



**THE BLUE TRAIN**  
A WINDOW TO THE SOUL OF AFRICA

## Window to the Soul of Africa...

### *Journey of a lifetime*



### Cape Town to Pretoria Route Description

The Blue Train's most popular route is between Cape Town and Pretoria (in either direction) – a 1,600 kilometre (994 miles) journey through some of South Africa's most diverse and spectacular scenery – a "window to the soul of Africa".



If heading **northbound**, the adventure starts in the Mother City of Cape Town – famous for its iconic Table Mountain at its heart and two oceans at its feet. Vibrant, cosmopolitan and an eclectic mix of old and new, this laid-back city with its ancient vineyards, award-winning restaurants and beautiful beaches is as "must" on any travel bucket list.

There is no better way to depart this city in style than onboard the luxurious Blue Train. After checking in at Cape Town station around 15h00 and collecting their Blue Train tickets from the desk, guests are encouraged to relax in the pre-departure lounge and enjoy some bubbles and canapes, before The Blue Train Manager welcomes everyone and introduces the team. Bags are swiftly whisked away to the carriages and are waiting for guests when their butler escorts them to their private suite.

The train departs Cape Town at around 16h00. Guests, once settled in, can mingle over High Tea in the Lounge Car whilst enjoying the last glimpses of Table Mountain as the train leaves the city via Bellville towards Paarl.

Should guests wish to enjoy the scenery from the train driver's perspective, there is a camera on the leading locomotive's footplate which feeds the approaching track, scenery and shows the train's GPS location and speed (average 60km/hour) onto the onboard entertainment system shown in every suite on a separate TV channel.

The first part of the journey starts off in spectacular style as the train heads for the vineyards and the open farmlands of the Swartland, about 40 miles north of Cape Town. Swartland means "black land" in Dutch, named after the native renosterbos (rhinoceros bush) which turns black after rains. The Swartland's wide fertile plain is known as "the bread-basket of Cape Town" thanks to its wheat fields reaching up to the foot of the mountains. Simply magnificent!

The skyline now becomes dominated by the ever-approaching profile of the mountains, which change to beautiful shades of orange, red, pink and purple as the sun sinks behind the horizon.

All suites are transformed, as if by magic, while guests enjoy their dinner - from comfy day time lounges into sumptuous bedrooms with crisp white sheets and subtle lighting.

After the train passes through Worcester, around 3 hours into the journey (usually during the first sitting for dinner), it travels through the Hex River Valley, with its lush vineyards and fruit orchards. Sunset ranges between 19h15 in the winter (June/July) and 21h45 in the peak of summer (Dec/Jan) so scenery depends largely on when you are travelling.

The track starts to climb altitude in earnest once it passes the grape-farming town of De Doorns, passing through the Hex River Tunnels near Touws River consisting of three short tunnels and then a long 13.5km tunnel, adding up to a total distance of about 16km. This is usually between 20h30 and 21h00. Under the cover of night, the track snakes its way north-east, parallel to the main N1 highway past Touwsrivier, Matjiesfontein and Laingsburg.

Overnight, the train travels slowly northwards towards Beaufort West (where it stops for a while) and the nearby Karoo National Park, crossing from the Western Cape into the Northern Cape at Three Sisters at around 04h30. Guests might wish to open their blinds from around 05h00 to watch the sun rise over the horizon. Nothing beats your butler bringing a hot cup of tea or coffee in bed! Picture windows showcase the dramatic scenery with endless vistas as the train passes vast fields of maize and distant pastures with sheep and cattle grazing.

The train heads north through the arid sheep farming country of the Great Karoo hinterland, passing through the towns of Victoria West and then De Aar at around 07h00. Lunch is served soon after the train crosses the Orange River around 11h00 and then the Modder river about an hour before arriving in Kimberley.



From roughly 14h00 till 17h00 guests enjoy an off-train excursion (not guaranteed) at the Kimberley Open Mine Museum – also known as “[The Big Hole](#)”. Over 150 years ago, the site was a featureless, flat-topped hill. When word spread that diamonds had been discovered in the area, thousands of prospectors, armed with nothing more than picks, shovels and hope, descended on Kimberley and created the largest hand-dug excavation in the world, with a depth of 200m. On arrival, guests are transferred from Kimberley station to the mine for a guided tour which includes heading out onto a special platform to view the big hole. Guests are then escorted down a “pretend mine shaft lift” into tunnels to see how the diamonds were mined. Guests are welcome to explore the museum further, time permitting, and to see the diamonds in the vault. On return to the train, a sherry in a commemorative Blue Train glass is offered; the glass is a gift to take home.

Guests should be sure to watch out for, on the left-hand side of the train, just after the train leaves Kimberley, the beautiful Kamfers Dam. At certain times of year, the dam appears to be a beautiful shade of pink thanks to the thousands of lesser flamingos that are attracted by the wetlands’ high concentration of blue-green algae.

It is estimated that up to 50,000 flamingos have been spotted at the dam when water levels are good. This is one of only four breeding areas in Africa (there are only six worldwide) and the only one in South Africa of the “near-threatened” lesser flamingo.



Guests might want to enjoy this view over a few pre-dinner drinks in the observation car as again the colours of the sunset are simply magnificent - depending on what time of year you are travelling and when the sun sets.

High tea is served in the non-smoking lounge.

Dinner is served followed by drinks and entertainment in the non-smoking lounge car as the train passes endless stretches of Kalahari thornveldt. Those who prefer, can head to the Club car at the front of the train for a cognac and hand-made Cuban cigar - or enjoy whiling away a few hours in the Observation car at the end.

The train will cross the Vaal River at Warrenton at around 21h00, leaving the Northern Cape and entering the North West as the train skims the border of the Free State. The train stops for about an hour in the early hours of the morning at the mining town of Klerksdorp and again for about 2 hours at Potchefstroom.

Breakfast is served from 06h00 till 09h00. The train will pass small mining towns such as Henley-on-Klip as the scenery starts to become dotted with mine dumps from the old gold fields before entering the sprawling metropolis of Gauteng as it skirts its way past Johannesburg north towards Pretoria, arriving at around 10h30.



Pretoria railway station is located in a 1910 building designed by British architect Herbert Baker with an iconic clock tower. Over 70 000 passengers pass through its beautiful archways every day – consisting mostly of commuters heading to or from work. Pretoria is one of South Africa’s three capital cities (legislative capital) and is affectionately known as the “Jacaranda city” thanks to the beautiful streets lined with purple flowers between September and November. This is usually when local university students write exams and it’s a local belief that if a flower falls on your head it’s good luck.

The union buildings, built in 1913, are South Africa’s official seat of power and it’s where all new presidents, including Nelson Mandela in 1994, are sworn into office. The 9m high bronze statue of Madiba in the gardens is the tallest statue of Mandela in the world and a very popular “selfie” spot. The statue of him opening his arms to embrace the Rainbow Nation was unveiled on the Day of Reconciliation (16 December), bringing the official 10-day mourning period of Mandela’s death to a close in 2013.

Other tourist spots include the National Zoological Gardens, Church Square, Freedom Park Heritage Site and Museum, the Botanical gardens and many historical sites and museums.

The high-speed Gautrain, launched in 2010, departs from Pretoria Station too, providing an easy connection to O.R. Tambo International airport should you wish. Alternatively, the airport is a 30-mile drive or road transfer away.

For more information visit [www.bluetrain.co.za](http://www.bluetrain.co.za)



Please note this schedule and any suggested timings are subject to change.