



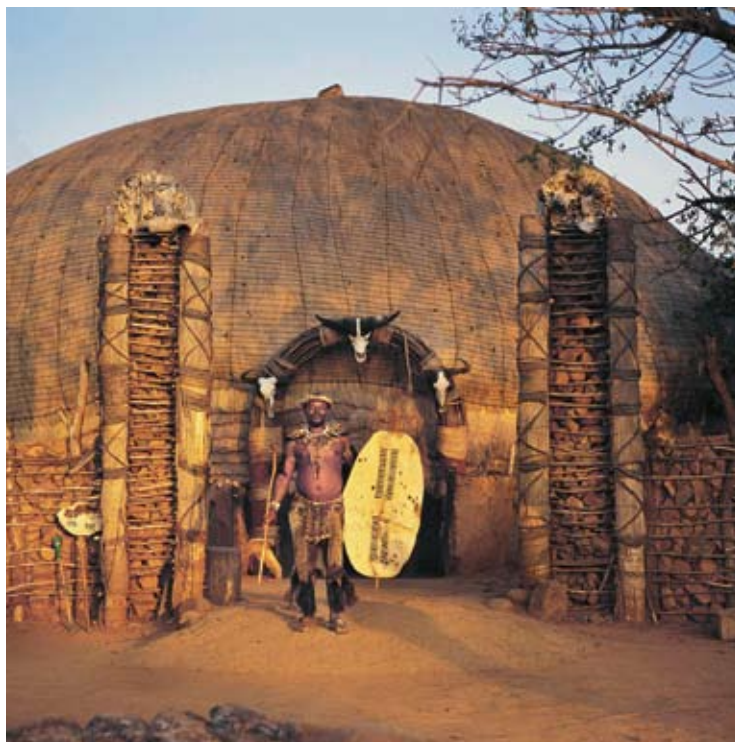
# A date with **Durban**

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**Durban, in South Africa, might feel like a home away from home, but that is what makes it special. Rest assured that the city has the perfect holiday for every age group.**

Go diving with sharks at uShaka Marine World.

**S**ix kilometres of golden sand, a steamy tropical climate and a merging of cultures that dishes up unique cuisine – Durban has all of the ingredients for a great vacation, but despite sitting in the heart of one of South Africa’s most vibrant provinces, the city itself often gets overlooked in favour of other cities. KwaZulu Natal’s array of game parks, hiking spots, beaches and historical sites offer an understandable draw for families, but don’t bypass Durban. South Africa’s third largest city is as family-friendly as smaller surrounding towns and guarantees something for each member of your brood.



Top: Dolphins show off their skills at the uShaka Sea World.  
Above: A typical Zulu village at PheZulu Safari Park.

### FOR MUMS AND DADS

The Victoria Street Market might not be at the top of the kids' holiday agenda, but there are enough new smells, bright sights and bowls of mystery food to keep most youngsters occupied while parents shop for spices in this Indian-influenced covered market. Kids can challenge their parents to sample the 'Atom Bomb' or 'Wild Fire' chillies and parents might like to buy some 'Mother-in-Law Exterminator' curry powder as a special souvenir for

Based in an old train station, the Stoker's Arms serves hearty pub food in its quaint countryside location away from the fast pace of central Durban.

family members back home. Also, sample Durban's famous Bunny Chow: half a hollowed-out loaf of bread filled with spicy curry—deliciously messy fun. Further north in Umhlanga, spend a morning at the Natal Sharks Board. The shark dissection might be too gruesome for little ones, but there's lots of info on great white sharks, some scary facts about shark attacks and an exhibition on the measures taken to keep sharks far from Durban's shores – the goal being to 'de-demonise' sharks. Daily boat trips take interested parties out to view the shark nets and there's a good chance of seeing dolphins en route.

