History

The only way to begin to understand modern-day South Africa is by immersing yourself in the country's long and turbulent history. For more on the history of Lesotho see p551, and on Swaziland see p575.

THE FIRST SOUTH AFRICANS

The first people to see dawn at the southern tip of the African continent were the San – skilled hunter-gatherers who followed a nomadic lifestyle, and who left few traces other than a series of striking rock paintings. Attempts to date this rock art indicate that the San were living in what is now South Africa as early as 25,000 years ago, and possibly as early as 40,000 years ago. Small numbers still live in South Africa today, making theirs one of the world's oldest continuous cultures.

Prior to the San, the picture is murkier. A major archaeological find in 1998 at Sterkfontein near Johannesburg (Jo'burg) revealed that human-like creatures or 'hominids' were roaming and hunting across the highveld at least three million years ago. By about one million years ago, these creatures – by then known as *Homo erectus* – had come to closely resemble modern humans, and ranged well beyond Africa, including in Europe and Asia. Somewhere around 100,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens,* or modern man, came onto the scene. Although it's still a topic of debate, fossils found near the mouth of the Klasies River in Eastern Cape indicate that our *Homo sapiens* ancestors may have been backpacking around South Africa as early as 90,000 years ago.

See www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/humans/humankind/o.html for an overview of human evolution in Southern Africa.

Beginning around 2500 years ago, some San groups acquired livestock from points further north. Gradually they abandoned their hunting-gathering traditions and became pastoralists, tending to small herds of cattle and oxen. With the livestock came concepts of personal wealth and property ownership. Community structures solidified and expanded, and chieftaincies developed. These pastoralist San, who were known as Khoekhoen ('men of men'), began to make their way south, reaching as far as the Cape coast. Over time, they established themselves along the coast, while small groups of hunter-gatherer San continued to inhabit the interior.

NEW ARRIVALS

At about this same time, Bantu-speaking peoples also began arriving in what is now South Africa. Originally from the Niger Delta area in West Africa, they had started to make their way south and eastwards about 1000 BC, reaching present-day KwaZulu-Natal by AD 500. The Bantu speakers kept livestock, farmed maize and other crops, were skilled iron workers and lived in settled villages. They arrived in Southern Africa in small waves, rather than in one cohesive migration. Some groups – the ancestors of today's Nguni peoples (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele) – sought out beach-front properties and settled near the coast. Others, now known as the Sotho-Tswana peoples (Tswana, Pedi, Basotho), settled in the highveld; while today's Venda, Lemba and Shangaan-Tsonga peoples made their home in the northeast of present-day South Africa.

That the Bantu-speakers and the Khoesaan mixed is certain, as evidenced by rock paintings showing the two groups interacting. The type of contact isn't known, although there's linguistic proof of integration, as several Bantu languages (notably Xhosa and Zulu) have incorporated the clicks characteristic of the earlier Khoesaan languages. Numerous Khoesaan artefacts have also been found at the sites of Bantu settlements.

As the pastoralist Khoekhoen moved south, mixing with the hunter-gatherer San, it soon became impossible to distinguish between the two groups – hence the oft-heard term 'Khoesaan'.

EXPEDITIONING EUROPEANS

The first Europeans to reach Southern Africa were the Portuguese, who were drawn southwards in the hope of finding a sea route to India and the East. In 1487, the intrepid Bartholomeu Dias and a small band of adventurers rounded a rocky, windy cape. Dias named it Cabo da Boa Esperança (Cape of Good Hope). A decade later, in 1498, the equally intrepid Vasco da Gama rounded the same point of land, and then kept sailing northeastwards. En route, he called in at various ports along the South African and Mozambican coasts before finally reaching India.

Although the Portuguese basked in the nautical achievement of successfully negotiating the cape, they showed little interest in South Africa itself. Its fierce weather and rocky shoreline posed a threat to their ships, and many of their attempts to trade with the local Khoekhoen ended in violence. The Mozambican coast, further northeast, was altogether more to their liking, with appealing bays to use as way-stations, succulent prawns and links with the legendary gold fields of the interior.

The Portuguese had little competition in the region until the late 16th century, when the English and Dutch began to challenge them along their trade routes. Traffic around the continent's southern tip increased, and the Cape became a regular stopover for scurvy-ridden crews. In 1647 a Dutch vessel was wrecked in what is now Cape Town's Table Bay. The marooned crew – the first Europeans to attempt settlement in the area – built a fort and stayed for a year until they were rescued. Their letters back home must not have been all bad, as shortly thereafter, the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) decided to establish a permanent settlement. The VOC – one of the major European trading houses sailing the spice route to the East – had no intention of colonising the area. They simply wanted to establish a secure base where passing ships could shelter, and where hungry sailors could stock up on fresh supplies of meat, fruit and vegetables. To this end, a small VOC expedition, under the command of Jan Van Riebeeck, reached Table Bay in April 1652.

THE DUTCH SETTLE IN

While the new settlement traded (out of necessity) with the neighbouring Khoekhoen people, the relationship could hardly be described as warm, and there were deliberate attempts to restrict contact. Partly as a consequence, VOC employees found themselves faced with a labour shortage. To remedy this, they released a small group of Dutch from their contracts and permitted them to establish their own farms, from which they would then supply the VOC settlement with their harvests.

TIMELINE

c 25,000 BC	AD 100–500	1487	1652
The San watch the sun rise in South Africa	Bantu-speakers arrive in present-day KwaZulu-Natal	Bartholomeu Dias successfully navigates the Cape of Good Hope	First Dutch settlement, at Table Bay, Cape Town

The arrangement proved highly successful, producing abundant supplies of fruit, vegetables, wheat and wine; they later raised livestock. The small initial group of free burghers, as these farmers were known, steadily increased, and began to expand their farms further north and east into the territory of the Khoekhoen.

The majority of burghers were of Dutch descent, and members of the Calvinist Reformed Church of the Netherlands, but there were also numerous Germans. In 1688 the Dutch and the Germans were joined by French Huguenots, also Calvinists, who were fleeing religious persecution under King Louis XIV.

In 1660, Jan Van Riebeeck planted a bitter-almond hedge separating the Dutch from the Khoekhoen. See sections of it in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (see p119).

In addition to establishing the free burgher system, Van Riebeeck and the VOC also began to import large numbers of slaves, primarily from Madagascar and Indonesia. With this additional labour, the areas occupied by the VOC expanded further north and east where clashes with the Khoekhoen were inevitable. The beleaguered Khoekhoen were driven from their traditional lands, decimated by introduced diseases and destroyed by superior weapons when they fought back – which they did in a number of major 'wars', and with guerrilla resistance which continued into the 19th century. Most survivors were left with no option but to work for Europeans in an exploitative arrangement that hardly differed from slavery. Over time, the Khoesaan, their European overseers, and the imported slaves mixed, with the offspring of these unions forming the basis for modern South Africa's coloured population.

Among the best-known Khoekhoen groups were the Griqua, who had originally lived on the western coast between St Helena Bay and the Cederberg Range. In the late 18th century, they managed to acquire guns and horses and began trekking northeastwards. En route, they were joined by other groups of Khoesaan, coloureds and even white adventurers, and rapidly gained a reputation as a formidable military force. Ultimately, the Griquas reached the highveld around present-day Kimberley, where they carved out territory that came to be known as Griqualand.

BURGHERS MEET THE BUSH

As the burghers, too, continued to expand into the rugged hinterlands of the north and east, many began to take up a seminomadic pastoralist lifestyle, in some ways not so far removed from that of the Khoekhoen who they were displacing. In addition to its herds, a family might have had a wagon, a tent, a Bible and a couple of guns. As they became more settled, a mud-walled cottage would be built – frequently located, by choice, days of hard travel away from the nearest European. These were the first of the Trekboers (Wandering Farmers, later shortened to Boers) – completely independent of official control, extraordinarily self-sufficient and isolated. Their harsh lifestyle produced courageous individualists, but also a backward people, whose only source of knowledge was often the Bible.

BRITS AT THE CAPE

As the 18th century drew to a close, Dutch mercantile power began to fade, and the British moved in to fill the vacuum. They seized the Cape to prevent it from falling into rival French hands, then briefly relinquished

A CHOSEN PEOPLE?

Boer lifestyle and culture – both real and idealised – have had a major influence on South Africa's history. While many of the early members of the Dutch VOC expedition planned to ultimately return to Europe, the Boers soon began to develop a view of themselves as a distinct community which was permanently settled in South Africa. According to their Calvinist beliefs, the Boers were God's chosen people, who had the duty to civilise their black neighbours and thereby ensure their salvation. Some scholars also say that it was Calvinism, and especially its doctrine of predestination, that spawned the Afrikaner idea of racial superiority: the separation of the races had been divinely ordained, and thus justified all efforts to preserve the purity of the white race in its promised land.

it to the Dutch, before finally garnering recognition of their sovereignty of the area in 1814.

Awaiting the British at the tip of the continent was a colony with 25,000 slaves, 20,000 white colonists, 15,000 Khoesaan and 1000 freed black slaves. Power was restricted to a white elite in Cape Town, and differentiation on the basis of race was deeply entrenched. Outside Cape Town and the immediate hinterland, the country was populated by isolated black and white pastoralists.

André Brink's novel *Praying Mantis* takes an enigmatic look at life in the Cape colony in the late 18th and 19th centuries, against the backdrop of more recent apartheid-era realities.

Like the Dutch before them, the British initially had little interest in the Cape Colony, other than as a strategically located port. One of their first tasks was trying to resolve a troublesome border dispute between the Boers and the Xhosa on the colony's eastern frontier. In 1820, about 5000 middle-class British immigrants – mostly traders and businesspeople – were persuaded to leave England behind and settle on tracts of land between the feuding groups with the idea of providing a buffer zone. The plan was singularly unsuccessful. By 1823, almost half of the settlers had retreated to the towns – notably Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth – to pursue the jobs they had held in Britain.

While doing nothing to resolve the border dispute, this influx of settlers solidified the British presence in the area, thus fracturing the relative unity of white South Africa. Where the Boers and their ideas had once been largely unchallenged, there were now two language groups and two cultures. A pattern soon emerged whereby English-speakers were highly urbanised, and dominated politics, trade, finance, mining and manufacturing, while the largely uneducated Boers were relegated to their farms.

The gap between the British settlers and the Boers further widened with the abolition of slavery in 1833 – a move that was generally regarded by Boers as being against the God-given ordering of the races. Meanwhile, British numbers rapidly increased in Cape Town, in the area east of the Cape Colony (present-day Eastern Cape), in Natal (present-day KwaZulu-Natal) and, after the discovery of gold and diamonds, in parts of the Transvaal (mainly around present-day Gauteng).

DIFAQANE & DESTRUCTION

Against this backdrop, the stage was being set for a time of immense upheaval and suffering among the African peoples of the region. This

period is known as the *difaqane* (forced migration) in Sotho, and as *mfeqane* (the crushing) in Zulu.

The roots of the *difaqane* are disputed, although certain events stand out. One of the most significant was the rise of the powerful Zulu kingdom. In the early 19th century, Nguni tribes in what is now KwaZulu-Natal began to shift from loosely organised collections of kingdoms into a centralised, militaristic state under Shaka Zulu, son of the chief of the small Zulu clan. After building large armies, Shaka set out on a massive programme of conquest and terror. Those who stood in his way were either enslaved or decimated.

Natal was named by Vasco da Gama, who, sighting its coast on Christmas Day 1497, named it for the natal day of Christ.

Not surprisingly, tribes in the path of Shaka's armies turned on their heels and fled, in turn becoming aggressors against their neighbours. This wave of disruption and terror spread throughout Southern Africa and beyond, leaving death and destruction in its wake. It also accelerated the formation of several states, notably those of the Sotho (present-day Lesotho; see p551) and Swazi (now Swaziland; see p575).

In 1828, Shaka met his untimely end when he was killed by his half-brothers Dingaan and Umhlanga. The weaker and less-skilled Dingaan became king and attempted to establish relations with British traders on the Natal coast, but events were unfolding that were to see the demise of Zulu independence.

THE GREAT TREK

Meanwhile, the Boers were growing increasingly dissatisfied with British rule in the Cape Colony. The British proclamation of equality of the races was a particularly sharp thorn in their side. Beginning in 1836, several groups of Boers, together with large numbers of Khoekhoen and black servants, decided to trek off into the interior in search of greater independence. North and east of the Orange River (which formed the Cape Colony's frontier) these Boers, or Voortrekkers (Pioneers), found vast tracts of apparently uninhabited grazing lands. They had entered, so it seemed, their promised land, with space enough for their cattle to graze, and for their culture of antiurban independence to flourish. Little did they know that what they found – deserted pasture lands, disorganised bands of refugees and tales of brutality – were the result of the *difaqane,* rather than the normal state of affairs.

With the exception of the more powerful Ndebele, the Voortrekkers encountered little resistance among the scattered peoples of the plains. They had been dispersed by the *difaqane* and lacked horses and firearms. Their weakened condition also solidified the Boers' belief that European occupation meant the coming of civilisation to a savage land.

However, the mountains (where King Moshoeshoe I was forging the Basotho nation that was later to become Lesotho) and the wooded valleys of Zululand were a more difficult proposition. Resistance here was strong, and the Boer incursions set off a series of skirmishes, squabbles and flimsy treaties that were to litter the next 50 years of increasing white domination.

A RIVER RUNS RED

The Great Trek's first halt was at Thaba 'Nchu, near present-day Bloemfontein, where a republic was established. Following disagreements among their leadership, the various Voortrekker groups split, with most crossing the Drakensberg into Natal to try and establish a republic there. As this was Zulu territory, the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief paid a visit to King Dingaan, and was promptly massacred by the suspicious Zulu. This massacre triggered others, as well as a revenge attack by the Boers. The culmination came in December 1838 at the Ncome River in Natal. Several Boers were injured, while several thousand Zulus were killed, reportedly causing the Ncome's waters to run red.

After this victory (the result of superior weapons), the Boers felt that their expansion really did have that long-suspected stamp of divine approval. Yet their hopes for establishing a Natal republic were short-lived. The British annexed the area in 1843, and founded their new Natal colony at present-day Durban. Most of the Boers headed north, with yet another grievance against the British.

Until 1994, 16 December was celebrated by whites as the Day of the Vow, before being renamed the Day of Reconciliation.

The British set about establishing large sugar plantations in Natal, and looked to India to resolve their labour shortage. From 1860 into the early 20th century, a stream of over 150,000 indentured Indians arrived, as well as numerous free 'passenger Indians', building the base for what was to become one of the largest Indian communities outside India.

THE BOER REPUBLICS

The Boers meanwhile pressed on with their search for land and freedom, ultimately establishing themselves at Transvaal (encompassing parts of Gauteng, Limpopo, North-West and Mpumalanga provinces) and the Orange Free State. Then the Boers' world was turned on its head in 1869 with the discovery of diamonds near Kimberley. The diamonds were found on land belonging to the Griqua, but to which both the Transvaal and Orange Free State laid claim. Britain quickly stepped in and resolved the issue by annexing the area for itself.

The discovery of the Kimberley diamond mines unleashed a flood of European and black labourers to the area. Towns sprang up in which the 'proper' separation of whites and blacks was ignored, and the Boers were angry that their impoverished republics were missing out on the economic benefits of the mines.

THE ANGLO-BOER WARS

Long-standing Boer resentment turned into full-blown rebellion in the Transvaal, and the first Anglo-Boer War broke out in 1880 (it was known by Afrikaners, as the descendants of the early Boers became known – see the boxed text on p52 – as the War of Independence). It was over almost as soon as it began, with a crushing Boer victory at the Battle of Majuba Hill in early 1881. The republic regained its independence as the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR; South African Republic). Paul Kruger, one of the leaders of the uprising, became president of the ZAR in 1883.

Meanwhile, the British, who viewed their defeat at Majuba as an aberration, forged ahead with their desire to federate the Southern African colonies and republics.

In 1879, Zululand came under British control. Then in 1886, gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand (the area around Jo'burg), accelerating the federation process and dealing the Boers yet another blow. Jo'burg's

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population exploded to about 100,000 by the mid-1890s, and the ZAR suddenly found itself hosting thousands of uitlanders (foreigners), both black and white, with the Boers squeezed to the sidelines. The influx of black labour was particularly disturbing for the Boers, many of whom were going through hard times and resented the black wage-earners.

The situation peaked in 1899, when the British demanded voting rights for the 60,000 foreign whites on the Witwatersrand (until this point, Kruger's government had excluded all foreigners from the franchise). Kruger refused, calling for British troops to be withdrawn from the ZAR's borders. When the British resisted, Kruger declared war. This second Anglo-Boer War was more protracted and the British were better prepared than at Majuba Hill. By mid-1900, Pretoria, the last of the major Boer towns, had surrendered. Yet resistance by Boer *bittereinders* (bitter enders) continued for two more years with guerrilla-style battles, which in turn were met by scorched-earth tactics by the British. By 1902, 26,000 people had died of disease and neglect. In May 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging brought a superficial peace. Under its terms, the Boer republics acknowledged British sovereignty, while the British committed themselves to reconstruction of the areas under their control.

The Witwatersrand contains the world's largest gold deposit, thus far yielding roughly one-third of all the gold ever mined on earth.

PEACE & UNITY?

During the immediate postwar years, the British focused their attention on rebuilding the country, in particular the mining industry. By 1907, the mines of the Witwatersrand were producing almost one-third of the world's gold. But the peace brought by the treaty was fragile, and challenged on all sides. The Afrikaners found themselves in the position of being poor farmers in a country where big mining ventures and foreign capital rendered them irrelevant. They were particularly incensed by Britain's unsuccessful attempts to anglicise them, and to impose English as the official language in schools and the workplace. Partly as a backlash to this, Afrikaans came to be seen as the *volkstaal* (people's language) and a symbol of Afrikaner nationhood, and several nationalistic organisations sprang up.

Blacks and coloureds were completely marginalised. Harsh taxes were imposed, wages were reduced and the British caretaker administrator encouraged the immigration of thousands of Chinese to undercut any resistance. Resentment was given full vent in the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906, in which 4000 Zulu lost their lives after protesting onerous tax legislation.

The British, meanwhile, moved ahead with their plans for union. After several years of negotiation, the 1910 Act of Union was signed, bringing the republics of Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State together as the Union of South Africa. Under the provisions of the act, the Union was still a British territory, with home-rule for Afrikaners. The British High Commission Territories of Basotholand (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Swaziland and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) continued to be ruled directly by Britain.

English and Dutch were made the official languages. (Afrikaans was not recognised as an official language until 1925.) Despite a major campaign by blacks and coloureds, the voter franchise remained as it was in the pre-Union republics and colonies, and only whites could be elected to parliament.

REPRESSION, RESISTANCE & RACISM

The first government of the new Union was headed by General Louis Botha, with General Jan Smuts as his deputy. Their South African National Party (later known as the South African Party or SAP) followed a generally pro-British, white-unity line. More radical Boers split away under the leadership of General Barry Hertzog, forming the National Party (NP) in 1914. The NP championed Afrikaner interests, advocating separate development for the two white groups and independence from Britain.

There was no place in the new Union for blacks, even though they constituted over 75% of the population. Under the Act of Union, they were denied voting rights in the Transvaal and Orange Free State areas, and in Cape Colony were granted the vote only if they met a property ownership qualification. Coming on the heels of British wartime propaganda promising freedom from 'Boer slavery', the failure to grant the franchise was regarded by blacks as a blatant betrayal. It wasn't long before a barrage of oppressive legislation was passed, making it illegal for black workers to strike, reserving skilled jobs for whites, barring blacks from military service and instituting restrictive pass laws. In 1913, the Natives Land Act was enacted, setting aside 8% of South Africa's land for black occupancy. Whites, who made up 20% of the population, were given over 90% of the land. Black Africans were not allowed to buy, rent or even be sharecroppers outside their designated area. Thousands of squatters were evicted from farms and forced into increasingly overcrowded and impoverished reserves, or into the cities. Those who remained were reduced to the status of landless labourers.

Black and coloured opposition began to coalesce, and leading figures such as John Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and Abdullah Abdurahman laid the foundations for new nontribal black political groups. Most significantly, a Columbia University-educated attorney, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, called together representatives of the various African tribes to form a unified national organisation to represent the interests of blacks, and to ensure that they had an effective voice in the new Union. Thus was born the South African Native National Congress, known from 1923 onwards as the African National Congress (ANC).

See www.anc.org.za for more on the ANC and South African history.

Parallel to this, Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi had been working with the Indian populations of Natal and the Transvaal to fight against the ever-increasing encroachments on their rights (see p40.

In 1924 the NP, under Hertzog, came to power in a coalition government, and Afrikaner nationalism gained a greater hold. Dutch was replaced by Afrikaans (previously only regarded as a low-class dialect of Dutch) as an official language of the Union, and the so-called s*wart gevaar* (black threat) was made the dominant issue of the 1929 election. Hertzog joined briefly in a coalition with the more moderate Jan Smuts in the mid-1930s, after which Smuts took the reins and, amid much controversy, led South Africa into WWII on the side of the Allies. However, any hopes of turning the tide of Afrikaner nationalism were dashed when Daniel François (DF) Malan led a radical breakaway movement,

1879 Zululand comes under British control

1881 First Anglo-Boer War ends; Transvaal becomes the South African Republic

1886 Gold discovered on the Witwatersrand

1893 Mahatma Gandhi sets sail for South Africa

MAHATMA GANDHI

In 1893 Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, a young Indian solicitor, set sail for Durban, South Africa, to take on a one-year legal contract in South Africa. Anti-Indian sentiment in Natal was high, and upon his arrival he was thrown out of a 1st-class train wagon at Pietermaritzburg because of his race.

The incident had a profound effect on Gandhi. He began schooling himself in methods of nonviolent resistance, and became increasingly involved with the local Indian community, working with them to safeguard their political rights. Within a short period, Gandhi had not only established himself as a successful attorney, but also as the leading spokesperson for Indian interests in South Africa.

In 1896, and again in 1901, Gandhi returned briefly to India where he lobbied extensively to bring attention to the plight of Indians in South Africa. Back in South Africa, Gandhi developed the thinking that was to guide his political activity for the rest of his life. He gave up the trappings of a successful attorney, began washing his own clothes, committed himself to a life of celibacy and nonpossession, and devoted himself fully to service. He also developed his defining philosophy of satyagraha (meaning, very loosely, truth through nonviolence).

