

Garden Route Tour by Bike



Highlights

Spend 10 days on a Garden Route Tour, cycling from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth. Take in the winelands, ostrich farms and the stunning coastline, and then take to a game reserve for some Big 5 spotting.

The Garden Route is so named for the short vegetation that grows along it. It's located in the eastern part of the Western Cape, which is almost literally the bottom of the continent. In such a relatively small stretch of land you'll see: mountains, beaches, rainforests and lush valleys. With a mild climate to boot, it has become a pretty popular destination, though most people opt for a Garden Route tour by car, rather than on two wheels. The area has inspired writers, photographers and adventurers for years and you'll be sure to add your name to that list by the end of the trip.

This tour packs in so many sights and different experiences, it's a perfect way to familiarise yourself with the country in a short amount of time. You'll get to know the people (past and present) by cycling through small frontier towns of the coast full of Dutch Cape architecture (striking white buildings with thatched roofs) and also by touring a township where South Africans are striving to make better lives for themselves. You'll meet the animals when you visit an African Penguin colony, a nature reserve and seek out the "Big Five" on a day safari. You'll traverse the land, exploring the stalactites and stalagmites of caves, sandstone rock formations - sculpted by the wind over millions of years - white sand beaches and even a rainforest.

Is it for me?

Though the riding is not too strenuous as the point of the tour is to take in the surroundings, you will have to be comfortable doing some physical activity. For those who are more fit, there are a few optional rides that are more intense if you feel the need for more of a workout. You will stay in nice accommodation but it won't be massively luxurious so if you want to get pampered this might not be the tour for you. Bear in mind that this is a group tour so you'll have to be comfortable with other people. But as long as you are up for some cycling and doing other day trips like hikes and exploring caves you'll have a blast.

Accommodation

Accommodation is included and you'll stay in a few lodges and a hotel in Cape Town, all three and four star. Most meals are included but there are a few dinners where you'll be responsible for finding a restaurant that's not included in the price. Make sure you sample some of the region's locally produced wine, accompanied with a steak cooked South African style, on a braai.

Itinerary

Day 1: Transfer to the Winchester Mansions Hotel (your overnight accommodation) to meet guides and other members of the group. There will be an orientation where you'll learn everything about the route as well as a talk on bike safety. You'll also be fitted for the bike you'll ride the duration of the trip. Then you'll ascend Table Mountain by cableway to watch the sunset. You're on your own for dinner that night but there are plenty of restaurants around the hotel. 10km with the option to do 14km extra

Day 2: After breakfast, transfer to Stellenbosch, the second-oldest town in South Africa. The ride starts at the Toy and Miniature Museum and continues through some traditional Cape Dutch architecture. The day winds up in Lanzerac where you'll enjoy a picnic lunch and sample some local wines. Later there will be a welcome reception

Prices from

2,226 GBP (10 days) per person

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and dinner in the home of a local chef; accommodation for day two is again the Winchester Mansions Hotel. 28km

Day 3: Day three starts with a transfer to Simonstown near False Bay. Then you'll spend the rest of the morning visiting a penguin colony and afterwards there is a ride in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. The afternoon holds a unique part of the tour - a bike ride through a South African Township. You'll visit a local healer, a school and get a unique insight into the culture of the country and the tough issues that people face every day. You'll also find out how important a bike can be to someone in the township. Again you'll be responsible for finding your own dinner but by now you'll be familiar with the area around the Winchester Mansions Hotel. 26km with an option of an extra 9km

Day 4: First up is a six hour transfer through Little Karoo and a visit to an ostrich farm. You'll arrive at your accommodations in De Rust and then go on an afternoon ride through the valley. Buffet dinner is included. 14km or 21km

Day 5: Ride through the Swartberg Mountains but don't worry, the track is mostly flat! You'll also see rock formations and explore the Cango Caves. Afterwards there's an optional donkey cart ride and then a traditional dinner at the guesthouse. 24 or 48km

Day 6: Cycle through diverse landscapes from farmlands to rainforests to the white beaches of the Indian Ocean. You'll enjoy a picnic lunch on the beach and dinner in your accommodation, Laird's Lodge, in Buffel's Bay. 26km with an option of 10km extra

Day 7: The routes of day seven are tranquil and wind through afro-montane forests with lunch in Tsitsikamma National Park, from which you can see the Indian Ocean. Choose to hike through the forest or just chill out on the beach afterwards. You'll be staying at Laird's Lounge again and will be able to choose an area restaurant for dinner. 30km or 45km

Day 8: This is actually a day without cycling. An optional hike after breakfast along the coastal path of Plettenberg Bay starts the day. Then you'll be transferred to the next accommodation in Sunlands where you'll have lunch and then enjoy a game drive in search of the "Big Five" - black rhino, African elephant, lion, Cape buffalo and leopard. Then relax with sunset drinks in the bush for a true African experience.

Day 9: The day starts with a morning ride along Addo Park and Zuurberg Mountains then lunch at a watering hole also used by elephants, lions and jackals. There will be a farewell dinner in the lodge at night. 26km

Day 10: Last ride in the morning in Sundays River Valley, then a quick breakfast and transfer to airport in Port Elizabeth (if you need a transfer back to Cape Town it can be arranged). 13km

Details

Getting there

You can easily find a flight to Cape Town, most major airlines fly there. The tour meeting point is the Winchester Mansions Hotel in Cape Town.

Price includes

Accommodation, food except three dinners, bicycle, helmet, fee for two guides, van support throughout route, all side activities (entrance fees, etc).

Price based on 2 people sharing. Single supplement is double the rate.

Available

Jan—Dec

Typical Duration

10 days

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed