

Explore Johannesburg

Things to do during your time in the city

Johannesburg is energetic, creative and culturally rich, with plenty to explore beyond the conference programme. Visitors can enjoy galleries, theatres, museums, heritage sites, restaurants, markets, university spaces, nature reserves, caves and day trips in and around the city. The suggestions below are intended to help delegates plan enjoyable outings during their time in Johannesburg. Some options are close to Wits, while others work better as half-day or full-day excursions.

Art, Design and Creative Precincts

Rosebank and Keyes Art Mile

Best for: contemporary art, design, restaurants, Sunday markets and an easy evening outing.

Rosebank is one of the easiest areas for visitors to explore. It is close to many hotels and has a good mix of galleries, restaurants, cafés, shops and design spaces in a convenient setting.

Keyes Art Mile is a highlight of the area, bringing together galleries, architecture, restaurants, creative spaces and curated retail. Rosebank is also home to two important galleries: Everard Read and Goodman Gallery. Everard Read is one of South Africa's longest-standing commercial galleries, while Goodman Gallery is internationally recognised for contemporary art and for artists engaging with African and global social, political and cultural themes.

Visitors in Johannesburg over a Sunday may also enjoy the Rosebank Sunday Market, held on the rooftop of Rosebank Mall. It usually includes food, crafts, clothing, art, design items and local stalls. Delegates should confirm times before visiting.

Suggested outing: Everard Read → Goodman Gallery → Keyes Art Mile → dinner or drinks in Rosebank.

Suggested outing: Sunday option: Rosebank Sunday Market → Keyes Art Mile → lunch or coffee nearby.

Victoria Yards

Best for: local makers, urban renewal, design, food systems, sustainability and creative entrepreneurship.

Victoria Yards is a creative precinct in Lorentzville that brings together artists, makers, designers, food producers, urban gardens and small creative businesses. It is especially interesting for visitors drawn to art, craft, design, sustainability, food systems, entrepreneurship and urban renewal.

Suggested outing: Spend a morning or afternoon exploring the studios, browsing local products and meeting some of Johannesburg's makers and creatives.

44 Stanley

Best for: coffee, lunch, independent shops, design stores and a quieter afternoon outing.

44 Stanley is a relaxed design precinct with leafy courtyards, independent shops, cafés, restaurants and boutique stores. It is a good choice for smaller groups looking for a quieter outing. It also pairs well with The Bioscope, Johannesburg's independent cinema.

Suggested outing: Browse the shops, have coffee or lunch, and check whether there is a film screening at The Bioscope.

Standard Bank Gallery and Standard Bank Art Lab

Best for: African art, exhibitions, Sandton, Nelson Mandela Square and an evening theatre or dinner route.

The Standard Bank Gallery is located in Marshalltown, close to Wits and the inner city. It is a useful stop for visitors interested in exhibitions, African art and public arts programming.

The Standard Bank Art Lab is located at Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton. It can be combined with a visit to Nelson Mandela Square, dinner in Sandton, drinks at Skye Bar or another Sandton rooftop venue, or a performance at Theatre on the Square.

Suggested outing: Standard Bank Art Lab → Nelson Mandela Square → dinner, drinks or Theatre on the Square.

Theatre, Performance and Film

Johannesburg has a strong theatre and performance culture, with venues offering drama, comedy, dance, music, musicals, student productions, independent performance and film.

The Market Theatre

Best for: South African theatre, storytelling, political history and socially engaged performance.

The Market Theatre in Newtown is one of Johannesburg's most important cultural institutions. It has a long history of politically and socially engaged theatre and remains a key space for South African performance and storytelling.

Suggested outing: Dinner in Newtown → performance at The Market Theatre.

Joburg Theatre

Best for: musicals, comedy, dance, drama and larger productions close to Wits and Braamfontein.

Joburg Theatre hosts musicals, comedy, dance, drama and large-scale productions. Its location close to Wits and Braamfontein makes it a practical evening option.

