





Gauteng from the sky

To get perspective on the major powerhouses of Johannesburg and Pretoria, Lisa Johnston joined Sky Africa for an aerial tour of the golden cities and found there's more to this part of Gauteng than traffic jams and shopping malls.

When the country was divided up into 11 new provinces post-1994, the small landmass squeezed between the Vaal River, Free State, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga was unsurprisingly named the Sotho word meaning 'place of gold'. Gauteng occupies only 1,4 per cent of South Africa's landmass but accounts for about 40 per cent of gold mined on Earth.

It's a land of work hard, play hard, but our ant-like antics at ground level make it difficult to get perspective on the province as a whole. While cruising at 400 metres in the air, however, everything becomes clearer. Towering skyscrapers are made diminutive against the magnificent folds of the Magaliesberg mountains, the scars of mining and industry are measured against vast green belts and forested suburbia, and the mass of humanity is contrasted with hectare upon hectare of farmland. >

Take the leap: Orlando in the northeast of Soweto was punted as a model African township and a posh residential area when the first 300 houses went up in 1931. In those dark days, this meant matchbox, two-bedroom units without indoor plumbing or electricity. These days the area remains densely populated and Orlando West is most famous as the site of the Soweto uprising; it's also the suburb where Nelson Mandela lived for several years while he was practising law. The disused Orlando Towers are now used by adventure maniacs who can opt to bungi, power swing or abseil from the decorated cooling towers.



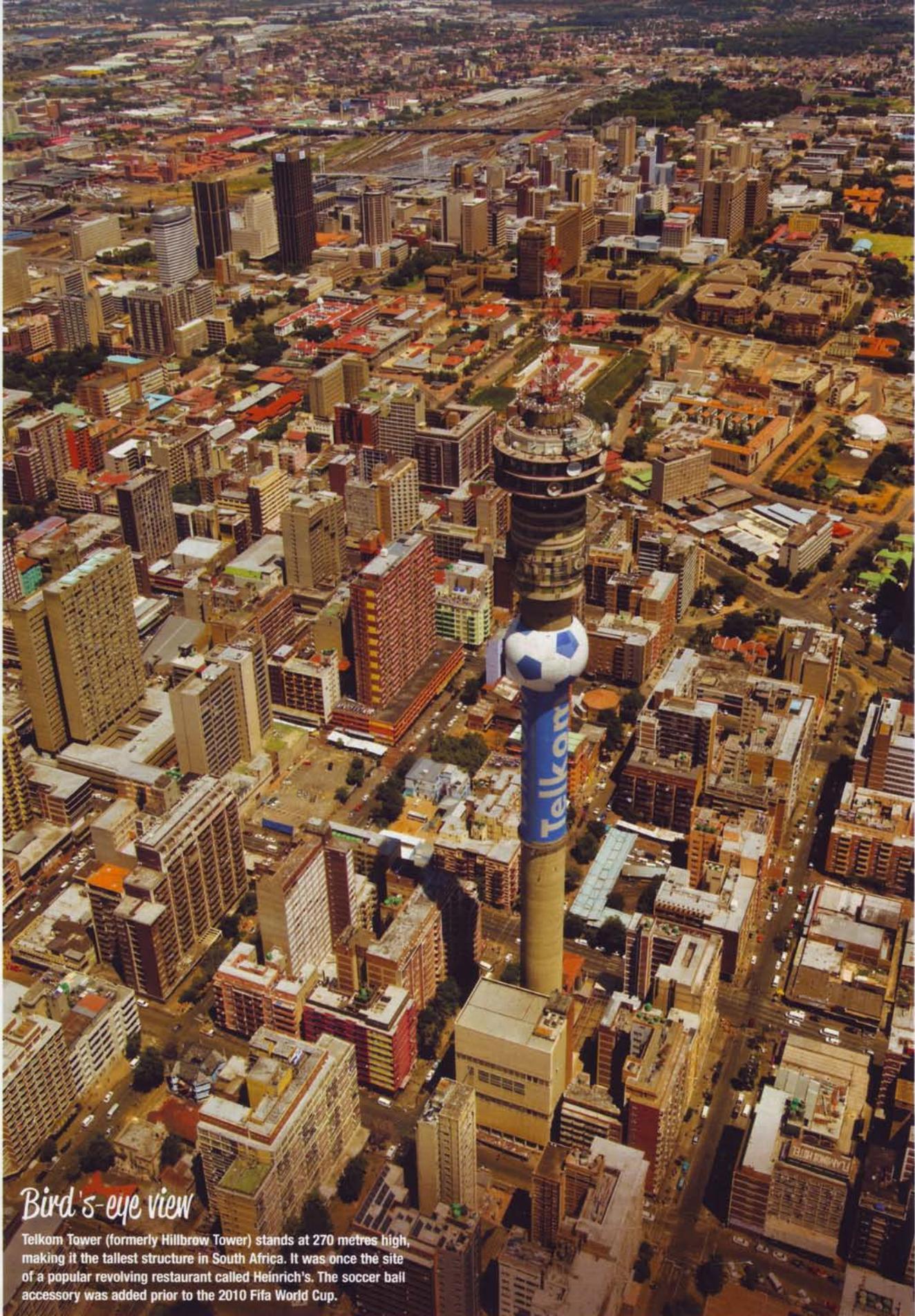
Ready for takeoff

Sky Africa offers a range of flying safaris for a bird's-eye view of the province, including its one-and-a-half-hour Gold Reef Tour, which takes in the gold mining towns of the Witwatersrand from Nigel to Krugersdorp. There's also the Golden City Flight, a one-hour flight that offers the best possible view of the city as well as Soweto and Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve. Romantics can take in a light show over the vast expanse of the Rand in a Golden City Night Tour. *Getaway* took the two-hour Flight of Two Cities for an aerial exploration of all Joburg and Pretoria have to offer as well as views of Sandton, Soweto, Hartbeespoort Dam and the Magaliesberg.

Aside from being highly entertaining, the pilots were excellent guides, pointing out areas of interest and doing their utmost to offer the best photographic angles on popular sites. It's a great way to explore the area regardless of whether you're a long-time resident, tourist or business visitor. Rates are R940 a person for the Gold Reef Tour, R1 400 for the Golden City Flight and R2 400 for the Flight of Two Cities. (Prices based on booking the full aircraft, otherwise on request. Sky Africa does pick-ups). Sky Africa also offers tailored air safaris across Africa. Cell 082-563-3314 or 071-607-7109, email reservations@skyafrica.com, www.skyafrica.com. ■



TOP: Heart of gold: the city of Johannesburg, now 125 years old, covers an area slightly larger than Greater London. With a population of about 3.3 million, it ranks among the world's largest 100 cities. The modern stadium in the foreground is the Johannesburg Athletics Stadium in the suburb of Doornfontein. Able to accommodate 37 500 people, it was originally built as an athletics stadium, but has also rugby matches and music concerts. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Up, up and away: at one time Sky Africa's Piaggio Albatross was used by the South African Air Force to patrol the coast. These days the executive cabin craft is used for air safaris. It has comfy seating and there's room to move around for better views. The large windows allow for excellent views and photo opportunities.



Bird's-eye view

Telkom Tower (formerly Hillbrow Tower) stands at 270 metres high, making it the tallest structure in South Africa. It was once the site of a popular revolving restaurant called Heinrich's. The soccer ball accessory was added prior to the 2010 Fifa World Cup.