

## South Africa: Cape Town & the Garden Route

### Bike Vacation Only

On this cycling tour of South Africa's famous Garden Route, VBT stands alone. Our thoughtfully designed itinerary takes you through South Africa's gorgeous southern coastline from the Cape of Good Hope to Tsitsikamma National Park. Along the way, VBT's expert local trip leaders will introduce you to the country's culture and history from different perspectives—including a tour of Cape Town's lively neighborhoods, dinner with a local family in the deep forests of Knysna, and a two-night stay at a delightful family-run working ostrich farm. You'll cycle the rugged coastlines of two oceans, spin through indigenous rainforests, discover an African penguin colony, and pedal past the wildflower fields of Little Karoo. Relaxing on the veranda with a superlative South African wine, you'll wonder why you didn't come here sooner.

### Cultural Highlights

- Float to the top of Table Mountain by cable car and marvel at the dazzling views.
- Savor a traditional South African *braai* (barbecue).
- Sample South African wines and learn about local wine culture during a private tasting.
- Encounter local wildlife, including a visit to an African penguin colony and a tour of an ostrich farm.
- Experience the many facets of South Africa's landscape—from wild coastline and lush vineyards to semi-arid plains and the world-famous Garden Route.

### What to Expect

This tour features a mix of easy terrain and moderate hills. Most rides take place on paved roads shared with vehicular traffic. Daily mileage is generally low, with limited opportunities for additional cycling. Frequent shuttles are included to facilitate exploration of South Africa's diverse landscapes. Our VBT support vehicle is available throughout the trip for your convenience. This tour is well-suited for both beginner and experienced cyclists.

**Tour Duration:** 9 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 11-32 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-3 hours

**Group size:** 14–20 max

### Climate Information

**Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

January 77°/63°, February 78°/63°, March 76°/60°, April 72°/56°, October 69°/54°, November 72°/58°, December 75°/61°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

January 0.6, February 0.6, March 0.8, April 1.6, October 0.1, November 0, December 0.7

## DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Warm-Up Ride

Your tour begins at 7:30 a.m. at our first hotel in Cape Town. Please arrive dressed for cycling. Your trip leaders—wearing VBT staff garments—will meet you in the lobby. From there, shuttle to the Table Mountain Cableway, where you'll ascend Cape Town's iconic flat-topped mountain and enjoy sweeping views of the Cape Peninsula.

Once back at the base station, you'll shuttle a short distance to the coast. After a safety briefing, orientation, and bike fitting with your trip leaders, set off on a warm-up ride along the base of Table Mountain's Twelve Apostles. As you pedal, enjoy dramatic views of the Atlantic Ocean en route to the beachside suburb of Camps Bay.

Your ride concludes at the bustling Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, South Africa's oldest working harbor and now a vibrant promenade filled with shops and restaurants. From the waterfront, shuttle to the Bo-Kaap neighborhood, Cape Town's historic Muslim quarter, known for its brightly colored houses and cobbled streets.

Continue your exploration on foot with visits to Greenmarket Square, St. George's Cathedral, and the Company's Garden—originally founded by the Dutch East India Company as a refreshment station in the 1600s and now a tranquil green oasis in the heart of the city. Enjoy lunch on the garden grounds.

This evening, gather for a festive welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Warm-Up Ride at Camps Bay — 16 km (10 miles)

### What to Expect:

Meet your tour early to beat the crowds at Table Mountain. This warm-up ride gives you a chance to get

comfortable on the bike that will be your trusty companion for the rest of the journey. As you ride, take in the beauty of Table Mountain and the coastal charm of Camps Bay. The route features mostly flat terrain with some gentle downhill—perfect for easing into your cycling adventure.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Cape Peninsula Tour / Cycle in Cape Point Nature Reserve**

This morning, shuttle

(approximately one hour and 15 minutes) along the stunning Chapman's Peak Drive to Simonstown, where you'll enjoy sweeping views of False Bay. Then, visit the African Penguin Colony at Boulders Beach—a unique conservation effort set within an urban environment.

While in the area, you'll also pass by the Simon's Town Bee Garden, part of a larger bee conservation network supported by Ujubee. VBT is proud to support Ujubee with a donation on behalf of each guest on this tour. Ujubee is committed to raising awareness about the importance of safeguarding all wild bee species. Through its network of conservation projects—including the Bee Garden in Cape Point Nature Reserve—Ujubee fosters knowledge exchange, shares best practices, and drives global initiatives for bee conservation. Everyone benefits from a healthy bee population!

