

North-West Province



With some of its most revered attractions just two hours from Johannesburg (Jo'burg), the North-West Province provides the perfect antidote for escaping big-city clutter. Home to some of the country's best-kept secrets, the region offers something for anyone – from music lovers to safari addicts to gamblers.

The Disney-esque Sun City and Lost City casino resorts are South Africa's most opulent theme parks. Once an exclusive sanctuary for the white elite, today the apartheid-era's most famous retreat is a multicultural place. Popular with South Africans of all colours (along with plenty of tourists), it's packed with all sorts of entertainment, from jet skiing to wave pools to slot machines. The complex is shamelessly gaudy and almost ridiculously kitsch, but it's also alluring enough to make for an ostentatiously fabulous place to pass an afternoon.

When you tire of artificial beaches, head into the wild. Nearby Pilanesberg National Park is our pick for a quick safari. Whether you drive yourself or join a tour, the wide-open spaces and numerous water-hole hides in this extinct volcano mean there's a decent chance of spotting something big, be it a lion, rhino or lumbering elephant.

Further afield, Madikwe Game Reserve is one of South Africa's best-kept secrets. Even though it's closer to Jo'burg than Kruger, and teeming with the same animals, it sees far fewer visitors. Translation? You get to search for herds of wild mammals in their natural habitat without herds of slobbering, gasping camera-clicking humans in tow.

This chapter concentrates on the eastern half of the province. It's not that we don't like the west, there is just little of interest there for travellers.

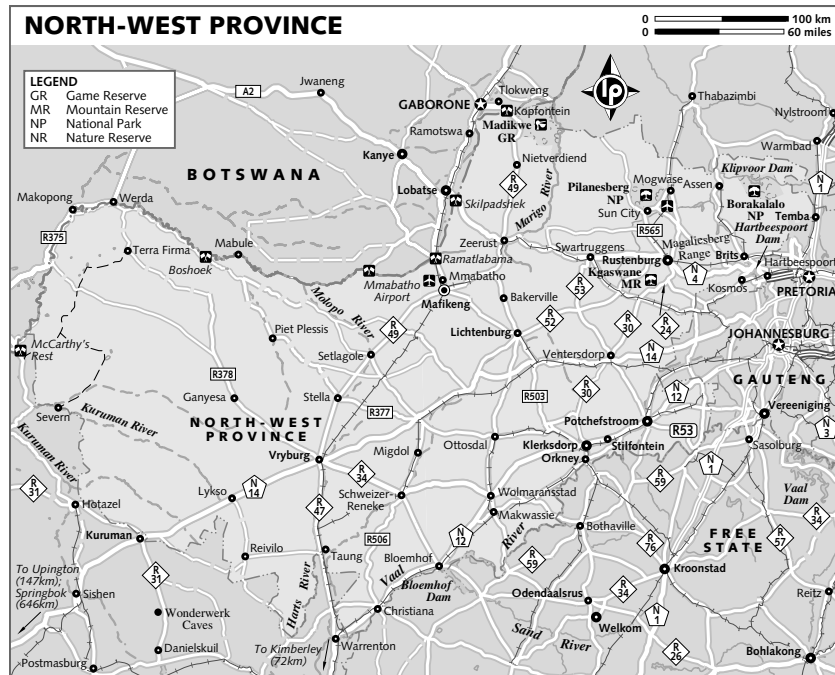
HIGHLIGHTS

- Listening to the melody of the bush from your camp under the stars in wild and wonderful **Madikwe Game Reserve** (p518)
- Searching for lions, rhinos and leopards amid rocky valleys and extinct volcanoes while on safari in super accessible **Pilanesberg National Park** (p516)
- Riding the waves, tanning on the beach or braving a fake earthquake in **Sun City** (p514), once a glittering icon of apartheid, now a playground for all South Africans
- Dancing to live music at the funky **Revel Inn** (p513), where chilling out is the religion of the house
- Shopping for handicrafts and enjoying the shimmering blue vistas at **Hartbeespoort Dam** (p514)



■ POPULATION: 4 MILLION

■ AREA: 116,320 SQ KM



HISTORY

The North-West Province takes in much of the area once covered by the fragmented apartheid homeland of Bophuthatswana (often shortened to 'Bop'), dumping ground for thousands of 'relocated' Tswana people. The nominally independent homeland became famous for the excesses of the white South African men who visited its casinos and pleasure resorts for interracial encounters with prostitutes, which would have been illegal in South Africa itself.

