

## Gauteng

---

### Introduction

Gauteng is an urban playground – think large shopping malls, bars, hotels, casinos and a vibrant cultural and entertainment scene. It is South Africa’s economic powerhouse, and is fast-paced, high-tech and ever changing.

### Top attractions



#### Apartheid Museum

The Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg documents South Africans’ struggle for freedom during the days of apartheid. Set on 7ha of landscaped grounds, the museum has over 20 exhibition areas that include film footage, text panels and artefacts. Image © Annette Kurylo



#### Cradle of Humankind

The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site spans a large area of Gauteng. Key attractions here are the Maropeng Visitor Centre and the Sterkfontein Caves, which are one of the most important palaeoanthropological sites in the world. Here, scientists have discovered important fossils that tell us much about the predecessors of modern humans.



#### Soweto

No visit to South Africa is complete without a stop in Soweto, South Africa’s biggest township and one that is steeped in history, as it was at the epicentre of the Struggle for democracy. Today it is a thriving hub with non-stop entertainment. Image © Michael Denne



## **Magaliesberg mountains**

The mountains that span Gauteng and the North West are more estimated to be 100 times older than Mount Everest. Their dramatic quartzite cliffs, valleys, ravines and waterfalls provide excellent exploring opportunities for nature lovers. The mountains are home to the elusive leopard, over 300 bird species, baboons, a variety of antelope and small mammals. For the adventurous there's hiking, mountain biking, white-water rafting, horse riding and abseiling.



## **Constitution Hill**

This is a human rights precinct and a world-class heritage tourist attraction that celebrates South Africa's democracy. It is also the home of South Africa's Constitutional Court, the highest court in the land. The precinct incorporates cultural, historical, artistic, educational and recreational spaces. Located between Braamfontein and Hillbrow in Johannesburg, it includes the Old Fort Prison, where political prisoners like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi were sent.



## **Gold Reef City**

Gold Reef City Theme Park is built around an authentic 19th-century gold mine, making it one of the few theme parks in the world that combines a historical attraction with a theme park. Visitors can go on a tour of a replica mining village, watch gold being poured, or go on an underground tour. The theme park also offers a number of fun rides. The Gold Reef City Casino is the oldest in Johannesburg and offers some of the best of gaming and entertainment.



## **Dinokeng Game Reserve**

The Dinokeng Game Reserve is Gauteng's first Big Five reserve, and is conveniently located relatively close to Johannesburg and Pretoria, allowing for great game viewing close to urban centres.

OR Tambo International Airport competes with the best airports in the world. It is the hub of South Africa's international and domestic air travel.



## Overview of Gauteng

Gauteng is the smallest of South Africa's nine provinces, but also the most densely populated and the fastest growing – not too surprising, really, as Gauteng means 'Place of Gold' (gold has been intertwined with the province's history ever since its discovery in the Johannesburg area in 1886).

It is a province of contrasts – old and new, contemporary and traditional, dense cities and wide-open grasslands, all co-existing.

Although dominated by urban areas, there are a number of great natural attractions, like the Dinokeng Game Reserve, Gauteng's only Big Five nature reserve; the Pretoria National Botanical Garden; and the Magaliesberg mountains.

Most of Gauteng is on the Highveld, a high-altitude grassland; its spectacular Highveld thunderstorms are legendary.

There's plenty for your clients to do in Gauteng, whether they favour a night on the town, a game drive or some great shopping. Invite them to immerse themselves in Gauteng's cultural scene – there are museums, galleries, theatres, historical sites, cultural hubs and a number of music festivals.

Gauteng boasts a world-class infrastructure, and a large range of accommodation, from the ultra-luxurious to budget options.

There are several small airports – Lanseria, Rand, Grand Central and Wonderboom – that link the province with the rest of the country.

## Game viewing and birding

Gauteng may be an urban mecca, but there are a number great game-viewing and birding opportunities.

In Johannesburg is the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden, with walks, trails and waterfalls. Its biggest attraction is a pair of Verreaux's eagles that live in the cliffs.

At the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve, just a short drive from Johannesburg and Pretoria, visitors can view a variety of animals, including the spectacular white lion.

The 13 000ha Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve, about an hour's drive from Johannesburg, has about 200 species of birds and a number of antelope species, including steenbok, kudu and eland.

Pretoria has a number of nature reserves within and surrounding the city. The Fountains, Groenkloof, Rietvlei and Wonderboom nature reserves are among its best natural attractions.

Travellers should also make a point of visiting the Dinokeng Game Reserve, Gauteng's first Big Five reserve. Here visitors also get to see rare white lions, along with hippos, crocodiles and over 300 bird species.



### Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden

The Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden is a relaxing place to spend your day.



### Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve

You can see beautiful white lions at the Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve.



### Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve

The Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve has a number of antelope species, including steenbok.



## **Dinokeng Game Reserve**

See all the Big Five at the Dinokeng Game Reserve.

Gauteng is a malaria-free area.

## **Urban experiences**

Gauteng has a number of urban treats for travellers.

### **Bars and pubs**

Gauteng boasts a number of great bars, pubs and shebeens (taverns) in its cities and townships. Some hotels have iconic bars that attract the 'It' crowd, which are usually the best places to see and be seen while enjoying a South African beer or cocktail. Township shebeens are great places to meet and interact with the locals; here you can often sample locally brewed traditional beers. Please advise your clients, though, that it's best to visit townships with a guide.

### **Townships**

A visit to a Gauteng township can make for an amazing experience. A large number of South Africans live in townships and visitors are encouraged to interact with locals and see what township life is all about.