Afterward, continue by shuttle to Cape Point Nature Reserve, where you'll drive along rolling roads blanketed with pristine fynbos and visit the Cape of Good Hope—the southwestern tip of the African continent. Your ride begins here, taking you out of the reserve and into the small seaside community of Scarborough. Relax and refuel with a hearty lunch at a local café.

In the afternoon, cycle farther along the wild Atlantic coastline through Scarborough and Kommetjie. This dramatic stretch of coast showcases azure waters, powerful waves, and glimpses of surfers and kite boarders in action. Return to your hotel in the late afternoon and enjoy some time to unwind.

This evening is free for you to explore Cape Town's vibrant dining scene. Your trip leaders and hotel reception team are happy to assist with recommendations and reservations.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cape Point to Scarborough — 12 km (8 miles)

Afternoon: Scarborough to Kommetjie — 8 km (5 miles)

## What to Expect:

Pedal over gentle terrain with a few climbs on the southern Cape Peninsula. Your ride begins just inside the reserve and continues all the way to lunch in Scarborough. After lunch, cycle along a scenic coastal stretch before tackling a steady climb and enjoying a lovely downhill into Kommetjie.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 – 20 km (8 – 13 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 3: Cycle the Franschhoek Winelands / Wine Tasting at a Local Vineyard**

Nestled between towering mountains in the beautiful Cape Winelands lies today's destination: the magnificent Franschhoek Valley. After breakfast, travel approximately one hour to Stellenbosch for a stroll through this historic town. Then, begin your ride to Franschhoek—long known as the “French Corner”—named by early settlers after the regions in France from which they emigrated. Founded in 1688 by French Huguenot refugees, the area quickly gained a reputation for producing exceptional wines, a legacy that continues today.

As you cycle through the valley, admire the region's lush, fertile landscapes and distinctive French flair. Stop in the center of Franschhoek to browse the Village Market, a weekly event where local vendors offer handmade crafts and artisanal foods. Enjoy a free lunch here or choose from one of the town's many acclaimed restaurants.

Your ride continues to a private estate for a wine tasting before arriving at your accommodations for the night, a stylish retreat set amid vineyards and dramatic mountain scenery. With its elegant Cape Dutch architecture, manicured gardens, and tranquil setting, the hotel offers a peaceful place to unwind. Enjoy the comfort of your surroundings before

gathering for dinner at a local restaurant.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Franschhoek Valley — 27 km (17 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Your morning route begins at the Boschendal Estate and heads into Franschhoek. Ride past beautiful wine estates such as L'Ormarins and La Motte, as well as scenic horse farms, with the Groot Drakenstein Mountains providing a dramatic backdrop. Cycle through the historic town of Franschhoek, where Bastille Day is still proudly celebrated.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 4: Cycle in Oudtshoorn

After breakfast, board the bus and journey inland to Oudtshoorn (approximately 5–6 hours, including rest stops). You'll travel along scenic Route 62—a highway often compared to America's Route 66—through the Little Karoo, a sprawling semi-arid region known for its wildflower-filled valleys and majestic sandstone mountains. Along the way, stop to browse local shops in the village of Barrydale and enjoy free time for lunch on your own.

Later this afternoon, arrive at your accommodations near Oudtshoorn, a charming town with Victorian flair nestled in the foothills of the Swartberg Mountains. You'll spend the next two nights at a luxurious 5-star guest house set on a sustainable working farm, home to ostriches, alfalfa fields, and cattle. This elegant estate combines warm country hospitality with exceptional comfort, offering sweeping views of the Olifants River Valley and the surrounding karoo landscape.

Once you're settled in, enjoy a short leg-stretching ride to explore the area's unique agricultural charm and natural beauty.

Dinner is served at the guest house this evening.

## Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Oudtshoorn — 27 km (17 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today's ride options take you past ostrich farms, historic farmhouses, barns, and the rugged scenery typical of the Little Karoo. This route also offers a chance to soak in the peace and quiet of this semi-desert region.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 5: Ride Through Meiringspoort / Ostrich Tour

This morning, shuttle approximately one hour to the village of De Rust, where you'll begin and end your ride through the picturesque Meiringspoort. This stunning route winds through a riverbed flanked by the twisting sandstone formations of the Cape Fold Mountains. The area is home to wildlife such as the klipspringer, black eagle, and grey rhebuck.

