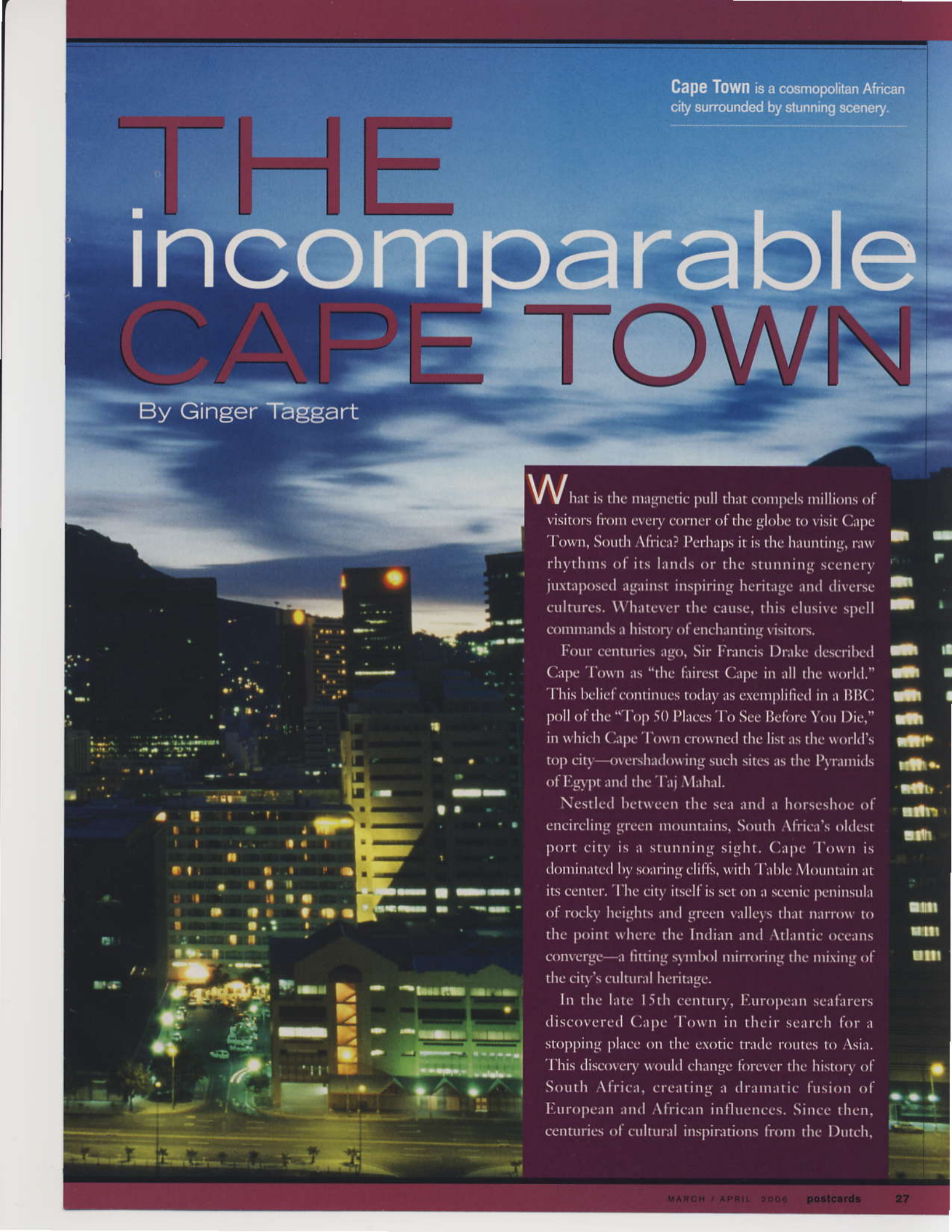


One of the most beautiful cities in the world, South Africa's Cape Town is a cultural and historical crossroads you shouldn't miss.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ALAMY





Cape Town is a cosmopolitan African city surrounded by stunning scenery.

# THE incomparable CAPE TOWN

By Ginger Taggart

**W**hat is the magnetic pull that compels millions of visitors from every corner of the globe to visit Cape Town, South Africa? Perhaps it is the haunting, raw rhythms of its lands or the stunning scenery juxtaposed against inspiring heritage and diverse cultures. Whatever the cause, this elusive spell commands a history of enchanting visitors.

Four centuries ago, Sir Francis Drake described Cape Town as “the fairest Cape in all the world.” This belief continues today as exemplified in a BBC poll of the “Top 50 Places To See Before You Die,” in which Cape Town crowned the list as the world’s top city—overshadowing such sites as the Pyramids of Egypt and the Taj Mahal.

Nestled between the sea and a horseshoe of encircling green mountains, South Africa’s oldest port city is a stunning sight. Cape Town is dominated by soaring cliffs, with Table Mountain at its center. The city itself is set on a scenic peninsula of rocky heights and green valleys that narrow to the point where the Indian and Atlantic oceans converge—a fitting symbol mirroring the mixing of the city’s cultural heritage.

