

36 Hours Johannesburg



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BENEDICTE KURZEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

FROM LEFT Colorful Diagonal Street; inside the trendy 44 Stanley warehouse complex; a video interview of Nelson Mandela, at the Apartheid Museum, which opened in 2001.

By RACHEL B. DOYLE

TOURISTS who bypass Johannesburg and head straight to Cape Town or out on safari are missing one of Africa's most thrilling metropolises. This former gold-rush town suffered in the aftermath of apartheid, but the revitalization that came with South Africa's hosting of the soccer World Cup in 2010 has blossomed. With a major face-lift of the city's infrastructure — including the two-year-old mass transit rail system, the Gautrain, which was completed in June — Johannesburg is showing off its virtues and overcoming its vices. Although crime in some precincts remains stubbornly high and a bit of caution is recommended, downtown Johannesburg is in the midst of a revival. Nowadays, young Johannesburgers from different backgrounds are working together to remake their city for the next generation, tapping into a well-spring of creative energy and entrepreneurial spirit. Parts of Johannesburg's once-decrepit inner city have turned into a vital gathering place, including an old parking garage that now houses a food and fashion market, and a one-time alcohol warehouse that is today stocked with galleries and restaurants. New enticements seem to pop up every few months in this fast-changing dynamo of a city.

Friday

3 p.m.

① Through Artists' Eyes

Johannesburg is home to one of the continent's most vibrant art scenes. In May, the new Wits Art Museum (at Bertha and Jorissen Streets; 27-11-717-1365; wits.ac.za; 50 rand entry, or \$6.25 at 8 rand to the dollar) opened with a wide-ranging collection of African artwork housed in three adjoining, and improbably elegant, repurposed buildings: a former gas station, a car dealer-

ship and a dental school. The 54,000-square-foot museum is a 15-minute drive from an intriguing cluster of contemporary galleries. The architectural standout, Circa on Jellicoe (2 Jellicoe Avenue; 27-11-788-4805; circaonjellicoe.co.za), is a three-year-old multimedia gallery designed to resemble a Zulu livestock enclosure, while the fortress-shaped Goodman Gallery (163 Jan Smuts Avenue; 27-11-788-1113; goodman-gallery.com) represents many of South Africa's top artists, like William Kentridge, whose works depict the country's stormy past with eclectic finesse. A few smaller galleries, like David Krut Projects (140 Jan Smuts Avenue; 27-11-447-0627; davidkrutprojects.com), have set up shop across from Goodman Gallery and are well worth checking out.

7 p.m.

② Color and Texture

Continue the creative theme at Cube Tasting Kitchen (17 Fourth Avenue; 27-82-422-8158; cube.wozaonline.co.za), an intimate restaurant that serves multi-course tasting menus based on colors and textures (6 to 14 courses for 450 to 650 rand; B.Y.O.B. with no corkage fee) in a minimalist dining room with an open kitchen. The chef, Dario De Angeli, e-mails wine recommendations before the meal, so diners can bring their own beverages to complement flavorful, and ambitious, dishes like a South African beef fillet with truffles and "cranberry cellophane," and a porridge of snails and scallops.

10:30 p.m.