The North-West Province was the site of a complex and sophisticated Iron-Age civilisation centred on the 'lost city' of Kaditshwene, about 30km north of modern-day Zeerust. The people who lived here had an economy so developed they traded copper and iron jewellery with China. By 1820, when European missionaries first visited the city, it was bigger than Cape Town. In the end, the peace-loving inhabitants of Kaditshwene proved no match for the aggression of the Sotho, displaced by Zulu incursions into the Free State. The city was sacked by a horde of 40,000 people and fell into ruins.

Diamonds were discovered in the province in the 1870s, resulting in an enormous rush to the fields around Lichtenburg. Mining is still important here and there are extensive platinum mines near Rustenburg.

CLIMATE

Summer temperatures range between 22°C and 34°C and winter brings with it dry, sunny days and chilly nights. The average winter (May-July) temperature is 15.5°C but can range from an average of 2°C to 20°C in a single day. The summer months (August-March) bring brief, refreshing afternoon thunderstorms.

LANGUAGE

Setswana is the principal language; most whites speak Afrikaans, with a minority having English as their first language.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

The principal towns in the province, Mafikeng and Rustenburg, are well connected by bus with Jo'burg and Pretoria. Potchefstroom is also a transport hub. Buses run

regularly to Gaborone in Botswana via Zeerust. The main border crossing is Ramatlabama, north of Mafikeng.

Elsewhere in the province, especially the sparsely populated west, public transport is sporadic and you'll most likely need your own vehicle to get around. Car hire is available through **Avis** (www.avis.co.za) Pilanesberg Airport (☎ 014-552 1501); Mafikeng (☎ 018-385 1114); Potchefstroom (☎ 018-290 8535) and **Imperial Car Hire** (www.imperialcarrental.co.za) Pilanesberg Airport (☎ 014-552 1767); Mafikeng (☎ 018-381 7447).

RUSTENBURG

☎ 014 / pop 123,000

Sitting at the edge of the Magaliesberg Range, Rustenburg is a large and prosperous mining town about 115km northwest of Jo'burg. There's no particular reason to visit, other than it makes a handy base if you're visiting nearby Sun City or Pilanesberg National Park and want to stay elsewhere (budget travellers will find this option particularly appealing).

On the way into town, you will find the well stocked **tourist information centre** (☎ 014-597 0904; Main Rd; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) between Plein and Van Staden Sts. There is also an art gallery here, and an arts and crafts shop. There is Internet access at **Copy Express** (☎ 014-592 1970; Biblio Plaza; per hr R30).

Sleeping

The information centre has information on other accommodation options if these places are full.

Bushwillows B&B (☎ 014-537 2333; wjmcgill@lantic.net; s/d R150/300) This is a lovely option about 12km outside town off Rte 24. Set in natural bush, it's a tranquil B&B where the friendly owner (an artist) knows a lot about South African wildlife.

Joan's B&B (☎ 014-533 3086; joan@joansbnb.co.za; 61 Wildevy Ave, Protea Park; s/d with breakfast R150/250) Joan's is a good old-fashioned B&B with simple but tidy rooms; the owners serve a hearty breakfast with a smile. Just don't get them onto politics...

Cashane Hotel (☎ 014-592 8541; fax 592 3016; 66 Steen St; s/d R250/370; ☎) A convenient, cheap and central option if you want to stay in a proper hotel. Rooms are clean, but ask for one towards the back, as the front can be noisy.

Traveller's Inn (☎ 014-592 7658; travinn@mweb.co.za; 99 Leyds St; s/d with half board R300/550) This guesthouse is quite a good bargain, considering rates include breakfast and dinner. Our top choice in town; rooms are comfy and well appointed, the staff friendly and the bar convivial.

Eating

In the Waterfall Mall, off Rte 30 around 3km south of town, you'll find most of the fast-food chains and a couple of decent coffee shops.

Royal Dutchman (☎ 014-537 3626; 58 Nelson Mandela; mains R60-80; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This dark and cosy restaurant has dining booths and a decent menu that features loads of seafood.

