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One of the most beautiful regions in the world, South Africa is a place where you can visit a game safari in the morning and scuba dive with great white sharks in the evening. Much of South Africa is a dry desert, so prepare for weather extremes if you're heading outdoors. Some tourists prefer to see the world with nothing but a backpack. This is very viable in South Africa, where a change of clothes could be all you have to bring. However, others may want to buy souvenirs, so keep some empty space in your bags if you want to take some memories off. The summer months are very hot in South Africa. Short slacks and breathing shirts are important, while socks that shell rather than absorb moisture will keep your feet dry. In winter a jacket may be enough to ward off the cold, but dressing in layers can help since even winter days can get hot. Regardless of the season, bring long sleeves and pants in which to change for evenings to ward off mosquitoes. Every season is the bathing season, so bring a swimsuit. Since South Africa can't sell the usual medicines you rely on, take enough supply to cover any medical condition. Tourists are advised to take malaria medication before arriving in South Africa. North American electronics cannot be connected to South African power outlets, so bring an adapter to charge your phone or camera. Editor's Note: The information on this page was compiled using reviews of real trips about what to pack in South Africa. We hand-choose everything we recommend and select items through testing and reviews. Some products are sent to us for free without any incentive to offer a favorable review. We offer our impartial opinions and do not accept compensation to review the products. All items are available and prices are accurate at the time of publication. If you buy something through our links, we may earn a commission. When it comes to incredible ways to spend your time, South Africa is a land of endless opportunities. For cultural travel, cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg have a wealth of museums, galleries, and fascinating historical sites. For the picky foodie, it's hard to compete with Western Cape restaurants and wineries, while adrenaline junkies are spoilt for choice with shark diving, rafting, and the world's tallest bungee bridge. Of course, South Africa is also a country of unparalleled natural beauty, and exploring its diverse flora and fauna tops the list for many visitors, whether they stay for several months or just a few days. 01 of 20 For most taking an African safari is probably one of the main reasons to visit South Africa in the first place. The country's most famous game reserve is Kruger National Park, and for good reason: it's also the largest and oldest park and is easily accessible. You can see all the Big Five here, and there's a wide range of accommodations, from self-catering corner chalets to luxury Night safaris, horseback riding safaris and walking safaris are all possible. Kruger's popularity means it's also often crowded. For a safari destination further off the beaten track, consider kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, a true wilderness located on the border with Botswana and known for its black-hand lion population. If you like the idea of a car safari, check out the Mkhuzi Game Reserve (located north of Durban in Zululand) or Addo Elephant National Park (located near Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape). There are also several smaller safari parks near Cape Town. 02 of 20 Hein von Horstven/Getty Images South Africa is home to some of the most beautiful golf courses on the planet, and they are surprisingly affordable. Gary Player and Ernie Els earned their first birdies on South African golf courses, and some of the best places in the country were designed by these two golf legends. Favorites include The Links at the upscale Fancourt hotel (located in George, Western Cape) and Leopard Creek, located near Kruger National Park. The first is the highest rated golf course in South Africa and the 34th best course in the world. Designed by Gary Player, it boasts spectacular views of the Outeniqua Mountains. The latter is special for its truly African flavor. Where else can you see giraffes wandering through the green or spot crocodiles and hippos splashing around in the dangers of water? Many of South Africa's golf courses are affiliated with luxury spa hotels so that non-golfers also have a lot to do. 03 of 20 Address Muizenberg Beach, Beach Rd, Muizenberg, Cape Town, 7950, South Africa Phone +27 21 480 7700 The South African coast stretches more than 1,600 miles, from the icy Atlantic to the mild Indian Ocean. Both coasts have their fair share of surf spots, but the most famous are all in the Cape Town area or further north along the east coast. If you're headed to The Mother Town, check out Muizenberg for beginner waves or Big Bay near Blouberg Beach. For professionals, the most famous wave here is Dungeons, a bestial right-hand man known to grow up to 60 feet. South Africa's surfing capital, however, is Jeffreys Bay, located 50 miles south of Port Elizabeth. This laid-back city welcomes the likes of Kelly Slater and Jordy Smith for the annual J-Bay Open, which focuses on the legendary Right Hand Breaking Supertubes. Further north, Durban is another hotspot for beginners and professionals. For the biggest thrills, check out the waves of North Beach, Bay of Plenty, and New Pier. 04 of 20 If you prefer to be underwater rather than above it, consider enrolling for an encounter with the world's largest apex predator: the great white shark. These magnificent animals are attracted by the waters of the Cape by the abundance of favorite prey: the seals of the Chief. Several companies in Gansbaai, Mossel Bay, and Simonstown offer cage diving tours, allowing you to see sharks in their natural environment without compromising your safety. If you prefer to get away with the bar, head further north to Alwal Shoal, a marine protected area just south of Durban. Here, you can dive with different species of sharks without the protection of a cage. In summer (November to April), bait diving allows you to get up close and personal with tiger sharks, while bull sharks and oceanic blacktip sharks are common throughout the year. During winter (June to September), sand tiger sharks gather on the reef to mate. Continue to 5 of 20 below. 05 of 20 Address Unnamed Rd, South Africa's natural scenery is arguably one of the most beautiful in the world, and the best way to experience it is on foot. There are plenty of long-distance hiking trails to explore, some of which take you along the breathtaking coastline, while others introduce you to the hidden secrets of the country's interior. Among the most famous routes are the Fanie Botha trail in Mpumalanga and the Rim of Africa, which crosses the Mountains of the Western Cape. If you're looking for a less structured hiking experience, head to the Wild Coast or Drakensberg mountains. In both places, an abundance of short and long trails allows you to explore as much as you want or not. The Wild Coast (also known as Transkei) offers insight into the rugged beauty of the East Cape coast and the culture of the Xhosa people. Drakensberg is home to South Africa's highest mountain range. 