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raising their young. The Hermanus Cliff Path and Gearing's Point both provide elevated vantage points where spectators watch as whales play just a few hundred feet from shore. The city even has its own Whale Crier, who warns locals and tourists whenever a whale is spotted by blowing on a seaweed horn. Land-based whale watching is both satisfying and free, but if you want to get even closer to whales it's worth paying for a boat tour with a licensed company like South Right Maps. In addition to southern right whales, you will also have the opportunity to search for other South African marine life, including humpback whales and Bryde, two species of dolphins, cape fur seals and the endangered African penguin. Aerial whale watching is another memorable option. In September, the Hermanus Whale Festival celebrates the city's most famous residents with three days of environmental talks, film presentations, beach cleaning, street parades, food stalls and artists. There are also many fun activities for kids, including Pirates & Mermaids Treasure Hunt. If your visit does not coincide with the festival, you can learn more about whales and industry that once operated from the nearby Bay of Betty, either the Old Harbour Museum or the Whale House Museum. The latter includes a full-size southern skeleton right whale. from the wildest/Getty Images Hermanus also has more than its share of beautiful beaches. The longest and most visited is Grotto Beach, which stretches for over 11 miles. Part of the beach has earned blue flag status for its superior cleanliness and facilities, which include easy parking, lifeguards, and braai (barbecue) facilities around the mouth lagoon. The lagoon is an ideal spot for families, providing a safe space for children to swim and play. Other top picks include Onrus Beach and Voelklip Beach, which are both for surfers. In December, Onrus Beach hosts the annual Onrus Classic Surfing and Bodyboarding competition. There are many other ways to make the most of Hermanus' stunning location between the mountains and the sea. The Hermanus Cliff Path is a 7.5-mile coastal trail stretching from New Harbour to Grotto Beach, offering stunning views of Walker Bay and its whales along the way. Walkers will also love the Fernkloof Nature Reserve, which has 37 miles of hiking trails. As part of the Cape Floristry Area, the reserve is a botanist's paradise with more than 1,250 plant species including many different types of endemic fynbos. Keep an eye out for wildlife ranging from grey rhebok and cape grysbok antelope to baboons and rock hyraxes. Walker Bay Nature Reserve offers a plethora of various outdoor activities such as whale watching, bird watching, hiking, 4x4 trails, and fishing. If you want to fish, you'll need permission, these can be purchased from any South African post office. Other options for water sports enthusiasts include canoeing and kayaking tours of the Klein River Lagoon or sea kayaking in Walker Bay. For golf lovers, the Hermanus Golf Course features 27 holes that are nourished with panoramic views of the coast and the mountain. If you love good food, you'll love Hermanus. The city is full of gourmet restaurants, most of which focus on a farm-to-table dining room that presents South Africa's rich produce. Often, the dishes are combined with local wines from the nearby Hemel en Aarde valley, which is appropriately translated into Uranus and Earth. For breakfast, try the sweet and savory pancake specialties at Betty Blue Bistro, a bright, minimalist space on the main street. For lunch and dinner, the wine glass and pear are tried and true favorites. The first traditional small plates and about 100 local wines sold by the glass. The latter is known for its seafood dishes, served outdoors. Both restaurants are very close to Gearing Point, so if the horn of Whale Crier sounds, you can go and watch whales in between courses. If you're in Hermanus over the weekend, head to Hermanus Country Market (which takes place every Saturday morning) to stock up on organic, gourmet delicacies and local wines before a picnic at Cliff Path. Accommodation options in Hermanus Hermanus dominate boutique hotels and luxury guesthouses. Of all this, One Marine Drive Boutique Hotel is a fan favorite. It features five highly decorated rooms (all with a private balcony overlooking the sea), a fireplace in the living room and a full homemade breakfast every morning. Birkenhead House 5-star is another great choice. Located at the top of the cliffs, it offers stunning views from all 11 rooms, the infinity pool and the excellent restaurant. This hotel offers spa treatments and all-inclusive rates. For a more affordable place to rest your head, think Hermanus Backpackers. This affordable option is in a great location in the city centre, just a 15-minute walk from Gearing's Point. You can choose from a range of dormitories and private rooms, some with private bathrooms. Other amenities include a cosy living room, a shared kitchen and a garden with a swimming pool. Hermanus is a year-round destination and no matter when you travel, there is always something to see and do. If you want to see whales, you need to time your visit to coincide with the June to December whale season. Activity usually peaks in August and September. Weather-wise, Hermanus has a mild Mediterranean climate and follows the same weather patterns as the rest of the western cape. Winter (June to August) is the coldest and wettest season of the year, with an average of six rainy days a month and temperatures ranging from 50 to 66 degrees F (10 to 19 degrees C). Summer (November to January) is the warmest and driest time of the year, with just two days of rain per month and temperatures ranging from 59 to 77 degrees F (15 to 25 degrees C). Therefore, even though winter is the best time to locate whales, summer brings plenty of sun and is the best time to enjoy on the beach. For the best of both worlds, plan your trip for November. Please note that accommodations and tours are booked quickly during the Hermanus Whale Festival (in September) and during the December holidays. Hermanus is located about 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of Cape Town. The fastest way to get there from Mother City is on the N2 motorway, a journey of just over 1.5 hours. The most scenic route bypasses along the coastal highway R44 and takes just over 2 hours. If you are travelling west from the garden route, Hermanus is 3.5 hours from Mossel Bay, 1 hour and 45 minutes from Cape Agulhas (the southernmost point in Africa) and 40 minutes from Gansbaai, the great capital of white shark diving. Most tourists travel to Hermanus using a rental car. However, if you do not have the your wheels, there are other options. Baz Bus is a hop-on/hop-off backpacker bus that stops at Hermanus en route from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth (and vice versa). The local tour operator Hotspot2c offers highly recommended itineraries for small groups, many of which include a visit to Hermanus. Thank you for letting us know! Know! Know!

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