

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE

# SOUTH AFRICA GOLF GUIDE



SOUTH AFRICA  
— GOLF TOURS —

*For U.S. & International Travelers*

Courses · Regions · Itineraries · Logistics

PRESENTED BY

**SOUTH AFRICA GOLF TOURS**

# CONTENTS

---

<b>01</b> Why South Africa for Golf	<b>10</b> Sample Itineraries
<b>02</b> The Regions at a Glance	<b>11</b> Top Luxury Resorts & Lodges
<b>03</b> The 15 Must-Play Courses	<b>12</b> Booking, Logistics & Etiquette
<b>04</b> The Western Cape Deep Dive	<b>13</b> Practical Travel
<b>05</b> Mpumalanga, Limpopo & North West	<b>14</b> Tipping in South Africa
<b>06</b> KwaZulu-Natal & Gauteng	<b>15</b> Budgeting Your Trip
<b>07</b> Links Golf in South Africa	<b>16</b> Sustainability in South African Golf
<b>08</b> Highveld vs Coastal Play	<b>17</b> Frequently Asked Questions
<b>09</b> When to Go: Month-by-Month	

---

## 01 WHY SOUTH AFRICA FOR GOLF

South Africa offers something almost no other golf destination can match: a dense concentration of championship courses set against radically different landscapes — clifftop coastline, Big Five bushveld, working vineyards, ancient links land — all reachable on a single trip and at roughly half the all-in cost of an equivalent week in Europe or the United States.



*Kruger National Park — elephants on the Crocodile River, which borders the back nine at Leopard Creek.*

From the altitude-enhanced distances of the Highveld to the wind-swept coastal links of the Cape, South African golf delivers diverse challenges in spectacular settings. Several courses on the must-play list have hosted majors, the Presidents Cup, the Nedbank Challenge, LIV Golf and multiple South African Opens. Outside the round, the country lets you stack experiences few other destinations can: morning round, afternoon game drive; morning round, afternoon wine tasting; morning round, afternoon whale watching from the same coastline.

South Africa is home to over 450 quality golf courses — many designed by legends including Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Ernie Els and Peter Matkovich — across a country with year-round playability, excellent infrastructure, English universally spoken, and strong USD value against the rand. For an international visitor, the practical case is as compelling as the romantic one.

### WHAT MAKES THE COUNTRY UNIQUE FOR VISITING GOLFERS

Density. Western Cape alone packs four to five world-ranked courses within a two-hour radius. Variety. True links, clifftop coastal, parkland, bushveld, vineyard estate — all in one trip. Wildlife. Hippos and crocodiles as gallery on the Crocodile River at Leopard Creek; warthogs and kudu at Skukuza inside Kruger itself. Value. Premium green fees R2,500–R6,300 (\$100–\$300); a comparable round in the US or Ireland is two to three times the cost. Year-round play. Every month is in season somewhere — the Cape from October to April, the Highveld and KZN from April to September. Easy logistics. Direct long-haul service from Europe and convenient connections from the US; English-speaking, dollar-friendly, with strong tourism infrastructure.

## 02 THE REGIONS AT A GLANCE

Five clusters carry the bulk of the country’s tournament-grade golf. Most multi-course itineraries combine two — typically a coastal/Cape leg with a safari/Highveld leg.

REGION	BEST FOR	HUB AIRPORT	PEAK SEASON
Western Cape — Cape Town	Scenic coastal & parkland, food and wine	Cape Town (CPT)	Oct–Apr
Western Cape — Winelands	Golf paired with world-class wine	Cape Town (CPT)	Sep–Apr
Western Cape — Garden Route	Coastal championship golf	George (GRJ)	Year-round
Mpumalanga / Limpopo	Big Five safari + championship golf	KMI / JNB	Apr–Sep
Gauteng / North West	Highveld parkland, Sun City	Johannesburg (JNB)	Apr–Sep
KwaZulu-Natal	Historic coastal courses, warm winter	Durban (DUR)	May–Sep

### TRIP-DESIGN RULE OF THUMB

For a first visit of seven to ten days, pair a Western Cape leg (Cape Town or the Garden Route) with a Mpumalanga safari leg. This single combination — coastal championship golf plus Big Five — is the experience that defines a South African golf trip and sets it apart from any other destination.

### PACING — A USEFUL PLANNING RULE

Plan two to three nights per stage. South Africa is a vast country and the temptation is to over-pack the itinerary. Two to three nights per region gives time to play the local marquee courses, see the surrounding landscape, and not feel constantly on the move. The diversity of regions is the point — give each one room to breathe.

## 03 THE 15 MUST-PLAY COURSES

This list represents the cream of South African golf — courses that have hosted major championships, earned international acclaim, and consistently deliver memorable experiences. Whether you are planning a dedicated golf trip or adding rounds to a broader South African adventure, these are the courses that should anchor an itinerary.

### #1 LEOPARD CREEK COUNTRY CLUB

*Malelane, Mpumalanga · Highveld · Championship*

<b>DESIGNER</b>	Gary Player (with Ron Kirby)
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 7,249 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R6,300 (incl. cart & halfway house)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Apr–Sep (dry season, best wildlife viewing)

#### WHY PLAY HERE

Consistently ranked #1 in South Africa and inside the world’s top 100, with a venue pedigree that includes Sunshine Tour and DP World Tour events. The course borders Kruger National Park along the Crocodile River, and the back nine plays directly along the river — making the gallery hippos, crocodiles, and elephants. The signature 13th, a par-5 with the Crocodile River along the right and an island green, is one of golf’s most photographed holes. The ultimate South African golf experience.

#### INSIDER TIP

Members-only: access is gated through partner lodges (Malelane Sun, Kruger Gate Hotel, Lukimbi Safari Lodge) or qualified tour operators. Book accommodation 3–6 months ahead and request golf as part of the package.



## #2 FANCOURT — THE LINKS

George, Western Cape · Garden Route · Championship



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Gary Player
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	73 · 7,341 yards (up to 7,500 from championship tees)
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R5,000 (hotel guests only)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Year-round; Oct–Apr peak

### WHY PLAY HERE

One of South Africa's only true links courses. Hosted the 2003 Presidents Cup. Built on reclaimed marshland and consistently ranked inside the world's top 100. Authentic links golf in Africa, plays firm and fast and rewards strategic thinking and shot-making over raw power. Wind typically picks up after 11am, so morning tee times are an advantage.

### INSIDER TIP

Stay at the Fancourt Hotel for priority access across all three on-property courses (Links, Montagu, Outeniqua). The Manor House offers butler-service villas ideal for groups.

## #3 ARABELLA GOLF CLUB

Kleinmond, Western Cape · Coastal · Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Peter Matkovich
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,621 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R890–R1,595
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Oct–Apr

### WHY PLAY HERE

Set within a protected biosphere reserve on the edge of a lagoon, with the Kogelberg Mountains as backdrop. One of the most photographed courses in the country. Wind plays a defining strategic role and changes day to day, which keeps the course fresh on repeat visits. The 11th — an island green surrounded by lagoon — is unforgettable.

### INSIDER TIP

Pair with whale watching in nearby Hermanus (June–November is peak season for southern right whales) and a tasting at Bot River.

## #4 PEARL VALLEY GOLF ESTATE

Paarl, Western Cape · Winelands · Challenging



Jack Nicklaus

<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,591 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R5,250 (walking; visitors)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Sep–Apr

### WHY PLAY HERE

Signature Nicklaus design routed among vineyards with a Drakenstein Mountain backdrop. Has hosted European Tour events and several South African Opens. Wide fairways and large undulating greens reward thoughtful shot selection. Playable for mid-handicaps but rewards course management over distance.

### INSIDER TIP

Build a Winelands day around it: morning round, lunch at Babylonstoren or Spice Route, afternoon tasting at Fairview, dinner in Franschhoek.

## #5 GARY PLAYER COUNTRY CLUB

Sun City, North West · Highveld · Championship



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Gary Player
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 7,831 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	~R1,200–R1,500 (incl. halfway house; caddies extra)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Apr–Sep

### WHY PLAY HERE

Annual host of the Nedbank Golf Challenge — one of the longest courses in South Africa. Savanna-style layout that has tested the world's best for decades. Play where the European Tour finale takes place each November. A genuine Big Tournament test, and the rest of the Sun City resort handles non-golfers easily.

### INSIDER TIP

Stay on-property at Sun City. Combine with the Lost City Golf Course on the same trip and a side visit to nearby Pilanesberg for malaria-free safari.

## #6 DURBAN COUNTRY CLUB

Durban, KwaZulu-Natal · Coastal · Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	George Waterman / Laurie Waters
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,651 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	Contact club for current visitor rates (significantly increased post-2024 redesign)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	May–Sep (less humid)

### WHY PLAY HERE

Has hosted the South African Open 19 times. Coastal kikuyu turf, deep tradition, and a routing that uses the natural dune landscape exceptionally well. A true historical pilgrimage. For golfers who care about the lineage of the South African game, this is the course.

### INSIDER TIP

Visitors are welcome on weekdays. Pair with a stay at the Oyster Box Hotel — Durban’s most iconic five-star property, with lighthouse views, fine dining, and easy access to the course.

## #7 PINNACLE POINT GOLF CLUB

Mossel Bay, Western Cape · Garden Route · Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Peter Matkovich (with Darren Clarke)
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 7,200 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,410 (low season) / R2,200 (peak) + R580 cart
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Oct–Apr

### WHY PLAY HERE

Built along cliffs roughly 100 metres above the Indian Ocean. Eight holes play directly along the cliff edge. The most spectacular ocean views in South African golf, and not just a scenic novelty — strong winds and forced carries demand committed ball-striking.

### INSIDER TIP

Book the earliest tee time you can. Wind is calmest before 10am, the light is best for photos, and dolphin and whale sightings are common from the cliffs.

## #8 PEZULA CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE

Knysna, Western Cape · Garden Route · Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Ronald Fream & David Dale
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,598 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,450
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Year-round; Oct–Apr peak

### WHY PLAY HERE

Carved through indigenous forest along the famous Knysna Heads. A unique forest-and-cliff-top hybrid with views over the lagoon and the Indian Ocean. Holes 13–15 along the cliff edge are a stretch of the country's most dramatic golf. The contrast with the inland forest holes gives the round real variety.

### INSIDER TIP

Ideal middle leg of a Garden Route swing — pair with Fancourt and Pinnacle Point for a three-course Western Cape coastal tour. Pezula Nature Retreat or CliffBreak Villa make excellent on-estate stays.

