

The Garden Route - 8 days

Country(ies): South Africa

Tour type: Shoestring

Transport: Minibus/coach

Group size: Min: 4 | Max: 12

Days: 8 days

Start Location: Cape Town, South Africa

End Location: Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Meals: Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 4

Highlights:

Cape Town, Cape Agulhas, Route 62 wine tasting, Oudtshoorn, Klein Karoo ostrich farm, easy canoeing in Wilderness NP, Knysna Heads viewpoint, Sedgefield beaches, Tsitsikamma NP, Big 5 safari in Addo Elephant Park



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Cape Town, Accommodation Transfer

You arrive at Cape Town International Airport, and are transferred to your accommodation. This will either be a lovely backpacker lodge, a deluxe guesthouse, or a charming boutique hotel. You have the rest of the day, as well as the next day, free to explore the Mother City on your own.

Included activities: Airport transfer

Approximate driving time: +/- 30 minutes, 25 km

OVERNIGHT: Cape Town Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra day in Cape Town - pre-tour

Day 2: Explore Cape Town at Leisure

Today and tomorrow are left free for you to explore Cape Town independently. There are many interesting sites to visit in this historic yet modern city. Highlights include Robben Island, Table Mountain, the V&A Waterfront, Signal Hill, Camps Bay and Clifton beaches, Hout Bay and the Constantia wine region.

The city sightseeing bus tour is an excellent way to experience Cape Town and we highly recommend trying it out. We also offer assistance with booking optional day tours (joining other travellers in Cape Town not booked on this trip) - these include a Cape Peninsula Tour or a Cape Winelands Tour.

OVERNIGHT: Cape Town Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Another day at leisure in Cape Town

Since there is so much to do in and around Cape Town, we've given you a second free day here, to do and see what you didn't have chance for yesterday.

OVERNIGHT: Cape Town Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Betties Bay, Hermanus, Shark Cage Diving (Optional), Cape Agulhas

After the last 2 days of free time in Cape Town, the group joins together today to leave Cape Town for a lovely day along the stunning coast towards Hermanus. We leave Cape Town early, heading for the beautiful seaside town of Hermanus. Travellers who have booked the optional shark cage diving activity will depart even earlier, and will miss this first half of the day, rejoining later. The rest of us will drive along the picturesque route to Hermanus, stopping at Betties Bay on the way. Here we will see a colony of endangered African penguins. When we arrive at Hermanus, we may be able to see the famous Southern Right Whales for which the town is famous (whale season is from July to November). The charming little town also has many markets, shops, and restaurants for you to visit. In the afternoon, we will depart for Cape Agulhas. This is Africa's most southerly tip, where we are also able to see the meeting point of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

Included activities: Penguins at Betties Bay

Optional activities: Shark cage diving, Whale watching boat trip (in season, July - November)

Travelling: Approx. 249km; 3 hours

OVERNIGHT: Cape L'Agulhas/Struisbaai Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Route 62, Winery Stop, Ostrich Farm

Today we leave Cape Agulhas and travel along the famous Route 62 towards Oudtshoorn. This is the longest wine route in South Africa, and we take full advantage by stopping at a local winery for lunch and a wine-tasting. We then continue onto Oudtshoorn, a famous town in the Klein Karoo that is known as the Ostrich Capital of the World. Our accommodation for the night is on a working game farm. In the evening you can enjoy a visit to an ostrich farm, whilst taking in the views of the Outeniqua and Swartberg mountain ranges in the background.

Included activities: Local wine tasting, Ostrich farm visit

Travelling: Approx. 330km; 4 hours

OVERNIGHT: Game Farm in Oudtshoorn area

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Wilderness National Park, Sedgefield

We have a thrilling day out in the wilderness ahead of us today. We make our way towards Wilderness National Park, crossing through the Outeniqua Mountain Pass as we do so, a stunning sight. We arrive at the national park, which features a variety of habitats and an abundance of biodiversity. We explore this natural wonderland by boat and on foot. First, we make our way down the Touw River via canoe, a unique and tranquil experience. We then go for a short 2km hike along a boardwalk up to a wonderful waterfall and rock pool area. We then depart for Sedgefield, where the pristine beaches are perfect for rounding off the adventures of the day.

