

BEYOND

In Focus



South Africa in a SIP

South Africa's coffee culture is as diverse as its multi-ethnic population. Rooted in humble beginnings, the country is now gripped by a coffee boom that's hard to ignore. **By Ananya Bahl**



“People used to say that Capetonians can’t function without coffee. So, we embraced that notion and said, ‘Okay, we’re doing this and we’re going to do it really well,’” says Kimala Rose, Public Relations Manager, Cape Town Tourism. We’re strolling along Cape Town’s V&A Waterfront—a complex brimming with cafés, restaurants, pubs, and boutiques. In front of us, the Atlantic Ocean is sprinkled with boats that are ferrying visitors to and from the sombre Robben Island—a far cry from the *joie de vivre* of the waterfront. I hear street performers busk a rather fun version of Toni Braxton’s *Un-break My Heart* on trumpets. Seagulls are flying above buildings that are a juxtaposition of colonial and avant-garde. The ambience is eclectic, much like Cape Town’s overall vibe.

From above: Cape Town's V&A waterfront with Table Mountain in the background; use your caffeine kick to try shark cage diving in the Western Cape. Opposite, below: Coffee roasters.

Kimala is being modest about a city that's always raring to go. Cape Town is the country's creative hub and many boutique coffee establishments are here. Wherever I found myself: in the hipster neighbourhood of Woodstock, the bohemian Long Street, lounging in the upscale Camp's Bay or running past pedestrian traffic in the commercial CBD, the allure of the brew was there. The focus is on consuming coffee that's sourced ethically and locally. This affinity for the beverage isn't restricted to the Mother City, though. Other South African metropolises like Johannesburg and Durban have joined the party, catapulting the country into a self-imposed cocoon of coffee bliss.

South Africa's love for coffee wasn't always so hip. Close to a century ago, it held a different significance, one that can be found in the Afrikaans term, 'boeretrou.' Literally translating into 'farmer's comfort'—and often used synonymously with coffee—it represents a homely feeling. When the country's patriarchs spent most of their time tilling and taming vast stretches of land, it was the afternoon coffee-time that brought with it warmth, reassurance, and generous helpings of rusk-like biscuits called 'boerebeskuit.' It gave farmers a much-needed boost to continue working till dusk.



**Close to a century ago,
it was the afternoon coffee-time
that brought with it warmth,
reassurance, and generous
helpings of boerebeskuit.**

BEYOND COFFEE

SEASIDE HAVEN

Straight out of an Enid Blyton story, **Hermanus** is a seaside resort town in the Western Cape. Go **shark cage diving** (whitesharkprojects.co.za), check out the Main Road's boutiques and art galleries, sign up for a meal at the Chef's Table at **La Pentola** (hermanus.lapentola.co.za). **Misty Waves Boutique Hotel** (hermanusmistybeach.co.za) is a great stay option here.

GIN GENIUSES

Gin is big in Cape Town. Its first distillery, **Hope on Hopkins**, uses Cape fynbos and the best botanical produce on two stills—Mildred and Maude—to make the finest gin in Africa. Sign up for their private tours, tastings and tutorials on Wednesdays and Saturdays for a gin-tastic experience. hopeonhopkins.co.za



Out For A Cuppa

Get your daily caffeine kick with these speciality brews in South Africa.

THE OTTOMAN HOUSE is an ode to owner Kerime's Turkish roots. Their Praline and Turkish coffees are must-haves along with boreks and Turkish delights. Don't miss the gold almonds from Istanbul. *8 Camp Road, Muizenberg, Cape Town; +27-21/788-1293*

COCO SAFAR'S flagship store in Cavendish has the world's first Spirit espresso machine with lever technology that brews the finest flat whites, macchiatos, and hot chocolate. The cafe also houses a coffee capsule emporium—a collection of coffees from around the world in Nespresso-compatible capsules that you can take home. *cocosafar.com*

Crowned the world's best café in 2015 by UK Telegraph, **TRUTH COFFEE** has a team of artisan roasters who aim to pour the perfect cuppa. Try their luxurious 'resurrection blend' and 'deep, dark, and twisted' espresso. *truth.coffee*

The **ARTS CAFÉ** at the Kwazulu Natal Society of Arts in Durban is a charming establishment, perfect for a quiet afternoon of art critiquing coupled with coffee. Their Vienna Coffee and Blondi are unmissable. *kznsagallery.co.za*

Started by Mpumelelo Zulu and Lawrence Murothela in Johannesburg's Soweto area, **KOFI SHOP** is one of South Africa's first black-owned coffee shops in a township. Coffee-lovers will take delight in their Afrikano and Kafe Moka, made with beans from Ethiopia and Tanzania. *kofishop.co.za*

PEDERSEN LENNARD cafe doubles as a minimalist furniture store. Combine your love for caffeine and creative spaces by sampling their Deluxe Coffee and buying unique décor items. *pedersenlennard.co.za*

A film studio, biker shop, and a coffee house: that's **LOS MUERTOS** for you. Drop in for a strong cup of coffee, buy memorabilia, watch a film, and make new friends. *31 Loop Street, Cape Town, Western Cape; +27-21/835-4321*

DELUXE COFFEEWORKS focuses on good music, better people, and the best coffee—roasted and served with love. Buy daily roasted in-house blends of handpicked beans from Brazil, Ethiopia, and Guatemala. They have outlets in Cape Town and Stellenbosch. *deluxecoffeeworks.co.za*

LATITUDE 33'S owners have picked the best from their travels and combined it at this cafe. Australian clothing labels, an art gallery, signature burgers, and of course, coffee are the order of the day. *lat33.co.za*

LOADING BAY features a menswear store, a skincare boutique, and a spacious café in the culturally-rich De Waterkant district. *loadingbay.co.za*



From above: Come to the bustling Long Street in Cape Town for a cup of Joe; you can buy freshly roasted coffee from Deluxe Coffeeworks.



The brew isn't just a drink or culture here—it's like a religion.

This sentiment can still be found in cafés today, albeit with a loss of the rusticism. Coffee is still seen as a comforter, an ever-present friend through the good times and the bad. It's about generosity, bonding with friends and family, elongated coffee sessions, or simply enjoying some alone time with your cuppa. The grab-and-go type is not popular. As Kimala puts it, "Coffee here is massive!"

New York-based artist and performer Flash Rosenberg once said, "I believe humans get a lot done, not because we're smart, but because we have thumbs so we can make coffee." I'm reminded of these words as I walk out of Cape Town's Longmarket. I'm standing outside the Methodist Church, a stone's throw away from the flea market, and staring at a coffee shop housed in the church building aptly titled, 'Heaven Coffee.' I'm convinced, now more than ever, that the brew isn't just a drink or culture here—it's a religion, and South Africans worship their coffee. ■