

## Introduction

Towards late afternoon, the great, unyielding canopy slowly softens its fierceness, and from pastel shades of pink and blue, the colours deepen, setting the endless Karoo canvas ablaze with glorious hues of orange and red.

The Great Karoo is a vast and unforgiving landscape of which the Karoo National Park is but a small portion. Being the largest ecosystem in South Africa, the Karoo is home to a fascinating diversity of life, all having adapted to survive in these harsh conditions. Karoo National Park is dominated by the lofty Nuweveld Mountains and rolling plains, where many species that originally occurred here now occupy their former ranges.

The Karoo National Park has a wide variety of endemic wildlife. Many species have been relocated to their former ranges - such as black rhino and buffalo, as well as Cape mountain zebra. Over 20 breeding pairs of black eagle find sanctuary within the park. There is also a wide diversity of succulent plants and small reptiles.

## Note to Travellers

- [Fossil Trail upgrades](#)
- Please note that tourist roads may be closed at times during heavy or prolonged rainy conditions or as a result of road maintenance.

Hmm. Please don't do that; leave the URL alone.

## Accommodation

### Main Rest Camp

- All accommodation is serviced daily and equipped with bedding, towels and soap.
- Breakfast is included in the accommodation costs, with the exception of camp sites.
- 8 Cape Dutch style family units, each with two bedrooms (six beds in total), en suite bathrooms (bath and shower), DSTV (limited channels), and fully equipped kitchen (kettle, toaster, stove, oven, fridge, cutlery and crockery). One unit (No. 8) has been adapted for persons with limited mobility and this contains a bath only.
- 19 Cape Dutch style units, each with a bathroom (shower and bath), open-plan areas with 2 single beds and a double sleeper couch and kitchenettes with basic equipment. Two units have been adapted for persons with limited mobility and these contain showers only..
- 10 Cape Dutch style cottages - one bedroom (double bed) open plan kitchen (microwave and three-plate hob) and lounge, bathroom (shower) and DSTV (limited channels).

## Camping

- 24 award-winning camping and caravan campsites amidst a veritable green oasis in the rugged Karoo environment with communal ablutions (shower and baths) and kitchen facilities with stove plates and scullery.
- All caravan sites equipped with 220V power points.
- A maximum of six persons, one caravan with a side tent and one vehicle, or one tent and one vehicle, or one autovilla or one motorised caravan will be permitted per site.
- Laundry with a washing machine and tumble drier (R10 tokens available at reception).

To view the accommodation prices, refer to [Tariffs](#)

## Activities & Facilities

### Activities

#### Adventure and Outdoor Activities

- Scenic drive along the picturesque Klipspringer Pass with its environmentally friendly style of construction and the scenic viewpoint at Rooivalle.
- Self-drive game viewing in your own vehicle.
- There are four 4x4 eco-trails available to visitors in 4x4 vehicles, at no extra cost:
  - **Nuweveld EcoTrail (90km)** and **Afsaal EcoTrail (13km)** are available to visitors in 4x4 vehicles. These two routes branch off the Potlekkertjie Loop and are available free of charge. About 50 kilometres of the Nuweveld trail is a Grade one 4x4 trail with some steep, rocky sections and sandy dry river crossings.
  - The **Embizweni Cottage** is available for visitors to overnight on the Nuweveld Trail. The cottage provides fully-equipped accommodation for six people with a gas-powered stove, fridge and geysers as well as solar-powered lights. **Rates** are R750 for 1-4 people plus R187 for each additional adult and R94 for each additional child, R27 pp /day C/Levy (rates valid until 31 October 2012). Bookings can be made via the Park's reception on [Lorrian.Bosch@sanparks.org](mailto:Lorrian.Bosch@sanparks.org) or Tel: +27(0)23 4152828.
  - The **Kookfontein Loop (7km)** and **Sandrivier Loop (7km)** branch off the Nuweveld and Afsaal Loops respectively, providing varied 4x4 route options.
  - **The Pienaars Pass 4x4 Trail (8km)** is a tough trail (Grade 4) that should only be attempted by experienced 4x4 users. This trail carries a cost of R195 per vehicle and number of vehicles on the trail is limited.
- **Guided game drives**
  - Night Drive (1½ hours): R150 for adults and R75 for kids under 12 years of age.
  - Morning Drive (2-3 hours): R732 (1-4 pax), R183 for each additional adult, R92 for each additional child.
  - Drives are led by knowledgeable guides. Departure times can be confirmed with reception and a minimum of 4 people are needed for each drive, and a maximum of 9 per drive can be accommodated
- **Guided walks** are available free of charge to visitors. Led by a qualified guide who will introduce you to the fascinating Karoo ecosystems, walks take place at 06:00 (2.5 hours), 10:00 (1.5 hours) and 15:00 (1.5 hours).
  - **Guided walks are subject to availability, depending on the availability of a guide.**
- **Fossil Trail:** This 400m long trail depicts the geology and palaeontology of the Great Karoo. Genuine fossils and petrified wood are on display on this paved trail, accessible to wheelchair-users.
- **Bird hide** at the dam near main rest camp.
- **Bulkraal picnic spot** with a swimming pool, ablution facilities, and braai facilities.