## #9 St. Francis Links

St. Frances · Eastern Cape · Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Jack Nicklaus
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 7,224 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,190 + R420 cart
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Year round; mornings best (wind builds by midday)

### WHY PLAY HERE

Carved into rolling dunes above the Indian Ocean, St Francis Links is like a Scottish links experience on the African continent — and for many seasoned golfers, it's the most memorable round in the country. Named South Africa's Best Golf Course at the 2021 World Golf Awards and host of the SA PGA Championship for five consecutive years from 2021 to 2025, it carries genuine tournament pedigree. The duneland terrain is spectacular — blind tee shots, deep pot bunkers, snaking par-5s, and water-protected par-3s — with panoramic views over St Francis Bay and inland to the mountains. Four tee options make it playable for a range of abilities, but mid-to-low handicappers will get the most from it, especially once local knowledge is factored in. Exceptional value for the quality

### INSIDER TIP

Book the earliest tee time available — wind typically builds through the morning and into the afternoon, and the course plays very differently calm versus in a gale. It's an hour's drive east of Plettenberg Bay, making it a natural extension of a Garden Route leg rather than a standalone trip. The par-3 17th — a Redan-style green in the dunes playing between 125 and 190 metres — has recorded 114 holes-in-one and is the most fun hole on the course

**#10 SIMOLA GOLF & COUNTRY ESTATE***Knysna, Western Cape · Garden Route · Challenging*

<b>DESIGNER</b>	Jack Nicklaus
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,234 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,450
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Oct–Apr

**WHY PLAY HERE**

Set high on a ridge above Knysna Lagoon. Nicklaus took full advantage of the terrain — dramatic elevation changes, elevated tees, and rolling fairways through indigenous forest. An unusual layout (five par-5s and five par-3s) and one of the most peaceful, uncluttered settings in the region. Excellent value for the quality.

**INSIDER TIP**

Easy to combine with Pezula for a two-round Knysna day. Stay on the estate for a quiet base.

**#11 STEENBERG GOLF CLUB***Cape Town (Constantia Valley) · Coastal · Moderate–Challenging*

<b>DESIGNER</b>	Peter Matkovich
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,142 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	Dynamic pricing: from ~R2,000–R2,800
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Sep–Apr

**WHY PLAY HERE**

On the oldest wine farm in the Cape, with the Hottentots Holland Mountains as backdrop. A Matkovich championship layout with strategic water hazards. One of the most photogenic courses in Cape Town and an obvious pairing with the Constantia wine route. Five-star resort amenities.

**INSIDER TIP**

After the round, the Steenberg estate's own tasting room is a short walk away. Ideal half-day if guests are short on time.

**#12 ERINVALE GOLF CLUB***Somerset West, Western Cape · Winelands · Moderate–Challenging*

<b>DESIGNER</b>	Gary Player
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,538 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,710 (international, high season) / R1,125 (SA-affiliated)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Oct–Apr

**WHY PLAY HERE**

Helderberg mountain backdrop with tree-lined fairways. Has hosted both the South African Open and the World Cup of Golf. Classic parkland with championship pedigree, and ten minutes from the Stellenbosch wine route. Strong value for the quality of layout.

**INSIDER TIP**

Easy access from central Cape Town (about 45 minutes), so it's a clean day-trip without changing hotels.

## #13 FANCOURT — MONTAGU

George, Western Cape · Garden Route · Moderate–Challenging



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Gary Player
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,787 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	R1,995 (day visitor)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Year-round

### WHY PLAY HERE

Lush parkland layout meandering through the estate's gardens and lakes. The friendlier sibling to The Links. Pristine conditioning and a more forgiving layout than The Links — useful for groups of mixed handicaps based at Fancourt.

### INSIDER TIP

Multi-round packages at Fancourt are good value if you plan to play more than one of the three on-property courses.

## #14 GLENDOWER GOLF CLUB

Johannesburg, Gauteng · Highveld · Championship



<b>DESIGNER</b>	Bob Grimsdell
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,714 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	~R1,000–R1,500 (contact club for 2025–26 rates)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Apr–Sep

### WHY PLAY HERE

Classic Johannesburg parkland that has hosted the South African Open multiple times. Tree-lined and demanding off the tee. A genuine championship test inside the city limits — useful for a stopover round if you are in Johannesburg either side of a safari leg.

### INSIDER TIP

Visitors welcome on weekdays. Book in advance. Factor in altitude — the Highveld plays roughly 10–15% longer than coastal.

**#15 ATLANTIC BEACH GOLF CLUB***Cape Town (West Coast) · Coastal · Moderate*

<b>DESIGNER</b>	Peter Matkovich
<b>PAR / YARDAGE</b>	72 · 6,245 yards
<b>GREEN FEE</b>	~R1,000–R1,500 (contact club for 2025–26 rates)
<b>BEST TIME</b>	Oct–Apr

**WHY PLAY HERE**

Links-style coastal course on the West Coast with ocean views and challenging coastal winds. Wide fairways, small well-protected greens. An authentic coastal experience without the premium green fee, and easy to combine with Milnerton for a budget-friendly Cape Town links day.

**INSIDER TIP**

Morning rounds are calmer. Wildlife sightings (coastal birdlife, occasional small game) are common.

**HONORABLE MENTIONS ON THE MUST-PLAY RADAR**

Royal Johannesburg & Kensington — historic Highveld parkland that has hosted the South African Open and DP World Tour events; one of the most respected club layouts in Gauteng. Highland Gate (Mpumalanga) — dramatic fairways carved into the hills; an interesting alternative or pre-trip warm-up before Leopard Creek. Oubaai (Garden Route) — Ernie Els's first South African signature course, with 17 holes that play through a stunning cliff-top setting. St Francis Links (Eastern Cape) — covered in the Links chapter. Worth a trip extension after Plett. Legend Golf & Safari Resort (Limpopo) — the Extreme 19th is a bucket-list one-hole experience.

## 04 THE WESTERN CAPE DEEP DIVE

The Western Cape is the country’s premier golf region — not just because of the quality of individual courses, but because of how dense the elite golf is within short travel distances. A single base in Cape Town, the Winelands, or along the Garden Route puts multiple top-tier courses within easy reach without long transfers between rounds. This makes the region uniquely suited to weekend breaks, extended holidays, and multi-course itineraries.



*The Cellars-Hohenort, Constantia — a luxury Cape Dutch estate close to the Constantia wine route and Steenberg Golf Club.*

South African Travellers’ regional advice on the Western Cape is consistent with this: the region offers an elegant setting between October and April, with a stable climate and a pleasant atmosphere for playing. The Garden Route works for most of the year — its ocean climate brings minor weather variation but conditions remain overall favourable.

### 4a. Cape Town & the Peninsula

Cape Town’s courses are built around dramatic mountain backdrops and the cool coastline of False Bay and the Atlantic. Variety is the headline feature: a true historic parkland (Royal Cape), a true links experience with Table Mountain views (Milnerton), a championship resort layout in the wine valley (Steenberg), and several affordable, friendly options closer to town.

#### THE TOP CAPE TOWN COURSES

COURSE	PAR	YARDAGE	GREEN FEE	BEST FOR
Steenberg	72	6,605	Dynamic, ~R2,000–2,800	Resort-quality round in Constantia
Royal Cape	72	6,200	~R1,000–1,500	History — the country’s oldest club (1885)
Milnerton	72	6,550	~R700–1,100	True links with Table Mountain views

COURSE	PAR	YARDAGE	GREEN FEE	BEST FOR
Erinvale	72	6,800	R1,710 intl / R1,125 SA-aff.	Championship test, Stellenbosch-side
Atlantic Beach	72	6,400	~R800–1,200	West Coast coastal links experience
Westlake	72	6,100	~R600–900	Friendly parkland near False Bay
Clovelly	72	6,300	~R700–1,000	Coastal layout above Fish Hoek
Mowbray	71	6,400	~R500–800	Historic city course, central

#### WHERE TO BASE IN CAPE TOWN

Constantia / Steenberg — closest to Steenberg and the Constantia wine route; best for a luxury, golf-and-wine pairing. The Cellars-Hohenort is the standout luxury option here. V&A Waterfront — central; best for a city base with easy access to Royal Cape and Milnerton plus restaurants and Table Mountain. The Queen Victoria, Cape Grace, Table Bay and The Commodore are all reliable luxury choices. Somerset West — best if Erinvale and the Stellenbosch winelands anchor the trip. Southern Peninsula (Muizenberg / Fish Hoek) — quiet coastal feel, closest to Clovelly and Westlake.

## 4b. The Cape Winelands

Five Winelands courses make a credible golf-and-wine itinerary on their own, with Pearl Valley as the marquee. Most rounds finish by lunchtime, leaving the afternoon free for tastings — and some of the best estates in the world are within 15–30 minutes of every tee.

COURSE	DESIGNER	GREEN FEE	NEARBY WINE ESTATES
Pearl Valley (Paarl)	Jack Nicklaus	R5,250	Fairview, Spice Route, Babylonstoren
Erinvale (Somerset West)	Gary Player	R1,710 / R1,125	Vergelegen, Lourensford, Morgenster
De Zalze (Stellenbosch)	Peter Matkovich	~R1,100–1,600	De Zalze; Stellenbosch wine route
Devonvale (Stellenbosch)	Gary Player	~R700–1,100	Devonvale own wines
Stellenbosch GC	Various	~R500–700	Spier, Delaire Graff, Tokara

#### HOW TO PLAY THE WINELANDS WELL

Tee off early. 7–8am tee times finish you by midday with the full afternoon for tastings. Build in a designated driver — Uber thins out in the rural Winelands and tasting flights add up quickly.

Weekday tastings are walk-in friendly; weekends require booking, especially for marquee estates like Babylonstoren, Tokara, Delaire Graff and Ernie Els Wines. Estates ship internationally — most can arrange shipment to the US for \$50–\$100 per case. Premium tasting tip: Ernie Els Wines pairs naturally with a De Zalze round, and Delaire Graff with a Pearl Valley round. Le Quartier Français in Franschhoek is a strong overnight base.

#### 4c. The Garden Route

The Garden Route — broadly Mossel Bay to Plettenberg Bay along the southern coast — is the deepest concentration of coastal championship golf in the country. A focused 5–7 day trip can play Fancourt’s three courses, Pinnacle Point, Pezula, Simola, plus several characterful smaller courses without ever moving more than two hours between tee boxes.



