

Zululand Tour Including Hluhluwe Game Reserve and St Lucia

Saturday 9th September 2017

We fly to Durban, King Shaka airport and drive inland, through sugar cane fields, undulating green verdant hills and wonderful forests.

Eshowe and Fort Nongqai

Our first stop will be at Eshowe. It is the oldest town of European settlement in Zululand. Eshowe's name is said to be inspired by the sound of wind blowing through the indigenous Dhlinda Forest, the most important and striking feature of the town. Today Eshowe is a market town, with a 100 km radius catchment area, two shopping centres, a main bus station serving the hinterland, a major hospital, and several schools.

We will visit the historic Fort Nongqayi, which houses a fascinating cluster of facilities including the Zululand Historical Museum, the Mission Chapel Museum, Vukani Zulu Cultural Museum, the Phoenix Prison Art Gallery, KZN Papermakers and the Ian Garland Arboretum.

We will lunch at Adam's Outpost Restaurant in Eshowe.

Dhlinda Forest

The next stop is the Dhlinda forest. Built of natural timber, 10 meters above the forest floor, the 125 meter boardwalk takes you through the forest just below the canopy.

The aerial Boardwalk will reveal magical bird life, indigenous trees, busy insects and rare flowers. Notice the botanical details, such as the bark textures, twisted vines, strangler fig roots, Epiphytic Orchids and the odd bird's nest.

The more energetic, can climb the 20m high viewing platform, which meanders above the canopy of the magnificent Flat Crown, Giant Umzimbeet and Forest Iron Plum.

You will be richly rewarded with the panoramic views towards the Indian Ocean.

Ntonjaneni Lodge (2 NIGHTS)

We will then make our way to **Ntonjaneni Lodge** which is our home for 2 nights.

After booking in, we will visit the Lodge Museum which houses the biggest private collection of Boer and Zulu war artefacts. The lodge also has an interesting shop.

After a braai, the guide will do a presentation on the history of the valley. You will gain an insight into the causes and effects of the battles of Isandlwana and Rorkes Drift.

An optional walk to Dingaan's spring is also available.

Sunday 10th September 2017

Kings Royal Herd

After breakfast we will visit the Kings Royal herd of the amazing Nguni cattle. These spectacular animals have the appearance of a multi coloured abstract painting. Each animal has a unique colour and pattern to its hide.

Dingaans Kraal / Media Centre

We then drive to the Emakhosini Valley. Our first stop is Dingaan's Kraal and the Media / Educational Centre.

In 1828, Dingane murdered his half brother, Shaka at Dukuza (present day Stanger). He built a large kraal in the Emakhosini Valley, on a slope of the Ntonjaneni hills.

The site was chosen for its views over the hills and for the perennial water supply from the two streams,. Moreover, the entrance to the kraal pointed towards the grave of King Zulu, the founder of the Zulu dynasty. The site became known as Umgungundlovu.

Umgungundlovu has been attributed with several meanings - 'the secret meeting of the king' (referring to the plot to kill Shaka) or the 'place of the large elephant', taken from the shape of two tusks placed together and which name refers to Dingane as the elephant.

Across the Umkhumbane stream is another spur of the Ntonjaneni hills. On the higher slope there is the place known as Hlom' amaButho or 'arm the warriors' hill where the impis would gather before military missions) It was here that the Reverend Owen was given permission to establish a mission and the spot from where he witnessed the deaths of Retief and his men.

We then visit a Media / Educational centre built below the main site. Here, we learn about the history of the Zulu traditions going back to the 1800's.

The Site of Piet Retief's Death and the Memorial

In January 1838, Piet Retief and 100 of his men including his son, visited Dingaan with the intention of negotiating for a tract of land for the newly arrived Boers. Dingaan was extremely distrustful of the Boers. After the Boers arrived to pay respects on 6th February they were invited into the inner enclosures.

During the course of a ceremony the Zulu's leapt upon Retief and his men and were dragged to KwaMatiwane Hill (Execution Hill). Retief was made to watch as all his men (including his son) were battered and strangled to death! Their remains were laid out in the open for the hyenas to clear. The rest of their remains were-discovered and buried in December of that year.

Battle of Gqokli Hill September 1818

This was to be Shaka's first major battle against the new dominant power in South Eastern Africa. Who? Explain... (Before Shaka the dominant power was the Ndwandwe Paramountcy, led by *nKosi* (king) Zwide.)

