

# Hitting The Big Blue

Blue health travel. The gist? The idea that spending time around water delivers tangible mind-body perks. We've rounded up some spots that promise to calm, centre and energise you. Start packing!

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**WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH WATER?**

We know stepping outside is generally good for our physical and mental well-being but doing so near water feels extra special. Well, it turns out that whether it's a river, ocean, lake or pool, being near water makes humans happy. "When you step outside, particularly by the edge of the water, your cortisol levels drop. Your brain switches into a different mode," explains marine biologist and researcher Dr Wallace Nichols, author of *Blue Mind*. Water has the power to inspire and promote personal rejuvenation. It "boosts creativity, settles your brain and body down, reduces stress," adds Dr Nichols. Many of us have caught ourselves simply staring at large masses of water with a mesmerising calm. You catch yourself reconnecting with your inner self, surroundings and the people around you. For one, we listen to the sounds of water when we meditate. On hot summer days, we flock to places near water to celebrate. So, why not do it during the cooler months? Here are some cool near-water spots to visit at some point.

**FOODIE'S PARADISE**

Enjoy a seasonal tasting menu from *Wolfgat*, a small restaurant hailed the Best Restaurant in the World at The World Restaurant Awards in 2019. The restaurant only takes 20 diners per sitting, so book ahead!

## Paternoster

**WHAT?** The call of the ocean

**WHERE?** Gonana Guest House, part of Cape Country Routes, in the seaside town of Paternoster.

**HOW MUCH?** From R1 350 per person sharing

**THE SEA CURES ALL AILMENTS**

If you've ever switched on a wind-down or meditation app, you will no doubt have

been met with the calm, meditative sound of the ocean. As with most things, there's no substitute for the real deal. Waking up to the sound of the ocean right outside your window, taking in the unique smells of the sea and feeling the sand beneath your feet on the beach is the perfect way to awaken all your senses and set up a healthy vacation. Paternoster is one of the oldest fishing villages on the West

Coast of South Africa. Stay at Country Routes's Gonana Guest House, Paternoster's first sustainable and environmentally conscious guest house — it is effectively off the grid and completely environmentally ethical. Experience the area in its fullness on a guided tour of shipwrecks, the local fishing community and indigenous plant life. Or explore the ocean and meet its inhabitants up close on a kayak.

## Kosi Bay

**WHAT?** Snorkelling, lakes and fishing

**WHERE?** Kosi Bay, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Kwa-Zulu Natal province

**HOW MUCH?** From R1 950 per person sharing at the Kosi Forest Lodge

**A LITTLE SLICE OF PARADISE**

Kosi Bay is an estuary system comprising four lakes linked by a network of channels. It is one of the jewels of the famous iSimangaliso Wetland Park. It's recognisable by the traditional woven fishnets used by the community to sustain themselves for over 700 years. The water is so blue here and there is barely another soul for kilometres. It is without a doubt a breathtaking, "wish you were here" destination.

Take a boat ride down the lake, then switch off the motor and listen to the peaceful soundtrack of nature. Kosi Bay is great for snorkelling, kayaking and all manner of water activities. Never been snorkelling before? Floating in busy water can be a stressful experience but these calm waters offer the perfect conditions. One of the best things about scuba diving and snorkelling is that they literally transport you to another world, where you get to explore and observe in absolute awe. Even the wildlife seem to recognise the area as one of reconnection, wonder and rebirth. Loggerhead and Leatherback turtles still lay their eggs along the iSimangaliso coastline. It is the only remaining major nesting site for these gentle creatures in Africa. Book a turtle tour and experience this special natural event firsthand. It's a memory you'll treasure forever.





**WAIT THERE'S MORE...**  
During flower season, colourful wild flowers carpet the park and the Postberg section is the best place to experience nature at its finest. You can hike through this piece of paradise on multi-day hikes, go game viewing or pop into the restaurant.

## West Coast National Park

**WHAT?** Lagoon, tranquillity and massages

**WHERE?** Kraalbaai Luxury House Boats on the Langebaan Lagoon, the focal point of the West Coast National Park, just 90 minutes outside of Cape Town's city centre

**HOW MUCH?** From R2 900 per day for a self-catering houseboat that sleeps six. Plus, entry into the national park which is R100 per adult per day for South African citizens, R150 for SADC nationals and R220 for international visitors during the annual flower season.

