

Explore our reserves in

the **GARDEN ROUTE**
and
KLEIN KAROO

What a delight, what a pleasure. Can there be a more accommodating natural environment? One

hundred and forty kilometres of lush plains and equally lush mountains. This is hill country that slopes down over films of inland lakes bordered by wooded cliffs, dunes, estuaries and a vast sea. To the north, there are the Outeniquas and the Tsitsikammas, huge ranges of sheer magnificence, below which rivers have cut gorges into stone. To the south, the warm Indian Ocean is a brooding presence with its lace-edge of white, its sweeps of beaches and its pointed headlands. Everything is green or blue or turquoise. Life is well supported. Birds and animals abound. It is a garden if ever there was one. And people play in it all day long, lost in their chosen fantasies. There is not much that is not catered for in this eden. Mountain biking; horse riding; canoeing; fishing; hiking;

4x4 trails; birding and archaeology. But it is the latter that makes it all so real: a long walk, a steep climb, insect bites, and finally, the realisation that the distance we like to think we have put between ourselves and our ancestors is not that great at all.



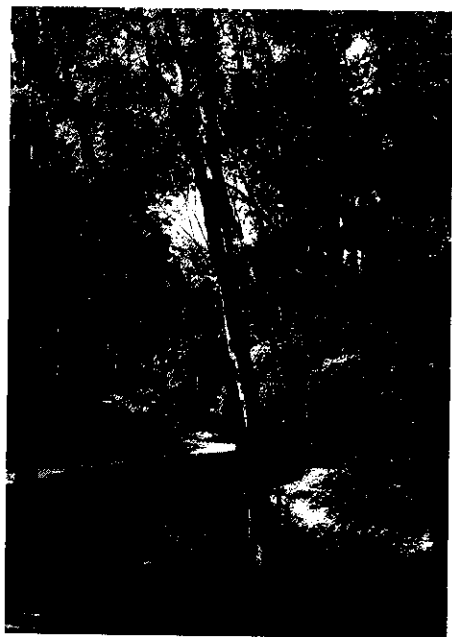
**i Garden Route & Klein Karoo
Regional Tourism**

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OUTENIQUA

Nature Reserve



T

*race the bee-lines that mark this mountain
– the patterned movements of the past*

Background

Outeniqua is a reserve of mountain passes and hiking trails. It offers the visitor a tranquil break from the rigours of daily life with a choice of activities from short rambles to more strenuous hiking routes and summit treks.

The name Outeniqua is derived from that of the Khoisan tribe, the Attaqua, once resident here. It means "they who bear honey".

The reserve lies between the high rainfall coastal region and the dry Little Karoo. The vegetation of this mountainous area is diverse. The moist southern slopes are predominantly covered with mountain fynbos, though wonderful pockets of cool, indigenous forest also occur in some of the kloofs.

The area is particularly attractive in September and October, when many of the proteas and ericas are in flower. The northern slopes are much drier, and accordingly the vegetation is sparser, blending with hardy, drought-resistant Karoo veld that takes over and runs inland to the horizon.

Ecologically, the mountain serves as a catchment for the entire coastal region, from Mossel Bay to Plettenberg Bay. Geographically, the Outeniqua and Robinson passes split the reserve into three sections: Wilfontein, closest to George; the Doring River Wilderness Area, to the

west; and the Attakwaskloof, a further little jump to the west again.

Nowadays, the most functional and therefore most travelled of the passes are the Outeniqua Pass, between George and Oudtshoorn, and the Robinson Pass, between Mossel Bay and Oudtshoorn. The least travelled is the original Attakwaskloof Pass, while the most attractive, in its old world way, is the Montagu Pass. The most difficult, however, remains the Cradock Pass, which appears to have been an engineering blunder from the very outset.

In the early days, colonial expansion was severely hampered by forests so vast and dense, it took several days of painstaking travel to get through them.

To thwart these forests, the logical though often as fraught route, was over the mountain and into the semi-desert of the interior.

But it was elephant herds that paved the way. They, because of their bulk, had long since developed a certain propensity to finding the easiest gradients over high ground.

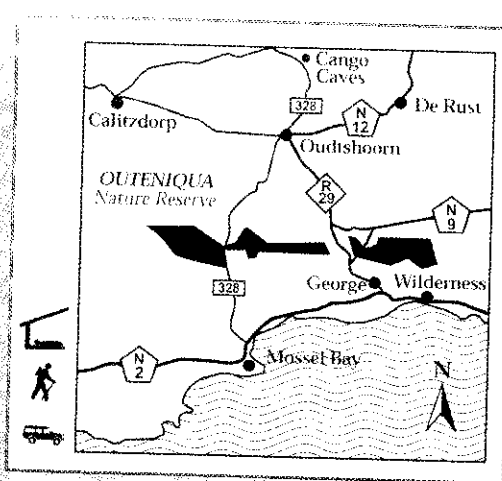
Later, these paths became familiar to the Khoisan, who in turn introduced them to the colonists, who turned them into passes.

Today the mountain, its footpaths and its defiles, attract hikers, motorists, and, in the case of Attakwaskloof, 4x4 trailists.

The Passes

No less than five cross the reserve's 100 km length. But of these, only the Outeniqua and the Robinson passes are tarred. Their associated trails are also listed below.





Attakwaskloof – Thirty-seven years passed after the Dutch landed at the Cape before the first official expedition was sent to crack the Outeniquas. In 1689, a standard-bearer arrived in the country of Mossel Bay. Khoisan people showed him the way, up through present Herbertsdale and into the broad Attakwaskloof Valley. The track through the kloof took him four days of hacking and burning. Your journey through the kloof can begin either at the Ruitersbos turn-off, on the R328 from Mossel Bay, or from the inland side of the Robinson Pass, where you will find a sign-posted turn-off to the left.

✱ As a two-day hike (35-40 km), you will overnight at what is known as the Perdekop house, at the foot of the valley. You will need a vehicle at the trail's end. Enthusiasts of the 4x4 will make the journey in a day, though an overnight at Perdekop will be more meaningful. The house can accommodate 10 people in three bedrooms. There is a kitchen with a wood stove, a hot water shower and an outside toilet. Bring everything else in the way of personal comforts.

Cradock – The town of George was established in 1811, but it had no access to the Oudtshoorn district. A possible route was soon earmarked right behind the town. Within two months of the following year a track was cleared and a pass declared. It proved to be one of the most dangerous in the region. And yet it was used for 35 long and mostly grudging years. The white marker stones leading up the foothills to the pass can still be seen today. As can the tracks the wagons scoured as they slid and

juddered from the reaches with their brakes full on.

✱ You can walk the route as a day hike (24,8 km; 8 hours). It starts from the reserve entrance and will leave you wondering how anything ever got done.

✱ Another day hike will take you to Cradock Peak (17 km; 6 hours). A trek to the summit of George Peak (8 hours) will reward you with stunning views. Both these routes start at the reserve entrance.

