

Laid-Back

# LATITUDE

Head south — way south — to **Cape Town**  
for a relaxed attitude and a *lekker jol*.

BY CARRIE HAMPTON





I came on holiday to Cape Town 18 years ago and never left. It happens more often than you think. So-called “swallows” come during warmer months (December to March), but many make Cape Town their permanent home. It’s easy to see why: sunshine and outdoor activities, mountains that dip their toes into the oceans, breathtaking scenery, more than 500 wine estates within an hour or so of the city and a flourishing restaurant scene. And for visitors, the city ticks the box on affordability, with a weak rand making eating, drinking and shopping laughably cheap.

### A Potted History

Cape Town is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan metropolis that seems more Mediterranean than African. It has a relaxed vibe, which is exemplified in the city centre at the Greenmarket Square African curio market. There are drums beating, colourful crafts and vendors imploring you to inspect their wares. You may hear any of the 11 official South African languages, but also French or Portuguese from Congolese and Angolans who have come to find work and, similarly, the native languages of Zimbabwe and Malawi. Resident Capetonians speak English, Afrikaans or Xhosa. To understand why, a short history lesson is required.

Although English is one of South Africa’s 11 official languages, it has been greatly influenced by the country’s other native tongues. Here are a few words you may hear in and around Cape Town that require some explanation:

**Howzit?** – (a greeting) How are you?

**Izit?** – (a contraction of *is it*, to show you are listening) Really? Is that so?

**lekker** – great, good, nice

**jol** – having fun, a party (It was a lekker jol!)

**just now** – at some later point (not immediately)

Abselling is one of myriad outdoor activities that are popular in Cape Town.  
FACING PAGE: Iconic Table Mountain rises majestically above V&A Waterfront, where you can find entertainment, a bite to eat, boat charters and more.



All manner of crafts and souvenirs are available at Greenmarket Square; good-natured haggling is expected.

# The Garden

## Route

Cape Town is a logical starting point for a self-drive road trip along The Garden Route. While the route actually begins farther east, the in-between stretch holds many diversions to rugged parts of the coast or via beautiful mountain passes into the interior. Once on the Garden Route, you'll be drawn to the warmer waters of the Indian Ocean and its soft, sandy beaches. Take a boat trip from Plettenberg Bay for sightings of dolphins and whales, or hire your own little motor launch and potter around on the shallow Knysna lagoon, enjoying its mild climate year-round.

This gives an indication of the relaxed attitude and temperament of the people. Take your cue from the acronym on a yacht moored in Simon's Town yacht basin, RUSH: Relax Until Something Happens.

But don't confuse laid-back with lazy — Capetonians are very active. The city offers a plethora of outdoor adventures such as sandboarding (like snowboarding, but on sand), abseiling, tandem paragliding, Harley riding along the coast road, under-the-city tunnel walking, mountain biking, jet boating, coasteering (a combination of hiking, swimming, rock climbing and jumping along the coast), sea kayaking, beach horse riding and even shark cage diving.

### The Essentials

Whether you seek thrills or a more subdued itinerary, make these amongst your must-dos in and around Cape Town.

- **V&A Waterfront** One of South Africa's premier tourist attractions, the V&A offers abundant shopping, food, boat trips and entertainment of all kinds.
- **Table Mountain** The geographical landmark has been compared to a goddess at rest, a stairway to heaven and a guardian of the city. Many Capetonians believe it plays a part in creating their relaxed outlook on life.
- **Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden** Explore exquisite, peaceful gardens of thriving South African flora on the slopes of Table Mountain with guided walks throughout the year.

- **Cape Point Hike** Hike through abundant and diverse vegetation or take the funicular to the top of the south-western tip of Africa for a stunning panorama.

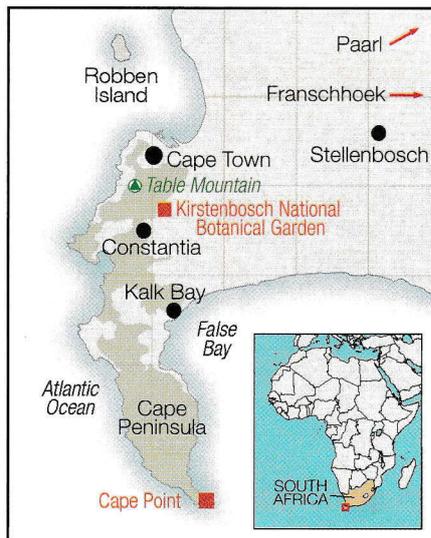
- **Robben Island** Former political prisoners lead three-and-a-half-hour tours, which include a return ferry ride, to provide accounts of the island's history and the prison life of Nelson Mandela and other freedom fighters.

- **A township tour** Experience different urban neighbourhoods to gain insight into *ubuntu*, a philosophy of morality and humaneness, communal responsibility and solidarity.

In 1652 the Dutch settled the Cape, which at the time was occupied by the Khoi (pastoralists) and the San bushmen (hunter-gatherers). The Dutch brought slaves from Java, Madagascar, West Africa and other places. With a predominantly male settlement, a mixed race soon emerged, for whom Afrikaans became the common language. The English first occupied the Cape in 1795 to protect the strategic outpost against possible Napoleonic attack. After a brief departure, the British returned in 1806 to claim it as their own. By the 1830s many Dutch Afrikaners left the British stronghold for the interior, in a movement known as the Great Trek, battling with the African tribes they met along the way. In the meantime, the British clashed with African Xhosa people on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony. Today Xhosa-speaking Africans form a large percentage of the population in Cape Town.

### Cape Town Time

Cape Town is nicknamed the Mother City. Some say this is because it was South Africa's first European settlement. But people from faster-paced Johannesburg say it's earned the moniker because it takes nine months for anything to happen here.



