

The Best of Southern Africa

People come to southern Africa for its natural beauty, wildlife, and sunshine, and few leave disappointed. With its immensely varied terrain supporting a rich diversity of fauna and flora, the region offers a correspondingly diverse range of experiences. Whether you're here on safari, on a self-drive tour through the vast hinterland, or simply on vacation in one of the world's most beautiful regions, this chapter will help you experience the very best southern Africa has to offer.

1 UNIQUE SOUTHERN AFRICAN MOMENTS

- **Spotting Zebra Grazing on the Mountain from the Highway** (Cape Town): Zebra, wildebeest, and various antelope graze on Table Mountain's slopes, literally minutes from the city center. Look out for them from the highway as you drive in from the airport. See chapter 5.
- **Enjoying the Sunset from Table Mountain** (Cape Town): From this great vantage point, you can watch the sun sink into the Atlantic Ocean, turning the Twelve Apostles a deep pink; then walk across the tabletop to the lip and watch the city lights start to twinkle and take in the dusky outline of the hinterland mountains under a moonlit sky. See chapter 5.
- **Feeling Humbled at Mandela's Prison Cell** (Cape Town): Tours of Robben Island are pretty restrictive, but looking into the tiny cell where Nelson Mandela spent most of his time in prison leaves few unmoved. Further insights are provided by guides, some of whom were incarcerated at the same time as Mandela, in what came to be known as the "University of Robben Island." See chapter 5.
- **Getting Caught Up in the Cape Minstrel Carnival** (Cape Town): Every new year, brightly dressed troops of "coloured" (mixed-race) men and children dance through the streets of Cape Town, singing to the quick-paced strum of banjos and the thump of drums. This tradition was inspired by American minstrels who came to the Cape in the late 1800s, but the celebration dates to 1834, when slaves took to the streets to celebrate their liberation. See chapter 5.
- **Watching Whales from White Sand Dunes** (Western Cape): At De Hoop Nature Reserve's Koppie Alleen, the massive white dunes stretch deep beneath the sea, turning its blue hue into a hypnotic turquoise. This is the perfect place to watch the Southern Right whales that come to breed off the Overberg Coast—said to offer the best land-based whale-watching in the world. See chapter 6.
- **Walking through Carpets of Flowers** (Northern Cape): In this annual miracle of almost spiritual proportions, the semi-arid and seemingly barren West Coast bursts into life after the first

spring rains. More than 2,600 species of flowers literally carpet the Namaqualand plains for a few weeks before subsiding back into the soil for another yearlong wait. See chapter 6.

- **Visiting the World's Largest Open-Air Galleries** (Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal): The bushman (or San) paintings are one of South Africa's greatest cultural treasures and shed light on the lives, pressures, and trance experiences of Bushman shamans. Some 20,000 individual rock paintings have been recorded at 500 different cave and overhang sites between Royal Natal National Park and Bushman's Neck; one of them, Sebaayeni Cave, contains 1,146 individual paintings. Other prime sites include the main caves in Giant's Castle game reserve and Battle Cave in the Injasuti Valley. The Cederberg in the Western Cape is another treasure trove of paintings, easily accessed by overnighting at Bushmans Kloof reserve. See chapters 6 and 10.
- **Jiving with Jo'burg Jollers to the Sounds of Kwaito** (Gauteng): The best place to experience the melting pot of rainbow-nation culture, and to celebrate the emergence of a cohesive national identity, is on the dance floors, grooving to kwaito, South Africa's own homegrown version of house. Look for performances (or recordings) by Brothers of Peace (B.O.P.), Mandoza, Mafikizolo, Zola, M'Du, Mzekezeke, Kabelo, Mapaputsi, Bongo Maffin, or Mzambiya. See chapter 8.
- **Experiencing the Pure Exhilaration of Your First Early-Morning Game Drive** (Limpopo Province, the North-

West, Mpumalanga, and Botswana): Winter (May–Aug) is considered to be the best time of the year to go on safari, as animals are the most visible. But be prepared: Rangers set off in their open-topped vehicles before dawn, when temperatures are barely above zero. See chapters 8, 9, and 12.