Montagu – Clearly an alternative to the Cradock Pass had to be found. And it was, one kilometre to the west. The new pass started lower down in the valley and made far greater use of contours. Today it is a national monument, but you can drive it in an ordinary car, up alongside the original stonewall, right back into history.



Outeniqua – Sooner or later, every pass is passed up. In 1943, it was the Montagu's turn. Vehicle improvements and an increase in traffic got everyone hankering for something better.

And better is what they got. The Outeniqua took about eight years to finish, but was well worth it. Today, a wonderful round-trip to make from George is up the Montagu Pass to Herold village, returning via the Outeniqua.

✽ An interesting little ramble here is the Pass-to-Pass day hike (4,7 km; 3 hours), from the Montagu to the Outeniqua or vice versa. The route takes you through attractive fynbos vegetation.

Robinson – With the growth of Mossel Bay and the growing inadequacy of the Attakwaskloof Pass, farmers and traders in the Oudtshoorn district had two options: detour via the now excellent Montagu Pass; or stick with an old bridle path near to the route of the present Robinson Pass. Work began in 1866, but was only finished

halfway through 1869. It was named after the inspector of roads.

✽ The Koumashoek circular day walk (16,5 km; 8 hours) starts in the Robinson Pass. It offers amazing views of the sea and inland to the Swartberg mountains.

Aside from these mountain pass routes, there are five other hiking routes to choose from.

Tierkop Trail – This is a 30 km two-day hike in the Witfontein section of the reserve. It starts at the reserve office and takes you up and under the George Peak, and then across to the overnight hut in a saddle below the Tierkop. Facilities here are basic. There is water and there are mattresses, but you should bring all other requirements.

Doring River Wilderness Trail – The trail begins at Waboomskraal on the northern side of the Outeniqua Pass and ends in the Robinson Pass to the west. It is a three-day 50 km-trek with two overnights. You will need a gas cooker and a tent, though one night is spent in an old, stone shepherd's hut. Water is available from the many perennial streams en route.

Doring River circular route – This is a day trail (14 km; 6 hours) that also starts at Waboomskraal, 20 km from George. It takes you through the pristine wilderness of the Doring River Valley.

The plantation walks – These vary in length (8-11 km) and start at the reserve entrance, where self-issue permits are available.

Tips

- ✽ If you intend hiking the Attakwaskloof, enquire about horseflies. They can be a nuisance at certain times of the year around watercourses.
- ✽ Permits are required for all activities in the Outeniquas and are available at the reserve office. As are maps of all the trails.
- ✽ There is no pre-trail accommodation in the reserve, but no shortage in George.
- ✽ Cellphone reception is line-of-sight only.

Getting there

The office is four kilometres outside George on the R29. From the top of York Street (George's main street), head out on the R29 to the signposted turn-off to the right.

Enquiries and bookings

Tel: (044) 870 8323/5

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GAMKABERG

Nature Reserve

Where the lion retreated, so humanity might prosper and where, if we are not careful, the zebra could vanish too

Background

To seek a place out, despite, or rather, specifically because of its dark, imperious mien, is the essence of travel. And to get there before anyone we know has, is where the real adventure lies. But to find that not only was the getting there, but what is hidden there, every bit as exciting as it might have been for the adventurous traveller of 300 years past, is reward indeed.

We are fortunate in Africa; the land forever heightens our sense of exploration, its expanses and its wildness. And we need not go far to find it. This is particularly so with the Gamkaberg Nature Reserve – such space and detachment, so close to towns and people.

The brooding Gamkaberg, together with the equally mysterious Rooiberg, appear to have been laid down as one over the lowlands of the Little Karoo, like a huge dyke between the Swartberg, the Outeniquas and the ocean. But they are riven by the Gouritz River that slides from the heights of the Swartberg and heads for the sea southwest of Mossel Bay. The Gamka is therefore a range in isolation. Its name is derived from the Khoisan, *gami*, meaning lion, Cape lion, once so successful and confident here, now extinct. Theirs was a rapid decline. As the humans approached, so the lions withdrew.

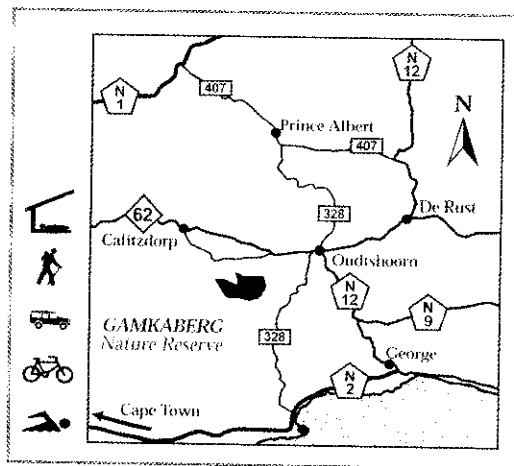
Deep, scarified ravines cut the side of the Gamkaberg. From a distance and against the rest of the mountain's dun suffusion,

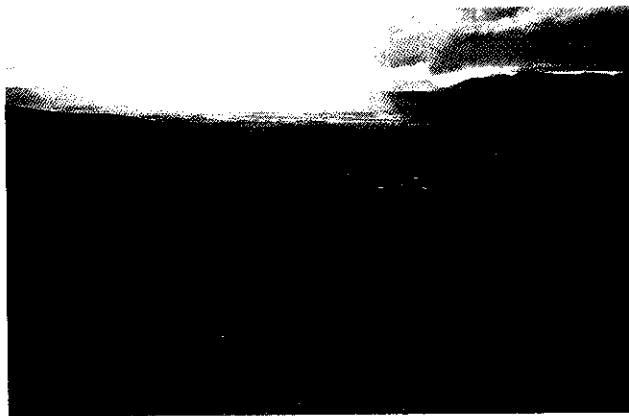
they are practically invisible. And to be alone in one of them is as if one was the last there, with the last lion, the whole world now inexplicably uninhabited.

The Gamkaberg Nature Reserve was established in 1974 to conserve a small, remnant herd of endangered Cape mountain zebra. They numbered 13 in 1970 and five in 1976 (six were shot by a local farmer in one outing). There are now 32 of them. The struggle continues.

Facilities

It is through exploration of the Tierkloof ravine (pictured above), in particular, that most visitors come to know Gamkaberg. In Tierkloof's maw, in the riverine thicket, is a





bush camp. Of all of Cape Nature Conservation's reserves, nowhere will your sense of seclusion and rustication be greater. It is constructed of thatch, wood and reed.

Nothing jars. Even leopard have been known to pass close by. And at night, on a full moon, doves call from the thorn trees, hoping to gain an evolutionary advantage.

