



THE BLUE TRAIN
A WINDOW TO THE SOUL OF AFRICA

Window to the Soul of Africa...

Journey of a lifetime



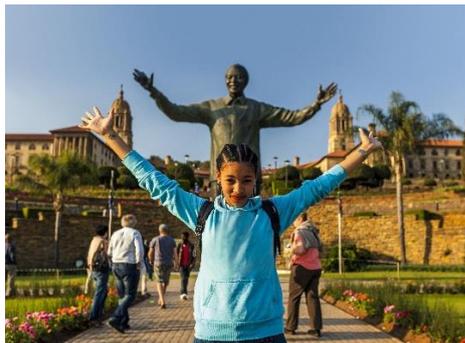
Pretoria to Cape Town Route Description

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

If heading southbound, the adventure starts in Pretoria which is a 30-mile drive away from Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport. 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. Blue Train guests tend to spend the night before travel in either Pretoria or Johannesburg but thanks to the new 2019 late afternoon departure time, a night in Gauteng is not essential, unless you wish to explore this buzzing city.



Pretoria railway station is located between the CBD and Salvokop, in a 1910 building designed by Herbert Baker. The Station, with its iconic clock tower, sees over 70 000 passengers pass through its beautiful arch ways every day – consisting mostly of commuters heading to or from work. The high-speed Gautrain, launched in 2010, stops here too, providing an easy connection to the airport.

However, nothing can beat the anticipation of the lucky few who are welcomed into the pre-departure lounge to board the luxurious Blue Train to Cape Town. After checking in at around 15h00 and collecting their Blue Train tickets from the desk, guests are encouraged to relax 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 Pretoria at around 16h00, heading south through Gauteng towards Johannesburg. Scenery is quite urban to start with and then becomes more rural with mine dumps reflecting the so-called City of Gold's rich history as you travel through the original mining towns such as Potchefstroom, Stilfontein and Klerksdorp. Guests are invited to the lounge car for high tea to meet their fellow travel companions as the sun slowly drops on the horizon.

The train enters the North West province briefly as the train heads south-west, skimming the border of the Free State. Guests might spot some animals along the way as the train passes by various farms. There's also the chance, if guests are lucky, to spot wildlife such as ostriches, springbok, black wildebeest, eland and gemsbok as the track skims the borders of game reserves like the Bloemhof Nature Reserve, 320 kms south of Johannesburg to the left of the tracks.

As the train travels south via the Kalahari thornveldt the scenery changes to fields of maize and pastures with cattle grazing. The train will cross the Vaal River at Warrenton entering the Northern Cape province.

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 GPS onto the onboard entertainment system which can be enjoyed in every suite on a separate TV channel.

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. Guest are welcome to leave the blinds open should they wish to wake up to the sunrise over the horizon in the morning.

Breakfast on board the train is served from 06h30 till 09h30. While guests dine, they should be sure to watch out for, on the right-hand side of the train this time, just before the train approaches 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 eat early and enjoy this view from the observation car!

From roughly 09h30 till 12h30 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 200m2. 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.



From Kimberley the train heads south into arid sheep farming country towards the towns of De Aar and Victoria West. The train crosses the Modder river 1hr after departing Kimberley and then the Orange River, 2hrs from Kimberley. The route then turns south-west towards Beaufort West and the nearby Karoo National Park.

Soon the mountains of the Western Cape come into view, as the track snakes its way, parallel to the main N1 highway past Laingsburg, Matjiesfontein, Touwsrivier then descending steadily down towards the grape-farming town of De Doorns, including a tunnel near Touws River. The first tunnel is the longest and stretches for about 13.5 km. This will be followed by three shorter tunnels which measure a total distance of about 16km.

Emerging from the tunnel, the train now enters the scenic Hex River Valley, heading towards the town of Worcester. This section of track is often mentioned as the highlight of the whole journey for many guests as the vegetation becomes increasingly lush as the train approaches the Swartland. 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, interrupted by wine, fruit orchards, and vegetable farms. Simply magnificent!

As the train approaches the Mother City, the iconic Table Mountain comes into view at Bellville and your journey ends in style at Cape Town station.

Famous for the flat-topped mountain at its heart and the two oceans at its feet, this vibrant, cosmopolitan city with its rich history and friendly people wins hearts with its eclectic mix of old and new.

Explore ancient vineyards, indulge at award-winning restaurants and discover beautiful beaches.

Cape Town is a “must” on any travel bucket list!



For more information visit www.bluetrain.co.za

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