

THE WEST COAST

The West Coast lets you rediscover yourself and touch the fingertip of God. Always through something small. Environmental conditions are harsh, the miracles minute.

Extraordinary succulents no bigger than your baby fingernail. A perfect shell smaller than a pea. The pinprick of a seagull high over head. The speed with which the wind robs you of your voice.

Fringed by the icy Atlantic and extreme mountains, this rugged landscape is one of contrasts where the angry shriek of a seagull is swallowed by a fierce wind, and once the rains have fallen, a carpet of delicate petals cover the ground in a magical tapestry of vibrant colour.

If you're looking for wild beaches, miles of tranquil hiking and no people, then head this way...

VREDENBURG

Founded around a bubbling spring of clear water, and an important centre for sheep and wheat farmers, the 'town of peace' is situated 13km inland from Saldanha and is one of the bigger towns in the area.

Windstone Backpacker and Horse Riding Trails

R45, Hopefield Road, POBox 320, Vredenburg, 7380

Tel: 022 766 1645 Cell: 083 290 7641

winder@mweb.co.za www.windstone.co.za

From Cape Town on R27: Right onto R45

(Hopefield/Malmesbury/Langebaan road). 1km, on right.

Just over 1 hour from Cape Town, Windstone, with its comfy en suite rooms, is a great base from which to explore the West Coast. It's close to the kite and windsurfers' paradise, Langebaan Lagoon, the

West Coast National Park and the picturesque fishing village of Paternoster. Experience a trail through the Fossil Park's private nature reserve or kick back and relax at the indoor pool.

Dorms R90; Doubles R260; Camping R65.

Groups welcome.

446 Karin

SALDANHA

This safe natural harbour is home to a navy training base and a hub for the fishing industry. Thanks to its encircling arms, the bay is not only super safe for swimming and a top spot for sailing, but the water is also warmed by the sun, making it lekker* to swim in, unlike the rest of the West Coast, which is generally a breath-freezing temperature. Langebaan National Park and the Postberg Nature Reserve lie on the other side of the bay and are home to many species of marine and coastal birds as well as glorious profusions of wild flowers in spring.

Saldanha Backpackers

1 Diaz Street, Saldanha, 7395

Tel/Fax: 022 714 4234

info@packafrica.co.za

www.packafrica.co.za

Take the R27 coastal road to Saldanha.

Sea views abound here, with the beach but 100m away and shops and banks not much further than that. So drench yourself in the West Coast's salt-fresh air, go exploring, take them up on their offer of water sports, windsurfing, kite surfing and boat trips, and finish the day in style at a braai* with a sea view or next to the pool. Then grab a glass of something chilly and check out the rustic art collection while you wait for your coals to reach perfection.

Dorms R85; Doubles from R240; Camping R45.
On the Elwierda bus route.

PATERNOSTER AND CAPE COLUMBINE

Old white-washed fishermen cottages rub shoulders with newer holiday homes in this small fishing village. To the south of the town lies the Cape Columbine Nature Reserve and lighthouse (named after the Columbine wreck of 1829) which marks a navigational point for ships approaching from Europe and America. The reserve is fringed by a jumble of rocks interspersed with small beaches that provide private viewpoints over the restless waves and hundreds of secret shell-strewn sitting spots. In Spring, masses of flowers carpet the reserve with rich and varied colours.

Thanks to the icy Atlantic Ocean, summer is cooled by a fresh sea breeze and a plunge into the bracing water will wake every nerve in your body. Early risers can meet the small fishing boats on their return from their sunrise sojourn and buy a fresh fish. Mmm. Sushi for breakfast, Red Roman for lunch and crayfish for supper...

The Beach Camp

Cape Columbine Nature Reserve, POBox 150, Paternoster, 7381

Cell: 082 926 2267

info@ratrace.co.za

www.ratrace.co.za

Drive through Vredenburg to Paternoster. At 4-way stop in Paternoster turn left, follow the signs.

Any closer to the sea and you'll get wet...

