



This page, Makweti Safari Lodge, Welgevonden.
Opposite page, clockwise from top left, elephant and giraffe spotting in the Kruger; The Cellars-Hohenort hotel; meeting the locals at Maqueti Lodge; The Cape Grace hotel and Table Mountain; Le Quartier Français Auberge



TATLER PROMOTION

South Africa spectacular

Vast, unspoilt and incredibly beautiful, South Africa is a country of extraordinary diversity. So where to start? Enter Susie Freeman, the ultimate regional expert



South Africa is undeniably one of the most inviting countries on earth. Its position, just south of the Tropic of Capricorn, ensures an almost perennially sunny climate. Wine and wildlife, beautiful cities and endless beaches, soaring mountains and an incredible history come together here – and there are few better places to see Africa's wildlife. So much to do, so little time? Look no further than Susie Freeman – whose in-depth knowledge of the country and highly personalised service will ensure the ultimate South Africa experience, tailor-made for you.

Almost any itinerary to South Africa should include the oceanside Cape Town – where old and new converge in one of the world's most cosmopolitan destinations. Dominated by the towering silhouette of Table Mountain and set on a rocky peninsula edged by sweeping beaches, this charmingly small city is renowned for its history, architecture, cultural mix and lively hospitality – centred to a large degree around the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, with its wealth of shops, restaurants and luxury hotels (all of which Susie has, naturally, visited personally). Here, the fabulous, five-star Cape Grace captures all the old-world charm of a bygone era; further afield, in the leafy Constantia region of the city, The Cellars-Hohenort offers a more intimate, home-from-home alternative, set in nine acres of beautiful grounds.

Head north from here to experience the rolling vineyards and distinctive Cape Dutch architecture of the Cape Winelands – think fascinating cellar tours and al fresco lunches, enjoying your favourite local tippie. In Stellenbosch, the River Manor Country House and Spa (created from two historical houses) is an absolute must; in Franschhoek, Le Quartier Français Auberge and Restaurant, nominated 'Best Small Hotel in the World' by *Tatler* in 2005, offers a true hideaway. Or head to the lush coastal belt of the Western Cape to join the

world-renowned Garden Route, with its unspoilt beaches, beautiful countryside and striking ridge of quartzite mountains – plus the sweeping Plettenberg Bay, the 'Jewel of the Garden Route'. For a remarkable close encounter of the cetacean kind, the Southern Cape town of Hermanus in late September offers an incredible viewpoint from which to witness the annual Southern Right whale migration from the shore. And in the northeast is the small province of Kwazulu-Natal, stretching from the Midlands to the soaring peaks of the Drakensberg – known by ancient chiefdoms as the 'Barrier of Spears'. Here, it's easy to imagine the historical dramas that unfolded against its dramatic African-veld backdrop – think the battlefields of Fugitives' Drift, the Zulu War and Anglo-Boer War – under the knowledgeable guidance of animated local historian David Rattray, while its protected regions are also home to a huge array of land and marine life.

Talking of which, most visitors to South Africa will wish to experience firsthand some of its extraordinary natural wonders. The 'Big Five' – elephant, lion, leopard, rhino and buffalo – can be spotted in one of the country's many wilderness areas, whether from a hiking trail or from the more leisurely vantage point of a private Landrover. At the famous Kruger National Park, visitors can choose from an array of outstanding safari lodges, such as Singita and Lion Sands. Or, just a two-hour drive from Johannesburg, the lush Welgevonden area offers an even more accessible wildlife experience, and is home to the spectacular Makweti Lodge, with just five secluded hideaways dotted among the foliage – fabulous for honeymooners.

Whatever you're looking for in South Africa, Susie Freeman can point you in exactly the right direction. And if you fancy a two-destination holiday, what better than a stopover in Mauritius, her other speciality? For details, call 01488 668 821 or visit www.susiefreemantravel.com