**LUXURY ON A BOAT**  
If travelling to places near large bodies of water inspires relaxation and rejuvenation, then certainly living on the water is an experience

you cannot forgo. Imagine spending the afternoon gently floating on a lilo, swimming in crystal clear, azure blue water before hopping onto the deck of your houseboat for a sunset massage while taking in the relaxing sounds of the lagoon.

Kraalbaai Beach is a more sheltered beach further up the lagoon, where the water is warmer and softer. The houseboats are permanently anchored and a ferry transports guests to and from shore, so no skipper's licence required and no chance of floating away. The tranquillity of the water draws you in from the moment you arrive. Besides a restful slumber surrounded by the lagoon, there's also kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding and fishing for you to enjoy. But trust us on the lilo!







## WIN A RESTORATIVE ESCAPE

Situated three hours out of Cape Town, the White Lion Lodge is what remote-mindful-getaway dreams are made of. The lodge is based in the southern part of the Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, which is known for its rich history, complex biodiversity and unique climate. This lodge boasts a 15-metre infinity swimming pool and when (or rather, if) you get tired of floating in the pool, the surrounding panoramic views over the riverbed from your mountaintop perch are nothing short of magical.

**Giveaway:** Win a two-night stay for two at The White Lion Lodge valued at R19 000.

*Ts and Cs apply. Non-transferable. Subject to lodge availability.*

*Enter here to stand a chance to win!*



## Mpumalanga

**WHAT?** Adventure and waterfalls

**WHERE?** Extreme Adventure Camp on the Panorama Route between Sabie and Hazyview on the R536 Sabie Road

**HOW MUCH?** R150 per person for a guided 12km hike with access to waterfalls. Tubing is R450 per person, for two and a half hours.

### **PUMP UP THE VOLUME**

Let's be honest, hiking can be a bit of a slog at times. Still, nothing beats the energising joy of coming across a waterfall on a long hike. First you hear small echoes in the distance. That's followed by the ever increasing rhythmic sound of running water (which could just as easily be a small stream). As you close the distance, the rocks and pathway dampen and the crashing sound

of moving water gets louder with each step. The brush clears and then bam, the beat drops. Towering cascades of water, hidden caves, flashes of rainbows as the light hits the spray and deep rock pools. It's magical, every single time.

There is so much benefit in experiencing water as calm, soothing and restorative. However, the hit of dopamine and adrenaline you get doing water adventure activities like geckoing, is nothing short of exhilarating. Whether you're a hardened thrill seeker or taking a leap of faith, the feeling of going over rapids while holding onto a tube for dear life and finally clambering out the other side, with a fist pump for making it through, is pretty awesome. Sometimes a challenge and more than a little faith in yourself are just what the doctor ordered.

## Jeffreys Bay

**WHAT?** Surfing

**WHERE?** Supertubes Guesthouse, part of Cape Country routes, on world-famous surfing beach, Jeffreys Bay, in the Eastern Cape is modern in style and only 30 metres from the beach.

**HOW MUCH?** From R950 per person sharing in a sea-facing room, including breakfast

### **CATCH A WAVE**

Ask any surfer and they will tell you, "surfing makes you happy." Of course it's full-body exercise, too — squats, lunges, push ups and core — they're all in there. But it's not just the endorphins from the workout that make it a good time. Studies show that surfing is also a meditative experience and increases feelings of calm and tranquility.

It draws your attention from future anxieties by requiring you to focus and stay in the moment. Also, beginner or pro, it's fun and who doesn't like to have fun?

Jeffreys Bay — or J-Bay to the locals — is home to a variety of famous surfing spots and is a popular surfing destination for surfers from all around the world. Even if you don't come for the surf, you can get your saltwater fix swimming or take a stroll on Dolphin Beach, one of the few Blue Flag beaches in the country. Other activities in the area for the whole family include whale watching, fishing, horse-riding, Big Five game viewing, excursions and shopping. With personalised service, friendly staff and being owner-managed, guests are guaranteed a delightful stay at Supertubes.