

DESTINATION

Access all areas

THERE'S NO REASON WHY PLANNING A TRIP SHOULD MEAN PILES OF PAPERWORK. AS A SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZEN, YOU CAN VISIT SOME GREAT DESTINATIONS WITHOUT THE HASSLE OF SECURING A VISA BEFOREHAND

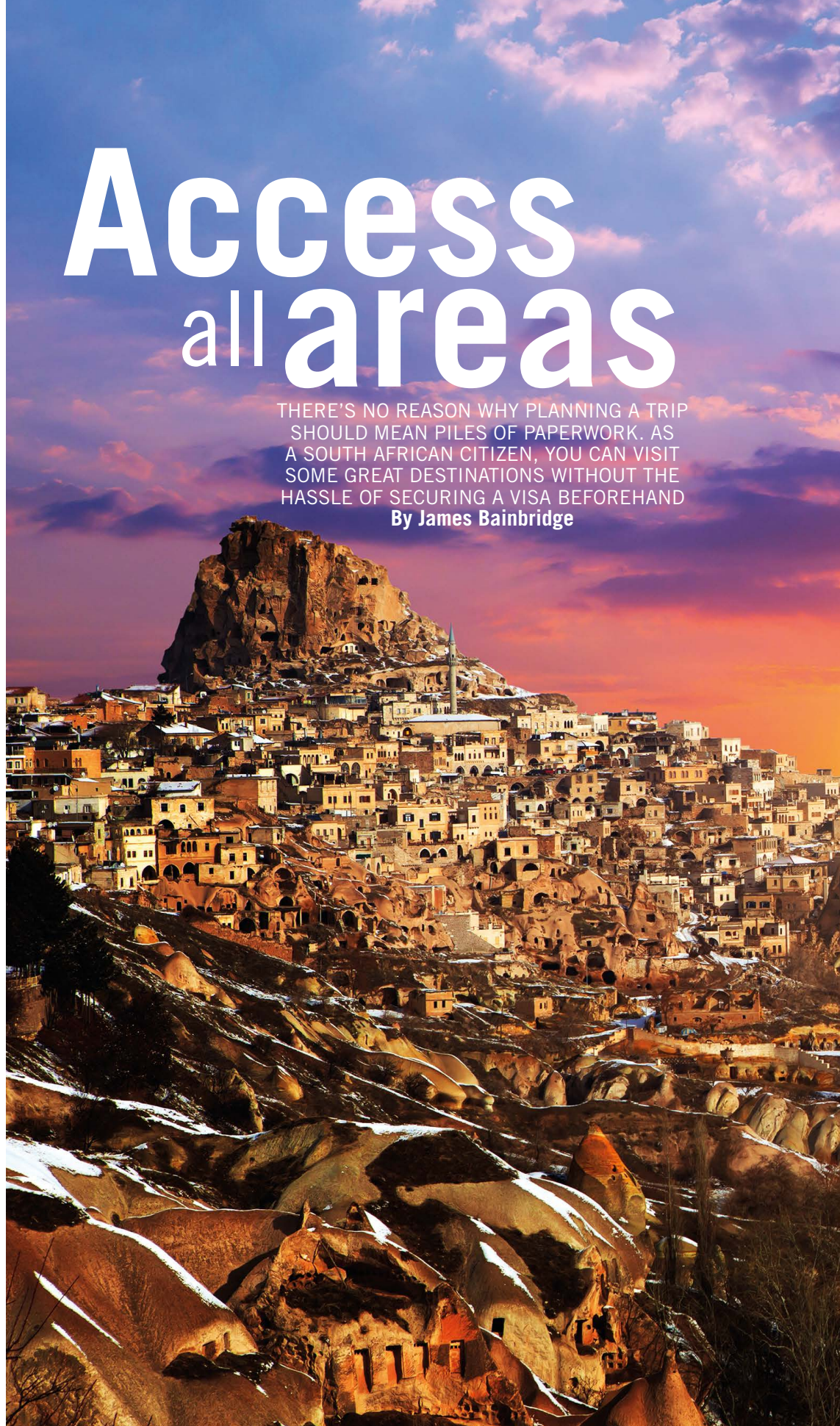
By James Bainbridge

For globetrotters, the South African passport sometimes seems just as useful as a pen out of ink. While folks from other places swan around the world without a care, we have to soldier through mountains of documents, visa application expenses and embassy visits. The British general visitor visa, for example, currently costs a discouraging £83, which is roughly R1 450.