### FOR TEENS

The Gateway Mall north of Durban in Umhlanga is paradise for teenagers, shopaholics and anyone keen to escape Durban's year-round sun for a few hours. Teens will no doubt be keen to shake off their parents for a while to enjoy the movie theatres, mammoth amusement arcades, climbing wall, simulator rides and the Wavehouse, where you can practise your surfing skills away from the sharks and riptides. Almost 400 stores offer respite from the summer rains, and dozens of restaurants and fast-food joints cater to every taste. If you're looking for a family pursuit, choose from bowling, mini golf, go-karting and bumper cars.

### FOR THE LITTLE ONES

Durban's top attraction might draw young children in first, but it's a picky traveller who can't find something to enjoy at uShaka Marine World. Named for the one-time fearsome Zulu king, the park actually has nothing to do with tribal culture and everything to do with fun in the sun. You'll need at least a day to check out the waterslides and the huge aquarium, where you can join one of their 'up-close' experiences – shark-cage diving, snorkelling or 'ocean walking'. There's also a family-friendly beach offering beach sports, kayaking, surfing and boat trips.

### GRAB SOME LUNCH

It's not a cheap eating option, but the views here are worth shelling out for. Based in uShaka Marine World's Phantom Ship, the Cargo Hold is undoubtedly Durban's most unique restaurant. One wall looks into the giant aquarium, allowing you to watch circling sharks while you wait for your appetisers. In fact the inside views are so captivating that diners tend to ignore the sweeping

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ocean vistas also on offer. Reservations are essential and children under 12 years of age are only allowed at lunch sittings. In the evening the Cargo Hold becomes a child-free upscale dining experience with a strict dress code.

### A FAMILY PHOTO

If there's one photo every traveller to Durban should take home with them, it's one with the elaborately dressed rickshaw drivers plying the promenade of Durban's Golden Mile. With beaded headdresses that make Rio's carnival queens look sombre and brightly painted rickshaws to match, the rickshaw pullers epitomise Durban's Zulu-meets-Asia identity. Enjoy a gentle trip along the beachfront or simply pose for snaps with the cheerful chaps who pull the rickshaws, but make sure you agree on a price first!

### SOMETHING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Animals are always high on the priority list for visitors to South Africa and while Durban is an epic

**Below:** The Cargo Hold, the most fascinating restaurant in the city with a view of the sharks floating in the aquarium.

**Bottom:** Durban's long sandy beach is a perfect spot to spend your evenings.



drive from the major reserves, there are wildlife-watching opportunities not far from the city limits. PheZulu Safari Park is a very affordable option half-an-hour from the city, with drives offering sightings of antelopes, zebras and giraffes. Those seeking something a little scarier can join the hands-on snake experience with a three-metre long python. If you're seeking an encounter with large game, head to the nearby Shongweni Game Reserve, where three-hour drives bring you face to face with two of the Big Five – rhino and buffalo. Unlike many larger reserves, rates are extremely reasonable.

for accommodation that might keep the kids entertained for a while, head 30 minutes south to Illovo. Villa Spa offers quiet, self-catering log chalets nestled in gardens just five minutes from the beach. There's a kids' playground, games room and a large swimming pool to keep the kids happy plus a Jacuzzi, sauna and rustic pub to make sure mum and dad don't get left out.

*Photos courtesy: South African Tourism*



Above: The Umgeni Steam Railway, A throwback to the colonial times.

Right: The Valley of 1000 Hills is the Bible belt of South Africa and many tourists come here for the Sunday Service.

### A FAMILY DINNER

West of Durban lies a pub that seems to have been designed with families in mind. Based in an old train station, the Stoker's Arms serves hearty pub food in its quaint countryside location away from the fast pace of central Durban. Parents can enjoy a pint of locally-produced beer while kids play in the old train carriages and clamber around the children's playground. The pub is also the launch point for the Umgeni Steam Railway, which chugs along taking in vistas of the Valley of 1,000 Hills on the last Sunday of each month.

### SLEEPOVER

Plenty of the city's B&Bs cater to families and welcome children of all ages, but if you're looking



### QUICK FACTS

#### GETTING THERE

Jet Airways operates daily flights to Johannesburg from Mumbai. Durban is two hours away and several flights ply between the two cities.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Log on to [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)