③ Dance and Drink

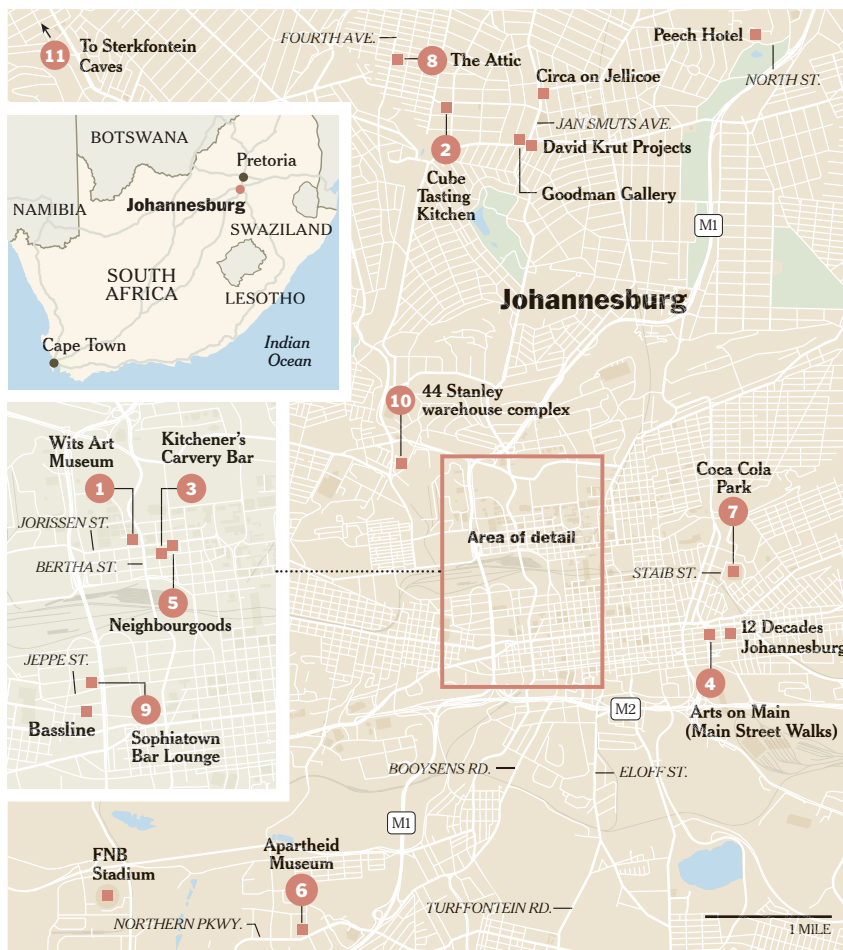
Kitchener's Carvery Bar (at De Beer and Juta Streets; 27-79-266-5077) is where stylish 20-somethings gather to dance to '90s R&B and toast with pints of beer. This laid-back pub, which dates back more than a century and has burgundy damask wallpaper and pressed-metal ceilings, books a mix of hip-hop, funk, house and Afrobeat D.J.'s. When it gets too hot on the dance floor, cool off on the outdoor patio.

Saturday

9:30 a.m.

④ Downtown Revival

Last August, a group called Main Street Walks began giving tours of Johannesburg's Central Business District (264 Fox Street; 27-72-880-9583; mainstreetwalks.co.za; 150 to 350 rand) to prove to visitors that the area, which many businesses fled in the turbulent transition to democracy in the '90s, is no longer the scary place that it used to be but an intriguing section of the downtown landscape. Groups begin at the Arts on Main building, explore the area's myriad governmental landmarks, wander down colorful Diagonal Street, with its vendors and traditional healing stores, visit a terrific eight-



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story used-books bazaar and admire the skyline from the 50th floor of the Carlton Center, Africa's tallest building (for now).

1 p.m.

⑤ Margarita in Hand

The instantly popular food and fashion market Neighbourgoods (73 Juta Street; neighbourgoodsmarket.co.za; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) opened in a former parking garage in the inner city last September. The indoor market with beer garden-style tables is filled with dozens of stalls selling everything from fedoras (140 rand) to Namibian oysters (15 rand) to hand-painted espresso cups (140 rand). Many in the crowd browse the wares with margaritas (35 rand) in hand.

2:30 p.m.

⑥ An Uneasy Past

At the ticket window of the Apartheid Museum (Northern Parkway and Gold Reef Road; 27-11-309-4700; apartheidmuseum.org; 60 rand entry), visitors are randomly assigned races and told to enter through separate turnstiles: one for whites, the other for non-whites. Once inside, comprehensive — and often devastating — multimedia exhibitions explore the social and political forces that gave rise to apartheid,

its core features and violent downfall, and the exhilarating, hard-won achievement of democracy.

