



Happy Birthday Nelson Mandela

Visit the Rainbow Nation to honour the contributions Nelson Mandela made to improve human rights in South Africa and around the world

By Johanna Read

On July 18, 1918, a baby named Rolihlahla Mandela was born into the Madiba clan in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Given the name Nelson by a teacher when he started school, he would later become not only South Africa's first democratically-elected president but also a world leader in human rights.

While South Africa is commonly thought of as a safari and wine destination, visitors can now follow "Madiba's Journey" and see sites commemorating

Mandela's life and legacy. They'll likely bring tears of both sadness and hope, but also provide a rich understanding of the country and of the world.

There are 27 major Madiba's Journey sites—one for each year that Mandela was imprisoned—and 100 sites in total in celebration of the 100 years since his birth.

Memorials to Mandela, affectionately called Madiba, are everywhere in South Africa. Official Madiba's Journey sites

are concentrated in four provinces: in the southernmost province, Western Cape, which is home to the country's legislative capital, Cape Town; in the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal provinces, both along the Indian Ocean; and in the country's smallest province, Gauteng, home to Johannesburg and where most flights from Europe and North America arrive.

Start your journey in Johannesburg at the Apartheid Museum (get a preview until January 2019 at the Mandela ex-



hibit in Winnipeg's Canadian Museum for Human Rights). Visit Constitution Hill, a former prison where both Mandela and Gandhi were held, and stop by Mandela's last house in Houghton, where kids still leave stones with messages of hope. Outside Joburg, in Soweto, take a tuktuk or bike tour to see the house where Mandela and his family lived and learn about freedom fighters and current life in South Africa's most famous township.

Robben Island is Cape Town's best known Mandela heritage site. Here, former political prisoners show visitors Mandela's tiny cell and explain the conditions prisoners lived under simply because they resisted the Apartheid government. Take the Footsteps to Freedom tour to several Cape Town sites linked to Mandela and to fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu (there's even a jazz club in the basement of Tutu's church).

In Port Elizabeth, the Indian Ocean city famous for its dolphin and whale watching, tour Route 67—an art-filled walk commemorating the 67 years Mandela dedicated to bringing freedom to South Africa. Climb 67 steps through a wide selection of public art up to the dramatic Voting Line sculpture and have your photo taken with Mandela, his fist upraised in determination and solidarity. He leads a line of Rainbow Nation voters who peacefully cast ballots in the country's first democratic election in 1994.

The city of Durban, with its long beaches and excellent surfing waves, also has a number of Mandela sites. The Freedom Route takes you to the highlights. Don't miss the Nelson Mandela Capture Site outside Durban near Howick. There's a small museum marking the spot where Mandela, disguised as a chauffeur, was arrested on August 5, 1962, the

beginning of his 27-year imprisonment and "long walk to freedom".

On the 50th anniversary of his capture, a stunning sculpture was unveiled at the site. Designed by Marco Cianfanelli, at first glance the sculpture simply looks like 50 columns set in the ground. Walk toward it down the path with plaques representing key events in the long walk to freedom. When you reach the perfect spot, the laser-cut steel columns suddenly snap into focus to form the profile of South Africa's famous freedom fighter.

To plan your visit, download the Madiba's Journey traveller app. It helps you plot an itinerary and provides additional background on each of the sites. For more information on tourism in South Africa, visit SouthAfrica.net. South African Airways had direct flights from New York's JFK and from London Heathrow.

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