*Pinnacle Point, Mossel Bay — eight holes play directly along the cliff edge above the Indian Ocean.*

The Garden Route as a destination — the 300-kilometre coastal stretch from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth — runs through forests, lagoons, beaches and dramatic cliffs. Charming towns dot the route, including Knysna with its famous Heads, Plettenberg Bay for beachside luxury, Mossel Bay for maritime history, and Wilderness for its peaceful rivers and forests. The ideal travel window is September to May.

#### GARDEN ROUTE COURSES, WEST TO EAST

Mossel Bay Golf Club (Mossel Bay). One of South Africa’s oldest courses (1905). The clubhouse promise — that you can see the sea from every tee — is essentially true. A friendly parkland-links blend that’s enjoyable for all skill levels and a confidence-boosting first round. Expect to spot springbok grazing near the fairways.

Pinnacle Point Golf Club (Mossel Bay). The dramatic clifftop layout. Matkovich-designed, multi-time winner of “Africa’s Best Golf Course”. Tee shots dare you to carry rocky bluffs and the surf below. Not just a scenic novelty — wind off the ocean turns it into a genuine test.

Fancourt Estate (George) — The Links, Montagu, Outeniqua. Three Gary Player championship courses on one estate at the foot of the Outeniqua Mountains. The Links is private, tour-grade, links-style and consistently #1 or #2 in the country. Montagu and Outeniqua are lush parkland layouts and more forgiving — ideal for mixed-handicap groups based at the resort.

George Golf Club (George). Established 1906. A traditional parkland course consistently ranked among the country's top 20, beneath the Outeniqua Mountains. Well-conditioned, characterful, and many locals quietly prefer it to the bigger resort names nearby.

Kingswood Golf Estate (George). Modern championship course co-designed by Sally Little and Danie Obermeyer. Blends links-style elements (open rolling fairways, pot bunkers inspired by St Andrews) with the region's parkland beauty. Greens here are widely considered the best in the region — Sunshine Tour pros use the course for off-season practice.

Oubai Golf Club (Herolds Bay, near George). Ernie Els's first signature course in South Africa. A links-style coastal layout with an unusual configuration of five par-5s and five par-3s. The signature 17th — a short par-3 over a gorge with the surf below — is the kind of hole that ends up on every camera roll.

Simola Golf & Country Estate (Knysna). Jack Nicklaus signature design high on a ridge above Knysna Lagoon. Dramatic elevation changes, generous off-the-tee landing zones, and slick contoured greens. One of the most peaceful settings in the region.



*Simola Golf & Country Estate — Nicklaus design above Knysna Lagoon.*

Pezula Championship Course (Knysna). Cliffside panoramas above the Knysna Heads. Holes 13–15 along the cliff edge are the highlight stretch. Errant shots disappear into the waves below. Book ahead — it's a popular stop on every Garden Route circuit.



*Pezula Championship Course — cliffside panoramas above Knysna Heads.*

Knysna Golf Club (Knysna). Old-school, casual, on the shores of the Knysna Lagoon. Founded 1909. Tidal saltwater marshes come into play on several holes. Excellent bent-grass greens. Visitor-friendly and affordable — a perfect breather between the bigger championship venues.

Goose Valley Golf Club (Plettenberg Bay). Gary Player design built on coastal sand dunes — meaning excellent year-round conditioning and drainage. Strategic and friendly, with views to the lagoon and distant Indian Ocean.

Plettenberg Bay Country Club (Plettenberg Bay). Parkland course in the Piesang Valley nature reserve, with the Piesang River weaving across the layout. Recently upgraded to USGA-spec bent grass greens. Bird and small wildlife sightings are constant.

**WORTH A DETOUR**

- St. Francis Links (Eastern Cape, ~1 hour beyond Plett). Jack Nicklaus signature, often top-10 in the country. Pure dunes, fast greens, relentless wind. The most authentic Scottish-style links experience in South Africa.
- Hermanus Golf Club. A friendly addition on a southern-coast leg, well-suited to a stop after Arabella, especially when paired with whale-watching season.
- Oudtshoorn Golf Club (Little Karoo). Worth the mountain pass for the novelty — a green oasis in semi-arid Karoo, with pepper trees, palms, and a striking signature trio of trees in the middle of the 13th fairway.

**A 5-7 DAY GARDEN ROUTE ROUND-UP**

Best base 1: Fancourt (George) — perfect for serious golfers, three courses on-property, easy day trips to George GC, Kingswood, Oubaai. Best base 2: Knysna — central for Pezula, Simola, Knysna GC, with Pinnacle Point an hour west and Goose Valley/Plett 30 minutes east. Best base 3: Plettenberg Bay — most scenic resort town for non-golfers; works as the eastern anchor of the trip. Internal flights help. CPT-GRJ (George) is a 1-hour hop and saves a long drive.

## 05 MPUMALANGA, LIMPOPO & NORTH WEST

This is the part of the country where the South African golf experience becomes genuinely unique — championship courses bordering or inside Big Five reserves, with elephants, hippos, and antelope as part of the round. It's also the home of the Nedbank Challenge at Sun City and of the country's #1 ranked course, Leopard Creek.



*Wildlife on the doorstep — a leopard at rest in the bushveld.*

---

*“The roar of a lion might just accompany the crack of your driver, or a giraffe might be your only gallery.”*

---

As many tour guides put it: this is the moment a South African trip stops feeling like a golf trip and starts feeling like a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

## **5a. Golf Courses Near Kruger National Park**

Within roughly two hours of Kruger, there are nine credible golf courses that can anchor or supplement a safari leg. The list below covers them in roughly the order an itinerary tends to use them — from the marquee at Leopard Creek out to the more local, characterful Lowveld options.

### **LEOPARD CREEK COUNTRY CLUB**

Already covered as the country’s #1. Designed by Gary Player with Ron Kirby. The back nine plays directly along the Crocodile River with Kruger as backdrop. The 13th — a par-5 along the river with an island green — is famous for crocodile and elephant sightings. Wildlife on or beside the course is constant: hippos, crocodiles, elephants, buffalo, antelope. Members-only — guests of partner lodges (Malelane Sun, Kruger Gate Hotel, Lukimbi Safari Lodge) and qualified tour operators can book.

### **SKUKUZA GOLF CLUB (INSIDE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK)**

The only golf course inside Kruger itself, at Skukuza Rest Camp. Originally designed and built by park staff in 1972, a 9-hole, 18-tee layout (par 72, ~5,950 metres) that can be played as 18. The course is unfenced from the park: warthogs, impala, kudu, baboons, vervet monkeys are constant company; hippos can be heard from the Sabie River; hyena, wild dogs, and occasionally big cats can wander onto the fairways. Rangers patrol for dangerous game. Green fee R400–R600. Requires a Kruger entry permit; book at Skukuza reception.

### **HANS MERENSKY GOLF ESTATE (PHALABORWA)**

Lowveld bushveld setting with water hazards and tree-lined fairways. 18-hole, par 72, designed by Bob Grimsdell. Unfenced — wildlife can appear anywhere. Known for its par-3 6th over a pond and the par-3 8th where hippos often bask. R800–R1,200. The estate offers accommodation, making it easy to anchor a multi-day golf-safari trip on the Phalaborwa side.

### **SABI RIVER SUN GOLF COURSE (HAZYVIEW)**

Peter Matkovich-designed 18-hole, par-71 layout on the banks of the Sabie River. Water hazards on roughly 15 of 18 holes. The hippo pond by the par-4 16th is home to a permanent hippo and crocodile population. Over 200 bird species and 260+ tree species identified on the property. A more accessible round than Leopard Creek, and an excellent warm-up or relaxed-day option.

### **OTHER LOWVELD OPTIONS**

- Kruger Park Lodge Golf Club (Hazyview) — Gary Player 9-hole layout (with dual tees for 18) along the Sabie River. ~6,100 metres. Crocodiles, hippos, impala and warthogs frequent the course.

- White River Country Club — Gary Player 18-hole, par-71 in forest and water settings. Known for a tricky dogleg-left 7th.
- Nelspruit / Mbombela Golf Club — Bob Grimsdell-designed, broad fairways, elevation changes. Convenient for KMI travelers.
- Kambaku Golf Club (Komatipoort) — rated South Africa’s #1 nine-hole course by Golf Digest. Set between the Crocodile and Komati Rivers. A perfect complement to the grandeur of Leopard Creek.
- Zebula Golf Estate & Spa (Bela-Bela) — Peter Matkovich championship design in a Big Five game reserve. Zebra, giraffe and various antelope graze the fairways. R1,200–R1,800.
- Koro Creek Bushveld Golf Estate (Modimolle) — Jack Nicklaus design through pristine bushveld. The par-3 17th plays over water to an island green. R900–R1,400.
- Elements Private Golf Reserve (Bela-Bela) — Gary Player championship course in a malaria-free Big Five reserve. Game drives available on the reserve itself. R1,500–R2,200.

### WILDLIFE ON THE COURSE — WHAT TO EXPECT

- Common, daily sightings: warthogs, impala, kudu, zebra, giraffe, vervet monkeys, plentiful birdlife. Hippos and crocodiles inhabit water hazards on several courses.
- Big Five encounters: elephants on holes 13–15 at Leopard Creek; buffalo occasionally visible from Skukuza; all Big Five at Elements Private Golf Reserve during scheduled game drives.
- Best wildlife windows: early morning (6–9am) and late afternoon (3–6pm). Dry season (May–September) concentrates wildlife near water, which makes the rounds even more spectacular.

### WILDLIFE SAFETY ON COURSE

Maintain 50+ metres from any wildlife. Never approach to retrieve a ball. If elephants are on the course, wait. Don’t try to play through. Don’t fish balls out of water hazards — hippos and crocodiles inhabit them. Stay in golf carts when dangerous game is present. Follow ranger instructions without exception.

### WHERE TO STAY FOR A KRUGER GOLF LEG

- Lukimbi Safari Lodge — luxury lodge in the southern Kruger with a private 15,000-acre concession. Conveniently positioned for both Leopard Creek and Kambaku.
- Singita Lebombo — ultra-luxury, exclusive concession (R25,000+/night). The pinnacle option for guests who want unmatched safari with golf as the secondary purpose.
- Lion Sands — treehouse suites and famously good ranger guiding (R15,000+/night).
- Malelane Sun / Kruger Gate Hotel — the standard mid-range routes to Leopard Creek access (R2,000–R3,500/night).
- Hans Merensky Estate — on-course lodging on the Phalaborwa side (R1,500+/night).
- Skukuza & Satara Rest Camps — SANParks lodging inside Kruger; required if you’re playing Skukuza GC.