As you pedal through the gorge, you'll have many opportunities to admire the dramatic rock formations of the Cape Fold Mountains. Turn around at Klaarstroom, a tiny hamlet featuring an all-in-one "Boerediens"

(farmer's service) with a post office, gas station, and shop. On the return ride, take a short hike to the Meiringspoort Waterfall—you may even be tempted to take a refreshing dip in the clear, cool pool below.

Back in De Rust, enjoy a hearty lunch before returning to your lodge for a relaxing afternoon. You may wish to cool off in the saltwater swimming pool or unwind on the terrace with a refreshing cocktail under an umbrella.

Later, your host will give a talk on the origins of ostrich farming, followed by a guided tour to learn more about these fascinating birds.

Tonight, enjoy a traditional South African *braai*—a barbecue dinner served at your lodge.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: De Rust to Klaarstroom — 24 km (14 miles) | Klaarstroom to De Rust — 24 km (14 miles)

### What to Expect:

Start cycling from the village of De Rust through the scenic Meiringspoort and continue on to Klaarstroom along the N12. Today's ride begins with a gentle uphill stretch, followed by a wonderfully gradual downhill on the return. Along the way, you'll have the option to stroll to the Meiringspoort Waterfall—where you might even take a refreshing dip in the “Mermaid Pool.” The ride concludes back in De Rust, where you'll enjoy lunch in the village.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 48 km (14 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 6: Ride Along the Knysna Lagoon

This morning, travel to the scenic coastal town of Knysna (approximately two 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 descend the Outeniqua Pass, passing through George and along the celebrated Garden Route—a spectacular stretch of coastline bordering the Indian Ocean. As you travel through the towns of Wilderness, Sedgefield, and Knysna, you'll encounter a diverse landscape of forested hills, craggy cliffs, and secluded coves.

Today's ride begins at a viewpoint overlooking the Indian Ocean and Buffels Bay, then explores the surrounding area. Starting on the outskirts of town, follow a brick bike path that winds along the lagoon, through Knysna's town center, and out to Thesen and Leisure Islands. The ride concludes at the mouth of the lagoon at Knysna's East Head, where you'll enjoy lunch.

After lunch, you may choose to shuttle to the hotel or cycle back along the lagoon. Upon arrival, check in and settle into your accommodations, where you'll stay for the next three nights.

This evening, gain insight into everyday life in South Africa as you join a local family in their home for a warm and memorable home-cooked vegan dinner.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Knysna to The Heads — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: The Heads to Knysna — 10 km (6 miles)

### What to Expect:

From the viewpoint above Belvidere, ride along nearly the entire inner edge of the lagoon, passing the Knysna Waterfront and continuing to the East Head, where the lagoon meets the ocean. This route takes you through the heart of Knysna and showcases the spectacular scenery of this uniquely beautiful lagoon, framed by steep mountains. After an initial downhill, the ride is mostly flat. Those who wish to extend the ride can continue cycling back to the hotel after lunch.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 34 km (16 – 21 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7: Harkerville to Robberg and Plettenberg Bay

After breakfast, shuttle approximately 30 minutes to Harkerville, just outside of Knysna. Begin your ride here, cycling through rolling farmland and lush forests—an undulating and scenic route that leads to the Robberg Peninsula in Plettenberg Bay. Along the way, take in sweeping views of Bahia Formosa (Portuguese for “Beautiful Bay”) and the sparkling Indian Ocean.

You'll regroup mid-ride at Robberg, where you can join your trip leaders for a short hike in the Robberg Nature Reserve. This stunning trail offers aerial views of the bay, fascinating rock formations, and a chance to observe indigenous flora. Keep an eye out for Cape fur seals in the ocean below.

After the hike, continue cycling into the town of Plettenberg Bay along the beachfront. Enjoy a seaside lunch and, if you wish, a refreshing dip in the Indian Ocean.

In the afternoon, shuttle approximately 40 minutes back to your hotel in Knysna for a relaxing end to the day. Cool off in the outdoor swimming pool or head to the bar's sun deck—the perfect spot for a sundowner, whether a bespoke gin and tonic or a refreshing craft beer on tap, as you soak in the views.



