



Red Ivory Hunting Safaris

& Safari Lodges

St. Lucia – Upper Kwa-Zulu Natal

- Visit iSimangaliso Wetland Park
- Go on a Bush & Beach Horse Ride
- See Hippos & Crocs Up Close
- Tour Isimangaliso
- Visit the Endoneni Cheetah Project
- Safari Day Trip to Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Game Reserve
- Go Whale & Dolphin Watching
- Deepsea Fishing



St Lucia is a small town on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal almost completely surrounded by wilderness. There are dozens of things to do in St Lucia! Visitors to this incredible destination will find themselves immersed in a natural setting that few other destinations can offer. There is good reason why this area was South Africa's first proclaimed UNESCO World Heritage Site, and you only have to spend a little time here to discover why...

St Lucia, an island in the midst of wilderness

Arriving in St Lucia town is like taking a step back into the wild Africa of old. In this little town the boundaries of development and wilderness are blurred in the most spectacular way. Pedestrians give way to hippos in the streets, cheeky troops of vervet monkeys patrol the neighbourhoods and gardens are fashioned around ancient milkwood and fig trees that attract all manner of hungry birds, while shy duiker or bushbuck peek timidly from the undergrowth.

This uninhibited encroachment of natural life into the town is not surprising when one considers that St Lucia is bordered on all sides by expansive wild lands. Lake St Lucia's sinuous reed-lined estuary forms the boundary to the west and south, the town is fringed by the warm Indian Ocean to the east, and to the north, the big game area of iSimangaliso Wetland Park's Eastern Shores section. A veritable Eden.

Indeed, the biggest attractions in this town are its incredible natural features. At almost 80 km in length, the spectacular Lake St Lucia is South Africa's largest estuary, and is a region of unparalleled natural beauty and biodiversity. The open waterways merge into mangrove forests alive with crabs, snails and limpets, and wind-waved reed beds that are full of birdsong. Flamingos wade through the shallows while pelicans and fish eagles fly overhead, and crocodiles laze on the shoreline while hippos rest in the shallows. Lake St Lucia's estuary section borders the town, and visitors to St Lucia can access it from a number of jetties and walkways along the town's perimeter.

St Lucia is also the gateway town to access the wilderness areas of iSimangaliso's Eastern and Western Shores sections. Here, large game like elephant, black and white rhino and buffalo live peaceably with smaller animals like the feisty warthog family running with their tails erect, tiny duiker hiding in forest patches or zebra and impala grazing in the open grasslands. From the grassy ridge-tops on Lake St Lucia's eastern shores, it is possible to look inland and see lazy hippos, wallowing in the lake's shallows while Africa's largest land animal, the elephant, trundles along the shoreline.

A short ways down from St Lucia's Estuary Beach, the Maphelane forested dunes at the mouth of the uMfolozi River are the highest in the country and indeed a sight to behold. Looking out over the ocean, it is not unlikely to also see whales, the ocean's largest mammal, as they make their way along the coast, and for special times of the year, turtles come ashore to lay their eggs on the sandy beaches of the park.

Visiting St Lucia town

The town of St Lucia is less than a three hour drive north from Durban and the King Shaka International Airport. What is more, the town is perfectly equipped for visitors, with a host of accommodation, restaurants and tour and charter companies of excellent repute.



Whether you are looking for high-adrenaline and energy-demanding activities, to be treated to a five star luxury safari or simply want to sit and watch the sun set over the waterway from one of the jetties in town, St Lucia has something for you. We have been lucky enough to sample a range of the activities on offer in St Lucia, and have experienced this incredible wilderness area from practically every angle that is possible; by bicycle, on foot, by boat, by horseback and open-backed safari vehicles! For nature lovers, St Lucia is well worth a visit and serves as the gateway to exploring the Lake St Lucia section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

So without further ado here is our guide to exploring St Lucia town and the Lake St Lucia section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.



Blue Marlin



White Marlin



Sailfish



Barracuda



BlackFin Tuna



YellowFin Tuna



Dorado (sometimes called Dolphin)



Wahoo

Deep Sea Fishing

Depend on the time and town we fish from we might use different boats or use a contracted boat if Red Ivory Safaris fishing boat is not in harbour or within distance. Boats we normally use are over the 21ft range with twin motors in well serviced conditions. Boats we use is a 28 ft custom built Buttcats / Kamassi Craft powered by 2X 150 Hp Suzuki 4 stroke motors fully equipped with all the top of the range Shimano and Daiwa fishing gear. This is the safest fishing boat to fish from. Buttcats is the safest boat and have no broaching.

