

FAQ'S: Whale Trail (Public Visitors)

1. What should I pack for the Whale Trail?

The Whale Trail takes you through ever-changing coastal conditions, from bright sun to strong winds and occasional rain, across uneven, rocky terrain. To stay comfortable and fully enjoy the experience, pack layered clothing, waterproof gear, sturdy hiking shoes, sun protection, plenty of water, and snacks. Being well-prepared ensures you can focus on the breathtaking scenery, wildlife and unforgettable moments along the trail.

Essentials:

- **Daypack:** Water, tissues, snacks, sunscreen, a hat and camera.
- **Clothing:** Layered clothing suitable for varying weather conditions, including a waterproof jacket.
- **Footwear:** Sturdy hiking boots or trail running shoes.
- **Sleeping:** Sleeping bag and pillow (no bedding provided).
- **Toiletries:** Personal hygiene items, including biodegradable soap, a small and medium towel.
- **First Aid Kit:** Bring along a First Aid Kit, including any personal medications i.e. antihistamines for allergies, and basic supplies.
- **Torch or Headlamp:** Recommended, plus extra batteries.
- **Water Bottle:** Reusable water bottle (min. 2L capacity).

Optional Items:

- **Camera:** To capture your adventure and the scenic beauty.
- **Binoculars:** For whale and bird watching.
- **Walking Poles/Sticks:** For added stability on uneven terrain.
- **Swimwear:** For swimming opportunities along the trail.

2. What are the portage box specifications?

We take care of transporting your luggage between the huts, so you can enjoy the trail.

- **Box Size:** Each hiker is allocated a **75-litre** container, measuring **714 L (mm) x 465 W (mm) x 356 H (mm)**, for luggage transport between huts. The size of the cooler box container is 70-litre and measuring
- **Groups:**
 - Up to **14 containers** for 12 hikers (includes 1 cooler box).
 - Up to **7 containers** for 6 hikers (includes 1 cooler box). N.B. The 14th and 7th container is a cooler box for perishable food items.
- **Availability:** Boxes are provided at **Potberg Hut** upon arrival.
- **Cost:** A fee is charged per container and is an optional extra. You are encouraged to add it during your booking request.
- If boxes have not been pre-booked, they can be booked and paid for on arrival. Only 1 single card payment can be made.

3. What are the accommodation facilities like?

Stay in comfort at our scenic overnight huts.

- **Huts:** Five overnight huts along the trail, each accommodating up to 12 people.
- **Facilities include:**
 - Fully equipped with beds (kindly bring your own bedding), kitchens with stainless steel crockery, cutlery and cookware.
 - Bathrooms with flushing toilets and fully functional showers.
- **Ice:** Visitors are welcome to bring along their own ice packs/bricks or dry ice, as ice is not supplied. However, ice trays are supplied in the freezer section of the fridge / freezer units in the huts.
- **Cooking Equipment:** Gas operated cooking tops are supplied at each hut. Unfortunately, no ovens are supplied.
- **Electricity:** Solar-powered lighting (no power outlets for charging devices).
- **Water:** Available at all huts, but it's advisable to bring purification tablets or bottled water.
- **Hot water:** All huts are solar powered, and the availability of hot water (for shower or cleaning purposes) depends on the sun exposure on the day as well as the length of shower time per person. *Note:* A shower time of no more than 3 minutes is encouraged for water and energy saving.
- **Check-out time:** Huts must be vacated by 08:00 to allow sufficient time for cleaning and luggage transfer for the next group.
- **Wi-Fi** – no Wi-Fi is available at the huts however cellular network connection is sometimes available along the section sections.

4. Travel and Parking arrangements?

- **Parking:** On the first day, hikers park their vehicles at the provided area near the Potberg hut, where limited secure parking is provided.
- **Post Hike Shuttle:** After completing the trail at Koppie Alleen, the shuttle will return hikers to their vehicle at the Potberg parking area. Time of collection: earliest at 09:00 and the latest at 12:00
- **Estimated travel times are**
 - From Cape Town International Airport – 225kms, approximately 3 – 4 hours
 - From the closest town, Bredasdorp – 52kms, approximately 45 minutes
 - From Hermanus – 140 to 170kms, approximately 1H45 to 2 hours
 - No shuttles are provided from Cape Town to Hermanus, as part of the CapeNature package, at this point.
 - Visitors are welcome to arrange their own private shuttle and are encouraged to carpool or travel in groups to reduce their carbon footprint.

5. What is the trail like?

Explore one of South Africa's most iconic coastal hikes.

- **Duration:** 5 days
- **Distance:** ±55 km (±34 miles)
- **Difficulty:** Moderate to strenuous, (particularly on day 1 & 2 where most extractions are required).
- **Terrain:** Mix of beach, cliff, and mountain paths
- **Tide Times:** Shared by CapeNature staff during the Visitor Briefing on the day of arrival.
- **Visitor Briefing:** On the date of arrival, all incoming visitors are invited to a compulsory safety briefing. This is held at the Welcome Centre on De Hoop Nature Reserve, at 15h00 daily.
- **Highlights:**
 - Whale watching (best between **June and December**)
 - Diverse fynbos and birdlife
 - Panoramic coastal views
- The trail experience varies for each hiker, depending on their individual fitness and strength levels.
Day 1-2: A moderately challenging uphill trail across rocky, mountainous terrain. Along the way, you'll get some of the closest views of the southernmost Cape vulture colony. Trail-running or sturdy hiking shoes are recommended.
Day 3-5: Starts with a slow descent into the serene lagoon, ending at Noetsie Hut. From there, the trail winds along the coastline, past Hammerkop, over rolling ridges and sandy dunes, and concludes at Koppie Alleen.

5. Is catering and guiding provided?

At this moment, the whale trail hike is a self-catered and self-guided experience.

6. What emergency or medical support is available along the Whale Trail?

The Whale Trail is a remote hiking experience with limited access to immediate medical assistance. In the event of an emergency, hikers can contact the reserve management using the emergency contact numbers provided for at the briefing session. It is strongly advised that all hikers carry a basic first aid kit and ensure they have adequate medical insurance and fitness to complete the trail. Emergency evacuations may be possible, but delays can occur due to the trail's remote location.

7. What wildlife might I encounter along the trail?

Hikers may encounter a variety of wildlife, including baboon, eland, bushbuck, mongoose, seal, otter, and various small mammals as well as ostrich, cape vulture, cormorant and other birds in their related habitats.

Good conduct in the nature reserve:

- Do not feed animals. Human food makes wildlife sick and changes their natural behaviour, making them dependent on people, particularly baboon.
- Never litter. Even small items like bottle tops and fruit peels can harm animals and pollute the environment.
- Respect animals' natural habits. Watch wildlife quietly from a distance and never chase, touch, corner, or disturb them.
- Stay on marked trails. Walking off-trail damages fragile plants and animal habitats.
- Keep noise to a minimum to prevent unnecessary disturbance.
- Do not pick plants, shells, or rocks. Leave everything as you find it so others can enjoy it too.
- Follow fire rules. Open fires may only be made in designated braai areas.

8. How do I book the Whale Trail?

We recommend booking early. Dates for the Whale Trail open one year in advance, and advance booking through the CapeNature Call Centre is required.

- **Reservations:** Required in advance via CapeNature.
- **When to book:** Up to 1 year in advance.
- **Tour operators:** Registered operators may book earlier.

Reach out to our Contact Centre to make your booking:

- Email: info@capenature.co.za
- Call: 087 087 8250

Online Bookings (NEW):

[Booking Whale Trail](#)