

# WILD COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA

A UNIQUE ESCORTED TOUR TO EXPERIENCE  
THE WILDLIFE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S WILD COAST  
INCLUDING THE SARDINE RUN

26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE TO 7<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2027



NOBLE CALEDONIA





Mkambati Nature Reserve, the Wild Coast

We are delighted to offer this new and exclusive exploration of the Wild Coast of South Africa, one of the country's most unspoilt and dramatic stretches of shoreline. Running along the Eastern Cape, it is a place of rugged cliffs, rolling green hills, hidden waterfalls, and remote beaches and the coastline is dotted with traditional Xhosa villages, offering glimpses into a slower, rural way of life. It is also an area rich in biodiversity: subtropical forests, estuaries, and marine life thrive here, making it a haven for birders, hikers, and nature lovers. The Wild Coast refers as much to the wild seas as to the land, with many famous shipwrecks and incredible tales of survival over the centuries it has a storied maritime past and during this unique tour we hope to be able to explore these waters, teaming with marine life.

The Sardine Run is one of the world's greatest marine spectacles, often called the "the greatest shoal on earth". Each winter (May–July), millions of sardines migrate up South Africa's east coast from the Agulhas Bank towards KwaZulu-Natal, forming massive, shimmering shoals. Thousands of predators - dolphins, sharks, whales, gannets, and seals -converge, driving the sardines into "bait balls" that can be seen from the sea and even the air. The timing and the visibility of the water vary, but the consistent presence of dolphins, whales and gannets in great numbers is the real highlight. On the days when the ocean swells allow, we will be able to experience an exhilarating boat launch through the surf zone, spending several hours out at sea in pursuit of this marine phenomenon, whilst also exploring this stunning coastline.

It would be remiss not to combine this wild coastal experience with a bush break and once again KwaZulu-Natal offers a uniquely lush and diverse wilderness. With seven distinct ecosystems - from rare sand forest and open woodland to grassland, wetland, and riverine thicket - this mosaic of habitats supports not only the Big Five, but also species less commonly seen elsewhere, such as cheetah, black rhino, and the shy nyala antelope. The subtropical climate and coastal influence bring a green richness to the landscape, contrasting sharply with the golden plains of East Africa or northern South Africa.

This tour is exclusively designed for just 16 participants who seek to explore the lesser-known treasures of this coastline, with a sense of adventure and a good level of fitness to take advantage of the marine opportunities. For those who join the boat launches and hikes, a high level of fitness is required due to the rugged nature of this coast and the energetic boating involved.

## Your Tour Leader



Pam is a South African marine scientist, PADI dive instructor, skipper and sailor, and has worked in and on the ocean just about every day for the past 25 years. After leaving school she worked in the diving industry whilst studying a BSc and went on to establish her own whale watching business. She has participated in several marine research cruises, has published four smartphone apps on sharks and rays, whales and dolphins, Antarctic Wildlife, and reef fish, and enjoys teaching people about the oceans and conservation through her travels. Pam started expedition cruising with Noble Caledonia in 2008 and has been almost everywhere a small cruise ship can take you, having led 150 expeditions from the poles to the remote reaches of every ocean. She has been involved in the Sardine Run since 2000 and is thrilled to be introducing Noble Caledonia guests to this exhilarating experience. On this tour Pam's partner, Dr Ryan Daly, will be the skipper and fellow guide for the Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge portion. Ryan is a marine scientist based in Durban, specialising in sharks, giant trevallies and the sardine run. His involvement and experience with the sardine run makes him one of the leading experts on this natural phenomenon.





## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Durban, South Africa.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight to Durban.

**Day 2 Durban.** Arrive into Durban, the coastal capital of KwaZulu-Natal Province. Transfer to the beachfront Oyster Box Hotel for our overnight stay. The rest of the day is at leisure before we meet this evening for dinner. (D)

**Day 3 Durban to Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge.** This morning, fly by small plane to Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge on the Wild Coast, where we have exclusive use of the property for our five night stay. After an hour's flight we will land and transfer to the lodge. Take some time to settle in before enjoying an afternoon activity. (B, L, D)

**Days 4 to 7 Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge.** During our stay, the daily programme will depend on the weather and wildlife associated with the Sardine Run. Each winter, millions of sardines move northwards along this coast and are pursued by tens of thousands of predators from birds to dolphins, fish, whales and sharks. Our expert skippers will monitor the weather and the sea conditions and when favourable, we will head out to look for the wildlife action following the Sardine Run. Our visit has been timed for the whale season with a high chance of seeing humpback whales from the shore and by boat. When not out at sea, a host of activities will be on offer. The Lodge is located in Mkambati Nature Reserve, an unspoiled and diverse ecosystem ranging from coastal forest and grassland to mangroves and there is a diverse range of flora and fauna. Zebra, eland, red hartebeest and kudu are just some of the animals that dot the plains. The reserve is also home to one of the last colonies of Cape vultures. The surrounding beaches are filled with tidal pools for spotting fascinating sea creatures and the waterfalls are dramatic. Guests can experience scenic game drives taking in both wildlife and ocean views, guided nature walks along the many trails, and bird watching. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge to Phinda Private Game Reserve.** After an early breakfast, we will leave the coast behind and fly back to Durban. From there, we begin the four hour drive north to Phinda Private Game Reserve, one of South Africa's oldest private reserves. Covering 74,000 acres, Phinda is a protected wilderness of undulating mountains, rivers, woodlands and vleis. We will arrive at Phinda Forest Lodge in the early evening, located in the rare and endangered Sand Forest. After checking in there will be time to enjoy a sundowner before dinner. (B, L, D)

