

History and culture in Pretoria

History and culture in Pretoria form part of the fascinating landscape of the city. Visit the Union Buildings and Freedom Park; spend time in the various museums and get to know about African and Afrikaner culture; stroll around Church Square and imbibe a sense of history.

History and culture in Pretoria/Tshwane reveals a lot about the character of this city. Once the capital of the old independent Transvaal Boere Republic, the new democratic Pretoria lies in Gauteng province, as part of the Tshwane municipality, and is the administrative and diplomatic hub of the country.

In Pretoria, history and culture is part of everyday life and landmarks of the past are everywhere. A pleasant stroll around Church Square in the heart of town takes visitors past *Die Raadsaal*, the parliament buildings of the former Boer Republic. Visitors will also see the Palace of Justice, used as a military hospital until 1902 by the British, when the hostilities of the Anglo-Boer War ceased.

The imposing Union Buildings, designed by Sir Herbert Baker, are a top attraction when visiting Pretoria. The crescent-shaped complex was built in 1910 to house the administrative offices of the Union of South Africa.

Art lovers who appreciate African and Southern African art should visit the Pretoria Art Museum in Arcadia. Set in beautiful grounds, it is often the chosen venue for launches and exhibitions celebrating ethnic diversity.

The University of Pretoria houses a distinguished collection of artworks. The National Cultural History Museum is rich in expressions of rock art, Ndebele murals and various historic gold and silver artefacts.

The Freedom Park is a whole new way of 'seeing' South African history. Intended to embody the nation's historical consciousness, the hill-top complex in Salvokop memorialises the struggle and the liberation heroes who have shaped the modern South African nation.

Here you'll find a memorial list of all those killed in both World War I and II, the Boer Wars and those who lost their lives during the turbulent times of apartheid, and stands as a monument to democracy. No trip to Pretoria or Tshwane is complete without a visit to Freedom Park.

Did you know?

One of Pretoria's most attractive examples of an historical building is Melrose House at 275 Jacob Maré Street. Once the home of a wealthy businessman, it dates back to the 1880s.

PRETORIA – JACARANDA CITY

Pretoria's architectural highlights include the Union Buildings, National Heritage Site the Voortrekker Monument, Mahlamba Ndlopfu – the President's residence in Pretoria – the South African Reserve Bank, Loftus Versfeld sports stadium and the South African State Theatre.

Located about 50km north of Johannesburg and surrounded by the foothills of the Magaliesberg mountains, the city of Pretoria is South Africa's administrative capital and home to government departments, ministries, foreign embassies and diplomatic missions.

Buildings in Pretoria feature a marked colonial influence, along with touches of art deco and South African-style architecture. City landmarks worth visiting include the Union Buildings (South Africa's seat of government), the Voortrekker Monument (a granite edifice commemorating the Voortrekkers' journey from the Cape to the hinterland and which is a National Heritage Site), Mahlamba Ndlopfu (the President's house in Pretoria), the South African Reserve Bank, Loftus Versfeld sports stadium and the South African State Theatre.

Pretoria is also home to the National Zoological Gardens and the Pretoria National Botanical Garden, along with nature reserves such Groenkloof, Rietvlei, Moreleta Spruit, Faerie Glen, Wonderboom Nature Reserve and the Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary,

Pretoria is also proud of its educational institutions: the University of South Africa (the largest distance learning university in Africa), the Tshwane University of Technology, University of Pretoria (Tukkies) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

Those with an interest in history should stop off at Freedom Park on Salvokop – a monument to democracy – and Kruger House, the historical residence of former President of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger.

The Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History provides fascinating insight into Stone Age and Iron Age artefacts, while the Mapungubwe Museum showcases excavated gold ornaments, ivory, ceramics, clay figurines, beads, iron and copper from a 13th century Iron Age settlement in Limpopo.

South Africa's national sport is rugby football, and Pretoria's Loftus Versfeld is home to the Blue Bulls rugby team, one of the country's top sides. If there's a match on, don't miss it.

