

ROTHSCHILD • SAFARIS •

Garden Route Extension

The Garden Route runs along the Western Cape coast from George to Port Elizabeth, and is so called because of its perpetual lushness. Its appeal is further enhanced by the ridge of folded mountains running along the coast, whose form and flow often resembles ocean waves. The diversity of scenery from exquisite empty beaches to staggering mountain passes, together with an unlimited choice of hotels, guest houses, lodges and country houses, makes this one of the most visited areas in South Africa.

WILDERNESS NATIONAL PARK

Traveling along the coast road, the lushness seems to increase with every mile and the area known as Wilderness could be mistaken for Switzerland. It is a charming world of lakes, rivers, fens and estuaries surrounded by pine forested slopes dotted with wooden chalets. The only difference is that in Switzerland you won't find the warm and inviting Indian Ocean just across the road.

Nature trails wind through densely wooded forests and along riverbanks and you can canoe through serpentine channels connecting one lake to another. There are even overnight canoe and walking trails in this park.

KNYSNA NATIONAL LAKE AREA

The well-visited town of Knysna, in the heart of the Garden Route, rests by a warm lagoon which ebbs and flows with the tides. The lagoon is dominated by the craggy bastions of the twin Knysna Heads and the Indian Ocean gushes through the narrow entrance formed by these rocks. Viewpoints from the top of the eastern Head give you the dual vistas, over the entire lagoon or out to sea. You may also be lucky enough to see a yacht surf through the narrow channel to the safety of its lagoon mooring. On the western head is a nature trail in the privately owned Featherbed Nature Reserve, accessible only by ferry.

The Knysna National lake Area is not a national park, but is monitored by the Parks Board to make sure that ongoing development is environmentally friendly. The lagoon has borne witness to centuries of trade in timber, ivory and gold, but nowadays the shores are lined with residential areas, a busy waterfront of shops and restaurants, a yacht basin, boat yards and the famous Knysna oyster hatchery.

Boat trips of all sorts can be undertaken and boats can also be hired, but as much of the lagoon is very shallow, it is essential to keep to the buoys marking the deep channel. No inexperienced skipper should attempt to exit the lagoon by way of the Heads, as this is a difficult and dangerous passage strewn with rocks and strong currents.

What makes Knysna such an attractive place is its range of scenery, which includes inland forests and mountains. Little of the massive indigenous forests still exist, and much has been put down to pine forestry, but there are still

some areas of tall evergreen Outeniqua yellowwoods and stinkwoods, and deciduous ironwoods, towering over forest tree ferns.

The exceptionally beautiful Knysna National Lake Area is home to the endangered Knysna seahorse, which clings on to plants with its tail and changes color to match its surroundings. The sandbanks and salt marshes of the lagoon and river mouth, teem with life and in turn provide food for an immeasurable number of organisms. Whales and dolphins are regular visitors along the entire Garden Route coastline.

Elephant were all but hunted to extinction in the Knysna area and only one remains. She is a grumpy old matriarch who turned down the friendship of some playmates brought in to keep her company. She now roams the forests alone while the other elephants have been re-located to a wildlife reserve. There are a growing number of private reserves along the Garden Route who have stocked up with game such as elephants, zebra, wildebeest, giraffe, buffalo - all of which were indigenous to the area once upon a time.

Many of the woodland birds are surprisingly colorful birds including redbilled woodhoopoe, Knysna woodpecker, paradise flycatcher, Knysna lourie and lesser doublecollared sunbird. While at the lakes, wetlands and lagoon you may see fish eagles, cormorants, kingfishers, blacksmith plovers and Egyptian geese.

SEASONS

The Garden Route's temperate weather falls between two climatic regions of summer and winter rainfall, consequently it rains whenever it feels like it, (mostly at night), which keeps the area perennially green.

Spring: You can feel spring in the air by the end of August and into September. October can be quite mixed because just when you think summer has arrived, another cold front moves in.

