

Jonkershoek Nature Reserve



Jonkershoek Nature Reserve

Just outside the picturesque town of Stellenbosch, which is located in the Western Cape, is the Jonkershoek Nature Reserve that covers an area of more than fourteen thousand hectares and is nestled at the base of the Hottentots-Holland Mountains. The smaller Assegaaibos Nature Reserve is located within the borders of the Jonkershoek Nature Reserve. It is the ideal attraction for visitors who are avid nature lovers as it is also encompasses the Jonkershoek Valley through which the Eerste River flows, as well as the Jonkershoek Mountains, offering a wide range of animal and bird species a diverse habitat to call home.

Simon van der Stel awarded pieces of land within the Jonkershoek Valley to numerous farmers in 1692, and the piece of land given to Jan de Jonkheer was named 'Vallei Jonkershoek'. In 1790 the Assegaaibosch Farmstead was established and over the years it was remodeled dramatically until it was eventually handed over to Wouter Eduard Wium by Lord Charles Somerset in the year 1817. Due to the agreement, Wium was to plant oak trees on the land, and today many of these trees can still be marveled at. Assegaaibosch was purchased by the Cape Provincial Administration in 1960, which renovated the farmstead that now serves as a guest house.

Assegaaibosch is ideal for visitors who enjoy short walks and tranquil picnics, while the rugged and challenging terrain of the Jonkershoek Nature Reserve attracts thousands of hikers each year. Hikers are advised that summer temperatures here are high, which is combined with strong winds, putting the reserve at risk of fires. Gale force winds often rage across the landscape in the winter months and snow is not uncommon on the mountains during this time. Weather conditions can change at any time and hikers should ensure they are prepared for all situations.

The reserve is blanketed in fynbos and boasts over a thousand plant species. While exploring Jonkershoek Nature Reserve, visitors could be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of spotted eagle owls, honey badgers, leopards, klipspringers, mongoose, sugarbirds, agama lizards, kingfishers, black eagles and baboons. Visitors are also alerted to the fact that venomous snakes, such as the cape cobra, puff adder and boomslang, are also residents of the reserve. Discovering the wonders and magnificence of the Jonkershoek Nature Reserve is a recommended activity for adventurous travelers.