In 1907, the Transvaal government passed the Asiatic Registration Act requiring all Indians to register with the Registrar of Asiatics, and to carry a certificate of registration. Gandhi called on the Indian community to defy the act, and to offer no resistance if they should be arrested. Over the next seven years, numerous similar discriminatory incidents followed, including a court decision nullifying all Hindu and Muslim marriages, which Gandhi and his followers also peacefully defied. In response, Gandhi – along with thousands of other Indians who had joined him in his satyagraha struggle – was repeatedly arrested.

Gandhi finally returned to India in 1914 – over 20 years after he first arrived in South Africa for a year-long stay. Apart from the profound global influence of Gandhi's life, his tactics in South Africa resulted in the 1914 passage of the Indian Relief Bill, which among other concessions restored recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages.

the Purified National Party, to the central position in Afrikaner political life. The Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret Afrikaner brotherhood that had been formed in 1918 to protect Afrikaner culture, soon became an extraordinarily influential force behind both the NP and other organisations designed to promote the *volk* ('people', the Afrikaners).

Due to the booming wartime economy, black labour became increasingly important to the mining and manufacturing industries, and the black urban population nearly doubled. Enormous squatter camps grew up on the outskirts of Jo'burg and, to a lesser extent, outside the other major cities. Conditions in the townships were appalling, but poverty was not only the province of blacks; wartime surveys found that 40% of white schoolchildren were malnourished.

THE WALLS OF APARTHEID GO UP

In the run-up to the 1948 elections, the NP campaigned on its policy of segregation, or 'apartheid' (an Afrikaans term for the state of being apart). It was voted in, in coalition with the Afrikaner Party (AP), and under the leadership of DF Malan.

Apartheid, long a reality of life, became institutionalised under Malan. Within short order, legislation was passed prohibiting mixed marriages,

making interracial sex illegal, classifying every individual by race and establishing a classification board to rule in questionable cases. The noxious Group Areas Act of 1950 set aside desirable city properties for whites, while banishing nonwhites into the townships. The Separate Amenities Act created, among other things, separate beaches, buses, hospitals, schools and even park benches.

The existing pass laws were further strengthened: blacks and coloureds were compelled to carry identity documents at all times and were prohibited from remaining in towns, or even visiting them, without specific permission. Couples were not allowed to live together (or even visit each other) in the town where only one of them worked, and children had to remain in rural areas.

In 1960, tensions came to a head in the Sharpeville massacre (see below). Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, whose rabid racism earned him the unofficial title of 'architect of apartheid', announced a referendum on whether the country should become a republic. The change was passed by a slim majority of voters. Verwoerd withdrew South Africa from the Commonwealth, and in May 1961 the Republic of South Africa came into existence.

ACTION & ACTIVISM

These developments pushed the hitherto relatively conservative ANC into action. In 1949 it developed an agenda that for the first time advocated open resistance in the form of strikes, acts of public disobedience and protest marches. Resistance continued throughout the 1950s, and resulted in occasional violent clashes. In June 1955, at a congress held at Kliptown near Jo'burg, a number of organisations, including the Indian Congress and the ANC, adopted a Freedom Charter. This articulated a vision of a nonracial democratic state, and is still central to the ANC's vision of a new South Africa.

In 1959, a group of disenchanted ANC members, seeking to sever all links with white government, broke away to form the more militant Pan African Congress. First on the PAC's agenda was a series of nationwide demonstrations against the hated pass laws. On 21 March 1960, police opened fire on demonstrators surrounding a police station in Sharpeville, a township near Vereeniging. At least 67 people were killed, and 186 wounded; most of those were shot in the back.

To many domestic and international onlookers, the struggle had crossed a crucial line at Sharpeville, and there could no longer be any doubts about the nature of the white regime. In the wake of the shooting, a massive stay-away from work was organised, and demonstrations continued. Verwoerd declared a state of emergency, giving security forces the right to detain people without trial. Over 18,000 demonstrators were arrested, including much of the ANC and PAC leadership, and both organisations were banned.

As black activists continued to be arrested, the ANC and PAC began a campaign of sabotage through the armed wings of their organisations, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation, MK) and Poqo ('Pure' or 'Alone'), respectively. In July 1963, 17 members of the ANC underground movement were arrested. Together with ANC leader Nelson Mandela,

Nelson Mandela's autobiographical *Long Walk to Freedom* offers an unparalleled recounting of the days of resistance, and of the years that followed.

1902 Treaty of Vereeniging ends the second Anglo-Boer War

1910 Union of South Africa created, with no voting rights for blacks; Lesotho and Swaziland remain British protectorate

1912 South African Native National Congress established; forerunner to the African National Congress (ANC)

1914 Indian Relief Bill is passed, restoring recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages

For more on Nelson Mandela, read the exhaustive *Mandela: the Authorised Biography* by Anthony Sampson.

who had already been arrested on other charges, they were tried for treason at the widely publicised Rivonia Trial. In June 1964, Mandela and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment. Oliver Tambo, another member of the ANC leadership, managed to escape South Africa and lead the ANC in exile.

> I have fought against White domination and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.
>
> *Nelson Mandela, 20 April 1964, Rivonia Trial*

DECADES OF DARKNESS

With the ANC banned, and Mandela and most of the rest of its leadership in jail or exile, South Africa moved into some of its darkest times. Apartheid legislation was enforced with increasing gusto, and the walls between the races were built ever higher. Most odious was the creation of separate 'homelands' for blacks (see the boxed text on p521). In 1966, Verwoerd was stabbed to death, but his policies continued under BJ Vorster and, later, PW Botha.

During the 1970s, resistance again gained force, first channelled through trade unions and strikes, and then spearheaded by the South African Students' Organisation, under the leadership of the charismatic Steve Biko. Biko, a medical student, was the main force behind the growth of South Africa's Black Consciousness Movement, which stressed the need for psychological liberation, black pride and nonviolent opposition to apartheid.

Things culminated in 1976, when the Soweto Students' Representative Council organised protests against the use of Afrikaans (regarded as the language of the oppressor) in black schools. On 16 June police opened fire on a student march, beginning a round of nationwide demonstrations, strikes, mass arrests, riots and violence that, over the next 12 months, took over 1000 lives.

In September 1977, Steve Biko was killed (see p274). Unidentified security police bashed him until he lapsed into a coma; he went without medical treatment for three days and finally died in Pretoria. At the subsequent inquest, the magistrate found that no one was to blame, although the South African Medical Association eventually took action against the doctors who failed to treat Biko. South Africa would never be the same again. A generation of young blacks committed themselves to a revolutionary struggle against apartheid ('Liberation before Education' was the catch-cry) and the black communities were politicised.

A Burning Hunger: One Family's Struggle Against Apartheid by Lynda Schuster is an extraordinary recounting of a black family's fight against apartheid, from the Soweto uprisings in 1976 until liberation in the early 1990s.

SOUTH AFRICA UNDER SIEGE

By 1980 South Africa was the only country in Africa with a white government and a constitution discriminating against the majority of its citizens. As international opinion turned decisively against the white regime, the government (and most of the white population) increasingly saw the country as a bastion besieged by communism, atheism and black

THE 'HOME'LANDS

In 1962 – two years before Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment – the Transkei was born. It was the first of 10 so-called 'Bantustans' or 'homelands' that were intended to provide a home for all black South Africans. On these lands – so went the white South African propaganda – blacks would be self-sufficient, self-governing citizens, living together with others of their own tribe.

The realities were much different. The homeland areas had no infrastructure or industry, and were incapable of producing sufficient food for the burgeoning black population. They were also completely disproportionate in size to the numbers of people they were supposed to host. All the homelands together constituted only 14% of South Africa's land, while blacks made up close to 80% of the country's population. Tribal divisions were made arbitrarily, and once a person had been assigned to a homeland, they could not leave without a pass and permission. The resulting suffering was intense and widespread. Overpopulated farming lands were rapidly exhausted, and families were divided as men were forced to return alone to urban areas as guest workers without rights.

Following creation of the homelands, blacks flooded to the cities seeking work: while life in urban squatter camps was bad, life in the homelands was worse. To stop this, the government banned blacks from being employed as shop assistants, receptionists, typists and clerks. The construction of housing in the black 'locations' (dormitory suburbs for black workers) was halted, and enormous single-sex hostels were built instead.

The situation in the homelands was further worsened by internal political strife. In an effort to garner more power for themselves, some homeland leaders became collaborators with the government, accepting 'independence' while crushing all resistance to their control and to the South African government.

Although the homelands came to an end with the demise of apartheid, their legacies – including completely insufficient infrastructure and distorted population concentrations in the homeland areas – continue to scar South Africa today.

anarchy. Considerable effort was put into circumventing sanctions, and the government even developed nuclear weapons (which have since been destroyed).

Negotiating majority rule with the ANC was not considered an option (publicly, at least), which left the government to defend the country against external and internal threats through sheer military might. A siege mentality developed among whites, and although many realised that a civil war against the black majority could not be won, they preferred this to 'giving in' to political reform. Brutal police and military actions seemed entirely justifiable. Paradoxically, the international sanctions that cut whites off from the rest of the world enabled black leaders to develop sophisticated political skills, as those in exile forged ties with regional and world leaders.

From 1978 to 1988 the South African Defence Force (SADF; now the South African National Defence Force, or SANDF) made a number of major attacks inside Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Lesotho. All white males were liable for national service, and thousands fled into exile to avoid conscription. Many more were scarred mentally and physically by their participation in vicious struggles in the region, or in the townships of South Africa.

Soweto Blues: Jazz and Politics in South Africa by Gwen Ansell takes a fascinating look at the interaction of jazz and politics in apartheid-era South Africa.

1932 World-famous singer Miriam Makeba (Mama Africa) is born in Johannesburg

1948 National Party gains control of the government; apartheid is institutionalised

1960 Sharpeville massacre; ANC and Pan African Congress (PAC) banned

1961 South Africa leaves the Commonwealth and becomes a republic

WINDS OF CHANGE

In the early 1980s, a fresh wind began to blow across South Africa. Whites constituted only 16% of the total population, in comparison with 20% 50 years earlier, and the number was continuing to fall. Recognising the inevitability of change, PW Botha told white South Africans to 'adapt or die'. Numerous reforms were instituted, including repeal of the pass laws. But Botha stopped well short of full reform, and many blacks (as well as the international community) felt the changes were only cosmetic. Protests and resistance continued at full force, as South Africa became increasingly polarised and fragmented, and unrest was widespread. A white backlash also arose, giving rise to a number of neo-Nazi paramilitary groups, notably the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), led by Eugène Terre'Blanche. The opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) was also formed at this time. With a broad coalition of members, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Reverend Allan Boesak, it called for the government to abandon its proposed reforms, and instead to abolish apartheid and eliminate the homelands.

Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa by Allister Sparks is a realistic yet optimistic analysis of South Africa as it steps into the future, written by one of South Africa's most respected journalists.

International pressures also increased, as economic sanctions began to dig in harder, and the value of the rand collapsed. In 1985, the government declared a state of emergency, which was to stay in effect for five years. The media was censored and, by 1988, 30,000 people had been detained without trial, with thousands tortured.

STALKED BY A SHADOW

Amid this turmoil, a perhaps even darker shadow had started to move across South Africa. In 1982, the first recorded death from AIDS occurred in the country. Within a decade, the number of recorded AIDS cases had risen to over 1000, and by the mid-1990s, it had reached 10,000. Yet these officially recorded cases were only the tip of the iceberg, with some estimates placing the actual number of HIV-positive cases at close to one million in 1995. Fuelled by the entrenched migrant labour system at South Africa's mines, AIDS is estimated to have been spreading at the explosive rate of over 500 new cases per day.

In the late 1980s, the South African Chamber of Mines began an education campaign to try and stem the rise of cases. But without a change in the underlying conditions of mine workers, success could hardly be expected. Long periods away from home under bleak conditions, and a few days leave a month were the apartheid-induced realities of life under which thousands of miners and other labourers worked. Compounding the problem was the fact that, as of the mid-1990s, many health officials were still focused more on the incidence of tuberculosis than of AIDS.

As South Africa began to take its first tenuous steps to dismantle the walls of apartheid, AIDS lay waiting to explode like a ticking time bomb.

THE WALLS BEGIN TO FALL

In 1986, President Botha announced to parliament that South Africa had 'outgrown' apartheid. The government started making a series of minor reforms in the direction of racial equality, while maintaining an iron grip on the media and on all anti-apartheid demonstrations.

In late 1989, a physically ailing Botha was succeeded by FW de Klerk. At his opening address to the parliament in February 1990, de Klerk announced that he would repeal discriminatory laws and legalise the ANC, the PAC and the Communist Party. Media restrictions were lifted, and de Klerk released political prisoners not guilty of common-law crimes. On 11 February 1990, 27 years after he had first been incarcerated, Nelson Mandela walked out of the grounds of Victor Verster prison a free man.

From 1990 to 1991 the legal apparatus of apartheid was abolished. A referendum – the last of the whites-only vote held in South Africa – overwhelmingly gave the government authority to negotiate a new constitution with the ANC and other groups.

FREE ELECTIONS

In December 1991 the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) began negotiations on the formation of a multiracial transitional government and a new constitution extending political rights to all groups. Months of wrangling finally produced a compromise and an election date, although at considerable human cost. Political violence exploded across the country during this time, particularly in the wake of the assassination of Chris Hani, the popular leader of the South African Communist Party. It's now known that elements within the police and army contributed to this violence. There have also been claims that high-ranking government officials and politicians ordered, or at least condoned, massacres.

In 1993, a draft constitution was published guaranteeing freedom of speech and religion, access to adequate housing and numerous other benefits, and explicitly prohibiting discrimination on almost any grounds. Finally, at midnight on 26–27 April 1994, the old national anthem 'Die Stem' (The Call) was sung and the old flag was lowered, followed by the raising of the new rainbow flag and singing of the new anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika' (God Bless Africa). The election went off peacefully, amid a palpable feeling of goodwill throughout the country.

The ANC won 62.7% of the vote, less than the 66.7% that would have enabled it to rewrite the constitution. As well as deciding the national

VRYE WEEKBLAD

In 1988, renegade Afrikaner journalist Max du Preez, together with a handful of other white anti-apartheid activists, founded *Vrye Weekblad,* South Africa's first Afrikaans-language anti-apartheid newspaper. From the start, the newspaper drew the wrath of the state. Its offices were bombed, du Preez received numerous threats and the newspaper was sued for defamation by then-president PW Botha. Yet, during its short life, it was ground-breaking for its commitment to free speech, its tireless campaigning against oppression and its exposés of corruption and brutality on all sides of the political spectrum. After just over five years of cutting-edge investigative reporting, *Vrye Weekblad* was forced to close down shortly before the 1994 elections. Du Preez later went on to work as producer for SABC's TV coverage of the Truth & Reconciliation hearings, and today continues to work as a highly respected journalist. For a fascinating account of the paper's history, look for a copy of du Preez's book, *Oranje Blanje Blues*.

government, the election decided the provincial governments, and the ANC won in all but two provinces. The NP captured most of the white and coloured vote and became the official opposition party.

REWRITING HISTORY

Following the elections, focus turned to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (1994–99), which worked to expose crimes of the apartheid era under the dictum of Archbishop Desmond Tutu: 'Without forgiveness there is no future, but without confession there can be no forgiveness'. Many stories of horrific brutality and injustice were heard by the commission, offering some catharsis to people and communities shattered by their past.

NELSON MANDELA

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is without doubt one of the global leaders of the millennium. Once vilified by South Africa's ruling whites and sentenced to life imprisonment, he emerged from 27 years of incarceration calling for reconciliation and forgiveness, and was able to rally together all South Africans at the most crucial of times.

Mandela, son of a Xhosa chief, was born on 18 July 1918 in the small village of Mveso on the Mbashe River. When he was young the family moved to Qunu, south of Mthatha in what is now Eastern Cape. Here he grew up living in a kraal (rural housing compound) such as those that still dot this landscape, living a typical rural life, while at the same time being groomed for a future position in the tribal leadership. After attending school at the University College of Fort Hare, Mandela headed to Jo'burg, where he soon became immersed in politics. He also finished his law degree and, together with Oliver Tambo, opened South Africa's first black law firm. Meanwhile, in 1944, together with Tambo and Walter Sisulu, Mandela formed the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC), which worked to turn the ANC into a nationwide grass-roots movement. During the 1950s, Mandela was at the forefront of the ANC's civil disobedience campaigns, for which he was first arrested in 1952, tried and acquitted. Various arrests and detention followed. After the ANC was banned in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, Mandela advocated establishing its underground military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. In 1964, while serving time for an earlier arrest, Mandela was brought to stand trial for sabotage and fomenting revolution in the widely publicised Rivonia Trial. After brilliantly arguing his own defence, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, and spent the next 18 years in the infamous Robben Island prison, before being moved to Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland, and later to Victor Verster prison near Paarl, from which he was eventually released.

Throughout his incarceration, Mandela repeatedly refused to compromise his political beliefs in exchange for freedom, saying that only free men can negotiate. Among other things, he rejected offers of release in exchange for recognising the independence of the Transkei (and thereby giving tacit approval of the legitimacy of the apartheid regime).

On 18 February 1990, Mandela was released and in 1991 he was elected president of the ANC. From this position, he continued the negotiations (which had started secretly while he was in prison) to demolish apartheid and bring an end to minority rule. In 1993, Mandela shared the Nobel peace prize with FW de Klerk and, in the first free elections the following year, was elected president of South Africa. In his much-quoted speech, 'Free at Last!', made after winning the 1994 elections, he focused the nation's attention firmly on the future, declaring, 'This is the time to heal the old wounds and build a new South Africa'.

In 1997, Mandela – or Madiba, his traditional Xhosa name – stepped down as ANC president, although he continues to be actively involved in politics as an elder statesman.

SOUTH AFRICA'S GOVERNMENT

In 1996, after much negotiation and debate, South Africa's parliament approved a revised version of the 1993 constitution that established the structure of the country's new, democratic government. Today, the national government consists of a 400-member National Assembly, a 90-member National Council of Provinces and a head of state (the president), who is elected by the National Assembly. In addition, there are nine provincial governments, each headed by a premier and a 10-person executive council. The provinces (and their capitals) are: Western Cape (Cape Town), Eastern Cape (Bisho), Northern Cape (Kimberley), KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg), Mpumalanga (Nelspruit), Gauteng (Jo'burg), Free State (Bloemfontein), North-West Province (Mafikeng) and Limpopo (Polokwane, or Pietersburg). Cape Town is the national legislative capital, Pretoria the country's administrative capital and Bloemfontein the judicial capital.

A South African president has more in common with a Westminster-style prime minister than a US president, although as head of state the South African president has some executive powers denied to most prime ministers. The constitution stands at the centre of the legal system, and is most notable for its expansive Bill of Rights.

Operating parallel to these Western-style institutions is a system of traditional leadership, under which all legislation pertaining to indigenous law, tradition or custom must be referred to the Council of Traditional Leaders. Although the council cannot veto or amend legislation, it can delay its passage.

National elections are held every five years, and are next due in 2009.

The commission operated by allowing victims to tell their stories and perpetrators to confess their guilt, with amnesty on offer to those who made a clean breast of it. Those who chose not to appear before the commission would face criminal prosecution if their guilt could be proven. Yet, while some soldiers, police and 'ordinary' citizens have confessed their crimes, it seems unlikely that the human-rights criminals who gave the orders and dictated the policies will present themselves (PW Botha is one famous no-show), and it has proven difficult to gather evidence against them.

FREE ELECTIONS – ROUND TWO

In 1999, South Africa held its second democratic elections. In 1997 Mandela had handed over ANC leadership to his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, and there was speculation that the ANC vote might therefore drop. In fact, it increased to put the party within one seat of the two-thirds majority that would allow it to alter the constitution.

The NP, restyled as the New National Party (NNP), lost two-thirds of its seats, as well as official opposition status to the Democratic Party (DP) – traditionally a stronghold of liberal whites, with new force from conservatives disenchanted with the NP, and from some middle-class blacks. Coming in just behind the DP was the KwaZulu-Natal–based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), historically the voice of Zulu nationalism. While the IFP lost some support, its leader, Chief Mangosouthu Buthelezi, held onto power as the national Home Affairs Minister.

SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

Despite the scars of the past and the enormous problems ahead, South Africa today is an immeasurably more optimistic and relaxed country

1990 Nelson Mandela freed

1994 First democratic elections; Nelson Mandela elected president

1997 Nelson Mandela retires as ANC president, succeeded by Thabo Mbeki

1999 ANC wins landslide victory in second democratic elections

than it was a decade ago. While Mbeki is viewed with far less affection by the ANC grass-roots than the beloved 'Madiba' (Mandela), he has proven himself a shrewd politician, maintaining his political pre-eminence by isolating or coopting opposition parties. The 2004 national elections were won decisively by the ANC with 70% of the votes, with Mbeki at the helm, and today continues its dominance in daily political life.

According to some studies, almost three-quarters of deaths of South African children under five years old are from AIDS-related illnesses.

Yet it has not been all clear sailing. In the early days of his presidency, Mbeki's effective denial of the HIV/AIDS crisis invited global criticism, and his conspicuous failure to condemn the forced reclamation of white-owned farms in neighbouring Zimbabwe unnerved both South African landowners and foreign investors.

In the coming years – in addition to choosing a successor for Mbeki, who has announced that he will step down in 2009 – attention is likely to focus overwhelmingly on crime, economic inequality, overhauling the education system and, especially, HIV/AIDS. With an estimated 4.5 million South Africans affected – more than in any other country in the world – this scourge threatens to eclipse all of South Africa's other problems.

For more on AIDS in South Africa, including what's being done, see www.avert.org/aidssouthafrica.htm.

In recent years, efforts by AIDS activists and NGOs (nongovernment organisations) have focused on urging the government to make anti-retroviral drugs available for treatment for all AIDS sufferers, and on reducing the major social stigma associated with infection. While huge strides have been made – with many provinces now providing widespread access to treatment – there is still a long way to go, both in ensuring treatment reaches all those who need it (especially children), and in lowering the still alarmingly high infection rate.