**Days 9 & 10 Phinda Private Game Reserve.** Over the next two days we will experience all that Phinda has to offer, including twice daily game drives where we hope to spot the big five as well as other incredible

wildlife in this stunning landscape. There will be opportunities for guided nature walks with experienced lodge guides, taking in your surroundings at a slower pace and experiencing the stillness of the forests. There will also be plenty of time to relax at the lodge. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Phinda Private Game Reserve to Durban to London.** We will depart Phinda after breakfast and transfer back to Durban Airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London. (B, L)

**Day 12 London.** Arrive this morning.

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin	£13795
Single	£16995

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Overnight accommodation at the Oyster Box Hotel • Five nights accommodation at the Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge • Three nights accommodation at Phinda Forest Lodge • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included lunches and dinners • Tours and activities as described • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

**Group Size:** We are restricting the group size to no more than 16 participants.

### TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

This tour very much requires a sense of adventure and flexibility. Elements of this tour are very reliant on weather and sea conditions, as well as wildlife on the move. There is no guarantee that we will be able to launch boats during our stay at Gwe Gwe for the Sardine Run if the weather is unfavourable. However, our skippers are highly experienced, and this is why we remain at Gwe Gwe for several days — to maximise our chances of experiencing this natural phenomenon.

The boats that will be used for the Sardine Run take a maximum of eight people and have no toilets on board. Embarkation and disembarkation are wet, directly from the beach. Guests will need to wade into the water and the boats launch through the surf to reach the open sea. Given this, and the remoteness of both lodges, guests must have a good level of fitness and mobility to be able to take part in the activities and enjoy the surroundings.

We plan to fly by small seater plane (3-8 seaters) to the Gwe Gwe Lodge, however, should the weather make this impossible, we may transfer by road, a journey of approximately 6-7 hours each way. At Phinda, the Forest Lodge suites are built on stilts and accessed via 7-10 steps. For the flights to/from Gwe Gwe, passengers are limited to 15 kg of luggage in soft-sided bags. Any extra luggage will be stored in Durban.

# YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For the duration of our tour we will be staying in handpicked accommodation, each carefully chosen for offering luxurious comfort, maximum immersion in nature and their sustainability credentials.



Ocean Terrace & pool area



Classic Room



The Palm Court

## The Oyster Box Hotel, Durban

Located on the Umhlanga beachfront, the Oyster Box Hotel is one of South Africa's most celebrated hotels. Built in 1947, it is set in lush gardens overlooking the Indian Ocean and offers two pools, a spa and a gym. Guests can enjoy two restaurants and the Palm Court that offers high tea, as well as three bars. The hotel is a mix of antiques and contemporary South African art and the attention to details extends to the rooms. The rooms are all decorated to reflect Durban's Indian, Zulu and colonial heritage. The classic sea facing rooms all offer the normal amenities including tea and coffee making facilities, air-conditioning, and luxurious bathrobes and slippers.



Gwe Gwe Lodge Exterior



Suite



Pool area with stunning views

## Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge

Gwe Gwe Beach Lodge is located on a 5,000 hectare private concession within Mkambati Nature Reserve. This prime location on the South African Coast offers extraordinary scenery and wildlife. The lodge features nine suites which we will have exclusive use of for our stay. Each suite has a private five metre pool and secluded patio garden, en-suite facilities including indoor and outdoor shower, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer and charging facilities, and lounge area. The lodge has a central lounge area with both indoor and outdoor dining facilities, wine cellar, campfire and bar. There is also a gym and spa including hot tubs. The lodge is very isolated and while it does have all the modern comforts such as Wi-Fi in the main lodge, given its location these can sometimes be temperamental.

## Phinda Forest Lodge

Set in the heart of one of Africa's oldest and most unique private game reserves, Phinda Forest Lodge located in the rare sand forest offers a wonderfully unique stay in South Africa. The Zulu-zen inspired lodge embodies a commitment to being an ecofriendly lodge that is harmonious with its environment. Along with a central lounge area and bar, the lodge has a pool overlooking the nearby wetland system and a small wellness spa and gym. The lodge has 16 air-conditioned suites which offer floor to ceiling glass walls that invite the forest inside, while the dense tree canopy shelters. The suites themselves float on stilts above the forest floor and offer private verandas. The suites all offer a fully stocked personal mini bar as well as a tea and coffee station. There is Wi-Fi throughout the lodge and complimentary laundry is available.



Suite Exterior



Boma Dinner



Pool



Bar



Suite Interior

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
Cover image: The Sardine Run.