- **Seeing Virgin Maidens Dance the Zulu King's Reed Dance** (KwaZulu-Natal): Experience a centuries-old tradition as you join some 15,000 Zulus, many dressed in tribal gear, to watch the virgin maidens dance for the Zulu prince Gideon, who would traditionally pick a wife here. See chapter 10.
- **Soaking Up Victoria Falls** (Zimbabwe): You'll never forget the sight of more than 500 million liters (130 million gallons) of water a minute thundering into the Batoka Gorge, creating soaring rainbows and a mist of drenching spray. Enjoy the view with a champagne breakfast on Livingstone Island. See chapter 11.
- **Rafting the Churning Waters of the Zambezi** (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe): There is absolutely nothing like hearing this mighty river pound past, drowning the guides' last-minute instructions as you plunge into swirling white waters, with such fitting names as The Muncher and Boiling Pot. See chapter 11.
- **Drinking the Waters of the Delta** (Okavango Delta, Botswana): As you're poled along in your *mokoro* (dugout canoe), past palm-fringed islands and aquatic game, sample the life-giving waters of the delta. Scoop up a handful (keeping an eye out for crocs!) and take a sip. See chapter 12.

2 THE WILDEST ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

- **Staring Down a Roaring Lion** (private game reserves in Mpumalanga, Limpopo Province, the North-West, and

Botswana): Tourists are notoriously hungry for shots of big cats, and if you spend 2 nights at one of the top private

game reserves, you will certainly get close to lions and leopards, often on the first drive. If you're lucky, you'll get close enough that your vehicle will shudder from the noise that erupts from the king of the jungle's gut. See chapters 8, 9, and 12.

- **Waiting for a Leopard to Finish Its Dinner** (private game reserves, the North-West, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal): Holing up in your room while a leopard gnaws its dinner outside your door might happen at any of the private game-reserve lodges that are set in the bush. Animals roam freely in this environment, and if dinner happens to be on your patio, celebrate the fact that you're not it and plunder the minibar. See chapters 8, 9, and 10.
- **Stalking a Rhino on Foot** (Kruger National Park, Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Reserve): Tracking rhino is no mean feat: They can smell humans up to 800m (2,624 ft.) away. Being on foot, with only the sounds of the bush and your beating heart as you crouch just meters from an animal as large as a tank, is unbeatable. For the best rhino-tracking experience, stay at Royal Malewane lodge, in the Thornybush game reserve adjoining Kruger. You will almost definitely track white rhino on the Bushman, Wolhuter, and Napi trails run by Kruger National Park, and the Umfolozi trails run by Hluhluwe-Umfolozi. See chapters 9 and 10.
- **Swimming with Penguins** (Boulders Beach, Cape Town): This is a beautiful place to swim; large boulders create natural swimming pools shared by the only land-breeding colony of jackass penguins. Watch them waddle and dive through the crystal-clear waters, which are slightly warmer than the Atlantic seaboard side—cold comfort, given how icy that is. See chapter 5.
- **Eyeballing a Great White Shark** (Cape Town, Hermanus, and Mossel Bay,

Western Cape): Forget tawdry images of razor-toothed monsters chomping at metal bars—this is a riveting, myth-dispelling opportunity to get up close and personal with one of Earth's most ancient creatures, viewing great white sharks in their natural habitat: Geyser Rock, the preferred winter breeding ground for 60,000 Cape fur seal. Most South African shark-cage diving companies adhere to a strict code of conduct, and many are involved in eco-research aimed at helping to save the endangered great white. Nowhere else on the planet can you get to the sharks with so little effort. (A tamer experience, with gentle ragged-tooth sharks at Cape Town's aquarium, lets scuba divers literally swim with the fishes.) See chapters 5 and 6.