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#### Facilities

- Breakfast is included in all accommodation costs, except for campsites.

- Fully licensed a la carte restaurant which is open for breakfast and dinner from 07h00 and 10h00 and 18h00 and 21h00 respectively.
- Shop where curios and basic commodities may be purchased between 07h30 and 20h00.
- Interpretive Centre
- Washing - machine and tumble drier in the camping site. Tokens are available at reception for R10.
- Picnic, braai and ablution facilities for day visitors at Bulkraal picnic site.
- Swimming pool for resident guests only.
- Public telephone
- **Conference Facilities:**
  - Full conference equipment and catering service  
Reservations: Tel +27 12 426 5025 / Fax +27 12 343 2005 / 6
- The town of Beaufort West is 12 kilometres away from the rest camp, with shops, a golf course, pharmacy, fuel station, hospital, bowling green, and the Chris Barnard Museum.

## History

During the late 1950's a local farmer (and twitcher) William Quinton campaigned for a conservation area in the Beaufort West vicinity.

However, it was only in the 1970s that South African National Parks proposed the establishment of a National Park that would be representative of the Nama Karoo Biome after a campaign launched by the South African Nature Foundation (SANF) and funded through the commission and sale of special art stamps depicting the flora and fauna of the Great Karoo. After considering a number of possible suitable areas it was decided to establish this new park in the vicinity of Beaufort West.

In a gesture of support, the Town Council of Beaufort West donated 7 209 ha of communal land north-west of the town to the South African National Parks. This area then formed the nucleus of the Karoo NP, proclaimed in 1979. SANF purchased additional land to be incorporated into Karoo NP, and in 1989 a luxury rest camp was opened.

The Great Karoo is an area of unrivalled importance for understanding the evolution of the oldest known complex ecosystems on land. The park forms part of one of the Karoo's classic study and collecting areas for the wealth of ancient petrified fossils of the long-gone Karoo animals. In the Karoo NP there is a clearly visible link between the geological horizons of the plains of Beaufort West, progressing through time, layer by layer, to those at the top of the Nuweveld escarpment.

## How to get there

Many visitors to Karoo National Park access the Park by car as this allows them the freedom to explore the park at their own leisure.

The Park is a convenient stopover on the N1 route between Cape Town and the interior of the country. Cape Town is situated about 500km south of the Park. [Johannesburg](#) is situated about 1 000km north of the Park.

The rest camp of the Park is situated 12km from the town of Beaufort West in the Western Cape, off the N1 highway.

## Air

- The closest airport is situated in George, approximately 300km from the Park.
- International airports are situated in Cape Town and [Johannesburg](#).
- An airport for small aircraft is situated 10km north of Beaufort West (no scheduled flights).

## Car Hire

Car hire facilities are located at airports and major cities.

## Internal Road Network

All internal roads are tarred, with the exception of the 4x4 Trail. Coaches and buses cannot access all roads in the Park – drivers should contact Park Reception for more information.

## GPS Coordinates

Entrance Gate: S 32°21'48.2 | E 22°32'28.4

## Gate Hours

- 05:00 – 22:00
- Arrivals after 22:00 are not permitted without prior arrangement.
- The reception office is open from 07:00 to 19:00.
- Visitors with reserved accommodation who will arrive after 19:00 must make prior arrangements to collect the keys to their accommodation at the entrance gate. Please call the camp at Tel +27 (0)23 415 2828.

## Maps

### Maps Main Camp Regional Map



### Park Map



## Tariffs

- [General Tariffs Information](#)
- [Pensioners' Discount](#)
- [Daily Conservation Fee](#)
- [Cost of a Wild Card](#)
- *Please note: Members of SANParks' loyalty programme WILD do not pay conservation fees provided that proof of Identity and their WILD card are shown on arrival.*
- [View availability for Karoo National Park](#)

### Daily Conservation Fees for 1 November 2011 to 31 October 2012

South African Citizens and Residents (with ID):	R27 per adult, per day R14 per child, per day
SADC Nationals (with passport):	R54 per adult, per day R27 per child, per day
Standard Conservation Fee (Foreign Visitors):	R108 per adult, per day

R54 per child, per day

## Vital Information

### Climate

Annual rainfall totals 260 mm, with the plains being hot in summer, and the mountain areas relatively cool throughout the year. During mid-winter snow occurs regularly on the peaks of the Nuweveld Mountains.

### Day Visitors

Day Visitors are welcome and no bookings are required for day visits.

### Fuel Stations: Petrol/ Diesel

Vehicle fuel is available in all parks (or is available on the park periphery):

- South African legislation stipulates that fuel stations will accept legitimate *petrol/fuel/garage/credit/debit cards* or cash as a form of payment for any fuel purchase.

