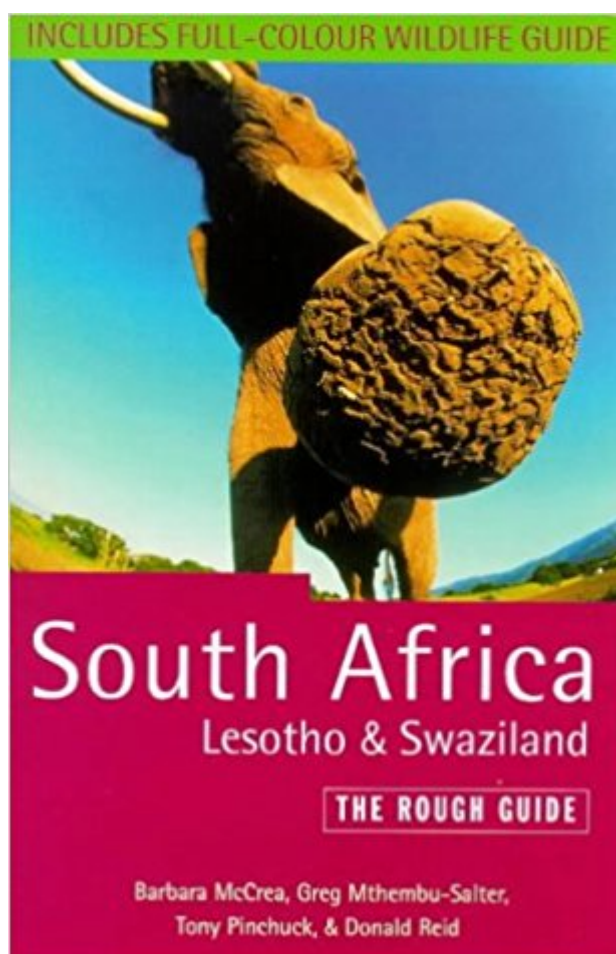


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The Rough Guide To South Africa, 2nd Edition (Rough Guide To South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland)



Synopsis

The essential handbook to one of the continents most exciting countries. Features include detailed accounts of every attraction, up-to-the-minute information on accommodation, practical tips on a vast range of activities, expert background on South Africa's history, and more than 70 maps.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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Where to go While you could circuit the whole of South Africa in a matter of weeks, a more satisfying approach is to focus your attention on one section of the country. Every one of the nine provinces (plus Lesotho and Swaziland) holds at least a couple of compelling reasons to visit, although, depending on the time of year and your interests, you'd be wise to concentrate on either the west or the east. The west, best visited in the warmer months (Nov-April), has the outstanding attraction of Cape Town, worth visiting for its matchless setting beneath Table Mountain, at the foot of the continent. Half a day's drive from here can deliver any other destination in the Western Cape, a province which owes its distinctive character to the fact that it has the longest-established colonial heritage in the country. You'll find gabled Cape Dutch architecture, historic towns and vineyard-draped mountains in the Winelands; forested coast along the Garden Route; and a dry interior punctuated by Afrikaner dorps in the Little Karoo. If the west sounds a bit too pretty and you're after a more "African" experience, head for the eastern flank of the country, best visited in the

cooler months (May-Oct). Johannesburg is likely to be your point of entry to this area, and its frenetic street life, soaring office blocks and lively mix of people make it quite unlike anywhere else in the country. Half a day away by car lie the Northern Province and Mpumalanga, which share the mighty Kruger National Park. Of South Africa's roughly two dozen major parks, the Kruger flashes like a beacon to first-time visitors homing in on game-viewing opportunities, and is unrivalled on the continent for its cross-section of mammal species. Kruger combines brilliantly with KwaZulu-Natal to the south, and an excellent short cut is to drive through tiny, landlocked Swaziland, which has attractions all of its own; a unique Swazi culture and a number of well-managed game parks. Once in KwaZulu-Natal, you'll be spoilt for superb game and birdlife; Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park is the best place in the world to see endangered rhinos and there are several other outstanding small game reserves nearby, such as Itala, Mkuzi and Ndumo. If it's hiking and nature you want, nothing rivals the soaring Drakensberg range. Meanwhile Durban is, after Cape Town, the only city in South Africa worth visiting in its own right; a busy, cultural melting pot with a bustling Indian district and lively beachfront. The long stretch of beaches north and south of Durban is the most developed in the country; but head north towards the Mozambique border and you'll be on the wildest stretch of coast in South Africa. Long sandy beaches, developed only in pockets, are characteristic of much of the 2500km of shoreline that curves from the cool Atlantic along the Northern Cape round to the subtropical Indian Ocean that foams onto KwaZulu-Natal's shores. Along its length, the pumping waves are excellent for surfing, yet don't teem with a crush of boards; Jeffrey's Bay on the Eastern Cape coast is a favourite spot. Much of the Eastern Cape coast is equally appealing, whether you just want to stroll, sunbathe or take in backdrops of mountains and hulking sand dunes. Scuba-diving, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, opens up a world of coral reefs rich with colourful fish, and southeast of the Western Cape winelands, along the Whale Coast, is one of South Africa's unsung attractions - some of the best shore-based whale-watching in the world. With time in hand you might want to leave the big cities, the coast and game parks, and drive through the sparse but exhilarating interior, with its open horizons, switchback mountain passes, rocks, scrubby vegetation and isolated dorps. The offerings of the Northern Cape and Northwest Province, while less obvious than Kruger, Cape Town and the Garden Route, can reveal surprises. Visit the western section of the Northern Cape in August or September, and you'll be treated to a riot of colourful wildflowers. From the staunchly Afrikaner heartland of Free State, you're well poised to visit the very undeveloped kingdom of Lesotho, set in the mountains between the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. Lesotho has few vestiges of royalty left today, but it does offer plenty of spectacular highland scenery, best explored on a sturdy, sure-footed Lesotho pony.

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