## 5b. Sun City and the North West

Sun City — about 2 hours from Johannesburg — is the all-in resort experience. The Gary Player Country Club is the longest course in South Africa and hosts the Nedbank Golf Challenge each November. Lost City Golf Course adds a second 18 with a desert-style routing. The resort is a complete entertainment complex (casino, water park, multiple hotels including the famous Palace) and is the most family-friendly destination in this guide. Easy add-on: Pilanesberg Game Reserve next door for a malaria-free safari day; Madikwe Game Reserve nearby for ultra-luxury Big Five.

## 5c. The Extreme 19th — Bucket-List Bonus Hole

Roughly 2.5 hours north of Johannesburg, in the malaria-free Waterberg region of Limpopo, sits Legend Golf & Safari Resort — home to the Extreme 19th, the world’s longest and highest par 3. The tee box sits 400 metres above the green at the top of Hanglip Mountain and is accessible only by helicopter; the green itself is shaped like the African continent and surrounded by a waste bunker.

After a 7-year closure, the Extreme 19th reopened in May 2026, and it is back on the bucket-list circuit. The all-in experience runs about R2,000 per person, including the helicopter flight and a video of your drive. A hole-in-one carries a \$1 million prize — first claimed by former Barbados cricketer Franklyn Stephenson; Morgan Freeman, Padraig Harrington, Sergio Garcia, Justin Rose, Bernhard Langer, Trevor Immelman, Jim Furyk, Retief Goosen, Vijay Singh, Ian Woosnam, Colin Montgomerie and KJ Choi have all played it.

The resort itself is more than the gimmick. The Signature Course is the country’s longest, with each hole designed by a different professional golfer. The 10-hole Tribute Course replicates famous par-3s from around the world. The whole estate sits inside the 22,000-hectare Entabeni Safari Conservancy with all Big Five present.



### WORTH ADDING FOR THE RIGHT CLIENT

The Extreme 19th is a one-day add-on best suited to first-time visitors with an appetite for the spectacular and an extra 24–48 hours in their itinerary. It pairs naturally with a Sun City or Madikwe leg (both broadly the same direction from Johannesburg) and works particularly well as the closing flourish of a trip.

## 06 KWAZULU-NATAL & GAUTENG

### KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal is South Africa's warm-weather golf secret. When the Western Cape turns grey and wet between June and August, KZN is dry, comfortable, and playing beautifully — a province where subtropical warmth, Indian Ocean coastline, Zulu cultural heritage, and some deeply characterful golf courses combine to make a trip that feels entirely distinct from anything else in the country.

KZN is home to the historic Durban Country Club, which has hosted the South African Open more than any other course in the country, and features challenging coastal winds and kikuyu grass fairways throughout. The province has 88 member clubs spread across five districts — from the Dolphin Coast in the north through the rolling Midlands to the quieter South Coast — and the range of golf on offer across those districts is wider than most visitors expect.

#### THE REGION IN THREE PARTS

**The North Coast (Dolphin Coast).** The stretch of coastline north of Durban, running from Umhlanga up through Ballito to Zinkwazi, is where the marquee resort golf sits. Zimbali Country Club, Zimbali Lakes, Prince's Grant, and Umhlali Country Club cluster here within easy driving distance, making the North Coast the most efficient base for a focused KZN golf trip.

**Durban City and Surrounds.** Durban Country Club is the anchor — a historic, world-ranked course inside the city limits. The Beachwood course, Mount Edgecombe, and Royal Durban round out the city offering. Most visitors base themselves in Umhlanga, 15 minutes north of the city centre, giving access to both the city and North Coast courses without needing to change hotels.

**The Midlands.** An hour inland and into the hills, the KZN Midlands deliver a completely different experience — trout rivers, mist-covered mountains, Meander-country charm, and several excellent courses including Champagne Sports Resort and Cotswold Downs. An excellent 48-hour detour from the coast.

#### THE TOP KZN COURSES

**Durban Country Club** · Durban · Par 72 · ~6,651 yards · *Contact club for visitor rates*

The only course on the African continent rated in the Top 100 Golf Courses in the World by Golf Magazine USA. Back in the SA Top 100 for 2025 following its extensive upgrade in 2023 by Golf Data, it combines lush coastal vegetation, sand dunes, and stunning views of the Indian Ocean into one of the most unique and challenging layouts in the world. The massive fairway undulations — particularly on the 5th, 8th, and 17th holes — are unlike anything else in South African golf. For any golfer who cares about the lineage of the game in this country, this is a pilgrimage.

#### INSIDER TIP

Book directly with the club for current visitor rates — pricing increased post-renovation and is not widely published online. Weekday play is recommended. The Oyster Box Hotel in Umhlanga is the natural luxury base for this round.

**Zimbali Country Club** · *Ballito, North Coast · Tom Weiskopf design · Par 72*

The Tom Weiskopf design rolls and tumbles among hills on the Indian Ocean shoreline, with wild grasses in out-of-play areas and wetlands a feature on numerous holes. It has matured well over 25+ years into one of the most aesthetically beautiful estates in KZN — coastal forest, significant elevation changes, and greens widely regarded as among the best in the province. Zimbali is again open to day visitors after a period of being reserved for members and guests. Cart-only layout.

**Zimbali Lakes — Ernie Els Signature Course** · *Ballito, North Coast · New*

The newest addition to the North Coast golf scene — purpose-built for spectacle with an impressive clubhouse and strong early reviews. Positioned directly adjacent to Zimbali Country Club, making a two-round Zimbali day very straightforward. Tee times available Wednesday to Sunday and on public holidays.

**Prince's Grant Golf Estate** · *Salt Rock, North Coast · Peter Matkovich design · Par 72*

Designed by Peter Matkovich and set partly alongside the spectacular Dolphin Coast, Prince's Grant opened in 1994 and is a rare seaside treat for this part of South Africa. Thirteen holes play alongside or towards the Indian Ocean, with the coastal wind a constant strategic factor. Strong on-estate accommodation in a 4-star lodge. A more relaxed, less resort-heavy experience than Zimbali.

**Champagne Sports Resort** · *Winterton, KZN Midlands · Hugh Baiocchi design · Par 72*

Sitting at altitude in the shadow of the Drakensberg, Champagne Sports is the marquee Midlands course — beautifully conditioned, mountain-backdrop scenery on virtually every hole, and a resort that handles non-golfers well with spa, fishing, horse riding, and tennis. An excellent change of pace from the coastal courses, and consistently underrated by international visitors who rarely venture this far inland.

**Cotswold Downs Golf & Country Club** · *Hillcrest, near Durban · Peter Matkovich design · Par 72*

One of three excellent Matkovich courses in KZN — any serious list of top KZN tracks has to include Prince's Grant, Cotswold Downs, and San Lameer. A hilly, tree-lined parkland inland from Durban with dramatic elevation changes, excellent conditioning, and a strong local reputation.

**San Lameer Country Club** · *Southbroom, South Coast · Peter Matkovich design · Par 72*

Rated in the top 30 South African courses, San Lameer was fashioned out of dense coastal bush and set in a nature conservation area on the largely unspoiled South Coast. A quieter alternative to the North Coast resort scene, ideal for travelers who want quality golf with a relaxed coastal stay away from Durban's bustle.

## WHERE TO BASE IN KZN

BASE	BEST FOR	COURSES WITHIN EASY REACH
Umhlanga (The Oyster Box, Radisson Blu)	Luxury urban base; Durban CC access	Durban CC, Beachwood, Mount Edgecombe
Ballito / Zimbali Estate	North Coast resort golf	Zimbali CC, Zimbali Lakes, Prince's Grant, Umhlali
Champagne Valley (Drakensberg)	Midlands escape; mountain scenery	Champagne Sports Resort, Gowrie Farm
Southbroom (South Coast)	Quiet coastal retreat	San Lameer, Selborne, Southbroom GC

## PRACTICAL NOTES FOR KZN

**Best season:** May to September. The subtropical climate means KZN is playable year-round, but winter delivers the best combination of low humidity, clear skies, and comfortable temperatures. December and January are hot and humid — still playable, but demanding.

**Wind:** Coastal winds are a consistent factor on North Coast and Durban courses. Direction and strength can change quickly. Morning rounds are generally calmer.

**Beyond golf:** iSimangaliso Wetland Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site, 3 hours north) hosts hippos, crocodiles, and marine turtles. Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park is the oldest game reserve in Africa and delivers a genuine Big Five safari experience. The Battlefields Route covers the Anglo-Zulu War sites at Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana. Zulu cultural experiences at Shakaland or Simunye lodge add a dimension no other province can offer.

**Getting there:** King Shaka International Airport (DUR) serves Durban with regular direct connections from Cape Town and Johannesburg. Most North Coast courses are 30–40 minutes from the airport.

---

## Gauteng

Gauteng is South Africa's economic heartland — the sprawling Highveld metropolis that sits 1,500 metres above sea level and serves as the country's main international gateway. For most international golf travelers, Johannesburg is either a starting point, an ending point, or a transit hub. The mistake is treating it as only that.

The Highveld golf scene is substantial: dozens of clubs, several world-class championship courses, and a unique altitude experience that meaningfully changes how the game plays. At approximately 1,500 metres above sea level, the thin air allows the ball to fly 10–15% further than at sea level — a driver gains 20–30 yards, mid-irons gain 10–15 yards, and a 150-yard shot effectively becomes 165–170 yards. Gauteng also sits at the centre of a spoke pattern that makes it uniquely useful strategically: Kruger/Leopard Creek is 4 hours east, Sun City and Pilanesberg are 2 hours west, Madikwe is 3 hours northwest.

## THE TOP GAUTENG COURSES

**Royal Johannesburg— East Course** · *Linksveld* · *Bob Grimsdell design* · *Par 72* · *~6,900 yards*  
 One of South Africa’s most historic and prestigious golfing destinations — two championship-level parkland courses surrounded by mature woodland, just fifteen minutes from central Johannesburg. The East Course is the one visitors come for: host to multiple South African Opens, known for its dramatic elevation changes and the fearsome inward half featuring back-to-back par-fours over 500 yards at the 10th and 11th. The West Course offers a more forgiving companion round for mixed-ability groups.

### INSIDER TIP

Visitors are welcome with advance booking — contact the club directly for current visitor rates. The 36-hole facility means you can play both courses on consecutive days without repeating a hole.

**Glendower Golf Club** · *Bedfordview* · *Charles Alison design (1937)* · *Par 72* · *6,803 metres* · *R500–R800*

The CH Alison-designed Glendower is one of the great survivors of mid-1930s South African golf — a course that has stood the test of time and continues to test the country’s best. Consistently ranked among South Africa’s top courses, it features lush kikuyu fairways and fast greens, with the signature 17th hole boasting one of the world’s largest bunkers. A regular host of the South African Open.

