

## Discover Durban, the tropical jewel of KZN!

Written by {ga=staceyv}

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While Cape Town and Johannesburg are the South African cities most well-known to international visitors, the sunshine-drenched port of Durban has become a popular attraction since being rediscovered by tourists during the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Called *eThekwin* in local language Zulu, which simply means *bay*, the city of Durban's rich history, beaches and her famous 'Golden Mile' are a subtropical delight on the Kwa-Zulu Natal province's coastline. While local holiday-makers usually trek a little further to Umhlanga for their school breaks, the Durban metropolitan is being revitalised, with the new world-class King Shaka International Airport having recently opened to travellers, the breathtaking Moses Mabhida stadium with a capacity of 54,000 and the ever-popular uShaka Marine World, which is the fifth largest aquariums in the world and is home to Gambit, who is the world's biggest bottlenose dolphin in an ocean aquarium.

Durban was first spotted during the Christmas of 1497 by explorer Vasco da Gama, as he sailed down Africa's eastern coastline searching for a trade route from Europe to India. He named the stretch of coast *Natal*, which means *birth of Christ in Portuguese*. The Portuguese community of Durban donated the Da Gama Clock to the city to commemorate the 400

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anniversary of the discovery, and this beautiful ornamental monument can be seen on the Victorian embankment of the city, on Port Road.

Now the third-largest city in the country, Durban's beginnings date back to 1824 when the legendary tribal king, Shaka Zulu, granted a party of European settlers from the Cape colonies a "30-mile strip of coast a hundred miles in depth". Today, many attractions in the northern Kwa-Zulu Natal area are named after this most famous of Zulu warriors, who is credited for uniting the tribes of his kingdom and notorious for his military genius.

Durban's central business district has a unique flavour, with extravagant Colonial buildings that mark the city's early British rule, and the Art Deco architecture on the waterfront that was introduced when it was transformed into a holiday destination in the 1970s, along with the Golden Mile.

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The Golden Mile runs along Durban's central beachfront, from South Beach (where you can also visit uShaka Marine World) to the new Suncoast Casino where you can while away an afternoon at the tables and slots, grab a bite at one of the casino's restaurants, or catch a movie at the in-house cinemas.

The Golden Mile is a prime spot for surfing, and has lifeguards and shark nets to keep swimmers safe. It's the perfect place to spend the day as a family, with plenty for the kids to do. A visit the Mini Town is a must; it's a tiny replica of the city of Durban, complete with a working railway! Teens would enjoy the Skate Park, where skateboarders and BMX riders gather to showcase their tricks and skills. For moms and dads, a romantic walk down the promenade exploring the wares and traditional crafts on display on the sidewalks is a perfect time-out.

More things to do in Durban include a visit to the Port Natal Maritime Museum, which houses many small craft as well as two large tug boats that children can explore (the Ulundi and the JR More), and a fun 'pirate' ship.

Round off your visit to Durban with a ride on a rickshaw, a colourful two-wheeled cart that is pulled by a runner who is often dressed in a wild, vibrant outfit. It's a one-of-a-kind local experience that is an absolute 'must' on your list of Durban attractions.