Located in a nature reserve, The Beach Camp offers a taste of West Coast splendour. Park off in the wind-protected living area or spend

time contemplating the mysteries of the sea at the Beach Bar. Enjoy seafood dinners and breakfast on the terrace.

BOX: Want it all for yourself? Get it, at R4 900 per night.

Tents R170pp/n; A-frames R220pp/n sharing.

Rates include Nature Reserve fees, tea and coffee until 10am.

Booking essential.

THE CEDERBERG

The magnificent mountains of the Cederberg are coloured in shades of ochre and red and weathered by extremes of sun and cold.

Extraordinary rock formations reach up to the sky with shy klipspringers, barking baboons and mysterious leopards haunting their heights. It's seventh heaven for hikers and rock climbers, and paradise found for people into wide open spaces, naked frolicking in rock pools and the sound of their own minds.

BOX: Giant Houdini dormice will steal food out of your pack while you sleep.

BOX: The Cederberg Mountains and all their bizarre rock formations demand dusty exploration.

Here is our suggestion for the Biedouw Valley intro:

Part of the Cederberg Mountains on the way to the beautiful mission village of Wupperthal, this wild and remote area has remained unchanged for centuries.

San artists left a rich legacy of rock art, leopards hunt along the Biedouw River and amazing spring flowers make this area a paradise for nature lovers.

Cederberg Oasis

Tel/Fax: 027 482 2819 cederberg@telkomsa.net

www.cederbergoasis.co.za

On N7: 30km north of Citrusdal, take Algeria/Cederberg turn-off, 62km on gravel. Follow the Ceres signs.

Via Ceres: Route R303, right at Op Die Berg, 17km on R355, left at Cederberg sign, 47km gravel. Follow Clanwilliam signs.

Oasis offers excellent food, awesome hikes and amazing starry nights. Renown for its rock art and sandstone formations, hiking here is almost compulsory and Gerrit will hand-draw you a fantastic map. Psst. Make sure you visit the Wolfberg Arch and Cracks, the Maltese Cross and Stadsaal Caves.

Dorms R90; Doubles R180; Camping from R35.

Self-catering. Restaurant. Bar. Internet. Swimming pool.

Enjo Life Farm

Biedouw Valley, POBox 191, Clanwilliam, 8135

Tel: 027 482 2869 rocks@soulcountry.info

www.soulcountry.info

N7 to Clanwilliam. Follow signs to Wupperthal. 50km. Turn left into Biedouw Valley. 11km.

Cradled by mountains in an untouched valley, this is where the elements reign supreme. Meet them. Meet yourself. Escape on lonely hikes, test your rock climbing skills (at the farm or at the famous Rocklands), wallow in the spring-fed pool or horse ride through

pristine bush. Top it all off with a flip through radical rock formations in their nifty little plane. You'll leave with your soul breathing again.

Dorms R85; Doubles from R220; Cabins R110pp; Chalet R370; Camping R45.

CITRUSDAL

About two hours drive from Cape Town, Citrusdal lies in the Olifants River Valley where herds of elephants have been replaced by groves of glossy orange trees backed by the Cederberg Mountains.

Roadside stalls tempt you with pockets of oranges, dried fruit, home-made jams and pure honey. Inhale the fresh citrus air, follow some roads to nowhere, buy a wheelbarrow of oranges and learn to make marmalade.

Gekko Backpackers

Arbeidsgenot Farm, POBox 200, Citrusdal, 7340

Tel: 022 921 3721 Cell: 082 574 2773

vism@mweb.co.za www.gekko.co.za

N7 from Cape Town: 170km (21km past Citrusdal on left).

Surrounded by citrus orchards, close to the Olifants River and the magnificent Cederberg Mountains, Gekko caters for everyone from wild adventurers to laid-back land lovers.

Head for famous rock formations and rock art, or zone out tubing the river, getting your DSTV fix or shooting some pool. Even better, grabba beer from the bar and claim a rock with an awesome view.

Dorms R70; Doubles R220; Double en suite R280; Camping R45.

Self-catering. Moola Magic. Swimming pool. BSA.