**Blair Atholl Golf Estate** · *Blair Atholl, Johannesburg* · *Gary Player design (2007)* · *Par 72*

Shortly after its debut in 2007, Gary Player’s Blair Atholl layout leapfrogged the quartet of classic Gauteng courses to very near the top of the national rankings. A private estate course representing the modern high end of Highveld golf: architectural ambition, excellent conditioning, a challenging layout. Access through estate membership or a qualifying tour operator.

**Steyn City Golf Club** · *Steyn City, Johannesburg* · *Jack Nicklaus Design (2015)* · *Par 72*

Opened in April 2015 after a lengthy grow-in period, the Nicklaus Design at Steyn City is the focal point of one of Johannesburg’s most ambitious parkland developments. Wide fairways, signature water features, and immaculate conditioning. The surrounding estate development is substantial but the course itself holds its own. Recently hosted the 2026 LIV Golf tournament.

**Houghton Golf Club** · *Houghton, Johannesburg* · *Harry Colt design (1929)* · *Par 72*

One of the most architecturally distinguished courses in the country. Harry Colt’s fingerprint — also responsible for layouts at Wentworth and Royal Portrush — is visible in the strategic routing and green complex designs. A beautiful, mature parkland course that repays multiple visits. Members-only, accessible through certain packages and tour operators.

**The River Club** · *Sandton, Johannesburg* · *Robert Grimsdell design (1967)* · *Par 72*

A fine, lightly played, members-only club that boasts some of the best golf land in Gauteng. Often called the “Augusta of South Africa” by local golfers for its beauty and exclusivity. A quiet valley setting that feels entirely removed from the Sandton hustle surrounding it. Access through member introduction or specialist tour operators.

## GAUTENG COURSES AT A GLANCE

COURSE	DESIGNER	STYLE	VISITOR ACCESS	GREEN FEE
Royal Johannesburg — East	Bob Grimsdell	Championship parkland	Advance booking	Contact club
Glendower	Charles Alison	Classic parkland	Advance booking	R500–R800
Blair Atholl	Gary Player	Estate championship	Via operator	Contact club
Steyn City	Jack Nicklaus	Modern estate	Advance booking	Contact club
Pecanwood	Jack Nicklaus	Waterfront	Walk-in / online	R700 + R420 cart
Houghton	Harry Colt	Historic parkland	Via operator	Contact club
The River Club	R. Grimsdell	Exclusive parkland	Via member	Contact club
Country Club JHB — Woodmead	Various	Parkland	Advance booking	~R700–R1,000
Silver Lakes (Pretoria)	Various	Estate parkland	Advance booking	~R700–R1,000

## PLAYING ALTITUDE GOLF: A PRACTICAL BRIEFING

Gauteng’s altitude is the defining characteristic that separates Highveld golf from everything else in the country. The practical implications are significant enough that every first-time visitor should spend five minutes adjusting their mental model before teeing off.

CLUB	SEA LEVEL DISTANCE	HIGHVELD (~1,500M)
Driver	250 yards	270–280 yards
5-iron	180 yards	195–200 yards
7-iron	155 yards	168–172 yards
9-iron	130 yards	140–145 yards
Pitching Wedge	110 yards	118–124 yards

## KEY STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENTS

Take one to two clubs less than your normal yardage club for approach shots. Expect less spin — the ball is harder to stop on greens, making bump-and-run shots more useful from further out. Budget additional distance on par-5s. Don’t be surprised by your driving distance on Day 1 — golfers regularly gain 20–30 yards off the tee.

## GAUTENG AS A STRATEGIC GATEWAY

O.R. Tambo International Airport (JNB) is South Africa’s main international hub and the most likely point of entry for US-based travelers. Rather than burning a day in transit, two rounds in Johannesburg before a safari leg turns a logistical necessity into a productive part of the trip.

- Day 1 — Arrive JNB. Transfer to Sandton or Rosebank hotel. Recovery day, Apartheid Museum, Soweto.
- Day 2 — Round 1. Royal Johannesburg East Course or Glendower. Afternoon at leisure.
- Day 3 — Round 2 + drive. Pecanwood at Hartbeespoort Dam, then continue to Sun City (45 mins) or Madikwe (2.5 hours).
- Days 4–6 — Safari leg. Pilanesberg, Sun City, or Madikwe.
- Day 7 — Drive back to JNB for onward connection or Cape Town leg.

#### ADDING LEOPARD CREEK

Fly JNB–KMI on Day 3 instead of driving west (45-minute hop to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, R800–R1,500). Play Leopard Creek on Days 3–4, then return to JNB for departure or Cape Town connection.

#### BEYOND GOLF IN GAUTENG

Johannesburg is a richer cultural city than its reputation suggests. The Apartheid Museum in Soweto is one of the most powerful museum experiences in the world. Constitution Hill, a former prison complex that now houses the Constitutional Court, is architecturally and historically extraordinary. The Cradle of Humankind (50 km west) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sandton’s dining scene in Rosebank and Melrose Arch is genuinely impressive. For wildlife closer to the city, Pilanesberg Game Reserve (2 hours) is malaria-free and delivers genuine Big Five sightings.

---

*KZN and Gauteng together give any South African golf tour real structural options — one for the warm-weather escape, the other for the strategic gateway that turns a transit day into a round.*

---

## 07 LINKS GOLF IN SOUTH AFRICA

South African links courses offer a unique blend of traditional seaside golf with dramatic coastal scenery that holds its own against Scotland and Ireland. True links here means coastal winds that change direction mid-round, firm fairways that demand a strategic ground game, and indigenous fynbos vegetation in place of Scottish gorse. The wind known as the “Cape Doctor” — a strong, fairly predictable southeasterly — is generally stronger and more consistent than its Scottish equivalent.



*Fancourt Links — South Africa’s only true links course, host of the 2003 Presidents Cup.*

### THE TOP 5 LINKS COURSES

COURSE	DESIGNER	YARDAGE	GREEN FEE	BEST FEATURE
Fancourt Links (George)	Gary Player	7,500	R5,000 (hotel guests)	Championship pedigree (2003 Presidents Cup)
St Francis Links (E. Cape)	Jack Nicklaus	7,100	~R1,800–2,500	The most natural dunes routing in SA
Pinnacle Point (Mossel Bay)	Peter Matkovich	7,200	R1,410–2,200 + cart	Cliff-top drama
Arabella (Hermanus)	Peter Matkovich	6,600	R890–1,595	Lagoon setting, mountain backdrop
Pezula (Knysna)	Fream / Dale	6,700	R1,450	Forest-and-cliff-top hybrid
Humewood (E. Cape)	S.V Hotchkin	6,372	R800	Classic links layout
Atlantic Beach	Mark Muller	6,875	R800	Traditional, undulating links

## HOW SOUTH AFRICAN LINKS DIFFERS

- Fynbos instead of gorse. Indigenous fynbos vegetation replaces traditional gorse and heather. Equally penal, but with a distinct local character (and wildlife).
- Dramatic elevation changes. Many SA links courses — especially the clifftop routings like Pinnacle Point — have significant elevation, adding a vertical dimension you don't see in classic Scottish links.
- Year-round playability. South Africa's climate keeps these courses firm and fast year-round, where Scottish links can become waterlogged in winter.
- Wildlife encounters. Dolphins, seasonal whales, antelope, abundant birdlife — these aren't just golf rounds, they're coastal wildlife rounds.
- Wind patterns. The Cape Doctor is stronger and more consistent than Scottish winds, especially in summer. Its consistency actually makes course management slightly more predictable, day to day.

## STRATEGY FOR PLAYING SA LINKS

- Wind first, club second — assess direction on every shot, expect to club up or down 2–3 clubs in strong wind, and play lower trajectories into wind.
- Embrace the ground game. Many greens are more accessible via bump-and-run than through the air. Practice running shots before the round.
- Accuracy over distance off the tee. Avoid pot bunkers at all costs; play to the fat parts of the greens; accept bogeys on the tough holes.
- Equipment notes — bring extra balls (fynbos is penal), consider a driving iron for control, and pack a wind jacket and rain gear regardless of forecast.

### PLAYING WINDOWS

Spring (Sep–Nov) is the sweet spot for first-time links visitors — light to moderate winds, perfect conditions. Autumn (Mar–May) is excellent across all skill levels. Summer (Dec–Feb) is for experienced links players who want to test themselves against the strongest Cape Doctor winds and the firmest fairway conditions.

## 08 HIGHVELD VS COASTAL PLAY

South Africa's geography creates two distinctly different golfing experiences. The high-altitude Highveld around Johannesburg sits at roughly 1,500 metres above sea level. Coastal South Africa – Western Cape, KZN – plays at sea level. The differences matter for club selection, ball flight, and equipment.

FACTOR	HIGHVELD (GAUTENG)	COASTAL (WC, KZN)
Altitude	1,500m above sea level	Sea level (0–100m)
Ball flight distance	+10–15% further	Standard
Climate	Dry, sunny; summer thunderstorms	Mediterranean (WC); subtropical (KZN)
Wind	Moderate, predictable	Strong coastal winds
Grass	Kikuyu, Cynodon	Kikuyu, fescue (links)
Course style	Parkland, bushveld, wildlife	Links, coastal, parkland
Best season	Apr–Sep (winter)	Oct–Apr (WC); May–Sep (KZN)

### ALTITUDE EFFECTS (HIGHVELD, ~1,500M)

Thinner air means less resistance on the ball – the result is meaningfully longer distances but also affects spin and stopping power.

- Driver: +20–30 yards
- Mid-irons: +10–15 yards per club
- Wedges: +8–12 yards
- Practical example: a 150-yard shot at sea level becomes 165–170 yards at altitude

### QUICK STRATEGY ADJUSTMENTS

- On the Highveld: take 1–2 clubs less than your normal distance, factor in extra roll on firm fairways, expect less spin, and exploit the driver advantage on par 5s.
- On the coast: check wind direction on every shot, play lower trajectories into the wind, take an extra club into wind, and book morning rounds when conditions are calmer.

### EQUIPMENT NOTE

You don't need different clubs for each region, but ball selection helps: higher-spin balls help at altitude where you need control on landing; lower-spin balls penetrate coastal wind better. Most touring golfers use the same set and adjust strategy.

## 09 WHEN TO GO: MONTH-BY-MONTH

South Africa is genuinely a year-round destination — but where you go matters by month. The fundamental rule: Cape and Garden Route from October to April; Highveld and KZN from April to September.

