



# A CULINARY EXPERIENCE IN AN UNDERWATER SHIPWRECK

Words by Sarah Ramnath, Images courtesy of Durban Tourism, Moses Mabhida Stadium, Suncoast and uShaka



**T**he popular six kilometre stretch of the beachfront that runs from South Beach, which includes the promenade, the Suncoast Casino, hotels and entertainment in the north to the Point Waterfront and uShaka Marine World which houses an aquarium and a huge theme park, is known as Durban's Golden Mile. The Moses Mabhida Stadium is also considered part of the Golden Mile.

Durban, the third largest city South Africa, and home to the largest and busiest port in Africa, is situated along the east coast of the Indian Ocean. Aside from the influx by international tourists drawn to its warm climate, Durban is also popular for its extensive beaches.

• • Any and everyone is welcome – be it parents teaching their little tots to ride a bicycle, rollerbladers, tandem cyclists, walkers or even runners pushing babies in strollers. This promenade is dog-friendly, so bring along your four-legged additions to your family too – but make sure to pick up after them. More towards the North Beach area,

enthusiasts of skateboarding, rollerblading and BMX riders can show off their skills and talent at the skate park. If you are one of those who love to cycle but unfortunately did not bring along your bicycle, despair not - it can be hired at a reasonable rate.

This beach is known as a surfer's paradise and is a haven for sun-worshippers. A generous sized swimming pool where you'd want to dive into is for the serious swimmers, and for fun lovers – splash pools and water slides will keep you entertained for hours. Durban's Golden Mile is the city's main tourist attraction greatly enjoyed by locals and visitors.

There are a myriad of restaurants, chain hotels and holiday apartments and curio markets all along the Marine Parade.

Restrictions have been placed in South Africa due to coronavirus though some are being eased. Visitors have all the aforementioned and much more to look forward to when Durban, and South



Africa in general, opens up.

## uSHAKA MARINE WORLD

The first of its kind in South Africa, boasting its world class 40-acre theme park which opened its doors in April 2004, is first and foremost an entertainment world, comprising of eight fun-packed attractions: the uShaka Sea World, the uShaka Wet 'n Wild, uShaka Sea Animal Encounters Island, uShaka Beach, uShaka Village Walk, uShaka Kids World and the uShaka Dangerous Creatures and Chimp & Zee. So there, you have it! Lots of fun and exciting rides to enjoy – not for just the little ones, but moms and dads too! And as a bonus you get to learn about the many little (and big) treasures of the ocean and the ocean itself.

In 2005, less than a year since its inception, this theme park was awarded an 'Outstanding Achievement in Thematic Creative Design' by the Themed Entertainment Association.

uShaka holds 32 tanks totalling about 17,500 cubic meters of water. The underground aquarium is designed around five shipwrecks, with its entrance above the ground through the 'Phantom Ship' which is a recreation of a 1940 cargo shipwreck.

## CARGO HOLD

With so many restaurants to choose from, you'll be spoilt for choice – the most popular one being the Cargo Hold which is highly recommended. Dining with the sharks is a common occurrence here at Cargo Hold, which is housed in the stern of The Phantom ship with captivating views of the shark tank. The restaurant is split into three levels, opt for the ground floor if available, which has the most spectacular views with seating closest to the tanks.

The best way to experience the ocean is to be in it. The settings and ambience are unsurpassed and perfect – nothing could be better than watching the sea animals swimming around peacefully with graceful manoeuvres while you relax and enjoy your sumptuous meal. If watching marine life, and indulging in seafood at the same time gives you feelings of guilt, then you could go for one of the many 'non-pescatarian' or vegetarian dishes on the menu!

## SAND ART

The stretch of sand along Durban's Golden Mile has become renowned for its display of the incredible sand art created by locals which is one of the other many popular attractions along the promenade. You can feast your weary eyes (especially after you've been to uShaka) on the exquisite and delicate sand art on exhibit. Detailed and complex creations by the sculptors who each have their own theme – some favour animals sculpturing – the Big Five, or 'Save the Rhino,' while others build fantasy castles to the finest, most intricate details. A few use food colourants to





get the desired effect to make it more realistic. There's no limit to the bountiful imagination of these talented sand sculptors. If the sculptor is in attendance, you can request to personalise some sand art by adding your name or a message, or you can have your picture taken lounging on a tightly compacted sand 'couch'.

## SUNCOAST CASINO, HOTELS & ENTERTAINMENT

Carry your good-luck charms with you, or don your favourite piece of clothes and head on to the casino, maybe you might become the next instant millionaire, or billionaire!

Apart from the main draw-card being the casino, this buzzing entertainment complex which officially opened its doors to the public in 2002 houses two hotels – the luxury Suncoast Towers comprising of 36 rooms which is popular among business travellers and leisure travellers alike, mainly because it offers boardroom with conferencing facilities, and the affordable yet superbly comfortable 128-room SunSquare Suncoast – both offering spectacular, unobstructed views of the sea.

There are many popular fast food franchise restaurants, cinemas, a gaming arcade, a few retail shops and its very own semi-private beach. With the recent upgrade, Suncoast has now added new family friendly restaurants to its already long list.

Suncoast, with its tasteful architecture somewhat inspired by Miami's South Beach Art & Style, is part of the Tsogo Sun Group. Distinctive for its spectrum of iconic brightly coloured lighting, Suncoast is visible from many kilometres away.

## THE MOSES MABHIDA STADIUM

A cool, breezy five to seven minute walk from Suncoast brings you to the stadium. Opened in November 2009, this stadium hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup and has a seating capacity of 62,760 and with its unique design, allows seating to be further adjusted to accommodate up to 80,000 people.

If you are an adrenaline junkie – the Big Rush Big Swing is perfect for you. From an 80 metre high platform attached to the arch, the exhilarating, yet somehow fearsome swing, swinging out into an immense arc of 220 metres, you free fall right into the heart of the stadium

(definitely not for the faint-hearted.) Ride the Skycar up to the top of the stadium which takes a mere two minutes before you step onto a platform, where you take in the spectacular 360 degrees scenic views of Durban, with the added bonus of a refreshing ocean breeze cooling you and tousling your hair.

## RICKSHAW RIDES

Keep a lookout for these uniquely ornate two-wheeler rickshaws, which are man-drawn carriages. Apart from the rickshaws being beautifully decorated, the pullers, as they are called, are literally pulling the carriage, are adorned with loud-coloured attire and extremely heavy headgear bedecked with beads, feathers, mirrors and other embellishments.

As the pullers gain momentum, they are lifted into the air which counterbalances the carriage being lowered at the same time, as passengers let out ecstatic shrieks with 'exciting fear' gripping them, as they are now facing skywards. Riding on these rickshaws is a truly memorable experience and a wonderful way to get around and do a little more sightseeing. For a small fee, these rickshaw pullers will take you on a ride you'll never forget and treat you like true royalty, just the way you should be.