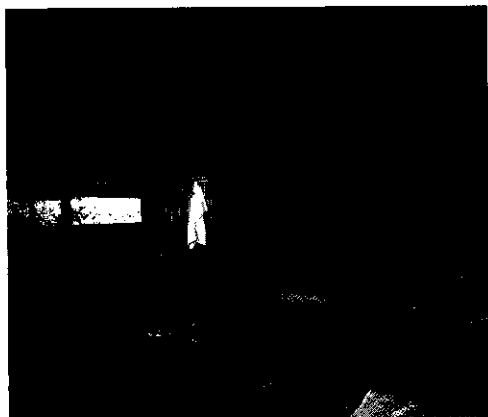
The spacious and comfortable main hut has one double bed and two singles. Also within this hut is the kitchen, with utensils, a gas fridge and stove, and a gas water heater at the sink. There is a food preparation table and a dining table. Solar lights are provided. There are a further four beds in two semi-permanent tents pitched under their own reed roofs a short distance from

the main hut. The reed and thatch ablution facilities, along a pathway lit by a hurricane lamp, consist of two flush toilets, a hot-water shower and an outside basin.

Alongside the main hut is a welcoming lapa, with its own table, chairs and braai area. Just beyond the lapa is a cement dam with a sheltered deck, that in summer, when temperatures hit the 40s, you will have difficulty keeping out of. The complex is wheelchair-friendly.

Hiking

On a flat on top of Gamka, 12 km from the bush camp, is Oukraal, a stone shelter in the mountain fynbos. It is reached through the top end of the Tierkloof – an easy to



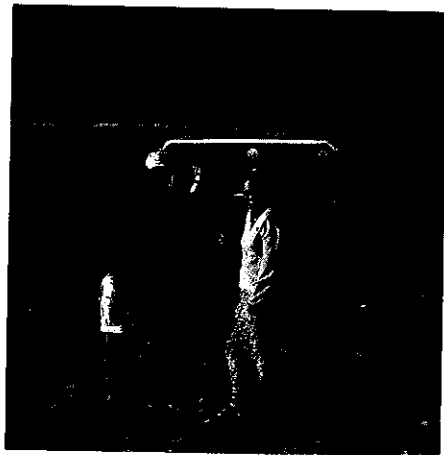
Zebra Crossing 4x4 route

First things first: a small point. You will need to bring your own vehicle. This said and done, there should be no problem. A guide can be arranged to accompany you. You will then see things you otherwise would not, making for a richer experience. Your accommodation will be the Tierkloof bush camp or the Oukraal stone shelter, or both.

The route covers a large and rugged section of the reserve, taking you to and from spectacular viewpoints more than 1 000 m above the Little Karoo.

The steepest sections have been strip-cemented for management purposes. Die-hards might consider this namby-pamby, but they could save you face, though you need not say so out loud. The possibilities are:

- * Use the bush camp as a base. Make daily excursions up and down the mountain.
- * Overnight in the bush camp. Take the 4x4 route. Overnight again up at Oukraal.
- * Overnight at the bush camp. Leave the next morning on the 4x4 route. Exit through the reserve's southern "entrance".
- * Set yourself up in the bush camp. Stay for as long as you like. Do not drive anywhere. Leave only when your larder is bare.



moderate six- to eight-hour hike that winds against the river course. This is an overnight trail, a circular route limited to 12 people. The return leg is shorter.

But if you thought the bush camp was close to nature, Oukraal is actually in nature, so do not expect comforts other than a mattress (six are provided). You will sleep in the stone shelter, easily mistaken for a koppie, unless you prefer to lug a tent. Even the lavatory appears to teeter above a 400 m precipice. Hence the name: long drop. Things are rarefied up here. And at midnight, when only endangered honey badgers and leopards are likely to be about, your fire will cast a special glow against the rocks. Wood is provided.

Tips

- * Whether you are a 4x4 enthusiast, a hiker or simply enjoy the outdoors, if you book, you will have the facilities to yourself and will not have to share with another party.
- * Longer, alternative 4x4 routes do exist in the area. Enquire from management.

* Gamkaberg has more than 20 rock art sites – a guide can be arranged.

* Mountain bikers should enquire after the approximately 30 km of incredibly wild overnight trail currently being set up in the shadow of the Rooiberg.

* There is no cellphone reception.

Getting there

From Cape Town to the reserve is about 420 km. But from Calitzdorp it is only 32 km. Follow the signs from Andries Pretorius Road. You can also get there from Oudtshoorn (33 km). Follow the signs a few kilometres outside of town on the R62. Or, from the coast, take the Hartenbos turn-off near Mossel Bay and the Robinson Pass to the R62 outside Oudtshoorn.

Enquiries and bookings

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E-mail: gamkanr@mweb.co.za

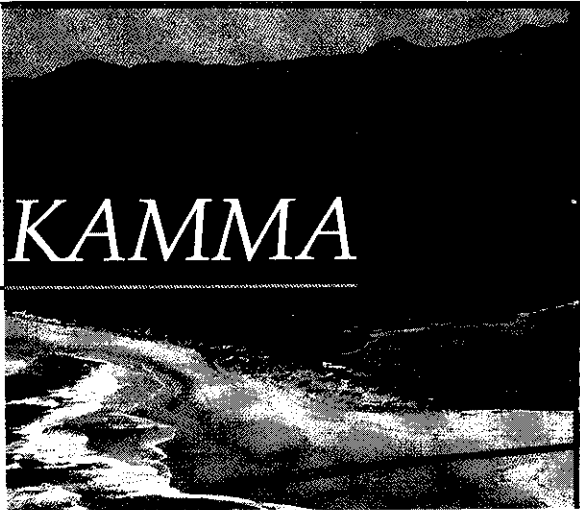
Bookings: Tel: (044) 874 2184

Fax: (044) 874 1567

E-mail: george@cnc.org.za

GOUKAMMA

Nature Reserve & Marine Protected Area



T

here is something about the sea and about coastal life – the sudden mood swings, the simmering vivacity

Background

They say most of humanity's problems stem from an inability to sit quietly in a room. They say this is so because we have a need to divert ourselves from the contemplation of our own mortality and our own triviality. We do this by immersing ourselves in work and other frenzies, when we could go down to the sea.

They say coastal societies get taken in by small distractions, as those of the deserts do by great thoughts. At Goukamma you will

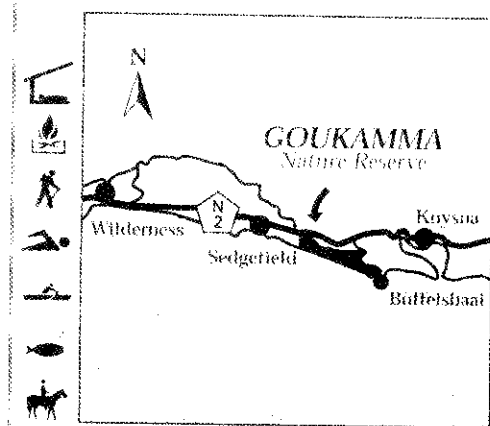
find a little of both. But mostly you will find your love for the sea swell up luxuriously and bear you blissfully along. Here there is a forest, a lake, a river, an estuary, a beach, dunes, there are winds, mists, salt, and yet everywhere there are places of peculiar quietness.

