

Itinerary

DAY 1

On the way to South Africa

DAY 2

Johannesburg overnight and orientation

Upon arrival in Johannesburg, we'll be met and escorted to O.R. Tambo Airport's InterContinental Hotel for an overnight stay. After a relaxing dinner, we'll have a trip briefing.

DAYS 3 TO 5

Richard Branson's beautiful Sabi Sand Game Reserve

"At Ulusaba, we have set out to create the most beautiful game reserve in Africa," says Sir Richard Branson. This website brims with beautiful safari lodges, camps, and game reserves, and we have our own favorites, but there's no doubt that Branson & Co are giving Ulusaba their best effort, which—as you know—entails a lot of creative, sumptuous, high-spirited best.

We fly to Ulusaba Private Game Reserve—in the vast Sabi Sand Reserve, adjacent to Kruger National Park—on a short scheduled charter flight and immediately begin to savour its distinctive mix of down-home hospitality and thoughtful luxury. Our rooms in Ulusaba's Safari Lodge are designed to give us an intimate feel for life in the bush (some are built tree-house style); we watch from our private verandah as animals stroll by on their way to the nearby watering hole, we swim in the lodge's pool, dine al fresco (or restaurant style, or in our room), pay visits to Ulusaba Reserve's well-populated animal troupes and solo stars by four-wheel drive vehicle or on guided walks, and maybe amble over to the the Lodge's Aroma Boma Spa, which specializes in "Africology," using time-honored local materials like rooibos, aloe, marula and African potato.

DAYS 6 & 7

The supercalifragilistic Cape Winelands

We fly from Ulusaba's private airstrip to Cape Town via Johannesburg and drive due west into the Winelands and our hotel, Mont Rochelle, another picture-pretty Branson gem, luxuriously well wrought, serene and welcoming, with the promise of "...a soft and golden morning, alert with the praise of birds," as the great Elspeth Huxley wrote about a different, but wonderfully similar African place.

We spend the next couple of days exploring the Winelands, South Africa's scenic treasure, graced with bang-up views that—with all due respect—out-drama Napa and Sonoma. We wander in the sparkingly kempt Dutch colonial towns of Stellenbosch, Paarl, and Franschhoek, dropping in on family-owned cheese farms and vineyards, lunching at the renowned Delaire Graff Estate (where, one guest wrote, "luxury meets stunning surrounds"). We'll ramble in Paarl's Spice Route, a brilliantly curated series of shops and attractions and artisan showcases, indulging in chocolate and wine pairings and innovative craft beer, and we'll watch Liz Lacey and David Jackson blow decorative glass like John Coltrane blew the sax. And we'll spend an afternoon at the fourth-generation Kanonkop Wine Estate, sampling its wares and roaming its collection of paintings, sculptures, and ceramics by some of South Africa's most revered and excitingly upcoming artists.

DAYS 8 TO 10

Cape Town's natural and urban delights

Cape Town has proudly vaulted to the top tier of the world's favourite cities. In 2014 it was ranked the world's number one Place to Go in the New York Times' annual list (we contribute our Capetonian praise elsewhere on this site). Cape Town is graced with a theatrical setting in a natural amphitheatre giving way to Table Bay, ringed with Devil's Peak, Signal Hill, Lion's Head, and the monarchical, ever-enchanting Table Mountain. The Cape Floristic region, a unique bit of natural magic, is home to more than 6,000 plants found nowhere else in the world. Cape Town's cultural, artistic, and culinary life is perhaps Africa's most bubbly. And our hotel, the magnificent One&Only, right on the fizzy Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, is stage centre on one of the continent's greatest shows.

We'll head over to the Cape Floristic Region, a scenery- and nature-lover's nirvana, pay our respects to the penguins at Boulders Bay, and enjoy lunch at Harbor House, on the shores of False (but nonetheless very comely) Bay, looking up an impressive 6,500 feet at Du Toits Peak. We'll take the aerial cableway to Table Mountain's once-glaciated summit and delve into urban Cape Town and its environs, spending some time with Rosie at her stalwart Rosie's Kitchen in Khayelitsha Township, where she feeds locals and children in need, and visit with Golden as he and his crew transform old cans into unforgettably gorgeous flowers. And throughout our Cape Town stay, our Micato Safari Director will be close by, introducing us to the city's iconic and lesser-visited sights, proudly showcasing a city and region that, as the Times says, "takes your breath away."

DAYS 11 & 12

Morning in Cape Town, then heading home

After a great O&O breakfast, we'll have ample time to pack and freshen up at leisure before we're escorted to Cape Town International for our flights homeward, arriving on Day 12.