

12 days on the northern loop



Join us on an unforgettable adventure from the soulful streets of Soweto to the untamed wilderness of Kruger. This 12 day tour on the northern loop will give you the opportunity to encounter diverse cultures, wildlife, and landscapes. Unwind in the tranquil beauty of the coastal paradise of St Lucia, create lasting memories as you explore the Kruger by foot or sleep in a traditional hut in eSwatini.

Tour Facts

Language:
French, English

Duration:
12

Tour Type:
continuous

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 : Welcome to South Africa

As soon as you arrive in Johannesburg, your French or English-speaking guide will welcome you and assist you in collecting the rental car.

You leave Johannesburg and take the road towards the north-east to reach Graskop. We suggest you spend the next 2 days exploring the Canyon region. First, we suggest exploring the southern part of the region. The attractions of the 1st day include God's Window, the famous falls near Graskop (Lisbon Falls, Berlin) as well as the former gold mining village of Pilgrim's Rest whose exploitation ceased in 1972. Classified as a historic monument, its old houses have been restored and transformed into a living museum. The Graskop gorge lift company allows you to zipline and cross a suspension bridge over a 70m deep gorge.

Note : If your flight does not arrive early in the morning, we suggest to book the domestic flight to Mpumalanga.

Day 2 : Discover the Blyde river canyon

Today, you will go further north to visit the famous Bourkes' potholes and the Blyde canyon! Deep from 6 to 800 meters, it extends over 26 km, making it the 3rd largest canyon in the world. Several viewpoints are worth a stop, particularly in the north, the "3 Rondavels" site.

About the hiking trails accessible from forever resorts: Hiking in this region is a magical and well-organized experience. There are four trails at Forever Resort Blyde canyon and it is important to check in at reception and mention the trails you plan to do. However, the trails are well marked and you do not need a guide to do them. The short Kadishi-Tufa trail (one hour) follows the Kadishi River, a tributary of the Blyde River, to a waterfall. The guinea fowl trail (three hours) offers beautiful views before descending to Kadishi; the Lourie Trail (three hours) explores native riparian forest and crosses the river; and the Leopard Trail (four hours) offers spectacular views of the Blyde River Canyon.

Meals Included

Breakfast, Dinner,

Location

Blyde River Canyon

Day 3 : Rehabilitation center and arrival in the Kruger park

Before returning to the Kruger Park where you will spend 4 nights, we suggest you take a morning to discover the rehabilitation work carried out by the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Center.

- **9:00** Visit to HESC: At the Hoedspruit rehabilitation center, you will witness the efforts put in place to preserve the kruger fauna from poaching and ensure the survival of endangered species (site link: <https://hesc.co.za/>). The Hoedspruit Endangered Species Center strives to support conservation within a sustainable ecosystem by focusing on the survival of threatened species through the maintenance of diverse cheetah lineages, rhino rehabilitation, education of local and international communities on the need for conservation.
- **11:00** End of the activity and drive to Kruger Park for the start of your Trail at 3:30 p.m. Driving in an open safari vehicle all the time and staying in a lodge is not necessarily the best way to experience the African bush. Doing it on foot is much closer to the ultimate wilderness experience. This is what we offer our most adventurous travelers: wilderness, remoteness, tranquility, peace and a big bonus: a small group.

A small percentage of South Africa is classified as true wilderness. In the Kruger National Park, 49% of the area of approximately 2 million hectares is zoned wilderness and it is in these areas that the KNP organizes wilderness trails. The trail begins at one of the restcamps in the park and lasts 3 nights. It offers simple but healthy meals prepared by a cook over an open fire or on a gas stove ("vegetarian" option included). Trail runners provide their own liquid refreshments in the form of alcohol or any other

cold drink. Drinking water is provided as well as coffee and tea with fruit juice as part of the bush breakfast. Cooling facilities are limited in each camp.

