

## **Aug 4 – Depart USA- Fly to Port Elizabeth (airport code PLZ)**

All flights to South Africa from the U.S. are overnight. Please book your flight so that you will arrive in Port Elizabeth on August 5 for the beginning of our Land portion of the Trip. Some may want to fly in a few days early to explore this beautiful region.

## **August 5 - Welcome to the Eastern Cape of South Africa!**

Arrive in Port Elizabeth, also known as the Friendly City, just a 1h 45 minute flight from Johannesburg. Port Elizabeth is the gateway to the beautiful Garden Route of South Africa, known for its incredible wildlife, indigenous forests, lakes, rivers, and beaches.

Upon arrival, we'll head directly to The Hotel Paxton, which is conveniently situated close to the airport, restaurants, Boardwalk Casino and Entertainment Complex and many prime beaches. For those arriving earlier, Port Elizabeth has a few incredible activities that can be pre-booked. They include a Giraffe Tracking safari on a 2500-hectare private game reserve, a Cape Buffalo encounter for a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the management of these iconic animals, or a Marine Eco Safari to the Cape Recife reserve for an array of possible sightings of whales and bottlenose dolphin as well as some extraordinary birding.

This evening, we will meet up for a briefing about our upcoming adventure and a chance to get to know your fellow travelers. Your time is your own to enjoy any of the nearby restaurants, explore or rest.

Overnight: [Kelway Hotel](#) (1 night) The Hotel is conveniently situated close to the airport and restaurants; it blends comfort and luxury with stunning views of the Indian Ocean. It's an ideal hotel to begin your tour.

## **August 6 - Gorah Elephant Camp, Addo Elephant National Park                      BLD**

Today, we have a short drive to the **Addo Elephant National Park**, South Africa's third largest national park, known for its large herds of elephants. This finely-tuned ecosystem provides a sanctuary to incredible numbers of elephant, lion, buffalo, black rhino, spotted hyena, leopard, antelope, zebra and over 400 bird species. This unique park is the world's only park with the '**Big 7**' - the **Big 5** plus the southern right whale and great white shark off the coast of the Algoa Bay.

Our home is the **Gorah Elephant Camp** situated in a private concession in the heart of Addo. This unfenced tented safari camp offers one a glimpse into a bygone era of authentic safari of centuries past - the awesome natural world of Africa merged with colonial nostalgia and modern sophistication to deliver an unforgettably unique 5-star adventure.

The incomparable thrill of quietly observing a passing herd of elephant while being served tea on the verandah of a stately Colonial manor house is the stuff of dreams and legends. At Gorah it's an everyday occurrence.

We'll arrive in time for lunch and have time to relax or lounge by the pool before High Tea at 3:30pm. When the sun sets, the predators are actively searching for their prey. **Evening game drives** are always special. We head in our safari vehicles for an afternoon game drive in search of wildlife, returning around 8 pm for dinner. Dinners at Gorah are a complete treat, where candle-lit corners with warm fires and paraffin lanterns create an atmosphere of romance throughout the entire house. Estate wines carefully chosen to elevate the meal, and a good selection of international beverages enhance the dining experience. Of course, there will also be decadent desserts!

Overnight: [Gorah Elephant Camp](#) (3 Nights)

Our Luxury Tents are spacious tents that recall the golden era of safari in the early 1900s. Each tent has an en-suite bathroom with shower, an interior relaxation area and a private deck offering panoramic views across the savannah plains. Hairdryer, personal in-room safe, bathrobes, slippers, bespoke body products, umbrellas, complimentary sherry in the room. The plush interior of the tent is enhanced through the simplicity and authenticity of solar power lighting and ceiling fans. The en suite bathroom with bespoke vanities and shower is discreetly situated to allow for complete privacy. To complete the experience, the tented suite invites you to completely relax and unwind with a book on the comfy couch or take an afternoon nap on the king-size bed, with 300-count cotton sheets enveloping you and sending you to dreamland.

