HIGHLIGHTS OF SOUTH AFRICA
Experience South Africa in all its complexity on this exciting expedition. Begin in Johannesburg, delving into the country’s political history at such sites as the Hector Pieterson Memorial and Nelson Mandela’s former home. Depart for the southern part of the country for a very different experience: a two-night stay at the Aquila Private Game Reserve. Here you’ll have a chance to see the “big five” game species — African leopard, rhinoceros, African lion, African elephant and Cape buffalo. Take part in multiple game drives, and visit a wildlife rehabilitation center. Continue to Cape Town, exploring highlights of the city as well as the peninsula itself, including the Cape of Good Hope; Boulders Beach, with its famous penguins; and the lush Kirstenbosch gardens. Learn about South Africa through its birth, its complicated history of apartheid and the ways in which it is moving into the future. Wind down your 11-day journey with several relaxing days in Stellenbosch, the leading wine region. Leave with a newfound appreciation of South Africa’s wilderness, beauty, culture and complexity.
DAY 1  Arrival

Arrive in Johannesburg today, and transfer to your hotel, the Protea Hotel Balalaika, a peaceful oasis in the center of the bustling Gauteng area. Enjoy a welcome reception this evening, followed by dinner. (R,D)

DAY 2  Exploring Johannesburg

Depart for a full-day tour of Soweto and Johannesburg. Begin at the Apartheid Museum, located in the Ormonde suburb. The museum tells the story of apartheid from the beginning of segregation through the end of the apartheid system and the country’s early democratic elections. After a break for lunch, continue to the Hector Pieterson Memorial and Museum, honoring the 12-year-old boy who was shot by police during what began as a peaceful protest and came to be known as the Soweto uprising. The shooting of Hector and other schoolchildren at the protest marked a pivotal moment in the anti-apartheid movement. End today at the Mandela House, where the South African leader lived during the early years of the struggle against apartheid and where he returned after his release from prison, and explore his personal life in this thoughtfully maintained museum. Return to the hotel for the evening at leisure. (B,L)

DAY 3  Into the Bush

Transfer this morning from the hotel to the airport for a short flight to Cape Town. Upon arrival in Cape Town, meet with your local guide to drive to the Aquila Private Game Reserve. The reserve spans nearly 20,000 acres and is home to the “big five” game species — lion, elephant, leopard, buffalo and rhinoceros. Take part in a late afternoon game drive, followed by dinner. (B,L,D)
DAY 4 Exploring the Reserve

Take part in an early-morning game drive for another chance to spot the big five. This afternoon, travel to the Aquila Rescue and Conservation Centre. This nonprofit provides rescue and rehabilitation services — as well as a permanent home — for animals that can no longer fend for themselves in the wild. The center includes a rhino rescue initiative and a cheetah breeding program. For the remainder of the day, you are free to relax and enjoy the reserve’s luxurious spa, swimming pool and other amenities. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 To Cape Town

Depart the Aquila Private Game Reserve to drive to Cape Town, about two hours away. Check in to your hotel near the V&A Waterfront, and take the afternoon to relax. The V&A Waterfront is one of the top visitor destinations in the city, with hundreds of shopping, dining and entertainment options dotted along the picturesque walkways. Reconvene in the evening for dinner featuring Cape Malay cuisine. Cape Malay food is little known outside South Africa and fuses local flavor profiles with Malaysian and Eastern elements, resulting in an aromatic cuisine that reflects the country’s history. (B,D)
Cape Town and Robben Island

Take a ferry to visit Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the island previously housed a leper colony and mental hospital in addition to its well-known prison. Tour the maximum-security prison, meet a former political prisoner and explore the island with a knowledgeable guide. Next, set off to explore the “Mother City” in style … by motorbike sidecar! With one or two travelers per sidecar, cruise around Sea Point and Camps Bay for a novel look at the city. The ride will end at the foot of Table Mountain. Weather permitting, board cable cars to ascend Table Mountain, the most recognizable landmark in the city. From your vantage point high over Cape Town, enjoy sparkling wine and an unbeatable view of the city’s landmarks. Descend the mountain, and continue to your hotel. Freshen up before dinner at a restaurant along the V&A Waterfront. (B, Wine Tasting, D)