The shoulder seasons in the Southern Hemisphere spring and autumn are widely considered the most comfortable across the whole country. Temperatures are moderate, courses are in excellent condition, and playing conditions are stable enough to combine multiple regions in one trip without major weather constraints.

### QUICK REGIONAL RULE

REGION	BEST WINDOW	WHY
Western Cape / Garden Route	October – April (summer)	Warm, dry, peak season
Gauteng / Highveld	April – September (winter)	Dry, sunny, no afternoon storms
KwaZulu-Natal	May – September (winter)	Less humid, comfortable

### MONTH-BY-MONTH

MONTH	RATING	NOTES
January	★★★★	Peak summer. WC excellent but crowded. Highveld afternoon storms.
February	★★★★	Similar to January. Still peak in WC. Book early.
March	★★★★★	One of the best months. Crowds thinning. Harvest season.
April	★★★★★	BEST OVERALL MONTH. Perfect weather nationwide.
May	★★★★★	Excellent value. Highveld and KZN perfect.
June	★★★★	Focus on Highveld and KZN. Best rates of the year.
July	★★★★	Highveld and KZN ideal. WC wettest month.
August	★★★★	WC weather improving. Good value before spring rush.
September	★★★★★	Spring arrives. Wildflowers in WC. Book ahead.
October	★★★★★	Peak season begins in WC. Book 2–3 months ahead.
November	★★★★	Full summer mode. WC busy. Nedbank Challenge at Sun City.
December	★★★	Peak holiday season. Most expensive and crowded.

**CHOOSING YOUR TIMING BY TRIP TYPE**

Pure golf trip — favour the shoulder seasons (Mar–May, Sep–Nov). Stable conditions over consecutive days, moderate temperatures, easy to string courses without weather constraints. Golf and safari combined — Southern Hemisphere winter (Jun–Aug) is ideal. Lowveld is dry and concentrated; Cape gets rain but you’re not basing there anyway. Pro tip: shoulder seasons (March–April, September–October) deliver roughly 80% of peak-season quality at roughly 60% of the cost. April is the single best all-purpose month.

## 10 SAMPLE ITINERARIES



*Kwena Lodge, Garden Route — elephants at the waterhole as seen from the lodge dining deck.*

### A. The Classic 10-Day Golf & Safari (Cape Town → Kruger)

The defining South African golf trip. Six rounds of championship golf, three game-drive days, two regions, one continent's most distinctive experience.

- Day 1 — Arrive Cape Town. Transfer to V&A Waterfront. Afternoon Table Mountain. Welcome dinner.
- Day 2 — Pearl Valley + Winelands. 18 holes at Pearl Valley. Afternoon tasting at Fairview or Spice Route. Dinner in Franschhoek.
- Day 3 — Arabella + Hermanus. 18 holes at Arabella. Afternoon whale watching in Hermanus (Jun–Nov). Stay at the Arabella Hotel & Spa.
- Day 4 — Drive to George — Fancourt Links. Morning drive (3.5 hrs). Afternoon round at Fancourt Links. Dinner at Fancourt.
- Day 5 — Pinnacle Point. 18 holes on the cliffs at Pinnacle Point. Stay at Pinnacle Point Beach & Golf Resort.
- Day 6 — Fly George → Johannesburg. Travel day. Afternoon Apartheid Museum or Soweto. Sandton hotel.
- Day 7 — Pecanwood, drive to Kruger. 18 holes at Pecanwood. Afternoon drive to Kruger area. Arrive at safari lodge.
- Day 8 — Leopard Creek + safari. Sunrise game drive. Late-morning round at Leopard Creek. Sunset game drive.

- Day 9 — Full safari day. Morning game drive in Kruger. Bush breakfast. Boma dinner under the stars.
- Day 10 — Depart. Final game drive and breakfast. Transfer to KMI. Connect home via Johannesburg.

#### **BUDGET — 10-DAY GOLF & SAFARI (PER PERSON, USD)**

Golf (6 rounds + carts): \$1,200 – \$1,800. Accommodation (9 nights): \$2,500 – \$4,000. Safari activities (3 days): \$800 – \$1,200. Internal flights (2): \$400 – \$600. Car rental (7 days): \$400 – \$600. Meals & activities: \$600 – \$1,000. Total: \$5,900 – \$9,200 per person.

## **B. The Ultimate 12–14 Day Golf, Wine & Safari**

For first-time visitors who want every signature South African experience in one trip — Cape Town, Winelands, Garden Route, Kruger. Stay at landmark properties: Queen Victoria or Cape Grace at the Waterfront, Lanzerac Hotel & Spa or Le Quartier Français in the Winelands, Fancourt Manor House on the Garden Route, Lukimbi Safari Lodge in Kruger.

- Cape Town leg: 4 nights — Steenberg + Clovelly + Cape Peninsula tour (Boulders Beach penguins, Cape Point) + cable car up Table Mountain.
- Winelands leg: 2 nights — De Zalze + Pearl Valley, paired with Ernie Els Wines and Delaire Graff Major's tastings.
- Garden Route leg: 3 nights — Fancourt Links + Pinnacle Point. Add a hot-air balloon flight over Mossel Bay; whale-watching marine safari in Hermanus en route.
- Kruger leg: 3 nights — Lukimbi Safari Lodge. Twice-daily game drives. Round at Leopard Creek + optional Kambaku.



*Boulders Beach, Cape Town — a colony of African penguins, a highlight of the Cape Peninsula tour.*

### C. 7-Day Garden Route Golf Tour

- Days 1–2: Cape Town (Steenberg, Erinvale)
- Days 3–4: George (Fancourt Links + Montagu)
- Days 5–6: Knysna (Pezula, Simola)
- Day 7: Mossel Bay (Pinnacle Point)



*Garden Route lodge dining — alfresco service with mountain views, ideal end to a Garden Route round.*

### D. 5-Day Winelands & Golf

- Days 1–2: Pearl Valley + wine tasting in Paarl/Franschhoek
- Day 3: Erinvale + Stellenbosch wineries
- Day 4: Arabella + Hermanus whale watching
- Day 5: Steenberg + Cape Town sightseeing

### E. 5-Day Kruger Golf-Safari Condensed

- Day 1: Fly KMI. Check in to Kruger Gate Hotel or Lukimbi. Round at Leopard Creek. Sunset game drive in Kruger.
- Day 2: Sunrise and afternoon game drives. Bush dinner.
- Day 3: Round at Skukuza Golf Club inside Kruger. Self-drive transfer to Satara. Night drive (big cats).
- Day 4: Exit via Phalaborwa Gate. Round at Hans Merensky. Spa or sunset round.
- Day 5: Optional early round or sleep in. Drive to KMI.

Budget: R25,000–R35,000 per person mid-range; R50,000+ for the luxury equivalent. Three to six days is the sweet spot for a Kruger golf-safari trip — long enough to get multiple rounds and several game drives without feeling rushed.

## **F. 7-Day Cape Town + Kruger (Compressed Classic)**

If 10 days is too long: skip Garden Route entirely and fly Cape Town → Johannesburg on Day 4. You play 4 rounds instead of 6 but keep the full safari experience. Budget approximately \$4,500–\$7,000 per person.

## **G. 15-Day Cape Town, Rovos Rail & Victoria Falls**

For golfers who want the journey itself to be the experience: 7 nights in Cape Town playing Steenberg, Clovelly, De Zalze and Pearl Valley, then 3 nights aboard the Rovos Rail luxury train, then 4 nights at the Victoria Falls Hotel with golf at Elephant Hills, a helicopter ride over the falls, and a Zambezi sunset cruise. The Rovos Rail Golf Safari is widely cited as one of the most indulgent ways to see South African golf — five-star carriages, fine dining, rounds at top courses including Fancourt and Leopard Creek.

## 11 TOP LUXURY RESORTS & LODGES

These are the resorts where 5-star service, championship golf, and high-end spa/dining come together. They earn their place not just on course quality but on the surrounding experience — and they pay back outsized for travelers who want one base for several rounds.

### 1. Fancourt Hotel & Resort — George, Garden Route

Three Gary Player championship courses including The Links (the country's only true links). Hosted the 2003 Presidents Cup. Championship spa — widely regarded as the best in the country — multiple restaurants, tennis, fitness, kids club. 5-star hotel rooms, villas, and the Manor House (with dedicated butler service for groups). Rooms typically \$300–\$600 per night. Three-night golf packages from approximately \$1,200, including three rounds.

*Best for: serious golfers who want multiple championship rounds without changing hotels.*

### 2. Leopard Creek Lodge & Golf — Malelane, Mpumalanga

The country's #1 ranked course on the Kruger boundary. Spa, fine dining, game drives, infinity pool, Kruger views. Luxury lodge accommodation typically \$400–\$800 per night. Combined safari-and-golf packages from approximately \$2,500 for three nights.

*Best for: the unique golf-and-safari combination. The signature South African luxury golf experience.*

### 3. Lukimbi Safari Lodge — Southern Kruger National Park

A 15,000-acre private concession inside the southern Kruger with off-road traversing rights. Suite categories from Classic up to the Giant Eagle Owl Suite (extended living, private plunge pool, outdoor shower). Conveniently positioned for both Leopard Creek and Kambaku. Boma dinners, ranger-tracker game drive teams, infinity pool. The signature pairing for a high-end Kruger golf leg.

*Best for: clients who want premium safari combined with Leopard Creek access in a single base.*

### 4. Arabella Hotel & Spa — Kleinmond, Western Cape

Mountain and lagoon views over a Peter Matkovich championship layout. World-class spa, multiple pools, fine dining, kids club, water sports. 5-star hotel overlooking the lagoon. Rooms typically \$250–\$500 per night. Two-night, two-round packages from approximately \$900.

*Best for: couples and spa-focused travelers. The most photogenic of the resorts.*

### 5. Pearl Valley Hotel & Estates — Paarl, Cape Winelands

Jack Nicklaus signature course among vineyards. Spa, wine cellar, fine dining, vineyard tours, mountain biking. Luxury hotel and private villas. Rooms typically \$300–\$550 per night. Wine-and-golf packages from approximately \$1,000 for two nights.

*Best for: golf and wine in equal measure, in the heart of the Cape Winelands.*

## 6. Sun City Resort — North West

Two championship courses (Gary Player CC and Lost City) plus casino, water park, multiple pools, spa, full entertainment complex. Hotels from 4-star up to The Palace. Rooms range \$200–\$800 per night depending on hotel. Golf-and-entertainment packages from approximately \$800 for two nights.