Suggested outing: Evening performance at Joburg Theatre → dinner in Rosebank or Parkhurst.

Wits Theatre

Best for: campus-based theatre, dance, music, experimental performance and student productions.

Wits Theatre offers theatre, dance, music, experimental performance and student productions, depending on the programme. It is a convenient option for delegates who want a cultural outing close to the conference venue.

Suggested outing: Wits Theatre performance → dinner or drinks nearby.

Soweto Theatre

Best for: performance in Soweto, local food, heritage sites and guided cultural experiences.

Soweto Theatre offers performance in one of Johannesburg's most historically and culturally significant areas. It can be combined with a broader Soweto visit, including local food, heritage sites and a guided tour.

Suggested outing: Guided Soweto visit → local food → Soweto Theatre performance, if available.

Theatre on the Square

Best for: intimate theatre, comedy, music, dinner in Sandton and Nelson Mandela Square.

Theatre on the Square is an intimate theatre at Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton. It presents plays, comedy, music and smaller-scale performances.

Suggested outing: Nelson Mandela Square → dinner nearby → Theatre on the Square.

Montecasino Theatres

Best for: larger entertainment productions, musicals, comedy, concerts and evening shows.

Montecasino in Fourways is a major entertainment destination with theatres that regularly host musicals, comedy, drama, concerts and larger productions. It is worth checking what is on during the conference week.

Suggested outing: Dinner at Montecasino → evening theatre show.

The Bioscope

Best for: independent film, documentaries, local films and a quieter evening out.

The Bioscope is Johannesburg's independent cinema, located at 44 Stanley.

Suggested outing: Independent film screening → dinner at 44 Stanley.

Heritage, History and Guided Tours

Johannesburg has a rich and complex history connected to mining, migration, apartheid, resistance, democracy, architecture, education and urban change. Guided tours are often the best way to experience the city with proper context.

Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

Best for: architecture, urban history, mining history, political heritage and Johannesburg's changing neighbourhoods.

The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation offers regular walking and bus tours focused on the city's architecture, neighbourhoods, social history and heritage sites. Visitors should check what tours are available during the conference week and book in advance.

Suggested outing: Johannesburg Heritage Foundation tour → lunch or dinner in Parktown, Rosebank or Braamfontein.

Constitution Hill

Best for: history, human rights, law, memory, political struggle and constitutional democracy.

Constitution Hill is one of Johannesburg's most important heritage sites. It includes the former prison complex and the Constitutional Court, and offers insight into South Africa's history of incarceration, political struggle, human rights and constitutional democracy.

Suggested outing: Constitution Hill guided visit → Wits Art Museum or Origins Centre → dinner in Rosebank or Parkhurst.

Soweto Cultural Experience

Best for: Vilakazi Street, local food, heritage sites and guided storytelling.

Soweto is one of Johannesburg's most historically significant and culturally vibrant areas. For visitors unfamiliar with the city, a guided tour is recommended.

African Journeys offers guided Soweto and Johannesburg tours. Alan can be contacted at alan@africanjourneys.co.za for private or tailored tour enquiries. Delegates should confirm availability, itinerary, costs and transport directly with the provider.

Suggested outing: Vilakazi Street → local food → heritage sites → Soweto Theatre or guided cultural tour.

Nature, Wildlife and Caves

Johannesburg is often associated with city life, but there are excellent nature, wildlife and cave experiences within easy reach. These outings are especially worthwhile for visitors interested in human evolution, geology, conservation, birdlife, archaeology and South African landscapes.

Cradle of Humankind, Maropeng and Sterkfontein Caves

Best for: human origins, archaeology, anthropology, evolution, geology and deep history.

The Cradle of Humankind is one of the most important palaeoanthropological regions in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located outside Johannesburg, it is a highly recommended outing for visitors interested in human evolution and the deep history of the region.