EXPEDITION EXPERT

Robyn Dixon
September Departure

Robyn Dixon covers sub-Saharan Africa for the Los Angeles Times. She has also reported from Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, as well as Afghanistan and Iraq. Dixon spent 10 years in Moscow, traveling extensively to Ukraine, Georgia and Tajikistan and across Russia. She started as a reporter in her home city of Melbourne, Australia. After doing every conceivable job, including writing a daily TV column and covering national politics in Canberra, she went to Moscow for the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age, sister papers of the Fairfax group in Australia. In 1999, Dixon moved to The Times’ Moscow bureau. She became the Johannesburg bureau chief in 2003.
DAY 7  Cape Day

Set out early today for a full day exploring the highlights of Cape Peninsula. Depart for Hout Bay Harbour, located at the end of Cape Town’s Atlantic seaboard. It is still a working harbor, full of colorful fishing boats and waterfront shops of every description. Board a glass-bottom catamaran for a cruise to Seal Island. The island is home to—fittingly—a massive seal colony. The glass floor of the boat provides unparalleled views of the seals and other South African marine life. Travelers can also enjoy drinks at the boat’s wood-paneled saloon. Return to shore, and take in the magnificent scenery during a drive along the ocean cliffs to the Cape of Good Hope. The road is referred to by locals as “Chappies” and was built by prisoners of war in the early 1900s. The nature reserve at the Cape of Good Hope is a Natural World Heritage Site. Ascend the lighthouse via the Flying Dutchman Funicular. The lighthouse, built high on the cliffs, was constructed to warn sailors to keep clear of the treacherous coastline here as they round the tip of the continent. Pause at Boulders Beach, home to a colony of several thousand endangered African penguins, to view these unique animals in their natural environment. After lunch at Cape Point Vineyards, meet with a horticulturalist for a guided tour of Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. The lush gardens focus on preserving indigenous species and represent many of the biomes found in this part of the country. Attend a traditional African dinner at Gold Restaurant during an evening of food and culture. Artists from diverse parts of Africa will perform music and dance as you enjoy a 14-course tasting menu featuring regional specialties from all over the continent. (B,L,D)

DAY 8  Another Side of the City

Today is dedicated to the long and complex history of Cape Town. Your guide will take you through the timeline of the city, from the birth of South Africa to apartheid-era South Africa to the new South Africa. Visit District 6—formerly a mixed-race neighborhood greatly affected by apartheid—and Langa, the city’s oldest black African township. Along the way, learn about the introduction of apartheid and the restrictive legislation introduced to enforce it. This evening, enjoy a home-cooked dinner hosted by a local family. (B,L,D)
DAY 9  Stellenbosch
Explore the lighter side of South Africa as you head to its famous Stellenbosch wine country. Immerse yourself in this leading wine region, home to towns that mix Cape Dutch, Georgian and Victorian elements yet maintain a modern edge. Enjoy the reds, whites and blends at multiple vineyards in the area, plus a three-course lunch. (B,L,Tasting)

DAY 10  Enjoying the Winelands
Today you are at leisure to enjoy the wineries of the region on your own or kick back at the hotel. The historic town is home to Stellenbosch University. Come together a final time in the evening for a farewell reception and dinner to toast the end of your time in South Africa. (B,R,D)

DAY 11  Departure
Transfer to the Cape Town airport for individual flights home. (B)

ACCOMMODATIONS

2 NIGHTS  Protea Hotel Balalaika
The Protea Hotel Balalaika is in the bustling Gauteng area, a business and entertainment center. The hotel features a lush and carefully designed garden, tasteful furnishings and multiple in-house restaurants.

2 NIGHTS  Aquila Private Game Reserve
The Aquila Private Game Reserve is a luxury lodge situated on thousands of hectares of protected game-filled land outside of Cape Town. The reserve features rich wildlife diversity, including all of the “big five” game animals. Accommodations at the lodge are designed to blend in with the surrounding terrain, and the lodge maintains a strong commitment to conservation and sustainability.

4 NIGHTS  Southern Sun Waterfront
The Southern Sun Waterfront is conveniently located 15 minutes from Cape Town’s airport, and is within walking distance of the bustling V&A Waterfront. A range of luxurious amenities make the Southern Sun an ideal place to stay for both business and leisure travelers. Guests can enjoy a pool, fitness center, tasteful décor, views of Table Mountain, and the authentically South African in-house restaurant Yizani.

2 NIGHTS  Spier Hotel
Spier Hotel is a sophisticated and character-filled property on the Spier Wine Estate outside of Stellenbosch. This award-winning hotel maintains a large collection of contemporary South African art and upmarket amenities while pursuing numerous sustainability initiatives, including its raptor rehabilitation program. The variety of venues for wining and dining make this an ideal accommodation for wine aficionados and others looking for a taste of South Africa.
DATES & PRICING

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