*Best for: families and groups where not everyone in the party plays golf.*

## 7. The Oyster Box — Umhlanga, KwaZulu-Natal

Durban’s most iconic five-star property. Lighthouse views, fine dining, easy access to Durban Country Club. The natural luxury anchor for a KZN leg.

## 8. Lanzerac Hotel & Spa — Stellenbosch

Historic estate at the heart of Stellenbosch, often used as the Winelands base on luxury tours. Combines a working wine farm with a 5-star hotel.

## 9. The Cellars-Hohenort — Constantia, Cape Town

A historic Cape Dutch estate with manicured gardens, two pools, and a working vineyard — directly adjacent to the Constantia wine route and a short drive from Steenberg Golf Club. The classic luxury anchor for a Cape Town leg that combines golf, wine and culture.

### MATCHING GUESTS TO RESORTS

Serious golfers — Fancourt or Leopard Creek (multiple championship rounds without moving).  
 Couples and spa-focused travelers — Arabella or Pearl Valley. Families with non-golfers — Sun City.  
 Once-in-a-lifetime golf-and-safari — Leopard Creek or Lukimbi. KZN coastal escape — Oyster Box.  
 Heritage / wine immersion — Lanzerac in Stellenbosch or The Cellars-Hohenort in Constantia.

## 12 BOOKING, LOGISTICS & ETIQUETTE

### How Far Ahead to Book

COURSE TYPE	PEAK SEASON	OFF-SEASON	EXAMPLES
Championship / Private	4–6 weeks (3–6 mo Leopard Creek)	2–3 weeks	Fancourt, Leopard Creek, Royal Cape
Resort Courses	3–4 weeks	1–2 weeks	Arabella, Steenberg, Erinvale
Public Courses	1–2 weeks	3–7 days	Milnerton, Westlake, Mowbray
Municipal Courses	1 week	2–3 days	Budget options

### Booking Methods

- Direct online — Course websites and platforms like GolfRSA. Easiest method for international visitors. Instant confirmation.
- Phone — Pro shops directly. Best for private clubs, members-only courses, and special requests.
- Email — Best for groups of 8+, multi-day packages, and special occasions. Response usually 24–48 hours.
- Specialist tour operator — The right answer for premium and private courses, multi-region trips, and clients who want a single point of accountability. Adds a 10–20% premium and saves substantial time and access friction — particularly for Leopard Creek.

### Visitor Requirements

- Handicap certificate. Most championship courses require 24 or better.
- Dress code. Collared shirt, tailored shorts or trousers, golf shoes (soft spikes only). No denim, t-shirts, cargo shorts, gym wear, or open-toed shoes.
- Identification. Passport or driver’s license at check-in. Credit card for the deposit/payment.
- Group bookings (8+). Email or phone, not online. 50% deposit typical. Book 6–8 weeks ahead minimum.

### Caddies

Optional almost everywhere, but uniquely part of the South African golf experience. Caddies cost roughly R250–R500 plus tip. Strongly recommended at courses like Leopard Creek and Durban Country Club for local knowledge — and at any course where local read on the greens matters.

### Two-Ball / Twosome Etiquette

A small but useful local convention: many South African clubs restrict or forbid playing as a two-ball, particularly on weekends. The long-standing international norm that twosomes have precedence has

largely been replaced here by a preference for weekend four-balls. If you're a couple or a pair traveling together, expect to be paired up with other golfers on weekend tee times — or book a four-ball outright.

## Getting Around

- Rental car. Highly recommended — roads are generally good. Drive on the left.
- Uber. Reliable in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. Thins out in rural Winelands and the Garden Route.
- Private transfers. Best for large groups, wine tasting days, and clients who don't want to drive.
- Internal flights. Use them. CPT–GRJ (1 hour) saves a long drive. JNB–KMI saves an even longer one.
- Driving advice. Avoid driving after dark when possible. Some rural roads have potholes. Keep doors locked at traffic lights and stop signs. Don't leave anything visible in the car.

## Equipment

- Bring your own clubs if playing 4+ rounds. Most international airlines accept golf bags as standard checked luggage.
- Rentals widely available at R400–R800 per round. Quality varies; serious players should bring their own.

## Cancellation Policy Norms

- 48–72 hours notice typical for full refund. Championship courses may require longer.
- Weather closures usually result in a full refund or rescheduling.
- No-shows are charged in full; some courses blacklist repeat offenders.

### IF YOUR TRIP INCLUDES LEOPARD CREEK

Treat the Leopard Creek tee time as the spine of the trip. Lock it 3–6 months ahead, then build around it. Access is gated through partner lodges (Malelane Sun, Kruger Gate Hotel, Lukimbi Safari Lodge) and qualified golf tour operators. Book accommodation and golf as a single package. Allow time for malaria prophylaxis: consult a doctor 4–6 weeks before travel. Risk is lowest May–September. Build in real safari time — Leopard Creek without at least 2 game drives is a missed opportunity.

## 13 PRACTICAL TRAVEL

### Visas

US passport holders do not require a visa for stays of up to 90 days. UK passport holders are also visa-exempt for up to 90 days. Always check current requirements before travel.

### Flights

Direct service operates daily from London Heathrow to Cape Town and Johannesburg (11–12 hours). From the US, direct flights from JFK, La Guardia, Washing DC and Atlanta. The most common routings are via European hubs (Heathrow, Frankfurt, Amsterdam) into either CPT or JNB. Overnight flights from Europe arrive early morning — ideal for starting a golf trip the same day. Book 3–4 months ahead for the best fares and availability.

### Health & Vaccinations

- No compulsory vaccinations are required for most travelers.
- Yellow fever vaccination is required if arriving from a yellow fever country.
- Malaria prophylaxis is required for the Kruger area and Sabi Sand. Consult your doctor 4–6 weeks before travel. Risk is highest in the wet season (Nov–Apr) and lower in the dry season (May–Oct). Cape Town, the Garden Route, the Winelands, Madikwe, Pilanesberg, and the Waterberg are malaria-free.
- Sun protection. UV is strong year-round. Use SPF 50+ and a wide-brimmed hat.

### Safety

South Africa has both a safe tourism infrastructure and meaningful crime risk in some urban areas. Tens of thousands of golfers visit each year without incident, but standard precautions matter:

- Don't display valuables. Use the in-room safe for passports, jewellery, large amounts of cash.
- Carry a copy of your passport when out and about; keep the original in the hotel safe.
- When self-driving, keep bags out of view (smash-and-grab opportunism happens at intersections). Avoid driving at night where possible.
- In urban areas, use Uber/Bolt rather than walking unfamiliar areas at night.
- Golf courses, safari lodges, and resort estates have excellent security. The risk is almost entirely outside these environments.

### Money

- Currency: South African Rand (ZAR). Roughly R18–R19 to \$1 USD as of 2025–26.
- Credit cards (Visa, Mastercard) widely accepted; Amex less common.
- ATMs are reliable and widespread.
- Carry small denominations of rand for tipping (R5, R10, R20, R50).

## Connectivity

- Free Wi-Fi at airports, hotels, restaurants, and most golf courses.
- For non-Wi-Fi areas, buy a local SIM at the airport (Vodacom, MTN, or Cell C). Pre-loaded SIM services like B4i.travel can have a SIM ready when you land.
- WhatsApp is the default messaging tool used by hotels, lodges, golf clubs, and tour operators. Set it up before you arrive.

## Power

Type M plug (three round prongs) is standard. Bring a universal adapter. South Africa has historically experienced scheduled power outages ('load-shedding'); hotels, shopping malls, and tourist attractions are equipped with back-up generators to ensure uninterrupted service.

## 14 TIPPING IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has a well-established tipping culture. The general rule is 10% as a starting point, with many service workers genuinely relying on tips. For a 7-day trip including a few rounds and a safari leg, total tip budget is typically \$150–\$300 per person on top of green fees and accommodation.

SITUATION	CUSTOMARY TIP	NOTES
Golf caddie	R250–R500/round	R500+ at Leopard Creek. Pay base fee at check-in; tip cash at end.
Restaurant	10% min, 15%+ usual	Service charge may already be added.
Bar staff	10–20% of bill	Tip first round well for faster service.
Hotel porter / bellhop	R10–R20 per bag	—
Housekeeping	R20 per night	Leave with a note.
Hotel concierge	R50–R200	For meaningful help.
Safari ranger	R200– R500/couple/night	R1,000+ at ultra-luxury lodges.
Safari tracker	R150– R300/couple/night	Tip ranger and tracker separately.
Lodge general staff	R100– R250/couple/night	Communal envelope at checkout.
Taxi / Uber / Bolt	10–20% of fare	Tip in-app for ride-shares.
Petrol attendant	R5–R10 per fill-up	They pump fuel for you.
Spa / massage	10–15%	Cash works best.

### TIPPING PRACTICAL TIPS

Always tip in local currency where possible. Keep small denominations (R5, R10, R20, R50) on hand. For families and groups, tip per room rather than per person. Card tipping is increasingly possible — most hotels add a tip line at checkout. At lodges, tip once at the end of your stay rather than after every activity — tipping after each game drive can put pressure on a guide to perform for the tipper at the expense of the group dynamic.

# 15 BUDGETING YOUR TRIP

## Per-Round Costs (Premium Course)

ITEM	COST
Green fee (premium course)	R2,500 – R6,300
Cart rental	R300 – R580
Caddie (optional)	R300 – R500 + R250–R500 tip
Lunch and drinks	R200 – R400
Total per round	R3,300 – R7,800

## Per-Round Costs (Top Quality Course)

ITEM	COST
Green fee (Top quality course)	R300 – R1,000
Cart rental	R300 – R580
Caddie (optional)	R300 – R500 + R250–R500 tip
Lunch and drinks	R100 – R300
Total per round	R1,000 – R2,500

## 7-Day Trip Budget (USD, per person)

ITEM	RANGE
Golf (5 rounds)	\$800 – \$1,500
Accommodation (mid-range)	\$700 – \$1,200
Car rental	\$300 – \$500
Meals and activities	\$500 – \$800
Total	\$2,300 – \$4,000

## Visitor vs Member Pricing

COURSE TIER	TYPICAL VISITOR RATE
Municipal	R500 – R800
Public championship	R900 – R1,500
Resort courses	R1,500 – R2,500

COURSE TIER	TYPICAL VISITOR RATE
Private / exclusive	R2,500 – R6,300

### Money-Saving Tips

- Twilight rates. 30–40% discount for tee times after 2pm.
- Weekday play. R200–R400 cheaper than weekends.
- Winter rates. 20–30% lower in May–August (Cape Town).
- Multi-round packages. Some courses (notably Fancourt) offer 3–5 round discounts.
- Stay-and-play packages. Accommodation + golf bundles save 15–25%.
- Travel off-peak. April–May or September save 20–30% on accommodation.
- All-inclusive safari lodges. Better value than à la carte for safari nights.
- Self-drive vs private transfers. Saves \$500+ across a multi-region trip if you're comfortable on the left.