Karl's Bauernstube (☎ 014-537 2128; Rte 24; mains R20-50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat, lunch Sun) An Austrian restaurant offering delights such as smoked warthog and sauerkraut (R40), and crocodile ragout (R35).

Getting There & Away

Intercape (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) stops in Rustenburg daily on its run between Pretoria (R110, four hours) and Gaborone, Botswana (R150, five hours). The bus stops at the **BP petrol station** (cnr Van Staden & Smit Sts), from where you can catch a minibus taxi into town (about R5).

The main minibus taxi rank is west of the corner of Van Staden and Malan Sts, on the Sun City side of town.

AROUND RUSTENBURG

About 50km outside Rustenburg, at Bokfontein on the N4 towards Swarttruggens, lies one of the province's best-kept secrets. Nestled in a green valley next to a small stream deep in the rural heart of Afrikanerdom, you'll find the **Revel Inn** (☎ 072-225 7182; www.revelin.co.za; camp sites R40, dm/d R50/130, bungalows R240; dinner R45; ☎). A liberal bastion in a conservative wilderness, it's the perfect old-school hippy backpacker joint, where chilling out is the house creed. Psychedelic paintings (and maybe even a different kind of mushroom omelette) encourage you to get in the groove and join the crowd of eccentric regulars who like to party hard. Constantly. At sporadic intervals Revel Inn hosts mini music festivals with live drumming, DJs, or such esoteric events as the

Magic Carpet Carnival and the Spring Love Party. When there's no party on, you could well have the place to yourself, so simply recline in a hammock, chill out in a tree house, or float in the perfectly circular pool and contemplate the sky, man...

MAGALIESBERG RANGE

The 120km-long Magaliesberg Range, north of the N4, swings in a half moon from Rustenburg to Hartbeespoort Dam (below). The region has attractive mountain scenery and some good walks. You'll need your own car to get here.

South of Rustenburg, at the western end of the range is **Kgaswane Mountain Reserve** (☎ 014-533 2050; admission R20; 🕒 8am-4pm). Here you can look for hyenas, black-backed jackals and small antelopes amid a wild terrain dominated by rocky ridges and wooded ravines.

The **Hunter's Rest Hotel** (☎ 014-537 2140; www.huntersrest.co.za; s/d with half board R530/900; 🍷) is an attractive resort with a big swimming pool and a golf course, in the Magaliesberg Range, 14km south of Rustenburg; follow the signs.

SUN CITY

☎ 014

Welcome to Sun City, South African style. At **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za; admission R60), the legendary creation of entrepreneur Sol Kerzner, Disneyland collides with ancient Egypt in a demented attempt to look like Vegas. Filled with gilded statues of lions and monkeys, acres of artificial

beaches, exploding volcanos and hundreds upon hundreds of clinking slot machines, it serves no other purpose than to entertain. Yet even though there's no question this gambling-centric resort is almost grotesquely gaudy, a visit here can also be pretty damn fun.

The complex is dominated by the spectacular Lost City, an extraordinary piece of kitsch claiming to symbolise African heritage. In fact it has less to do with African heritage than Disneyland Paris has to do with French heritage, but it's still entertaining. A sort of mega amusement park in high-glitz style, it teems with all sorts of attractions, from a wave pool to water slides to simulated earthquakes.

Started as an apartheid-era exclusive haven for wealthy whites, these days one of Sun City's best features is the mix of black, white and especially Asian people who flock here at weekends. Losers at the tables can console themselves with the thought that they are helping to pay over 3500 salaries.

If you're travelling with the kids (there's tons to keep them busy) or on a budget and tired of just hanging around the hostel, Sun City is a pretty good bargain. The admission fee covers all the main attractions, and you'll also be given R30 in 'Sunbucks', which can be spent at the various restaurants, shops or slot machines. Of course if you've got the cash to splash out, this place also boasts one of the world's most luxurious hotels – a shrine to all things glittery and golden.