Dinner is on your own tonight. You may choose to dine at the hotel's restaurant or take a shuttle into Knysna to explore the lively waterfront dining scene.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Harkeville to Robberg — 16 km (10 miles) | Robberg to Plettenberg Bay — 8 km (5 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today's ride begins through rolling farmland and continues along scenic, undulating roads toward Robberg Peninsula and Plettenberg Bay, offering stunning views of the crescent-shaped bay and the Indian Ocean. You'll regroup at Robberg for a short hike in the Robberg Nature Reserve. After the hike, continue riding along the beachfront, taking in the charm of Plettenberg Bay, and finish at Beacon Island Beach.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 km (10 miles) - 24 km (15 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 8: Bloukrans Pass & Nature's Valley

After breakfast, shuttle

(approximately 90 minutes) to Storms River Rest Camp in Tsitsikamma National Park. Join your leader for a hike through the rainforest to an awe-inspiring suspension bridge spanning the mouth of the Storms River. Alternatively, spend time relaxing on the beach or take a dip in the Indian Ocean.

Next, shuttle a short distance to the start of your ride. Pedal through lush, indigenous Afro-Montane forest as you make your way over Bloukrans Pass and then onto Groot River Pass, eventually descending into Nature's Valley Pass. Experience the peace and quiet of these stunning forest-lined routes, and listen for the call of the Knysna loerie—the "Bird of Eden." Celebrate your final ride with a picnic-style lunch at Bramon Wine Estate.

Shuttle back to your accommodations

(approximately 60 minutes) and take some time to freshen up. Tonight, celebrate your South African odyssey with a festive farewell dinner on site.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bloukrans Pass to Nature's Valley — 41 km (25 miles) OR Bloukrans Pass to Nature's Valley with Shuttle — 22 km (13 miles)

### What to Expect:

Start your morning with an optional hike or some relaxation at the beach. The hike (approximately 1.3 miles roundtrip) leads through the rainforest via boardwalks and wooden stairways, opening to a suspension bridge before returning the same way. Today's epic ride takes you through the beautiful Afro-Montane forests of the Tsitsikamma region and past the scenic seaside village of Nature's Valley, nestled in a quiet and stunning estuary setting. The day includes two major climbs, beginning with Bloukrans Pass—a long, scenic downhill followed by a solid climb after crossing the Bloukrans River. The route continues through superb indigenous forest along open, easy roads before descending the Groot River Pass into Nature's Valley. The second big climb of the day brings you back up to the Craggs plateau, followed by easy riding on mostly flat roads. Please note: Bloukrans Pass is officially closed to motor traffic, offering cyclists pristine, car-free riding. However, there is no backup vehicle on this section, so riders must commit to the full climb out before heading down. Due to erosion, some potholes may be present—caution is advised. For those who prefer to avoid the day's big climbs, there is the option to shuttle around Bloukrans Pass and rejoin the ride on the other side. A shuttle is also available for the climb out of Nature's Valley via the Groot River Pass.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 41 km (13 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 9: Travel to George / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an included breakfast, meet at 11:00 a.m. and travel by minibus (approximately one hour) to George Airport (GRJ) for your departing flight. Please do not schedule your onward travel from George Airport before 2:00 p.m. If your flight departs earlier, you will need to arrange transportation to the airport at your own expense. Your flights may arrive at your final destination in North America the following day.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### Cape Cadogan Boutique Hotel (Days 1-2)

A renovated historic property, the Cape Cadogan Boutique Hotel, offers 19 modern rooms with air conditioning and complimentary WiFi, individually decorated in emerald-green, classic black and white, and a hint of gold sparkle. Known for its spa, pools, fitness center, and onsite restaurant, Upper Union, serves an innovative seasonal menu.

### Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa (Day 3)

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.

### La Plume Guest House (Days 4-5)

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.

### Knysna Hollow Country Estate (Days 6-8)

Set on a secluded 7.4-acre (3-hectare) country estate, Knysna Hollow Country Estate is located in the heart of the Garden Route, just five minutes from the center of Knysna. The property was renovated in 2018 and offers a tranquil retreat with contemporary four-star accommodations. Stylish, standalone garden suites are air conditioned and elegantly decorated to mirror the lush gardens and sparkling swimming pools that surround the property. A popular onsite restaurant known as the social hub of the Knysna Hollow features casual dining, where locals and visitors alike enjoy authentic South African

hospitality and unique menu specialties using locally sourced ingredients. WiFi is available throughout the property. Available on limited departures.