Pretoria and its suburbs are not short of shopping destinations, with malls such as Atterbury, Brooklyn, Centurion, Hatfield, Kolonnade, Menlyn Park, Sammy Marks, Sunny Park, Woodlands, Wonderboom Junction and Wonderpark offering shoppers a host of choices. Most of the larger shopping malls feature cinema and restaurant complexes.

Did you know?

Pretoria is popularly known as Jacaranda City due to the thousands of lilac-bloomed jacaranda trees that line its streets, parks and gardens.

PRETORIA TOURIST ATTRACTIONS – PLACES TO VISIT

- **The Voortrekker Monument**

Address: Eeufees Rd, Pretoria

Opened: December 16, 1949

Height: 62 m

Architect: Gerard Moerdijk

The Voortrekker Monument commemorates the epic exodus of disillusioned Boers from the Cape into the interior. This massive monument is ringed with granite ox-wagons and inside contains a frieze of Boer heroics. The large grounds have been declared a National Nature Reserve, which abounds with small game.

Did you know?

The granite frieze in the Voortrekker Monument is the largest in the world.

The monolithic Voortrekker Monument is one of the first landmarks visitors see as they drive into Pretoria from the south.

It commemorates the epic exodus by disillusioned Boers from the Cape into the interior, which laid the foundation for the borders of present day South Africa.

In 1834 slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire. This was highly unpopular with the Boers and became the focal issue of greater disaffection.

In what has come to be known as the Great Trek, thousands of Boers began migrating from the Cape in late 1835. Beyond the border they fanned out, with most choosing to continue either into the central interior or north-east into present day KwaZulu-Natal.

There Zulu king Dingane took fright at the arrival of large numbers of settlers. He massacred one group under Piet Retief and ambushed another before being defeated at Blood River on 16 December 1838.

Shortly after, the British annexed what the Boers called Natalia, causing them to again trek into the interior to the areas that were to become the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal.

Gerard Moerdijk designed the Voortrekker Monument, opened on 16 December 1949. Ringed by 64 granite ox-wagons outside, inside it features a historical frieze and cenotaph, which is lit every 16 December by a shaft of sunlight through an opening in the roof. The granite frieze, depicting the heroics of the trekkers on 27 bas-relief panels, is the largest in the world.

On the outside of this Pretoria monument are five massive statues of Boer leaders and another by Anton von Wouw of a Boer woman and her 2 children. On the grounds are an indigenous garden and an open-air amphitheatre. In 1992 the Voortrekker Monument Nature Reserve was declared around the site.

- **Union Buildings**

Address: Government Ave, Pretoria, 0002

Opened: 1913

Phone: 012 300 5200

Construction started: November 1, 1910

Architect: Herbert Baker

Architectural styles: Italian Renaissance, Neoclassical architecture, Cape Dutch architecture, Edwardian architecture

Pretoria's Union Buildings, the official seat of the national government, house the offices of the South African president and are located atop the Meintjieskop in the Arcadia suburb of Tshwane. An important South African heritage site, the impressive building is surrounded by pretty terraced gardens that offer panoramic views over the city.

The Union Buildings are one of the most recognisable and impressive heritage landmarks in Tshwane. The 285 metre long sandstone building was designed by Sir Herbert Baker in 1910 to mark the Union of South Africa. The neo-classical design of the semi-circular building reflects the British imperial tastes of the time and the site itself, high on a central ridge looking out over the city, was chosen thanks to its similarity to the location of the acropolis in Athens. The two wings of the building and their twin domed towers are said to represent the Afrikaans and English languages, joined together by a central curved courtyard, symbolic of the union of the communities following years of war.

The Union Buildings have been the backdrop for some of the country's most pivotal moments such as the 20 000 strong march on August 9, 1956, led by South African women of all races protesting against the apartheid pass laws. For international visitors this iconic building is most memorable as the place where Nelson Mandela was inaugurated in 1994 as the first democratically elected leader of South Africa, a moment which was screened live on television to millions of viewers across the world.

