

BEING TOURISTY In Cape Town



NEL AUSTIN/SA TOURISM

Beaches, mountains, a stunning waterfront... This good looking city has all that it takes to have fabulous fun. **BY PALLAVI PASRICHA**

land in Cape Town with the famed Table Mountain high on my agenda. Wherever I go in the city, it looms large in the background, beckoning me, and I cannot wait to be on top of the flat-topped, sandstone mountain. But it's cloudy, and I am told I can only enjoy the jaw-dropping views of the city and the beaches on a clear day. I decide to discover Cape Town instead, on foot.

The city is very similar to a few cities I have visited in Europe with its charming cathedrals, cobbled streets, quaint shops and beautiful lush gardens. But it has a certain energy. I spend my first evening at the V&A waterfront, one of the most buzzing parts of the city. Lined with restaurants, pubs and lounges, it is easy to spend hours here. Shopping pulls me into Victoria Wharf Shopping Centre and I end up picking many artefacts—cushion covers, coasters with animal prints, colourful diaries and a wooden painting—from the Red Shed Craft Workshop, a permanent market within the mall with a number of curio and art shops. I am tempted to walk into one of the bars and enjoy the waterfront but others in the group want to head for dinner to one of the best known restaurants of the city. The

Roundhouse. Located at Camps Bay, this former guardhouse, tea room and hunting lodge serves an exquisite French meal with some great wine. As we head back to the hotel, we all agree that our first day in this city has ended on a perfect note.

There is plenty to pack into my brief stay. The next day I go to Signal Hill, which is much lower than the Table Mountain. All right, it

may not have the famed landmark's sweeping views, but it is perfect for me as the city is spread out below me. The Lion's Head, another mountain

peak and Table Mountain, lie on two sides of this hill, and appear to be so close that it seems I can literally touch them. This is a popular spot to watch the sun go down. With the vast expanse of the ocean in front and the sky taking on an orange glow, you can see right up to the notorious Robben Island. After soaking in the views and posing for pictures at various points, I move on to the next place that I have heard so much about—Boulders Beach.

Located about half an hour away from Cape Town, this stunning waterfront is crowded with more than 2,000 African penguins. The beach is crowded with many families as it is a popular place for

children. Watching the penguins take tiny steps is a delightful sight, and I could have stared at these adorable creatures for hours, but there are other plans to follow. Leaving them behind is not easy, but the drive which lies ahead more than makes up for it. Cape Town keeps getting better as I move on from one spot to the other.

Going along the Atlantic Ocean is one of the most memorable experiences of my stay. The Chapman's Peak Drive, starting from Hout Bay to Noordhoek, a picturesque suburb, is rated among the most scenic in the world, and it certainly takes your breath away. We go along the winding nine-km road with rocky mountains to my left and the sparkling blue Atlantic Ocean to my right. We stop on the way for pictures and spend about 15 minutes at a view point midway to soak in the wonderful views. It's a drive I am not going to forget for the rest of my life.

I am on my way to yet

another stunning site—the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden—located on the foot of the Table Mountain. It is part of the Cape Floral Region (that has eight floral areas in and around Cape Town) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is undoubtedly one of the prettiest gardens I have seen—full of different varieties of flowers. I'm lucky, as I'm visiting during great weather and the flowers are in full bloom. Spring is in the air and the garden is a montage of colours. Besides flowers and plants, there are sculptures at various points in the garden. You can easily spend the day here though I had to leave in an hour.

As I emerge from the garden, I look wistfully up to Table Mountain. It has been shrouded in clouds throughout my stay, and I leave Cape Town the next day trying to imagine what the views from up there must be like. Ironically, my most abiding memory of the city is the spot I never make it to.

DON'T MISS

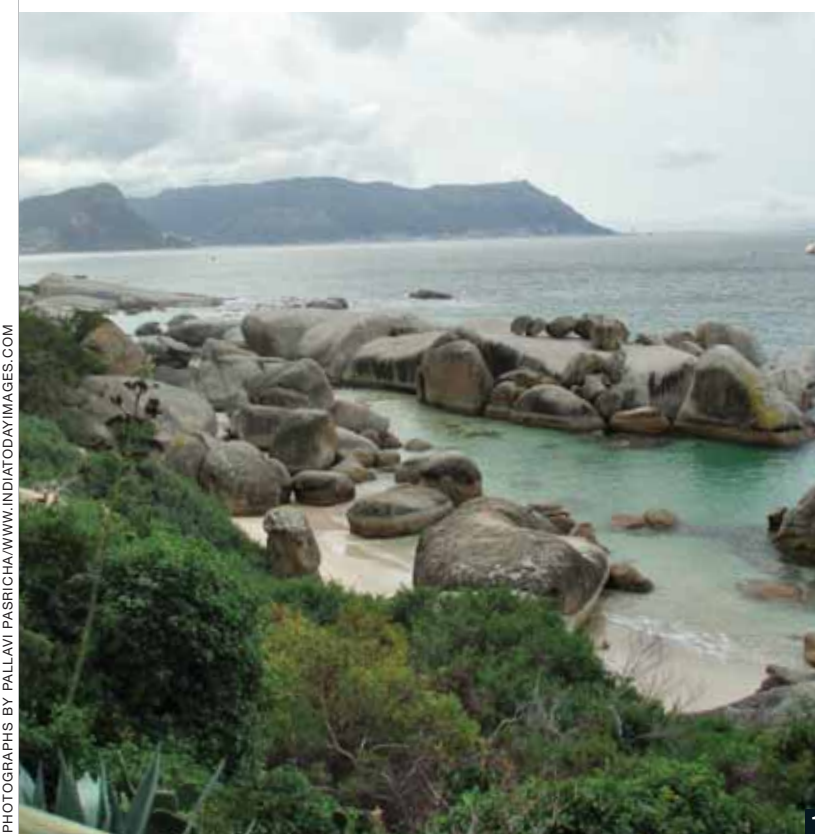
- Your visit to Cape Town is not complete without a wine tasting tour at the Cape Winelands. Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are the two areas you can visit. A number of vineyards there conduct daily tours followed by a wine tasting session. It will be convenient for you if you book tours online at www.capewinelands.gov.za

- Go for a game safari, two hours away from Cape Town. Aqulia Game Reserve is the most popular followed by Kagga Kamma and Inverdoorn. You can spot the Big Five at all parks.

MUST VISIT
Have a meal at *Le Quartier Français* at Franschhoek rated top 50 in the world



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1. Boulders beach, one of the few places where African penguins can be spotted 2. The scenic Chapman's Peak Drive 3. The colourful V&A Waterfront

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