

Greater Kruger National Park Discoverer Extended

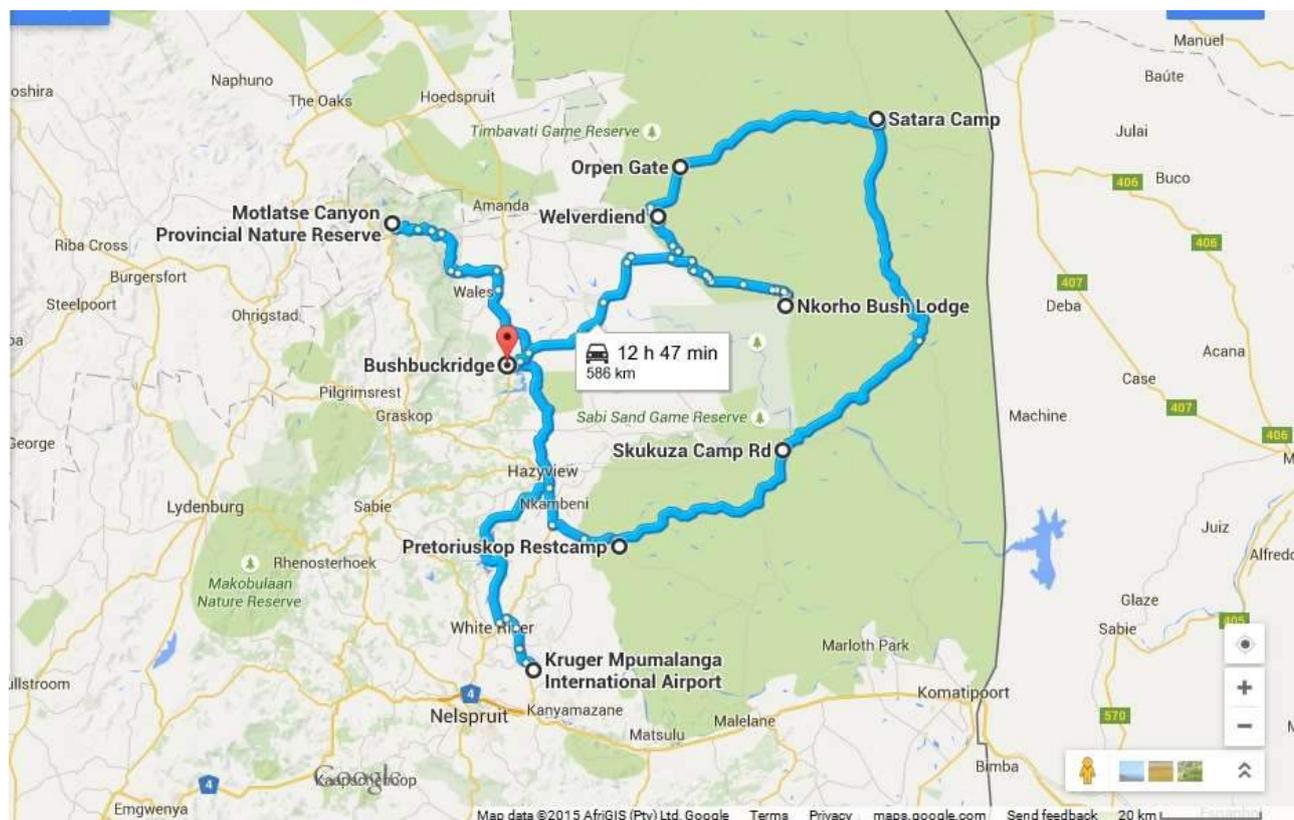
An unforgettable wildlife encounter in South
Africa's Greater Kruger National Park



Introduction

South Africa's Greater Kruger National Park needs little in the way of introduction. Comprising some 20 000 km² of wildlife refuge covering large parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces and offering some of Africa's best game viewing, the Kruger has gained a reputation as one of the world's great game parks. While the park is just under 400 km from north to south, and there are numerous camps spread from the top to the bottom, the south offers the easiest access and generally the best game viewing, thanks to the diversity of flora and landscapes. Vehicular transfers from Johannesburg are easy enough, but the best access is via Kruger Mpumalanga Airport near the town of White River or directly into Skukuza Airport, meaning that one can be 'on safari' only minutes after arrival. Four nights is our minimum recommended duration of stay, and for those with more time available our Discoverer Extended version will fit the bill. On the western boundary of the Kruger there are several large private reserves which form what's called the Greater Kruger National park. Some of these are actually joined to the Kruger, allowing free movement of animals, and no game viewing experience is complete without the private lodge component. Thus our last few nights are spent in the world-famous Sabi Sand Game Reserve (two nights on the standard Discoverer, three on the Extended), where close-up viewing of big game, and the predators in particular, coupled with wonderful accommodation and fine dining, round off the South African wildlife experience perfectly.

