

## *Hiking, Trails and Routes: Kruger Park Wilderness Trails, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces, Lowveld, South Africa.*

The experience of a lifetime! Wilderness trails in the world-famous Kruger National Park allow visitors a close personal encounter with nature by traversing large areas of unspoilt wilderness on foot under the guidance of armed and experienced trail rangers. Sites for the trail camps are selected for their scenic beauty and diverse plant and animal life. Groups spend three nights in rustic two-bedroomed huts. Ablution facilities include reed-walled showers and flush toilets. A covered lapa serves as the dining and socialising area where the campfires flickering shadows encourage stories of adventures in the African bush. Simple wholesome meals are provided. The day commences with coffee and rusks in the crisp morning hours. A light meal is enjoyed in the bush and brunch awaits the group when they return at noon. Evening meals comprise either hunter's stew or braais supplemented with salads and vegetables.

The duration is three nights and two days, either from Sunday to Wednesday or from Wednesday to Saturday. Trailists meet at the designated restcamp at 15h30 on Sundays or Wednesdays from where they will leave by vehicle for their trail camp after a short briefing.

There are several trails from which to choose:

- **Bushman.** The Bushman Trail lies in the southeastern section of the park, near Berg-en-Dal Restcamp. The trail camp is situated in a secluded valley. The landscape is characterised by awe-inspiring granite hills, reminiscent of the Zimbabwean Motopos, which provide splendid vantagepoints of the surrounding bush. White rhino, elephant and buffalo are some of the animals encountered on this trail. Bushman paintings can be viewed in many of the hill shelters and are a feature of this trail.
- **Metsi-Metsi.** The Metsi-Metsi Trail runs through the area east of the Nwamuriwa Mountain near Tshokwane. The Trail Camp nestles at the foot of the mountain and overlooks a small waterhole. A hide provides the ideal place to view many species of bird and animals at close range. The landscape varies from undulating savannah to rocky gorges and ravines. The Nwaswitsontso River, being one of the few sources of permanent water during the dry winter months attracts an abundance of game, especially elephant. A great variety of wildlife, including black rhino and large predators can be found here.
- **Napi.** Situated midway between Skukuza and Pretoriuskop in picturesque woodland bushveld, the trail camp lies nestled in luxuriant reverie bush at the confluence of the Napi and Byamiti streams. The trail is characterised by undulating terrain, granite hills and a high resident population of white rhino. Black rhino, elephant, lion and buffalo also frequent the area. Birdlife is prolific.
- **Nyalaland.** The Nyalaland Trail winds through one of the prime wilderness areas of southern Africa. The trail camp is on the banks of the Madzaringwe Stream north of Punda Maria, near the Luvuvhu River. The magnificent Lanner Gorge and other vantagepoints offer splendid views of the

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bushveld. The area is known for its fever trees and baobab forests, prolific birdlife and spectacular views. The beauty of this area makes up for its lack of big game. Another interesting feature of this trail is the recently discovered fossil sites.

- **Olifants.** The trail camp is situated on the banks of the Olifants River, west of the confluence of the Olifants and Letaba Rivers. A magnificent stretch of this perennial river, which ultimately flows into Mozambique and the sea. The landscape varies from riverine bush and gorges to the foothills of the Lebombo Mountains. It supports variety of wildlife, including large predators, elephant and buffalo. The river is home to crocodile, hippo and many bird species. The call of the African Fish eagle is almost synonymous with this trail. The rare Pels fishing owl can sometimes be seen in the riverine vegetation.
- **Sweni.** Conjure up a picture of Africa at its wildest. Herds of zebra and wildebeest and tall stately giraffe scattered across the sun-drenched plains. The pungent smell of buffalo in one's nostrils. The sight of an enormous elephant bull feeding in a thick stand of lala palms only meters away. The trail camp, which overlooks the Sweni Stream in the wilderness area near Nwanetsi, provides a view of the surrounding maroela and knobthorn savannah. The area is home to the Sweni lion pride. Black and white rhino have also been sighted in the area.
- **Wolhuter.** The Wolhuter Trail commemorates the legendary father and son rangers Harry and Henry Wolhuter who for many years patrolled the southern section of the park. The trail camp is situated between Berg-en-Dal and Pretoriuskop restcamps – the heart of white rhino country.

Clothing should be comfortable and durable. Neutral colours such as khaki are preferable (most animals are colour-blind). Light coloured garments such as whites and creams should be avoided. T-shirts are not recommended as they provide little protection against sun on the back of the neck. A hat and an all-weather jacket should be taken along. A tracksuit, either woollen or lightweight depending on the season, is useful. Footwear should be worn in prior to the trail, have thick soles and provide good ankle support. It is preferable not to wear white shoes. Exclusive clothing is available at the point of departure and on completion of the trail. Ask the trail ranger for further information.

A camera, binoculars, sunscreen lotion and reference books are optional. A powerful torch is essential.

Note:

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- **Number of People.** A maximum of eight people between the ages of 12 and 60 may participate per trail. It is recommended that the group comprise of persons of similar age with common interests and a similar level of fitness.
- **Fitness.** A reasonable level of fitness is required as up to 20 km will be walked per day. The distance is covered at a leisurely pace however to afford trailists an intimate encounter with the wilderness. Due to the terrain covered, handicapped persons should not attempt these trails.
- **Indemnity.** All participants are required to complete an indemnity form before embarking on the trail. Minors must be in a possession of a form signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- **Rules of the Park.** The rules and regulations of the Park also apply to trailists.
- **Safety.** Trailists depend on the trail ranger for their safety and for guidance. The ranger must therefore be obeyed at all times. Failure to co-operate could lead to the immediate cancellation of the trail.
- **Alcohol.** Liquor may be consumed at the trail camp only. Excessive consumption is strongly discouraged. Trailists must provide their own liquor and soft drinks.
- **Malaria.** Malaria prophylactics are essential. Please consult your pharmacist.

Trailists must provide their own transport to the rest camp, from where they will be transported to the trail camp, as follows:

Bushman	Berg-en-Dal	Malelane Gate
Metsi-Metsi	Skukuza	Kruger Gate
Napi	Pretoriuskop	Numbi Gate
Nyalaland	Punda Maria	Punda Maria
Olifants	Letaba	Phalaborwa
Sweni	Satara	Orpen
Wolhuter	Berg-en-Dal	Malelane Gate

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Reservation Procedures. Priority will be given to written applications received 13 months in advance. Applications should state the number of persons, the name of the trail, the proposed date and alternative dates. Deposits should not accompany applications. Accommodation before and after the trail will be reserved if requested. Applicants are requested not to submit duplicate applications for the same party. ADKrugertrails

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