HEADING HOME? NEED AFRICAN GIFTS QUICK? HEAD TO HARTBESPOORT

Hartbeespoort Dam is a favourite weekend retreat for South Africans living around Jo'burg and Pretoria, but it also makes a great day trip for travellers hoping to escape the urban jungle for at least a little while. Less than an hour's drive from either city, it feels worlds apart. Gone is the hustle, replaced instead by rolling hills, winding country roads and the green-blue waters of the dam. And while there's no doubt the surrounding countryside is bucolic, the real reason to visit is to check out the fantastic **Welwitschia Country Market** (🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun). With more than 40 open-air stands full of African curios to choose from, it's a great place to stock up on all those gifts you meant to buy, but somehow didn't, before the plane takes off. Prices are reasonable, quality is fair to excellent (you can find some really nice pieces) and you can bargain.

If all your shopping has left you famished, head across the street to the **Upperdeck Restaurant** (mains from R15). There is a varied menu, including vegetarian dishes, and live music on weekends.

You'll need your own transport to reach the dam.

SUN CITY FOR KIDS

When the kids are good and sick of your idea of the great African adventure, cheer them up with a day at Sun City. Not only is this kid-friendly entertainment complex safe, it also offers plenty to keep the little ones amused. **Adventure Mountain** (admission included), in the Valley of the Waves, is kiddie paradise with child-sized pools and waterslides. Older kids will dig tubing down the Lazy River or flying through the twisty waterslides in the main park.

The **Kwena Gardens Crocodile Sanctuary** (admission R40), near the front entrance, is another favourite. It's home to the world's biggest captive crocs. Feeding time is 4.30pm.

Back inside the main entertainment centre, you'll find a children's arcade with loads of games.

If mum and dad need a little space themselves, a number of babysitting options are available, including the weekend **Kamp Kwena** activity centre where kids get to indulge in activities like face painting, limbo and castle jumping. Check at the welcome desk about rates and availability.

Orientation & Information

The car park for day visitors is at the entrance, about 2km from the entertainment centre. An elevated 'sky' train shuttles from the car park to the Cascades hotel and the entertainment centre.

The **welcome centre** (☎ 014-557 1544; 🕒 9am-8pm Sun-Thu, 8am-1am Fri & Sat) at the entrance to the entertainment centre has maps and just about any information you could possibly need.

Sights & Activities

The best part of Sun City is undeniably **Lost City**, which is entered over a bridge flanked by life-sized fake elephants, and basically consists of **Valley of the Waves**, a pool with a large-scale wave-making machine, a sandy beach, numerous water slides and other amusement park rides. Every hour or so a voice booms out some nonsense about lost civilisations and earthquakes from a hidden mike, and the bridge shakes while dry ice pours out of either side. It's cheesy, but fun.

You'll find separate smoking and non-smoking casinos in the **entertainment centre**. Done up in a jungle theme with animal murals painted on the dome ceiling, it also houses food courts, shops and movie theatres.

In the heart of Lost City is **Palace of the Lost City**, a hotel that could inspire hallucinations, but to which access is prohibited to all but its lucky – and wealthy – guests.

Eighteen holes at the superb **Gary Player Country Club** or the **Lost City Golf Course** cost R500 (R350 for hotel guests).

Near the main entrance is **Waterworld**, on the shores of a large artificial lake, which has facilities for parasailing (R375), jet skiing (R235) and water-skiing (R240).

Sleeping

If the Sun City hotels are too expensive (and you have your own transport), consider staying at Pilanesberg National Park (p516) and making the complex a day trip only. The town of Rustenburg (p513) is also close enough to use as a base.

All the following hotels can be booked through **Sun City** (☎ 014-557 1000; www.suncity.co.za) or **Sun International central reservations** (☎ 011-780 7800; www.suninternational.com). The following places can often be found for less over an Internet hotel consolidator such as **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com).

Sun City Cabanas (r from R1200; 🍷 🍷) The cheapest option in the complex is laid-back and aimed at family groups. Rooms are modern with all the typical upmarket conveniences.

Sun City Hotel (r from R2000; 🍷 🍷) The most lively of the hotels, with gambling facilities on the premises, as well as a number of restaurants, a nightclub and an entertainment centre.

Cascades (r from 2400; 🍷 🍷) The Cascades has been displaced by the Palace of the Lost City as the most luxurious hotel in the complex, but the rooms are still easily described as palatial.