2003

South African government approves provision of free anti-retroviral drugs in public hospitals

2006

Close to five million South Africans are living with HIV/AIDS

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

More than a decade has passed since South Africa's first democratic elections, and the country is still finding its way. While the streets pulsate with the same determination and optimism that fuelled the liberation struggle, the beat is tempered by the sobering social realities that are the legacy of apartheid's long years of oppression and bloodshed. Freedom has brought with it a whole new set of challenges.

Unemployment, crime and HIV/AIDS are the top concerns of most South Africans today, and the nation is fast becoming a society divided by class rather than colour. The gap between rich and poor is vast – one of the highest in the world, according to World Bank statistics. Manicured suburbs rub shoulders with squalid townships where clean drinking water is a scarce commodity and palatial residences overlook cramped tin-roofed shanties. Violent crime has stabilised at unacceptably high levels, and a generation that saw almost daily brutality and uncertainty during its formative years is now coming of age. Although the formal racial divisions of apartheid have dissolved, shadows and old ways of interacting remain, and suspicions and distrust still run high.

While crime continues to grab headlines and undermine South Africa's reputation as a tourism destination, it's important to keep it in perspective. The slowly and often fitfully emerging new South Africa is a unique and refreshing place to visit, and one of the most inspiring and hope-filled places that you'll find anywhere on the continent. Its political history is so fresh that those who lived through it are still there to guide you and grass-roots activism is high; visiting provides a rare chance to experience a nation that is rebuilding itself after profound change. As a backdrop to all this is the stunning natural magnificence, and the remarkably deep bond – perhaps best expressed in the country's literature (see p55) – that most South Africans feel for their land.

HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in South Africa, accounting for about 30% of deaths nationwide (versus about 6% of deaths from homicide and violence).

LIFESTYLE

It's difficult to present a unified picture of everyday life in South Africa. Many middle-class and wealthy families live in heavily secured homes and spend their leisure time in equally fortified shopping centres. Visit an upmarket shopping mall and you'll see people dining alfresco-style, under umbrellas at cafés that are actually indoors. Guards patrol the walkways and shops to keep criminals at bay, there's still a lingering sense of fear and loss connected with the passing of the old regime, and conversations are peppered with gloomy predictions about the government and the future.

Life is very different for the millions of South Africans who are still living in poverty. Tiny matchbox houses are home to large extended families, clean drinking water remains a luxury in some areas, and health facilities are not uniformly available.

Yet, township life is vibrant and informal. People gather on street corners and in local bars known as *shebeens*. Weddings are big events, and frequently spill onto the streets with plenty of dancing. If you're passing by, don't be surprised if you're encouraged to join in.

Unfortunately, funerals are becoming one of the most common gatherings in South Africa, as well as in Lesotho and Swaziland, and on weekends, cemeteries are routinely crowded with mourners. Many of those who are dying are youths, and people spend their time attending

the funerals of one relative after the next. Many women have even formed burial societies to save money to cover the increasing costs.

According to one survey, South Africans spend more time attending funerals than shopping, going to braais (barbecues) or having their hair cut.

Thousands of households in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland are now headed by children whose parents have died from AIDS. Sometimes the only survivors from an entire family are the eldest children, who were born before their parents became infected. A large number of grandparents who have nursed and lost their adult offspring to AIDS are also looking after their orphaned grandchildren, many of whom are also HIV-positive.

Despite its prevalence, there's still a heavy stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. Many people are ashamed to admit that a relative died of AIDS, and family members will often tell you that their loved one passed away from tuberculosis or the flu.

POPULATION & PEOPLE

South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland together form a beautiful and rich tapestry of cultures and ethnic groups – see the boxed text, p52.

In addition to their cultural roots, the three countries also have fascinatingly complex and interlocking socioeconomic compositions. South Africa's Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg (Jo' burg) and Pretoria, is the economic engine of the country, generating more than half of South Africa's wealth. It's also the most densely populated and urbanised province. At the other end of the scale is the rural and underdeveloped Eastern Cape, where up to 20% of adults have never received any formal schooling.

Millions of immigrants from across the continent make their way to South Africa to take advantage of the country's powerhouse economy. While some arrive legally, many others take their chances – for example, jumping out of the windows of moving trains as they are being deported. Many of these illegal immigrants live in Jo'burg's impoverished inner city, causing resentment among some South Africans who accuse the outsiders of taking jobs and creating crime.

Swaziland's socioeconomic scene is almost completely wrapped up in that of its larger neighbour. Almost three-quarters of Swazi exports go to South Africa and even more goods and services are imported. Up to 70% of Swazis live in rural areas and many rely on farming for survival. Swazi culture is very strong and quite distinct from that of South Africa. The monarchy influences many aspects of life, from cultural ceremonies to politics. While some Swazis are proud of the royal traditions and suspicious of those who call for greater democracy, there's a small but growing number of human rights and opposition activists who believe power should be transferred from the king to the people.

Lesotho's main link with South Africa has been the mining industry. In the 1990s, at least 120,000 Basotho men were employed by South African mines, and up to one third of Lesotho's household incomes were from wages earned by the miners. When the mining industry was restructured though, tens of thousands of jobs were lost. Today, many former miners have returned home to Lesotho to join the ranks of the unemployed.

Beyond economics, different racial groups have complicated links. While much of the focus in South Africa has been on black and white relations, there is also friction and distrust between blacks, coloureds and South Africans of Indian descent. Yet, sometimes locals are surprisingly open when they talk about the stereotypes and prejudices that exist between various groups. Ask a Zulu what he or she thinks about Xhosas or quiz English-speaking whites about their views on Afrikaners.

WOMEN

In some respects, South African women have enjoyed a uniquely high profile during the country's turbulent history. Women were at the centre of the anti-pass law demonstrations and bus boycotts of the 1950s, protesting under the slogan 'You strike the woman and you strike the rock', and women are also strongly represented in South Africa's parliament. One-third of parliamentarians, as well as one-third of government ministers, are female, including the speaker of the National Assembly – a ranking that puts South Africa among the top 11 countries in the world for representation of women in government. Women's rights are also guaranteed in the constitution, and the ANC has a quota system for the party.

South Africa has the world's largest HIV-positive population, and Swaziland its highest HIV-infection rate (38.8%), with Lesotho just a few steps behind.

However, the daily reality for many South African women is very different, with poverty, sexual violence and HIV overshadowing other gains. Sexual violence statistics are particularly sobering. South Africa has the highest incidence of reported rape in the world, with approximately 52,000 cases of rape reported to the police annually, and a woman assaulted in the country every 26 to 60 seconds on average. Some women's groups say the real figures are much worse, because many women are too afraid to report the crime. Even more saddening is the fact that at least 20% – some place the figure closer to 40% – of reported rapes and attempted rapes are of girls below 18 years of age.

Women are statistically more likely than men to be infected with HIV, and many women become infected at an early age because they are having sex with older men. Worsening the situation is the threat of sexual violence, which often undermines the ability of young women to ensure their partner is wearing a condom.

In Swaziland, women have long held the legal status of minors – unable to own property in their own name, enter into contracts or secure bank loans without the sponsorship of a male relative. As recently as 2003, widows were disqualified from voting in elections, and were ordered to stay at home in accordance with the traditional Swazi belief that a widowed woman is 'unclean' because she still carries the spirit of her dead husband. A new constitution approved in 2005 guarantees women equal political, economic and social rights, reserves one-third of parliamentary seats for women and states that 'a woman shall not be compelled to undergo or uphold any custom to which she is in conscience opposed'. It's not yet clear how much of an actual gain this represents, as some of these provisions may be negated if traditional law is given precedence in the courts. Ironically, against this backdrop, a government survey has found that more than 70% of small businesses in Swaziland are operated by women.

The Zulu word for grandmother is *gogo*. The *gogo* plays a vital role in many families and her monthly pension is often the only regular source of income for the extended family.

In Lesotho, women shouldered a big share of economic, social and family responsibilities while their husbands and male relatives went to work in the mines in South Africa. Many of the mining jobs have now disappeared and – despite some bumps in recent years – the textile industry has become an important part of Lesotho's economy, with up to 90% of the new jobs going to women. Contrary to the trend elsewhere in the region, Basotho women are often better educated than their male counterparts, as many boys in rural areas are forced to tend cattle (or head off to South Africa to work), instead of spending time in the classroom.

SPORT

South Africans are sports fanatics, and after decades of being shut out of international competition, the national teams are now hungry for glory.

SOUTHERN AFRICA'S SLOWLY MELTING POPULATION POT

There are few countries where racial and ethnic conflicts have been as turbulent, protracted and high-profile as in South Africa. The country's heart pulses with the blood of groups with a diversity that covers the ancient San and Khoekhoen, 17th-century Dutch settlers, 19th-century British traders, Bantu-speaking African peoples, Indians, Jews, Portuguese and more. Yet it is only since 1994, with the commitment of the African National Congress (ANC) to build a nonracial 'rainbow nation', that there has been any significant degree of collaboration and peace between the various groups.

During the apartheid era, the government attempted to categorise everyone into one of four major groups – easily enough said, perhaps, but disastrous to implement. The classifications – African (at various times also called 'native' and 'Bantu', and sometimes now also 'black'), coloured, Asian or white – were often arbitrary and highly contentious. They were used to regulate where and how people could live and work, and became the basis for institutionalised inequality and intolerance.

Today, these times are slowly fading into history, although now discrimination based on wealth is threatening to replace racial discrimination. Yet the apartheid-era classification terms continue to be used. While we've also used these terms throughout this book, they work only to a certain extent, and within each of the four major categories are dozens of subgroups that are even more subjective and less clearly defined.

Lesotho and Swaziland were never subject to racial categorisation. This, plus the fact that both countries were for the most part formed around a single tribal group (the Basotho in Lesotho, and the Swazi in Swaziland), means that the constant awareness of racism that you'll encounter while travelling in South Africa is largely absent from these societies.

African

The vast majority of South Africans – about 77% – are Africans. Although subdivided into dozens of smaller groups, all ultimately trace their ancestry to the Bantu-speakers who migrated to Southern Africa in the early part of the 1st millennium AD. Due to the destruction and dispersal of the *difaqane* (forced migration), and to the forced dislocations and distortions of the apartheid era, tribal affiliation tends to be much weaker in South Africa than in other areas of the continent.

Today, discussions generally focus on ethno-linguistic groupings. With the new constitution's elevation of 11 languages to the status of 'official' language, the concept of ethnicity is also gaining a second wind. The largest ethno-linguistic group is the Nguni, which includes Zulu, Swazi, Xhosa and Ndebele peoples. Other major groups are the Sotho-Tswana, the Tsonga-Shangaan and the Venda.

The Zulu have maintained the highest profile ethnic identity over the years, centred in recent times around Chief Mangosouthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party and its calls for an autonomous Zulu state. About 23% of South Africans speak Zulu as a first language. The second-largest group after the Zulu are the Xhosa, who have been extremely influential in politics. Nelson Mandela is Xhosa, as were numerous other figures in the apartheid struggle, and Xhosa have traditionally formed the heart of the black professional class. About 18% of South Africa's population uses Xhosa as a first language. Other major groups include the Basotho (who live primarily in and around Lesotho and South Africa's Free State), the Swazi (most of whom are in Swaziland) and the Tswana (who live primarily in Limpopo and North-West Province, and in Botswana). The Ndebele and Venda peoples are fewer in number, but have maintained very distinct cultures. These and other groups are profiled in the regional chapters throughout this book.

Coloured

During apartheid, 'coloured' was generally used as a catch-all term for anyone who didn't fit into one of the other racial categories. Despite this, a distinct coloured cultural identity has developed over the years – forged at least in part by whites' refusal to accept coloureds as equals and coloureds' own refusal to be grouped socially with blacks.

Among the diverse ancestors of today's coloured population are Afrikaners and others of European descent, West African slaves, political prisoners and exiles from the Dutch East Indies, and some of South Africa's original Khoesaan peoples. One of the largest subgroups of coloureds is the Griqua (p33), most of whom are members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Another major subgroup is the Cape Malays, with roots in places as widely dispersed as India, Indonesia and parts of East Africa. Most Cape Malays are Muslims and have managed to preserve their culture – especially evident today in Cape Town's Bo-Kaap district, in the *karamats* (tombs of Muslim saints) circling the city, and at the end of Ramadan, when you can see thousands of Muslims praying on Cape Town's Sea Point promenade.

Today, most coloureds live in Northern Cape and Western Cape, with significant populations also in KwaZulu-Natal. About 20% speak English as their first language. The vast majority – about 80% – are Afrikaans-speakers, and one of the oldest documents in Afrikaans is a Quran transcribed using Arabic script.

The most vibrant expression of Cape coloured culture is the riotous Cape Town New Year Karnaval (p610).

White

Most of South Africa's approximately 5.5 million whites (about 12% of South Africans) are either Afrikaans-speaking descendents of the early Dutch settlers or English-speakers. The Afrikaners, who mix German, French, British and other blood with their Dutch ancestry, constitute only about 7% of the country's total population. Yet they have had a disproportionate influence on South Africa's history. Rural areas of the country, with the exception of Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the former homelands, continue to be dominated by Afrikaners, who are united by the Afrikaans language and by membership in the Dutch Reformed Church – the focal point of life in country towns.

While some Afrikaners still dream of a *volkstaat* (an independent, racially pure Boer state), the urbanised middle class tends to be considerably more moderate. Interestingly, the further the distance between the horrors of the apartheid era and the 'new South Africa', seemingly the more room there is for Afrikaners to be proud of their heritage. One expression of this is the growing popularity of the Absa Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (p611).

Important Afrikaner cultural organisations include the secret Afrikaner Broederbond, which is highly influential in National Party politics; the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereninginge (FAK), which coordinates cultural events and movements; and the Voortrekkers, an Afrikaner youth organisation based on the scouting movement.

About two-thirds of South Africa's white English-speakers trace their roots to the English immigrants who began arriving in South Africa in the 1820s, although they are far less cohesive as a group than the Afrikaners. Other white South Africans include about 100,000 Jews, many of whom immigrated from Eastern Europe, or fled Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s; a sizable Greek population; and about 50,000 Portuguese, most of whom came over from Mozambique during the 1970s.

Asian

About 98% of South Africa's roughly one million Asians are Indians. Many are descended from the indentured labourers brought to KwaZulu-Natal in the second half of the 19th century, while most of the others trace their ancestry to the free 'passenger Indians' who came to South Africa during the same time as merchants and business people. During apartheid, Indians were discriminated against by whites, but were frequently seen as white collaborators by some blacks.

Today's South African Indian population is primarily Hindu, with about 20% Muslims, and small numbers of Christians. Close to 90% live in Durban and other urban areas of KwaZulu-Natal, where Hindu temples, curries and Eastern spices are common parts of everyday life. Most speak English as a first language; Tamil or Hindi and Afrikaans are also spoken.

In addition to the Indians, there are about 25,000 Chinese, concentrated primarily in Jo'burg, and small numbers of other East Asians.

Football, followed by rugby and cricket, is the most popular spectator sport. The majority of football fans are black, while cricket and rugby attract predominately white crowds, although this is slowly changing.

South African rugby, in particular, is still struggling to shake its reputation as a whites-only domain, despite the inclusion of black players and officials. Development programmes are nurturing talent across the colour divides, and both rugby and cricket are now played regularly in Soweto and in some other townships. Victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup was a turning point, and the image of President Nelson Mandela celebrating while wearing a Springboks jersey became a symbol of reconciliation. South African fans adore their beloved 'Boks' and Springbok-fever runs high in the lead up to international rugby tournaments.

South Africa's national football team is called Bafana Bafana ('Boys Boys' in Zulu). The women's team is called Banyana Banyana (Girls Girls).

In 2010, South Africa will host the football World Cup. The big local match is the Soweto Derby, pitting Jo'burg's 'Orlando Pirates' and 'Kaizer Chiefs' teams against each other. Wherever you are in the country, if a local invites you to a game, don't miss it. And if you're in the townships, watch for football stars cruising the streets in their expensive cars. Many of the top players are flamboyant and enjoy pop-star status among their fans.

MEDIA

After decades of restrictions and repression, South Africa's media is in a state of transition. The national broadcaster, SABC, is an important source of news for millions of South Africans, and is adjusting to its role as an independent voice. Discussion invariably centres around sport, business and crime, and investigative and political journalism are slowly evolving. SABC currently has 18 radio stations and several TV channels.

Privately owned e-tv, which was launched about a decade ago, has a younger, funkier style and smooth presentation.

Minibus taxis have been named after former Olympic distance runner Zola Budd because of their reputation for being fast and reliable.

Surf the radio airwaves and you'll get a sense of South Africa's diversity, with specialist stations broadcasting in all of the 11 official languages. Jo'burg's Y-FM (www.yfm.co.za) – a youth station that broadcasts in a mixture of English and township slang – has been one of the biggest success stories.

The media industry, mirroring political developments, has been the site of significant black empowerment deals, as stations and publications have changed hands. Previously white-dominated radio station Jacaranda-FM, for example, is now one of the top-rated black stations.

South Africa's best-selling English daily newspaper is the *Sowetan*. Although catering primarily to a poorly educated audience, it has a more sophisticated political and social outlook than most of the major white papers.

RELIGION

'When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "Let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.' (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

Religion plays a central role in the lives of most people in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. Christianity is dominant in all three countries, with more than 75% of South Africans, about 90% of Lesotho's population, and around 60% of Swazis identifying themselves as Christians. Major South African denominations include the Nederduitse Gereformeerde (NG) or Dutch Reformed Churches, which have a national congregation of more than 3.5 million people and more than 1200 churches across the country, and the considerably more flamboyant Zion Christian Church (ZCC), with an estimated four million followers, plus many more in Swaziland. Every year more than one million ZCC members gather at Zion city near Polokwane in Limpopo Province during festivals at Easter and in September. Across all denominations, church attendance is generally high. On Sunday mornings in Lesotho, for example, you'll see families walking long distances through the mountains to go to church on even the most bitter winter days.

Despite their disproportionately large social influence, Muslims, Hindus and Jews combined make up less than 6% of South Africans. The rest of the population are atheist and agnostic, with a small number of people following traditional African beliefs.

Muti comes from the Zulu word *umuthi,* meaning 'tree'. *Muti* is derived from many different sources, including plants and animal parts.

Up to two-thirds of South Africa's Indians have retained their Hindu faith, and today most of the country's Hindus are of Indian descent. Islam has a small but growing following, particularly in the Cape. The Jewish community is estimated to be around 100,000, mostly in Jo'burg.

African traditional believers are a small group, although their traditions and practices have a significant influence on the cultural fabric and life of the region. The use of *muti,* or traditional medicine, is widespread, even among those who practise Christianity – just stop by the Museum of Man & Science shop on Diagonal St in central Jo'burg, or walk near the entrance to Chris Hani Baragwanagth Hospital in Soweto, where you'll see hawkers selling all sorts of herbs, powders and liquid concoctions.

ARTS

Cinema

Much of the history of South African cinema since its beginnings in the late-19th century has been one of exclusion and fragmentation. With the collapse of apartheid, the walls hemming in and dividing the industry began to fall as well. Ramadan Suleman's *Fools* (1998) was the first major feature film directed by a black South African. Since this release, the industry has given rise to a host of new talents, including Zola Maseko *(Drum)*, Zulfah Otto-Sallies *(Raya)*, who is also noted for her work on TV, and many others. For more film titles, see the boxed text, p22.

Drum: The Making of a Magazine, by Anthony Sampson, tells the story of *Drum* as it moved into its 1950s heyday, becoming a mouthpiece for the anti-apartheid movement, and featuring some of the era's most prominent literary figures.

Literature

South Africa has an extraordinarily rich literary history, and there's no better way to get a sense of where the country has come from, and where it is heading, than delving into local literature.

Many of the first black South African writers were missionary-educated, including Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, who was also the first Secretary-General of the African National Congress (ANC). In 1930, his epic romance, *Mhudi,* became one of the first books published in English by a black South African. (The first was RR Dhlomo's *An African Tragedy,* published in 1928.)

In 1948, South Africa moved onto the world literary stage with Alan Paton's international bestseller, *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Today, this beautifully crafted, lyrical tale of a black priest who comes to Jo'burg to find his son is still one of the country's most widely recognised titles. Other Paton classics include *Too Late the Phalarope,* which looks at the Afrikaner psyche and the inhumanity of apartheid, and *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful,* another poignant look at the human toll of the apartheid system.

Age of Iron, by JM Coetzee, is the tale of a lone elderly woman who is confronted by unexpected bloodshed. Coetzee's writing is exquisite and gives a sense of the violence and isolation of apartheid South Africa.

During the 1950s, *Drum* magazine became the focal point of lively satire, fiction and comment, and routinely drew attention as a major anti-apartheid mouthpiece. It gave a popular voice to urban black culture, telling the stories of those who were trying to live their lives despite oppression, and launched the careers of numerous prominent journalists and authors. Among these were Can Themba, known in particular for his short stories, and journalist Moses 'Casey' Motsisi.

In the 1960s, future Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer began publishing her first books, including *Not for Publication and Other Stories* (1965) and the widely acclaimed *A Guest of Honour* (1970). Her most famous novel, *July's People,* was released in 1981, and depicts the collapse of white rule.

Tune into Y-FM 99.2 for a taste of the local version of hip-hop, known as Kwaito music.

It was also in the 1960s and into the '70s that Afrikaner writers began to gain prominence as powerful voices for the opposition. Breyten Breytenbach – a poet and novelist who spent much of the '60s in self-imposed exile – was later jailed for becoming involved with the liberation movement, while André Brink was the first Afrikaner writer to be banned by the apartheid government. Brink's classic novel, *A Dry White Season,* portrays the lonely struggles of a white South African who discovered the truth about a black friend who died in police custody. Other Brink titles include *The Rights of Desire* – a tale of post-apartheid South Africa – and the recently published *Praying Mantis*.

The '70s also gave rise to several influential black poets, including Mongane Wally Serote, a veteran of the liberation struggle. His work, including the moving epic poem 'No Baby Must Weep', served as a rallying force for those living under apartheid, and today continues to give insights into the lives of black South Africans during the worst years of oppression.

