

Shout of Africa

Jump-start your sales by going beyond the safari parks, writes Emily Bamber

They've been on safari, ticked off the big five and seen more impala than they can shake a stick at. So what's next?

Of course, Africa is best-known for its world-class wildlife viewing, but did you know there's a wide range of holidays on the continent that don't involve donning khaki shorts?

Dazzling cities and rolling winelands, historic sites and hundreds of miles of virgin beaches reveal a different side to Africa that will keep your clients coming back for more. And if khaki is their colour, they can always tag a safari on to the start or end of one of these holidays.

► CULTURE

Every Africa itinerary should include time for a humble appreciation of the

hosts' cultural heritage. And none is more fascinating than that of the Maasai people, who continue a semi-nomadic lifestyle in the Masai Mara in southern Kenya.

Life revolves around their livestock, and simple settlements are literally packed up and moved when grass and waters run out. These are a warrior people and the rural Maasai continue to wear traditional clothing – think skins, spears and beaded jewellery. It's possible for visitors to spend time in the villages and learn about the Maasai way of life, visit schools and walk with the herds on their way out to pasture in the mornings.

Many lodges are part-run with the community, and at properties such as the Porini Amboseli Camp, guests are looked after by Maasai warriors and elders, and a stay here channels money directly to these families. At Leleshwa in the Greater Mara you can suggest a Maasai blessing ceremony for honeymoon couples.

Operators such as Audley

Travel also offer experiences with the Samburu, also in Kenya, the Himba people of Namibia, the Kunda in Zambia, the San Bushmen in Botswana, and the Xhosa and Zulu in South Africa.

► BEACHES

Flanked by the Indian Ocean in the east and the Atlantic in the west, Africa has thousands of miles of coast, much of it fringed by white-sand beaches where resorts offer chilled-out, barefoot paradise and diving in calm waters.

Regional air connections make it possible to combine the wildlife parks of South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Namibia or Botswana with the beaches →

PICTURES: KENYA TOURISM BOARD; SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM



LEFT:
Kenyan coast

RIGHT:
Seidelberg Wine Estate, South Africa

BELOW:
Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa



➔ of Mozambique or Zanzibar.

If customers would rather stay in one country, then Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa have abundant beaches as well as wildlife parks. Malawi is also emerging as an alternative with its big-five reserves and Great Rift Valley Lake, where clients can dive among an incredible array of neon-coloured fish.

The paradise islands of Zanzibar off the coast of Tanzania are often sold as a standalone beach holiday. Their stunning beaches are edged by coral reef and offer all the ingredients for a sunshine holiday with a spattering of culture – the capital Stone Town is the only



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functioning ancient city in East Africa and was once a centre for the spice, slave and ivory trades.

To the west, The Gambia has the winning combination of beachfront resorts, great climate and relatively short flight times from the UK.

▶ **WINE TOURS**

Leaving the suburbs of Cape Town and driving northeast towards the mountains, the view from the window quickly changes. As soon as visitors turn off the highway, they’ll find themselves meandering through lush green valleys striped with vines.

This is the heartland of the South African wine industry, which produces more than one billion litres of wine a year from tens of thousands of hectares of vineyards. Known as the boland, or highland, the region has hundreds of wineries in picturesque rolling landscapes studded with elegant Dutch colonial farmsteads, many of

which welcome visitors for tours and tastings. White grape varieties dominate, with chenin blanc top of the list, but reds, particularly cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and merlot, have been heavily planted in recent years.

A few days exploring the winelands is a must for visitors to the Western Cape and easily tags on to a Cape Town holiday or a self-drive along the Garden Route. Stellenbosch and Franschhoek are colonial towns at the heart of the region and the starting point for the Wine Route. Clients can self-drive if they’re prepared to be abstemious, join a group tour or stay a few nights in or around either town. ➔



PICTURE: TOURISM KWAZULU-NATAL/LEWIS FREETH

HISTORY

The blood of British, Zulu and Boer warriors once drenched the plains of KwaZulu-Natal, a beautiful region in the foothills of South Africa's Drakensburg Mountains. Local guides lead animated tours of the key sites, which include Isandlwana, Rorke's Drift and Fugitive's Drift from the Zulu War, and Spion Kop from the Boer War, giving visitors an insight into the battles and the eventual fate of colonialism.

History goes back much further in these mountains as the whole area is peppered with San rock art, some of it 3,000 years old. The most spectacular and concentrated collections are found in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park.

KwaZulu-Natal is particularly photogenic and best enjoyed at a leisurely pace. The roads are well maintained and clearly signposted, and many British holidaymakers fly to Johannesburg or Durban and self-drive. Several operators offer itineraries that include a safari and a few days at Isimangaliso Wetland Park, an important coastal sanctuary.

If your history-loving clients are passing through Johannesburg then suggest they visit the Apartheid Museum – a truly perception-altering journey through South Africa's recent

past. And, of course, no trip to Cape Town is complete without visiting Robben Island, where the late Nelson Mandela was famously imprisoned.

SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

There's no way to have a quiet day at Victoria Falls, where the Zambezi River plunges 344 feet over the rocks below creating a deafening roar, a 100ft plume of spray and incredible conditions for watersports. These include white-water rafting in an area classified 'extremely difficult', with long and violent rapids and huge drops. If that's not hardcore enough, how about abseiling from the rock face, gorge swinging, microlighting or even bungee-jumping from Victoria Falls Bridge?

Don't write off the area if your clients are older or less fit. There are helicopter rides, pleasure boat tours and plenty of places just to stand and admire this Wonder of the World – just warn them to pack waterproofs, as the spray is intense and sightseers get soaked. With airports on both sides of the falls, it's easy to build a few nights here into a wider Africa itinerary.

Elsewhere on the continent, thrill-seekers can try gorilla trekking through Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania



LEFT: Victoria Falls

or hiking around the Ngorongoro Crater.

And for desert adventure, nowhere beats Namibia, where the apricot-coloured dunes around Sossusvlei reach almost 1,000ft. Suggest 4x4 rides, sandboarding, dune-bashing, quadbiking or simply photographing this extraordinary landscape. **TW**



Expert Africa has an eight-night Safari and Sands holiday, with three nights in Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania followed by a five-night beach holiday in Zanzibar. From £2,488 including accommodation, flights and transfers. expertafrica.com

Somak Holidays has a nine-night Best of KwaZulu-Natal self-drive holiday, with three days spent touring the battlefields. From £1,653 including accommodation, flights and transfers. somak.com



LEFT: Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania
BELOW: Sossusvlei, Namibia