However, South Africans of an itchy-foot disposition need not despair as there are many exotic lands that happily usher us across their doormats. Once you have passed through our neighbouring countries in East and Southern Africa, most of which offer visa-free entry to SA citizens, many further-flung spots are accessible, and with minimum hassle and expense.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Your passport must be valid for six months from the date of entry with at least two blank pages.
- For some places, including Thailand, Ireland, Hong Kong and New Zealand, a ticket or booking for onward travel and proof you have funds for the duration of your stay are necessary.
- Take a copy of your travel insurance policy and keep your insurer's contact details in a safe place.
- Be sure to pack your International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP or yellow card).



Turkey

Straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey encompasses the best of both, with beaches, bazaars, architecture and mountains to satisfy sun seekers and culture vultures. Istanbul, former capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, bears testament to its centuries of glory in buildings such as the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace. Asian Turkey, known as Anatolia, comprises 97% of the country, its steppe and mountains fringed by the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts.

On these adjoining coastlines, forgotten ruins such as Ephesus,

an ancient Roman capital with marble streets, poke out from the undergrowth and peek above the waves.

Turkey specialises in combining old relics and ruins with lyrical scenery, and it pulls out all the stops in Cappadocia, a dreamscape of rock formations formed by volcanoes. It was once home to cave-dwelling Byzantine Christians.

The paperwork Tourist visas are free for South Africans (most nationalities are charged US\$20). The only catch is that visitors must apply for the visa before travelling at

www.evisa.gov.tr.

www.turkeytravelplanner.com

www.goturkey.com



▶ **BALLOONING OVER CAPPADOCIA IN TURKEY IS DEFINITELY ONE FOR THE BUCKET LIST**



▶ NEW ZEALAND HAS MAGICAL LANDSCAPES, IT'S NO WONDER THE LORD OF THE RINGS WAS FILMED HERE

NEW ZEALAND

It may be time to visit that cousin who emigrated to New Zealand, particularly if they live on the South Island. Just across the bay from the laid-back country's mellow capital Wellington, the South Island's snow-capped Southern Alps survey the rugged West Coast. To sample the scenery that lent magic to Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogies, drive over Arthur's Pass or do one of the aptly named Great Walks around fjords such as Milford Sound.

New Zealand is stunning hiking country, with further options including the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, which leads across active volcanoes and stood in for Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings*. Also on the North Island are the Coromandel Peninsula's forested hills and Bay of Islands, with its Maori heritage and coastal activities. **The paperwork** South Africans do not need a visa to visit for up to three months.

📄 www.immigration.govt.nz
 📄 www.newzealand.com
 📄 www.tourism.net.nz



Thailand

South-East Asia's legendary land of Buddhist temples, tropical beaches and limestone rock formations has come a long way since the era evoked by Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Beach*, when travelling there revolved mostly around the famous hedonistic full-moon parties.

These days, an overabundance of activities and experiences await on the much-loved islands of Ko Samui and Ko Phangan, and new favourites like Ko Tao, as well as at the remote temples and villages in mountainous northern Thailand, and among the speeding tuk-tuks in urban Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Dive with whale sharks, recuperate at a meditation retreat or health spa, reflect in an underground cave shrine or get soaked at the Songkran water-throwing festival (in April).

Thai food reflects the country's diversity, including stir-fried noodle dishes such as pad thai, red or green curries and fresh seafood flavoured with lashings of lemon grass and chillies.