John Maxwell (JM) Coetzee was also published in the 1970s, although it wasn't until two decades later that he gained international acclaim. His novel *Disgrace* – a powerful, brittle and complex look at South African social realities – was released in 1999 and won Coetzee his second Booker Prize. Coetzee won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

Reporters Without Borders ranks South Africa 31st in the world in terms of press freedoms, equal with Australia, and before the USA (which is ranked 44th).

One of the most prominent contemporary authors is Zakes Mda, who – with the publication of *Ways of Dying* in 1995 – made a successful transition from poetry and plays to become an acclaimed novelist. His most recent book, *The Whale Caller* (2005), takes a somewhat sceptical look at the optimism surrounding the new South Africa.

For more literary highlights see the boxed text, p22.

Architecture

Among the highlights of Southern African indigenous architecture are the 'beehive huts' that you'll see dotted throughout the region, as well as in Swaziland and in rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal. These structures consist of a frame made of wooden sticks or poles, bent and lashed together to form a dome, and then covered with grass mats and thatching. A typical homestead or *umuzi,* as it's known in Zulu, consists of a group of these dwellings arranged in a circle around a cattle kraal, and surrounded by a fence made of stones or bush. Traditionally the huts were set on an eastward-facing slope, with the hut of the chief at the highest point.

Beehive huts are also found in Xhosa areas, where they are used primarily in initiation rites, though the more common residential variant is the thatched, round, straight-walled huts that you'll see throughout rural parts of Eastern Cape. While mud bricks or other materials are now often used, traditionally, the sides of these huts were constructed with a mixture of clay and cattle dung spread over a circular frame topped with thatching. Xhosa huts are typically seen scattered over the hillsides, rather than arranged in the kraals characteristic of Zulu areas.

Elaborately painted Ndebele houses – a relatively recent tradition – are another highlight. Their exteriors sport brightly coloured geometric motifs or more elaborate artwork that may depict anything from airplanes to double-storey dwellings and street lamps.

Basotho homes are also often brightly painted, and feature geometric and often highly symbolic mural art known as *litema*. The tradition began with women painting symbols on their houses as a form of supplication for rain and good fortune. Beginning during the anti-apartheid struggles, some Basotho women also used *litema* as a political statement, painting their houses in the gold, black and green colours of the ANC. Today, *litema* is used particularly around special celebrations and holidays, such as births, weddings and religious feasts.

The beautifully photographed *Shack Chic,* by Craig Fraser, is a captivating portrayal of the strength and spirit of those living in South Africa's townships.

The colonial era also left a rich architectural legacy. One of its most attractive building styles is that of the graceful and gabled Cape Dutch house so typical of the Western Cape. Pretoria is another showpiece of colonial-era architecture, with an impressive collection of conservative and stately creations, including the famous Union Buildings (p434), designed by English architect Sir Herbert Baker.

Jo'burg grew quickly after the discovery of gold in 1886 and those who were making money were eager to show off their wealth with palatial homes and grand offices. In Durban, the designs were more playful. Beginning in the 1930s, flamboyant buildings with Art Deco influences gave the city its own style. Take a stroll along Victoria Embankment, or up Broad or Aliwal Sts for a sampling. Cape Town's building boom in the 1930s also left a wealth of impressive Art Deco designs, especially around Greenmarket Square. Many of the highlights are included in the walking tour, p138.

The dour days of apartheid delivered many bland office blocks and public buildings, and much of contemporary architecture is now centred on overcoming this heritage. The white-dominated industry is gradually attracting more black professionals, but it's a slow process and South Africa is still finding a sense of style that reflects the nation. Security is a major consideration for contemporary architects, as the country's crime rate means that high walls, electric fences, boom gates and guard houses are a required part of many building plans.

One of the most noteworthy examples of new South African architecture is the Constitutional Court in Jo'burg (p403). Inaugurated in 2004, it was built on the site of the old Jo'burg Fort where many famous anti-apartheid activists were jailed during the liberation struggle. Another is the new Northern Cape Legislature Building in Kimberley (p529), which is notable for its lack of columns, and minimisation of angles and straight lines.

For some more architectural highlights, see the boxed text, p22.

Visual Arts

South African art had its beginnings with the San, who left their distinctive designs on rock faces and cave walls throughout the region. When European painters arrived, many of their early works centred on depictions of Africa for colonial enthusiasts back home, although with time, a more South Africa–centred focus developed.

See www.artthrob.co.za for the latest on South Africa's contemporary visual arts scene.

Black artists were sidelined for many decades. Gerard Sekoto was one of the first to break through the barriers, and is viewed today as one of the major figures in the development of South African contemporary art. Before departing South Africa for France in 1947, he lived in Sophiatown and Kliptown, and much of his early work depicts the colour and vibrancy of township life. One of Sekoto's most famous paintings from this time was *Yellow Houses* (1940), which became the first work by a black painter to be bought by the Jo'burg Art Gallery.

At about the same time that Sekoto was gaining prominence, a Sophiatown neighbour, John Koenakeefe Mohl, began spearheading artistic instruction and schooling for young black artists. In 1960, he was one of

the founding members of the Artists' Market Association, which was set up to provide a showcase for young talent – today continued in Artists Under the Sun.

Artists Under the Sun (www.artistsunderthesun.org) was founded during the apartheid era to promote visual arts regardless of colour. It's still going, with a free exhibition on the first weekend of each month at Zoo Lake in Parktown, Johannesburg.

Throughout the apartheid era, racism, oppression and violence were common themes on canvas. Many black artists who were unable to afford materials adopted cheaper alternatives, including lino prints. Artists also played an important role in designing the logos for T-shirts, banners and posters during the liberation struggle.

In more recent times, a lack of public funds for the arts sector has meant that it has become more reliant on corporate collectors and the tourism industry. Contemporary art ranges from vibrant crafts sold on the side of the road to high-priced paintings that hang in trendy galleries. Innovative artists are using anything from telephone wire, safety pins, beads and plastic bags to tin cans to create their works.

Local sculpture is also diverse. Artists including Jackson Hlungwane, known for his highly symbolic, religiously oriented woodcarvings, and Helen Martins, whose concrete sculptures can be seen at her Owl House in Nieu Bethesda (see p271), have experimented with a range of styles and materials.

Theatre & Dance

During the colonial era, South African theatre was dominated by European and American plays staged for local audiences. But home-grown playwrights, performers and directors gradually emerged, particularly in the 1930s, when theatre began to gain popularity in the townships. One of the first black South African writers to have his work published in English was Herbert Dhlomo, who won acclaim for his 1936 drama *The Girl Who Killed to Save*. Jo'burg's old Sophiatown neighbourhood was a particularly prolific font for new artists and pieces. Yet, the apartheid regime's National Theatre Fund didn't provide support to black theatre companies and development was marked by a constant struggle for resources.

A major turning point came with the arrival on the scene of writer and director Athol Fugard. Fugard, who played a crucial role in developing and nurturing black theatrical talent, established several troupes in Port Elizabeth and Jo'burg during the 1950s. By the 1960s and '70s, theatre and politics were inextricably intertwined. Several artists were arrested and charged for their role in the fight against apartheid and others had their work banned. The innovative two-man show *Woza Albert!,* which portrayed Jesus Christ arriving in apartheid-era South Africa, won rave reviews and international acclaim.

In 1974, run-down buildings at Jo'burg's old 'Indian' fruit market were converted to become the Market Theatre, with patrons and performers defying the apartheid government's notorious Group Areas Act to ensure that it became an all-race venue. Today, the Market Theatre is still one of the best-known performance spaces in the country (p415).

While the end of apartheid took with it the powerful themes of racism and oppression that had spawned decades of local creative output, South Africa's performing arts scene is now enjoying a renaissance and beginning to explore new topics.

African Footprint (www.africanfootprintonline.com), which had its world premiere in 2000, has been a highly successful showcase of young South African dancers. Another highlight is the First National Bank Dance Umbrella – an annual festival of dance and choreography that brings together local and international artists and provides a stage for new work.

Music

Jane Cornwell

Nelson Mandela once declared that music would be the salvation of his people. Just as music fuelled the resistance to apartheid, it continues to sing out for freedom and justice, providing a soundtrack to everyday lives. Music is everywhere in South Africa, coming through every available medium, communicating in every imaginable style. Want a 'typical' South African sound? Forget it: South Africa has the greatest range of musical styles on the African continent, and more than any country of similar size anywhere in the world. A nation of record collectors, the people of South Africa love their music. Rock, jazz, classical, gospel, rap, reggae, maskanda, mbaqanga, kwaito…and much more. Here centuries-old traditions jostle with new genres sprung from old ones. Western styles are given an idiosyncratic stamp. The country's gargantuan recording industry (with its new, small-but-determined crop of independent black-owned labels) watches, ready to pounce.

The sounds of South Africa have an inevitable influence on its smaller neighbours Lesotho and Swaziland. Vocal choirs are popular in Lesotho, as is Afropop, jazz, reggae and especially kwaito. Traditional musical instruments such as the *lekolulo* flute and the *setolo-tolo* mouth bow continue to be played by the Sotho. Swaziland, too, has its traditional music, which is used as accompaniment for harvests, weddings, births and other events. It also has local choral music, jazz, Afropop, rock, a burgeoning hip-hop scene and, above all else, gospel.

In South Africa, over a decade's worth of freedom has proved that a recovering country can still produce sophisticated talent to the highest international standards. The Rainbow Nation continues to address social concerns, express sadness and bring joy. No one sound will ever identify South Africa, which can only be a good thing (the annual South African Music Awards is a multicategory, multitextured and very long ceremony as a result). Part of what makes South Africa so astonishing is its range. What follows is a by-no-means definitive look at the major genres, with their major players. So get humming, swing your hips and dive in.

Pascale Lamche's *Sophiatown* (2003) looks at Jo'burg's bustling Sophiatown, the Harlem of South Africa. Home to many artists and musicians, it was flattened for redevelopment in the 1950s. Archive footage and interviews with Nelson Mandela, Hugh Masekela and Dorothy Masuka make for compulsive viewing.

A POTTED HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC

The Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho people have been singing and dancing for thousands of years – this is the music that attracted Paul Simon before he recorded his 1988 album *Graceland* – just as the Venda (and in Lesotho, the Basotho) have been playing their *mbiras* (thumb pianos) and reed pipes. There are eight distinct 'tribal' traditions in South Africa, and democracy has seen a resurgence in traditional musicians making very traditional music. But from the earliest colonial times to the present day, South Africa's music has created and reinvented itself from a mixture of older local and imported styles. Most of the popular ones use either Zulu a-capella singing or harmonic mbaqanga as a vocal base, ensuring that whatever the instrument – and the banjo, violin, concertina and electric guitar have all had a profound influence – the sound stays proudly, resolutely African.

Ever wondered why the chord sequences of many South African songs seem familiar? Blame the church: the Protestant missionaries of the 19th century developed a choral tradition that, in tandem with the country's first formal music education, South African composers would blend with traditional harmonic patterns: Enoch Sontonga's 1897 hymn 'Nkosi

In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants (1994) is a legendary tome by ethnomusicologist David B Coplan, who focuses on the sung oral poetry of the workers who migrate from Lesotho to the mines and cities of South Africa.

Sikelel, i Afrika' (God Bless Africa), originally written in Xhosa, is now the country's national anthem. Today the gospel movement is the major industry player. Gloria Bosman, Sibongile Khumalo, Pinise Saul and other top black South African artists now working across a range of genres – classical, jazz, gospel, opera – started singing in mission-school choirs or in church. Others, such as redoubtable gospel superstar Rebecca (who has dropped her surname, Malope), crossed over from the shiny world of pop. Swaziland's biggest gospel star is Shongwe, a former gold miner.

INTERVIEW WITH HUGH MASEKELA

After almost three decades away, one of South Africa's most renowned musicians in exile during the apartheid era, Hugh Masekela, has reclaimed his place in the national music terrain. Since his return in 1990, Masekela's drive, musicality and business acumen have provided a much needed spark for the explosion in South Africa's recorded music scene. It hasn't been easy, he shrugs. But he's glad to be back, just the same.

'I am like a pig in dirty mud,' he says with a grin. 'I have been very fortunate to be able to reimmerse myself in the things that I missed when I was away. People like myself, Miriam (Makeba) and Abdullah (Ibrahim) were always living overseas reluctantly. To tell you the truth, until I came back here, which I never thought I would, my career never really started.'

Masekela's 21st-century success – with albums like *Sixty, Black to the Future* and *Time* – is hugely satisfying for an individual who began playing music some 50 years ago. 'Creatively I get my energy from this place,' he says. 'I always have. Now the time has come to give back.' Beyond his solo work, which also provides a platform for a slew of talented musicians (such as Zwai Bela, former member of kwaito group TKZee), Masekela is committed to rebuilding the country. There is his initiative MAAPSA (Musicians and Artists Programme of South Africa), which implements drug rehabilitation projects in the creative community (Masekela is a former addict himself). There is his record company, Chissa, which has expanded to include music events, theatre productions, opera and films.

'Chissa is the first African-owned independent record company. It has been a hell of a fight to get where we are because everything that is entertainment-oriented in Africa was always owned by the old, colonial-era order,' says the unapologetically political Masekela, eyes flashing. 'There is resistance, because they know that in the end we will kick them out. So this is the new fight. The new revolution. The government would like to help, but because they're politicians they don't know how to.'

He isn't alone, he adds. Masekela and his colleagues aim to establish the same sort of music distribution network that exists in, say, India, Japan and Brazil – even in America or Europe. 'But to do that we have to own it. So that's what we're going through now. It's the kind of legacy a few of us would like to leave: the ownership and reclaiming of our culture. That is what will bring our self-esteem back. Apartheid basically killed our culture – and for us to re-energise and revive it we have to own the audio-visual industry.'

It's been a long personal road. The Witbank, Jo'burg, boy was moved to pick up a trumpet after watching Kirk Douglas playing Bix Beiderbecke in the movie *Young Man With A Horn* ('He had the finest clothes, he stood in front of the band, he always got the girl'). He co-founded The Jazz Epistles, the first black South African jazz band to make a long-playing record, and left his fractured homeland for Great Britain and then the US ('Miles, Dizzy and Louis all said to me, "Put some of that South African flavour in your music and everyone will sit up and take notice"') and elsewhere in Africa. He married (and divorced) Miriam Makeba, impressed Nelson Mandela, and befriended the likes of Harry Belafonte, Paul Simon and Fela Kuti. Most of all, he used his profile to remind his people and the world of what they were, and what was going on.

Masekela is now back where he belongs. 'To rebuild a nation that has been repressed and kicked around is very rough. People look at us as this amazing miracle "Rainbow Nation", but the after-effects don't go away the day after you stand in line to vote, you know.' Hugh Masekela pauses, smiles. 'We'll get there, slowly,' he says. 'But we need to work together.'

Zulu music's veteran exponents Ladysmith Black Mambazo – wrongly considered 'typical' South African music by many Westerners, thanks to their rapid-fire album releases and relentless international touring schedule – exemplify the way indigenous harmonies were neatly mixed with the sounds of European and African church choirs (a vocal style known as *mbube*). In the same way that much contemporary South African art was born from oppression, Ladysmith's 'tiptoe' *isicathamiya* music, with its high-kicking, soft-stepping dance, has its origins in all-male miner's hostels in Natal province in the 1930s, with workers at pains not to wake their bosses. *Isicathamiya* choirs still appear in weekly competitions in Johannesburg (Jo'burg) and Durban; such choirs, or versions thereof, often busk South African city streets.

Paul Simon's *Graceland* album has sold 7 million copies worldwide and – despite the controversy over the breaking of sanctions – was vital in alerting the rest of the world to the music of South Africa.

Kwela music, like most modern South African styles, came out of the townships. Kwela, meaning 'jump up', was the instruction given to those about to be thrown into police vans during raids. Once-infamous areas like Soweto, Sharpeville, District Six and Sophiatown gave rise to urban, pan-tribal genres, mostly inspired by music coming in (or back) from America such as jazz, swing, jive and soul. Black South Africans added an urban spin: kwela, with its penny whistles (an instrument evolved from the reed flutes of indigenous cattle herders) and one-string bass became sax-jive, or mbaqanga. Marabi soul took off in the 1970s. Bubblegum pop dominated the 1980s. Kwaito, South Africa's very own hip hop, exploded in the 1990s and remains, apart from gospel and a burgeoning R&B scene, the country's most popular genre. Kwaito superstar and former township heavy Zola even has his own TV show.

America and Europe were the inspiration for white South African artists. Sixties phenomenon Four Jacks and a Jill were pure Western pop. British punk inspired 1970s working-class outfits a la Wild Youth. The 1980s saw a crossover of black and white musicians: Johnny Clegg and Juluka (now Savuka) used a fusion of white rock and pop with traditional Zulu music to challenge racist restrictions and set a precedent for others. Grunge helped shape the likes of Scooters Union, the Springbok Nude Girls and other 1990s guitar bands. The likes of Seether, the Parlotones and former Springbok frontman Arno Carstens means that rock continues to, well, rock the country today. Afrikaans music – through Anna Davel, Chris Chameleon, Lize Beekman and Theuns Jordaan – continues its renaissance. And then there's the huge cutting edge dance scene: house, techno, acid jazz, R&B, dancehall and all grooves in between, often with live elements thrown in.

The 2006 Oscar-winning township drama *Tsotsi* features a soundtrack composed by kwaito star Zola (who also plays local gang boss Fela), as well as haunting tracks by singer-songwriter Vusi Mahlasela (*Music From the Motion Picture Tsotsi*, Milan Records).

The effects of apartheid on lives and culture are still sorely felt; musicians such as jazz legend and former exile Hugh Masekela stress the need for continued vigilance. (Look out, too, for the multitalented protest singer, Vusi Mahlasela.) The creation of a black-owned, black-run music industry and distribution network is still a long way off (resistance by moguls in the old white biz has been fierce), but is vital nonetheless. South African music still needs to be Africanised. In the meantime, the music of the resistance has maintained its fire by changing its focus: other scourges – such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, the abuse of women and children – are being written about, talked about and sung about. Opportunities abound in the current climate of cultural and artistic expression.

In Swaziland, where the enthusiastically polygamous King Mswati allegedly had his teenage daughter and her friends whipped in 2005 for refusing to turn down the music at a party, and where the ancient but controversial Reed Dance ceremony sees thousands of bare-breasted virgins

www.lonelyplanet.com

The Morija Arts and Cultural Festival is a five-day celebration of Basotho culture and Lesotho heritage that takes place in Morija (40km from Lesotho's capital, Maseru) at the end of September each year.

dance for the absolute monarch, things aren't quite so liberal. Mswati, who has his own 'electronic' praise singer, Quawe Mamba (who runs the king's TV studio as well as a private TV channel), has long hosted fundraising concerts that feature both international stars (Eric Clapton, Erykah Badu) and local acts. Music, he has said, 'is a healing weapon for a depressed soul as well as an expression of joy'. And indeed, music pulses strongly in Swaziland, courtesy of everyone from kwaito DJ Kwephe and reggae outfit Black Roses to fast-rising singer Fanaza Tsabedze.

Up in Lesotho, the hills and valleys are alive with the sound of music. The Basotho people love their songs and instruments: children in villages harmonise their hearts out in choirs; shepherd boys play their *lekolulo* flutes and sing in pure, pitch-perfect voices; women play the stringed *thomo;* and men the *setolo-tolo,* a sort of extended Jew's Harp played using the mouth.

In South Africa, however, boundaries are down. Styles are cross-pollinating. Many genres, especially jazz, are booming (venues, however, need to follow suit). Democracy, so bitterly won, has never sounded so sweet.

SOUTH AFRICAN MUSICAL STYLES

Marabi

In the early 1900s travelling African-American minstrel shows, vaudeville acts, ragtime piano players and gospel groups impressed local audiences in the growing cities of Cape Town and Jo'burg. Urbanisation had a domino effect on musical styles: visiting American jazz artists and records by the likes of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington kick-started what would later become the South African jazz scene. By the 1920s and 1930s the urban ghettos were singing and swinging to a defining, dangerous (in Sotho it means 'gangster') small band sound: marabi.

Played on cheap pedal organs and keyboards with accompaniment from pebble-filled cans, marabi flooded illegal township shebeens (unlicensed bars) and dancehalls. Its siren call got people in and drinking, but it also offered some dignity and consolation to the oppressed working-class areas where it was played. Marabi's trancelike rhythms and cyclical harmonies had links to American Dixieland and ragtime; subsequent decades saw the addition of penny whistle, drums, banjo and a big-band swing, even bebop aesthetic.

Marabi made its way into the jazz-dance bands that produced the first generation of professional black musicians: the Jazz Maniacs, Merry Blackbirds and Jazz Revellers. Often referred to, simply (and not always correctly) as 'African jazz' or 'jive', marabi went on to spawn other styles. One of these was kwela.

Kwela

Kwela was the first popular South African style to make the world sit up and take notice. Initially played on acoustic guitar, banjo, one-string bass and, most importantly, the penny whistle, kwela was taken up by kids with no access to horns and pianos but keen to put their own spin on American swing. Groups of tin-flautists would gather to play on street corners in white areas, with the danger of arrest (for creating a 'public disturbance') upping the music's appeal and attracting rebellious white kids known as 'ducktails'. Many such groups were also lookouts for the *shebeens*.

South African Music Week takes place every August in Cape Town.

Kwela combos gained a live following but little recording took place until 1954, when Spokes Mashinyane's Ace Blues became the smash African hit of the year and sent white producers scurrying into the black market. Artists such as Sparks Nyembe and Jerry Mlotshwa became popular; the hit 'Tom Lark' by Elias Lerole and His Zig-Zag Flutes even crossed over to Britain, where – probably because of its similarity to skiffle – it stayed in the charts for 14 weeks.

In the early 1960s Mashinyane introduced the saxophone to kwela with his song 'Big Joe Special', ending the penny-whistle boom and creating sax-jive. Sax-jive quickly became mbaqanga.

Mbaqanga

The saxophone became vital to jazz music, which, much to the dismay of white kwela fans, was now limited to performances in the townships. Mbaqanga ('easy money') had its innovators: Joseph Makwela and Marks Mankwane of celebrated session players the Makhona Tshole Band added electric guitars to the cascading rhythms – notably a funky, muscular bass – while sax player/producer West Nkosi set the pace. This hugely popular electric sound backed singers whose vocal style was later christened 'mqashiyo' (after a dance style), even though it was really no different from mbaqanga.