Included activities: Canoeing and hiking in Wilderness National Park

Travelling: Approx. 144 km; 2 hrs

OVERNIGHT: Sedgefield Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Knysna, Tsitsikamma National Park, Bloukrans Bungee (Optional)

This morning, we will head to the famous town of Knysna via the beautiful Lake District of the Garden Route. Whilst in Knysna we'll visit the viewpoint, where we'll be rewarded with magnificent views of the Knysna River estuary and towards the Indian Ocean.

Our next destination is Tsitsikamma National Park. On our way, we make an important stop: Bloukrans Bridge, where we find the world's highest bungee jump. The adrenaline junkies in our group will have the chance to experience this once-in-a-lifetime activity; the rest of us continue on towards the park. Inside Tsitsikamma National Park, there are a variety of exciting activities on offer. Explore the beautiful beaches and forests, go hiking and swimming, and walk across the famous suspension bridge, which spans a river mouth. Later, we depart for Addo.

Included activities: Entrance to Tsitsikamma National Park

Optional activities: 216 M Bloukrans bungee jump

Travelling: Approx. 320km; 4.5 hours

OVERNIGHT: Addo Backpackers or Deluxe Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Addo Elephant National Park, Port Elizabeth

Day 8, the last of a truly amazing week, is spent on safari in the African bush. Addo Elephant National Park is a vast wilderness that is home to a stunning diversity of habitats and wildlife species. Here you will find the famous African Big 5, including approximately 600 elephants, as well as an abundance of smaller game species including some Cape buffalo, lion, black rhino, warthog, zebra, eland, kudu, hartebeest and many others. After a thrilling 2-3 hour game safari, it is time to leave for Port Elizabeth. We arrive in the early afternoon, in time for the early evening departures of many international flights.

We offer a longer version of this tour which spends a couple of days returning to Cape Town. Or you can extend your stay in Port Elizabeth, at lodges outside Addo, or at private game reserves. Please enquire with us for more information.

Safari extension: If you wish you can also add on as many days as you would like at a private game reserve in the Eastern Cape, with round-trip transport from Port Elizabeth at the end of your tour with us. Please contact us for more information, options and prices.

Included activities: Entrance and 2-3 hour drive with tour vehicle through Addo Elephant National Park

Optional activities: 2-hour open vehicle game drive with Addo field guide

Travelling: Approx. 40 km, 30 minutes

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Departure airport transfer in Port Elizabeth

Included:

- 24hr airport arrival & departure transfers
- 7 nights accommodation in Backpacker Hostels or Deluxe Guesthouses/Hotels
- All transport in AC minibuses
- All activities and highlights as mentioned in the itinerary
- Experienced & qualified local driver/guide
- Local wine tasting

- Klein Karoo ostrich farm
- Canoeing and hiking in Wilderness National Park
- Hiking in Tsitsikamma National Park
- Game viewing safari in Addo Elephant National Park
- Meals: 7 breakfasts and 4 dinners

Excluded:

- International Flights (available on request)
- Visa fees if required
- Travel Insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guides & drivers
- Entrance fees and activities not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional tours in Cape Town and elsewhere
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Tour Adjustments:

Please note that tours departing prior to August 2023 will include a visit to Cango Caves in place of the 4x4 Ostrich Farm tour. The visit to Knysna will also be one day earlier on tours departing up until August 2023.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Single supplement - Backpacker lodges (SASHGR)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (dorm)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hostel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Prices shown are per person per night based on dorm accommodation.

Note: Seasonal pricing applies

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (backpacker single/twin/double)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same backpacker accommodation as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in backpacker level accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Cape Town pre-tour (deluxe guesthouse)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Gqeberha post-tour (backpacker single/twin/double)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in backpacker level accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra Night in Gqeberha post-tour (deluxe guesthouse)

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing 1 room in deluxe guesthouse accommodation.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Options available while on tour (SASHGR | SASHG9)

Min numbers: 1

These options are available while you are on the tour from local activity providers who your booking will be with. Prices are given as a guide and are subject to change. Please contact us in advance to book the Sunday Cape Winelands and Cape Peninsular tours and the Monday Shark cage diving option as we will need to reserve arrangements for you before you arrive.