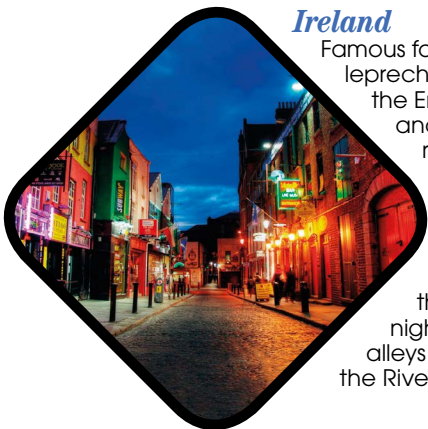
The paperwork South Africans qualify for the Visa Exemption Rule and can enter for up to 30 days without a visa.

📄 www.thaiembassy.org/pretoria
 📄 www.tourismthailand.org

Ireland

Famous for shamrocks, Guinness, leprechauns and the Blarney Stone, the Emerald Isle is both eccentric and lyrical, with wild mountain ranges and fiddlers rocking crowded pubs.

Dublin (pictured inset) is a mixture of Georgian splendour and, especially on the cobbled streets of the Temple Bar area, raucous nightlife. With its 17th-century alleys and bridges spanning the River Lee, Cork is also worth



Argentina



▶ IGUAÇU FALLS IN NORTHERN ARGENTINA IS A POPULAR SCENIC BREAK FROM THE BUSTLE OF BUENOS AIRES

Bordering Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay, but with passion and melancholy imported from Europe and Africa, Argentina expresses its fiery soul in the tango. You can put your best foot forward and try this sensual dance in the atmospheric cafes, dance salons and *milongas* (tango events) of the capital Buenos Aires, also a fine place to visit a *parrilla* (steak house) and sample the beef that gives SA braais a run for their money. From the tropical gush of Iguazu Falls to the Andean peaks, Argentina's landscapes are breathtaking, typified by the image

of a gaucho galloping through a cacti-dotted desert. Make a beeline for Patagonia, with its glaciers, mountain lakes and arid steppe almost at the tip of South America. **The paperwork** As with most of South America, South Africans don't need a visa to enter Argentina. Cheapest flights to Buenos Aires fly via Dubai, Istanbul or Brazil. www.esafr.mrecic.gov.ar www.argentina.travel www.turismo.gov.ar

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLO/GETTYIMAGES/THINKSTOCK, COURTESY IMAGES

▶ THAILAND'S ISLAND PARADISE IS AN AFFORDABLE DESTINATION FOR SOUTH AFRICANS



checking out, as is the city of Galway further north for its popular oyster festival in September. And Dingle's colourful houses and pubs are a beautiful sight. But Ireland's real majesty lies in the rugged, untamed mountains and peaty valleys in areas such as County Kerry, most famous for the Ring of Kerry drive along a rough Atlantic peninsula. **The paperwork** SA passport holders are allowed entry to the Republic of Ireland, but not Northern Ireland, without a visa. www.dfa.ie www.ireland.com www.discoverireland.ie

Hong Kong

In this world city on the South China Sea, previously a British Dependent Territory and now a special administrative region of China, all the energy and exoticism of Asia mix with global influences. Pungent incense smoke curls between temple rafters, capitalist monoliths shoot out of Hong Kong Island, hoofs thunder at the Happy Valley Racecourse and wet markets offer seafood and some best-left-identified creatures from the deep. It's a city teeming with neon signs and clicking chopsticks, where visitors can take in the harbour views from the Peak

Tram before snacking on dim sum, or cross Victoria Harbour on the Star Ferry to Kowloon's markets and museums. It's a haven for shopping, whether you are looking for electronics bargains, local ceramic crafts or high-end designer labels. There are also infinite ways to keep the children happy, such as Disneyland and the Ocean Park Aquarium. **The paperwork** South Africans can visit Hong Kong, but not the rest of China, visa-free for up to 30 days. www.immd.gov.hk www.discoverhongkong.com ♦