

Info Sheet

SWARTBERG

NATURE RESERVE

Oudtshoorn



USEFUL NUMBERS AND TIMES

RESERVATIONS	☎ 087 087 8250
RESERVE OFFICE	☎ 087 087 3001 (Office hours) ☎ 082 784 1784/ (After hours / Search Rescue) ☎ 082 784 1786 Emergency
OFFICE HOURS	07h30 – 16h00 (Monday - Friday)
CHECK-IN TIME	08h00 – 15h00
CHECKOUT TIME	16h00
WEBSITE	https://www.capenature.co.za/
BOOKING PORTAL	https://booking.capenature.co.za/
GATE TIMES	07h30 – 16h00

HOW TO GET THERE

📍 S 33 ° 35'28.9" E 22° 12'07.21"

Swartberg Nature Reserve Office is situated in Oudtshoorn and not on the reserve itself, on the corner of Baron van Rheede Street and the Queens Hotel Building, opposite C.P. Nel Museum, behind the Queens Hotel Building.

ABOUT THE RESERVE

The Swartberg Nature Reserve lies in the Oudtshoorn town under Central Karoo and Garden Route Districts between the Great and the Klein Karoo. This area was clearly used by the San for many centuries, as evidenced by the numerous rock paintings and artefacts found in caves all over the reserve. It is an area of extreme climates, with very cold winters, often with snow on the mountains and temperatures well below zero, while summers can be uncomfortably hot with temperatures reaching 40°C or more.

ACTIVITIES

- All day walks and overnight trails must be booked before arrival
- **Permit required**, available on the CapeNature Central Reservations System – online and via telephone or at the CapeNature Office in Oudtshoorn.

DAY WALKS	Marked day trails available.
SWARTBERG 4X4 TRAIL	A rugged and challenging out and back route starting and ending at the top of the Swartberg Pass just past The Top between Oudtshoorn and Prince Albert.
OVERNIGHT HIKING TRAIL	The Swartberg Trail is a difficult 2-day overnight hike. Hikers have a choice of two routes for the second day with different destinations.
BIRD WATCHING	No designated bird watching areas; however, a variety of birds can be found throughout the reserve.
WILDLIFE WATCHING	No designated wildlife watching areas; however, a variety of small wildlife can be found throughout the reserve.

SWARTBERG NATURE RESERVE RULES

- All access is subject to the conditions stipulated in the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (57/2003) and the Nature Conservation Ordinance (19 of 1974).
- Access to the Swartberg Nature Reserve is only permitted at times prescribed by the managing authority
- Access permits are required and subject to payment of conservation fees
- Ensure you always have your permit ready for inspection
- Only use approved trails
- Cycling is not permitted, except on approved cycling routes.
- Drones are not permitted
- Parking is only permitted in approved parking areas
- Do not block access, this is a high-risk area for fires and emergency service vehicles (including trucks) must be able to pass easily.
- Do not feed the wild animals
- Dogs (and other pets) are not allowed
- Special use permits will be required for activities other than hiking
- Do not lure, disturb, harm, feed or kill any animal in the reserve.
- Do not pick, uproot, remove, cut or in any way damage any plant or part thereof in the reserve
- Do not deface, etch into, scratch on or in any way cause damage to any geological or historical feature or structure in the Reserve.
- Littering & dumping is not permitted, regardless of whether it is a natural item or not.
- Do not pollute any rivers and streams
- Open fires on trails, including the starting and end point, are strictly prohibited
- Do not discard cigarette butts, due to fire prone area.
- No weapons (including firearms) are allowed.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Bookings must be made in advance online or by telephone with CapeNature Central Reservations.
- The reserve office is in Oudtshoorn and not on reserve.
- **Keys must be collected at the CapeNature office in Oudtshoorn before 16h00 – Monday to Friday.** (Corner of Queens Hotel Building and Baron van Rheede Street, Oudtshoorn).
- Cell phone reception on the trails is limited.
- There is no Wi-Fi on the trails.
- All hikers must adhere to the De Hoek Holiday Resort's rules and regulations when on their property.
- Hikers use all hiking trails at their own risk.
- Porterage or transport services are not provided.
- In emergency situations, rescue services will be contacted. These may include Wilderness Search/Rescue or Metro. Much of the terrain is not accessible by vehicle and thus rely on rescue helicopters.
- Hiking groups are restricted to a maximum of 12 and a minimum of 3 (for safety reasons).
- Minimum age limit to hike on the reserve is 12 and all persons between the age of 12 and 18, must be accompanied by supervising adults.
- Hikers should remain within their hiking groups, hike single file and only on the demarcated trails.

HIKING CHECKLIST: WHAT TO BRING

- Comfortable walking shoes/boots.
- Warm jacket/top – temperatures can drop quickly on top of the mountain.
- Sun Hat.
- Sun Block.
- Water – no water available on route (clients should bring sufficient water to drink).
- Plastic bag for the items you want to throw away but that you need to take back with you.