South Africa

- **Sunday**
 - One Day Cape Winelands group tour | R2000
 - One Day Cape Peninsula group tour | R2000
- **Monday**
 - Shark cage diving - Shark cage diving clients will be picked up in Cape Town early Monday morning by the shark company. Shark diving clients will only meet up with the tour group after lunch on the first day and will miss out on the first half of day 3. | R4155
 - Whale watching boat trip (in-season, July - November) | R1440
- **Thursday**
 - Bungee jumping (216m) | R1690
- **Friday**
 - 2-hour additional Addo game drive (open vehicle, early morning) | R510

1. Accommodation

As is typical on our Shoestring level tours, more than one level of accommodation is available on this trip. All options have been selected based on their cleanliness, service levels, setting and atmosphere. We also select places close to each other so often it is just a short walk between them. Included dinners are generally taken together at the backpacker lodge, though you are welcome to eat elsewhere if you prefer.

Backpacker Lodges:

The standard level of the tour is based on staying in good quality backpacker style lodges. These have a friendly, social vibe, and are ideal for younger travellers looking for a bit of an atmosphere. They often have a bar or bonfire area for socialising. Although available at a budget price, the standard of backpacker lodges in South Africa is generally very high. We offer options of shared dorms or private en-suite twin/double rooms within the Backpacker lodges. These can often surprise you with the level and quality of accommodation provided.

Deluxe Guesthouses / Boutique hotels:

If you would prefer some more comfort then we offer an upgrade option to stay in some really lovely deluxe guesthouses and small boutique style hotels instead of the backpacker lodges. These provide a more private, quieter and luxurious experience and can be fabulous places to stay, full of character and with beautiful gardens, friendly hosts, and great views. Accommodations most often used for the guesthouse upgrade are shown below. Alternative properties of a similar standard may be used on some dates.

Addo National Park

At Addo both levels stay in a working citrus farm near the park (Avoca River Cabins) which has a unique location and style of accommodation and is a nice upgrade if you've chosen the Backpacker level.

Notes:

- Single, twin and double rooms are available in all locations.
- Heating or air conditioning is not provided as standard in most backpacker lodges, guesthouses or small hotels, just because it is not normally needed in South Africa! However, fans or extra blankets are always available on request if you need them.
- Accommodation providers are subject to change without notice. The properties listed are our preferred options, but sometimes due to availability or other issues with the property, we may substitute another property of similar standards.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

2. Destination Guides

Oudtshoorn – Ostrich Capital of the World

The town of Oudtshoorn is situated in the Western Province of the beautiful South Africa and is known and loved by many local holidaymakers around the country. Originally the area was occupied by Bushmen and this can be seen by the large number of rock paintings which can be found in the caves surrounding the Swartberg Mountains. The first farmers settled in the area during the 1700's and the first large permanent structure – the Dutch Reformed Church – was built in 1839 and the town started growing around this church.

The town of Oudtshoorn is especially known for its ostriches and many ostrich farms surround the town. The ostrich craze in the Karoo started with the fascination the town's people had with the feathers as they were used as a fashion accessory. Ostrich feathers were obligatory items of high fashion just before world war one. The great feather boom began around 1870. At its height there were more than 750 000 domesticated ostriches in the little Karoo area and feathers were being exported at the rate of about 450 000kg's a year. Then came world war one and then austerity became a way of supporting the war effort. Many farmers went bankrupt in this time. In later years the industry revived with the demand for ostrich leather, biltong, eggs and feathers. At present there are about 90 000 ostriches in the Little Karoo

Cango Caves

The Cango Caves is one of South Africa's most beautiful hidden treasures. Just 17km outside of the Klein Karoo

town of Oudtshoorn, the Cango Caves are one of the Garden Routes most exciting and beautiful tourist attractions. Here, guests can explore the unseen beauties of South Africa and will be astounded by the sheer size and length of the caves. The Cango Caves are primarily dripstone caverns which lie in a limestone ridge which runs parallel to the Swartberg Mountains. Together the chambers and tunnels of the Cango Caves extend over 4km, placing them among the largest caves in the world. The largest chamber, Van Zyl's Chamber, was named after an explorer who apparently came across the caves in the 1770s, however there is no record of a man named Van Zyl being in the area during that time and there is evidence that the caves have been known to man since the Stone Age; recent finds – of some tools left behind in ancient hearths in the Cave mouth – prove that humans have lived and sheltered here for at least 80 000 years.

