

It's that time of the year where thousands of holiday-makers will begin their annual pilgrimage to South Africa's coastal regions with its countless holiday spots nestling in these serene and pristine areas. Nice-sounding names such as Sugar Coast, Golden Mile, Palm Beach, Wild Coast, Banana Beach, Garden Route, Blaauwberg Coast, Witsandbaai, Hibiscus Coast, Dolphin Coast, Sunshine Coast or Shelly Beach give a foretaste of the scenic views this countryside is offering to its visitors.

South Africa's coastline covers more than 3 000 km, in between the remarkable Cape Point, part of the Cape Peninsula National Park, where the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean meet. The coastline, with its magnificent mountains against the backdrop, the Tsitsikamma Coastal Forest National Park, its estuaries overgrown with mysterious mangrove swamps, which are home to a unique animal and plant world, and its golden beaches, is a paradise for tourists, hikers and nature lovers. Both ultra-modern cities and historic towns, heritage sites, superb accommodation, excellent seafood restaurants, but also picnic spots placed at dreamlike unspoiled beaches, vibrant shopping malls selling traditional handicraft and other beautiful collectibles, as well as numerous sports possibilities make South Africa's coastline a favoured destination for South Africans and foreigners from all over the world.

On 18 October 2002 eight beaches along the South African coast were awarded the internationally renowned Blue Flag for excellent beach management. The beaches accredited are Humewood Beach, Margate Main Beach, South Beach, Willard Beach, Ramsgate Beach, Marina Beach, Lookout Beach and Grotto Beach. Blue Flag is a well-known environmental and tourism campaign in Europe, currently active in 23 countries, which provides the proof that the awarded beaches adhere to international safety, cleanliness and other high-level tourist standards. Due to its excellent environmental status, South Africa is still

the only country outside Europe to be granted the right to implement the campaign.

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