This battle marked a turning point in the history of Southern Africa.

In spite of being significantly outnumbered, masterful strategy and tactics won the battle for Shaka.

While Shaka's shrewd new battle plans and his newly trained army, saved his people from extermination, he had by no means eliminated the Ndwandwe threat.

He had only eked out a respite. The Zulus had given up several hundred cattle (the economic capital of the Ndwandwe Chiefs) and sacrificed precious fighters they could not afford to lose. Zwide, for his part, was infuriated by the loss of his sons, by the blow to his arms, and, most of all by the temerity of the upstart of the Zulu clan, and came back the following year with an even larger army and smarter generals. Shaka had only that year to consolidate his own power to meet the second invasion he knew was coming. This he was able to do by vigorous diplomacy with other tribes, and by attracting thousands of angry warriors who had scores to settle with the treacherous Zwide.

Umuzi Bush Camp for Lunch

The uMuzi Bush Camp is in the eMakhosini Valley - The Valley of the Zulu Kings (eMakhosini Valley) .

We will pause for an outdoor lunch. A bar for refreshments is also available.

The camp is a stone's throw away from Ondini, King Cetshwayo's capital. You are now in the heartland of the Zulu nation.

Ondini Museum

After lunch we visit the the Ondini Historical Reserve, which houses the reconstruction of the royal residence of King Cetshwayo, a site museum and a cultural museum.

After the decisive Battle of Ulundi on 4th July the royal residence at Ondini was razed to the ground and Cetshwayo was captured. Still puzzled by Britain's actions, Cetshwayo wrote to the British governor in 1881 from his exile at the Castle in Cape Town: "I have done you no wrong, therefore you must have some other object in view in invading my land."

The isigodlo, or royal enclosure, has been partially reconstructed with traditional Zulu beehive huts which you can wander around. The site museum has a model showing the full original enclosure. Among the items in the Cultural Museum is a major bead collection.

We will then have a short lecture on the Battle of Ulundi where the British Empire finally recovered their pride after their humiliating defeat at Isandwala at the hands of the Zulus.

Monday 11th September 2017

We now drive through the heart of Zululand to enter Africa's oldest game reserve for the next 3 nights.

Hluhluwe national park covers 96000 ha. with a hilly topography. The northern section of the park is noted for its wide variety of bird and animal life as well as the "Big Five". The Reserve is also renowned for its excellent Rhino conservation policies. During my trip last December, I saw Rhino in 5 different places.

There are numerous hides overlooking pans.

After entering the park we will do some game viewing and later stop for an alfresco lunch in the bush.

We will then make our way to beautiful Hilltop Camp where everyone will be housed in Chalets. The chalets come with on suite bathrooms (bath and shower), twin beds, lounge area, DSTV TV , Kettle fridge, etc.,.

Tuesday 12th September 2017

At 10 am half the group will go on a game drive in an open vehicle and the other half will go for a drive at 10 am in the coach.

At 3 pm there is a game drive on the coach.

In addition you can book at your own expense extra early morning and evening drives in an open vehicle.

There is also a pleasant self guided walk through the forest within the camp,

Breakfast. Lunch and Dinner are all served in the Hilltops Restaurant.

Wednesday 13th September 2017

At 10 am the half the group that did not go on the open vehicle drive on Tuesday will get their chance on a game drive in an open vehicle and the other half will go for a drive at 10 am in the coach.

At 3 pm there is a game drive on the coach.

In addition you can book at your own expense extra early morning and evening drives in an open vehicle.

There is also a pleasant self guided walk through the forest within the camp,

Breakfast. Lunch and Dinner are all served in the Hilltops Restaurant.

Thursday 14th September 2017

We leave Hilltop Camp and make our way to **St Lucia** where we will go on a Hippo and Croc cruise. We have a finger lunch on the boat.

We will also make a stop at a market.

We will then board our flights for home in the early evening.

Cost

The cost is R 8195 per person without flight costs or R 9995 per person including flights.

There are a limited number of cheaper accommodation options if you wish to downgrade from Chalet's to Rondavels with nearby communal ablutions. I personally think the Chalets with a lounge area will make the tour much more enjoyable.

Doug Gardner 084 419 0027 doug@ddinfo.co.za