Unfortunately, you cannot go inside the buildings themselves, but visitors are free to explore the terraced gardens that look out over the city. The gardens are a particularly popular place for family picnics or to have wedding photos taken and also often function as the venue for major concerts and festivals.

Within the gardens you'll find various monuments to important historic South African figures including a monument of General Louis Botha riding his horse and an imposing nine metre tall bronze statue of Nelson Mandela which was unveiled here just after his death in 2013.

- **Loftus Versfeld Stadium, Pretoria**

Address: Kirkness St, Pretoria, 0007

Capacity: 51,762

Opened: 1923

Phone: 012 420 0700

Sponsorships have come and gone, but Pretoria's landmark Loftus Versfeld Stadium has resisted all attempts at name changes, and stubbornly remains good old Loftus. Some of the world's entertainment greats, from Pavarotti to UB40, and Celine Dion to Robbie Williams, have graced the pitch, belting spectacular concerts out into the night, but first and foremost, Loftus is a sporting ground.

Loftus Versfeld Stadium is one of South Africa's most iconic sporting venues, with a history that dates back over a century. It was named after Robert Owen Loftus Versfeld, who was the founder of organised sports in Pretoria, but unlike some other sporting venues which have changed their names, this Pretoria stadium has clung on to its original name. Locals know it affectionately as just 'Loftus'.

Over the decades, it has undergone many upgrades – the last major one in readiness for the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ when it hosted six matches, including the Round 16 match between Paraguay and Japan (Paraguay won 5-3 on penalties).

Some R90-million was spent on a new roof over its East Pavilion, new VIP seating, an upgraded lighting system and facilities for emergency power. New video boards, scoreboards, turnstiles and comprehensive media facilities were all installed as well as additional seats with a spectator capacity of 51 762.

Loftus Versfeld Stadium hosted both the Rugby World Cup in 1995 and the African Cup of Nations in 1996. It was the field on which South Africa first won a soccer match against European opposition, namely Sweden, in 1999. It has hosted the 2013 Castle Rugby Championship, the 2013 ABSA Currie Cup Final, as well as numerous soccer and boxing matches.

To be at Loftus Versfeld, to hear the crowd roar as its teams take to the field, and the swell of thousands of proud voices singing South Africa's national anthem, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, is to share a quintessential experience of South Africa's sporting culture.

The seemingly stately city of Pretoria may be the political and diplomatic hub of Gauteng province, but Loftus Versfeld is the sporting heart of South Africa.

Did you know?

Loftus Versfeld is also the home ground of the celebrated Blue Bulls rugby team.

- **Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History, Pretoria**

Address: Bosman St & Visagie St, Pretoria, 0002

The National Museum of Cultural History has items appealing to all, from the ancient art of the San to contemporary works of leading artists; from the distant history of Mapungubwe to apartheid in the recent past. Appropriately situated in the capital, this stately institution also features a programme of temporary exhibits.

The National Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria is housed in the Old Mint, a building of historical importance in South Africa's capital city.

Coins may no longer be produced here but what this building contains is just as valuable, including wide-ranging cultural and natural displays, and prized South African artworks.

So diverse are the collections here that any visitor is guaranteed to find an exhibit or two to offer hours of absorbing viewing.

One exhibit, titled 'Schroda' after a site in the ancient kingdom of Mapungubwe, displays early Iron Age clay figurines excavated from this World Heritage Site in the province of Limpopo. Over 1 000 years old, the sculptures relate to cultural practices such as initiation and *lobola* (the payment of cattle as a bride price).

There is also a large display of rock art, both paintings and engravings, with shamanic scenes in which trance is used to ascend to a spiritual world.

Works of iconic figures of the South African art world are on display along with South African crafts, including beading, weaving, basketry and embroidery.

Delving into recent apartheid history, you'll find a display featuring the forced removals of the Indian, African and Asian populations from the neighbourhoods of Lady Selborne and Marabastad in Pretoria in the 1960s.

The National Museum of Cultural History is a member of the Ditsong Museums, a group of eight Gauteng-based museums, seven of which are in Pretoria. With some five million objects stored behind the scenes, it also showcases some of its collections in an ongoing programme of themed displays.

