

South Africa: Cape Town & the Garden Route

Bike Vacation Only

Experience the full complexity and diversity of an astonishing country on our bike tour through South Africa. You'll touch its controversial history on a township tour—as well as its contemporary culture on visits to an ostrich farm, a wine estate, and a local home. Venture to the top of Table Mountain by cable car. Ogle at dramatic landscapes of sandstone mountains, flower-filled valleys, semi-arid plains, and a teeming lagoon on carefully crafted cycling routes. Journey along the Garden Route, admiring the forests, cliffs, and coastline that have made it famous. Visit a penguin colony. Explore a little pocket of France in the middle of its celebrated wine country. And end each exhilarating day in charming accommodations that reflect the true character of each amazing destination.

Cultural Highlights

- Float to the top of Table Mountain by cable car, and marvel at the dazzling views.
- Join a guided tour of a local township, for an up-close view of post-apartheid South Africa.
- Sample South African wine and learn about local wine culture during a private tasting.
- Encounter local wildlife, including a visit to an African penguin colony and tour of an ostrich farm.
- Contrast 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 offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills. The VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance, with the exception of a short section on days 1 and 9. This tour is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists.

Tour Duration: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 7 - 31 miles

Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 03:15

Group size: 20 max

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: Arrive in Cape Town / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

Upon arrival in Cape Town, you will need to make your own arrangements for transportation from the airport to our hotel. A metered taxi will cost approximately R400 (USD \$38) and will take about 30 minutes to cover 13 miles. Please contact the hotel to advise the staff of any travel delays or changes, and they will pass your message to your VBT trip leaders. The remainder of the day is yours to explore Cape Town at leisure, using VBT's city information as your guide. There will be an informal welcome reception at the hotel this evening with your trip leaders and fellow travel companions.

DAY 2: Cable-car ride to summit of Table Mountain / Cycle along Table Mountain / Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens / Langa township / Welcome dinner

After breakfast, shuttle to the Table Mountain Cableway, where you'll be lifted to 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.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Warm-up Table Mountain – 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to get used to the bike that will be your stalwart companion for the rest of the trip. Admire the beauty of Table Mountain and Cape Town as you ride.

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Cape Peninsula Tour / Cycle in Cape Point Nature Reserve

This morning, you'll shuttle (approximately 75 minutes) via the stunning scenery of Chapman's Peak Drive 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 a local café.

In the afternoon, cycle farther to enjoy the wild Atlantic coastline of Scarborough and Kommetjie. This stunning section of coast features azure oceans, big waves, surfers, and kite boarders. Travel 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 and hotel reception team will help 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 starts just inside the Reserve, from where you ride all the way to lunch in Scarborough. After lunch, start with a section along the coast before a steady climb and steeper incline to Kommetjie.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4: 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, travel (approximately one hour) to Stellenbosch, for a stroll around this historic town. Then cycle 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, check into your hotel and enjoy the facilities at your home for the evening, Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa.

Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Franschhoek Valley – 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Your morning route starts from the Boschendal Estate and heads into Franschhoek. Cycle past beautiful wine estates such as L'Ormarins and La Motte. and horse farms with the Groot Drakenstein Mountains as your backdrop. Cycle through the historical town of Franschhoek where Bastille Day is still celebrated.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 km (14 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: 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.

Dinner is at the lodge this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Oudtshoorn Loop – 32 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

The ride options will take you past ostrich farms, old farmhouses, barns, and scenery typical of the Little Karoo. This ride also offers the chance to enjoy the peace and quiet of the Karoo, a semi-desert region.

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 km (19 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Ride through Meiringspoort

This morning, shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) to the village of De Rust, where you will start and end your ride through picturesque Meiringspoort. 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. In the "Poort," you have many opportunities to admire the Cape Fold Mountain formations as you pedal through the gorge. Turn back at Klaarstroom: the hamlet with all-in-one "Boerediens" (farmers' service), which includes a post office, gas station, and shop.