- **Watching Rare Turtles Nest** (Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal): In November and December, the female leatherback and loggerhead turtles leave the safety of the sea at night to lay their eggs above the high-tide mark on the northern beaches of KwaZulu-Natal. Two months later, hatchlings scramble out of their nests and make a run for the ocean. Only one or two out of every thousand survive to maturity and return to the exact same beach where they were born to produce the next generation. See chapter 10.
- **Avoiding a Territorial Hippo** (Victoria Falls, Okavango Delta, Zululand, KwaZulu Natal): The upper reaches of the Zambezi and the Okavango Delta's watery channels are best explored by gliding along in a canoe (for the most authentic African safari, sign up for the 3-day Kanana Mokoro Trail and camp out on islands in the Delta), but you're more than likely to meet a hippo this way. Always treat them with respect—despite a relatively docile appearance, they are Africa's most dangerous mammal and are responsible for more deaths than crocodiles or lions. See chapters 11 and 12.

3 THE BEST PRIVATE GAME LODGES & CAMPS

- **Morukuru** (Madikwe, North-West): With no schedules, no rules, and absolutely no pressure on guests to do anything other than relax, this wonderful little lodge combines the finest in safari luxury with fabulous service and really memorable game experiences. Not only can you learn to track lion and leopard with your personal Shangaan tracker, but you'll have your very own ranger, chef, and obliging butler, all on call to fulfill your every whim as you laze on your teak deck overlooking the Groot Marico River. Who's the king of the jungle? You are. See chapter 9.
- **Singita** (Sabi Sands Reserve and Kruger National Park): The much-lauded Singita offers the best game lodge experience in Africa, with a choice of styles, from plush colonial to the last word in contemporary Afro-chic, and superlative game-viewing. Elevated private viewing decks let you immerse yourself in the tranquility of the bush without leaving your suite. Add top-notch rangers, a roving masseuse, exquisite food, and a connoisseur's selection of wines, and you're assured an unforgettable stay—the only difficulty is deciding which lodge you prefer. See chapter 9.
- **Londolozi Private Granite Suites** (Sabi Sands Reserve, Mpumalanga): Long before Singita and Royal Malewane came on the scene, Londolozi set the standard in luxury bush accommodations, and it's still a class act. Of the four camps, the Granite Suites are the most luxurious, particularly the two that are right on the river—arguably the best in the entire Kruger, with private plunge pools that drop onto the boulders that form the Sand River banks. Londolozi is justifiably famed for its leopard sightings. See chapter 9.
- **Royal Malewane** (Thornybush Reserve, Limpopo Province): With privately situated suites that offer every luxury, this is all about deep relaxation, enhanced by the recently expanded spa. If you can bear to leave your private pool and viewing deck (or in-room lounge and fireplace), you'll find the on-foot tracking is the country's best. See chapter 9.
- **Lebala and Kwara** (Kwando and Okavango Delta, Botswana): These two camps are both run by class-outfit Kwando Safaris and offer superb game-viewing, with a good mix of wet and dry-land activities. Lebala is the flagship camp, located on a massive concession shared by only one other (sister) camp, with superlative accommodations. But it's the superior game-viewing and guiding that has earned them their much-deserved reputation. See chapter 12.
- **Jao Camp** (Jao Concession, Okavango Delta, Botswana): Not only is this camp located in one of the finest concessions in the delta, but it is also one of the most gorgeous camps on the continent; if the price is too steep, operator Wilderness Safaris has 3 other options on the Jao concession, at virtually half the price. See chapter 12.
- **Mombo Camp** (Moremi, Okavango, Botswana): At the confluence of two river systems, Mombo has long been regarded as one of the best game-viewing spots in Africa, attracting large numbers of plains game and their attendant predators; for game-viewing that's much on a par, but at a much friendlier price, take a look at sister camp **Duba Plains**. See chapter 12.
- **Linyanti Bush Camp** (Chobe Enclave, Botswana): On the edge of the Linyati marshes, bordering the Chobe National Park, this is an area that sees huge

concentrations of game in the winter months, and the only lodging option here is this intimate six-tent camp. Personally run by owners Beks and Sophia, the camp offers understated luxury, superlative guiding, and exceptional value. The couple also has a small camp in the delta and offers 3-night mobile walking safaris (see chapter 12).

