The Western Cape Epic

Trip Code: PXKC

Version:

PIONEER	GUIDED GROUP	10 TOUGH



HIGHLIGHTS

- The challenging gravel road ascent to the Swartbert Pass (1568m)
- Continuous, point-to-point ride with no transfers
- Colourful mix of rugged mountain and fertile farmed landscapes
- Winetasting at Stellenbosch and a night in Cape Town

AT A GLANCE

- 11 days biking
- 866 kilometres
- 40% surfaced road
- 60% gravel road
- 95% vehicle supported
- Max altitude - 1568 metres
- Join at Plettenberg Bay, end Cape Town

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

South Africa's most mountainous and diverse province, the Western Cape extends from Plettenberg Bay in the east to Cape Town. With the Indian Ocean to the south, the province is crossed east to west by a number of prominent mountain ranges, amongst them; Swartberg, Langeberg, Outeniqua and Rooiberg. Gravel roads dating from the 1860's cross these ranges and provide some of the highlights, not to mention the challenges, of this fantastic new cycling adventure.

There are gravel roads throughout the Western Cape and quite recently established long-distance cycle routes that take advantage of these roads. We have combined two of these routes - the Cross Cape Ride and the Karoo Crossing - to produce the ultimate South African cycle adventure. We'll cycle 866 kilometres in 11 days, from 'Plett' to the Garden Route coastal gem of Knysna, then inland via historic towns, winding mountain passes, ancient rock engravings and a first crossing of the arid, desert-like Little Karoo. There are also expanses of fertile farmland with olive groves, fruit trees and vineyards adding to the colour and pattern of the landscape. Beyond the high point of the route at the Swartberg Pass (1568m), we reach Calitzdorp and rejoin the Cape Cross Ride. Several challenging days follow as we recross the Little Karoo and tackle more passes, including the Rooiberg and Franschhoek, en-route to journey's end in the Cape Winelands capital of Stellenbosch. Winetasting at Stellenbosch and a night in Cape Town provide a suitably chilled out conclusion to this epic adventure.

Is this holiday for you?

ADVENTURE CYCLING. With an average of almost 80 kilometres and 1300 metres of accumulated ascent each day for 11 days (two thirds on gravel roads) this is a challenging undertaking, suitable for reasonably committed cyclists with good endurance. A hardtail mountain bike will work well on the non-technical mix of paved and gravel roads. You can also take on this challenge on your gravel bike. BIKE HIRE AVAILABLE LOCALLY.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A locally based English speaking bike guide
- Single timed airport transfers as described
- A support vehicle and driver
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as per the Meal Plan
- Stellenbosch wine tasting

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if required)
- Tips for local guide and crew
- Airport departure taxes (if applicable)
- Optional activities
- Some meals as per the Meal Plan
- Miscellaneous personal expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Bike Carriage on the flights - please check with your carrier for charges
- Bike hire

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the accommodation in Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, South Africa.

A single transfer from Port Elizabeth Airport is provided, usually in the early afternoon of Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary.

If this transfer does not work with your flights, we can book for you a private transfer from Port Elizabeth Airport to Plettenberg Bay. This is a relatively expensive option, especially for a single traveller. A taxi booked directly at the airport on arrival would be a little less costly and an Uber would be less costly still.

Another option would be to arrive a day early into Port Elizabeth and to join the group transfer on the following day. We can book your accommodation for you if you choose to do that.

On the last day of the Land Only itinerary there is a single transfer from the hotel in Cape Town to Cape Town Airport for flights departing in the early afternoon.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included (except 1 lunch and 4 dinners).

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

Breakfast is usually cereal, coffee, tea and toast. Lunches will be picnic style; salads and cold meats and cheeses for making up sandwiches. Dinners will be braais (barbecue), potjies (stew), stir fries, pasta, etc. The local team will provide most of the meals, including cooking dinners at the overnight accommodation. Water is provided from the support vehicle and there are drinking water taps at the majority of the lodges and guesthouses that we use. It's a good idea to bring a supply of your favourite energy bars, gels etc. from home, as these are not widely available locally.

Accommodation

Throughout the tour we use a mix of comfortable guesthouse, chalet and cabin accommodation. Accommodation is based on twin-share rooms with en-suite facilities, apart from 2 nights where we have 2 rooms sharing a bathroom. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. Depending on availability it may also be possible to book single room occupancy. For additional hotel prices and single supplement costs please refer to the dates and prices page of the trip on our website. Please note that the local team will appreciate help with group chores, such as meal preparation and tidying up after meals.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The trip will be led by an experienced local cycling guide. In addition, there will be a support vehicle and driver.

Spending Money

A total of about £300 should cover your miscellaneous expenses, departure taxes and non-included meals. The South African currency is the Rand and this can be obtained at the airport on arrival and from ATM's in several places on our route.

Guidance on Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guide and driver for work well done. As a rough guide, we suggest you allow a total of £50 for tipping your crew.

Your Bike

If you are taking your own bike, we suggest that a 'hardtail' mountain bike with front suspension is appropriate for this holiday. It should have a good range of gears and we recommend you fit fast-rolling tyres with tightly spaced centre knobs for speed on the paved sections, paired with aggressive shoulder knobs for cornering grip on the loose gravel roads.

A gravel bike can also work well on this tour. Tyres similar to those described above should be fitted and we recommend a minimum tyre width of 50 mm to cope with the worst of the loose gravel.

Since you are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, it's important to ensure it is in good working order. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you.

Please contact us if you are unsure about the suitability of your bike.