Even down on the rushing beach and within the forest din, hushes descend for no apparent reason – a band of plough snails in a moment between ebb and flow; the cipher stop, as every last cicada tunes in. One minute you sense malevolence in the air, the next goodness and warmth.

There are two halves to Goukamma, three thirds, if you count them. There is Goukamma itself, a beautiful stretch of estuary named from the Khoisan for Dark Waters, and there is Groenvlei, with its strange green waters. Between the two exists a sweep of old sand dunes, vegetated fossil dunes, rather, that over millennia have turned to stone. They are of the highest in the country. Parts are covered in ancient milkwood and coastal forests, parts in fynbos. They creep down to 14 km of wild beach and ragged rocks, the length of which is a marine protected area.

Groenvlei, on the other hand, is a serene and mysterious freshwater lake. It has no in-flowing river and apparently no link to the sea. Hippo used to live here. Part of its shore is forest, part dense reed. It is home to the estuarine roundherring, a saltwater fish that should long since have departed, but that instead adapted to the lake's fresh water, the lake having once been connected to the sea. Today Groenvlei gets its water





from run-off and seepage from the dunes about it, unlike the languid Goukamma River, which still gets most of its water straight from its source in the Outeniquas.

But like the river, as it leaves the hills, at Goukamma you too can unwind, have a stretch, slow down. A giant kingfisher comes in low to a dead branch. A mullet breaks the surface and then does so again further away. A blacksmith plover sinks to its knees for a hurried prayer. In places the water goes from rich amber to obsidian.

Facilities

Goukamma has six self-catering units. All are equipped with stove/hob, fridge/freezer, pots, pans, crockery and cutlery. Bedding can be supplied, but at an additional fee.

The Bush Camp: Groenvlei's bush camp is amongst the trees of a milkwood forest, behind the reeds at the lake edge. Built of local timbers and thatch, it consists of an open-plan kitchen/living/braai area, two separate double-story sleeping units, a separate hot-water shower and a flush toilet. You will get about on wooden decks and walkways. One of these leads to your own jetty and double canoe.

The sleeping units have one double bed and two single beds each. Firewood and grids are provided.

The Rondavels: At the Buffalo Bay side of Goukamma, there are three wonderful thatched double rondavels set against the hill overlooking the river and the estuary. They sleep six people each – three in each

rondavel (room), in combinations of double, single and bunk beds. The rooms connect by a kitchenette and a shower/toilet. Each rondavel has its own braai area.

The River Lodge: Also at the Buffalo Bay side of Goukamma, situated above the river, are a river lodge and a flatlet. The river lodge has a lounge/dining room and fully equipped kitchen. It sleeps nine people in three bedrooms. The main bedroom has an en suite shower and toilet while the separate bathroom has a bath, shower and toilet. The lodge also has its own braai area.

The flatlet is on the floor above the Goukamma office. It is meant to provide



cheaper accommodation, though it has the best views at Goukamma. It sleeps eight people in two rooms, each with two sets of bunk beds. There is a separate kitchenette. The toilet/shower is at the foot of the outside stairs leading up to the unit. It has its own braai area under milkwood trees.

Hiking and Horseriding

Obviously, in such diverse habitats, life abounds – birds, in particular, but also grysbok, bushbuck, bushpig, porcupine, caracal, mongoose, honey badger and otter. Inshore along the coast you can see dolphins year round and southern right whales from about August to December.

There are four day hikes, the longest being the Goukamma to Groenvlei, up over the fossil dunes and down through milkwood forests (16 km; 4-5 hours). The beach walk covers the reserve's entire seaboard (14 km; 4 hours), but is cut off by a cliff at spring highs. The circular route from Goukamma (8 km) leads through a milkwood forest. You could modify it to include a beach walk. Groenvlei has its own short, but fascinating, lakeside forest walk.

Horseriding is also possible. All you need is your horse.

Tips

* The novelty of living in the forest at Groenvlei is that you share it with other animals, including vervet monkeys. Put all

food away in the cupboards and do not feed the monkeys.

* Bass fishing on Groenvlei is excellent, as is fishing along the coast and in the Goukamma River (freshwater angling licences are obtainable from the reserve, and marine licences from any post office).

* No removal of bait or any marine organisms, including shells, octopus and oysters is allowed within the one nautical mile-wide marine protected area.

* Picnicking, swimming, sailing and canoeing are possible at Goukamma, where canoes can be hired.

* Cellphone reception is generally good.

Getting there

To Groenvlei Bush Camp: About 2 km beyond Sedgefield on the N2 to Knysna, take the Lake Pleasant turn-off. Pass the caravan park on your right, the hotel on your left, go up the hill and follow the sign-posted turn-off to the left for about 2 km.

To Goukamma River: About 10 km beyond Sedgefield on the N2 to Knysna, take the Buffels Bay/Goukamma turn-off. After about 6 km you will see the river and picnic area on your right. Enter at the gates and follow the signs upstream to the office.

Enquiries and bookings

Tel: (044) 383 0042

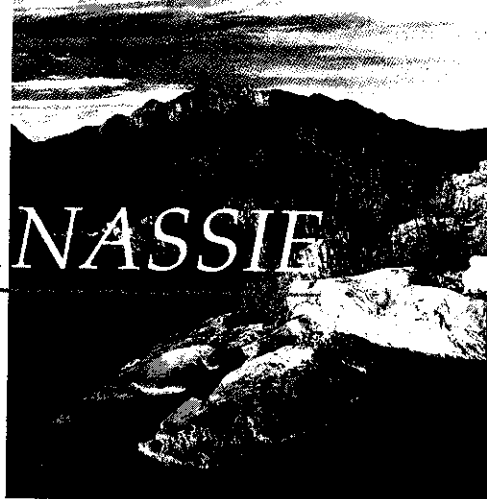
Fax: (044) 383 0043

E-mail: goukamma@mweb.co.za



KAMMANASSIE

Nature Reserve



A

*rock island not necessarily
inanimate in character*

Background

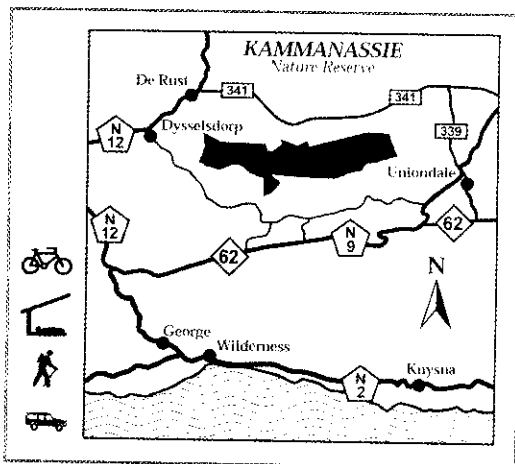
Try not to take the obvious route when approaching this inselberg. Try to come at it obliquely, from around the back roads, from Dysselsdorp, say, or along the clayey roots of the Langkloof. And when you leave, go by a similar route. Make this a priority and the spirit that is this rock dome will never leave you.