06 of 20 Peter Van Der Byl/Getty Images For the passionate botanist, South Africa is a very special destination. In the far south of the country, the Cape floral region is home to about 9,500 species of plants, 70% of which are nowhere else on Earth. The region is one of the six floral kingdoms in the world and is particularly famous for its absolutely unique species of fynbos. For a short time each year, western Cape flowers are usurped by wildflower blooms in the Northern Cape. In late July or early August, the arrival of spring sees the arid landscapes of north-west South Africa transformed into a sea of colors. Flowering begins in the far north and slowly spreads southwards, and lasts only a few beautiful weeks. Wildlife viewing hotspots include Namaqua National Park and Goegap Nature Reserve. 07 of 20 history lovers will find a lot of interest in South Africa. In Blood River, two monuments are an account of the conflict between the Zulu people and the Dutch Voortrekkers. The Anglo-Zulu War is commemorated by memorials and museums in historic battlefields such as Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana. Of course, South Africa's modern history has been overshadowed by the horrors of apartheid, and many of its places are linked to that period of racial injustice. In Johannesburg, you can see firsthand the rebirth that has after apartheid with a tour of Soweto. Once the site of bloody riots, the township is now a cultural hotspot. 08 of 20 Mark Harris/Getty Images South Africa has no less than eight UNESCO, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, one recognized by the United Nations as of great cultural or natural importance. Other cultural sites include the Cradle of Humanity (where fossils of our ancient ancestors were discovered) and the ruins of the ancient kingdom of Mapungubwe. The remaining sites range from the Vredefort Dome to wetland iSimangaliso park. The first represents one of the largest meteor craters on the planet, created in a collision so large that it is thought to have shaped evolutionary history. The latter is an incredible protected area that stretches from the border with Mozambique to the province of the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Here, you can explore beaches, game reserves, and valuable estuary areas. Continue up to 9 of 20 below. 09 of 20 If you have limited time, Cape Town's Kirstenbosch Gardens offer a spectacular overview of South Africa's plant life. Described as one of the largest botanical gardens in the world, this South African highlight is located on the eastern edge of Table Mountain. The gardens are home to more than 7,000 of the 22,000 plant species growing in South Africa, including unique plants such as fynbos, pelargonium and medicinal flora. 10 of 20 The few places show South Africa's turbulent past eloquently as Constitution Hill. This living museum, which was once a prison, follows the country's long road to democracy. Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Fatima Meer and tens of thousands of South African municipalities have all been confined here at some point during the country's unstable history, making it a must. 11 of 20 Yann Lamoureux/EyeEm/Getty Images If you're staying in Cape Town, it's worth hiking to the Cape of Good Hope, a headland off the southern tip of the country. While Africa's true southern tip is just a few hundred miles south of Cape Agulhas, Cape of Good Hope is still worth visiting for its rugged natural beauty. Here, you can watch whales from June to November, climb the lighthouse for stunning views, or just explore the landscape. Don't forget to stop at Boulder's Beach if you want to see penguins! 12 of 20 Catherine Scotton/Getty Images The Apartheid Museum opened in Johannesburg in 2001. Visitors here can learn about South Africa's painful history of racial segregation, including how residents were once ranked by nose width, hair type, skin pigmentation, and other physical characteristics. The museum includes interactive exhibits, movies, and historical photos. Continue up to 13 of 20 below. 13 of 20 Blyde River Canyon Reserve is the third largest canyon in the world and one of South Africa's most visited attractions. The reserve includes hiking trails, a resort, and spectacular natural wonder viewpoints like Bourke's Luck Potholes, the Three Rondavels, Pinnacle Rock, and God's 14 of 20 Farmer is a popular Pretoria restaurant that dine farm to table on the map in South Africa. Don't expect a chic, ultra-modern restaurant though. Instead, you're eating dishes like lamb loin with lemon confit and in a walled mud and with tin roof shed. 15 of 20 This flat mountain is one of Cape Town's best-known landmarks. If you want to go to the top for spectacular views, you can hike or take a cable car. It is part of Table Mountain National Park, which is home to incredible wildlife, especially bird species such as booted eagles and African harrier falcons. 16 of 20 Henk Bogard/Getty Images Pilanesburg is an underrated national park that's home to the Big 5 and much more. The park is just three hours from Johannesburg and offers day safaris that include guides and lunch. The best time to visit is from July to October, when it is dry and clear. Continue up to 17 of 20 below. 17 of 20 TripSavvy/Jess Macdonald The Big Hole, also known as The Kimberley Mine, is an open pit said to be the deepest hole carved by hand. Mining operations ceased here in 1914, but it's still worth a visit to the excellent exhibition center, diamond vault, and underground experience. 18 of 20 TripSavvy/Faye Strassle In Cape Town, you can take a tour of Robben Island, the only political prison where Nelson Mandela was jailed for 18 years. You can also visit District Six, where there were forced evictions of non-whites after the adoption of the racist Group Areas Act in 1950. 19 of 20 Peter Timuss/UG/Getty Images Babylonstoren is an old Dutch Cape farm that houses an elegant hotel, beautiful garden, multiple restaurants, and most importantly, a 200-acre winery that produces excellent pinot noir and chardonnay. There's also an on-site spa. 20 of 20 The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa opened in 2017 as the largest museum of contemporary African art in the world. Located at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, the stunning museum is housed in a converted grain silo. It contains more than 100 galleries. Galleries.

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