Palace of the Lost City (r from R3500; 🍷 🍷) It's no wonder *Condé Nast Traveller* named it one of the best hotels in the world for 2006 as this over-the-top property redefines the

fantasy of luxury. The rooms are done up with bold-coloured carpets and duvets and hand-painted ceilings, but seem a bit unimaginative when compared with the awesome public spaces. Set in a 25-hectare botanical garden, the grounds are filled with cascading waterfalls and pools, meandering paths and a watery rides to get your adrenalin rushing.

Eating

All the hotels have a selection of restaurants. There are plenty of fast-food joints in the entertainment centre. Your 30 Sunbucks will just about get you a burger and a soft drink.

Getting There & Away

Tiny Pilanesberg Airport once gloried in the name 'Pilanesberg International Airport', when it was the home of Bop Air, the airline of the former 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana. It's about 9km east of the Sun City complex. **SAairlink** (☎ 011-978 1111; www.sairlink.co.za) operates flights six times a week from Jo'burg (R500) and three times a week from Cape Town (R1000). From the airport, you'll need to hire a car or arrange for your hotel to pick you up.

Surprisingly, the Sun City complex is poorly signposted, so navigators will really need to concentrate or you'll miss it. From Jo'burg it's a two-hour drive. The most straightforward route is via Rustenburg and Boshhoek on the Rte 565.

PILANESBERG NATIONAL PARK

Don't be fooled into thinking this **national park** (☎ 014-555 5356; adult/child R20/10, per vehicle R15; ☽ dawn-dusk) is some kind of tacky super-annuated zoo just because it's nearly on top of Sun City. In reality, it protects over 500 sq km of an unusual complex of extinct volcanoes, and is the fourth-largest national park in South Africa. The scenery is impressive, with towering rocky outcrops in the centre of the park, particularly in the area around Mankwe Lake, the centre of an extinct 1200-million-year-old volcano. It's near enough to Sun City to make it easy to visit both in one day (something many Jo'burg tour operators do), and it's close enough to the big city to be considered for a last quick safari before it's time to head home.

Since 1979, when Operation Genesis brought dozens of translocated animal species to the park, Pilanesberg has been home to extensive populations of many of Africa's most impressive animals. All the big cats are here, and along with the lions and leopards and cheetahs, you'll also find jackals, hyenas, white and black rhinos, elephants, giraffes, hippos, buffaloes, zebras and a wide variety of antelopes (including sables, elands, kudus and gemsboks). Since early 2000, African wild dogs can be seen here too. The region also has a diverse population of birds – over 300 species have been recorded.

There is an excellent 100km network of gravel roads, hides and picnic spots, and some good-value accommodation. Since it is no more than 25km from one end of the park to the other, it is easy to cover the range of different environments in the park and to see a wide variety of animals. To do any real justice to it, however, you need a full day. On no account should you miss the viewpoints over the crater from Lenong Lookout.

You'll either need to join an organised tour from Jo'burg (p405) or Pretoria (p434) or have your own transport to visit the park. We liked **Footprints in Africa** (☎ 083-302 1976; www.footprintsinafrica.com; 425 Farenden St, Pretoria) based at the Pretoria Backpackers. They offer two-day Pilanesberg safaris, that also visit Sun City, starting at R1200 per person.

