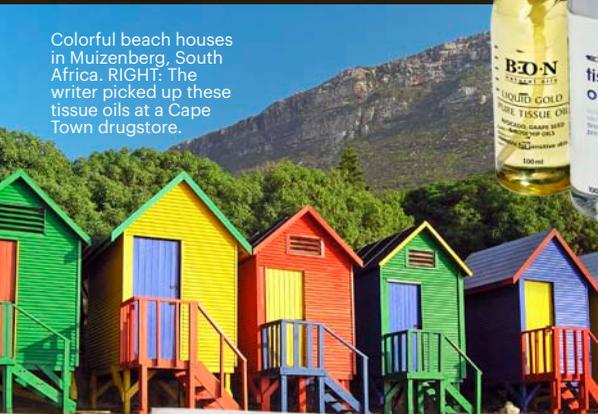




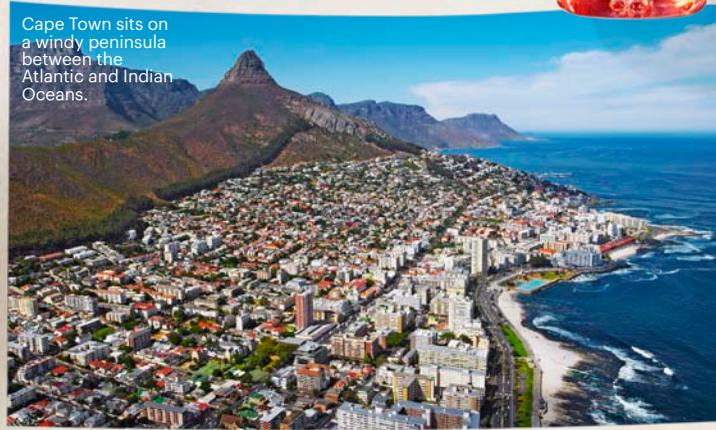
The volatile weather around Cape Town's Table Mountain can wreak havoc on skin.



Colorful beach houses in Muizenberg, South Africa. RIGHT: The writer picked up these tissue oils at a Cape Town drugstore.



RIGHT: Bio-Oil, \$20; walgreens.com.



Cape Town sits on a windy peninsula between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

CAPE TOWN'S FAMED Table Mountain was swathed in clouds the drizzly morning I arrived in South Africa, but by the time my car pulled up to the hotel, the sun was burning bright. "Welcome to Cape Town—four seasons in one day," my driver joked.

I soon learned that the country's rough weather (volatile in Cape Town, which sits on a windswept peninsula; hot and dry near Johannesburg and the famous game reserves) has sparked many skincare innovations over the years. In 1952, a South African chemist used lanolin, an oil derived from sheep's wool, to create a light face lotion that was more appropriate for warm weather than the heavy creams available at the time. Maybe you've heard of it: It was called Oil of Olay.

A few decades later, chemist Dieter Beier set out to make a nongreasy body oil to treat his dry skin. Instead of sheep, he looked to ducks for inspiration and created PurCellin Oil, a (non-animal-derived) replication of the oil that birds use to waterproof their feathers. In 1986, he blended vitamins and natural extracts like rosemary and calendula with PurCellin Oil to create Bio-Oil. It's since become popular worldwide as a skin-toning body oil (South African model Candice Swanepoel is a fan) and not-so-secret trick for minimizing stretch marks.

TISSUE ISSUE

In a Cape Town drugstore, the salesperson told me I could find Bio-Oil with the tissues. "Like, near the Kleenex?" I asked.

"No—*tissue oils*," she said, petting her skin before pointing to a sign that read the same. Beneath it, I found Bio-Oil, along with bottles from other brands. I bought a bunch, then e-mailed my local expert, Mathahle Stofile, the beauty editor of *Marie Claire South Africa*, to make sure I wasn't part of some grand experiment in which locals trick tourists into rubbing random household products all over their bodies. She confirmed that, yes, tissue oils are quite popular in South Africa. "They help diminish stretch marks and even out skin tone, which is a big issue for South African women, especially those who are black and Indian," Stofile wrote. "Bio-Oil is

FIELD GUIDE: SOUTH AFRICA

SKIN SAFARI

JENNIFER GOLDSTEIN hunts for complexion perfection at Africa's southern tip



No safari is complete without a leopard sighting.

one of our favorites, but many women make their own by mixing glycerin with their lotion.” Americans have been missing out on an entire beauty product category!

GLOW-GETTER

Body quenched, it was time for some above-the-neck assistance. The constant breeze—and maybe a few too many glasses of the local sauvignon blanc—had left my complexion parched, making every fine line more visible. So I headed to a skin clinic (here, as in Europe, women enlist dermatologists for medical situations, and spas or clinics for cosmetic assistance).

An aesthetician at Skin Symphony introduced me to Environ, a line founded by Cape Town plastic surgeon Dr. Desmond Fernandes, one of the first doctors to promote retinoids for skin-cancer protection. After cleansing my skin, the aesthetician brushed on Ionzyme Focus Frown Serum and rolled out an apparatus that looked like it belonged in a dentist’s office. She explained that the handheld wand of the Ionzyme DF II Machine emits

sound waves and pulsed electrical currents that would help the serum penetrate. When she touched the wand to my skin, I felt a buzzing sensation and tasted something metallic. I made it about 10 minutes before I spoke up about the metal mouth. She looked at a form I had filled out beforehand. “You checked that you didn’t have fillings,” she said, and explained that they can sometimes cause a metallic taste during the treatment. *Oops.* (Note to self: Read medical-form questions before checking all the “no” boxes.)

The facial’s final step was a pleasantly cool Alginate Mask, which dried into a rubbery cast of my face, and an application of Intensive Colostrum Gel, a soothing hydrator made from an extract of (ethically sourced) cow’s milk. A full 12 hours later, I looked in the mirror, and, no joke, I was still glowing; the lines that had been on my forehead earlier were completely gone.

RANGER PICK

The next day, my new face and I flew to MalaMala Game Reserve for the most South African experience of all: a safari. Despite the heat, we spotted the Big Five (elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, lion, buffalo) on our first game drive. On the way back to camp, bumping along in an open-top Land Rover, the ranger driving asked what had brought me to his country. When I told him I had come to learn more about its beauty secrets, I thought he was going to laugh (this was a man who could track leopards, after all). Instead, he opened his glove compartment and pulled out a tube of Environ sunscreen. “Then you’ll definitely want to try this,” he said. “It’s what all the rangers use.” Seems the country’s reputation for skincare expertise extends well beyond the city limits. **mc**



The lilac-breasted roller bird is common in South Africa.

Sunset on the MalaMala Game Reserve, which abuts Kruger National Park.



1. Sunscreen SPF 25, \$36. 2. Ionzyme C-Quence Energising Masque, \$118.
3. Intensive Colostrum Gel, \$66. All items, **Environ**; available at dermaconcepts.com.