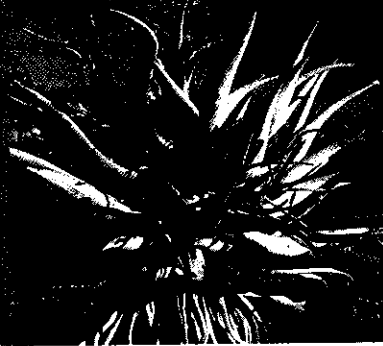
The Khoisan, who left their art in its caves, gave it their name: Kammanassie, Mountain of Water. To them there was no question about it. It was perfect. They knew the influence it had – on the earthly and the unearthly. Where there is no water, there is no life and the spirit is bound to flee. Thankfully, the streams and rivers still flow in their deep, narrow kloofs. In fact, so massive and yet so self-contained and mysterious is this mountain that one could imagine beings living here still, not so much on it as in it, a vast, subterranean world more real than our own. Deities of nature, say, like orades, the mountain nymphs of Greek mythology.

Should we only ever look upon mountains as things to climb or to study? Or should we imbue them with something of the catacomb, precious and revered? For catchments they remain and if we cannot look after our water sources, what will we look after?

Kammanassie receives rain throughout the year, an average of about 600 mm. And

it is this that helps sustain the small herd of endangered Cape mountain zebra, which are greatly dependent on water. These beautiful animals were shot nearly to extinction throughout the region in earlier times, often only as meat for servants. Kammanassie's population are descendants of the original herd that ran on this mountain. They are described as a pure gene pool, that is, none have been introduced from elsewhere to bolster their survival. There are 40 animals here now. In the 1970s there were six. This is their ideal habitat, their last best local bet. And it is with good reason that they are flighty and difficult to approach. Only two other pure gene pools survive, one at Gamkaberg Nature Reserve





Africa's wild equines

These horses have never known a stable door and, until recent times, never knew confinement either. They roamed the hills and grassy plains in great herds and, when migrating to water, in even vaster herds. Today, however, they are only found in significant numbers in larger African nature reserves.

There are two zebra species – the Burchell's or plains zebra, and the Hartmann's, of which the Cape mountain zebra is a sub-species.

The Cape mountain zebra is most easily distinguished from the Hartmann's zebra by the lack of stripes on its belly and its almost donkey-like ears.

But common to all zebra are these animals' more peculiar traits. Their hysterical whinny, their podginess and their ability to appear dark or pale, depending on the light.



and the other at the Mountain Zebra National Park, near Cradock.

But as if to further test our ability to ponder, something truly ethereal was discovered on the mountain recently. They have called it the Kammanassie blue. It is a butterfly of the same genus as the Karkloof and Brenton blues, coloured for hope and eternity. The latter is one of the world's rarest butterflies. All three are endangered.

Facilities

Kammanassie has a self-catering guest-house in Uniondale, a few kilometres from the reserve. It sleeps 10 people in four rooms (bedding provided), has a kitchen with a fridge, a stove and its own cutlery and crockery. It has a bathroom/shower and a second separate shower/toilet. It also has a sitting room. Use this as your operations room and the house as your base from which to explore the reserve and the region. You could make day trips to Baviaanskloof, Oudtshoorn, George, Plettenberg Bay and Knysna from here. The house has a garage and a braai area. It is next door to the reserve office, from where you can get your reserve entry permit.

Hiking

The reserve has no overnight hiking, but it does have two fantastic day hikes, both of which will bring you into more than nodding acquaintance with the mystery of the mountain. It is on these trails that you are likely to come across the Kammanassie cone bush, endemic to the reserve. There are also klipspringer, duiker, grysbok, rhebuck, kudu and mountain reedbuck in

the reserve, not to mention baboons. The 7-km out-and-back Kloof Route will take you through the shady, indigenous forest of Lands River Valley. It ends at a waterfall, where, in summer, swimming is inevitable. The 6,5 km circular Rooiplaas Route climbs above the Lands River Valley and out on to a plateau with expansive views over the Langkloof and across to the Outeniquas.

4x4 route

The nearby Millwood Nature Reserve has the 27-km Bay-to-Bay View Route with views to beat all views. Although it is not actually on Kammanassie, the reserve falls under Cape Nature Conservation's management.

This circular trail starts at the apple farm Vergenoeg and winds up to the top of the Outeniquas. A short detour (7 km) to the Spitskop viewpoint will allow you to take in spectacular views up and down the coast, from Tsitsikamma to Sedgefield and back inland.

The route then follows the crest until the road drops down into the Millwood basin and the campsite and picnic area. There is a toilet here and water, but no showers.

A maximum of three vehicles are allowed on this route, which can be done as a two-day trail or in a day.

Tips

- * Visit the Uniondale tourism office. The town has more to offer than its ghost. Phone (044) 752 1588.
- * Lansrivier farm, which was established in the early 1900s, has two fully equipped and recently restored guesthouses that sleep six people each. Phone (044) 745 1404.
- * Keys to the Millwood 4x4 route must be collected at the Palm Garage at Nollshalte. They will only be issued on proof of a valid permit and must be returned to the garage on departure.
- * Cellphone reception in Uniondale only.

Getting there

The reserve is a few kilometres outside Uniondale off the N9. Uniondale is 75 km from Knysna or Plettenberg Bay via the Prince Alfred's Pass. Millwood Nature Reserve is south-east of Nollshalte in the Outeniquas. Nollshalte is about 35 km south-west of Uniondale and is 90 km from George and 100 km from Oudsthoorn.

Enquiries and bookings

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ROB

Nature Reserve & Marine Protected Area



Compelling evidence of the past has hauled up on the cracked rocks of this peninsula called Seal Mountain

Background

In days long gone, as all good tales begin, there was nothing here but land, waves of grassland, stretching forever along the horizon. Before that there was sea. Now all is again sea and only a lonely, wind-cut hill continues to jut proud of the big blue and of the continent. It is this peninsula that holds the ancient memory, a gnarled and encrusted finger held out to the past.

Below and about, giant versions of present-day plains animals once roamed the lowlands: the giant buffalo; hartebeest; springbok; and zebra, amongst others. People of the Stone Age lived here too, for thousands of years.

Ancestors of the San found protection in the caves of Robberg and by day ranged the veld, hunting with increasing success with quartzite chips and bones. They knew nothing else.

Then came another flood. The polar ice caps began to melt and the oceans rose again. Today, whales and white horses surface and sound, crabby seals bark from their north shore rookery, and on top of Robberg, like some ornate signet ring, is Cape Seal, the highest navigational light on the coast.