Bike Hire

You can either take your own bike or hire one locally. Our agent has a mix of Giant Talon 29ER 1 and Giant Fathom 29ER 1 bikes for hire which are perfect for this ride. These are hardtail bikes purchased in either 2016 or 2017. The two models of bike are similar, with Shimano components, Shimano hydraulic disc brakes and 100mm suspension forks. The bikes are also fitted with a single bottle cage. Bike rental is subject to availability and costs £200 (US$255 or €240) paid in Plettenberg Bay on Day 1. Please note that this must be paid in cash. If you want to hire a bike, please contact the KE office and we can reserve one on your behalf. We must stress that your hire contract is with the local rental company and KE cannot be held responsible for any issues arising from bike rental. If you do hire a bike, we recommend that you take your own shoes, pedals and possibly even your saddle, which will go a long way towards making it feel like your own bike. You will also need to take a helmet, which must be worn at all times when riding. The hire bikes are generally fitted with regular knobbly tyres.

Travelling With Your Bike

Airlines require that you pack your bike properly for travel and for this holiday we recommend that you use a purpose-made soft bike bag. These can be relatively inexpensive. They are also light in weight, easy to handle and, most importantly, can be packed into a small space to allow easy transportation in the support vehicle. You will need to partially dismantle your bike to pack it in your bag.

PLEASE DO NOT USE a purpose-made rigid bike box for this holiday. We do not have the space in the support vehicle to transport these bulky items.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding travelling with your bike.

Vehicle Support

Throughout this trip we have the back up of a support vehicle, which is usually a 14 - seater Mercedes Sprinter with a trailer for the bikes. Each morning our main baggage will be loaded onto the support vehicle that generally follow the group on the day's ride. The local biking leader and the support vehicle driver will watch over the group and there will be regular water stops, every 20 kilometres or so and at the top of each of the passes, to allow the biking group to reassemble. We want everyone to enjoy their cycling experience on this trip and we recognise the importance of group members being able to cycle at their own pace. The support vehicle will pick up any group members who wish to take a break from cycling at any time.

Baggage Allowance

Apart from your bike in its bag (if you are taking your own bike), you should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a rugged kitbag or holdall, as well as a small day pack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack. The day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras and GPS devices whilst travelling and will also carry your day-ride essentials during the rides.

Your baggage allowance on the flights will depend on your airline. When choosing your flights, whether booking them directly or through KE, you will need to consider the cost of carrying your bike. These costs are your responsibility.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa South Africa

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays. You must have 2 blank pages in your passport.

Rules on **travelling with children under 18 years** have been relaxed. Visa exempt children entering South Africa only need passports, and not birth certificates as previously required. This applies if the child is travelling with both parents, one parent or an adult who is not a biological parent, and school groups. There are some different requirements for unaccompanied children, and children who do not have UK passports or visa exempt passports. For full details please see the FCDO website.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in South Africa is the South African Rand.

Preparing for your Holiday

The better conditioned you are the more you will enjoy your trip. We suggest that you adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long cycle rides in hilly country and/or gravel road or forest track rides to ensure you are physically capable of taking part in this trip - this will also provide you with an opportunity to make sure all your riding kit is tried and tested before you travel. Cycling is obviously the best activity to prepare for this trip, however, running, hillwalking and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.

Climate

South Africa's Western Cape has a Mediterranean climate but with many microclimates that provide varying temperatures and rainfall levels. The southern autumn - April and May - is warm and sunny with little rain. Maximum daily temperatures will be around 20 to 25 degrees Centigrade dropping as low as 10 to 15 degrees at night in some places.

Books

- Lonely Planet. Cape Town and the Garden Route.
- Lonely Planet. South Africa. Lesotho and Eswatini.
- Insight Guides. South Africa.
- The Rough Guide to South Africa.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

For this holiday you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and helmet (which must be worn at all times when cycling).

Bike Wear

- Cycling helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Daypack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack (e.g. Camelbak)
- Water bladder - min. 2 litres water capacity
- Cycling shirts including 1 long sleeve / or lycra arm warmers
- Cycling shorts - 2 pairs
- Bib tights and/or lycra leg warmers
- Fleece jacket or jumper
- Lightweight windproof top

- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Regular biking gloves
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)
- Camera
- Mobile phone

Other Stuff

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing and footwear
- Warm jacket for cool evenings
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries, including anti-bacterial handwash
- Swimwear
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Insect Repellant
- Chamois cream (e.g. Assos/Ozone)
- Rear light (eg. clip-on silicone band LED) for early morning starts
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Water purification tablets
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Spares

If you are hiring a bike you do not need to bring any spares. The hire bikes are provided in good condition and a supply of spares is carried. You may be asked to pay directly for any spares used, especially in the case of crash damage or damage by mis-use. If you are taking your own bike, you should consider taking a minimum of spares, including a couple of spare spokes (for each wheel if they are different), spare brake blocks (or brake disc pads), chain links/chain connector, rear derailleur hanger and any non-standard parts specific to your bike. If you are taking your own bike, we suggest that you also take a couple of spare inner tubes.

Repairs

Whilst not essential, it is a good idea that you familiarise yourself with how to carry out at least some basic repairs to your bike e.g. changing an inner tube and fixing a puncture. Your bike guide will be happy to help with repairs and general maintenance, but being able to carry out a simple repair yourself could save the inconvenience of having to wait for assistance.

Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take suitable water bottle(s) or a hydration pack and you should also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Always Looking for a New ChallengeWe have the imagination and the experience and the local contacts that allow us to come up with innovative and exciting adventure holidays - like this one!

Please Note This document was downloaded on 09/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change