Maropeng is the official visitor centre for the Cradle of Humankind and offers exhibitions on human evolution, early technology and the long history of life on Earth. Nearby, the Sterkfontein Caves are famous for major fossil discoveries, including “Mrs Ples” and “Little Foot”.

Delegates should check opening times and cave access before visiting, as schedules may change and cave tours may be affected by weather, maintenance or other operational factors.

Suggested outing: Maropeng Visitor Centre → Sterkfontein Caves → lunch in the Cradle area.

Greater Cradle Nature Reserve and Cradle Area Experiences

Best for: open landscapes, wildlife viewing, birdlife and a slower outdoor experience.

For visitors who would like to combine landscape, wildlife and time outdoors, the broader Cradle area offers several nature-based experiences, including the Greater Cradle Nature Reserve and nearby lodges or reserves. This can also be combined with a visit to Maropeng or Sterkfontein Caves.

Suggested outing: Greater Cradle Nature Reserve or Cradle area nature experience → lunch or coffee nearby → optional visit to Maropeng or Sterkfontein Caves.

Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden

Best for: gardens, walking paths, birdlife, waterfall views and a relaxed nature outing.

The Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden is one of Johannesburg’s most beautiful green spaces. The garden also has a geological trail, which may be of particular interest to visitors interested in geology, ecology and the natural history of the Witwatersrand.

Suggested outing: Morning walk at Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden → coffee or picnic in the garden.

Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve

Best for: walking trails, grassland, koppies, birdlife and wildlife within the city.

Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, located in the south of Johannesburg, is a good option for visitors who want a more active outdoor experience without committing to a full day outside Johannesburg.

Suggested outing: Morning nature walk at Klipriviersberg → lunch nearby.

Kloofendal Nature Reserve

Best for: shorter walks, birdwatching, geology and local mining history.

Kloofendal Nature Reserve has walking trails and is known for its natural landscape as well as its historical mining links.

Suggested outing: Guided or self-guided walk at Kloofendal → coffee or lunch in the west of Johannesburg.

Modderfontein Reserve

Best for: walking trails, birdwatching, dams, grassland and open space.

Modderfontein Reserve is well suited to visitors who want a nature walk, birding or a relaxed outdoor morning on the eastern side of Johannesburg.

Suggested outing: Nature walk or birdwatching at Modderfontein Reserve → lunch nearby.

Pretoria and Rietvlei Nature Reserve

Best for: a Pretoria city drive, wildlife viewing, birdwatching and a relaxed game drive near the city.

Pretoria is close enough to Johannesburg for a half-day or full-day outing. Visitors can combine a short Pretoria city tour with a nature stop at Rietvlei Nature Reserve.

Rietvlei Nature Reserve is a popular game-viewing destination near Pretoria, with self-drive roads, guided game drives, birdwatching and open grassland around the dam. Visitors may see wildlife such as buffalo, rhino, zebra, antelope and a wide range of birdlife, although sightings are never guaranteed.

Suggested outing: Pretoria city drive → Union Buildings or selected city landmarks → Rietvlei Nature Reserve self-drive or guided game drive → coffee or lunch nearby.

Wildlife Experiences Near Johannesburg

Best for: visitors who want a conservation-focused wildlife or landscape experience outside the city.

Visitors who would like to see wildlife can consider guided wildlife or conservation-focused experiences outside the city. Options in and around the greater Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cradle areas may include wildlife reserves, nature reserves and guided conservation experiences.

Delegates should choose reputable operators, confirm travel times, and check whether the experience is conservation-focused, educational or entertainment-based before booking.

Suggested outing: Guided wildlife or conservation experience outside Johannesburg → lunch in the Cradle, Pretoria or Magaliesberg area.

Things to Do at Wits

Wits is not only the conference venue. It is also one of Johannesburg's major academic, cultural and historical institutions, with museums, performance spaces, public art, science spaces and landmark buildings on or near campus.