- Marlin - (October -April)
- Sailfish - (All Year)
- Yellow Fin Tuna - (All Year)
- King Mackerel - (Jan - July)
- Queen Mackerel - (June - Dec)
- Dorado - (Oct - April)
- King Fish - (Oct - April)
- Wahoo - (Oct - April)



Explore the waterways of Lake St Lucia

iSimangaliso Wetland Park's Lake St Lucia is a truly special place. It is South Africa's largest estuary and is home to the highest concentration of hippos and crocodiles in the country. Moreover, it has been recognized for its biodiversity and natural beauty. What better way to explore this iconic waterway than by boat?

A number of operators offer cruises on the lower section of the Lake St Lucia estuary. This is a relaxed (and dry!) way to enjoy this fascinating environment. Not only will you be able to view hippos and crocodiles from a watery perspective, but you will also be able to appreciate the diversity of habitats and other birds and animals that use the estuary. The guide on board will point out interesting sights as you pass and will be able to add to your understanding and appreciation of this amazing place. We recommend taking a late afternoon cruise on the estuary to enjoy sunset from the water. Few things can beat listening to the iconic call of the African Fish Eagle while watching the sun paint the water pink.



Enjoy some beach time on the unspoiled coastline

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park has some 220 km of beach, stretching from St Lucia to Kosi Bay near the South Africa-Mozambique border. Of this, 190 km are protected, making sure that the marine life is preserved.

Bordered by big-game bush along its length, the undeveloped coastal stretch within iSimangaliso's Eastern Shores section is a coastal paradise and features popular beaches like Mission Rocks and Cape Vidal. Visitors can walk unhindered for miles, and you don't have to go far either before yours is the only set of footprints on the beach.

Visitors to St Lucia can access the coast at three spots: Estuary Beach, accessed from St Lucia town, and Mission Rocks or Cape Vidal within iSimangaliso's Eastern Shores section.

St Lucia's Estuary Beach is a long sandy beach with a relatively steep shoreline. This, combined with murky water from the open uMfolozi River makes it unsuitable for bathers. The beach is perfect for those wishing to enjoy a long walk though, and has the added attraction of access to Lake St Lucia's estuary mouth. From a vantage point on one of the sand dunes, visitors can spot any number of aquatic and coastal birds resting on the sandbanks or feeding in the estuary's shallows. Hippos and crocodiles are also often visible from the beach. Continue your walk further south and take in the impressive sight of Maphelane's forested dunes, before turning back towards St Lucia at the uMfolozi River mouth.

Cape Vidal and Mission Rocks are well worth a stop for anyone looking to spend time on the beach during their time in the Eastern Shores section. As well as a rest camp at Cape Vidal for overnight visitors, both destinations have ablution facilities for day visitors, and Cape Vidal further boasts a curio shop, petrol station and boat launch site. Fishing is also permitted at Mission Rocks, Cape Vidal as well as Estuary Beach for those with a valid permit.

For bathers, Cape Vidal with its wide sandy bay is the obvious choice. At low tide, a rocky reef that runs out from the headland blocks the waves and creates a protected area ideal for bathing and snorkeling, although strong currents can develop here at times. The beach at Mission Rocks is a wide rocky platform and at low tide, a network of rock pools become exposed that will keep old and young alike fascinated for hours!

No matter which you choose, time on such a beautiful stretch of coastline is always a pleasure. Bring a picnic, because we're sure you won't be looking to leave in a hurry!

Snorkel Cape Vidal's rocky point

Cape Vidal is a wide bay in the Eastern Shores section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, and is popular among anglers, swimmers and nature enthusiasts. At low tide, a rocky reef runs out from the headland, creating an inshore area that is sheltered from the incoming waves. Snorkelers can take advantage of these gentle waters and immerse themselves in an underwater paradise. As well as a variety of subtropical reef fishes, snorkelers can explore remnants of the *Dorothea* wreck that lie along the Cape Vidal point. This vessel is well-known among treasure hunters for the large load of Kruger Rand it was alleged to be carrying when it sank.

Guided snorkel trips are available. Snorkeling with a guide who is familiar with the currents and conditions at Cape Vidal increases your safety in the water, and vastly increases your

enjoyment as they can point out interesting fish and invertebrates that you would otherwise miss. They can also assist with the identification of these animals and provide fascinating information about their biology and traits. Time in the water depends on conditions and guests' abilities but is generally about an hour.

Greet the ocean's giants on a boat-based whale watching tour

Every year, magnificent humpback whales migrate from their feeding grounds around Antarctica to breed along the South African coastline from mid-May to December. From here, they will continue towards Madagascar where the pregnant females give birth. In the coastal waters off the Lake St Lucia section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, male humpbacks engage in dominance displays to determine who will get to mate with the female once she arrives. A single female will mate with up to eight males during a single season, and there is no telling which male will actually father her calf.