The Cango Caves was the first tourist attraction in South Africa to employ a full-time tour guide, ensuring that each person who visited the caves could do so with a professional. In fact, you can only visit the caves today as part of a tour group. The standard tour will take you to the main chambers and front parts of the cave, however adventure tours can be embarked on which take guests into the narrower and in depth parts of the Cango Caves.

Knysna

Today's highlight is the Knysna Lagoon, a perfect spot for water sports or simply relaxing and admiring the striking beauty of The Heads. The town of Knysna, voted South Africa's favourite holiday town, nestles in the 4 lagoon basin. It is protected by The Heads - two towering sandstone cliffs flanking a deep channel through which the tides flow. There are spectacular views and a cosy restaurant at the Eastern Head and the Western Head is a privately owned nature reserve – Featherbed Bay.

The Knysna Lagoon is one of the few places in the world that supports an oyster hatchery and the town is well-known for its fresh oysters, as well as its beer, made locally at Mitchell's Brewery. Rich in history, Knysna's museums are well worth visiting: the Millwood House Museum, and the Angling Museum in the Old Gaol. There are many other attractions, from the lush surrounding rainforests, the nearby Buffalo Valley Game Reserve, Featherbed Nature Reserve and Noetzie beach to a wide selection of restaurants and craft markets. The forest, one of the largest areas of indigenous trees left in South Africa, is very dense and in some areas impenetrable. Knysna was originally founded by George Rex in the 19th century as a port for the timber trade. The forest was nearly decimated as a result of logging but escaped devastation due to far-sighted conservation policies introduced in the 1880s. The herds of forest elephants that once roamed the forest have not been so lucky, they have all disappeared and one lone female is said to remain today. The beautiful and elusive Knysna Loeries can still be seen in the area, as well as a large variety of other birds and a few small antelope.

Tsitsikamma National Park

'Tsitsikamma' is a khoi word meaning 'place of abundant or sparkling water' – an apt name considering the abundance of bubbling natural rivers and streams decorating the region. The Tsitsikamma region stretches from the sweeping Bloukrans River in the west all the way to the Eerste Rivier in the east. Bordered on the north by the majestic Tsitsikamma Mountains and the tepid Indian Ocean on the south, the sought-after destination is flanked by incredible natural scenery every direction you look.

The lush park covers an 80km stretch of sweeping coastline with popular holiday destination Nature's Valley resting on the western end and the world-famous Storms River Mouth at its epicentre. The protected area is covered in a thick blanket of indigenous forest along with the odd commercial plantation and an abundance of natural Fynbos. Deep river gorges fork between the plateau as they rush down towards the sea, resulting in a dramatic spectacle of tumbling waterfalls and deep kloofs. A mild all-year-round climate affords visitors the opportunity to engage in a myriad of fun outdoor activities encouraged by the region's bustling tourism industry, while a high rainfall ensures the natural greenness that the area is renowned for. With exceptional hiking trails and unparalleled coastal scenery, Tsitsikamma is a top destination for eco-tourists and avid adventurers.

The Otter Trail is a hiking route along the Garden Route coast and is not only the most popular route in the Tsitsikamma National Park, but is widely regarded as one of the finest in the world. Stretching from Storms River Mouth to Nature's Valley, the full trail takes a total of five days and exposes hikers to some of the most exquisite natural beauty, including imposing coastal mountains, dense gallery forest and sweeping white-sand beaches.

Addo Elephant Park

The Addo Elephant Park is situated about an hour outside of the city of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and is recognised as one of South Africa's most popular national parks and game reserves. It is sanctuary to over 550 elephants in just 120 000 hectares. It is also the third largest national park in South Africa and is the only one to incorporate a marine area into its conservation strategy.

The history of the park is an uncomfortable one. In 1919 the administration of the Cape Province decided to cull the elephant population in the Addo region and hired a Professional hunter, Major Jan Pretorius, to destroy the entire herd that inhabited the area at the time. It took him a year to kill 120, before he was stopped due to public

outcry. Only 16 traumatized Addo elephants remained, wounded, frightened and unable to coexist with humans. In 1931, when only 11 elephants were left alive in the area, it was proclaimed a National Park. The elephants, however, were still hostile - destroying crops and attacking anyone who came near them. Finally, in 1952, one of the farmers of the area suggested that a fence be erected around the park. This kept the Elephants secure and out of the surrounding farming area. Black rhino was reintroduced in 1961- the first in the Cape for a hundred years. Today the Park is a sanctuary to over 450 elephants, Cape buffalo, a variety of antelope species, as well as the flightless dung beetle, found exclusively in this area. Addo elephants are unique in that although they belong to the same species as the African Elephant, they are smaller with more rounded ears and the females generally have no tusks. The marine section extends to invite guests to observe the southern right whales, dolphins and sea life in the Indian Ocean coast next to the park.