But it is people that fascinate.

In Nelson Bay Cave, archaeologists have found evidence of 120 000 years of almost continual human habitation on Robberg. The first recorded European habitation in

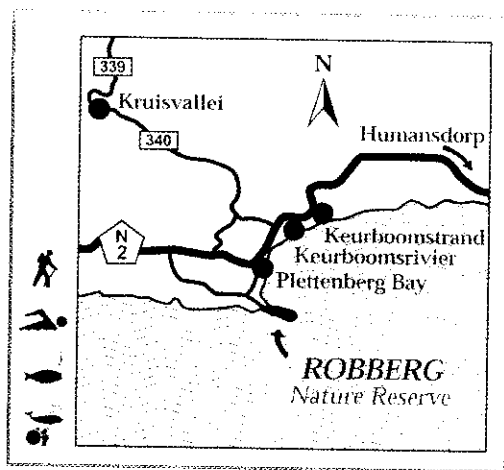
South Africa occurred in 1630 on the beach in the corner on the north side of this peninsula. A Portuguese vessel was wrecked here. The survivors camped out on the beach for about a year while they built two small boats and traded with what were possibly Robberg's last inhabitants.

The tombolo

Wind continues to play a part in the character of Robberg. You can see it in the sculptured shape of some of the fynbos and in the peninsula itself. The southern slope is gradual; the northern shoreline drops off almost sheer. And then there is the tombolo, grafted like a scion to the mainland. Not to be mistaken for tombola, the lottery game, a tombolo is a spit that links an island to a mainland.

Robberg's tombolo and island are on its south side, nearly in the middle of the peninsula's 4 km length. The tombolo is a result of waves sweeping round both sides of the island in the prevailing south-westerlies. Sand from longshore drift is deposited to form a beach between the island and the mainland.

In Robberg's case, this sand has developed a further interesting feature – a climbing-falling dune. The sand is blown up the peninsula's southern slope and into a wind-shadow, where it accumulates. Gravity then pulls the sand down Robberg's precipitous northern slope and deposits it in Plettenberg Bay. There are other tombolos along our coast, in the Eastern Cape for instance, but this is the finest working example.



Hikes

You will forever regret visiting Robberg without having set time aside to walk the peninsula. It will play on your mind. Four hours is all it takes.

There are three routes to choose from, they are circular and run clockwise. They increase in difficulty with distance, but can be described as up-and-down, so take water. And keep a look out for whales (humpback, Brydes and southern right, depending on the season), dolphin (hump-

back and bottlenose) and visiting open-sea birds (a storm-blown tropic bird once landed on Robberg).

The Gap circuit (2,1 km; 30 minutes) is the shortest. In this Cretaceous mudstone cleft is clear-cut and fascinating evidence of the break-up of Gondwanaland. The Witsand circuit (5,5 km; 2 hours) leads along Robberg's north ridge, above the seal colony and on into the wind-shadow of the climbing-falling dune. Follow this dune down to the tombolo and a boardwalk to a



colony of kelp gulls. From here is an easy return to the car park via the Gap.

The Point circuit (9,2 km; 4 hours) is the longest and is not recommended for young children. From the dune wind-shadow, the trail continues on along the north ridge to the Point, where hundreds of swift terns, gannets and cormorants roost. You then make your way back along the southern rocky shoreline (try to get this on a spring low tide for added interest). You will pass the island as you cross the tombolo. Then it is a climb up through the Gap and you are back at the car park. Always beware of waves and currents, especially at high tide.

Tips

- Visit Nelson Bay Cave and its Stone Age interpretation centre if you do nothing else. It is, in a word, haunting. And do so preferably before you embark on one of the hikes. You will be the wiser for it. Geologists have been known to clutch their chins in wonder on Robberg.
- Robberg's marine protected area extends one nautical mile out to sea. Only rock and surf angling is allowed. Permits are available at any post office.
- There is no accommodation on the peninsula, but there is plenty in Plett.
- Cellphone reception is generally good.

Getting there

Follow the airport road 8 km out of town from Plettenberg Bay. Look for the turn-off to the left.

The seal rookery

Cape fur seal rookeries are mostly found on offshore islands inaccessible to the public, but Robberg has its own.

Rookeries, you will notice, are not sanctums of calm. They are places of doubt and trouble. Bulls roar, cows howl and cubs bleat. And underwater, their main predator, the great white shark, is always alert to weakness or lapse.

Pups are born in late November and early December.

The Cape fur seal is the only seal indigenous to southern Africa. Single seals can be seen hunting or resting almost anywhere along the Cape coast.



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KEURBOOMS RIVER

Nature Reserve



To think that water levels here were once 300 metres above their present

Background

We enter through the river mouth, in our brightly coloured canoes. There is a tight turn here. We must bear right for the tidal flats left ribbed and rippled by a stream come by under cover of darkness. A party of Kittlitz's plovers fly off as one, but not far. Ahead, a string of channel buoys, glistening black-headed, draw us on into deep water and pilotage past Stanley's Island. This brings us by a stoop and a sigh under the bridge of the national road to a ribbon of blue in the green. It is here that the gorge rises wooded and steep, and where the river comes into its own. For it is here that the water is also wide open, off the caravan park at Aventura.

It is so broad and the way so clear it seems we could run inland to possibly north of the Tsitsikamas and be there before anyone sees us. Above the far bank here, someone's old folly, a road to nowhere cuts like a quarry into the gorge.

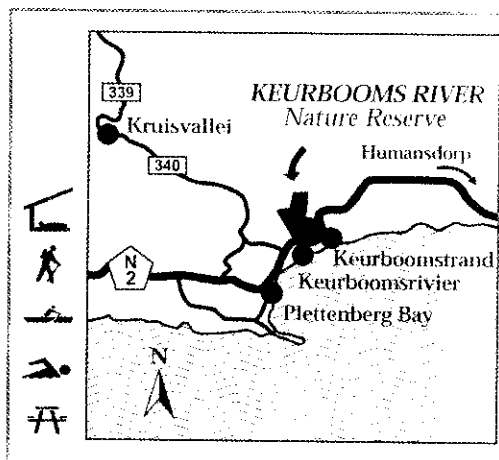
On the left, a bit further on: the Hartbees. It comes down as a tributary from a ravine almost completely healed by faith in growth alone. In a bend beyond, a young fish eagle eyes us from 30 m up in a red elder. It leaves it to the last minute to flap off slowly upstream apparently unperturbed. We hold off paddling and listen for its call, but nothing.

The forest and bush is so thick here on either side that the riverbanks can hardly

be seen. Stinkwood and ironwood stick up. An Outeniqua yellowwood characteristically cobwebbed with lichen appears not to have moved for centuries. And here, and on both banks no less, are examples of the river's Keurboom namesake, named from the Afrikaans for choice tree. The reference is to its gorgeous pink flowers that grow in such profusion in spring that the foliage can hardly be seen.

