beer and an underground wine cellar. Other amenities include an outdoor pool, manicured grounds harboring more than 270 bird species, and an elegant onsite restaurant. You may also wish to relax on the wide *stoep*, or veranda, of your guest cottage, which features one, two, or three bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, a shared kitchen and living room, and lagoon or garden views. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout. Available on limited departures.

Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa (Day: 5)

Nestled in the heart of the Cape Winelands, bordered by leafy vineyards in the small town of Franschhoek and surrounded by magnificent mountain vistas, the quiet and unassuming Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa eases you into pure luxury. Prepare to be treated to elegant finishes and careful attention to detail

here, as you enjoy a remarkable selection of inspiring venues, from delectable restaurants to indulgent spa treatments. It is luxurious hotel accommodation at its best. The hotel is air conditioned and offers WiFi throughout.

More Quarters (Days: 2,3,4)

From one of the 18 apartments at More Quarters you can explore nearby bars, beaches, great little shops, local eateries, and boutiques. Its an authentic experience of Capetonian living, with Lions Head above you, the buzz of the neighborhood next to you, and the vibrancy of the city all around you. The hotel is air conditioned and offers WiFi throughout.

La Plume Guest House (Days: 6,7)

A working ostrich and alfalfa farm and vineyard set in the tranquil Olifantsrivier Valley, La Plume commands spectacular views of the Swartberg Mountains. A warm welcome awaits at this charming 1902 Victorian homestead, where your host has combined Old World charm with modern comforts to ensure both extraordinary service and personal attention. In addition to private entrances, sunny verandas, and elegant, comfortable antique furnishings, the air-conditioned guest rooms offer a television and minibar. WiFi is also available.