## Unwind With a **Cape Town** Getaway

Go to [IntervalWorld.com](http://IntervalWorld.com).  
Getaways are available throughout 2014,  
and start at **£517** for a studio unit at SDD  
and **£1,019** for a studio unit at VLF.\*

\*Getaways to VLF include transfer from airport to the resort, five nights in the Bay Hotel and two in a seaside manor, breakfast daily and 10 per cent off all food, beverages and spa treatments. Visit [IntervalWorld.com](http://IntervalWorld.com) for details.

### Wine and Dine

A trip to the Cape Winelands District will fast-track your relaxation process, whether you head to the suburb of Constantia, just 20 minutes from the city, or to the towns of Stellenbosch, Paarl or Franschhoek, each an hour and a half or less from central Cape Town. Beautiful wine estates are set in mountain valleys. To mention a mere few is to do injustice to the rest, so arm yourself with the annually updated *Platter's South African Wine Guide*, which lists every estate and their recent wines.

The Cape Winelands is also the self-declared gourmet capital of South Africa. Pace long, lazy lunches to the speed of unhurried service, sampling delectable dishes in glorious vineyard surroundings. Stellenbosch and Franschhoek have more than their fair share of award-winning restaurants, including The Tasting Room, Bread & Wine at Moreson, Pierneef à La Motte, Delaire Graff's Indochine, Makaron, Rust en Vrede and Tokara.

On Cape Town menus you can expect fresh, sustainably caught fish plucked from the waters surrounding the Cape Peninsula. Sleepy old Kalk Bay harbour — a short drive south of the city — jolts into life around lunchtime when the day's catch is thrown off the boats straight onto the jetty. You can buy your supper and have it scaled and gutted while you wait. Alternatively, dine at one of several fish-and-chips outlets in the harbour.

### Choose Your Strand

The coastal location of Cape Town means that there are several



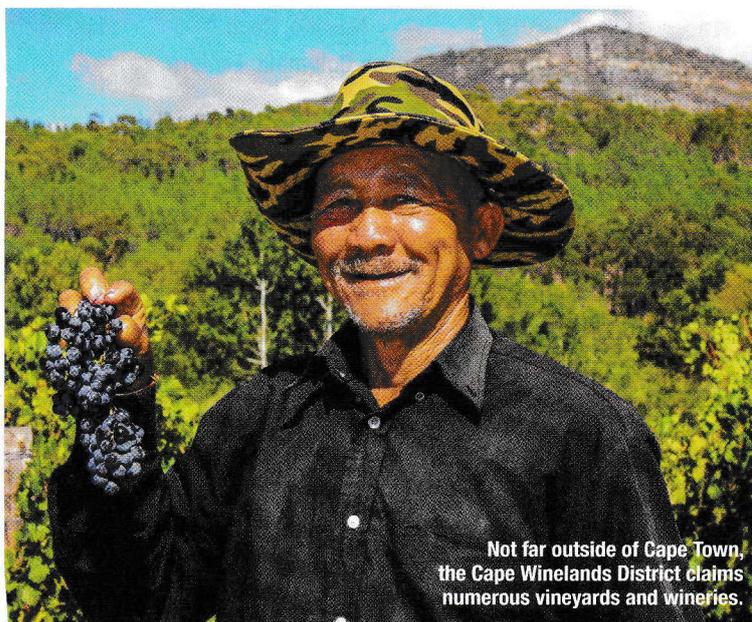
**Boulders Beach is home to one of just a few colonies of the land-based African penguin.**

sandy options within a short distance. Camps Bay and Clifton on the Atlantic seaboard have a very St Tropez feel, with beautiful people strutting their stuff. In contrast, on the shores of False Bay, there's no need to flirt with fashion or sport a six-pack, and the farther south you go, the more mellow it gets. Head for Muizenberg to surf, Fish Hoek to swim and build sandcastles, and Boulders to see the rare colony of land-based penguins.

### The Stuff of Legends

Visitors to Southern Africa have long flocked to glimpse the meeting of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Cape Point is often (mistakenly) claimed to be the site of this confluence, but the two bodies of water actually meet closer to Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa, about two hours' drive south-east of Cape Town. But as you gaze out to sea from the old lighthouse at Cape Point and see the world curve into a watery horizon, you may notice a distinct line in the water, where the cool Atlantic current meets the slightly warmer waters of False Bay. You could also be forgiven for looking into the mist and seeing the *Flying Dutchman* ghost ship, as young midshipman King George V of England reported seeing in 1881. ■

London-born travel writer Carrie Hampton has called Cape Town home for the past 18 years. She's written six African travel books, including a Cape Town guide book and a coffee table book. She has a safari review blog, [safariart.com](http://safariart.com).



**Not far outside of Cape Town, the Cape Winelands District claims numerous vineyards and wineries.**

## fastFACTS

### RESORT DIRECTORY:

[IntervalWorld.com](http://IntervalWorld.com) or page 296

**CLIMATE:** Cape Town has a Mediterranean climate with cool, wet winters, warm, dry summers and mild spring and autumn months.

**DON'T MISS:** A boat trip around the harbour and into Table Bay from the V&A Waterfront. Many operators are lined up along the wharf.

**CURRENCY:** South African rand

**TIPPING:** 10% to 15% is expected in restaurants and taxis. Guarding your parked car has become a profession, and the car guards live off your R2 to R5 tips.

**INTERVAL TRAVEL:** 0844 701 1111

**CAR HIRE:** Recommended  
**VISITOR INFORMATION:** Cape Town Tourism  
[capetown.travel](http://capetown.travel)

EXCHANGING? BE SURE TO PLACE A REQUEST. WHY? SEE PAGE 10.

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# Cape Town

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