

AFRICA – SOUTH AFRICAN CYCLING SAFARI

10-days / 9-nights Moderate GUIDED cycling, game viewing, sightseeing includes Kruger National Park



More than just a cycling holiday this is an in-depth exploration of the north-eastern corner of South Africa, combining a traditional game-viewing safari with sightseeing, a cultural and historical insight AND cycling. Exploring by bike allows you to discover the vast panoramas of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. We cycle in the breathtaking Blyde River Canyon, one of the largest canyons in the world, through plantations of citrus, avocado and macadamia. We visit a massive limestone cave system, admire the rock formations of the Blyde and Treur Rivers, wonder at the magnificent views of canyons, escarpments and mountains, and see the remains of an Iron Age African kingdom. The tour starts at Johannesburg airport and ends in Hoedspruit, a farming community with a good airport, gateway to the Blyde River Canyon reserve and Kruger National Park.

The highlight is the opportunity for wildlife encounters by bicycle, on foot and by vehicle. Kruger National Park is renowned worldwide for its diversity and density of wildlife, including the iconic animals of Africa – lion, elephant, rhino, leopard and buffalo, joined by cheetah, hyena, giraffe, zebra, antelope, vultures and eagles, and so many more. We stay in the National Park and also stay in private game reserves where we may spot giraffe, impala or zebra while cycling, or cheetah and elephants while walking with our expert guides.

Cost from: **\$3780** per person, twin-share Single room supplement on request, limited availability

Departs: 10th March, 7th April, 5th, 19th May, 2nd June, 18th August, 1st September, 6th October, 2019

Includes: 9 nights in selected 3-star hotels, lodges or guesthouses; full board from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10; bicycle hire; entrance into Kruger National Park and Mapungubwe National Park; arrival transfer from Johannesburg airport to Hoedspruit; departure transfer to Hoedspruit airport; cycle tours, game drives and activities as per itinerary; support vehicle.

Not included: Flights, drinks, visa / passport charges, personal expenses, gratuities. Transfer from Hoedspruit to Johannesburg and extra nights of accommodation can be arranged at extra cost.

E-bike hire: From \$390 per E-bike – availability strictly limited, please request when booking.

Grading: Moderate – daily cycling ranges up to 40 kilometres over varied terrain, from mostly flat to undulating with some steeper climbs. We cycle mostly on gravel or paved roads, quiet country roads with little traffic whenever possible. The pace allows for rest stops and photo opportunities, and the tour should present little difficulty for anyone who is a regular cyclist.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival

Arrive into O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, where you will be met for your 11am transfer to your accommodation at a private game lodge near Polokwane, the capital of Limpopo Province, where we spend three nights. After settling in we go for a game drive, hoping for our first glimpse of giraffe, impala or zebra, followed by dinner served in a *boma* or *kraal* enclosure, a uniquely South African way of dining.

Day 2: Cycle safari

cycling @ 20 to 40km

After breakfast we set out on an exploratory ride through the South African bushveld, aiming to have close encounters with some of Africa's iconic animals, including giraffe and zebra, as well as kudu, impala and many bird species. Free time this afternoon – you may like to join a guided bushwalk or just relax next to the pool.

Day 3: Mapungubwe National Park

no cycling

An early start for the drive to Mapungubwe National Park. This UNESCO World Heritage-listed site was once the centre of the largest kingdom in Africa, home to a highly sophisticated Iron Age civilisation which traded gold and ivory with China, India and Egypt. In the 14th Century the area was abandoned due to climatic change and drought, and the power base of the kingdom shifted north to Great Zimbabwe. We take part in a guided walking tour of the Mapungubwe Hill archaeological site. A highlight of the day is the view from a lookout point of the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers, marking the borders between South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Mapungubwe is also home to a wide variety of wildlife including over 380 species of bird, most of the large mammals, and a number of reptiles including Nile crocodile lurking in the waters of the Limpopo.



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Day 4: Wolkberg Mountains

cycling @ 15 to 30km

After breakfast we head to the majestic Wolkberg Mountain range of Limpopo, which separates the Highveld from the Lowveld. Avocados, macadamias and lychees are cultivated here too. We cycle a leisurely circuit through pine and eucalyptus plantations, mountain and farm scenery. We have lunch at a restaurant with views into the Letsitele valley, our next destination. The afternoon is yours at leisure – you may like to book a spa treatment at the hotel wellness centre, have drinks in the historic bar and lounge, or just relax taking in the mountain views from the balcony before dinner.

