

ST. OLAF ALUMNI & FAMILY TRAVEL

RESOURCE LIST 2024 SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa: A Companion Trip to the St. Olaf Choir Tour

Hosted by Bryan Shealer, Senior Associate Director, Piper Center

June 2–16, 2024

This list was compiled in the hopes that you would find it useful in preparing yourself for departure or in continuing the learning experience after you return home.

Guide Books

A guide book will go a long way in answering many of your general questions about what things to do and where to eat during your free time. It will also typically provide a few words and phrases, sometimes a tip on pronunciation, and other useful things such as tipping guidelines, how best to obtain money, and maps.

Keep in mind that your St. Olaf hosts will not know the cities like the back of their hand. They are present to help influence the group experience, not to be an expert on tourism in each location. Thus, we recommend bringing a guidebook to help you make decisions about your free time. You can find all the standards, such as *DK Eyewitness Guides*, *Fodor's*, *Frommer's*, *Insight Guides*, *Lonely Planet*, *Rick Steves*, and *Rough Guides*.

General

The Happy Traveler: Unpacking the Secrets of Better Vacations, by Jaime Kurtz

A psychology professor applies research on happiness and decision-making to enhance the experience of travel.

Travel as a Political Act, by Rick Steves

The book is about more than the following idea, as indicated by the title, but I've been sharing this same idea with travelers for years, captured here in the summary on amazon.com: "By sharing his experiences from Europe, Central America, Asia, and the Middle East, Rick shows how we can learn more about our own country by viewing it from afar."

Two articles, each about a 3–4 minute read:

"What is Cultural Appreciation (And How It's Different From Cultural Appropriation)?"

<https://preemptivelove.org/blog/what-is-cultural-appreciation/>

"The Difference Between Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Appreciation"

<https://passionpassport.com/cultural-appropriation-appreciation/>

~ Heidi Quiram P '21, Director of Alumni & Family Travel

Readings

We Are Not Such Things by Justine Van Der Leun

The author re-investigates a 1993 murder of a Fulbright scholar outside of Cape Town and in the process, shows us a contemporary South Africa incorporating the themes of justice, privilege, forgiveness and reconciliation. The reviews find it well-written and helpful in understanding what South Africa is like today.

A History of South Africa-Third Edition by Professor Leonard Thompson

Reviewed as being factual but easy to read, this book begins with the early Africans (before European intervention) and ends with the author's impression of post-apartheid South Africa.

Diamonds, Gold, and War: The British, the Boers, and the Making of South Africa by Martin Meredith

This book covers the time when diamonds and gold were discovered in South Africa (1871-1911), and relates how greed for them led to war, imperialism, and apartheid. Meredith creates lively portraits of colorful celebrities of the time including Cecil Rhodes and Paul Kruger, and knows how to use thorough research to tell an interesting and exciting story.

Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela by Nelson Mandela

Mandela recalls his past, highlighting his life as an ordinary village boy, his political awakening as one of the few black African lawyers, his involvement with the ANC in resisting the apartheid government, his 27 year imprisonment on Robben Island (where much of this book was written), and finally his term as President of South Africa. His wisdom, grace, and ability to forgive make him a true hero of South Africa.

Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

Simple yet profound with a use of language that is likened to the King James Version of the Bible, this book is the story of an old black Anglican rural priest who searches for his son in the corrupt city of Johannesburg. The author tries to create an unbiased, objective look at the society which gave rise to apartheid and to show what it is like to live with constant fear. THIS IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON FILM OR VIDEO STARRING JAMES EARL JONES AND RICHARD HARRIS.

The Power of One by Bruce Courtenay

This is the memoir of an English boy growing up in South Africa during WWII, the beginning of the apartheid era. As the only Brit in an Afrikaner boarding school, Peekay suffers loneliness and endures torture and degradation because of his background. Influenced by blacks and whites alike, he finds boxing as a way of surviving and even fulfilling his dreams. THIS IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON FILM OR VIDEO, BUT THE BOOK IS SUPERIOR.

Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee

This Booker Prize winner (Coetzee has also won the Nobel Prize for Literature) tells the story of an aging academic (David Lurie) who disgraces himself by seducing a student and then experiences disgrace himself when three young men break into his daughter's farm. It is a story of personal shame and responsibility, but also tells of life after apartheid and the implications for power for South Africa.

July's People by Nadine Gordimer.

Nobel and Booker Prize winner, Nadine Gordimer, tells the story of a fictionalized black revolution that could have happened under apartheid. Bam and Maureen Smales, white South African liberals, are forced to rely on the kindness and generosity of July, their former black servant. They struggle with physical hardships and inconveniences but more importantly must deal with powerlessness and the uncomfortable dependency on somebody else for their very survival.

You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town by Zoe Wicomb

This is a collection of linked stories that explores the experience of "colored" citizens of South Africa (those of mixed heritage.)

Our Generation by Zubeida Jaffer

Jaffer's autobiography is both a personal story and an apartheid story, documenting her life and her struggles as a member of the media. We hope to

No Future Without Forgiveness by Desmond Tutu

This book is Tutu's remarkable personal memoir of his time as chair of the commission. It records his insistence of the need to discover a "third way" in the healing of the national psyche.

Cobra, by Deon Meyer

In the context of the kidnapping of an Oxford mathematician from an elite wine-country guest-house, Mr. Meyer, South Africa's leading thriller writer, tells the story of a mixed-race orphan, skilled in the techniques and honor code of a professional pickpocket. He chooses the wrong victim, and the plot begins to twist. Translated from Afrikaans, the novel incorporates the hope and turmoil of the end of apartheid and the corrupt and desperate Cape Town of today.

"Master Harold and the Boys" by Athol Fugard

Based on an incident in Fugard's life, this play uses dance as a metaphor for existence. A 17 year old white South African of the 1950s has always turned to the wisdom and love of Sam, a middle-aged black servant of his alcoholic father. Circumstances and fear, however, push him to choose superiority and arrogance over humanity. THIS IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON FILM OR VIDEO.

"Born A Crime: Stories From A South African Childhood" by Trevor Noah

This autobiography is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

"Winnie and Nelson: Portrait of a Marriage" by Jonny Steinberg

A NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD FINALIST • AN LA TIMES BOOK PRIZE FINALIST • A WASHINGTON POST AND NEW YORKER BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR • A deeply researched, shattering new account of Nelson Mandela's relationship with Winnie Madikizela-Mandela that "does justice both to the couple's political heroism and to the betrayals and the secrets that hounded their union" (The New Yorker). Drawing on never-before-seen material,

Steinberg—one of South Africa’s foremost nonfiction writers—reveals the fractures and stubborn bonds at the heart of a volatile and groundbreaking union, a very modern political marriage that played out on the world stage.

Movies

“Cry Freedom”

This 1987 film directed by Richard Attenborough features Kevin Kline and Denzel Washington. It is the story of the assassination of black South African political activist, Steve Biko, and his relationship with American newsman, Donald Woods.

“The Gods Must Be Crazy”

An innocent bushman finds an empty Coke bottle in the Kalahari Desert (dropped by a pilot) and thinks of it as a gift from the gods. Humorous, thought provoking and bubbly.

“A Dry White Season”

The story is based on the events in Soweto in 1976. Insulated from apartheid all of his life, a South African school teacher learns of the beating, torture and death of his gardener’s son by the police. His desire to find the truth and work for justice turns him into a radical who alienates even his family and friends. The film, made in 1989, stars Donald Sutherland, Susan Sarandon, and Marlon Brando.

“Shaka Zulu”

In 1986 this 10-part British mini-series (it still appears in the U.S. on TBS) was created to tell the life story of Shaka, King of the Zulus. The series hints at parallels between the Zulu and the British empires as they vie for control of South Africa. Don’t confuse this with the movie, “Shaka Zulu-Last Great Warrior” starring Roger Alborough and Karen Allen. If you are interested in the historical period, the former will give you a truer, more realistic portrayal.

Audio

Radio diary on National Public Radio by Thembi Ngubane, who suffered from and was outspoken about Aids/HIV and who only recently died of drug-resistant tuberculosis. You can hear the archived version of her radio diary at <http://www.radiodiaries.org>.