### **August 7 –Safari Time in Addo National Park, Gorah Elephant Camp**

**BLD**

Today is all about the game! A typical day on safari at Gorah is relaxed with no rushing. We'll awake by 7:30 and head out on a morning game drive after breakfast. Our passionate and professional guides will intrepidly search the vast terrain for animals in their natural habitat. We'll spend our day in the company of large herds of elephants, experiencing the grace with which they move and witnessing the social family interactions between the herds.

Return for lunch on the verandah of the Manor House as we dine while watching the game come to drink at the waterhole. High tea is again a must-experience before we head out again on an afternoon drive.

Tonight, experience an exquisite dinner like no other under the stars in the outdoor **Boma**, listening to the sounds of the night.

Overnight: Gorah Elephant Camp

### **August 8 – Bushwalking, Meerkats, Game Drives**

**BLD**

Today, we have the opportunity to walk in the wild! We can walk out into the bush with our experienced rangers ( 6 guests at a time with 2 rangers), following the ancient paths trodden over time. This offers an incredible experience to understand better the fauna and flora of the ecosystem and learn about small creatures, including the “small 5” – the leopard tortoise, elephant shrew, buffalo weaver, ant lion and rhino beetle. This is not a strenuous walk but gives you the opportunity to breathe in the bush air, listen to the sounds of nature and awaken your senses. (Despite the low level of walking, there is a policy that those over 65 years old require a letter of medical fitness. Walks are totally weather-dependent and last for two hours. We can arrange several walks throughout the day.)

Today we also have the chance to get up close and personal with the delightful meerkats. **The Meerkat Experience** is only 6 guests per trip, and this can be done on the morning game drive. Potentially here are 2 den sites that could be used but this is not guaranteed on the sightings as the meerkats do move if there has been rain. Chances are great as we are visiting in the dry season.

After a wonderful Gorah lunch you can choose to sit on the verandah and let the game come to you, then go out with your rangers on another **game drive** experience or relax by the pool.

The lodge is exclusively ours so the lodge management will ensure that everyone gets split to enable them to do whichever activities they prefer. Overnight: Gorah Elephant Camp

## **August 9 - Monkeys, Big Cats and Treehouses- Tsala Treetop Lodge, Plettenberg Bay**

After breakfast today, we make our way to the seaside town of Plettenberg Bay, called the ‘Beautiful Bay’ by the Portuguese explorers, and it’s easy to see why. Along the famous Garden Route, this 4-hour drive will take you through the beautiful Tsitsikamma region with huge Indigenous forests and rivers. We will visit Monkeyland and Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary, places known for making happy endings to sad stories involving some of Africa’s most fascinating creatures.

**Monkeyland** is the world’s first, multi-species free-roaming primate sanctuary hosting over 550 primates of 10 different species, even lemurs. We’ll go on a 1-hour guided tour into the 12-hectare forest with one of South Africa’s most professionally trained Monkey Safari Guides. The guides will endeavor to find as many of the different species and give us ample time to take photos and ask questions. Our past groups agree it is a delightful place to visit.

At [Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary](#), we enjoy a 90min walking tour to see and photograph lions, leopards, tigers, jaguars and other big cats, as well as springboks, zebras and a host of other animals from raised platforms located around the sanctuary. Follow the hyperlink above to read all about the wonderful work they do.

We’ll arrive in charming Plettenberg Bay in the late afternoon. Playground to the wealthy, beach mansions overlook the Indian Ocean, often dotted with luxury yachts, while leisure time is given over to polo and golf, among other things.

Our home for the next four nights is the amazing **Tsala Treetop Suites**. Like all guests here, you'll get the VIP treatment and feel you have arrived in paradise. Set amidst the treetops of an age-old indigenous forest, Tsala is a lavish celebration of the spirit of Africa. Tucked into the forest canopy, the hide-away suites each with private pool are the epitome of romanticism. Constructed of stone, wood and glass these ultimate of abodes, comprise a sumptuous bedroom, an elegant sitting room with fireplace and a spacious bathroom

Overnight: [Tsala Treetop Lodge](#) (3 nights) Emulating the monumental ruins of an ancient central African civilization, the impressive stone-masonry entrance flanked by water features leads into a magnificent foyer supported by polished Blackwood columns. The afro-baroque décor with its earthy colors, rich textures and handcrafted fittings draws inspiration from the diverse cultures of Africa, yet remains integrated with the sophistication of the Western world. Whether from the exotically appointed dining room, the intimate glassed-in lounge, or the large open decks high above the forest floor, the views are all breathtakingly beautiful, encompassing lush forests extending across rolling valleys towards distant hills. Tucked into the forest canopy, the hide-away suites, each with a pool, are the epitome of luxury. Constructed of stone, wood and glass this ultimate abode comprises a sumptuous bedroom, an elegant sitting room with fireplace and a spacious bathroom.