From sweep to swerve we go. A cliff falls in at the water's edge. You could jump from that ledge for a dare. A bed of reeds flop their heads and toss.

From this point on it is canoes only. Soon the river begins to tighten. And then the forest crowds in coolly around us. Even





our ripples disturb. Let us not speak too soon, or too loudly, but it seems that any minute now, if we want to go any further, we will have to get out and walk. We have come to a cove, with a grass verge, a kind of a landing stage and steps running up into the forest, what you might call a ghat. Most welcoming. There will be rocks and rapids around the next bend.

It is at this point that somebody men-

tions something about whiskey and a place to pass the night.

Tips

- * Choose an off-peak period if you value quiet. The lower reaches of the river can get busy. Upstream, where powerboats are prohibited, is where you might like to be.
- * For day visitors, picnic sites with ablution facilities can be found upstream from the slip. But you will need a boat of some sort to get there. There are more picnic sites closer to the entrance to the reserve, where no boat is required.
- * Canoes can be hired from the kiosk at the Keurbooms River bridge.
- * There is no cellphone reception in the river gorge.

Getting there

About 8 km beyond Plettenberg Bay on the N2 towards Nature's Valley. Follow the signs. The entrance to the reserve is on the left just over the Keurbooms River bridge.

Enquiries and bookings

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Canoe Trail

This is a trail like no other. There is just you, your boat and the river. And at the end of the trail, to welcome you, is the overnight log cabin, Whiskey Creek – Keurboom's main attraction, other than the river itself.

The cabin is to be found on stilts in a forest clearing away upstream above a crook. It is only accessible by canoe, to one group of canoeists at a time. The cabin is immensely comfortable and popular. It consists of a large sleeping quarter that opens out on to an even larger timber deck (pictured right), with an open-air kitchen under a generous veranda roof. Off the veranda is the toilet and hot water shower. A stone braai/lapa has been built into the middle of the deck. The cabin sleeps 10 people in four double bunks and two single beds, each with its own mattress. You will need to take food and bedding with you. A timber walkway leads down to the river, which winds out of a kloof and around past the cabin. The kitchen has a gas cooker and fridge. Pots, pans, crockery and cutlery are provided, as is fresh water. There is no electricity, but a solar power installation provides energy for lights and the fridge.

The cabin is about a two-hour easy paddle from the slipway near the entrance to the reserve. But you can turn it into something of a mini-expedition, with stops along the way. Bring your own field guides, if you are that way inclined. A stargazer's guide, for instance, would be indispensable for those nights at the lapa.

You can pull your boat up on to the bank and never look at it again, until you leave. The place is isolated. Swimming and unhurried upstream explorations on foot will continuously distract you.



It is our hope that the many successful stories of the Cape Action for People and the Environment will be shared and expanded to cover as many communities and deliver as many benefits to the people of the region as it is possible to achieve. The local communities engaged by Cape Action are proud that Cape Action really is.



Supporting people and the environment

CAPE ACTION FOR PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

People and the environment



Cape Nature Conservation is a founding C.A.P.E. partner.

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CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION

Tourism Facilities Prices

Tariffs valid 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004

Weekend rates (denoted by italics where applicable) apply on Fridays, Saturdays and public holidays, but not in peak season. Peak season rates apply in the December/January school holidays at certain reserves.

Entrance Fees per person (pp)

- * Includes activities such as day hikes, picnics, swimming, bird watching, mountain biking (except on special trails)
- * Entrance is free for children under six

Winelands and Route 62

Adults, students and pensioners: R15 – R18
Scholars: R8 – R9

West Coast

Adults, students and pensioners: R10 – R18
Scholars: R8 – R9

Cape Overberg

Adults, students and pensioners: R15 – R18
Scholars: R8 – R9

Central Karoo, Garden Route and Klein Karoo

Adults, students and pensioners: R15
Scholars: R8

Annual Entrance Permits

Single reserve: R95
All reserves: R185
All reserves & wilderness areas: R700

Abseiling, rock climbing & sailing
R35 pp per day, excluding entrance fee

Fishing

Annual freshwater angling licence (available at most of the reserves and booking offices): R35
Annual marine angling licence (available at post offices): R40

4X4 Routes

R145 per vehicle excluding entrance fee unless accommodation is booked

Mountain Bike Trails

R45 pp per day, excluding entrance fee

Accommodation

- * Children under the age of three do not pay for accommodation
- * Overnight customers do not pay an entrance fee, except when camping at Algeria, Cederberg
- * All accommodation is self-catering

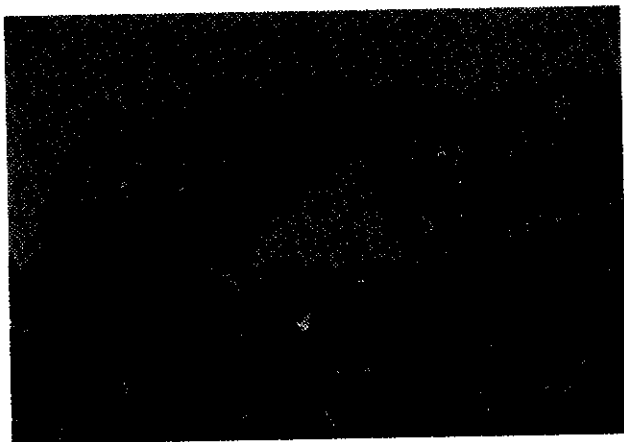
Camping and Caravan Sites

- * Standard camping fees are charged at all nature reserves unless otherwise specified
- * Fees include entrance fee except at Cederberg's Algeria
- * Campsites can accommodate up to 6 persons only
- Standard fee: R95
- Basic facilities only: R65
- Exceptions: Gamkaskloof, Swartberg: R100
Algeria, Cederberg: R80

Overnight Hiking Huts

R55 pp per night
R45 – R55 per scholar/child per night

SOME LIKE IT HIGH.



OTHERS MIGHTY.



THAT'S THE SPLENDOUR OF THE CAPE.

Snowcapped in winter, formidable, flat-topped, rugged and majestic, the Western Cape's 200 million year old mountain ranges offer spectacular challenges to climbers and hikers. They're high and often mighty, harbouring hidden treasures of rare plants and endangered animals. If rock-climbing or hiking leaves you hot and bothered, view them from afar or by the car. Or if it's Table Mountain, by cable-car. And when you sit in the mountain wilderness of the Cederberg or cross the mountain ranges into the Karoo, you'll have some of the world's best stargazing overhead.