Did you know?

Rock art showcased in the National Cultural History Museum reflects the accessing of spiritual power by the San people through their trance dance.

- **The South African State Theatre, Pretoria**

Address: 320 Pretorius St, Pretoria, 0002

Phone: 012 392 4000

Performing arts venues that are, in themselves, artistic by design are very rare. It's a combination that offers an entirely different meaning of art for art's sake and is best understood if viewed and visited as part of an audience. Come to the South African State Theatre and be moved – in more ways than one ...

Surrounded by high-rises and the capital's hustle and bustle, the South African State Theatre in Pretoria is not just devoted to the promotion of the performing arts, but is itself a major drawcard for tourists, thanks to its architectural splendour.

Occupying an entire block in the city centre, the State, as it's commonly known, consists of five theatres, a large public square embracing pedestrian patronage, restaurants and a coffee shop.

More importantly, since staging its first show in 1981, the State Theatre in Pretoria has featured a wide range of productions including opera, ballet, musicals, drama, cabaret and children's theatre.

In 2006, the South African State Theatre affirmed its position as the premier venue for large-scale productions when its production of *Swan Lake* by the St Petersburg Ballet Theatre drew packed houses.

As one of the principal receiving houses for ballet performances on the sub-continent, opening night of *Swan Lake* at the State played out like a who's who of people from powerful sectors of sub-Saharan society.

But it's not the only headline-making show that the State Theatre has catered for. Many curtains have been lifted here on world-class productions including *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Sound of Music*, and South Africa's own *Sarafina!*, a musical tour de force by impresario Mbongeni Ngema.

Situated in a city known for its spacious performing arts venues, the State Theatre is unrivalled not only by any other dance theatre in Pretoria or any other city in Africa, but can hold its own against the best that the biggest has to offer, including the Sydney Opera House.

Its many spacious theatres, nooks, crannies and maze of connecting corridors offer audiences much more than a night of performing art.

A dramatic edifice in itself, going to the State Theatre in Pretoria is an experience that stays with people long after the show's curtain has come down.

Did you know?

Designed by architects Hans and Roelf Botha, the State Theatre in Pretoria was once the largest reception venue of performing arts in the southern hemisphere.

- **Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria**

Address: Kgorong Building, Unisa Muckleneuk campus, Preller St, Pretoria, 0002
Phone: 012 441 5683

As an institute of learning, the University of South Africa (Unisa) Art Gallery hosts a range of interesting exhibitions throughout the year. These exhibitions invite debate, stimulate learning, encourage interesting collaborations and showcase exciting artistic talent from South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

The Unisa Art Gallery is one of the most significant exhibition spaces in South Africa. It is best known for its collection of contemporary South African art.

The Unisa Art Collection contains a good cross-section of drawings, graphics, photography, woven tapestries, appliqués, sculpture and mixed media works, by artists such as Gerald Sekoto, Irma Stern, Walter Battiss, David Goldblatt, Nicolas Slovo and Angela Buckland, as well as art works by recent graduates and young artists.

Works are also considered for their innovation and their contribution to a specific genre or medium within the collection. This approach means the gallery has one of South Africa's best collections of graphic prints and photographs from prominent artists like Roger Ballen and Zanele Muholi.

This Pretoria art gallery hosts regular exhibitions of art from its own collection. These exhibitions are generally curated in-house. Some exhibitions are designed to look at medium and technique. Others are more conceptually driven and create conversations between selected works of art or artists.

As an institute of learning, the Unisa Art Gallery also prides itself on hosting experimental and challenging exhibitions that invite debate and stimulate learning.

Its temporary exhibitions of work from outside of its collection have included art by South Africa's top documentary photographers, sculptors, lithographers and craft workers, including Cedric Nunn, Guy Tillim, and William Kentridge.

The gallery also hosts travelling exhibitions which provide students, teachers and visitors with exciting international visual and conceptual exchanges.

One of the gallery's annual highlights is the UNISA 4th level Visual Arts student exhibition, where graduating students exhibit their work in the gallery space. The gallery also hosts the Advanced Diploma student's exhibition and, occasionally, Masters Student exhibitions.