Soweto is South Africa's most iconic township – apart from its historical significance, it offers restaurants, shebeens (taverns) and outdoor activities.

Of particular interest is Vilakazi Street, the only street in the world where two Nobel Peace Prize winners (Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu) have lived.

Also worth a visit is the Hector Pietersen Museum and Memorial, which pays tribute to the Struggle against apartheid, and Regina Mundi, an enormous Catholic church.

The township also has some great options for adrenaline junkies, including zipping around on a quad bikes or taking a 30-minute speedboat ride around the Orlando Towers Dam. Or how about bungee jumping 33 storeys off the famous Orlando Towers?

Soweto is also home to the famous Wandie's Place, a restaurant where many international celebrities have dined.

Atteridgeville Park in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, is a popular spot for jazz get-togethers.

### **Malls**

Some of the best shopping malls in Africa are to be found in Johannesburg, Pretoria and their surrounds. There's Sandton City, Nelson Mandela Square, Rosebank Mall and Hyde Park Corner in Johannesburg, and Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in Pretoria, to mention a few. Shops offer everything from international clothing, cosmetics, jewellery and shoe brands to the latest techno

gadgets. But these malls are not just about shopping – visitors are able to combine shopping with the finest dining, cinemas and theatres, and even amusement parks.

## **Casinos**

South Africa has a large number of casinos and entertainment complexes. Popular gaming destination Gold Reef City in Johannesburg pays tribute to the gold mining days. There's also Carnival City in Brakpan, Silverstar Casino in Krugersdorp, Emperors Palace in Kempton Park and Montecasino in Fourways. These complexes typically include hotels, restaurants, bars and huge entertainment complexes.



## **Bars**

Gauteng has some great vibey venues. The Randlords rooftop.



## **Soweto Bike tours**

Soweto is South Africa's most iconic township – apart from its historical significance, it offers restaurants, culture, shebeens (taverns) and outdoor activities.



## **Nelson Mandela Square**

For a great shopping experience, head to Nelson Mandela Square.

The Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto is the one of the largest hospitals in the world.

## Main centres



### Johannesburg

It's the capital of Gauteng, and was built on the discovery of gold in 1886. It is now a vibrant and large city (the greater Johannesburg area is home to about 10-million people). It's been home to celebrities and icons including Nelson Mandela, actress Charlize Theron and golf stars Gary Player and Charl Schwartzel.



### Soweto

Soweto is the acronym for South-Western Townships – a group of townships just outside of Johannesburg to which Africans were moved by the apartheid government during the early 1900s. Today Soweto is home to millions and is South Africa's largest township. Image © Albinfo



### Pretoria

This is the administrative capital of South Africa and the home of the Union Buildings, the official seat of the South African government and the offices of the president. In Pretoria, visitors will also find Freedom Park, a multi-faceted heritage precinct. It is also home to the State Theatre. Image of the Union Buildings © JW Hurter



### Vereeniging

Vereeniging is situated on the banks of the Vaal River, a 45-minute drive from Johannesburg. Much of its early growth was due to the surrounding coal mines. It is now an important centre of industry, and is also known as the site where a treaty to end of the South African War (also known as the Anglo-Boer War) was signed.



### Kempton Park

Kempton Park is home to Africa's biggest airport, OR Tambo International Airport. It is situated next to Tembisa, one of the largest townships in South Africa, and is also the home of the Emperors Palace hotel and casino. It's a short trip from here into Johannesburg or Pretoria.

The Gautrain is a rapid rail link from Pretoria and Johannesburg to the OR Tambo International Airport.

## Timeline



**1855**

Pretoria is founded in 1855 by Marthinus Pretorius, a leader of the Voortrekkers – Afrikaans and Dutch peoples who migrated from the Cape Colony into the interior of South Africa to escape British rule. Image © [peragro](#)



**1886**

Gold is discovered in 1886 in what is now Johannesburg, leading to the Witwatersrand Gold Rush and the establishment of Johannesburg. Image © [undone](#)



**1941**

In 1941, the Royal Imperial Hospital was built in what today is Diepkloof, Soweto, for convalescing British and Commonwealth soldiers. The hospital was later renamed Baragwanath Hospital (and is now Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital). © [Nigeria Health Watch](#)



**1976**

Soweto comes to the world's attention on 16 June 1976 with the Soweto Uprising, when mass protests by students erupted over the apartheid government's policy to enforce education in Afrikaans. Image of Hector Pieterse Museum © [Ina96](#)



**1994**

In 1994, the area roughly covering Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging, which was previously part of the old Transvaal province, is renamed Gauteng.



**2010**

In 2010, Johannesburg hosts the final of the FIFA World Cup, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies. Image © [shanediaz120](#)

## **Tips for your travellers**

- Gauteng is sunny for much of the year – sunscreen and a hat are advisable when going out during the day. It can be very cold in winter, though, between May and August.
- Tap water is safe to drink in all of the major centres and towns. Bottled water is, however, freely available, if your client prefers.
- As in any other place your client travels, they should be aware of their surroundings, shouldn't walk around wearing lots of jewellery or displaying any cash, and stay in well-lit and well marked areas at night.
- Minibus taxis are abundant, but it is safer to use metered taxis.
- A service charge is not usually included in the bill at restaurants, and a tip of between 10% and 15% is standard.
- Staying connected is easy – there are a number of mobile phone (cellphone) networks and most hotels offer free Wi-Fi connection.
- Most shops in malls are open from 9am to 6pm, although there are some that stay open a little later.

Johannesburg is recognised as an urban forest because of its millions of trees.