### Office Hours

- Administration: Mondays to Fridays 07:30 to 16:00
- The Reception Office is open from 07:00 to 19:00 daily.

### Tips and Hints

- Pets are not allowed in national parks.
- Firearms to be declared at reception where they will be sealed. The seal will be broken upon departure.
- Motorcycles or bicycles are not allowed.
- Hospital, doctors, pharmacies, as well as vehicle repair and police services in Beaufort West.
- Fuel available in Beaufort West.
- Cool clothing for summer and warm for winter – the region is subject to sudden changes in weather, particularly in the mountains.
- Remember to bring a hat, walking shoes, sun block, camera, binoculars and bird and mammal reference books.
- Hikers on day trails must always carry sufficient water.

### Contact Information

- Karoo National Park  
Tel: +27 (0)23 415 2828 / 9  
Fax: +27 (0)23 415 1671 [E-mail](#)

## Mammals & Reptiles

Because of the sparse vegetation, game viewing in Karoo National Park is easily facilitated. Best viewing is achieved on the 13km “Lammertjiesleegte” Route on the plains.

Large herbivores such as Red Hartebeest, Black Wildebeest, Eland, the two zebra species, kudu and springbok are all regularly seen. Klipspringer are regularly seen on the pass of the same name. Other species are less obvious due to smaller size, nocturnal habits or restriction to the wilderness areas of the park.

Cape rock elephant-shrew	Cape Fox
Smith's rock elephant-shrew	Bat-eared Fox
Round-eared elephant-shrew	Cape Clawless Otter
Lesser red musk shrew	Striped Polecat
Forest shrew	Water Mongoose
Lesser dwarf shrew	Yellow Mongoose
Common split-faced bat	Small Grey Mongoose
Cape serotine bat	Suricate
Melck's serotine bat	Small-spotted Genet
Vervet monkey	Aardwolf
Chacma Baboon	Caracal
Cape Hare	African Wildcat
Scrub Hare	Antbear (Aardvark)
Smith's Red Rock Rabbit	Rock Hyrax
Riverine Rabbit	Black Rhinoceros
Pouched mouse	Cape Mountain Zebra
Grey pygmy climbing mouse	Burchell's Zebra with Quagga bred characteristics
Pygmy mouse	Black Wildebeest
Short-tailed gerbil	Red Hartebeest
Hairy-footed gerbil	Springbok
Grant's rock mouse	Klipspringer
Namaqua rock mouse	Steenbok
Multimammate mouse	Gemsbok
Striped mouse	Kudu
Saunders' vlei rat	Eland
Panthera Leo	Lion
Karoo bush rat	Common Duiker
Spectacled Dormouse	Gemsbok
Porcupine	Grey Rhebuck
Common Molerat	Mountain reedbuck

### Reptiles

Karoo National Park has a very rich reptilian fauna. Of particular significance are the 5 species of tortoise. However there is also a terrapin, an agama, 2 chameleons, a monitor, 18 snakes and several geckos, skinks and lizards.

## Vegetation

The vegetation in the Karoo National Park falls within the Karoo-Namib bio-geographical region, with areas of the park falling into the Nama Karoo Biome..

The vegetation physiognomy consists of Montane Karoo grassy shrublands, Karoo grassy dwarf shrublands, Karoo succulent dwarf shrublands, and riparian thicket. Steep elevation and precipitation gradients have a direct

impact on gradients in vegetation. High elevation (1800m) and relatively high rainfall (406mm) montane grasslands occupy communities dominated by grasses. The increasing aridity away from the escarpment edge is steep, and Motane Karoo dwarf shrublands replace these mesic communities. At lower elevation (800m) the precipitation is very low (175mm) and uncertain.

The substrata influence the vegetation, with the sandy substrata of the drainage lines supporting more woody taxa and grasses. Moving away from the mesic environment of the riparian zone, rapid desiccation occurs and more xeric communities are encountered.

## People with Disabilities

### Wheelchair Access

*An in-depth [accessibility profile](#) for Karoo National Park has been compiled.*

The rest camp has three units accessible to wheelchair users (2 chalets with 2 beds and a sleeper couch and one unit with 6 single beds in 2 bedrooms).

The reception area and shop can be accessed easily enough (there is a small step at the entrance to the building.) Descending into the restaurant is currently achieved via an exceptionally steep ramp, and even the strongest of wheelchair users will need assistance.

The highlight of the park from an accessibility perspective is a fossil trail accessible to wheelchairs and most of the circuit is on a smooth, firm surface with an appropriate gradient. A bird hide and a couple of other walks are not accessible, but wheelchair users can follow the road down to the picturesque campsite and make their way around it absorbing the fauna and flora. Birds, insects and tortoises are particularly prominent. Otherwise visitors can go on a scenic mountain drive or a game viewing plains drive.

(Please see additional information on [Wheelchair Accessibility](#))