Orientation & Information

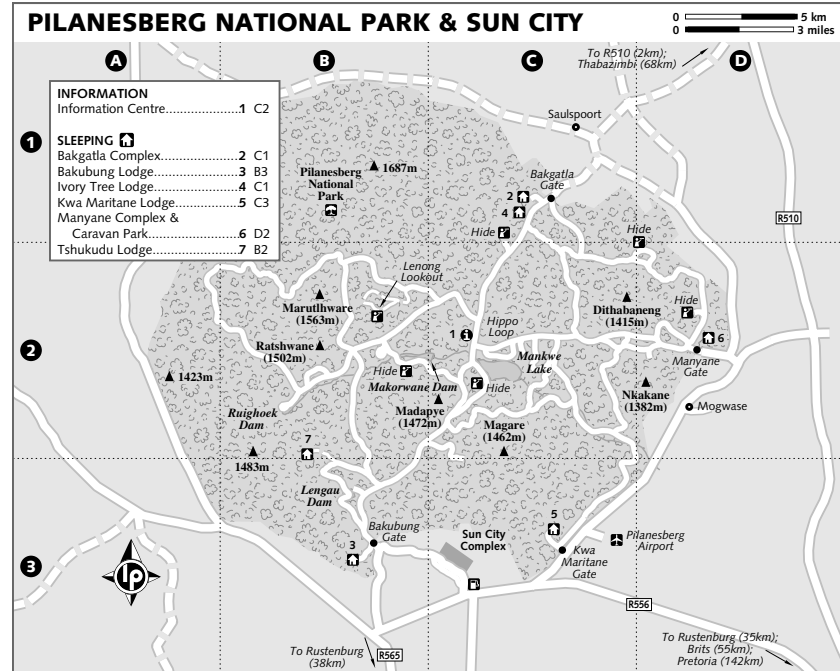
There are four gates into Pilanesberg. Enter from the direction of Sun City using either Bakubung Gate to the west (via Rte 556) or Manyane Gate to the northeast (via Rte 556 and Rte 510 if you're coming from Pretoria and Jo'burg).

A useful information booklet and map (R10) is available at the main park gates, where overnight visitors must enter and report to the **reception office** (☎ 014-555 5355; ☽ 24hr).

There is an **information centre** (☎ 014-555 7931; www.parksnorthwest.co.za/pilanesberg) with an interpretative display and shop in an old magistrates court in the centre of the park.

Activities

Gametrackers Outdoor Adventures (☎ 014-552 5020; www.gametrac.co.za) runs a dizzying variety of



activities within the park. Book at its offices at the Manyane or Bakgatla Complexes (below), or at the Sun City welcome centre (p515). There are early-morning, late-afternoon and night wildlife drives (2½ hours, R250). For something a bit more adventurous try tracking rhinos on foot with a guide (R300) or an elephant-back safari (R400).

Mankwe Safaris (☎ 014-555 7056; www.mankwe-safaris.co.za) also runs a variety of activities; enquire at its office next to the Manyane Gate reception office. Wildlife drives with a bush braai (barbecue) cost R350, walking trails are R250 and the company can also organise museum trips and cultural tourism activities.

Sleeping & Eating

Manyane Complex & Caravan Park (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites R145, 2-person safari tent R350, d/tr chalet with breakfast from R730/1125; ☽ ☽ ☽) Near Manyane Gate, this complex is thoughtfully designed and laid out, with high-quality facilities, including a shop with a reasonable range of food items and a decent restaurant. The chalets are pretty

posh, with good linens on firm mattresses, a grassy braai area, full kitchen and sitting room with TV. Rates include a hearty breakfast buffet.

Bakgatla Complex (☎ 014-555 5351; www.goldenleopard.co.za; camp sites R165, d safari tent R880, d/tr chalet with breakfast R920/975; ☽ ☽ ☽) A smaller camp, but with the same quality digs, Bakgatla is northwest of Manyane gate. The luxury safari tents come with full bathrooms and covered porches. Rates include a buffet breakfast, and half-board (lunch and dinner) options are available starting at R1100 for two people.

Kwa Maritane Lodge (s/d with breakfast & dinner R1600/2200; ☽ ☽ ☽), **Bakubung Lodge** (s/d with breakfast & dinner R1600/2200; ☽ ☽ ☽) and **Tshukudu Lodge** (s/d with full board R3500/5000; ☽ ☽ ☽), all run by **Legacy hotels** (☎ 011-806 6806; www.legacyhotels.co.za), are the park's three main luxury options. Kwa Maritane and Bakubung are essentially similar, with high standard accommodation. Both hotels have still managed to retain a bit of taste and character, though neither exactly represents a wild bush experience. Tshukudu is more

exclusive, with just six luxury cottages, each with a sunken bath that has a view over the surrounding hills, and rates include activities.

Ivory Tree Lodge (☎ 011-706 8781; www.africananthology.co.za; s/d with full board R2800/3800; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This luxury lodge sits in a tranquil woodland spot in the northeastern portion of the park near Bakgatla gate; activities are included in the rates. The resort says it welcomes children, but at the same time warns that children under 12 may not be welcome on the game drives. It's a better bet for couples.

