

SIX THINGS TO DIG INTO IN DURBAN

For a dose of adventure, dive with sharks, bungee jump into a stadium and sample some bunny chow. By Vawn Himmelsbach

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA—Durban is designed for adventure, with miles of sandy beaches along its rugged coastline and mountains just a few hours' drive away.

To the south is the aptly named Sapphire Coast, with quiet stretches of beach and holiday towns. To the west is the Valley of a Thousand Hills, with nature reserves and cultural experiences, and further on is uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, with the highest mountains in Africa on this side of Mount Kilimanjaro. And north, along the Elephant Coast, are game reserves populated by the Big Five (rhinoceros, Cape buffalo, African lion, African elephant and African leopard). Where to start? Here are six suggestions:



RED CARNATION HOTELS

A sundowner with a view: Even if you can't afford to stay at this boutique hotel (previous guests include Prince Harry and actress Charlize Theron), the Oyster Box is well worth a visit for its quirky, colonial charm, filled with KwaZulu art. Plus, it's the best place in town for a sundowner; head to the rooftop Lighthouse Bar, with panoramic views of the Indian Ocean and historic red-and-white lighthouse, for a G&T. The Oyster Box is also known for its Indian buffet (Durban-style, of course) and afternoon tea service. Details: oysterboxhotel.com

Take a leap: When there isn't a soccer or rugby game, head to Moses Mabhida Stadium for the Big Rush, Big Swing. Mistakenly, I thought it was, well, a big swing. But it's actually a bungee-jumping experience, where you plummet into the void above the pitch and swing out in a 220-metre arc. If that's too extreme for your tastes, you can climb 500 steps to the top of the 106-metre-high arch on the Adventure Walk, or take the more tranquil SkyCar, offering 360-degree views of the city and Indian Ocean. Details: mmstadium.com



Chill at the beach: The Golden Mile is a wide stretch of golden sand that actually extends about six kilometres from uShaka Marine World to the Blue Lagoon area. Walk the promenade, dotted with bars, hotels and restaurants, and vendors under thatched stalls selling Zulu arts and crafts. South Beach is considered a surfer's paradise; there are other surf spots further north. There's also kayaking at Umgeni River and jet skiing at Blue Lagoon.

Vawn Himmelsbach was hosted by Durban Tourism, which didn't review or approve this story.



USHAKA MARINE WORLD

Swim with sharks: While it's possible to dive with sharks in the Indian Ocean, you don't need your scuba certification to have the same experience in the Xpanda Shark Dive at uShaka Marine World. It feels unnatural to lower yourself into a giant tank of sharks — with nothing between you and them except a cage — but after a few moments of terror, I found the experience less *Fear Factor* and more *Zen*, as ragged tooth, sand and spinner sharks glided past me. Details: ushakamarineworld.co.za



Chow down on bunny chow: One-third of Durban's population is of East Indian descent. So, along with South African wines and barbecue, Durban is where you come for curry. Durbanites have put their own twist on Indian food, however, such as bunny chow — a hollowed-out loaf of bread filled with curry, typically made with mutton, chicken or kidney beans; for a true Durbanite experience, try the award-winning spicy chicken and prawn bunny chow at Cane Cutters. Details: facebook.com/CaneCutters53



Ride a rickshaw: Sugar magnate Sir Marshall Campbell brought the rickshaw to Durban from London in 1893. Before the rise of the automobile, rickshaws were a common form of transportation around Durban, pulled by strong Zulu tribesmen. Though nowadays it's a tourist attraction, a ride in a rickshaw is a far more interesting way to see Durban than on a tour bus; the "rickshaw men" wear leopard-print headdresses decorated with ox horns and their carts are painted with patterns symbolic of Zulu culture.

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Hurricane Irma and Maria have been awful - no question about it. The storm season normally is done by mid-October, which is the time when the bulk of the ships start the Caribbean season. While there has been damage to many islands and countries, most are, or soon will be open for business and your tourism support is even more important than normal. Take advantage of your choice of many tremendous deals. One is an 11 night package departing on October 28th. Only \$2199 CAD gets you roundtrip Toronto air, 1 night hotel in Fort Lauderdale, 10 nights in a very desirable high-category balcony stateroom aboard the gorgeous new ms Koningsdam, a \$50 pp onboard credit and taxes.

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