## **August 10 - Marine Big 5 Safari**

We head out to sea in search of the Marine Big 5, (whale, shark, dolphin, seal and penguin), embarking on a thrilling 2-hour nautical journey that commences and concludes with an exhilarating beach launch into the waves! The specially crafted cat-style boat boasts an ocean-conquering design that prioritizes both safety and comfort. They are able to approach whales as close as 50 meters once spotted. Anticipate encounters with an array of marine life, from seals and pelagic birds to majestic sharks, substantial fish, penguins, and even octopuses, all thriving in their natural habitats.

We’ll return at midday and the afternoon is free. There are many beachside restaurants where you can go for lunch. Walk on the beach or explore the beautiful Robberg Peninsula. For those looking for adventures, Plettenberg Bay offers ziplining, skydiving, bungee jumping or kayaking.

Our excursion returns via the **Garden of Eden Forest Walk**, which offers the opportunity to follow a long wooden boardwalk through the incredible Indigenous forest, giving you an opportunity to soak the forest in. Experience giant moss and lichen-covered trees, dappled sunlight, moss, and streams.

Dinner is also on your own, but there are two options for dinner, either at Zinzi Restaurant, Tsala's fine dining option and in the top 100 restaurants in South Africa or at Hunters Country House, offering elegant a la carte dining inspired by South African flavors.

Overnight: Tsala Treetop Lodge

## **August 11 - Free at Last. Fun along the Garden Route**

**B**

There is so much to see or do. Make the most of your final day in this amazing region! Today, you have the whole day to explore the area. Tsala Lodge and Nicki can arrange activities there. AFS's favorites here include:

Optional activity - A day of scenic beauty at **Featherbed Nature Reserve** in Knysna to explore the beautiful town of Knysna and its lagoon in the Western Head of Knysna. This is the premier number one Eco-adventure in this region. It includes a short boat trip across the lagoon to the Featherbed Nature Reserve, where you will be taken up by tractor and trailer to the top of the hills and then do a slow 2.2km meander down through the beautiful reserve to have lunch at the world-renowned outdoor restaurant on the edge of the lagoon situated under the canopy of Milkwood trees. This is a 4-hour excursion that includes lunch, and we suggest you spend some time in Knysna shopping afterward before heading back to the lodge. 10am-2pm

Other activities loved by visitors include a Treetops Canopy Tour for an unforgettable adventure as you zipline from one platform to the next along a series of steel cables set amongst magnificent natural surroundings. The scenery high up within the forest canopy is spectacular. Enjoy the view from above while taking in waterfalls and spotting birdlife amongst the surrounding trees. Spend a morning kayaking down the beautiful Keurbooms River.

Swim with the Seals, getting up close and personal with African fur seals. The adventure takes you out to sea where you have the chance to snorkel with the seals.

Plettenberg Bay wine tasting tour, combining the best wine estates and vineyards in the Craggs with a special visit to the Mill at the Old Cape Mohair Factory. And for the adrenalin junkies – you can try bungee jumping from the highest bungee in the world at 218m or skydiving over Plettenberg Bay.

Overnight: Tsala Treetop Lodge

## **August 12 - Departure**

**B**

After breakfast, we do a 1 ½ hour transfer to the town of **George** through the towns of Knysna, Sedgefield and Wilderness. This beautiful drive fully encapsulates the beauty of the Garden Route, passing lagoons, lakes, beaches, and forests before arriving in George, the exit town of the Garden Route.

(From George (airport code GRJ) it is a 2-hour flight back to Johannesburg or for those that want to extend your adventures, it is a 1 hour flight to Cape Town or a 4 hour road trip.)