

Camdeboo National Park outside Graaff-Reinet



Camdeboo National Park

Find Graaff-Reinet in the Eastern Cape of South Africa on a map and then look for Camdeboo National Park a place you have to visit.

Formed hundreds of millions of years ago, the Karoo of South Africa is one of the great natural wonders of the world. Camdeboo National Park provides the visitor with insights into the unique landscape and ecosystem of the Karoo, not to mention awesome scenic beauty. A unique feature of the 14 500-hectare park is its location, practically surrounding the town of Graaff-Reinet in the Eastern Cape.

The greater portion of the park is situated between 740 and 1480 metres above sea level on the foothills of the Sneeuwberg range, while a small section of the low lying-plains is included. The Nqweba Dam lies within the park and covers about 1000 hectares when full.

At some places, dolerites form jointed pillars – the best examples of which are found in the Valley of Desolation where erosion of the softer sedimentary beds has left dolerite pillars which rise to heights of 90 – 120 metres.

Activities and Facilities:

Valley of Desolation – The Valley of Desolation was declared as a National Monument of geological and scenic significance.

The road to the top of the valley provides tourists with easy access to the viewpoints with their panoramic views of the landscape.

To the north, the highest peak in the Sneeuberg mountain range – Compassberg (2504 m) – is prominent, while on a clear day, the southern horizon stretches as far as the distant Cockscomb Mountains. To the east lies the 'Driekoppie' (in the park) and the Nardausberg (beyond the park boundaries), both of which are often covered in snow during winter.

The Plains of Camdeboo lie spread out south of the Sneeuberg from Pearston to Murraysburg. The viewpoints at the valley itself provide a breathtaking view of piled dolerites columns against the backdrop of the plain of the Great Karoo and a timeless sense of wonder.

Visitors may learn more about the reserve through information displays at parking areas or viewpoints.

Game Viewing – Presently, approximately 19 km of gravel roadways provide visitors with the opportunity to view the entire range of indigenous species in their preferred habitats.

Impunzi picnic area has four sites suitable for family outings. Each site is provided with a 'braai' stand, picnic table and refuse drum. Water is available and the picnic area is provided with a 'long drop' toilet.

Trails and walks – The Crag Lizard Trail (45 minutes) starts at the Valley parking area and extends for about 1.5 km via the Valley viewpoints. It is marked with the Crag Lizard logo.

The Eerstefontein Day Walk starts and ends at the Spandaukop

gate. There are three route options of 5; 11 and 14 km with good rest spots at Eerstefontein and Agtersfontein.

How to get there:

When entering Graaff-Reinet, you will enter on College Road. College Road becomes Church Street. The Old Dutch Reformed Church is dead centre of this road and vehicles can only turn left around the church and will come to a stop street. Turn left at the stop street into Caledon Street and proceed down the street. At the four-way stop, turn right into the road towards Murraysburg. Keep going onto the road to the Valley of Desolation. The entrance to the park is 8 km from Graaff-Reinet on the Murraysburg road.