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LUXURY TRAVEL

Three More Great Reasons to Go to Cape Town Right Away

Photographer: Iwan Baan/Zeitiz MOCAA

The South African capital has added incredible hotels, top-tier art, and avante garde fashion to its already alluring list of attractions.

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No stranger to tourists, Cape Town has typically staked its reputation on being an adventure capital more than an arts center. The city's natural beauty draws even the laziest of travelers on hikes up Table Mountain, to penguin-packed beaches sheltered by rocky coves, and across the rolling hills of 200 nearby vineyards.

But change is afoot in the Mother City. I was living here in 2014, when it was dubbed a World Design Capital, and I witnessed the emergence of a local cultural scene. The Central Business District and once-gritty Woodstock area were then morphing into art hubs brimming with studios and world-class galleries such as Stevenson, Gallery Momo, and Whatiftheworld. Even outside the city, vineyards like Leeu Estates, Le Quartier Français, and Delaire Graff Estate are now showcasing homegrown artistic talents.

This long-simmering creativity came to a boil in September when philanthropist and ex-Puma Chief Executive Officer Jochen Zeitz opened the 500 million-rand (\$36 million) Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Mocaa). The German businessman has been a passionate collector of art from the African continent and diaspora for a decade, painstakingly amassing a collection—rumored to include more than 1,000 works—that ranges from Zimbabwean political commentary and African American pop art to Tunisian photography.



A room at the Silo hotel, with its signature geodesic windows. Source: The Royal Portfolio

Previously, the only way to see part of his collection was to pay upwards of \$1,800 per night to sleep among a handful of special pieces at his Segera Retreat safari camp in Kenya. The 100,000-square-foot museum does more than bring the collection to the masses; it gives the city its own version of London's Tate or New York's Whitney Museum and cements Cape Town as a bona fide global art capital. On a continent loaded with imagination and talent, the vanguard is right here.



The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art
Africa Photographer: Iwan Baan/Zeitz MOCAA

The building itself is a marvel. Thomas Heatherwick—the British architect behind [Google's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif.](#), and [King's Cross in London](#)—has transformed an abandoned 1920s-era grain silo into a concrete cathedral to creativity. Inside is an airy, almost diaphanous atrium that Heatherwick carved out of the factory's 42 hulking cylinders. Suspended from the ceiling is Nicholas Hlobo's haunting *Impundulu Zonke Ziyandilandela* (“All the Lightning Birds Are After Me”), a dragon made from rubber inner tubing that references South African Xhosa mythology.

A wander through the 80 galleries that circle the building's light-filled atrium will reveal nebulous cowhide sculptures by Swaziland-born Nandipha Mntambo, portraits featuring intricate spectacles fashioned from trash that Kenyan artist Cyrus Kabiru collects on the streets of Nairobi, and textured canvases layered with sari fabrics by Madagascan Joël Andrianomearisoa.

The neighborhood around the museum, rechristened the Silo precinct, is changing more than its name. Until recently it was nothing more than a barren stretch adjacent to the Victoria & Albert Waterfront—a glossy-but-bland shopping plaza that draws more tourists than the Egyptian pyramids. Now tenants include edgy accessories designer [Kirsten Goss](#); [Kat van Duinen](#), who makes extraordinary ostrich bags and python clutches; and [Guild](#), a showcase for South African furniture. Meanwhile, [the Yard](#) and other restaurants are bringing locals to an area they once avoided the way New Yorkers bypass Times Square.

Conveniently perched above the museum is Cape Town's best new place to stay. [The Silo hotel](#) is anchored by geodesic windows that bulge out of the 28 rooms and look onto Table Mountain. (Guests are currently being asked to avoid soaking in its decadent baths, because of a local water shortage.) Surveying the landscape from my suite, I thought about how easy it would be to assume that this progress all resulted from the Zeitz Mocaa, but the opposite is true: The museum is merely a reflection of the city's momentum.

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