Today, the Unisa Art Gallery remains focussed on acquiring representative works by both established and peripheral South African artists that are individual expressions of diverse South African identities.

Did you know?

The Unisa Permanent Art Collection consists of over 1500 artworks.

- **Pretoria Art Museum, Gauteng**

Address: Schoeman St & Wessels St, Arcadia Park Pretoria

Phone: 012 358 6750

Established: 1964

The Pretoria Art Museum's collection policy has always focused on establishing a representative collection of local art. It hosts revolving exhibitions of work from its permanent collection, as well as regular temporary exhibitions by local artists, including urban and rural art, paintings, sculpture, graphics, tapestries, photographic prints and ceramics.

The Pretoria Art Museum focuses on showcasing exceptional local art. Its permanent collection includes works by such legendary South African artists such as Pieter Wenning, Henk Pierneef, Frans Oerder, Anton van Wouw and Gerard Sekoto.

This art gallery's permanent collection also contains works from the Lady Michaelis Collection, international graphic art, 17th century Dutch paintings and pieces by artists such as Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Kathe Kollwitz and Salvador Dali.

The Pretoria Art Museum was established to house the City Council's growing art collection, which had been built up since the early 1930s. Its current building was constructed in the early 1960s.

From the start, this Pretoria museum took a strategic decision to concentrate on establishing a representative collection of local art and today, its permanent collection represents a comprehensive historical record of South African art.

Highlights from the gallery's permanent collection include several works by Walter Battiss, township street scenes by Gerard Sekoto and one of the biggest collections of Henk Pierneef's work, including paintings, drawings and graphic work such as woodcuts, linocuts and etchings. Among these are 18 paintings of early Pretoria that are an important part of the collection. The Pretoria Art Museum also has a number of post-impressionist and expressionist works by Maggie Laubscher and Irma Stern.

Today, the Pretoria Art Museum focuses on collecting urban and rural art that includes paintings, sculpture, graphics, tapestries, photographic prints and ceramics. It has several exhibition halls that host concurrent exhibitions from the permanent collection, as well as temporary local and international exhibitions.

Did you know?

The Pretoria Art Museum's collection was housed in the City Hall from 1930 until 1964.

- **Pretoria Botanical Gardens**

Address: 2 Cussonia Ave, Pretoria, 0186

Phone: 012 843 5071

The Pretoria Botanical Gardens sprawl over 70ha in the eastern suburbs of the Jacaranda City. A haven of biodiversity, the garden supports a thriving wildlife population that includes antelope, bushbabies and mongooses. It's also a prime spot from which to view the annual white butterfly migration.

The Pretoria Botanical Gardens are one of two national botanical gardens in Gauteng. It has its roots in a scientific facility dating back to the 1950s, used for botanical research.

Fortunately for botanical enthusiasts, the garden was officially opened to the public in 1984 and has since become a popular visitor attraction in the Jacaranda City.

As a green lung in the city, it boasts many different biomes, including savanna and forest, and features specimens of half of all tree species found in South Africa.

More than 50ha of the gardens are developed, showcasing predominantly local plant species. There are different themed gardens, such as the medicinal garden, that can be explored.

The quartzite ridge that divides the gardens offers up two distinct botanical areas – the warm north-facing and the cooler south-facing slopes. Each has its own natural vegetation that has adapted to the prevailing conditions. Visitors will enjoy the abundant indigenous flora along this section, easily accessed via a paved trail.

Wildlife in the Pretoria Botanical Gardens is varied and includes everything from birds to antelope. It has recorded over 220 bird species, including raptors such as kestrels, hawks, falcons and eagles.

In the natural grasslands, keep your eyes open for duikers (small antelope), scrub hares and mongooses, which forage in this area in the late afternoon. You might even be lucky enough to spot some of the bushbabies that frequent the woodland sections.

If you're in the area between December and February, make sure you visit the gardens to witness the annual migration of the brown-veined white butterfly, when 1 000s of these creatures fill the sky en route to Mozambique.