BORAKALALO NATIONAL PARK

Located in the northeastern corner of the province on the Moratele River and the Klipvoor Dam, this **national park** (☎ 012-729 3337; admission R15, plus per car R10; 🕒 5am-8pm Dec-Apr, 6am-7pm May-Nov) lives up to the meaning of its name: Place of Relaxation. Most of the original animal inhabitants were relentlessly hunted out and are now slowly being reintroduced, with 350 bird species as well as leopards, otters, zebras and jackals now resident.

Book accommodation through **Golden Leopard Resorts** (☎ 014-555 6135; goldres@iafrica.com); camps in the reserve include **Pitjane Fishing Camp** (camp sites per person R60), **Phuduphudu** (4-person safari tents R425) and **Moretele** (camp sites R60, 4-bed safari tents R325).

To get here from Pretoria and Jo'burg, head to Brits, then take Rte 511 to Assen and follow the signs to Klipvoor Dam and the park. There is no public transport.

ZEEERUST

☎ 018 / pop 17,600

As a major jumping-off point for Gaborone (Botswana), Zeerust sees a lot of in-and-out traffic and as a result has a certain vibrant bustle to it. The town is quite large; there are plenty of shops strung along Church St, including a couple of banks and 24-hour petrol stations. There are also a couple of basic hotels on the main street.

The **tourist information office** (☎ 018-642 1081; Church St; 🕒 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) is in the municipal building and has info on area attractions.

Intercap (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) passes through Zeerust on its daily run between Pretoria (R130, two hours) and Ga-

borone (R75, three hours). The bus stops at the **Chicken Licken** (Church St).

The **minibus taxi rank** (Church St) is on the Mafikeng side of town.

MADIKWE GAME RESERVE

One of the largest reserves in South Africa, **Madikwe** (☎ 083-629 8282) comprises 760 sq km of bushveld, savanna grassland and riverine forest on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. The reserve was created in 1991, not only to protect endangered wildlife, but as a job-creation scheme and a way of providing a more sustainable environment for local people. A massive translocation operation, called Operation Phoenix, brought more than 10,000 animals into the area. The animals had all once been indigenous to the area, but their numbers were depleted due to hunting and farming pressures from the human inhabitants. The operation took over seven years to complete, with animals (including entire herds of elephants) being flown or driven in from various other reserves around Southern Africa. All of the Big Five, plus the endangered wild dog, are now present, together with over 350 bird species. Madikwe is one of South Africa's best-kept secrets: it's nearer to Jo'burg than the Kruger Park but has far less visitors. It's also malaria-free, making it a good option for children.

Sleeping & Eating

Madikwe is not open to day visitors, so to visit you'll have to book into one of the 24 lodges and camps within the park, all of which do guided wildlife drives in open vehicles.

Mosethla Bush Camp (☎ 011-444 9345; www.thebushcamp.com; s/d with full board & shared bathroom R1600/2500) There's nothing fancy about this rustic and intimate camp with abodes in open-fronted log cabins within an unfenced bush area. The place prides itself on being au naturale and there's no electricity or running water. But canvas bucket showers and hot water boilers ensure it's still very comfortable. Rates include bush walks, wildlife drives and all meals.

Jaci's Lodges (☎ 083-00 2071; www.madikwe.com; s/d with full board around R6500/8000, children R1500; 🍷 🍷 🍷) For sheer luxury, panache and design flair, Jaci's two lodges – Safari Lodge and Tree Lodge – can compete with anywhere

else in Africa. Activities are included and the quality of guiding is excellent, ensuring guests have the best chance of seeing great wildlife during their stay. Unusually for such an upmarket place, Jaci's welcomes children and has babysitters and various kids' activities for when parents need a break.

Getting There & Away

It takes about four hours to drive from Gauteng to the reserve gates via the N4 and the Rte 510 from Rustenburg, or Rte 49 from Zeerust. Buses on their way from Gaborone can be prevailed upon to stop in the reserve, while at the other end of the scale there is also a regular scheduled flight from Jo'burg airport. Ask about either of these options when booking your accommodation.