Meals Included
Breakfast, Dinner,

Location
Hoedspruit rehabilitation center

Day 4 & 5 : Walking trail in the Kruger National Park

About your trail: The camps are located in a wilderness trail area and far from normal tourist activities. The group admits a maximum of 8 people. The reason people take these trails is to get away from modern life.

Trail runners arrive at trail camp late in the afternoon (the day before) and are oriented or introduced to camp, then given time to settle in and relax. The trail leader will give the trail runners a complete briefing on the camp rules, the routine for the next few days, what to expect, safety aspects and will answer all your questions.

After a healthy meal, guests have the opportunity to sit around the fire, socialize, listen to the sounds of the night, and marvel at the beautiful night sky.

Mornings start before dawn with a cup of coffee, tea and rusks, after which the walk will depart from camp or a drive can be taken through the wilderness area to a point from where the morning walk will begin .

We return late in the morning and after a well-deserved brunch, a nap is welcome until mid-afternoon. The afternoon activity consists of a short walk and traditional "aperitifs".

We return to camp where once again a well-cooked meal is served to restore body and mind. The second day is a repeat of the activities of the first day.

On the last morning, hikers have the opportunity to enjoy the camp's bush choir early in the morning, as no walking takes place. Guests are then returned to the starting point after a light breakfast.

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7SASuoWgtU>

Meals Included
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner,

Day 6 : Night game drive in Kruger

Once the trail is finished, we suggest taking your vehicle and crossing the park during the day to go to Skukuza camp. You will spend one last night in Kruger, which will end with a night safari.

Skukuza is the largest rest camp and administrative headquarters of the Kruger National Park. It is located on the south bank of the Sabie River. You will experience a very different side of the African bush on this 4x4 safari with ranger. You may be lucky enough to see predators hunting or devouring their prey before going to rest. In the evening, far from the city lights, the night sky sparkles above you, while your guide uses a spotlight to make out the reflective eyes of leopards, genets, porcupines, galagos and other owls.

Meals Included
Breakfast,

Location
Skukuza

Day 7 : Immersion in Eswatini

Today, you leave for Eswatini (new name of Swaziland) where you will spend the night at KaPhunga in the village Myxo and Bobo, two local guides. You will sleep in a real Swati hut, meet the villagers, eat local dishes and discover the habits and customs of this monarchy landlocked in South Africa.

After crossing the northern border of Eswatini we suggest you make a stop at the Ngwenya glass factory. The charming Ngwenya Glass resort is set in large native gardens and is considered one of Swaziland/Eswatini's top tourist attractions! Here, a small group of Swazi artisans - with centuries-old expertise - bring to life enchanting interpretations of Africa's animals and birds, imbuing each with its own irresistible personality. Witness the magical art of glassblowing from a balcony. Each item is handmade from 100% recycled glass! Browse the well-stocked adjoining showroom and purchase your little souvenir of a truly African visit to the Kingdom of eSwatini.

Meals Included
Lunch, Dinner,

Location
KaPhunga, Eswatini

Day 8 & 9 : Enjoy the best of Kosi Bay

After breakfast, cross the southern border. Swaziland and depart for Kosi Bay, an area located in the northern part of the KwaZulu-Natal province, between Swaziland and the coast. The bird routes and coral reefs off the coast are major tourist attractions. The next day, your day includes a kayaking session, snorkelling and a traditional fishing trip.

KAYAK: Vusi, our famous guide will meet you just after the wooden bridge going down towards Kosi Bay Mouth. When you arrive at the edge of the estuary, he will inform you about the kayaking part of the excursion. You will be guided on double sea kayaks to the southern shore of the estuary where you will enter incredibly surreal mangrove channels. Here on the mangrove islands you will be able to see 5 different species of mangroves and if you are lucky, the local mangrove kingfishers.

From the mangrove islands, you will cross the Kukalwe River. This is a small freshwater stream that flows into the system and is a beautiful sanctuary for fish and birds. Vusi will guide you to the north bank of the estuary, from where you will have a 10-minute walk to the next part of your adventure.