- **Jack's Camp** (Makgadikgadi Pans, Botswana): Desert reserves have a very special effect on the spirit, and these classic 1940s safari camps, situated under palm trees on the fringe of the pans, offer one of the most unusual experiences in Africa. (For a more luxurious desert lodge—we're talking swimming pools and top-end service—head for Tswalu, in the Kalahari.) See chapter 12.

4 THE BEST PARKS & NATURE RESERVES

- **Table Mountain National Park** (Cape Town and Cape Peninsula, Western Cape): With so much natural, unfettered beauty so startlingly close to a major city, it's easy to forget that vast portions of the horn-shaped protruding peninsula that makes up Africa's most southwesterly point is actually a preserve, not only for an entire plant kingdom and free-roaming wild animals, but for some of the most splendid mountain and coastal scenery on the planet. You can easily see it by bike, car, or cableway—by why not hike from Table Mountain's Signal Hill all the way to Cape Point?—and discover that nature herself made Cape Town one of the world's favorite city destinations, and certainly Africa's most beautiful. See chapter 5.
- **De Hoop Nature Reserve** (Whale Coast, Western Cape): A magnificent coastal reserve featuring deserted beaches, interesting rock pools, beautiful *fynbos* (uniquely diverse shrublands), a wetland with more than 200 bird species, and a number of small game, but for many, the best reason to come here is because it offers some of the best land-based whale-watching in the world. See chapter 6.
- **Tsitsikamma National Park** (Garden Route, Western Cape): Stretching from Storms River Mouth to Nature's Valley,

this coastline is best explored on foot via the 5-day Otter Trail. If the trail is full or you're pressed for time, take the 1km (½-mile) walk to the mouth, or complete the first day of the Otter Trail, which terminates at a beautiful waterfall. See chapter 6.

- **Goegap Nature Reserve** (Namaqualand, Northern Cape): This is one of the best places in Namaqualand to witness the floral transformation after the first spring rains. A recommended way to explore the reserve is to hire a bike and complete the two trails that traverse the reserve. Grazing among the flowers are zebra, springbok, and the stately gemsbok, or oryx. See chapter 6.
- **Kgalagadi (Kalahari) Transfrontier Park** (Northern Cape): This is one of the largest conservation areas in Africa—twice the size of Kruger—yet because of the long distances you need to travel to reach it, this desert reserve is seldom included in the first visitor's itinerary. Pity, for it is starkly beautiful, with red dunes, blond grasses, and sculptural camelthorn trees contrasting with cobalt-blue skies. Despite its aridity, the reserve supports a number of predators, including the famed black-maned “Kalahari” lion, hyena, wild dog, and cheetah. See chapter 6.
- **Addo Elephant National Park** (Eastern Cape): The main game-viewing area

is compact, but this is the place to see elephant by the ton—the Addo herds are famously relaxed around visitors and will pass a hair's breadth away from your car without blinking; you're also almost sure to see baggy-skinned babies up to mischief, chasing warthogs at the waterholes and whatnot. What's more, Addo extends from the edge of the Karoo to the coast—so there are whales and sharks as well as the Big 5. See chapter 7.