Summer: The months of November to March are hotter, with December to February seeing mid-summer daily temperatures around 75°-86°F (24-30°C).

Autumn: Temperatures start cooling down from about April but it can still be very pleasant until June.

Winter: June, July and August are mid-winter months but the days may still be bright and warm, but it gets cold in the evening and cold fronts pull in.

GARDEN ROUTE SPECIALITIES

- *Oysters fresh from Knysna lagoon*
- *Boating and canoe trips*
- *Scenic viewpoints*
- *Knysna lourie*
- *Lone Knysna elephant*
- *Lush forests*
- *White sandy beaches*

DAY 1
GARDEN ROUTE

This morning you will meet your guide to begin your Garden Route tour. Drive from Cape Town with your guide to Oudtshoorn enjoying the sights along the way including the Cango Caves (entrance fees included). (This drive takes approximately 5 hours or more). You will spend the night at Hlangana Lodge.

Hlangana Lodge is a four-star guesthouse set on more than a hectare of exotic gardens on the outskirts of Oudtshoorn, en route to the Cango Caves. Offering the highest standards of luxury and service, Hlangana is perfectly situated to serve as a haven from where you can explore Oudtshoorn and the surrounding countryside. And explore you must, for there is much to experience: the awe-inspiring Cango Caves, ostrich show farms, rare wildlife, unique fynbos and succulent plant habitats, 4x4 and mountain bike trails, hot air balloon trips, majestic mountain passes, scenic drives and historical buildings, to name but a few. Add to that Oudtshoorn charming ambience, the hospitality of its people, the renowned Karoo cuisine and fine wines, and you start to realize why one day is hardly enough time to soak up the wonder of this special region.

Overnight: Hlangana Lodge

DAY 2
GARDEN ROUTE

Starting your day off with breakfast, you will then continue with your guide for another day of sightseeing. You will enjoy a visit to an ostrich farm this morning, after which you will continue on to Plettenberg Bay. Today you will enjoy the Featherbed Nature Reserve (Knysna Lagoon) on a cruise around the lagoon, and a wonderful lunch (activities and lunch included). You will have the afternoon at leisure. You will overnight at Periwinkle Lodge for the next two nights.

Periwinkle Lodge is a beachfront situated guest Lodge with magnificent views of the Ocean and Robberg Peninsula.

Overnight: Periwinkle Lodge

DAY 3
GARDEN ROUTE

Today's sightseeing includes Monkeyland, the Elephant Sanctuary in the Craggs, and Plettenberg Bay (activities included). After an eventful day you will return to Periwinkle Lodge for the night.

Overnight: Periwinkle Lodge

DAY 4
GARDEN ROUTE

Today you visit Tsitsikamma National Park and the Big Tree (activities included) on your way to St. Francis Bay. You will spend the night at Thatchwood Country Lodge.

Thatchwood Country Lodge is a unique thatched guest lodge situated at the entrance to the village of St Francis Bay and is set in beautifully landscaped gardens with abundant bird life.

St Francis Bay boasts all the usual sports; hikes and walks; boating and other water related activities both on the sea and in the river. Not only does it have its own airport, in a nature reserve, but the only privately owned harbour in

the country, both facilities providing another whole range of associated pleasures and activities. Whales, dolphins, birds, special plants, and other wonderful creatures keep nature lovers ecstatic while sophisticated shops and restaurants provide for every other need.

Overnight: Thatchwood Country Lodge

DAY 5
CONTINUE TO YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

After breakfast today, you will transfer to Port Elizabeth Airport where you will connect with your flight to your next destination.

Note:

You have the option to spend just 3 nights (i.e. one night less at Periwinkle Lodge).

You also have the option to return to Cape Town at the end of your Garden Route tour.

TRIP PRICE FROM \$2,395 per person

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT ROTHSCHILD SAFARIS

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