

A Hedonist's Tour of South Africa

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The key to being truly “on holiday” comes down to overindulgence: of food, wine, shopping, culture—pick your vice and go to town. I tend toward a piquant cocktail of all four categories, because, really, what is the point of a holiday if not absolute hedonism? Overeat, overdrink, oversleep, then walk it all off while exploring. Then repeat the delicious cycle again.

My latest quest for bites, booze, and beaches took me to the South Africa. You’d need more than a week to properly explore the Western Cape but I managed to squeeze in four perfect spots: Cape Town, Franschhoek, Hermanus, and Plettenberg Bay—though I left each one wishing I had more time.

The culinary options alone are worth the flight: From the traditional biltong (a unique beef-jerky-like situation) and koeksisters (a fried dough ball) to a very nontraditional smoked snoek fish and caviar blini to a kingklip fish burrito, I tried it all. If that’s not enough, the (literally) breathtaking views and pristine beaches should make you want to book a flight immediately.

Once you do, be sure to make these spots among your first stops. You’ll quickly see why South Africa is epicurean Eden with views to match.

Cape Town

A metropolitan city at the beach, Cape Town feels a bit like a city of permanent pop-ups: Everything is fresh, young, and terminally cool with something new about to surface every minute.



Where to eat

The highly lauded [Test Kitchen](#) is a no-brainer, but don't miss the charcoal cooking-themed [Ash](#) (named for chef Ash Heeger, a veteran of the Test Kitchen); start with “snackles,” then do the ribs and top it off with coconut lemon meringue pie. Next head to Cape Town's newest (and brightest) restaurant and members club, the [Stack](#). Come for the delicious brasserie menu and stay for the eclectic and vivid décor: Deep magentas and emerald greens mixed with leopard-print carpet and brass accents make for a visual feast for any interior aficionado.

What to do

Skip Camps Bay Beach and opt instead for the beaches in Clifton. After swimming, head into town and explore the shops (try [Pezula](#) for interior inspirations and [Merchants on Long](#) for the chicest pieces from African designers). Pop into [Lady Bonin's Tea](#) or the [Orchard Juice & Health Bar](#) next door to refuel before hiking up Table Mountain for unreal views and photo ops.

Don't miss

Before heading to dinner in town, pop into [Outrage of Modesty](#), a one-of-a-kind cocktail club on Shortmarket Street. From the Pine & Wine (pineapple-and-pine-needle-infused wine, naturally) to the Avo on Toast (avocado puree with tequila, agave, chili, lime, and a “burnt toast” ice cube), these guys are cooking up innovative concoctions that make for an ideal pregame buzz.

The Wine Country of Franschhoek and Stellenbosch

This region is South Africa's answer to Napa Valley and home to countless stunning wineries offering much more than a few tasty tipples.



Where to eat

You can't go wrong in Franschhoek, but the Tasting Room at [Le Quartier Français](#) with its African-inspired “surprise” tasting menu of eight courses with wine to match tops my list. The surprise is that each course offers different options to every diner; we had more than 30 different plates between four people! (I'm still dreaming about the cornbread baked in a tin can.) For lunch, I loved sitting in the garden at [Maison](#) and choosing several of the small plates to pair with the wines.

What to do

Wine, wine, and . . . did I mention wine? Be sure to do the tastings at [La Motte](#) and meander the stunning grounds post-tasting. At [Delaire Graff](#), where you can stroll the gorgeous diamond room after sampling, the setting is exquisite and nonpretentious, with a helpful staff and, obviously, delectable wines. Afterwards, I did find myself Googling “Can a young person get gout?” but just be sure to walk off some of the wine before diving back in.

Don't miss

Seriously, do not miss [Babylonstoren](#) in Franschhoek, which features a vineyard, spa, restaurant, prickly pear maze, orchards, ducks, chickens, herb gardens, and a farm shop selling locally made soaps and panama hats. It's the stuff of Instagram dreams.

Hermanus

This town on the southern coast of the Western Cape offers a perfect mix of beach life and mountain life: Hike, beach, and repeat.



Where to eat

One of my favorite meals was dinner at the [Fisherman's Cottage](#). Request to sit at one of the picnic tables outside for fish curry and oysters. For lunch, [Harbour Rock](#) offers sushi and the freshest catch of the day overlooking the harbour.

What to do

Spend the morning hiking through the Kleinrivier mountains, the afternoon at Langbaai Beach, and the evening walking along the Cliff Path.

Don't miss

Grab a seaside chaise at the [Birkenhead Hotel](#), the ultimate «beach house». All you need is a good book and you're set for the day – but keep your eyes peeled for whale sightings.