Upon your return to De Rust, enjoy a hearty lunch. Then head back to our lodge and relax on the lovely grounds. This afternoon, your host will give a talk on the origins of ostrich farming and afterwards a tour to learn all about these fascinating birds.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Morning De Rust to Klaarstroom – 24 km (14 miles) OR Klaarstroom to De Rust – 24 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Start cycling from De Rust village through Meiringspoort and out the other side to Klaarstroom on the N12. Today's ride is mostly flat and includes an optional stroll up to the Meiringspoort waterfall and even a swim in the mermaid pool. Those wishing a longer ride can turn back and do it all again, cruising back to the village of De Rust for lunch.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Ride Knysna Lagoon / Drive along the Garden Route / Home-hosted dinner

This morning, you'll travel 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, costal Garden Route. You'll leave Oudtshoorn and travel 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 lagoon and explores the town of Knysna. Begin on the outskirts and follow a bike path along the Knysna Lagoon into and through town, onto Thesen and Leisure Islands, 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.

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.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Knysna to The Heads – 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon The Heads to Knysna – 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

From the viewpoint above Belvidere, ride along almost the entire inner edge of the lagoon, right past the Knysna Waterfront and on to the East Head of the lagoon, where it meets the ocean. This ride takes in the heart of Knysna itself, plus some spectacular scenery of this quite unique lagoon, surrounded by steep mountains. After the initial downhill, the ride is flat. Those who desire a longer ride can continue back to the hotel after lunch.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 40 km (10 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Ride from Rheenendal to Buffels Bay / Picnic lunch at the seaside

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 undulating ride 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.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Rheenendal to Buffels Bay – 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon Buffels Bay to Knysna – 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts from a small rural town called Rheenendal. The support vehicle will drive you to the top of the ride, so you are able to see the route before mounting your bike. The ride takes you through undulating farmlands past a few interesting craft businesses, such as the Porcupine crafts, which make hand-printed fabrics. A few hills might make this ride a bit challenging, but the reward comes on the second half of ride, after you have crossed the N2 highway. The ride down to the coast is mostly downhill with a few gentle climbs. Spectacular views of the river mouth and the ocean await you as you sweep down the hill to Buffels Bay. The afternoon ride takes you back along the way you came to the railway station.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 41 km (10 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 9: Nature's Valley & Bloukrans Pass Cycle / Lunch in Tsitsikamma National Park / Farewell dinner

After breakfast, shuttle (approximately 60 minutes) to Craggs to start your ride. Pedal along quiet roads this morning, riding the old road down into Nature's Valley Pass, then up the Groot River Pass and onto 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 accommodations (approximately one hour 40 minutes), freshen up and get ready for a festive farewell dinner at your lodge tonight to celebrate the end of your South African odyssey.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Nature's Valley to Bloukrans Pass – 52 km (32 miles) OR Nature's Valley to Bloukrans Pass with

Shuttle – 33 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's epic ride drops down through beautiful indigenous afro-montane forests past the scenic resort village of Nature's Valley. Cyclists ready for a big climb can continue to cycle after crossing the Groot River. The rest can board the vehicle to shuttle up the hill, then continue cycling on to the Bloukrans Pass. Here, you may take a long descent into the river valley and another long climb out again, if you wish.

Please note that the Bloukrans road has been officially closed to motor traffic for a while, so that cyclists can enjoy the pristine beauty of the forests with no traffic. As there is no backup vehicle on this section, cyclists need to commit to the full climb out before heading down. Also, be aware that, due to flood and erosion damage, there are some potholes.

Those who shuttle around Bloukrans can rejoin the ride at the other side of the Bloukrans Pass. From here, enjoy open undulating roads past Coldstream, a small forestry village, and then go on to the Tsitsikamma coast, where the ride ends.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 – 52 km (20 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Travel to George / Departure

After an included breakfast, travel by minibus (approximately one hour) to the airport in George for your departing flight. Your flights may arrive at your final destination in North America the following day.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

More Quarters (Days: 1,2,3)

From one of the 18 apartments at More Quarters you can explore nearby bars, beaches, great little shops, local eateries, and boutiques. It's 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 not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout.

Le Franschhoek Hotel and Spa (Day: 4)

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 not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout.

La Plume Guest House (Days: 5,6)

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 (Days: 7,8,9)

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.