5:30 p.m.

⑦ Sports Therapy

Sports in South Africa are not just intensely followed, they are transformative, too. Rugby was credited with helping the country come together after the end of apartheid, while the 2010 World Cup helped show the world how far this once-divided society had progressed. Attending a rugby match at Coca-Cola Park (47 North Park Lane; 27-11-402-8644; www.ellispark.co.za), the first black-owned stadium in South Africa, or a soccer rivalry at the beautifully renovated FNB Stadium (Soccer City Avenue; 27-11-247-5300) is a must if there's a game on while you're there. Think painted faces, a frenetic crowd, and, of course, vuvuzelas, the shrill horn ubiquitous at sporting events here.

8 p.m.

⑧ Festive Repast

With its dog-and-pheasant-illustrated wallpaper, holiday lights strung along wooden ceiling beams and delicious Asian-influenced bistro fare, the Attic (24 Fourth Avenue; 27-11-880-6102) is one of the most delightful and casual

restaurants in town. Dishes like Mozambican crab fettuccine (98 rand) and a superb miso-seared tuna (140 rand) are served in generous portions. But leave room for inspired desserts like cardamom panna cotta with coffee jelly (45 rand). There are plenty of bars within walking distance — a rarity here — but the Attic's attached wine bar is one of the coziest.

10:30 p.m.

⑨ Live Music, African Style

Named after the Johannesburg township where the musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba honed their crafts, retro-chic Sophiatown Bar Lounge (at Henry Nxumalo and Jeppe Streets; 27-11-836-5999; sophiatown.co.za) invites jazz performers to play for a boisterous crowd on Thursdays and Saturdays. Dance by the stage or relax with a glass of South African red at one of the tables. If you're in the mood for a large-scale club, head to nearby Bassline (10 Henry Nxumalo Street; 27-11-838-9142; bassline.co.za), widely seen as the city's best live music space. The diverse, often excellent, programming skews toward jazz, hip-hop and reggae as well as homegrown styles like kwaito, which blends slowed-down house music with African samples.

Sunday

10 a.m.

⑩ Brunch and Shop

Ask for a table on the terrace at Salvationcafé (44 Stanley Avenue; 27-11-482-7795; salvationcafe.co.za), a much-beloved brunch spot inside the trendy 44 Stanley warehouse complex. After some halloumi cheese and pesto French toast (59 rand), wander around the 1930s building's maze of galleries and shops, like the well-stocked Wizards Vintage (27-11-025-3056), where a recent visit found green Prada sandals for 300 rand, and Dokter and Misses (27-11-025-2469; dokterandmisses.com), which sells clever home items.

1 p.m.

⑪ Cradle of Humankind

Never has the term World Heritage Site felt more appropriate than at the Cradle of Humankind, where many significant hominid fossils were excavated. The most spectacular finds were made in the eerie Sterkfontein Caves (Sterkfontein Caves Road; 27-14-577-9000; maropeng.co.za; tours for 130 rand), 30 miles from the city, where a nearly complete skeleton of an Australopithecus was discovered in the '90s. After crouching and winding through narrow spaces, the knowledgeable guides tell of the abundance of fossils found here, and point out such natural oddities as a stalactite that resembles an elephant, a deep underground lake and a column shaped like Africa. ■

If You Go

Entertainment is not hard to come by at **12 Decades Johannesburg** (286 Fox Street; 27-11-026-5601; www.12decadeshotel.co.za), an artist-designed hotel in a rejuvenated section of the inner city. The 12-room hotel is within a complex that contains galleries, restaurants, a cinema, a rooftop bar and a gym, and a Sunday food and design market. Suites for two from 820 rand. The **Peech Hotel** (61 North Street; 27-11-537-9797; thepeech.co.za) is a stylishly designed eco-hotel in the Melrose area. The 16 rooms and suites juxtapose modern furnishings with African wall hangings, and the hotel bistro uses locally sourced market produce. There is a small pool. Doubles from 2,120 rand.