Take an overnight flight to Johannesburg, South Africa. Be sure to get some sleep on our flight to be ready for an unforgettable adventure.

Upon arrival in Johannesburg we will be met by our expert guide and will exchange money into the colorful South African Rand. Johannesburg is the largest city in Southern Africa with more than six million people. It’s a city of contrasts! Johannesburg is in Gauteng Province. “Gauteng” is a Sotho word meaning “Place of Gold.” South Africa’s wealth is based primarily in the Golden Reef that makes up the Witwatersrand (Ridge of White Waters), of which Johannesburg is the center. This afternoon our guide will provide an in-depth orientation and brief history of South Africa and personal insights into what living here is like for South Africans.

This morning kicks off with personal accounts from citizens about the Apartheid era, the changes encountered since its end, and what life is like for citizens today. Next up, a tour of historic downtown Johannesburg, or “Joburg,” as locals call it. Keep an eye out for Ponte City and other locations used in the movie “Chappie,” which was filmed here. Check out the contrast between formal and informal commerce as the offices of downtown Johannesburg provide a backdrop to roadside stands where hawkers sell everything from fruit to cell phone chargers. We’ll enjoy lunch in Maboneng, the dynamic, creative center of Joburg’s regeneration district. This afternoon, we’ll visit the Apartheid Museum where we will learn about the time South Africans call “The Troubles.” The Apartheid Museum is the story of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity and oppression. You’ll see how South Africa is coming to terms with its past, and how its people are working toward a shared future.

From scenic coastal towns to rustic bush camps, South Africa sets the stage for an exotic adventure where students and teachers travel off the beaten path to understand the storied history and rich culture of this breathtaking country.

**Program Highlights**

- Wildlife! Three nights at Tshkudu Bush Camp, a big-5 game reserve
- Apartheid Museum, where the human spirit triumphs over oppression
- Soweto Kliptown Youth (SKY Project) for South African Teens
- Robben Island Prison, where Nelson Mandela was held captive
- Friendly locals in the Lange and Soweto Townships
- Two days with South African high school students
Today, experience life in Joburg’s massive South Western Township (SÔ-WEh-TÔ). Soweto was the heart of the Freedom Struggle, and today is home to a dichotomy of people, languages, economic groups, traditions and modernity. We’ll see Baragwanath Hospital, the largest in the Southern hemisphere. You’ll marvel at the seeming chaos of a huge taxi-rank, where hawkers and shoppers blend into an endless flood of commuters hurrying in every direction to board local taxis. We’ll visit the Soweto Kliptown Youth (SKY) Project, which was founded by a 16 year-old boy in 1987, providing hope and services to some of the most neglected children and teens in South Africa. We’ll also see the famed Vilakazi Street in Orlando, which has been home to two Nobel peace prize winners. After dinner, we’ll attend the Bioscope—a unique cultural attraction which screens local films and showcases local talent, South African style.

This morning we will transfer to Tshukudu (“chew-koo-doo”) Bush Camp in the Eastern part of the country. As we journey east, the planes of the Highveld (“hi-felt”) give way to Lowveld. Here it begins to look like classic African terrain, with grasslands and distinctive Thorn Trees, Fever Trees, Umbrella Trees and Mopane sprinkling the landscape. Tshukudu is situated in the Central Lowveld near the Blyderiver (“blay-duh-river”) Canyon and adjoining the Kruger National Park. Tshukudu boasts 5,000 hectares (12,000+ acres) of unspoiled bush with a breathtaking view of the rugged Drakensberg Mountains. This private game reserve is family-owned and the focus is on environmental education, game breeding projects and rehabilitation of animals. In addition to opportunities for sports and swimming, you’ll love the educational “bush walks” with knowledgeable game rangers who teach conservation and identification of birds, trees, grasses, spoors and snakes, as well as edible plants and berries. And then there’s the “game drives.” This is what people are talking about when they say they went “on Safari,” where you have unforgettable close encounters with the wildlife in their natural habitat. Tshukudu is home to the Big Five: Elephant, Rhino, Lion, Leopard and Cape Buffalo. (Remember the Big Five—there will be a test!)

Today we say goodbye to Tshukudu and journey back to Johannesburg for an evening flight to Cape Town. Tucked into the arms of a broad bay, surrounded by white-sand beaches, the magnificent Table Mountain rises dramatically as a backdrop to the city. Cape Town has a Mediterranean look and feel, and was the first place of settlement for many European settlers, entrepreneurs and religious refugees, as well as the landing spot for Indian, Madagascan and South-East Asian slaves. Cape Town reflects the wealth of South Africa’s history and heritage of cultures, religions, styles and flavors.

This morning we embark on a boat to Robben Island, once described by Nelson Mandela as “the harshest, most iron-listed outpost in the South African penal system,” where it has become an international symbol of triumph of the human spirit. Our guide will take us through the prison and we’ll visit the cell where Nelson Mandela was held. After our visit to Robben Island, we’ll make an excursion through Langa, a local township. Townships were created as racially divided suburbs for black South Africans long before Apartheid legislation. Our walking tour will allow us to explore how the township has developed over the years, while meeting locals face-to-face. Guides from the area will teach you how to greet residents along the way in Xhosa, the “click language.”

This morning, we will continue our visit with local high school students. This is an incredibly rare opportunity to learn about what it important to young South Africans, exchange ideas and tell them about what life is like in the USA. Most American students describe this as the most unforgettable part of their entire South African adventure.

Today, let’s journey to Cape Point, the most south-westerly point of Africa. The sea cliff here is one of the highest sea cliffs in the world—820 feet above sea level. The “Point” was treated with respect by sailors for centuries. By day, it was a navigational landmark and by night (and in fog) it was a menace beset by violent storms and dangerous rocks. Beware the ghosts of sailors lost on these treacherous rocks! Keep an eye out, too, for bontebok, baboons, and Zebra, as the park is home to many species of fauna and flora. If we’re lucky, we’ll see the African Penguin in its natural habitat.

Our final day is all about an unforgettable visit to the international symbol of Cape Town, Table Mountain! At the tip of the African continent, the Cape is where two oceans meet: the Indian and the Atlantic. There is no better view of this phenomenon than from atop Table Mountain. We’ll take the revolving aerial cable car to the summit, where you’ll take in the entire Cape Peninsula, the oceans, beaches, and the city, all from various stunning vantage points. Later, we’ll head to the airport to board our flight for the journey back to the USA.