- **Origins Centre:** explores human origins, southern African rock art, archaeology, early technology and symbolic culture. Recommended for visitors interested in anthropology, archaeology, neuroscience, African history, art and human origins.
- **Wits Art Museum:** a university art museum dedicated to African art, with exhibitions, collections, talks and public programmes. Recommended for art lovers, researchers, educators and visitors interested in African creativity and visual heritage.
- **Wits Anglo American Digital Dome:** offers immersive 360-degree digital experiences, including astronomy shows, scientific visualisations and creative digital content. Recommended for visitors interested in science, astronomy, AI, education, digital media, data visualisation and immersive experiences.
- **Wits Theatre:** regularly hosts theatre, dance, music and experimental work. Recommended for visitors looking for an accessible evening activity on or near campus.
- **Campus Walk and the Great Hall:** the Great Hall is one of the university's most recognisable landmarks. A short campus walk gives visitors a better sense of Wits as part of Johannesburg's intellectual life.

Suggested Routes

- **Wits Culture, Science and Performance Route:** Origins Centre → Wits Art Museum → campus walk → Digital Dome or Wits Theatre.
- **Contemporary Art and Design Evening:** Rosebank → Everard Read → Goodman Gallery → Keyes Art Mile → dinner nearby.
- **Sunday Rosebank Route:** Rosebank Sunday Market → Keyes Art Mile → lunch or coffee in Rosebank.
- **Creative Johannesburg Route:** Victoria Yards → Maboneng → street art or food experience. A guided option is recommended for those unfamiliar with the city.
- **Theatre and Storytelling Night:** Market Theatre or Joburg Theatre → dinner nearby.
- **Heritage and Democracy Route:** Constitution Hill → Wits Art Museum or Origins Centre → dinner in Rosebank or Parkhurst.
- **Sandton Art, City and Theatre Route:** Standard Bank Art Lab → Nelson Mandela Square → drinks at Skye Bar or another Sandton rooftop venue → Theatre on the Square.
- **Heritage Johannesburg Route:** Johannesburg Heritage Foundation tour → Parktown or inner-city heritage sites → dinner in Rosebank or Parkhurst.
- **Entertainment Evening Route:** Montecasino → theatre show → dinner or drinks nearby.
- **Soweto Cultural Experience:** Vilakazi Street → local food → Soweto Theatre or guided cultural tour.
- **Cradle of Humankind Route:** Maropeng Visitor Centre → Sterkfontein Caves → lunch in the Cradle area.
- **Nature and Botanical Garden Route:** Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden → waterfall walk or geological trail → picnic, coffee or lunch.
- **Urban Nature Walk Route:** Klipriviersberg, Kloofendal or Modderfontein Reserve → morning walk → lunch nearby.
- **Pretoria and Wildlife Route:** Pretoria city drive → Union Buildings or selected landmarks → Rietvlei Nature Reserve self-drive or guided game drive.
- **Wildlife and Landscape Route:** Greater Cradle Nature Reserve, a Cradle area nature experience, or another reputable wildlife/conservation outing → lunch in the Cradle, Pretoria or Magaliesberg area.

Practical Information

Johannesburg is best enjoyed with some planning. Visitors are encouraged to check opening times, current exhibitions, market days, theatre schedules and booking requirements in advance, as many venues operate according to changing programmes and events.

For evening outings and visits outside the immediate conference area, delegates are advised to travel in groups, use arranged conference transport where available, or book reliable ride-hailing transport directly to and from venues. It is advisable to avoid walking alone at night, keep valuables discreet, and plan routes before departure.

International visitors should consult the latest travel guidance provided by their own embassy, consulate or foreign ministry before travelling. The UK Government's South Africa travel advice is one useful example of the type of guidance available, but delegates should follow the advice relevant to their own nationality, travel route and personal circumstances. This should be read alongside local conference information and any travel advice provided by the organisers.

Delegates are also encouraged to ask local hosts or conference organisers for advice when planning outings, particularly for evening activities, inner-city visits, wildlife outings, cave visits or routes that may be easier with arranged transport or a guide.