Map Reference



Daily Itinerary

Day 1: The Blyde River Canyon

You'll meet your guide at Kruger / Mpumalanga International Airport near White River, a small town on the south-western corner of the park, and then make your way into the Drakensberg Escarpment, which stretches all the way down the eastern side of the country to the Eastern Cape. We'll be staying at a resort on the edge of the Blyde River Canyon, reportedly the third largest canyon in the world. The area is wonderfully scenic, with incredible cliffs stepping down in tiers to the Blyde River running along the bottom of the canyon. Our resort is situated close to the main canyon, and offers private view sites and some wonderful nature walks. It's a great place to unwind after the long flight and before the excitement (and early mornings!) of the safari. Note that this tour can also begin with a pick-up in Johannesburg, which for groups can be more economical than flying. Please enquire for more details.

Day 2: Pretoriuskop Rest Camp

After an optional morning walk (or a sleep-in!) at the Blyde Canyon we'll have breakfast and then depart, taking in some of the sights of the Panorama Route, such as the Three Rondavels View Site, God's Window and Lisbon Falls, before heading down off the Escarpment and into the Kruger National Park, where the game viewing can begin. Pretoriuskop Rest Camp is situated in the south-west corner of the park, which is dominated by Broad-leaf Woodland and large granite domes which tower over the surrounding plains. Game viewing in this region is variable. In the spring it is often the first part of the region to receive rain, which results in the first green flush of sprouting grasses. At such times grazers such as Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest and Buffalo move into the area, and it can on occasion produce some rare antelope species such as Tsessebe, Sable and Lichtenstein's Hartebeest. There's also a fair chance of seeing Wild Dogs here, as there's a pack which use the rocky outcrops near the camp as a den site. In the summer the bush becomes very thick, meaning that most grazers move out of the area, but it's still worth a night for the chance of seeing Wild Dogs. We should arrive in the early afternoon, and after checking in we'll head out on an afternoon game drive before a chance to freshen up before dinner.

Days 3 - 4: Skukuza Rest Camp

After a morning drive from Pretoriuskop we'll have breakfast and depart for our next destination, Skukuza Rest Camp. Skukuza, named after the first warden of the park, James Stevenson-Hamilton, for his rather brash but effective management style (the name Skukuza means 'He who sweeps clean'), is situated on the southern bank of the Sabie River. The Sabie is one of the largest rivers in the park, and one of only a few permanent water courses in the park. It's also the most biologically diverse, with a large diversity of fish species which in turn support water birds, reptiles such as Nile Crocodile and even the elusive Cape Clawless Otter. The permanent water also supports a large Impala population, which provide food for Leopards and Wild Dogs, while the bigger herbivores such as Buffalo support several Lion prides, and we'll hope to have some encounters with these exciting predators during our stay here. The river also attracts breeding herds of Elephants, and we'll no doubt come across them during the heat of the day when they head down to the river to water and cool down. Our time here will involve early morning drives of between three to four hours in duration, a mid-day rest period followed by an afternoon drive, returning to camp for time to freshen up before dinner. During the mid-day rest period there's opportunity to visit the camp's curio shop, get some lunch at the cafeteria and have a bit of a stroll.

Days 5 - 6: Satara Rest Camp

For our next two days we'll head north to the central regions of the reserve. The drive there is just short of a hundred kilometres and will take up a large portion of the day, but there will be plenty to see along the way. As we head further north the terrain will become flatter and more open due to the transition from the granite-based soils of the south west to the basalt soils of the central region. The Satara region is drier and more open, with large areas of grassy plains. These attract large numbers of Zebra and Wildebeest, which in turn support a healthy Lion and Spotted Hyena population, while the smaller herbivores provide food for Cheetah and Leopard, and game viewing in the region can be superb. We should arrive in camp in the afternoon and after a bit of a rest will head out on our first game drive in the area. Our routine here will be the same as that of the previous camp. Night drives are an optional extra here, allowing one to get out after dark and experience the bush at night and to see predators such as Lion, Spotted Hyena, Leopard, African Wild Cat and perhaps even Serval on the move under the cover of darkness.