SNORKELLING: The Kosi Bay Mouth snorkeling area is nicknamed "the aquarium" for very valid reasons. On the incoming tide, when crystal clear water enters the estuary from the warm Indian Ocean, the visibility is incredible with incredible quantities of fish. The Kosi Bay "Aquarium" is a declared and protected sanctuary where no fishing is allowed, making its calm, clear waters perfect for our snorkeling adventures. The mouth of Kosi Bay is home to a large number of parrotfish, codfish, lionfish, bream, snapper, butterflyfish, streamers and more.

Here Simon will guide you and point out all the different species of interest. Water clarity and current tend to be better during the neap period. After snorkeling, you will return to the fishkraals where Mike, a wise fishkraal owner from Thonga, will be waiting for you.

TRADITIONAL FISH KRAAL TOUR: The local Tembe have been practicing the art of fish spearing in their traditional kraals for 700 years. These fish traps are made from 100% natural materials and have

been refined over decades. These traps operate in a way that maintains high conservation values by allowing small fish to use these traps as a refuge to hide from predatory fish. These small fish can escape traps different from recreational fishing nets. Mike will show you how the traps work and how they are constructed and maintained. If the traps are successful, you will have the opportunity to try to throw your own lunch, Thonga style.

Then it's time to go sit under the shady uMdomi tree. This is where the mind begins to drift back to many years ago. A moment of pure simplicity... Vusi and Mike will surprise you here with their traditional cooking skills! Fresh fish will be perfectly prepared on sharpened sticks next to a blazing fire. The fish will be served on wild banana leaves with a delicious portion of cornbread and peanut soup. The amaThonga have been eating meals like this on the shore of the Kosi Bay estuary for 700 years.

In addition to this rich cultural experience, Mike will show you how he harvests his own traditional palm wine from a nearby wild date palm. These palms contain internal fluids, very rich in sugars, which help protect them from fire damage. The local Thonga have learned over the years that this rich source of vitamin C and sugar can also be nutritious for the mind.

Meals Included Breakfast, Dinner,	Location Kosi Bay
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Day 10 : The Hippo Cruise in Saint Lucia

After breakfast, you leave Kosi Bay towards the South, where we propose to make a stop in Saint Lucia for your last night in the Kwa Zulu Natal province, but above all to take part in the famous cruise on the Saint Lucia estuary. The park in which the estuary is located is a world natural heritage. The cruise is a treat for bird watchers with over 500 species to see, coastal dune forests and marshes. With over 800 hippos and 1,500 crocodiles in the St Lucia ecosystem, you are sure to come face to face with one of these creatures during your cruise.

Depending on the season and your interests, we suggest you take à horse ride through the park, or that you leave in the evening for an ethical turtle tour.

Meals Included Breakfast, Dinner,

Day 11 : Game drive in Hluhluwe

Your day starts with a half day game drive in Hluhluwe. The Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Reserve is the oldest national park and one of the largest in South Africa. Less touristy than the Kruger National Park, it is the meeting of two reserves: Hluhluwe and Umfolozi, named after the two rivers which cross it. Proclaimed a national reserve in the 1950s for the conservation of the rhino, the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi reserve is now home to nearly 90% of the world's rhino population. You will come back to Saint Lucia at around 1pm before heading to Durban airport after lunch. You will take à local flight to Johannesburg where à dinner is included at your guesthouse.

Meals Included
Breakfast, Dinner,

Location
Hluhluwe-Umfolozzi Reserve

Day 12 : Goodbye South Africa

After breakfast, leave on a guided tour of Johannesburg and Soweto. The township of Soweto, once marked by segregation during apartheid, represents the heart of South Africa's fight against injustice. This guided tour will allow you to discover Soweto, the house of Nelson Mandela and the museum of the young Hector Pieterse, shot dead during a peaceful march in Soweto. The tour also includes a guided tour of the Apartheid Museum and a traditional South African lunch.

After the tour, your guide will transfer you to the airport, where you will embark on your international return flight.

Meals Included
Breakfast, Lunch,

Location
Soweto