

South Africa National Day Special

Experience grand natural wonders, fauna through virtual traveling

Many parents groan at the thought of preparing their children's school summer research project every year. The nearby zoo is always there for a quick fix, but how about taking the kids on a real safari?

Watching wild animals roaming around in the vast nature of South Africa may become a treasured memory for kids and what was once a childhood dream isn't impossible today.

As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 outbreak, staying at home is paramount, but South Africa is not as far as one would imagine. Thanks to virtual tours and livestreams, families can explore the plains from the comfort of their couches to prepare for the day they can see the country's wildlife in person.

In the meantime, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued travel alerts regarding the novel coronavirus for a number of countries and regions. Certain countries and regions are advised not to travel at this moment and individuals are strongly advised to check any travel alerts and local updates through announcements from various news sources, the ministry's travel safety website, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's Quarantine Office website and the South African Tourism website (<http://travel.south-africa.jp/corona/>).

Before the journey

Assembling a hefty encyclopedia of animals native to the southernmost tip of the African continent makes for an impressive summer project and is a perfect way to bring a bit of the great outdoors inside.

Grand scenes such as a pride of lions hunting or elephants taking a morning stroll aren't exactly everyday occurrences in Japan.

In this sense, researching South Africa's many animals and the ecosystem is a good first step in preparing for physical and virtual journeys alike; a little background knowledge can go a long way in keeping kids excited about seeing what they read

about unfold before their eyes.

Parents can indulge themselves in their own treats, too. Now is as good a time as any to become acquainted with rich, full-bodied South African wines to pair with an evening of relaxation and self care.

Kruger National Park

A large leopard slouching against a tree, a giraffe searching for acacia leaves, a herd of buffalo bursting into view, or the roar of a lion protecting their territory — welcome to Kruger National Park.

Roughly the size of Shikoku, this reserve is one notable destination that is home to the "big five" of rhinos, elephants, lions, buffalo and leopards, along with several thousands of other species that can be admired in their natural habitat.

Although it is currently closed to the public, the park has an array of livestreams available for virtual visitors. Animals are said to be most active early in the morning and during the evening so those in Japan should take note of time zone differences. Highlight reels are also available at all times for both little ones and parents impatient for moments in the vein of "The Lion King."

Nature and the stars

South Africa, with its wealth of vast nature, is also a paradise for star gazers. Taking in the Southern Cross unspoiled by city lights is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many and the country has a collection of fascinating myths and local legends tied to the constellations that dot the Milky Way.

Back on the earthly plane, Blyde River Canyon stands as one of the world's biggest canyons and is acclaimed for its expanse of greenery. There's no shortage of astonishing sights, but the view from God's Window, a popular lookout, is incomparable.

There are many more superb spots in South Africa. The Three Sisters — three

similarly shaped hills that are all next to each other — are a natural curiosity that continue to pique the interest of those ranging from everyday tourists to devoted geologists.

Bourke's Luck Potholes by the village of Moremela are named after a local prospector who incorrectly believed there were gold deposits in the area. A man-made bridge and observation areas oversee the otherworldly stone structures and holes at the base of the canyon; these sculptural pieces are the surreal result of erosion throughout the centuries.

Notes for the future

While traveling is ill-advised at present, it doesn't hurt to take note of a few things for when the world can safely take to the skies once more — especially for those inspired by their virtual travels.

A trip to South Africa makes for a remarkable family vacation and guided tours are recommended for one's first trip to the country. Those concerned about the language barrier will be happy to find there are guides fluent in Japanese. Additionally, as with any vacation, travelers should practice basic safety measures. These include steering clear of dangerous areas, not going out alone at night and refraining from wearing expensive accessories.

In terms of vaccines, South Africa does not require travelers from Japan to be vaccinated for cholera, smallpox or other infectious diseases in advance, but malaria prevention is something to prepare for. Visitors are advised to keep their hands and arms, neck and other parts of the body covered and use strong mosquito repellents. Malaria pills are also available and can be prescribed by physicians prior to flying out.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. It is a modified and translated excerpt based on the following article written in collaboration with South African Tourism: <https://www.travel.co.jp/guide/article/42690/>



Left: Blyde River Canyon is one of the world's three greatest valleys. Right: Safari tours at Kruger National Park, South Africa.

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