Jonkershoek & Assegaaibosch Nature Reserves
 * Entrance fee includes day hikes, braaiing, picnicking and fishing
 * **Assegaaibosch guesthouse:** R530 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 10) pay R110, entrance fee included

Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve
 * **Keurtjieboom:** R80 pp per night
 * **Landdroskop, Aloe ridge, Boesmanskloof huts and Shamrock lodge:** R55 pp per night, R45 per scholar/child per night
 * **Kloofing:** Suicide Gorge and Rivier-sonderend: R65 pp per day

Limietberg Nature Reserve
 * **Tweede Tol camping** (30 sites): R95
 * **Limietberg hut:** R55 pp per night or R45 per scholar/child per night
 * **River rafting:** R50 pp per day

Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve
 * **Guesthouse:** R460 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R115
 * **Rondavels** (5 units): R220 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R55
 * **Boesmanskloof & Genadendal Trails** (2 days): R50 pp per trail or R40 per scholar/child per trail
 * **Day walks:** R18 per adult, R9 per scholar/child

Cederberg Nature Reserve
 * **Cottages** (5 units): R315 (R330) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R70 (R80)
 * **Garskraal, Rietdak:** R360 (R380) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R90 (R95)
 * **Camping** (48 sites): Algeria: R115 for 5 sites with electricity, others R95; Kliphuis: R65
 * **Trails:** Area A, Area B, Area C (1 night): R45 pp or R25 per scholar/child
 * **Wilderness day walks** (including Maltese Cross and Wolfberg Arch): R25 pp or R15 per scholar/child
 * **Stadsaal Caves:** R16 pp or R8 per child

Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve
 * **Accommodation:** R120 for 1-2 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R70
 * **Camping** (16 sites): R65

Groot Winterhoek Nature Reserve
 * **De Tronk cottage:** R320 (R360) 1-4 persons per night; additional persons (max 7) pay R80 (R90)

* **Veepos guesthouse:** R350 (R380) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 8) pay R85 (R95)
 * **Trails: Die Hel & Perdevlei:** R45 pp or R25 per scholar/child
 * **Wilderness entrance per day:** R20 pp or R10 per scholar

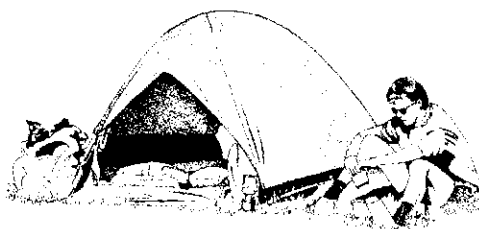
Rocherpan Nature Reserve
 * **Entrance fee:** R25 per vehicle
 * Minimum 2 nights stay required
 * **Rondavel:** R220 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R55
 * **Cottage:** R240 (R280) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R60 (R70)

Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve
 * **Podocarpus forest cabin & Scolopia cottage:** R385 (R445) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R95 (R110)
 * **Camping:** R95
 * **Boosmansbos Wilderness trails:** R35 pp per day or R25 per scholar/child per day

Marloth Nature Reserve
 * **Fully equipped cottage:** R300 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R85
 * **Overnight huts:** R55 pp per night or R45 per child/scholar

De Mond Nature Reserve
 * Activities such as picnicking, swimming and day walks are covered by entrance fee
 * **Accommodation:** R260 for 1-6 persons (R300). Linen available at R20 extra pp

De Hoop Nature Reserve
 * **Rondavels** (2 units) & **basic cottages** (7 units): R285 (R350) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R70 (R85)
 * **Old House** (max 10) & **fully equipped cottages** (3 units): R430 (R535) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R110 (R135)
 * **Lekkerwater holiday home:** R1 570 (R1 965) for 1-6 persons; additional persons pay R260 (R330)



- * **Camping** (8 sites): R95
- * **Whale Trail** (max 12): R520 pp per trail until 30 August. Portage service: R200 pp for group bookings of 6 or 12
- * **Mountain Bike Trail** (max 12): R365 (R430) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R90 (R110) (including entrance fees and accommodation at Cupidoskraal)

Kogelberg Nature Reserve

- * **Accommodation** at Hut 5 & Hut 6: R240 for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R60
- * **Highlands Trail** (2 days): R50 pp per trail or R40 per scholar/child per trail
- * **Kayaking**: R50 pp per day, excluding entrance fee

Salmonsdam Nature Reserve

- * **Basic cottages**: R160 (R185) for 1-4 persons (max 4)
- * **Larger basic cottage**: R320 (R370) for 1-8 persons (max 8)
- * **Camping** (6 sites): R95

Anysberg Nature Reserve

- * **Cottages**: R185 (1-2 persons) to R380 (1-4 persons); additional persons (to a max of 6) pay R60 extra
- * **Pony trails**:
Day pony ride: R90 pp per ride
Two-day pony/horse trail: R390 pp including overnight shelter and guide

Swartberg Nature Reserve

- * **Bush shelter**: R260 for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 12) pay: R65
- * **Lenie Marais, Koot Kordier**: R330 (R420) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R85 (R105)
- * **Snyman's house**: R380 (R460) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 6) pay R95 (R115)
- * **Skoolmeester's house, Trappiesgewel Piet & Bellie, Trappiesgewel Freek & Martha**: R190 (R230) for 1-2 persons; additional persons (max 4) pay R95 (R115)
- * **Sankie Marais**: R380 (R460) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 8) pay R95 (R110)

- * **Camping** (10 sites): R95
- * **Bothashoek, Gouekrans & Ou Tol overnight huts**: R55 pp per night for adults and scholars/children
- * **Gamkaskloof Interpretation Hike**: R10 pp
- * **4x4 Route**: R145 per vehicle
- * **Mountain Bike Trail**: R45 pp per day

Outeniqua Nature Reserve

- * **Attakwaskloof, Tierkop Hut & Perdekop overnight huts**: R55 pp per night
- * **Mountain Bike Trail**: R45 pp per day

Gamkaberg Nature Reserve

- * **Tierkloof bush camp**: R280 (R320-R350) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (max 8) pay R70 (R80-R90)
- * **Camping** (2 sites): R65
- * Two nights minimum stay at weekends

Goukamma Nature Reserve

- * Linen available at R25 extra pp
- * **Groenvlei bush camp**: R320 (R540) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R80 (R135)
- * **River lodges (2 units) & thatched rondavels (3 units)**: R240 (R380) for 1-4 persons; additional persons pay R60 (R95)
- * **Canoe hire**: R35 (single), R70 (double)
- * **Annual boat permit**: R55 a year

Kammanassie Nature Reserve

- * **Uniondale guesthouse**: R80 pp (Linen available at R35 extra pp) (maximum of 10 people)

Keurbooms Nature Reserve

- * **Whiskey Creek cabin** (on the canoe trail): R400 (R520) for 1-4 persons; additional persons (to a max of 10) pay R100 (R130)
- * **Picnic site**: R5 pp per day
- * **Canoe hire**: R35 (single), R70 (double) per day
- * **Boat permit**: R80 a day; R145 a month; R280 a year
- * **Launching fee**: for motorised boat: R25 per day or R250 a year; for non-motorised canoe: R15 a day or R150 a year

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