- **Madikwe Game Reserve** (North-West): Rapidly gathering momentum as one of the country's most sought-after getaways, this 75,000-hectare (185,250-acre) reserve offers highly diverse eco-zones (including Kalahari sandveld), allowing it to support an unusual range of species—which is why it's been dubbed the Magnificent 7 reserve (cheetahs and wild dogs in addition to the usual suspects). Best of all, it's malaria free. See chapter 9.
- **Kruger National Park** (Mpumalanga and Limpopo Province): One of Africa's greatest game parks, with probably the best-developed infrastructure, Kruger is the most cost-effective, do-it-yourself way to go on safari. Most accommodations are pretty basic but clean, functional, and affordable, and the park teems with wildlife. Good news for connoisseurs is that there are an increasing number of classy private concessions, where the finest lodgings are available—for a price. See chapter 9.
- **iSimangaliso Wetland Park** (Zulu-land, KwaZulu-Natal): This World

Heritage Site encompasses five distinct ecosystems, includes the croc-rich estuary, swamp and dune forests, and the Mkhuze savanna and offshore coral reefs. It is also close to Hluhluwe-Umfolozi, the province's largest Big 5 reserve, which supports Africa's densest rhino population (both black and white). See chapter 10.

- **uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park** (KwaZulu-Natal): The Drakensberg in its entirety is spectacular, but if you have time to visit only one region, head north for the Amphitheatre. One of the most magnificent rock formations in Africa, it is also the source of South Africa's major rivers: the Vaal, the Orange, and the Tugela. Rolling grasslands, breathtaking views, and crystal-clear streams can be explored only on foot or horseback. See chapter 10.
- **The Victoria Falls National Park** (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe): This World Heritage Site offers the most stupendous views of the 1,000m-wide (3,280-ft.) falls, and the constant spray, crowned by a permanent rainbow, sustains a lush and verdant rainforest. See chapter 11.
- **Moremi Game Reserve** (Botswana): No visit to Botswana would be complete without a trip to Moremi, which makes up much of the eastern shores of the delta and offers arguably the best game-viewing in southern Africa, though the more exclusive experiences are to be had on the many concessions that border the reserve. See chapter 12.

5 THE BEST OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

- **Paragliding Off Lion's Head and Landing on Camps Bay Beach** (Cape Town): It's a breathtaking ride hovering high above Cape Town's ever-changing cityscape, the slopes of Table Mountain

folded beneath your weightless feet. As you glide toward the white sands of Camps Bay, lapped by an endless expanse of ocean, you'll have time to

admire the craggy cliffs of the Twelve Apostles. See chapter 5.

- **Kayaking to Cape Point** (Cape Town): Kayaking is the most impressive way to view this towering outcrop, the southwestern-most point of Africa. It's also the ideal opportunity to explore the rugged cliffs that line the coastline, with numerous crevices and private coves on which to beach yourself. See chapter 5.
- **Mountain Biking through the Knysna Forests** (Garden Route, Western Cape): Starting at the Garden of Eden, the 22km (14-mile) Harkerville Red Route is considered the most challenging in the country. Its steep, single-track slip paths take you past indigenous forests, silent plantations, and magnificent coastal fynbos. See chapter 6.
- **Bungee Jumping off Bloukrans River Bridge** (Garden Route, Western Cape): The real daredevils do the highest bungee jump in the world in just their birthday suits, leaping 216m (708 ft.) and free-falling (not to mention screaming) for close to 7 seconds. See chapter 6.
- **Surfing Bruce's Beauties** (Cape St. Francis, Eastern Cape): Bruce's Beauties, the waves featured in the 1960s cult classic *Endless Summer*, form an awesome right-point break. They need

a massive swell, however, and don't work very often; the same goes for *Supertubes*, hailed the perfect wave, in nearby Jeffrey's Bay. See chapter 7.