Mbaqanga's idiosyncratic vocals echoed 1950s groups such as the Manhattan Brothers and Miriam Makeba's Skylarks, groups who copied African-American do-wop outfits but used Africanised five-part harmonies instead of four. In the 1960s Aaron Lerole of Black Mambazo added his groaning vocals to the mix, but it was the growling bass of Simon 'Mahlathini' Nkabinde and his sweet-voiced Mahotella Queens (backed by the Makhona Tshole Band) who would inspire a generation, including Izintombi Zeze Manje Manje and the Boyoyo Boys who would be sampled by British producer/chancer Malcolm McLaren on the 1981 British number one, 'Double Dutch'. The Mahotella Queens – sans Mahlathini – are still going strong.

South African Music (www.music.org.za) has links to local artists, performances and music news.

Mbaqanga remains a dominant force in South African music, its influence apparent in everything from soul and reggae to R&B, kwaito and, of course, jazz.

Jazz

Structurally, harmonically and melodically distinctive, the force that is South African jazz started as an underground movement and became a statement of protest and identity. In the hands of such exiled stars as singer Miriam Makeba, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (formerly Dollar Brand) and trumpeter Hugh Masekela, it was famously an expatriate music that represented the suffering of a people. Legendary outfit the Blue Notes – led by Chris McGregor and featuring saxophonist Dudu Pukwana – helped change the face of European jazz after relocating to the UK. Jazzers who stayed behind kept a low profile while developing new sounds and followings with, variously, jazz-rock fusion, Latin and even Malay crossovers.

A SLEEPING GIANT

In 1939 Zulu migrant worker Solomon Linda recorded a song called 'Mbube' (Lion) for Gallo; retitled 'Wimoweh/The Lion Sleeps Tonight' it made big bucks for everyone from Pete Seeger to Disney, who used it in 1994's *The Lion King*. Linda had signed away his rights to his song (which has made an estimated US$15 million), but in 2006 a loophole was discovered in South African law that brought the rights back to Linda's family.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

- marabi – *From Marabi to Disco,* Various Artists (Gallo, South Africa)
- kwela – *Spokes Mashiyane,* King Kwela (Gallo, South Africa)
- mbaqanga – *Soul Brothers,* Kuze Kuse (Gallo, South Africa)
- jazz – *Sheer Jazz,* Various Artists (Sheer Sound, South Africa)
- gospel – *Tales of Gospel S.A.* (Sheer Sound, South Africa)
- neotraditional music – *Sthandwa,* Phuzekhemisi (Gallo, South Africa)
- soul and reggae – *Respect,* Lucky Dube (Gallo, South Africa)
- bubblegum, kwaito and current trends – *New Construction,* Bongo Maffin (Gallo, South Africa)

World-renowned exiles who returned home after the end of the anti-apartheid cultural boycott had to work hard to win back local audiences. Most now enjoy healthy followings – Masekela remains his country's most enduring musical ambassador – in what is a thriving (if occasionally backbiting) mainstream scene. Frequent festivals, often featuring top overseas acts, are providing platforms (among the best is the Cape Town International Jazz Festival each April) and the South African media is lending its support.

Featuring music and interviews by Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba among others, Lee Hirsch's *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (2003) explores the role of music in the fight against apartheid. Made over nine years, this is a deeply affecting film.

Well known locals are moving jazz forward, working with DJs, artists, poets and dance companies. Coltrane-esque saxophonist Zim Ngqawana (who led a group of 100 drummers, singers and dancers at Nelson Mandela's inauguration in 1994) is drawing on folk and rural traditions as well as Indian, avant garde and classical music. His former sideman, pianist Andile Yenana, combines the traditional and experimental with Monk-ish flair. Guitarist Jimmy Dludlu, a sort of African George Benson, takes time out to work with music school graduates. Lesotho-born Tsopo 'The Village Pope' Tshola has made an astounding comeback. Female vocalists Gloria Bosman, Sibongile Khumalo, Judith Sephumo and myriad others are making their mark. Many are enjoying success in another genre with common roots: gospel.

Gospel

The music industry's biggest market – bolstered by the country's 80% Christian black population – South Africa's gospel is an amalgam of European choral music, American influences, Zulu a-cappella singing and other African traditions incorporated within the church (Zionist, Ethiopian, Pentecostal and Apostolic). All joy, colour and exuberance, rhythm, passion and soul, gospel choirs perform throughout South Africa, lifting the roofs off big, formal venues and community halls alike. The 24-piece ensemble and overseas success story, Soweto Gospel Choir (check out their new album, *Blessed*), like many big choirs features a band with drummers and dancers.

This vast genre is divided into both traditional gospel – as personified by the heavyweight Pentecostal Church Choir (IPCC) and others such as Solly Moholo, Lusanda Spiritual Group and Jabu Hlongwane – and contemporary gospel. Beacons of the latter include tiny diva Rebecca (who also sings in the traditional style), multiplatinum KwaMashu Deborah 'Debs' Fraser, Reverend Benjamin Dube ('the Gospel Maestro') and classical ensemble Soweto String Quartet. Former gold miner Shongwe – who created his gospel songs while working underground and hummed them until his shift was over – is Lesotho's biggest star.

Gospel also comprises much of the oeuvre of Ladysmith Black Mambazo (whose 2006 album *Long Walk To Freedom* finds them collaborating with Western artists including Emmylou Harris and Natalie Merchant). Their Zulu *isicathimiya* music is a prime example of the way traditional South African music has appropriated Western sounds to produce unique musical styles.

Neotraditional Music

Away from the urban life of the townships and the cities' recording studios, traditional musicians from the Sotho, Zulu, Pedi and Shangaan regions were creating dynamic social music. By the 1930s many were mixing call-and-response singing with the dreamy 10-button concertina, an instrument that has made a comeback in Zulu pop. The Sotho took up the accordion (accordion players and groups still abound in Lesotho); the Pedi the German autoharp; and the Zulu embraced the guitar.

Rage (www.rage.co.za) is an online magazine with music news, reviews and fashion.

Maskanda (or maskandi) is a form of rhythmic and repetitive guitar picking born through the Zulu experience of labour migration. Many made do with an *igogogo,* an instrument fashioned from an oil can; maskanda stalwart Shiyani Ngcobo still uses the *igogogo* in his live sets. Today's top-selling maskanda acts include Bhekumuzi Luthuli, Inkunzi Emdaka, Thokozani and Phuzekhemisi, whose shows often include dozens of singers, dancers and instrumentalists.

The upbeat and vaguely Latin-sounding Tsonga (formerly Shangaan) music tends to feature a male leader backed by, variously, a female chorus, guitars, synths, percussion and an unabashed disco beat. Best known acts include Doctor Sithole, George Maluleke, Matshwa Bemuda & Magenge Sisters and Thomas Gezane Mzamani.

Young Xhosa artist Lungiswa is one of the few female South African musicians to play the *mbira* in her traditional/urban crossovers. Veteran singer Busi Mhlongo (like Tsepo Tsola, now addiction-free after support from Hugh Masekela's MAAPSA drug rehabilitation programme) fuses the traditional Zulu sound with hip hop and kwaito.

In Lesotho, a group of shepherds known as Sotho Sounds play instruments made from rubbish: one-string fiddle *(qwadinyana),* guitars *(katara)* and drums fashioned out of disused oil cans, car tyres, twigs and a kitchen sink. Having played WOMAD UK in 2003 they have returned to their base in Malealea, where they continue to compose and rehearse (they perform for guests of Malealea Lodge every second night).

One World (www.oneworld.co.za) is an independent music cyberstore selling South African music and a limited range of books and videos.

But again, it's in South Africa that roots are being mixed with every sound imaginable, from country, blues, rap (check out Hip Hop Pantsula, H2O, Tuks Senganga) and house (see DJs Fresh, Oskido, Christos) to rock, reggae and soul.

Soul & Reggae

The American-led soul music of the 1960s had a huge impact on township teenagers. The local industry tried various cheap imitations; the few South African 'soul' groups that made it did so on the back of a blend of soul and marabi, like the Movers, or soul and electric bass mbaqanga, like the Soul Brothers, a band who spawned dozens of imitators and are still going strong today. Contemporary South African soul is often filed under mbaqanga: the genre from which evergreen reggae star Lucky Dube sprang (in 1984) into another style of music entirely. Dube's legacy aside, in South Africa reggae is often subsumed into other genres like ragga and

TOP 10 SOUTH AFRICAN ALBUMS

- *The Indestructible Beat of Soweto, Volumes 1-6* – Various Artists
- *Jazz in Africa, Volume 1* – Jazz Epistles
- *Her Essential Recordings* – Miram Makeba
- *Hope* – Hugh Masekela
- *The Best of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens*
- *Shaka Zulu* – Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- *Zabalaza* – Thandiswa
- *Ibutho* – Zola
- *The Voice* – Vusi Mahlasela
- *New Beginnings* – Judith Sephuma

kwaito: the redoubtable Bongo Maffin (the Fugees of South Africa) throw kwaito, house, reggae, ragga, gospel and hip hop into the pot.

Homegrown R&B has also surged ahead: hugely popular female singer Lebo Mathosa fuses traditional and dance music, funk and R&B. Big-voiced belter Pebbles cites Mariah and Whitney as inspirations. The hunky Camagu mixes his smooth voice with electronic beats, while the wonderful Thandiswa (Bongo Maffin's Lauryn Hill) makes nods in the R&B direction on her latest release, *Zabalaza.*

Bubblegum, Kwaito & Current Trends

The disco that surfaced during the 1970s came back – slick, poppy and Africanised – in the 1980s as 'bubblegum'. Vocally led and aimed squarely at the young, this electronic dance style owed a debt to mbaqanga as well as America. What the Soul Brothers started, superstars like Brenda Fassie, Sello 'Cicco' Twala and Yvonne Chaka Chaka refined. (The sudden death of the outrageous and brilliant Fassie in May 2004 left South Africa reeling.) Bubblegum's popularity waned in the 1990s, and in its place exploded kwaito (kwi-to, meaning 'hot').

The music of young, black, urban South Africa, kwaito is a rowdy mix of everything from bubblegum, hip hop, R&B and ragga to mbaqanga, traditional, jazz, and British and American house music. It is also a fashion statement, a state of mind and a lifestyle. Chanted or sung in a mixture of English, Zulu, Sesotho and the street slang Isicamtho (usually over programmed beats and backing tapes), kwaito's lyrics range from the anodyne to the fiercely political. A unique fusion, kwaito has caught the imagination of post-apartheid South Africa. Acts such as Zola, Boom Shala, TK Zee and Arthur remain major players, while the current crop includes Brickz, Brown Dash, Spikiri and Prokid – though he is also considered a rapper. (The rap versus kwaito debate is a noisy one.)

Freedom of expression used to be a luxury for black youth living in a country torn apart by apartheid. Not any more. The first place this freedom became visible was the music scene – a scene that is thriving, creating and reinventing itself in ways too numerous to mention here.

Environment

THE LAND

South Africa spreads over 1,233,404 sq km – five times the size of the UK – at the tip of the African continent. On three sides, it's edged by a windswept and stunningly beautiful coastline, winding down the Atlantic seaboard in the west, and up into the warmer Indian Ocean waters to the east.

Much of the country consists of a vast plateau averaging 1500m in height, and known as the highveld. To the east is a narrow coastal plain (the lowveld), while to the northwest is the low-lying Kalahari basin. The dramatic Drakensberg escarpment marks the point where the highveld plummets down towards the eastern lowlands.

Tiny Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa. It sits entirely above 1000m, perched on a 30,350 sq km patch of highland plateau and rugged peaks. Swaziland is almost half Lesotho's size, measuring only 17,363 sq km. Yet within its borders it encompasses diverse ecological zones, ranging from rainforest in the northwest to savanna scrub in the east.

Lesotho has the highest lowest point of any country in the world:1380m, in southern Lesotho's Senqu (Orange) River valley.

WILDLIFE

Southern Africa contains some of the most accessible and varied wildlife-watching found anywhere on the continent.

Animals

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is home to an unparalleled diversity of wildlife. It boasts the world's largest land mammal (the African elephant), as well as the second largest (white rhino) and the third largest (hippopotamus). It's also home to the tallest (giraffe), the fastest (cheetah) and the smallest (pygmy shrew). You probably have a better chance of seeing the Big Five – the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion – in South Africa than anywhere else. There's also a lesser-known 'Little Five' – the rhinoceros beetle, buffalo weaver, elephant shrew, leopard tortoise and ant lion – if you're looking for a challenge. See the colour Wildlife Guide (p69) for a glimpse of some of these and other animals.

Good safari companions: *Field Guide to Mammals of Southern Africa* and *A Field Guide to the Tracks and Signs of Southern and East African Wildlife* both by Chris and Tilde Stuart, and *The Safari Companion: A Guide to Watching African Mammals* by Richard Estes.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Tourism is a big industry in Southern Africa. Following are a few guidelines for minimising strain on the local environment:

- ask permission before photographing people
- don't give money, sweets or pens to children; donations to recognised projects or local charitable organisations are a better option
- support local enterprise
- avoid buying items made from ivory, skin, shells etc
- carry a Sassi wallet card (see p94) if you enjoy dining at seafood restaurants
- use water and other natural resources prudently
- inform yourself of South Africa's history, and be sensitive to it in your travels

Also check the website of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (www.fairtourismsa.org.za).

Among the most comprehensive field guides covering South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland are *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa* by Kenneth Newman, and *Birds of Southern Africa* by Ian Sinclair et al.

The best time for wildlife-watching is the cooler, dry winter (June to September) when foliage is less dense, and animals congregate at waterholes, making spotting easier. Summer (late November to March) is rainy and hot, with the animals more widely dispersed and often difficult to see. However, the landscape turns beautiful shades of green around this time and birdlife is abundant.

South Africa hosts over 800 bird species, including the world's largest bird (the ostrich), its heaviest flying bird (Kori bustard), and vividly coloured sunbirds and flamingos. Also here in abundance are weavers, who share their huge city-like nests with pygmy falcons, the world's smallest raptors.

Bird-watching is good year-round, with spring (August to November) and summer the best.

Endangered Species

The Johannesburg-based Endangered Wildlife Trust (www.ewt.org.za) is the best source of information on South Africa's endangered species.

The black rhino is the highest profile entry on South Africa's threatened species list (good places to spot these include Mkhuze Game Reserve, p345 and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, p335). The riverine rabbit is the country's most endangered mammal (the only place in the world it is found is near rivers in the central Karoo). The wild dog (seen with luck in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park) is also endangered, as is the roan antelope.

Endangered bird species include the graceful wattled crane and the blue swallow. The African penguin and the Cape vulture are considered threatened.

LESOTHO

Thanks primarily to its altitude, Lesotho is home to fewer animals than many Southern African countries. Those you may encounter include rheboks, jackals, mongooses, meerkats and elands.

Close to 300 species of birds have been recorded in Lesotho, notably bearded vultures, lammergeiers and bald ibises.

SWAZILAND

Tiny Swaziland boasts about 120 species of mammals – one-third of Southern Africa's nonmarine mammal species. Many (including elephants, rhinos and lions) have been introduced, and larger animals are restricted to nature reserves and private wildlife farms. Mongooses and large-spotted genets are common, and hyenas and jackals are found in the reserves. Leopards are present, but rarely seen.

Swaziland's varied terrain supports abundant birdlife, including the blue crane, ground woodpecker and lappet-faced vulture.

Plants

Over 20,000 plant species sprout from South Africa's soil – an amazing 10% of the world's total, although the country constitutes only 1% of the earth's land surface.

Among Lesotho's earliest wild inhabitants were dinosaurs, including the small, fast-running Lesothosaurus, which was named after the country.

Dozens of flowers that are domesticated elsewhere grow wild here, including gladiolus, proteas, birds of paradise and African lilies. South Africa is also the only country with one of the world's six floral kingdoms within its borders (see p85).

In the drier northwest, there are succulents (dominated by euphorbias and aloes), and annuals, which flower brilliantly after the spring rains, and are one of Northern Cape's major tourist attractions (see p543).

(Continued on page 85)

(Continued from page 68)

In contrast to this floral wealth, South Africa has few natural forests. They were never extensive, and today only remnants remain. Temperate forests occur on the southern coastal strip between George and Humansdorp, in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg and in Mpumalanga. Subtropical forests are found northeast of Port Elizabeth in the areas just inland from the Wild Coast, and in KwaZulu-Natal.

In the north are large areas of savanna, dotted with acacias and thorn trees.

More bird species have been sighted in Swaziland than in the larger Kruger National Park.

Lesotho is notable for its high-altitude flora, including Cape alpine flowers and the spiral aloe *(Aloe polyphylla)*.

Swaziland's grasslands, forests, savannas and wetlands host about 3500 plant species – or about 14% of Southern Africa's recorded plant life.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

South Africa

South Africa has close to 600 national parks and reserves, collectively boasting spectacular scenery, impressive fauna and flora, excellent facilities and reasonable prices. They'll likely be the highlight of your visit. The most famous feature wildlife, while others are primarily wilderness sanctuaries or hiking areas. The table on p88 lists some of the best, though all are well-worth exploring.

The spiral aloe is Lesotho's national flower. Look for its left- and right-handed (clockwise and anticlockwise) varieties on the slopes of the Maluti Mountains.

The majority of the larger wildlife parks are under the jurisdiction of the **South African National (SAN) Parks Board** (☎ 012-428 9111; www.sanparks.org), except for those in KwaZulu-Natal, which are run by **KZN Wildlife** (☎ 033-845 1000; www.kznwildlife.com). Several other provinces also have conservation bodies that oversee smaller conservation areas within their boundaries. **Komatiland Eco-Tourism** (☎ 013-754 2724; www.komatiecotourism.co.za) oversees forest areas, promotes ecotourism and manages several hiking trails around Mpumalanga. Other useful contacts include **Cape Nature Conservation** (☎ 021-426 0723; www.capenature.org.za) and the **Eastern Cape Tourism Board** (☎ 043-701 9600; www.ectb.co.za).

All South African national parks charge a daily entry ('conservation') fee. Amounts vary; see individual park listings for details. If you are a South African resident or a national of a South African Development Community (SADC) country (this includes many of South Africa's neighbours), you are entitled to reduced rates. Another way to save is to consider purchasing a 'Wild Card' from SAN Parks. There are different

THE CAPE FLORAL KINGDOM

The tiny Cape Floral Kingdom – parts of which are now a Unesco World Heritage site – is the smallest of the world's six floral kingdoms, but unquestionably the most diverse. Here you'll find an incredible 1300 species per 10,000 sq km, some 900 more species than are found in the South American rainforests.

The Cape Floral Kingdom extends roughly from Cape Point east to Grahamstown and north to the Olifants River. Today, most of the remaining indigenous vegetation is found only in protected areas, such as Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula.

The dominant vegetation is *fynbos* (fine bush), with small, narrow leaves and stems. The *fynbos* environment hosts nearly 8500 plant species, most of which are unique to the area.

Some members of the main *fynbos* families – heaths, proteas and reeds – have been domesticated elsewhere, but many species have a remarkably small range: clearing an area the size of a house can mean extinction.

versions of the card, including one for foreign tourists which gives you 10 days entry into any one park for R795 (R1395 per couple, R1795 per family). This isn't much of a saving for some of the less expensive parks, but if you're planning at least five days in Kruger National Park (where the daily entry fee is R120), it's worth buying. They also have cards targeted at different park clusters, depending where in the country you'll be travelling, and various loyalty programs. For details on acquiring a Wild Card, see www.wildinafrica.com.

James Stevenson Hamilton's classic, *A South African Eden,* chronicles South Africa's early wildlife conservation efforts and the creation of Kruger National Park.

In addition to its national parks, South Africa is also party to several transfrontier parks joining conservation areas across international borders. These include Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, combining Northern Cape's old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park with Botswana's Gemsbok National Park; and the ambitious Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which spreads nearly 100,000 sq km (larger than Portugal) across the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (see p467). Private wildlife reserves also abound.

In total, just under 7% of South African land has been given protected status. The government has started teaming up with private landowners to bring private conservation land under government protection, with the goal of ultimately increasing the total amount of conservation land to over 10%.

Lesotho

Rhinos aren't named for their colour, but for their lip shape: 'white' comes from *wijde* (wide) – the Boers' term for the fatter-lipped white rhino.

In part because of a land tenure system that allows communal access rights to natural resources, less than 1% of Lesotho's area is protected – the lowest protected area coverage of any nation in Africa. Remote Sehlabathebe National Park (p572) is the main conservation area, known for its isolated wilderness setting. Others include Ts'ehlanyane National Park (p563) and Bokong Nature Reserve (p567). Also see p554.

Swaziland

About 4% of Swaziland is protected, and its conservation areas are particularly good value for money. They are also quite low-key, with fewer visitors than many of their counterparts in South Africa. Among the best are the easily accessed Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary (p586), Mkhaya Game Reserve (p594) and the beautiful Malolotja Nature Reserve (p590), which is used primarily for hiking.

SAFARIS

The best and cheapest (especially if you're in a group) way to visit the parks is usually with a hired car. A 2WD is perfectly adequate in most parks, but during winter when the grass is high, a 4WD or other high-clearance vehicle will enable you to see more. Organised safaris are readily arranged with all major tour operators and with backpacker-oriented outfits, most of which advertise at hostels.

SOUTH AFRICA'S UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

- Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (p339)
- Robben Island (p107)
- Hominid fossil sites of Sterkfontein and Kromdraai (p427)
- uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park (p346)
- Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (p500)
- Cape Floral Region Protected Areas (p85)
- Vredefort Dome (p383)

DON'T GET CHARGED

One of South Africa's major attractions is the chance to go on safari and to get 'up close and personal' with the wildlife. Remember, however, that the animals aren't tame and their actions are often unpredictable. Some tips to avoid getting charged (and to avoid other less dramatic perils of the bush):

- heed the warnings of safari guides
- don't move in too close to an animal – for good photos, invest in a telephoto lens
- never get between a mother and her young, or between a hippo and the water
- don't feed animals; baboons' canine teeth are sometimes larger than those of a lion
- watch out for black rhinos, which will charge just about anything
- brush up on your tree-climbing skills
- avoid snake bites by wearing boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth, and taking care around holes, crevices and when collecting firewood
- avoid ticks by wearing insect repellent when hiking; check your body and clothes if you've been walking through tick-infested areas (ie any scrubland, even in cities) or sitting under camel thorn trees (a favoured haunt for ticks)

Several major parks (including Kruger, Hluhluwe-Imfolozi and Pilanesberg) offer guided wilderness walks accompanied by armed rangers. These are highly worthwhile, as the subtleties of the bush can be much better experienced on foot than in a vehicle. They should be booked well in advance with the relevant park authority (see contacts listed earlier in this section, and in the individual park listings in the regional chapters). Shorter morning and afternoon walks are also possible at many wildlife parks, and can generally be booked the day before. For overnight walks, it's necessary to get a permit in advance from the relevant park authority, and you'll generally be restricted to overnighting in official camp sites or huts.