MAFIKENG

☎ 018 / pop 50,900

Mafikeng and Mmabatho were originally twin towns about 3km apart, but are now combined and Mmabatho is part of Mafikeng. Mmabatho was built as the capital of the 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana, and became famous for the monumental and absurd buildings erected by corrupt Bophuthatswana president, Lucas Mangope.

Today Mafikeng is a friendly and relaxed town with a large middle-class black population. The main reason to visit is the excellent Mafikeng Museum, one of the best in the country.

History

Mafekeng (as the Europeans called it) was established as the administrative capital of the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland (present-day Botswana). The small frontier town, led by British colonel Lord Baden-Powell, was besieged by Boer forces from October 1899 to May 1900. The siege was in many ways a civilised affair, with the besieging Boers coming into town on Sundays to attend church. However, it was seized upon by the heroics-hungry Victorian press as a symbol of British courage and steadfastness. During the siege Baden-Powell created a cadet corps for the town's boys, which was the forerunner to his boy-scout movement.

In reality, the British officers dined on oyster patties and roast suckling pig in their

mess while the Baralong and Mfengu people, who sustained equal casualties in the service of the colonialists, lived on dogs and locusts. The Baralong military hero Mathakong Kodumela, who saw his troops massacred by the Boers several times while raiding for cattle to feed the town, was dismissed by Baden-Powell as 'uncooperative' when he asked for arms to defend them.

Orientation

It's easy to get around Mafikeng on foot. Most shops and banks are around the central local bus station. It's 5km from the centre of Mafikeng to the Megacity shopping mall in Mmabatho; catch one of the many local buses. Megacity is a useful starting point if you're heading further north or west; you'll find banks, a post office and a supermarket.

Information

MONEY

All banks have ATMs and can change travellers cheques or cash at a pinch.

ABSA (cnr Warren & Main Sts)

First National Bank (Robinson St) Between Main and Shippard Sts.

Standard Bank (cnr Main & Robinson Sts)

POST & COMMUNICATIONS

Internet café (☎ 018-384 9071; per hr R20;

🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Thu; 8.30am-4.30pm Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) In the Megacity shopping mall.

Main post office Next to Megacity.

Post office (Carrington St) Between Main and Martin Sts.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Mafikeng Tourism Info & Development Centre

(☎ 018-381 3155; www.tourismnorthwest.co.za; cnr Lichtenburg Rd & Nelson Mandela Dr; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

Sights

There is reams of interesting and quirky regional information, dating from prehistoric times onward, to be gleaned at the excellent **Mafikeng Museum** (☎ 018-381 6102; cnr Carrington & Martin Sts; admission by donation; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat). Among the many displays in the museum is an exhibit charting the rise of the boy-scout movement, and an entire room dedicated to the famous siege, with original photographs and letters, and good information about the forgotten role played by the town's black population. There's also some

the N12 about 115km southwest of Jo'burg, almost verging on a city, which looks rather unappealing from the main road. While there are some pleasant leafy suburbs around the university, the only real reason to stay is to check out the Vredofort Dome (p383) in the neighbouring Free State.

Maps of Potch and the Vredofort Dome are available at the **Tourist information office** (☎ 018-293 1611; cnr Potgieter & Church Sts; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri).

The whole of Potch can be found at the **Lake Holiday Resort** (☎ 018-299 5473; fax 018-299 5475; camp sites R75, rondavels with shared bathroom from R135; 📍) on a sunny weekend. The resort's facilities include fairground attractions, boats, a café and plenty of braais. The simple rondavels come in various sizes.

Smart and modern, the **Willows Garden Hotel** (☎ 018-297 6285; willowsgch@mweb.co.za; cnr N12 & Mooiriver St; s/d with breakfast R395/500; 📶 📺 📺) is a business-style hotel with all the mod cons you'd expect. Dros restaurant next door provides room service.

Intercap (☎ 0861-287 287; www.intercape.co.za) buses stop in Potch on their daily run between Pretoria (R85, 3½ hours) and Upington in the Northern Cape (R225, eight hours). **Greyhound** (☎ 012-323 1154; www.greyhound.co.za) buses run from Potch to Cape Town (R420, 16 hours) and Jo'burg (R110, two hours).

The *Trans Karoo* train also stops here on the way between Pretoria (1st/2nd class R80/60, five hours) and Cape Town (R450/305, 24 hours).