- **Surfing the Mighty Zambezi River** (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe): Not content to merely raft down the Zambezi, adrenaline-seekers can plunge into the churning waters attached to a boogie board and ride the 2m- to 3m-high (6½–9¾-ft.) waves. See chapter 11.
- **Riding an Elephant through the African Wilderness** (Mpumalanga, Victoria Falls, and Botswana): This is a great way to explore the bush, not only because of the elevated view and the proximity with which you can approach animals, but because you can't feel any safer—no one in the jungle messes with an elephant. See chapters 9, 11, and 12.
- **Tracking Big Game on Horseback** (Mashatu and Okavango Delta, Botswana): You haven't lived until you've outraced a charging elephant on the back of your trusty steed. Experience Africa as a pioneer by taking a 3- to 10-day horse safari in the Mashatu Game Reserve, or explore the western delta bordering the Moremi Game Reserve. See chapter 12.

6 THE BEST SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY STOPS

- **Robben Island** (Cape Town): A prison for political activists since the 17th century, including its most famous prisoner, Nelson Mandela, the island was commonly known as the Alcatraz of Africa. Today the island is a museum and a nature reserve, and a tangible symbol of South Africa's transformation. See chapter 5.
- **Bo-Kaap** (Cape Town): This Cape Malay area, replete with cobbled streets and quaint historical homes, was one of

the few “nonwhite” areas to escape destruction during the apartheid era, despite its proximity to the city. Visible today only as large tracts of cleared land on the southern outskirts of town (opposite the Bo-Kaap), this once vibrant suburb was razed in the 1960s. See chapter 5.

- **Wupperthal Moravian Mission Station** (Cederberg, Western Cape): At the end of a long, dusty road in the Cederberg Mountains, Wupperthal remains

unchanged to this day and is both an architectural and cultural living legacy of the early missionaries. Other mission stations worth visiting are Elim and Genadendal, both in the Overberg. See chapter 6.

- **The Red Location Museum** (Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape): This award-winning architectural wonder is made up of 12 individual, rusty, corrugated iron “memory boxes,” filled with exhibits and narratives about local life and culture, and the community’s contribution to the struggle against apartheid. See chapter 7.
- **Apartheid Museum** (Johannesburg, Gauteng): Few other museums are able to achieve the emotional impact generated by this reminder of South Africa’s ugly past. The collection of images, audiovisual presentations, and intimate tales of human suffering and triumph in the face of adversity is staggering; raw and vivid, the journey from oppression to democracy is powerfully evoked here. See chapter 8.
- **Origins Centre** (Johannesburg, Gauteng): For anyone interested in understanding the great genetic strand that purportedly binds all of humanity to a common African ancestor, this new museum is filled with clues, from little bits of sharpened rock to fascinating films depicting the shamanic trance rites of the nomadic San people. While the design and layout owes much to contemporary art galleries, this new attraction is a source of fairly hard-core academic knowledge, including DNA testing (at a price) that may provide you with a better idea of where your own ancestral roots may lie. See chapter 8.
- **Cradle of Humankind** (Gauteng): Having shot to fame in 1947 with the discovery of a 2.5-million-year-old hominid skull, the region continues to produce fascinating finds about the origins of mankind. Tours with paleontologists introduce you to many intriguing aspects of human evolution, in an area that’s remained unchanged for millions of years. See chapter 8.
- **Rorke’s Drift and Isandlwana** (Battlefields, KwaZulu-Natal): These two Anglo-Zulu War battlefield sites, within walking distance of each other, encompass both the British Empire’s most humiliating defeat and its most heroic victory in the colonies. At the Battle of Isandlwana, more than 1,300 armed men were wiped out by a “bunch of savages armed with sticks,” as the mighty Zulu nation was then referred to. Hours later, 139 British soldiers (35 of them ill) warded off a force of 4,000 Zulus for 12 hours, for which an unprecedented 11 Victorian Crosses were awarded. See chapter 10.
- **The Vukani Collection** (Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal): While most Westerners head for the cultural villages to gain some insight into Zulu tribal customs and culture, Vukani is where Zulu parents take their children. With the largest collection of Zulu artifacts in the world, this is a highly recommended excursion, particularly for those interested in crafts. Note that if you aren’t venturing this far afield, the **Campbell Collection** in Durban is an alternative. See chapter 10.