For a wide selection of links on environmental issues in South Africa, see www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/southafrica/rsaenviro.html and www.environment.gov.za/Enviro-Info/env/salinks.htm.

Throughout South Africa, park infrastructure is of high quality. You can often get by without a guide, although you'll almost certainly see and learn more with one. All national parks have rest camps offering good-value accommodation, ranging from self-catering cottages to camp sites. Most have restaurants, shops and petrol pumps. Advance bookings for camping and cottages are essential during holiday periods. Otherwise, it's generally possible to get accommodation at short notice.

Most park and reserve entrances close around sunset.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

South Africa

South Africa is the world's third most biologically diverse country. It's also one of Africa's most urbanised, with approximately 60% of the population living in towns and cities. Major challenges for the government include managing increasing urbanisation and population growth while protecting the environment. The picture is complicated by a distorted rural-urban settlement pattern – a grim legacy of the apartheid era (p40) – with huge population concentrations in townships that generally lack adequate utilities and infrastructure.

See the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa website (www.panda.org.za) for an overview of conservation efforts in the country.

Land degradation is one of the most serious problems, with about one-quarter of South Africa's land considered to be severely degraded. In former homeland areas (see p43), years of overgrazing and overcropping have resulted in massive soil depletion. This, plus poor overall conditions, is pushing people to the cities, further increasing urban pressures.

Water is another issue. South Africa receives an average of only 500mm of rainfall annually, and droughts are common. To meet demand, all major South African rivers have been dammed or modified. While this has improved water supplies to many areas, it has also disrupted local ecosystems and caused increased silting.

South Africa has long been at the forefront among African countries in conservation of its fauna. However, funding is tight, and will likely remain so as long as many South Africans still lack access to basic amenities. Potential solutions include public-private sector conservation partnerships, and increased contributions from private donors and international conservation bodies such as World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

THE GREAT IVORY DEBATE

In 1990, following a massive campaign by various conservation organisations, the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) banned ivory trading in an effort to protect Africa's then-declining elephant populations. This promoted recovery of elephant populations in areas where they had previously been ravaged. Yet in South Africa – where

TOP PARKS & RESERVES

Location	Park	Features	Activities	Best Time to Visit	Page
Cape Peninsula	Table Mountain National Park	rocky headlands, seascapes; water birds, bonteboks, elands, African penguins	hiking, mountain biking	year-round	p107
Western Cape	Cederberg Wilderness Area	mountainous and rugged; San rock paintings, bizarre sandstone formations, abundant plant life	hiking	year-round	p235
Mpumalanga/ Limpopo	Kruger National Park	savanna, woodlands, thornveld; the Big Five and many more	vehicle safaris, guided wildlife walks	Jun-Oct	p466
	Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve	canyon, caves, river; stunning vistas	hiking, kloofing	year-round	p453
Northern Cape	Augrabies Falls National Park	desert, river, waterfalls; klipspringers, rock dassies; striking scenery	hiking, canoeing, rafting	Apr-Sep	p541
	Richtersveld National Park	mountainous desert; haunting beauty; klipspringers, jackals, zebras, plants, birds	hiking	Apr-Sep	p547
Eastern Cape	Addo Elephant National Park	dense bush, coastal grasslands, forested kloofs; elephants, black rhinos, buffaloes	vehicle safaris, walking trails, horse-riding	year-round	p255
	Tsitsikamma National Park	coast, cliffs, rivers, ravines, forests; Cape clawless otters, baboons, monkeys, rich birdlife	hiking	year-round	p242
KwaZulu-Natal	Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park	lush, subtropical vegetation, rolling savanna; rhinos, giraffes, lions, elephants, lots of birds	wilderness walks, wildlife-watching	May-Oct	p335
	Greater St Lucia Wetland Park	wetlands, coastal grasslands; elephants, birds, hippos	wilderness walks, vehicle/boat safaris	Mar-Nov	p339
	Mkhuze Game Reserve	savanna, woodlands, swamp; rhinos and almost everything else; hundreds of bird species	guided walks, bird walks, vehicle safaris	year-round	p345
	uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park	awe-inspiring Drakensberg escarpment; fantastic scenery and wilderness areas	hiking	year-round	p346
Free State	Golden Gate Highlands National Park	spectacular sandstone cliffs and outcrops; zebras, jackals, rheboks, elands, birds	hiking	year-round	p385
Lesotho	Sehlabathebe National Park	mountain wilderness; bearded vultures, rheboks, baboons; wonderful isolation	hiking	Mar-Nov	p572
Swaziland	Malolotja Nature Reserve	mountains, streams, waterfalls, grasslands, forests; rich bird and plant life, impalas, klipspringers	hiking	year-round	p590

elephants had long been protected – the elephant populations continued to grow, leading to widespread habitat destruction.

Earthlife Africa (www.earthlife.org.za) is one of South Africa's most active environmental groups, and a good contact for anyone wanting to get involved.

Solutions to the problem of elephant overpopulation have included creating transfrontier parks to allow animals to migrate over larger areas; relocating animals; small-scale elephant contraception efforts; and, most controversially, culling.

As a result of culling, South Africa has amassed significant ivory stockpiles. In 2002, after much pressure, Cites relaxed its worldwide ivory trading ban to allow ivory from legally culled elephants to be sold, with the idea that earnings could go towards conservation projects. However, the decision has been disputed by several other governments on the (quite plausible) grounds that resuming trade will increase demand for ivory, and thus encourage poaching.

Under the current plan, Cites will monitor things to see whether poaching does indeed increase after the ban is relaxed (early signs suggest that it will). Meanwhile, ivory's popularity is growing. In China – one of the main markets for the illegal ivory trade – ivory is now the rage in mobile phone ornamentation.

Lesotho

Environmental discussion in Lesotho centres on the controversial Highlands Water Project (see p566). Among the concerns are disruption of traditional communities, flooding of agricultural lands and possible adverse ecological impact on the Senqu (Orange) River.

Other environmental issues include animal population pressure (resulting in overgrazing) and soil erosion. About 18 to 20 tonnes of topsoil per hectare is lost annually, with sobering predictions that there will be no cultivatable land left by 2040.

On a brighter note, Lesotho and South Africa recently combined forces in the Maluti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project to protect the alpine ecosystem of the Maluti and Drakensberg mountains.

THE KUYASA PROJECT

Although South Africa is only responsible for between 1% and 1.5% of the total global warming effect, it releases more greenhouse gases than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa, and is ranked in the top 15 worldwide contributors to greenhouse warming. With about 90% of the country's electricity coming from coal firing plants, electricity generation is the main culprit in the production of greenhouse gases.

The Kuyasa Project is a small but widely lauded step towards minimising greenhouse gas emissions through the use of alternative energy sources. It began in 2003, when 10 low-income houses in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township were retrofitted with renewable energy technologies such as solar water heaters, energy efficient lighting and insulated ceilings. In addition to promoting impressive energy savings – averaging about 40% per household – the project also created jobs and offered other sustainable development benefits.

The project – which was spearheaded by SouthSouthNorth, a nonprofit development organisation – gained international recognition when it qualified for the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Clean Development Mechanism Gold Standard for its design and its contributions to sustainable development. It is now slated for replication elsewhere in Khayelitsha, and in other areas of the country.

In another impressive initiative, the GreenHouse Project's (www.greenhouse.org.za) People's Environmental Centre holds regular workshops in Johannesburg to raise awareness about energy efficiency and promote the use of renewable energy sources.

LYNEDOCH ECO-VILLAGE

About 15km south of Stellenbosch in the centre of the Cape Winelands is the site of South Africa's first ecologically designed and socially mixed community. Utopic, perhaps, but Lynedoch Eco-Village is well on its way to becoming a reality, with a preschool, a primary school, a community hall and a home owners association already in existence. Houses as well as community buildings will all be energy efficient – outfitted with solar panels and other energy-saving devices – and the emphasis will be on recycling and on making the community self-sufficient. The idea is that the development of this and other similar communities will ultimately save Stellenbosch and surrounding areas from uncontrolled urbanisation or semi-urbanisation, while at the same time protecting the local environment and economy. For more, see www.sustainabilityinstitute.net.

Swaziland

Three of Swaziland's major waterways (the Komati, Lomati and Usutu Rivers) arise in South Africa, and Swaziland has been closely involved in South Africa's river control efforts. Drought is a recurring problem in eastern lowveld areas.

Other concerns include lack of community participation in conservation efforts, and insufficient government support.

Food & Drink

It's only since the dismantling of apartheid that anyone has talked of 'South African cuisine' as a unified whole. Earlier, the Africans had their mealie pap, the Afrikaners their boerewors, and the Indians and Cape Malays their curries. Today, along with divisions in other aspects of life, the culinary barriers are starting to fall.

Check out *The South African Illustrated Cookbook* by Lehla Eldridge for a collection of recipes highlighting the many faces of South African cuisine.

Awaiting the visiting gastronome is a fusion of influences: hearty meat and vegetable stews that resulted when the Dutch encountered the bush; the seemingly endless variety of maize dishes that have been at the centre of African family-life for centuries (and also feature throughout Lesotho and Swaziland); a sprinkling of *piri-piri* (hot pepper) from Mozambique; and scents of curry and coriander that have wafted over the Indian Ocean from Asia.

It can take some work to discover this diversity, and not get overwhelmed by the fast-food chains and homogenised, over-sauced dishes that are easy to find anywhere. But if you're willing to forage a bit for your food, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland offer a delectably rich culinary heritage that's just waiting to be discovered.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

In *Flavours of South Africa,* South African culinary guru Peter Veldsman traces the history of South African cuisine, with lots of information on ingredients and local specialities.

What you'll be served at mealtimes is likely to be completely different, depending on where you are. Afrikaners have developed breakfast into an art form – albeit unbelievably calorie-rich – featuring lots of meat, eggs and sugar. It's easier to keep the figure trim travelling in Swaziland and Lesotho, or among South Africa's African population, where you'll be treated to bowls of piping hot maize or sorghum porridge, sometimes sweetened, sometimes slightly fermented and sour. Breakfast buffets at many hotels keep up their loyalty to the queen, with classic British breakfasts of eggs, limp toast and grilled tomatoes. In Cape Town's Bo-Kaap area, or among Durban's Indian population, you're just as likely to be served a spicy curry or *atchar* (pickled fruits and vegetables).

Biltong & Boerewors

Traditional Afrikaner cuisine traces its roots back to the early days of Dutch settlement. Your first introduction is likely to be biltong (dried meat, called *umncweba* in Swaziland). Rusks (dried bread) are another common item, as are spicy boerewors (farmer's sausages). If you're having trouble getting used to boerewors, it could be that you're eating *braaiwors* (barbecue sausages), an inferior grade. *Potjiekos* (pot food) kept Boer families well fed as their wagons rolled into the horizon. It traditionally featured stewed meat and vegetables that bubbled away for hours in a three-legged pot over hot coals.

Real boerewors must be 90% meat, of which 30% can be fat. We can only imagine what goes into unregulated *braaiwors*…

Perhaps more than anything else, it's the braai (barbecue) – an Afrikaner institution that has broken across race lines – that defines South African cuisine. It's as much a social event as a form of cooking, with the essential elements boerewors and beer.

Cape Cuisine

Often referred to as Cape Malay cuisine, Cape cuisine has its roots in the mixing of the 'Malay' slaves (many of whom were from Madagascar and Indonesia) with the Dutch settlers. Often stodgy and overly sweet, it's nonetheless well worth trying, as is its close cousin, Afrikaner cuisine. The central feature is a mixture of Asian spices and local produce. Dishes to watch for include *bobotie, waterblommetjie bredie* and *malva* (all described on p96). True Cape cuisine, which is strongly associated with the Muslim community, contains no alcohol.

Hungry for a quick bite? Try a roasted mealie (cob of corn) or Durban's filling *bunny chow* (curry-to-go: half a loaf of bread, scooped out and filled with curry).

Curries

Along with Mahatma Gandhi, India's other great export to South Africa has been the curry. Durban is the place to go for the spiciest curries. Curries are also popular in Cape cuisine, though they're usually not as spicy.

Mealie Pap

Mealie pap (maize porridge) is the most widely eaten food in South Africa, as well as in Swaziland and Lesotho. It's thinner or stiffer (depending on where you eat it), bland and something of an acquired taste. However, it's ideal if you want something filling and economical, and can be quite satisfying served with a good sauce or stew.

Meat

In Lesotho, look for *motoho* – a fermented sorghum porridge. Swazi variants include *sishwala* (maize and bean porridge, usually eaten with meat or vegetables) and *incwancwa* (slightly fermented maize porridge).

There are few areas in the world where meat could be considered a 'staple', but certain parts of South Africa would certainly be among them. Anything that can be grilled is – with ostrich, crocodile, warthog and kudu only a few of the variants you'll find, along with the more traditional beef and lamb. Steaks in particular tend to be excellent value.

Seafood

Considering the fact that it's surrounded by two oceans, South Africa has a remarkably modest reputation as a seafood-lover's destination. Yet Cape Town, the west coast and the Garden Route have some delicious fish dishes. Among the highlights: lightly spiced fish stews, *snoekbraai* (grilled snoek), mussels, oysters and even lobster. Pickled fish is popular in Cape cuisine, while in Swaziland prawns are a common feature on restaurant menus, courtesy of nearby Mozambique.

DRINKS

Beer

Beer is the national beverage. There are numerous reasonable brands, including Castle, Black Label and Namibia's all-natural Windhoek. In the Cape provinces try Mitchell's and Birkenhead's. Lager-style beer comes in cans or dumpies (small bottles) for around R8. Bars serve long toms (750mL bottles) from around R10. Draught beers are uncommon.

Water

Tap water is generally safe in South Africa's cities. However, in rural areas (or anywhere that local conditions indicate that water sources may be contaminated), as well as throughout Swaziland and Lesotho, stick to bottled water and purify stream water.

Wine

South African wine debuted in 1659. Since then, it's had time to age to perfection, and is both of a high standard and reasonably priced. Dry whites are particularly good – try Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Colombard and Chenin Blanc – while popular reds include Cabernet Sauvignon, pinotage (a local cross of Pinot and Cinsaut, which was known as Hermitage), Shiraz and Pinot Noir. No wine may use any estate, vintage or origin declaration on its label without being certified. In addition,

no South African sparkling wine may be called champagne, although a number of producers use Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blends and the *méthode champenoise*.

Wine prices average from around R60 in a restaurant or bottle store. Most restaurants stock a few varieties in dinkies (250mL bottles).

In Lesotho, watch for white or yellow flags hung in villages to advertise home-brew – yellow for maize beer and white for sorghum beer or *joala*.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

If you're after fine dining in cosy surroundings, head to the Winelands (p169. Along the Western Cape coast, open-air beachside eateries serve fish braais under the stars. A highlight of visiting a township is experiencing family-style cooking in a B&B. In addition to speciality restaurants, every larger town has several places offering homogenised Western fare at homogenised prices (from about R50). Most restaurants are licensed, but some allow you to bring your own wine for a minimal or no corkage charge.

Larger towns have cafés, where you can enjoy a cappuccino and sandwich or other light fare. In rural areas, 'café' usually refers to a small corner shop selling soft drinks, chips and meat pies. Most places are open from about 8am to 5pm.

In the old days most South African pubs had a *kroeg* (bar) where white men would drink; a ladies' bar and lounge for white couples; and a hole in the wall where bottles would be sold to blacks and coloureds. Unofficial segregation is still the norm, and bars are heavily male-dominated. Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Kimberly have the best selection of pubs. Reasonable but soulless franchised bars proliferate in urban areas, and most smaller towns have at least one hotel. In townships, things centre around *shebeens* – informal drinking establishments that were once illegal but are now merely unlicensed. Throughout South Africa, and in major towns in Lesotho and Swaziland, you can also buy alcoholic drinks at bottle stores and supermarkets.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

South Africa is a meat-loving society, but it's easy enough to find vegetarian offerings in larger towns, and to make do in rural areas by self-catering. In tourist areas and student towns, such as Grahamstown, you'll even find the occasional vegetarian restaurant. Otherwise, there's little that's specifically vegetarian. Cafés are good bets, as many will make veggie food to order. Indian and Italian restaurants are also good, although many pasta sauces contain animal fat. Major cities have health food stores selling tofu, soy milk and other staples, and can point you towards vegetarian-friendly venues.

Eating vegan is difficult: most nonmeat dishes contain cheese, and eggs and milk are common ingredients. Health-food shops are your best bet, though most are closed in the evenings and on weekends.

In Lesotho and Swaziland, while you'll find plenty of bean, peanut and other legume dishes, it's more challenging to keep variety in a vegetarian diet.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD INITIATIVE

South Africa's oceans abound with fish, but supplies are not unlimited. While populations of many fish – including snoek, hake and yellowtail – are considered to be at healthy levels, overfishing and use of inappropriate fishing methods means that those of others (eg white mussel crackers and steenbras) are dangerously low.

To address this situation, South Africa's WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) marine programmes office began the Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) to spread information about the situation in the seas, and to promote seafood enjoyment that's also healthy for the environment. To learn more about the initiative, check www.panda.org.za/sassi. The site also has a free downloadable 'Consumer's Seafood Pocket Guide' wallet card with colour-coded listings of the conservation status of popular fish species (red – no; yellow – maybe; green – yes), so that you can make an informed, pro-environment choice the next time you sit down to dinner at a seafood restaurant. As the WWF notes, giving exploited species a break allows their populations to recover, and saying 'no' to illegally caught or sold species helps to fight unsustainable environmental practices.

EATING WITH KIDS

Children are well catered for in South Africa, and most restaurants are very family-friendly. Many have special children's meals, and it's easy to find menu items that are suitable for young diners. Highchairs are readily available at restaurants in tourist areas. Apart from curries and other spicy dishes, there isn't anything in particular to avoid. Although tap water is fine to drink, if you've been giving your child bottled water at home or elsewhere on your travels, it's probably best to continue to do so here. Child-size boxes of fresh juice and beverages, such as carbonated apple juice, make good snacks. For more on travelling with children, see p605.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

In tourist areas, dining etiquette and customs are very Westernised. However, eating and snacking on the street is much less common than it is in Europe and the US.

For those who can afford it, three meals per day is the norm. Dinner is the main event, although lunch may be more filling in rural areas. Portions are usually large. For something light in restaurants, a soup and salad (which often comes with cheese) should more than suffice. The most popular snack is roasted mealies, sold along roadsides throughout all three countries covered in this book.

A little-advertised treat of South Africa travel is the country's wide variety of excellent natural fruit juices, including passion fruit and *nartjie* (tangerine).

In rural areas you may also have the chance to try eating with your fingers. It's a bit of an acquired art: use your right hand only, work to ball up the staple (pap) with your fingers, dip it in the sauce or stew, and then eat it, ideally without dripping sauce down your elbow or having your ball of staple break up in the communal stew pot.

Braais are the main food-centred social event. If you're invited to one, dress is casual and the atmosphere relaxed.

COOKING COURSES

Cape Town, a gourmet's paradise, is the best place for cooking courses. A few to try:

Andulela (☎ 021-790 2592; www.andulela.com) A tour company offering both a half-day Cape Malay cookery course in the Bo-Kaap every Saturday (R295) and an African cooking safari (R295) in the township of Kayamandi near Stellenbosch where you can learn to prepare traditional Xhosa foods.

Cape Gourmet Adventure Tours (☎ 083-693 1151; http://gourmet.cape-town.info) Another tour company offering upmarket custom-designed cooking classes in Cape Town, plus restaurant tours to sample the local cuisine.

Cooking with Conrad Gallagher (☎ 021-794 0111; www.conradgallagherfood.com; Bramasole House, 31 Alphen Dr, Constantia) Two-day gourmet cooking courses (R1850) run by Michelin Star chef Conrad Gallagher, and covering everything from breakfasts to braais plus table dressings and flower arrangements. His 'Desperate Housewives' one-day course (R1000) for 'ladies of leisure' is on the first and last Saturday of the month.

Kopanong (☎ 021-361 2084; kopanong@xsinet.co.za) Thope Lekau offers a half-day cook up (R150) at this Khayelitsha-based B&B (p165) where you can learn to cook African style.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know *phutu* from *umphokoqo?* A boerewor from a *braaiwor?* Get behind the cuisine scene by getting to know the language. For pronunciation guidelines see p651.

Menu Decoder

It's unlikely that you'll see all of these items on the same menu, but they provide an insight into the diversity of South African cuisine.