A boat-based whale watching excursion provides an opportunity to get up close to these magnificent creatures. For your safety and that of the animals, please do not expect to get within touching distance of these beautiful creatures. There is nothing stopping whales and dolphins from approaching the boat themselves if they wish however. Being on a boat surrounded by whales, and close enough to hear them breathe as they come to the surface, is truly magical.

As well as the humpback whales, there is also the opportunity to view a number of other whale and dolphin species as you cruise through the water. Depending on ocean conditions on the day, passengers also get to view the wreck of the *Jolly Rabino* to the south of Maphelane, or enjoy the sight of Maphelane itself – South Africa's highest vegetated dune.

Note - Boat-based whale watching tours launch out of St Lucia or when weather conditions don't allow for a surf launch, from the port of Richards Bay to the south. Excursions generally last approximately three hours. Please note that although whale sightings in season (May-December) are almost definite, nature gives no guarantees

Horseback ride the beach and bush

Few settings can beat the romance of horseback riding in the African bush, or along an empty beach. Riders complete a figure of eight trail through the iPhiva game section on the Eastern Shores and then along iSimangaliso's unspoiled beaches to the mouth of St Lucia estuary.

Horseback riding is an unobtrusive way of viewing wildlife and allows riders in this southern section of the park to get up close to a number of non-dangerous animals. It is also a great way to enjoy the scenery and natural vegetation of the park.

The beaches in the St Lucia section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park are beautiful, and on their way towards the estuary mouth riders can enjoy the freedom of being out on the long coastline lined with high forested dunes and turquoise seas. At the St Lucia estuary mouth there is the chance to view hippos and crocodiles sunning themselves on the bank, as well as a number of water-associated bird species including pelicans, flamingos, herons and other smaller gulls and terns.

Note - The horse ride in iSimangaliso's Eastern Shores begins at the stables close to Bhangazi Gate. The pace starts out slow to allow the riders to get used to their mounts and also for the guides to assess each rider's ability. From this point there are various sections

where those who are comfortable are invited to trot and canter for a bit more variety. The guides are not only highly competent horsemen but also very good at managing the group and catering for each person's ability, making sure that the ride is an enjoyable experience for all.

Explore the Eastern and Western Shores on a guided evening game drive...

Just because we go to sleep at night doesn't mean the bush does too. When the sun sets, a whole new group of nocturnal animals and birds start their day. Others, like many predators, take advantage of the cover of darkness to go on the hunt.

A guided night game drive through iSimangaliso's Eastern or Western Shores can be a rewarding experience, yielding many sightings that would not be possible during the daylight hours. As with other game reserves, driving after dark is prohibited to the public in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and the only way to view these areas after sunset is on a guided game drive with a licensed operator who will collect you right from your hotel's doorstep in St Lucia.

Night time game drives generally last for approximately three hours, during which time your guide will take you offroad, through sections of the park that usually have restricted access to the public. Game drive vehicles are higher than the typical passenger car allowing for a better view of game over low fringing vegetation. These vehicles are open-backed and guests can enjoy the night time sounds and smells of the bush unhindered. Your knowledgeable guide will be able to explain any interesting sightings you may have and it is a pleasure experiencing the bush with someone who knows it well.

Self Game-Drive

Lake St Lucia and its wilderness areas of iSimangaliso's Eastern and Western Shores are areas of supreme natural beauty. The expansive waterways of Lake St Lucia give way to wetlands and reed beds, and grassy hilltops merge with forested valleys and dunes. Expansive vistas across the park can be enjoyed from the well-maintained roads and series of designated view sites throughout the park, and exploring the park at leisure is a highly rewarding activity.

Once under extensive forestry agriculture, the land around Lake St Lucia has been painstakingly restored to its natural state by iSimangaliso's highly dedicated team of conservationists and restocked with game that include four of the big five (buffalo, white rhino, leopard and elephant), giraffe, antelope such as kudu and waterbuck as well as a variety of smaller animals and birds.

Visitors to the Western Shores can explore different areas of Lake St Lucia that include Charters Creek and Fanie's Island, while the Eastern Shores combines Lake St Lucia attractions like Catalina Bay with popular coastal destinations that include Cape Vidal and Mission Rocks. Both areas of the park have designated picnic sites and viewpoints that are worth a stop. We would recommend the uMthoma Aerial Boardwalk on the Western Shores for spectacular tree-top views over the wetlands of Lake St Lucia, and the eMfabeni and kuMziki Lookouts on the Eastern Shores for panoramic vistas over over Lake St Lucia's expanse.