Days 7 - 9: The Sabi Sand Game Reserve

After a last morning activity in the Kruger we'll exit via Orpen Gate and enter the adjacent Sabi Sand Game Reserve. The Sabi Sand Game Reserve is a 65 000 hectare piece of private land that is contiguous with the neighbouring national park. The reserve has its origins in cattle ranching and hunting land that was turned over to conservation by a group of forward-thinking land owners and now boasts some of the continent's best game viewing. The reserve is home to all six species of cat found in the eastern regions of the country, although it is most famous for its regular close-up encounters with Lion and Leopard. As Cheetah have such large home ranges they are not always present in the reserve (moving freely between the Sabi Sands and the Kruger National Park). Man's activities have benefited them here in the Sabi Sands however, as the many small artificial dams and pans result in a large resident Impala population, which in turn attracts these roving predators into the area on a regular basis. The same goes for the endangered Wild Dog, with several packs spending some of their time in the Sabi Sands, though these predators are highly mobile and sometimes spend only a day or two in the area before moving back to the Kruger National Park. Part of the thrill here in at the private lodges is observing the expert Shangaan tracker at work as he uses his incredible knowledge, skill and intuition to find these cats for us. On an afternoon drive a pride of lions might be resting up almost invisibly in some long grass, but the morning drive may find them out on the hunt – each drive is a completely different experience and the three-night stay will give us enough time out in the bush to ensure ample sightings and encounters. The fantastic game-viewing will be complemented by optional bush walks, where we get a chance to get closer to the ground and learn about some of the smaller creatures and the links that hold the whole ecosystem together. Fantastic accommodation and superb dining will augment the experience – it doesn't get much better than this! Each full day thus entails a morning safari, followed by breakfast, an optional bush walk, lunch and a rest period followed by an afternoon safari that returns to camp after dark, giving us the chance to observe cats moving about under the cover of night.

Day 10: Departure

After a last morning drive (time permitting) and breakfast, we'll pack and make our way to Kruger / Mpumalanga Airport from where participants can fly on to Johannesburg, Durban or Cape Town for their onward arrangements. A drop off in Johannesburg can also be arranged, subject to a price change. Please enquire for more details.



Tour in brief

Best time to visit: game viewing is at its best during the dry months, from June to mid-November, but any time of the year will provide a rewarding safari experience.

Expected weather conditions: warm to hot in summer, possible afternoon thunderstorms. Cool to mild and dry during winter – warm clothing recommended for the open vehicle safaris in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve.

Tour tempo: medium-plus, optional mid-day breaks on non-travelling days (advisable in the hotter areas).

Accommodation standards: medium to high: National Park's rest-camps and private lodges.

Mammal viewing: excellent, especially in the private reserves. Full range of species can be seen, including the Big Five (Elephant, Rhino, Cape Buffalo, Lion and Leopard) as well as Cheetah, Wild Dog and Spotted Hyena. Good general game as well, and it's possible to see 35+ mammal species on this tour.

Add-ons: this tour can be combined with a visit to Cape Town and the Western Cape, or Victoria Falls.

Tour Costs

(Please contact us for prices for groups larger than 6)

November 2018 - October 2019

2 participants	R 60 280 per person sharing
3 participants	R 52 125 per person sharing
4 participants	R 48 290 per person sharing
5 participants	R 45 400 per person sharing
6 participants	R 43 350 per person sharing
Single Supplement	R 10 900

Includes

- Accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Lunches on days 7, 8 and 9
- Ground transport
- Bottled water in the Lawson's vehicle whilst travelling
- Entrance fees
- Personalised checklists
- Specialist guide fees

Excludes

- All airfares
- Travel and medical insurance
- Lunches except for days 7, 8 and 9
- All drinks
- Optional excursions where applicable
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature

Notes

- The camps mentioned are dependent on availability. If these specific camps are not available, we'll substitute with other camps, but there may be a difference in price, which will be advised at the time the booking enquiries are made.
- This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control.
- Birds and mammals mentioned on this itinerary do not represent all that can be seen. A full list of possibles appears on your checklist.
- This itinerary is flexible and can be adjusted according to available time and budget. Arrival and departure points are quoted as from Kruger / Mpumalanga International Airport, but road transfers to and from Johannesburg can be arranged.
- Please enquire if you would like to consider the extra cost of an open-sided safari vehicle in the Kruger National Park.