FOOD

Meat Dishes

bobotie – a curried-mince pie topped with egg custard, usually served on a bed of rice with a dab of chutney
boerewors – spicy sausage, traditionally made of beef and pork plus seasonings and plenty of fat; an essential ingredient at any braai and often sold like hot dogs by street vendors
braaiwors – inferior grade boerewor
bredie – hearty Afrikaner pot stew, traditionally made with lamb and vegetables
eisbein – pork knuckles
frikkadel – fried meatball
potjiekos – meat and vegetables cooked for hours on a three-legged pot over a fire
russian – a large red sausage, fried but often served cold
smilies – slang term for boiled and roasted sheep heads, often sold in rural areas
sosatie – lamb cubes, marinated with garlic, tamarind juice and curry powder, then skewered with onions and apricots, and grilled; originally Muslim, but now often made with pork fat
venison – if you see this on a menu it's bound to be some form of antelope, usually springbok
vienna – a smaller version of the russian
waterblommetjie bredie – Cape Malay stew mixing lamb with water-hyacinth flowers and white wine

Curries, Condiments & Spices

atchar – a Cape Malay dish of pickled fruits and vegetables, flavoured with garlic, onion and curry
bunny chow – South Africa's answer to Indian fast food: half a loaf of bread, scooped out and filled with curry; best eaten in Durban
chakalaka sauce – a spicy tomato-based sauce seasoned with onions, *piri-piri,* green peppers and curry, and used to liven up pap and other dishes
curry – just as good as in India; head to Durban if you like your curry spicy, and to Cape Town (Bo-Kaap) for a milder version
monkey gland sauce – a sauce made from tomato and Worcester sauces and chutney; often offered with steaks
Mrs Balls' Chutney – most famous brand of this sweet-sour condiment
piri-piri – hot pepper
samosa – spicy Indian pastry
slaphakskeentjies – a Cape Malay dish of onions poached in a milk and mustard sauce

Breads & Sweets

fetkoeks – literally, 'fat cakes'; deep-fried bread dough with a rich fruit or mince-meat filling
koeksesters – small doughnuts dripping in honey, which are very gooey and figure-enhancing
konfyt – fruit preserve
malva – delicious sponge dessert; sometimes called vinegar pudding, since it's traditionally made with apricot jam and vinegar
melktart – a rich, custard-like tart made with milk, eggs, flour and cinnamon
rooster koek – griddle cake traditionally cooked on the braai
rusk – twice-cooked biscuit, usually served for breakfast or as a snack and much better than those given to teething babies
vetkoek – deep-fried dough ball sometimes stuffed with mince; called *amagwinya* in Xhosa

Grains, Legumes & Vegetables

amadumbe – yam-like potato; a favourite staple in KwaZulu-Natal
imbasha – a Swazi fried delicacy of roasted maize and nuts
imifino – Xhosa dish of mealie meal and vegetables
mashonzha – mopane worms, fried, grilled or served with *dhofi* (peanut sauce); common in Venda areas
mealie – cob of corn, popular grilled as a snack
mealie meal – finely ground maize
mealie pap – maize porridge; a Southern African staple, best eaten with sauce or stew
mopane worms – caterpillars found on mopane trees; dried and served in spicy sauce as a crunchy snack
morogo – leafy greens, boiled, seasoned and served with pap; called *imifino* in Xhosa
pap & sous – maize porridge with a tomato and onion sauce
phutu – a Zulu dish of crumbly maize porridge, often eaten with soured milk; called *umphokoqo* in Xhosa
rystafel – Dutch/Afrikaner version of an Indonesian meal consisting of rice with many accompanying dishes
samp – mix of maize and beans; see *umngqusho*
tincheki – boiled pumpkin cubes with sugar, common in Swaziland
ting – sorghum porridge, popular among the Tswana
umngqusho – samp (dried and crushed maize kernels), boiled, then mixed with beans, salt and oil, and simmered; a Xhosa delicacy (called *nyekoe* in Sotho)
umvubo – sour milk and mealie meal

Fish

kingklip – an excellent firm-fleshed fish, usually served fried; South Africa's favourite fish
line fish – catch of the day
snoek – a firm-fleshed migratory fish that appears off the Cape in June and July; served smoked, salted or curried

DRINKS

Don Pedro – an alcoholic milkshake traditionally made with whiskey and ice cream, but also commonly available with other liquors
mampoer – home-distilled brandy made from peaches and prickly pear
rooibos – literally, 'red bush' (Afrikaans); herbal tea that reputedly has therapeutic qualities
spook & diesel – rum and cola
springbok – a cocktail featuring créme de menthe topped with Amarula Cream (a South African version of Baileys Irish Cream)
steen – Chenin Blanc; most common variety of white wine
sundowner – any drink, but typically alcohol, drunk at sunset
umnqombothi – Xhosa for rough-and-ready, home-brewed beer; *umqombotsi* or *tjwala* in Swaziland
witblitz – 60-proof 'white lightning'; a traditional Boer spirit distilled from fruit

Food & Drinks Glossary

Following are a few more terms – mostly in Afrikaans, except as noted – to help you make your way around.

FOOD

biefstuk	steak
biltong	dried, salted meat
brood	bread
dipadi	toasted maize with salt and sometimes sugar (Sotho)
groente	vegetables
ho seal	mealie meal (Sotho)

hoender	chicken
incwancwa	fermented maize porridge (Swati, Zulu)
ingubela	pumpkin porridge (Xhosa)
isijingi	mashed pumpkin and ground maize (Zulu)
kaas	cheese
lipolokoe	steamed bread
motoho	fermented sorghum porridge (Sotho)
ntswanatsike	fermented barley porridge (Sotho)
sishwala	pap, usually served with meat or vegetables (Swati)
tinkhobe	boiled, whole maize (Swati)
umncweba	biltong (Swati)
varkvlies	pork
vis	fish
vleis	meat
vrugte	fruit

DRINKS

amasi	sour milk (Xhosa)
bier	beer
cool drink	canned soft drink
dinkies	250mL bottles of wine
dumpies	small bottles of beer
glas melk	glass of milk
ijinja	local ginger brew (Xhosa)
joala	local sorghum brew
koppie koffie	cup of coffee
long toms	750mL bottles of beer
moqopothi	local sorghum brew (Zulu)
tee	tea
wyn	wine

OTHER

braai	open-air barbecue; from *braaivleis* (grilled meat)
kroeg	bar
padkos	picnic
shebeen	unlicensed bar

Wildlife Guide

Mention Africa, and the first thing many people think of is the wildlife. South Africa – home to one of the most magnificent groupings of wildlife on the planet – is no exception. On even just a short visit to the country's parks you are almost guaranteed to see dozens of hoofed, tusked, winged and other creatures, and the chance to spot the fabled big cats and great herd animals is one of the region's prime attractions.

Thanks to its varied terrain, which ranges from woodland and savanna to dry shrub land and coastal marshes, South Africa hosts an amazing diversity of species, plus a full range of experiences – from the epic seasonal migrations of huge zebra herds, to the skittish antics of a troop of vervet monkeys to the drama of lions closing in on a kill. Another attraction is that the local wildlife is eminently viewable – the animals in many areas are used to the presence of human beings (in vehicles), and visitors can enjoy up-close encounters of the sort normally limited to researchers and specialists.

Most significant wildlife populations in South Africa are enclosed within fences, intended to minimise conflict with their human neighbours. Yet, due to the vast spaces, you'll generally only see the fences when you drive through the park gates – the wildlife itself is satisfyingly and completely wild.

When on safari, it's worth remembering that wildlife tourism is one of the main sources of revenue for conservation efforts in South Africa (as well as in neighbouring Swaziland). The money you spend in national parks and reserves is ploughed back into these areas, thus ensuring that future visitors will be able to collect their own unforgettable memories.

Chacma Baboon in front of *fynbos* vegetation, Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, Western Cape.
PHOTO BY KARL LEHMANN

Both bushbaby species are often found in family groups of up to six or seven individuals.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

PRIMATES

BUSHBABIES
GREATER BUSHBABY

Otolemur crassicaudatus (pictured); lesser Bushbaby Galago moholi

Named for their plaintive wailing call, bushbabies are actually primitive primates. They have small heads, large rounded ears, thick bushy tails and the enormous eyes that are typical of nocturnal primates. The greater bushbaby has dark-brown fur, while the tiny lesser bushbaby is very light grey with yellowish colouring on its legs. Tree sap and fruit are the mainstay of their diet, supplemented by insects as well as, in the case of the greater bushbaby, lizards, nestlings and eggs.

Size: Greater bushbaby length 80cm, including a 45cm tail; weight up to 1.5kg; lesser bushbaby length 40cm; weight 150g to 200g. **Distribution:** Greater bushbaby is restricted to far northeast of region; lesser bushbaby to north of Limpopo. **Status:** Common but strictly nocturnal.

The male vervet monkey has a distinctive bright blue scrotum, an important signal of status in the troop.
PHOTO BY ADRIAN BAILEY

VERVET MONKEY

Cercopithecus aethiops

The most common monkey of the woodland-savanna, the vervet is easily recognisable by its speckled grey hair and black face fringed with white. Troops may number up to 30. The vervet monkey is diurnal and forages for fruits, seeds, leaves, flowers, invertebrates and the occasional lizard or nestling. It rapidly learns where easy pickings can be found around lodges and camp sites, but becomes a pest when it becomes habituated to being fed. Most park authorities destroy such individuals, so please avoid feeding them.

Size: Length up to 130cm, including a 65cm tail; weight 3.5kg to 8kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Widespread in woodland-savanna throughout much of the east and north of the region; absent from deserts, except along rivers. **Status:** Very common and easy to see.

The chacma baboon lives in troops of up to 150 animals, and there is no single dominant male.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

CHACMA BABOON

Papio ursinus

The snout of the chacma baboon gives it a more aggressive appearance than other primates, which have more humanlike facial features. However, when you see the interactions within a troop, it's difficult not to make anthropomorphic comparisons. It is strictly diurnal and forages for grasses, fruits, insects and small vertebrates. The chacma baboon is a notorious opportunist and may become a pest in camp sites, which it visits for hand-outs. Such individuals can be dangerous and are destroyed by park officials: don't feed them.

Size: Shoulder height 75cm; length up to 160cm, including a 70cm tail; weight up to 45kg; male larger than female and twice as heavy. **Distribution:** Throughout the region, except for the heart of deserts. **Status:** Common in many areas and active during the day.

RODENTS

SPRINGHARE

Pedetes capensis

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In spite of its name and large ears, the springhare is not a hare but a very unusual rodent with no close relatives. With its powerful, outsized hind feet and small forelegs, it most resembles a small kangaroo and shares a similar energy-efficient hopping motion. The springhare digs extensive burrows, from which it emerges at night to feed on grass and grass roots. Reflections of spotlights in its large, bright eyes often give it away on night safaris.

Size: Length 80cm, including a 40cm tail; weight 3kg to 4kg. **Distribution:** Widespread in the centre and north of the region; favours grassland habitats with sandy soils. **Status:** Common but strictly nocturnal.

Although swift and able to leap several metres in a single bound, the springhare is preyed upon by everything from jackals to lions.
PHOTO BY ANTHONY BANNISTER/ABPL

CAPE PORCUPINE

Hystrix africaeaustralis

If attacked, a porcupine drives its rump into the predator – the quills are easily detached from their owner but can remain embedded in the victim, causing serious injury or death.
PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN

The Cape porcupine is the largest rodent native to Southern Africa. Its spread of long black-and-white banded quills from the shoulders to the tail makes it unmistakable. For shelter, it either occupies caves or excavates its own burrows. The porcupine's diet consists mainly of bark, tubers, seeds and a variety of plant and ground-level foliage. The young are born during the hot summer months, in litters of between one and four.

Size: Length 70cm to 100cm, including a 15cm tail; weight 10kg to 25kg. **Distribution:** Throughout the region. **Status:** Nocturnal but occasionally active on cooler days; difficult to see.

CAPE GROUND SQUIRREL

Xerus inauris

The burrows of the ground squirrel are often shared with meerkats.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

The Cape ground squirrel is a sociable rodent that lives in a colonial burrow system, usually containing up to a dozen individuals but sometimes as many as 30. It feeds on grass, roots, seeds and insects, but readily takes hand-outs from people in tourist camps. The ground squirrel is well adapted to dry surroundings: it does not need to drink, extracting all the moisture it requires from its food. It often stands on its hind legs to scan its surroundings, and erects its elegant fan-like tail when danger threatens. The tail is also used as a sunshade.

Size: Length 45cm, including a 20cm tail; weight up to 1kg. **Distribution:** North-central South Africa. **Status:** Common; active throughout the day.

The jackal is persecuted by farmers but is very resilient and can be readily seen on farms.
PHOTO BY ANDREW MACCOLL

CARNIVORES

JACKALS
BLACK-BACKED JACKAL

Canis mesomelas (pictured); side-striped jackal Canis adustus

This jackal relies heavily on scavenging but is also an efficient hunter, taking insects, birds, rodents and even the occasional small antelope. It also frequents human settlements and takes domestic stock. Pairs of black-backed jackals form long-term bonds, and each pair occupies an area varying from 3 to 21.5 sq km. Litters contain one to six pups; they are often looked after by older siblings as well as by their parents. The less-common side-striped jackal is grey in colour with a distinctive white-tipped tail.

Size: Shoulder height 35cm to 50cm; length 95cm to 120cm, including 30cm to 35cm tail; weight 12kg. **Distribution:** Black-backed throughout region; side-striped only in northeast. **Status:** Black-backed common, active night and day; side-striped less abundant, active night and early morning.

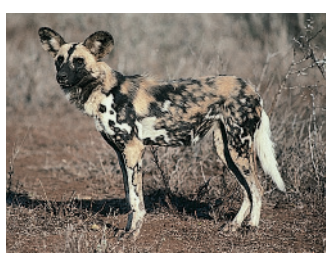
The huge ears of this little fox detect the faint sounds of invertebrates below ground, before it unearths them in a burst of frantic digging.
PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN

BAT-EARED FOX

Otocyon megalotis

The bat-eared fox eats mainly insects, especially termites, but also wild fruit and small vertebrates. It is monogamous and is often seen in groups comprising a mated pair and offspring. Natural enemies include large birds of prey, spotted hyenas, caracals and larger cats. It will bravely attempt to rescue a family member caught by a predator by using distraction techniques and harassment, which extends to nipping larger enemies on the ankles.

Size: Shoulder height 35cm; length 75cm to 90cm, including a 30cm tail; weight 3kg to 5kg. **Distribution:** Throughout western half of South Africa and open parts of Limpopo. **Status:** Common, especially in national parks; mainly nocturnal but often seen in the late afternoon and early morning.



The wild dog requires enormous areas of habitat and is one of the most endangered large carnivores in Africa.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

WILD DOG

Lycaon pictus

The wild dog's blotched black, yellow and white coat, and its large, round ears, make it unmistakable. It is highly sociable, living in packs of up to 40, although 12 to 20 is typical. Great endurance hunters, the pack chases prey to the point of exhaustion, then cooperates to pull down the quarry. The wild dog is reviled for killing prey by eating it alive, but this is probably as fast as any of the 'cleaner' methods used by other carnivores. Mid-sized antelopes are the preferred prey, but it can kill animals as large as buffaloes.

Size: Shoulder height 65cm to 80cm; length 100cm to 150cm, including a 35cm tail; weight 20kg to 35kg. **Distribution:** Restricted to major parks of the extreme northeast. **Status:** Highly threatened, with numbers declining severely from a naturally low density.

HONEY BADGER

Mellivora capensis

Africa's equivalent of the European badger, the honey badger (also known as the ratel) has a reputation for a vile temper and ferocity. Mostly nocturnal, it is omnivorous, feeding on small animals, carrion, berries, roots, eggs, honey and especially on social insects (ants, termites and bees) and their larvae. Its thick, loose skin is an excellent defence against predators, bee stings and snake bites. In some parks, honey badgers habitually scavenge from bins, presenting the best opportunity for viewing this animal.

Size: Shoulder height 30cm; length 95cm, including a 20cm tail; weight up to 15kg. **Distribution:** Widespread, although absent from central South Africa and from Lesotho. **Status:** Generally occurs in low densities; mainly nocturnal.

While stories of it attacking animals the size of buffaloes are probably folklore, the honey badger is pugnacious and very powerful for its size.
PHOTO BY LORNA STANTON/ABPL

GENETS
SMALL-SPOTTED GENET

Genetta genetta; large-spotted genet Genetta tigrina (pictured)

Like many other mammals, genets deposit their droppings in latrines, usually in open or conspicuous sites.
PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

Relatives of mongooses, genets resemble long, slender domestic cats and have pointed foxlike faces. The two species in the region are very similar, but can be differentiated by the tail tips (white in the small-spotted genet, black in the large-spotted genet). They are solitary animals, sleeping by day in burrows, rock crevices or hollow trees and emerging at night to forage. Very agile, they hunt well on land or in trees, feeding on rodents, birds, reptiles, nestlings, eggs, insects and fruits.

Size: Shoulder height 18cm; length 85cm to 110cm, including a 45cm tail; weight 1.5kg to 3kg. **Distribution:** Small-spotted genet is widespread in South Africa, but absent from the central east; large-spotted is common in eastern and southern coastal regions. **Status:** Very common but strictly nocturnal.

MONGOOSE

Social behaviour helps the mongoose when confronting a threat: collectively, they can intimidate much larger enemies.
PHOTO BY DAVE HAMMAN

Although common, most mongooses are solitary and are usually seen only fleetingly. The slender mongoose (*Galerella sanguinea*; pictured) is recognisable by its black-tipped tail, which it holds aloft like a flag when running. A few species, such as the dwarf mongoose *(Helogale parvula)*, the banded mongoose *(Mungos mungo)* and the meerkat *(Suricata suricatta)*, are intensely sociable. Family groups are better than loners at spotting danger and raising kittens. Insects and other invertebrates are their most important prey.

Size: Ranges from 40cm and 400g (dwarf mongoose) to 120cm and 5.5g (white-tailed mongoose). **Distribution:** At least two or three species in most of region; the greatest diversity is in northeast. **Status:** Common where they occur; sociable species are diurnal, solitary species are nocturnal.

The male aardwolf assists the female in raising the cubs, mostly by baby-sitting at the den while the mother forages.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

AARDWOLF

Proteles cristatus

The smallest of the hyena family, the aardwolf subsists almost entirely on harvester termites (which are generally ignored by other termite eaters because they are so noxious), licking over 200,000 from the ground each night. Unlike other hyaenids, it does not form clans; instead, it forages alone, and mates form only loose associations with each other. The aardwolf is persecuted in the mistaken belief that it kills stock, and may suffer huge population crashes following spraying for locusts (the spraying also kills termites).

Size: Shoulder height 40cm to 50cm; length 80cm to 100cm, including a 25cm tail; weight 8kg to 12kg. **Distribution:** Throughout the region, except for southern and western coasts. **Status:** Uncommon; nocturnal but occasionally seen at dawn and dusk.

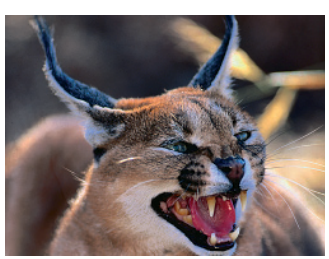
Female spotted hyena are larger than, and dominant to, males and have male physical characteristics, the most remarkable of which is an erectile clitoris (which renders the sexes virtually indistinguishable).
PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

SPOTTED HYENA

Crocuta crocuta

Widely reviled as a scavenger, the spotted hyena is actually a highly efficient predator with a fascinating social system. Clans, which can contain dozens of individuals, are led by females. The spotted hyena is massively built and appears distinctly canine, although it's more closely related to cats than to dogs. It can reach speeds of up to 60km/h and a pack can easily dispatch adult wildebeests and zebras. Lions are its main natural enemy.

Size: Shoulder height 85cm; length 120cm to 180cm, including a 30cm tail; weight 55kg to 80kg. **Distribution:** Occurs only in the northeast of the region. **Status:** Common where there is suitable food; mainly nocturnal but also seen during the day.



The caracal's long back legs power a prodigious ability to leap – it even takes birds in flight.
PHOTO BY JANE SWEENEY

CARACAL

Felis caracal

Sometimes also called the African lynx due to its long tufted ears, the caracal is a robust, powerful cat that preys predominantly on small antelopes, birds and rodents but is capable of taking down animals many times larger than itself. Like most cats, it is largely solitary. Females give birth to one to three kittens and raise them alone. The caracal is territorial, marking its home range with urine sprays and faeces. It occupies a range of habitats but prefers semiarid regions, dry savannas and hilly country; it is absent from dense forest.

Size: Shoulder height 40cm to 50cm; length 95cm to 120cm; weight 7kg to 18kg; male slightly larger. **Distribution:** Throughout the region except for much of KwaZulu-Natal and the western and southern coasts. **Status:** Fairly common but largely nocturnal and difficult to see.

LEOPARD

Panthera pardus

The leopard is highly agile and hoists its kills into trees to avoid losing them to lions and hyenas.
PHOTO BY ADRIAN BAILEY

The leopard is the supreme ambush hunter, using infinite patience to stalk within metres of its prey before attacking in an explosive rush. It eats everything from insects to zebras, but antelopes are its primary prey. It is a solitary animal, except during the mating season when the male and female stay in close association for the female's week-long oestrus. A litter of up to three cubs is born after a gestation of three months and the females raise them without any assistance from the males.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm to 75cm; length 160cm to 210cm, including a 70cm to 110cm tail; weight up to 90kg. **Distribution:** Absent from most of region except northeast and mountainous areas of south and east. **Status:** Common, but being mainly nocturnal they are the most difficult of the large cats to see.

LION

Panthera leo

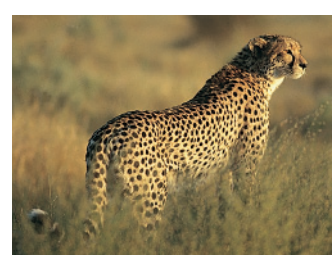
The lion spends much of the night hunting, patrolling territories and playing.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

The lion lives in prides of up to about 30, the core comprising four to 12 related females, which remain in the pride for life. Males form coalitions and defend the female groups from foreign males. The lion is strictly territorial, defending ranges of between 50 to 400 sq km. Young males are ousted from the pride at the age of two or three, entering a period of nomadism that ends at around five years old when they are able to take over their own pride. The lion hunts virtually anything, but wildebeests, zebras and buffaloes are the mainstay of its diet.

Size: Shoulder height 120cm; length 250cm to 300cm, including a 100cm tail; weight up to 260kg (male), 180kg (female). **Distribution:** Restricted to major reserves of South Africa's northeast. **Status:** Common where it occurs; mainly nocturnal but easy to see during the day.

CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus



The cheetah usually stalks prey to within 60m before unleashing its tremendous acceleration, as it becomes exhausted after a few hundred metres.
PHOTO BY ANDREW VAN SMEERDIJK

The world's fastest land mammal, the cheetah can reach speeds of at least 105km/h. The cheetah preys on antelopes weighing up to 60kg, as well as hares and young wildebeests and zebras. Litters may be as large as nine, but in open savanna habitats most cubs are killed by other predators, particularly lions. Young cheetahs disperse from the mother when aged around 18 months. The males form coalitions; females remain solitary for life.