3. Transport

The transport used for this tour is an air-conditioned minibus which can comfortably seat 14 adults including the driver/guide. Seats in the 14-seater minibuses can be compared in size to an airplane seat – if that setup is uncomfortable for you then please enquire about a private tour where different vehicles can be used.

Our "luggage trailer" is specifically designed for each passenger to have one suitcase and one carry-on sized piece of luggage – a laptop bag, backpack, or similar. Suitcase size is limited to the dimension of 67 cm (26 in) by 45 cm (18 in), and carry on is limited to the dimension of 48 cm (19 in) by 32 cm (13 in). There are generally no porters or staff available to assist with luggage – luggage should be of a size and weight you can comfortably manage yourself. Hard or soft suitcases are fine.

Some game safaris may be carried out using 4x4 jeeps/safari vehicles - see your tour itinerary for details. These may be open-roofed or enclosed. You must not leave the vehicle or lean out through windows without express permission from the guide.

4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

Group size & makeup:

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. Despite this being a 'Shoestring' level tour, the maximum group size is just 12 people, with the minimum number set at 4. We do share this tour with other operators and agents and this means that guests can join the group from all over the world. Most travellers come from the UK, America, Canada, Australia & New Zealand and various European countries. Average ages are mid 30s. Due to the active and group nature of the tour we set a minimum age of 14, and maximum age of 65 years - we are able to make exceptions to the upper age limit as long as you are relatively fit and are confidently able to walk a minimum of 3 hours, partake in the activities included in the itinerary and able to carry your own luggage.

Tour leaders:

A fully qualified driver/guide will run the tour and do both the driving and guiding. This is different to some countries where we may have a separate driver and guide, but common practice in South Africa. The guides have a wealth of knowledge about the places you'll be visiting and travelling past, and many travellers note them as one of the highlights of their tour.

5. Tour Style

This is an active tour and is best suited to travellers who like to keep on the move and see and experience a lot of a country in a relatively short time. You must be able to comfortably walk, carry luggage, get in and out of the vehicle frequently, etc.

There are some easy and short hikes, and a gentle canoeing experience included in the itinerary. These can be missed out if you wish. There are also opportunities for the more adventurous in the group to get their adrenalin

fix, with the tour passing the highest bridge bungee jump in the world from Bloukrans Bridge and time available to have a jump if you love that type of excitement! Those not jumping will continue to Tsitsikamma National Park and the group will rejoin together later in the day.

All tours are run in English. If this is not your first language, you will need to understand and be able to speak a certain amount of English and we request that while you are with the group you make an effort to speak English so that everyone can be included in the conversation. We also ask that everyone brings an open, positive, easy-going and interactive attitude to the tour. This will help make it a good experience for everyone.

Because of the distances we need to cover, and the number of places and activities we want to include, these tours run to a tight schedule. Please ensure you are on time for all departures.

6. Local Options

On all our Shoestring tours we strive to strike a balance between including plenty of meals, tours and activities and being accessible and affordable.

The main tour price covers all your accommodation, transport, most meals and a range of tours and activities. In addition, there are further **Locally Available Options** on this tour. These have been chosen to give you more of a taste of what is available in the region and sometimes to offer an adrenaline rush during a relatively sedate tour. All these local options are offered and operated by professional local activity providers and Encounters Travel is not responsible for your booking or time while taking any of these options. Prices for these options are given on our website, but please bear in mind that are given as a guide only and may vary seasonally and can change from time to time. Availability is subject to seasonal daylight hours and our time-keeping that day.

Please check the itinerary for more information and prices. The Cape Winelands and Cape Peninsular group tours available during your time in Cape Town are based on joining set departures with other travellers not booked on our trips. These should be booked and paid for before you arrive in South Africa. The Shark Cave diving should also be reserved before joining the tour to guarantee your spot, but your final booking and payment is made to the local operator while on the tour. Other options should be finalised and paid for during the trip.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