In the late 15th century, European seafarers discovered Cape Town in their search for a stopping place on the exotic trade routes to Asia. This discovery would change forever the history of South Africa, creating a dramatic fusion of European and African influences. Since then, centuries of cultural inspirations from the Dutch,





**Two Oceans Aquarium**

vibrant character all set against the stunning backdrop of Table Mountain.

To immerse yourself in Cape Town and South Africa, ask your Carlson Wagonlit Travel expert about Globus' 16-day South Africa adventure, which

Whether Cape Town is used as a gateway to exploration or a stand-alone destination, the rich diversity of the city unfolds to its visitors like a welcome mat bidding entry into a great cathedral of treasures. There are activities for everyone, from adrenaline junkies and culture buffs to those wishing only to be pampered amongst striking scenery.

**SEEING THE CITY**

To gain orientation, take a half-day city tour beginning with a visit to the city's most famous landmark, Table Mountain. Located in the heart of the city, the mountain offers some of the best climbing in the world and more than 550 hiking walks rich with flora and fauna. In fact, the mountain claims more diverse plants than the entire British Isles. Although hiking is spectacular, most tourists opt to ascend via cable car, which provides quick access to the vast views across Table Bay and the Atlantic. (Tip: Plan your visit for early morning when the lines are



**Musicians in Cape Town**

British, French and even Malaysians have combined with African heritage to create a rich, textured history that is almost palatable. Immense natural beauty and urban ambiance create a unique blend of pulsing nightlife, succulent cuisine, pearly white beaches, and

includes three nights in Cape Town, a visit to the Cape of Good Hope, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, and wine tasting at Spier Winery, the oldest South African wine cellar. Additional nights are spent throughout South Africa, including Kruger National Park and Johannesburg.

shortest and winds are weakest.) Cape Town's city center features multiple museums and historic buildings, including the Castle of Good Hope, which is the city's oldest building. Don't miss the Company's Garden, which was originally established as



**Canal Walk** is home to more than 400 stores.

TOP: PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF COREIS. BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM



a vegetable garden for crews of passing trade ships and is the oldest formal garden in South Africa.

If the city's lush parks, white beaches, and scenic splendors sound a bit tame, you can choose from numerous active pursuits that include rock climbing, tandem paragliding, bungee jumping, mountain biking, surfing, wind-sailing, and deep sea fishing. To commune with nature, try sea kayaking among whales and penguins or even shark diving to view the great whites up close! Your Carlson Wagonlit Travel expert can help you set up your adventure.

Avid photographers should travel about 10 minutes north to Milnerton, Cape Town's oldest northern suburb along Table Bay, which offers a great vantage point from which to capture a perfect photograph of Table Mountain. Visitors also can enjoy an 18-hole golf course, beachside seafood restaurants, and the town's scenic lighthouse.

Within Cape Town, shopping, dining, and entertainment come alive at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, which features noteworthy restaurants, craft markets, Two Oceans Aquarium, and the South African Maritime Museum. From here, boat tours also depart to Robben Island, offering a stirring visit to the prison where Nelson Mandela was held captive for 18 years during apartheid.

To incorporate Cape Town into a larger African itinerary, consider Abercrombie & Kent's luxurious 14-day Southern Africa in Style package, which combines Cape Town with deluxe



**Cape Town** against the backdrop of Table Mountain

game viewing in Botswana and a trip to Zimbabwe to see the world's largest falling curtain of water—the World Heritage Site of Victoria Falls.

However you choose to see it, Cape

Town is sure to amaze you with its natural beauty, entertain you with its cultural attractions, and enthrall you with its historic tales of struggle, discovery, and growth. □



## Three Quick Side Trips

Cape Town can serve as a good base camp from which to explore the area. Here are three nearby attractions worth checking out:

**Cape of Good Hope:** A scenic southbound journey brings visitors to Table Mountain National Park, which includes the famous Cape of Good Hope. Don't miss Boulders Beach, with its intriguing warm weather penguin colony, or Cape Point, which offers stunning ocean views at the southern tip of the Cape Peninsula.

**Hermanus:** About 79 miles from Cape Town, Hermanus lies in the heart of the Whale Route. Emerging from its roots as a rustic fishing village, this town now commands international attention by boasting some of the world's best whale-watching sites. Unique ambiance is added by the bellowing sounds of the whale crier, who signals viewing locations with his kelp horn.

**Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens:** Located about eight miles from Cape Town's city center, Kirstenbosch claims a reputation as one of the world's best botanical gardens. With more than 5,000 plant species stretching over the eastern side of Table Mountain, these gardens provide a relaxing retreat with tours and guided walks available year-round and sunset concerts offered in the summer. —G. T.