Size: Shoulder height 85cm; length 180cm to 220cm, including a 70cm tail; weight up to 65kg. **Distribution:** Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, parts of Limpopo and reserves of South Africa's northeast. **Status:** Uncommon, with individuals moving over large areas; active by day.

UNGULATES (HOOFED ANIMALS)

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The aardvark digs deep, complex burrows for shelter, which are also used by many other animals such as warthogs and mongooses.
PHOTO BY PHOTO BY ANTHONY BANNISTER/ABPL

AARDVARK

Orycteropus afer

Vaguely pig-like (its Afrikaans name translates as 'earth-pig') with a long tubular snout, powerful kangaroo-like tail and large rabbitlike ears, the aardvark is unique and has no close relatives. Protected by thick wrinkled pink-grey skin, aardvarks forage at night by sniffing for termite and ant nests, which they rip open with their astonishingly powerful front legs and large spadelike nails. Normally nocturnal, they occasionally spend cold winter mornings basking in the sun before retiring underground.

Size: Shoulder height 60cm; length 140cm to 180cm, including a 55cm tail; weight 40kg to 80kg. **Distribution:** Widely distributed throughout nearly the entire region. **Status:** Uncommon; nocturnal and rarely seen.

An adult African elephant's average daily food intake is about 250kg of grass, leaves, bark and other vegetation.
PHOTO BY ALEX DISSANAYAKE

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Loxodonta africana

The African elephant usually lives in small family groups of between 10 and 20, which frequently congregate in much larger herds at a common water hole or food resource. Its society is matriarchal and herds are dominated by old females. Bulls live alone or in bachelor groups, joining the herds when females are in season. A cow may mate with many bulls during her oestrus. An elephant's life span is about 60 to 70 years, though some individuals may reach 100 or more.

Size: Shoulder height up to 4m (male), 3.5m (female); weight 5 to 6.5 tonnes (male), 3 to 3.5 tonnes (female). **Distribution:** Restricted to a few reserves in South Africa's northeast, east and south. **Status:** Very common in some parks.

Despite its resemblance to a large guinea pig, the dassie is actually related to the elephant.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

ROCK DASSIE

Procavia capensis

The rock dassie (also known as the hyrax) occurs practically everywhere there are mountains or rocky outcrops. It is sociable, living in colonies of up to 60 individuals. It feeds on vegetation, but spends much of the day basking on rocks or chasing other rock dassies in play. Where it's habituated to humans it is often quite tame, but otherwise it dashes into rock crevices when alarmed, uttering shrill screams. Rocks streaked white by dassies' urine are often a conspicuous indicator of a colony's presence.

Size: Length 40cm to 60cm; weight up to 5.5kg. **Distribution:** Throughout the region except the central eastern coast; absent from dense forest. **Status:** Common and easy to see, especially where they have become habituated to humans.

ZEBRAS
BURCHELL'S ZEBRA

Equus burchellii (pictured); mountain zebra Equus zebra

The zebra social system centres around small groups of related mares over which stallions fight fiercely.
PHOTO BY MANFRED GOTTSCHALK

Burchell's zebra has shadow lines between its black stripes, whereas the mountain zebra lacks shadows and has a gridiron pattern of black stripes just above its tail. Both species are grazers but occasionally browse on leaves and scrub. Stallions may hold a harem for as long as 15 years, but they often lose single mares to younger males, which gradually build up their own harems. Both types of zebras are preyed upon by all the large carnivores, with lions being their main predators.

Size: Shoulder height 140cm to 160cm; weight up to 390kg; mountain zebra smaller than Burchell's zebra; female of both species smaller than male. **Distribution:** Burchell's zebras in northeast of region; mountain zebras in a few reserves in Southern Africa. **Status**: Burchell's zebra common; mountain zebra less common.

RHINOCEROSES
WHITE RHINOCEROS

Ceratotherium simum (pictured); black rhinoceros Diceros bicornis

Aggressive poaching for rhino horn has made rhinos Africa's most endangered large mammals.
PHOTO BY CAROL POLICH

The white rhino is a grazer, preferring open plains, while the black rhino is a browser, living in scrubby country. The black rhino is prone to charging when alarmed – its eyesight is extremely poor and it has been known to charge trains or elephant carcasses. The white rhino is generally docile, and the more sociable species, forming cow-calf groups numbering up to 10. The black rhino is solitary and territorial, only socialising during the mating season.

Size: White rhino shoulder height 180cm; weight 2100kg to 1500kg; black rhino shoulder height 160cm; weight 800kg to 1200kg. **Distribution:** Restricted to protected areas, occurs naturally only in some reserves of KwaZulu-Natal. **Status:** White rhino threatened but well protected; black rhino endangered.

WARTHOG

Phacochoerus aethiopicus

The distinctive facial warts can be used to determine the sex of warthogs – females have a single pair of warts under the eyes whereas males have a second set further down the snout.
PHOTO BY ADRIAN BAILEY

The warthog's social organisation is variable, but groups usually consist of one to three sows with their young. Males form bachelor groups or are solitary, only associating with the female groups when a female is in season. The warthog feeds mainly on grass, but also eats fruit and bark. In hard times, it will burrow with its snout for roots and bulbs. It rests and gives birth in abandoned burrows or in excavated cavities of abandoned termite mounds.

Size: Shoulder height 70cm; weight up to 105kg, but averages 50kg to 60kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Restricted to the region's northeast. **Status:** Common and easy to see.

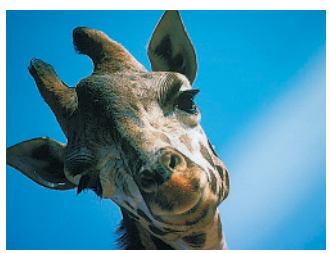
The hippo is extremely dangerous on land and kills many people each year, usually when someone inadvertently blocks the animal's retreat to the water.
PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

HIPPOPOTAMUS

Hippopotamus amphibius

The hippo is found close to fresh water, and spends the majority of its day submerged in water before emerging at night to graze on land. It can consume around 40kg of vegetable matter each evening. The hippo lives in large herds, tolerating close contact in the water but prefering to forage alone when on land. Adult bulls aggressively defend territories against each other, and most males bear the scars of conflicts (providing a convenient method of sexing hippos). Cows with calves are aggressive towards other individuals.

Size: Shoulder height 150cm; weight 1 to 2 tonnes; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Restricted to the region's northeast. **Status:** Common in major watercourses.



Despite the giraffe's incredibly long neck, it still has only seven cervical vertebrae – the same number as all mammals, including humans.
PHOTO BY JOHN HAY

GIRAFFE

Giraffa camelopardalis

The name 'giraffe' is derived from the Arabic word zarafah (the one who walks quickly). Both sexes have 'horns' – they are actually short projections of skin-covered bone. The giraffe browses on trees, exploiting a zone of foliage inaccessible to all other herbivores except elephants. Juveniles are prone to predation and a lion will even take down fully grown adults. The giraffe is at its most vulnerable at water holes and always appears hesitant when drinking.

Size: Height 4m to 5.2m (male), 3.5m to 4.5m (female); weight 900kg to 1400kg (male), 700kg to 1000kg (female). **Distribution:** Restricted to the region's northeast. **Status:** Common where it occurs and easy to see.

During the dry season the nyala is active only in the morning and evening, but during the rains they more often feed at night.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

NYALA

Tragelaphus angasii

The nyala is one of Africa's rarest and most beautiful antelopes. Males are grey with a mane and long hair under the throat and hind legs; they also have vertical stripes down the back and long, lyre-shaped horns with white tips. Females are a ruddy colour with vertical white stripes and have no horns. The nyala browses on trees and bushes. Female nyala and their young live in small groups. The young may be taken by baboons and birds of prey.

Size: Shoulder height 115cm (male), 100cm (female); weight 100kg to 140kg (male), 60kg to 90kg (female); horns up to 85cm long. **Distribution:** Restricted to the region's northeast. **Status:** Common where it occurs, but well camouflaged.

BUSHBUCK

Tragelaphus scriptus

When startled, the bushbuck bolts and crashes loudly through the undergrowth.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON

A shy and solitary animal, the bushbuck inhabits thick bush close to permanent water and browses on leaves at night. It is chestnut to dark brown in colour and has a variable number of white vertical stripes on its body between the neck and rump, as well as a number of white spots on the upper thigh and a white splash on the neck. Normally only males grow horns, which are straight with gentle spirals and average about 30cm in length. It can be aggressive and dangerous when cornered.

Size: Shoulder height 80cm; weight up to 80kg; horns up to 55cm long; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Throughout the region's northeast and eastern and southern coastal areas. **Status:** Common, but difficult to see in the dense vegetation of their habitat.

GREATER KUDU

Tragelaphus strepsiceros

A strong jumper, the greater kudu readily clears barriers more than 2m high.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

The greater kudu is Africa's second-tallest antelope and the males carry massive spiralling horns much sought after by trophy hunters. It is light grey in colour with between six and 10 white stripes down the sides and a white chevron between the eyes. The kudu lives in small herds comprising females and their young, periodically joined by the normally solitary males during the breeding season. It is primarily a browser and can eat a variety of leaves, but finds its preferred diet in woodland-savanna with fairly dense bush cover.

Size: Shoulder height up to 150cm; weight 200kg to 300kg (male), 120kg to 220kg (female); horns up to 180cm long. **Distribution:** Throughout much of region's north, and with populations in central and southern South Africa. **Status:** Common.

ELAND

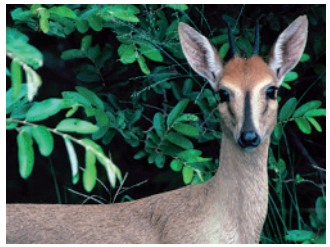
Taurotragus oryx

The eland normally drinks daily, but can go for over a month without water.
PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

Africa's largest antelope, the eland is massive. Both sexes have horns averaging about 65cm long that spiral at the base and sweep straight back. The male has a distinctive hairy tuft on the head, and stouter horns than the female. The eland prefers savanna scrub, feeding on grass and leaves in the early morning and from late afternoon into the night. It usually lives in groups of around six to 12, generally comprising several females and one male. Larger aggregations (up to a thousand) sometimes form at 'flushes' of new grass.

Size: Shoulder height 124cm to 180cm; weight 300kg to 950kg; horns up to 100cm long. **Distribution:** Small parts of north-central and northeastern South Africa and the Drakensberg. **Status:** Naturally low density, but relatively common in their habitat and easy to see.

The common duiker is capable of going without water for long periods, but it will drink whenever water is available.
PHOTO BY MITCH REARDON



COMMON (OR GREY) DUIKER

Sylvicapra grimmia

One of the most common small antelopes, the common duiker is usually solitary, but is sometimes seen in pairs. It is greyish light brown in colour, with a white belly and a dark-brown stripe down its face. Only males have horns, which are straight and pointed, and rarely grow longer than 15cm. This duiker is predominantly a browser, often feeding on agricultural crops. This habit leads to it being persecuted outside conservation areas, though it is resilient to hunting.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm; weight 10kg to 20kg; horns up to 18cm long; female slightly larger than male. **Distribution:** Very widespread throughout the region. **Status:** Common; active throughout the day, except where disturbance is common.

The waterbuck's oily hair has a strong musky odour – especially with mature males, potent enough that even humans can smell them.
PHOTO BY DAVID WALL

WATERBUCK

Kobus ellipsiprymnus

The waterbuck has a bull's-eye ring around its rump, and white markings on the face and throat. It's a solid animal with a thick, shaggy, dark-brown coat. Only males have horns, which curve gradually out before shooting straight up to a length averaging about 75cm. The small herds consist of cows, calves and one mature bull; younger bulls live in bachelor groups. This grazer never strays far from water and is a good swimmer, readily entering water to escape predators.

Size: Shoulder height 130cm; weight 200kg to 300kg (male), 150kg to 200kg (female); horns up to 100cm long. **Distribution:** Wet areas in northeastern South Africa. **Status:** Common and easy to see.

The whistling call of the reedbuck is often repeated when advertising territories, and is also given in alarm.
PHOTO BY ANDREW VAN SMEERDIJK

REEDBUCKS
COMMON REEDBUCK

Redunca arundinum (pictured); mountain reedbuck Redunca fulvorufula

The common reedbuck is found in wetlands and riverine areas. The rarer mountain reedbuck inhabits hill country and is the smaller, but is otherwise physically similar, with the underbelly, inside of the thighs, throat and underside of the tail white, and with males having distinctive forward-curving horns. However, their social systems differ: common reedbucks live in pairs on territories; female mountain reedbucks form small groups, the range of each encompassing the territories of several males.

Size: Common reedbuck shoulder height 90cm; weight 50kg to 90kg; mountain reedbuck shoulder height 70cm; weight 20kg to 40kg; male bigger in both species. **Distribution:** Common reedbucks in north and east of region; mountain reedbucks in region's east. **Status:** Common and easy to see.

ROAN ANTELOPE

Hippotragus equinus

The roan antelope is one of Southern Africa's rarest antelopes, and one of Africa's largest. A grazer, it prefers tall grasses and sites with ample shade and water. Its coat varies from reddish fawn to dark rufous, with white underparts and a conspicuous mane of stiff, black-tipped hairs from the nape to the shoulders. Its face is distinctively patterned black and white and its long, pointed ears are tipped with a brown tassel. Herds of normally less than 20 females and young are led by a single adult bull; other males form bachelor groups.

Size: Shoulder height 140cm; weight 200kg to 300kg; horns up to 100cm long. **Distribution:** Can be seen in Kruger NP. **Status:** One of the less common antelopes; although numbers are declining, they are not difficult to see where they occur.

Both sexes of roan antelope have long backward-curving horns.
PHOTO BY JASON EDWARDS

SABLE ANTELOPE

Hippotragus niger

The sable antelope is slightly smaller than the roan antelope, but more solidly built. It is dark brown to black, with a white belly and face markings. Both sexes have backward-sweeping horns, often over 1m long; those of the male are longer and more curved. It occurs in habitat similar to, but slightly more wooded than, that of the roan antelope. Females and young live in herds, mostly of 10 to 30. Mature males establish territories that overlap the ranges of female herds; other males form bachelor groups.

Size: Shoulder height 135cm; weight 180kg to 270kg; horns up to 130cm long. **Distribution:** Restricted to extreme northeastern South Africa. **Status:** Common and easy to see.

Both the roan and sable antelopes are fierce fighters, even known to kill attacking lions.
PHOTO BY DENNIS JONES

GEMSBOK

Oryx gazella

The gemsbok (or oryx) can tolerate arid areas uninhabitable to most antelopes. It can survive for long periods without drinking (obtaining water from its food) and tolerates extreme heat. A powerful animal with long, straight horns present in both sexes, it's well equipped to defend itself and sometimes kills attacking lions. Herds usually contain five to 40 individuals but aggregations of several hundred can occur. The gemsbok is principally a grazer, but also browses on thorny shrubs unpalatable to many species.

Size: Shoulder height 120cm; weight 180kg to 240kg; horns up to 120cm long; male more solid than female and with thicker horns. **Distribution:** North-central South Africa. **Status:** Common where it occurs, but often shy, fleeing from humans.

As a means of conserving water, the gemsbok can let its body temperature climb to levels that would kill most mammals.
PHOTO BY ANDREW MACCOLL

Bontebok and blesbok often stand about in groups facing into the sun with their heads bowed.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

BONTEBOK & BLESBOK

Damaliscus dorcas dorcas & Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi

Closely related subspecies, the bontebok and the blesbok are close relatives of the tsessebe. The best way to tell them apart is to look at their colour – the blesbok has a dullish appearance and lacks the rich, deep brown-purple tinge of the bontebok. Both species graze on short grass, and both sexes have horns. As with many antelope, males are territorial, while females form small herds. The bontebok was once virtually exterminated and numbers have recovered to only a few thousand.

Size: Shoulder height 90cm; weight 55kg to 80kg; horns up to 50cm long. Female smaller than male. **Distribution:** Endemic to South Africa; bontebok confined to southwest; blesbok widespread in central region. **Status:** Bontebok rare but easy to see where they occur; blesbok is common.

The tsessebe is a grazer, and although it can live on dry grasses, it prefers flood plains and moist areas that support lush pasture.
PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

TSESSEBE

Damaliscus lunatus

The tsessebe is dark reddish-brown, with glossy violet-brown patches on the rear thighs, front legs and face. The horns, carried by both sexes, curve gently up, out and back. A highly gregarious antelope, it lives in herds and frequently mingles with other grazers. During the mating season, bulls select a well-defined patch, which they defend against rivals, while females wander from one patch to another. It is capable of surviving long periods without water as long as sufficient grass is available.

Size: Shoulder height 120cm; weight 120kg to 150kg (male), 75kg to 150kg (female); horns up to 45cm long. **Distribution:** Found in parts of northeastern South Africa. **Status:** Common where they occur.

The wildebeest is a grazer, and moves constantly in search of good pasture and water.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

BLUE WILDEBEEST

Connochaetes taurinus

The blue wildebeest is gregarious, forming herds of up to tens of thousands in some parts of Africa, often in association with zebras and other herbivores. In Southern Africa, numbers are much reduced and huge herds are a rarity. Males are territorial and attempt to herd groups of females into their territory. Because it prefers to drink daily and can survive only five days without water, the wildebeest will migrate large distances to find it. During the rainy season it grazes haphazardly, but in the dry season it congregates around water holes.

Size: Shoulder height 140cm; weight 200kg to 300kg (male), 140kg to 230kg (female); horns up to 85cm long. **Distribution:** The region's central eastern coast, northeast and central north. **Status:** Very common but mostly restricted to protected areas.

KLIPSPRINGER

Oreotragus oreotragus

Male and female klipspringers form long-lasting pair bonds and occupy a territory together.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

A small, sturdy antelope, the klipspringer is easily recognised by its curious tip-toe stance – its hooves are well adapted for balance and grip on rocky surfaces. The widely spaced short horns are present only on the male of the species. The klipspringer normally inhabits rocky outcrops; it also sometimes ventures into adjacent grasslands, but always retreats to the rocks when alarmed. This amazingly agile and sure-footed creature is capable of bounding up impossibly rough rock faces.

Size: Shoulder height 55cm; weight 9kg to 15kg; horns up to 15cm long; female larger than male. **Distribution:** On rocky outcrops and mountainous areas throughout the region; absent from dense forests. **Status:** Common.

STEENBOK

Raphicerus campestris

If a potential predator approaches, the steenbok lies flat with neck outstretched, zigzagging away only at the last moment.
PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

The steenbok is a very pretty and slender small antelope; its back and hindquarters range from light reddish-brown to dark brown with pale underpart markings. The upper surface of its nose bears a black, wedge-shaped 'blaze' useful for identification. Males have small, straight and widely separated horns. Although steenboks are usually seen alone it appears likely that they share a small territory with a mate, but only occasionally does the pair come together. The steenbok is active in the morning and evening.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm; weight up to 10kg to 16kg; horns up to 19cm long. **Distribution:** Apart from a large area of the central east and eastern coast, steenbok are widely distributed throughout the region in all habitats, except desert areas. **Status:** Common where it occurs.

SUNI

Neotragus moschatus

When surprised the suni will freeze, sometimes for prolonged periods, before bounding away with a barking alarm call.
PHOTO BY RICHARD I'ANSON

This tiny antelope, which vies with the blue duiker for the title of smallest in the region, is best looked for from observation hides at water holes. It is often given away by the constant side-to-side flicking of its tail (blue duikers wag their tails up and down). Suni are probably monogamous, living in pairs on their small territories, and use secretions from a large scent gland in front of their eye to mark their territories. They nibble selectively on leaves and fallen fruit.

Size: Shoulder height 35cm; weight 4kg to 6kg; horns up to 14cm long. **Distribution:** Wooded areas of the region's extreme northeast; can be seen in Kruger National Park and False Bay Park. **Status:** Difficult to see because it is small, shy and lives in thickets; active in the early morning and late afternoon.

The impala is known for its speed and its ability to leap – it can spring as far as 10m in one bound, and 3m into the air.
PHOTO BY ADRIAN BAILEY

IMPALA

Aepyceros melampus

Although it is often dismissed by tourists because it is so abundant, the graceful impala is a unique antelope that has no close relatives. Males have long, lyre-shaped horns averaging 75cm in length. The impala is a gregarious animal, and forms herds of up to 100 or so. Males defend female herds during the oestrus, but outside the breeding season they congregate in bachelor groups. It is the common prey of lions, leopards, cheetahs, wild dogs and spotted hyenas.

Size: Shoulder height 90cm; weight 40kg to 70kg; horns up to 80cm long; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Widespread in the northeast of the region. **Status:** Very common and easy to see.

The springbok is extremely common in arid areas, usually in herds of up to 100, whose social structure varies considerably.
PHOTO BY ARIADNE VAN ZANDBERGEN

SPRINGBOK

Antidorcas marsupialis

The springbok is one of the fastest antelopes (up to 88km/h) and has a distinctive stiff-legged, arched-backed bounding gait called 'pronking', which is commonly displayed when it sees predators. When pronking, it raises a white crest along the back (normally hidden within a skin fold) and the white hairs of the rump. It can survive for long periods without drinking, but may move large distances to find new grazing, sometimes congregating in herds of thousands when doing so. Both sexes have ridged, lyre-shaped horns.

Size: Shoulder height 75cm; weight 25kg to 55kg; horns up to 50cm long; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Northwestern and central-northern South Africa. **Status:** Very common and easy to see.

Although it is generally docile, the buffalo can be very dangerous and should be treated with caution.
PHOTO BY LUKE HUNTER

AFRICAN BUFFALO

Syncerus caffer

The African buffalo is the only native wild cow of Africa. Both sexes have distinctive curving horns that broaden at the base and meet over the forehead in a massive 'boss'; those of the female are usually smaller. It has a fairly wide habitat tolerance, but requires areas with abundant grass, water and cover. The African buffalo is gregarious and may form herds numbering thousands. Group composition is fluid and smaller herds often break away, sometimes rejoining the original herd later.

Size: Shoulder height 160cm; weight 400kg to 900kg; horns up to 125cm long; female somewhat smaller than male. **Distribution:** Restricted to some reserves of the region's northeast and east. **Status:** Common; can be approachable where they are protected.