

How to explore Durban's Florida Road like a local

Florida Road in Durban has much to offer for locals, out-of-towners and international tourists.

Situated in the Morningside suburb, Florida Road is a tree-lined, 2km stretch of eateries, pubs and a host of galleries and quaint shops, many of which are to be found in characterful, restored old Victorian and Edwardian buildings.



Foodie haven

Its restaurants, in particular, have given the area the reputation of being the heart of Durban's "foodie" culture where tastes to suit every palate (and establishments to quench any thirst) are easy to be found. Mexican taco bars sit side by side with pizzerias, fine dining, Zulu-style grillrooms and parlours dedicated solely to the pursuit of sugar.

Unlike other entertainment nodes, however, the vibe here lasts all day, with early morning coffee seekers meeting up with friends and colleagues, to sit at sidewalk cafes and watch the passing trade, Parisian style.

To experience it at its best – as the locals would – a stay in the Florida Road area is also highly recommended, and there are options to suit solo business travellers through to couples and groups.

Accommodations

"It's both a very safe family-friendly area, as well as very cosmopolitan in the entertainment options it offers," says Funeka Zaula, general manager, Bon Hotel 64 on Gordon, just off Florida Road. The 35-roomed hotel caters for both leisure and corporate travellers, and its own PL8 restaurant adds to the area's wide mix of dining options.



Airbnb is also in abundance in the neighbourhood, for those preferring to go the self-catering route – with a number of choices ranging from Morningside penthouse apartments to quaint townhouses with gardens off Florida Road.

“If you’re a first-time traveller to Durban, it’s an ideal area in which to base yourself and really get to know the city,” adds Zaula. “Not to mention that it’s also in very close proximity to many of the sites for which Durban has become famous.”

Among these, notes Zaula, is Durban’s Golden Mile. Just down the road from the Florida Road precinct, the Mile, as it’s also known, runs the length of the popular Durban beachfront. Including a promenade along which to take a leisurely stroll, walk out onto the piers or generally take in the golden sands and join the sun worshippers, it starts at South Beach and ends 6km further north at the Suncoast Casino and Entertainment World.

Sights and sounds

The promenade is also where Durban’s aquarium, uShaka Marine World, is situated – with its water park, dolphinarium and a restaurant looking onto the largest shark tank in the world.

For those who prefer their leisure options slightly more compact, Mini Town is also situated alongside the promenade. Originally built in 1969, it is a 1:24 in size miniature replica containing many of Durban’s buildings as well as a harbour with 212,000 litres of water, and a working miniature railway and airport.



For more of a bird's eye view across the real Durban, the Golden Mile is also home to the Moses Mabhida Stadium – with its famous Arch. Holding up the roof of the stadium, the Arch has become a South African “must-see” in its own right: a funicular carries visitors to a viewing platform 106 metres above the centre of the pitch, offering a spectacular view over the city and the ocean.

Its south side features a 550-step adventure walk and, for the even braver at heart, there is the world's largest swing – allowing visitors to swing out in a 220-metre arc over the pitch.

Closer to the ground, the suburb of Morningside is also home to Mitchell Park. An easy walk from Florida Road, this is an ideal place for families to visit with many species of birds, monkeys and snakes to be seen and options from the Blue Zoo restaurant to a tea garden ready to feed hungry mouths.

“It's a place as popular with residents in the area as it is for visitors,” notes Zaula. “And that goes for the entire Florida Road vicinity. It's a great place in which to make the best of what the heart of Durban has to offer and really feel at home. ”

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