

TUSSEN DIE RIVIERE GAME RESERVE



DESCRIPTION

Although the 22 000-ha Tussen die Riviere Game Reserve was developed to cater for the South African hunter, three valuable nature trails have been laid out for hikers visiting the reserve during the summer (non-hunting season). Although relatively unknown, each of these trails has exciting attributes and is well worth walking.

Because of its large size, scenic Karoo splendour and development for hunting, Tussen-die-Riviere supports large populations of diverse and readily observable game species: hikers can expect to see springbok, blesbok, red hartebeest, black wildebeest and blue wildebeest, steenbok, impala, mountain reedbuck, gemsbok, kudu, zebra, eland and white rhino. Spotting these majestic herds or spooking a solitary antelope while walking can be a unique and thrilling experience.

Trails are the Middelpunt Hiking Trail of 7 km, the Klipstapel Hiking Trail of 12 km and the Orange River Hiking Trail of 16 km. Permits are issued at the gate. Walking permits are not required.

Accommodation is in 6 self-contained cottages, each sleeping 2 people. The Hunter's Camp at the start of the Middelpunt Trail comprises 5 shelters with reed 'bomas' and braais, and a central ablution block. At Spes Bona, starting point for the Klipstapel and Orange River trails, there is an old barn sleeping 40 people on a veranda. Toilets, showers and braai area provided, but no hot water. Hikers can leave their cars and equipment at the shelter, provided they carry sufficient water with them.

Attractions include a large variety of game such as kudu, zebra, eland, blesbok, steenbok, impala and springbok, as well as the confluence of the Orange and Caledon rivers, and beautiful rock formations.

Caution - The reserve is closed for hikers during the hunting season (May to August), so the trails are open only in the summer. Walkers are advised to carry water, and to wear gaiters to protect their legs from grass seeds. Summer rainfall area, mostly in the form of thunderstorms. Strong winds and cold nights are possible year-round, so be prepared for the worst. Hikers should carry binoculars and water.

1. Middelpunt Hiking Trail on the reserve's well-watered western boundary is physically easy as it meanders along the banks of the Caledon River, and offers the trailist the opportunity to spot waders and larger waterbirds including the blue crane, grey heron, white-bellied stork and African shelduck.

2. Klipstapel Hiking Trail, situated in the middle of the reserve's vast 22 000 ha, has a unique attraction: in an approximately 2 sq. km area lies a field of eroded dolerite pillars, each block precariously balanced on its base. This natural phenomenon strongly resembles the stone cairns of the Matopos in Zimbabwe.

3. Orange River Hiking Trail crosses some open plains, but the longest part of this trail follows the course of the Orange River as it makes its way through mountainous terrain, which provides the hiker with some very beautiful views of the river and the hills beyond. Several species of long grass and thorny annuals possessing seeds with sharply pointed dispersal mechanisms are common in the reserve; gaiters with boots are highly recommended footwear for all hikers.

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