7 THE MOST AUTHENTIC CULINARY EXPERIENCES

- **Preparing and Eating a Cape Malay Meal** (Cape Town): Typified by mild, sweet curries and stews, this cuisine is easy on the uninitiated palate. The most authentic restaurant is Biesmiellah, located in the Bo-Kaap in Cape Town, and many of the top restaurants in the Cape incorporate Cape Malay spicing in creative ways. While you could simply sit down to a meal, why not join an eye-opening “cooking safari,” during which you cook alongside genuine Bo-Kaap families in their own homes? Learn to roll roti and fold samosas, and then tuck into a gratifying home-cooked meal, featuring the results of your own labor. Rather than leaving a tip, you’ll leave having made friends with a community. See chapter 5.
- **Tucking into *Boerekos*** (Cape Town, Stellenbosch, and Tulbagh): South Africa’s countryside is dotted with small-town communities where traditional Afrikaner *boerekos* (farmers’ food) is still a staple, although perhaps given a contemporary update in the manner of 21st-century celebrity chefs (even Gordon Ramsey’s new Cape Town venture, **maze**, plunders one or two original recipes). For the most inspired take on modern South African cuisine, try **Cognito** (☎ 021/882-8696), in Stellenbosch. While in Tulbagh, the Wineland’s darling sleeping giant, you can sample ultratraditional *waterblommetjiefredie* (water lily stew) at **Paddagang Restaurant** (☎ 023/230-0242), on Church Street, lined with beautifully restored Cape Dutch heritage. See chapter 5.
- **Lunching in the Vineyards** (Wine-lands): Set aside at least one afternoon to lunch in the Winelands overlooking vine-carpeted valleys. Recommended options include the lovely terrace at **Constantia Uitsig** (☎ 021/794-4480), on the Constantia Wine Route; a window table at **La Petite Ferme** (☎ 021/876-3016), overlooking the lush Franschoek Valley; or—for the most sought-after dining experience in Stellenbosch—**Overture** (☎ 021/880-2721), with tables perched over the vineyards. See chapter 5.
- **High Tea at the Nellie** (Cape Town): Regularly voted Africa’s top hotel, the Mount Nelson has been serving up the best high tea south of the equator for over a century. Luxuriate on sofas under chandeliers as plates piled high with cucumber sandwiches and cream tea are served to the strains of the tinkling pianist. A graciously colonial experience, it’s a relative bargain at R150 a head. See chapter 5.
- **Braaing *Kreef* (lobster) on the Beach** (West Coast, Western Cape): The West Coast all-you-can-eat beach *braais* (barbecues) are legendary, giving you an opportunity to try a variety of local fish. Your best bet is Muisbosskerm, near Lamberts Bay, an ideal spot if you want to combine a trip to the Cederberg. See chapter 6.
- **Eating with Your Fingers:** You’ll find that the African staple *pap* (maize-meal prepared as a stiff porridge that resembles polenta) is best sampled by balling a bit in one hand and dipping the edge into a sauce or stew. Try *umngqusho*—a stew made from maize kernels, sugar beans, chilies, and potatoes, said to be one of Nelson Mandela’s favorites. You’ll most likely sample *pap* on a township tour (see chapters 5, 7, and 8).
- **Dining Under the Stars to the Sounds of the Bush** (private game reserves

throughout southern Africa): There's nothing like fresh air to work up an appetite, unless it's the smell of sizzling food cooked over an open fire. Happily, dinners at private game reserves combine both more often than not. Weather permitting, meals are served in a *boma* (a reeded enclosure), or in the bush in riverbeds or under large trees. Armed rangers and massive fires keep predators at bay.

- **Chewing Biltong on a Road Trip:** Biltong, strips of game, beef, or ostrich cured with spices and dried, is sold at farm stalls and butcher shops throughout the country. This popular local tradition, dating back to the Voortrekkers, is something of an acquired taste, but it's almost addictive once you've started.