Did you know?

The gardens feature an avenue of *Bolusanthus* trees that were among the garden's first plantings in 1946

- **The National Zoological Gardens, Gauteng**

Address: 232 Boom St, Pretoria

Phone:012 339 2700

The oldest and largest zoo in the country, the National Zoological Gardens in downtown Pretoria boasts a collection of wildlife that is second to none, including an extremely rare white tiger, a plethora of unusual insects and a host of large carnivores.

The only zoo with national status in the country, the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa first opened in 1899 and has become one of the top-rated zoos in the world, attracting over 600 000 visitors annually.

More widely known as the Pretoria Zoo, the National Zoological Gardens has well over 3 000 individual animals representing over 500 different species and the collection includes mammals, fish, birds, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles.

Situated on 85ha in downtown Pretoria, the zoo also boasts the largest inland aquarium in the country, a well-appointed reptile park and the third largest collection of exotic trees in South Africa.

While these zoological gardens have many rare and unusual specimens, gone are the days when zoos were merely a glorified list of the odd and exotic held in cages; today zoos play an important role in conservation efforts and the Pretoria Zoo is at the forefront of these efforts, forming part of the National Research Foundation.

But if it's animals you've come to see the Pretoria Zoo will satisfy all your cravings. All the usual suspects are here, held in spacious enclosures designed to mimic the animal's natural habitat as best as possible. The zoo also holds one of the few white tigers in captivity, and is the only zoo in the world to feature an insectarium.

A wonderful innovation is the Adopt-an-Animal scheme that helps provide support for the animal's food and care for a year. Join the scheme and your entrance to the zoo is free, allowing you to visit your wild child as often as you like.

The Pretoria Zoo features a full range of tours and programmes, including overnight camping options and moonlight tours, perfect for viewing some of the more elusive nocturnal animals.

Did you know?

The first white rhino born in captivity was delivered at the Pretoria Zoo.

- **Pretoria – surrounding areas**

Pretoria's surrounding areas offer a wealth of attractions for the independent traveller – there's the Dinokeng tourism region, the Cradle of Humankind, the Hartbeespoort Dam and the Magaliesberg, as well as a number of small noteworthy attractions just outside the city limits.

Pretoria's surrounding areas give visitors the opportunity to explore the Gauteng province. There's Johannesburg just 45 minutes away (along the highway), the Dinokeng area, the Magaliesberg, the Cradle of Humankind and Hartbeespoort Dam.

Of all the areas surrounding Pretoria/Tshwane, Dinokeng offers the widest variety of fun attractions. Here you can go on game drives, nature walks, visit the Cullinan mine (where the world's largest diamond was found), learn about Ndebele culture, visit the Khuwana Tavern and spend time at a bona fide Buddhist Temple. It's no wonder then that this tourism region has been touted as 'Africa in one day'. The town of Cullinan is part of this route and is a great place for a relaxed lunch.

The Cradle of Humankind is also an easy drive from Pretoria and here you'll find a number of attractions including the Sterkfontein Caves and the fascinating Maropeng Visitor Centre. There are also wonderful eateries in the area – with Roots restaurant at the Forum Homini boutique hotel leading the way.

Hartbeespoort Dam, located along the R512, is a great place for water sports, golf and weekend getaways. There are a number of attractions close to the dam including the Elephant & Monkey Sanctuaries, an aerial cableway, snake parks, craft and curio stores and a number of spas.

The Magaliesberg with its ancient mountains, agricultural lands, craft routes and country hotels is a wonderful place to get away from it all. There are quaint country hotels, friendly B&Bs, as well as a choice of eateries.

En route to Brits, book a tour of the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre, stop by well-stocked, smaller game reserves, or try your luck at the Carousel Entertainment Complex for gambling entertainment.

There's also the suburb of Irene, near Centurion, where you'll find the home of former General Jan Smuts on Doornkloof Farm. Here there is an excellent organic market and an art gallery well worth visiting.

Did you know?

Dinokeng means 'place of rivers' in the Batswana and Bapedi languages.