Day 5: Letsitele and Kaross workshop

cycling @ 20km

Today we learn more about modern life in the small farming town of Letsitele and the surrounding valley with a visit to a citrus farm or a macadamia or avocado packhouse. We ride through orange groves to the Kaross embroidery workshop, founded by a local artist in 1989 to provide opportunities for rural women to earn a living. The blankets, wall hangings, cushions, bags and other textiles celebrate the women's creativity, cultural heritage and traditional skills learnt from their mothers and grandmothers.

Day 6: Blyde Dam and Kruger National Park

cycling @ 27km

After breakfast we cycle alongside the Blyde River, keeping an eye out for kudu and baboons, to a vantage point with impressive views – photographs hardly do justice to this panorama, as they call it locally 'God's Window'. A picnic lunch on the banks of the Blyde River in the shade of lush green trees and in the afternoon we head to Kruger National Park. We drive through Bushbuckridge (named after the enormous herds of bushbuck which populated the ridge in the 1880s) and the small farming town of Hazyview, just a few kilometres outside the park. We arrive into Kruger and our lodge for 2 nights in the late afternoon for a BBQ.

Day 7: Kruger National Park

no cycling

We spend a full day in Kruger National Park today – make sure your camera battery is fully charged! Kruger is one of Africa's largest game reserves, nearly 2 million hectares of diverse habitat – mountains, bushveld, savannah and tropical forest – supporting an enormous variety of wildlife. The highlight is of course sighting the *Big Five* – lions, elephants, leopards, rhinos and buffalo – but the park is also home to cheetah, zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, eland and impala, hippos, hyena, monkeys, the endangered African wild dog and over 100 other species of mammal. Early morning and dusk game drives can be spectacular.

Bird watchers are well-rewarded here, with over 500 species of birds, some migratory and others resident year-round, including eagles, stork, vultures, owls and hornbills. Less obvious but still essential to the ecosystem are reptiles, fish and amphibians, including crocodiles, African rock python, black mamba and on rare occasions the Zambezi shark. This is truly a place like no other in the world. We return to our accommodation late in the day for dinner and to reflect on the special moments of the day.

Day 8: Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve

cycling @ 16 to 40km

The Blyde River Canyon is the third largest canyon in the world, with many of its walls covered with lush subtropical vegetation. Our ride starts at Pinnacle Rock, and we follow the escarpment to Wonder View, where on a clear day we can see as far as Mozambique. We continue to Lisbon Falls, a very photogenic 94-metre cascade. Here you can choose to either extend your bike ride by cycling to our lunch spot, or hop into the support vehicle for a relaxed drive. The canyon is home to a wide range of wildlife including antelope, hippos, crocodiles, bushbabies and vervets, eagles, falcons, kestrels, vultures, buzzards and owls. After lunch we visit Bourke's Luck Potholes, a series of potholes and plunge pools sculpted over thousands of years by the currents of the Blyde and Treur Rivers as they meet and form swirling eddies and whirlpools. We take a short drive to the Three Rondavels lookout point, where the rock formations below resemble the traditional round African huts. We stay overnight nearby, overlooking the escarpment.

Day 9: Echo Caves

cycling @ 27km

Leaving the Three Rondavels and Blyde River we cycle mostly downhill to Echo Caves. A farmer stumbled upon the caves when seeking his lost cattle in the 1920s and we glimpse a portion of the enormous limestone cave system – eerie rock formations, dripping stalactites, rock art and large caverns. We drive the Abel Erasmus pass through the Drakensburg escarpment into the Lowveld for our last evening. In the late afternoon we go for a game drive in an open-topped game viewing vehicle with an experienced guide, and our farewell dinner is once again served in a *boma*, around a fire, under the starlit African skies.

Day 10: Departure day

We begin our last day with an early morning bushwalk led by an experienced game ranger. After breakfast we depart for Hoedspruit Eastgate airport (a private transfer to Johannesburg can be arranged at extra cost).



Outdoor Travel can offer pre- or post-tour extensions in Johannesburg or Cape Town. In Johannesburg a visit to Soweto is a must. In and around Cape Town there are safari lodges, wine regions, and marine wildlife. We also offer guided or self-guided cycling holidays in Europe and the UK, in New Zealand, the USA & Canada.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** for more details and reservations:

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