*Exchange-rate context: roughly R18–R19 to \$1 USD as of late 2025; rates fluctuate.*

## 16 SUSTAINABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN GOLF

South African golf is in the middle of a meaningful sustainability transition — and for the kind of traveler this guide is written for, that matters. Visitors who care about responsible travel, water stewardship, and the climate impact of their trips will find a country where the leading clubs are actively measuring and reporting on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance.

The clearest snapshot of where the industry stands comes from the John Collier Annual Survey on Environmental Compliance, Social Responsibility and Good Governance (ESG) for South African Golf Courses — now in its nineteenth edition (2025–2026), and the most authoritative benchmarking tool available for South African golf.

### Why this matters for the visiting golfer

South Africa is a water-stressed country. Many of its premier courses sit in fragile biomes — fynbos in the Western Cape, bushveld in the Lowveld, indigenous coastal forest along the Garden Route. The way courses manage water, biodiversity, energy, waste, and turfgrass chemistry directly affects whether the playing experience visitors fly in for is sustainable for the next generation.

The 2025 survey reported improvements in 14 of 15 measured ESG focus areas, with overall compliance levels rising to 33% — modest in absolute terms, but a meaningful upward trajectory.

### The Three Pillars of ESG in South African Golf

- Environmental stewardship (E) — managing water, biodiversity, energy, waste, turfgrass chemistry, and the broader landscape and habitat.
- Social responsibility (S) — employee wellbeing, fair labour practices, transformation, training, health and safety, and community outreach.
- Governance excellence (G) — ethical leadership, transparent reporting, risk management, stakeholder engagement, and accountability.

### Environmental Stewardship — Where the Industry Stands

The environmental pillar is the most visible to visiting golfers. The 2025 John Collier Survey measured compliance across many specific areas. Selected results:

ESG FOCUS AREA	2025	2024
Formal integrated environmental management policy	39%	38%
Formal biodiversity policy (fauna & flora protection)	30%	28%
Designated environmental areas on or near the course	45%	43%
Formal landscape assessment carried out	41%	38%
Formal water management policy and plan	27%	25%
Records actual quantities of irrigation water used	40%	39%

ESG FOCUS AREA	2025	2024
Monitors irrigation water quality	29%	28%
Fertilisation and nutrition policy and programme	26%	25%
Integrated pest management programme	27%	26%
Formal waste management policy	39%	35%
Sustainable energy efficiency policy	36%	33%

#### WHAT THESE NUMBERS MEAN

The figures above are not high in absolute terms, but every measured area improved in 2025. The trajectory is what matters: clubs are adopting ESG principles because they make good business sense — water audits cut costs, energy efficiency reduces electricity bills, biodiversity programmes generate marketing stories, and good governance attracts members.

#### WATER — THE CENTRAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Water is the defining sustainability challenge for South African golf. The country is genuinely water-stressed; Cape Town’s 2018 “Day Zero” crisis was a turning point. The leading clubs now measure irrigation volumes (40% of survey respondents), monitor water quality (29%), and have formal management plans (27%). For visitors, this translates into courses that increasingly use treated effluent, capture rainwater, deploy soil-moisture sensors, and reduce irrigated acreage — all without compromising playability.

#### BIODIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPE

Many South African courses sit inside or beside protected biomes. 45% of surveyed clubs now have formally designated environmental areas on or near the course, and 30% have a formal biodiversity policy. The visible result for visitors: indigenous fynbos along Western Cape fairways instead of imported lawns; protected wetlands hosting hippos and crocodiles in the Lowveld; restored coastal forest along the Garden Route; and on-course wildlife encounters that simply don’t happen in most other golf destinations.

#### Social Responsibility

South Africa’s specific history makes the social dimension of golf particularly important. Transformation, fair employment practices, and meaningful community outreach are now embedded expectations. Many clubs run caddie development programmes, junior golf initiatives in surrounding townships, and partnerships with local schools.

For visitors, the practical implication is straightforward: tipping caddies generously, supporting clubs that visibly invest in their staff and communities, and choosing tour operators that work with transformed and locally-owned partners is itself a form of responsible travel.

## Governance Excellence

South Africa is — somewhat surprisingly — a global leader on corporate governance frameworks. The King Code, now in its fifth iteration (King V, released in October 2025), is internationally respected and provides the structural backbone for how golf clubs are increasingly being run. The 2025 John Collier Survey reported governance compliance at 33% (up from 31% in 2024) and communications policy compliance at 38% (up from 37%).

## What This Means When Choosing Where to Play

- Visible biodiversity and environmental signage on the course — designated wildlife areas, indigenous plant labelling, water-saving notices.
- Caddie programmes and on-course staff development — evidence the club invests in its people, not just its turf.
- Transparent club governance — published committees, accessible AGM minutes, clear stakeholder engagement.
- Third-party sustainability certifications — GEO, ISO 14001, or comparable independent verification.
- Membership of CMASA — a strong indicator the club is engaged with industry-wide best practice.
- Visible water and energy management — solar installations, rainwater capture, treated effluent irrigation.

### HOW SOUTH AFRICA GOLF TOURS ENGAGES WITH SUSTAINABILITY

We work with operators and properties that take sustainability seriously and report transparently on it. We favour partner lodges and clubs that invest in their staff, communities, and surrounding biomes. We brief our clients on responsible travel practices — water conservation, wildlife etiquette, fair tipping, and supporting local businesses. We continually review the ESG performance of our supply chain, in line with the principle that the issues which are recorded and measured can be managed.

## 17 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What's the #1 ranked course in South Africa?**

Leopard Creek Country Club, on the Kruger boundary. Members-only — guests of partner lodges and qualified tour operators can book.

### **What's the oldest course in South Africa?**

Royal Cape Golf Club, established 1885. An 18-hole, par-72 parkland in Cape Town's southern suburbs with USGA-standard greens and views of Table Mountain.

### **What's the most famous course?**

Gary Player Country Club at Sun City — annual host of the Nedbank Golf Challenge (formerly the Million Dollar Golf Challenge), one of the largest prize purses in golf.

### **When is the absolute best month to play?**

April. Perfect weather nationwide, low crowds, good rates, and excellent course conditions. September is a close second.

### **Can you golf year-round?**

Yes. The Western Cape has winter rain (Jun–Aug), but the Highveld and KwaZulu-Natal are at their best in those months. There is always somewhere in the country in season.

### **When should I avoid travelling?**

December is the most expensive and crowded month — peak holiday season. If you must travel then, book 4–6 months ahead and play very early.

### **How much does a round cost?**

Premium courses R2,500–R6,300 (\$130–\$330 USD). Mid-range R1,200–R2,500. Budget-friendly R400–R1,000. South Africa is consistently 40–60% cheaper than equivalent rounds in Europe or the US.

### **Do I need to book ahead?**

For top courses (Leopard Creek, Fancourt, Arabella) — yes. 2–4 weeks for peak season, 1–2 weeks off-peak. Some courses accept walk-ins midweek but it's not worth the risk for a must-play.

### **Can I really combine golf and safari?**

Yes — and it's the country's signature offering. Leopard Creek borders Kruger; Gary Player CC at Sun City is next to Pilanesberg; many lodges sell golf-and-safari packages. Even Skukuza Golf Club inside Kruger is unfenced from the park.

### **How long should a golf-and-safari trip be?**

Minimum 5 days for a meaningful experience (2 days golf, 2–3 days safari). Ideal is 7–10 days. Below 5 days you're rushed; below 3 days for the safari leg specifically, you've spent the air time but missed the experience.

**Do I need malaria prophylaxis?**

For Kruger and Sabi Sand — yes. Cape Town, the Garden Route, the Winelands, Madikwe, Pilanesberg, and the Waterberg are all malaria-free. Risk is lowest May–September. Consult a doctor 4–6 weeks before travel.

**Is South Africa safe for golf travelers?**

Yes — with reasonable precautions. Tens of thousands of golfers play here every year without incident. Stick to standard travel safety habits in cities. Golf estates and safari lodges have excellent security; the risk is largely outside those environments.

**Are caddies mandatory?**

No — optional almost everywhere. But strongly recommended at Leopard Creek, Durban CC, and any course where local knowledge of greens and wind helps. R250–R500 plus tip.

**What about the two-ball / weekend rule?**

Many South African clubs restrict or forbid playing as a two-ball, particularly on weekends. Expect to be paired up if you're a couple booking a weekend tee time, or book a four-ball directly.

**What should I wear?**

Standard golf attire (collared shirts, tailored trousers/shorts, soft spikes) — no denim, gym wear, or open-toed shoes. Wind jacket and rain layer. SPF 50+ and a wide-brimmed hat. For safari combo: neutral colors (khaki, olive), insect repellent, binoculars, camera with zoom, layers for early game drives.

**How does altitude actually affect my game?**

On the Highveld (~1,500m), the ball flies roughly 10–15% further. A 150-yard shot becomes 165–170 yards. Driver gains 20–30 yards. Take 1–2 clubs less than normal.

**Can I ship wine home?**

Yes — most Winelands estates ship internationally. Approximately \$50–\$100 to the US for 6–12 bottles. Ask the estate about export and duty.

**Is there anywhere truly bucket-list, beyond the usual?**

The Extreme 19th at Legend Golf & Safari Resort (Limpopo) — a par-3 played from a tee 400m above the green, accessible only by helicopter, with a \$1 million hole-in-one prize. Reopened in May 2026 after a 7-year closure.

**What's the best train experience for golfers?**

The Rovos Rail Golf Safari combines five-star accommodation and dining with rounds at top courses including Fancourt and Leopard Creek. Widely regarded as the most indulgent way to see South African golf.

# SOUTH AFRICA GOLF TOURS

---

*Bespoke South Africa journeys for the discerning golfer*

*This guide consolidates and edits content from [golfguides.africa](https://golfguides.africa), [satravellers.com](https://satravellers.com), [ascottours.co.za](https://ascottours.co.za), [golfandtours.com](https://golfandtours.com), [golfinsouthafrica.com](https://golfinsouthafrica.com), the Nineteenth John Collier Annual Survey on ESG for South African Golf Courses (2025–2026), and supporting context from broader operator coverage.*

*Source course pricing and seasonal data reflect 2025–26 figures; verify current rates before booking.*