HIKING SAFETY TIPS

- Wear comfortable walking shoes, sunscreen, and a hat.
- Do not hike alone.
- Carry enough food and water with you.
- Make sure you know what the weather conditions are before you depart.
- Take a warm jacket/raincoat in winter.
- Make sure you have a relevant map of the area.
- Take a field medical kit with you for emergencies.
- Obey all signage.
- Stay in a group and on the trails.



DAY TRAILS / WALKS

► PLATBERG TRAIL

This circle route offers stunning views of the Swartberg on the Northern side and its rock formations. Best time to hike is early morning, depending on weather conditions. A variety of fauna and flora can be seen along the trail. No water points available on the trail or at the start/end.

Maximum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	32
Minimum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	3
Total distance in km:	8.4
Type of route:	Circular
Degree of difficulty:	Moderate
Estimated time to complete:	4 hours
Cut-off time to set off on trail to be back before gate closes:	10h30
Must trails be booked before arrival at reserve?	Yes
Is a permit required?	Yes

► OUTOL CIRCULAR TRAIL

Spectacular views from start to finish with a variety of fauna and flora along the route. Best time to hike is early morning, depending on weather conditions. There are no water points available on the trail or at the start/end.

Maximum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	32
Minimum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	3
Total distance in km:	7,4
Type of route:	Circular
Degree of difficulty:	Moderate
Estimated time to complete:	3 hours
Cut-off time to set off on trail to be back before gate closes:	12h00
Must trails be booked before arrival at reserve?	Yes
Is a permit required?	Yes



DAY TRAILS / WALKS

► DE HOEK TRAIL

De Hoek Trail starts and ends at De Hoek Holiday Resort. This hike is not for beginners, or the faint hearted as you will have to do some steep uphill climbing before trailing downhill back to De Hoek. Best time to hike is early morning during the months of April, May, September and October. The first water point is only at 3km so best to take some water with you from the start. The fauna and flora along the route afford the hiker spectacular views and photo opportunities.

Maximum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	12
Minimum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	3
Total distance in km:	8.8
Type of route:	Out and back
Degree of difficulty:	Strenuous
Estimated time to complete:	5 hours
Cut-off time to set off on trail to be back before gate closes:	10h30. Subject to De Hoek Holiday Resort times.
Must trails be booked before arrival at reserve?	Yes
Is a permit required?	Yes



SWARTBERG 2-DAY OVERNIGHT TRAIL

Degree of difficulty:	Strenuous – for experienced hikers.
Best time of the year to hike:	April, May, September and October.
Maximum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	12
Minimum no. of people allowed on trail per day:	3
Duration (Number of days):	2
Total distance in km:	20.4km



SWARTBERG 2-DAY OVERNIGHT TRAIL

DAY 1

8.4km

The trail starts at De Hoek Private Holiday Resort, approximately 35 km outside Oudtshoorn on the Swartberg Pass road, where secure parking is available. Guests wishing to overnight at De Hoek should make their own arrangements (044 272 8214). Start early, especially during April, May, September, and October, as the trail climbs steadily from approximately 725 m to Bothashoek Hut at 1,460 m above sea level. The first water point is 3 km from the start, so carry enough water. Along the way, enjoy spectacular mountain scenery, diverse fynbos, and excellent photo opportunities.

Latest start time: 08h00

Estimated time: 3 hours

Degree of difficulty: Strenuous

DAY 2

12.8km

Following the 4x4 route, the trail winds down to Ou Tol Hut, situated next to the Swartberg Pass.

Latest start time: 08h00

Estimated time: 3 hours

Degree of difficulty: Moderate

Alternative – Day 2

12km

This route takes you over the summit with majestic views of both sides of the Swartberg Mountain to Ou Tol.

Latest start time: 08h00

Estimated time: 3.5 hours

Degree of difficulty: Strenuous



SWARTBERG 4X4 TRAIL

The Swartberg 4x4 Trail starts and ends at the top of the Swartberg pass just past The Top between Oudtshoorn and Prince Albert. You will find yourself cutting southeast, straight across the top of the Swartberg mountain range, with views for hundreds of kilometres in almost every direction. The scenery is rugged and the road is very challenging in parts morning during the months of April, May, September and October. The first water point is only at 3km so best to take some water with you from the start. The fauna and flora along the route afford the hiker spectacular views and photo opportunities.

Maximum no. of vehicles allowed on trail per day:	4
Minimum no. of vehicles allowed on trail per day:	2
Total distance in km:	25.6
Type of route:	Out and back
Degree of difficulty:	Rugged scenery and parts of the road are painstaking. Drivers and passengers will be sorely tested.
Estimated time to complete:	2 days
Overnight accommodation:	Guests can book the Bothashoek Hut (at the 12.8 km mark) as overnight accommodation.

USEFUL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Swartberg Nature Reserve Office:	087 087 3002
Mountain Search & Rescue:	10177/083 339 1240
South African Police Services:	10111 Oudtshoorn: 044 203 9014 Prins Albert: 023 541 1316
Hospital Services:	Prince Albert Provincial Hospital: 023 541 1300 Oudtshoorn Provincial Hospital: 044 203 7200 MediClinic Klein Karoo: 044 272 0111
Ambulance:	Metro: 10177 or 044 272 0111 ER 24: 082 372 5290
Fire Department:	ER 24: 082 372 5290



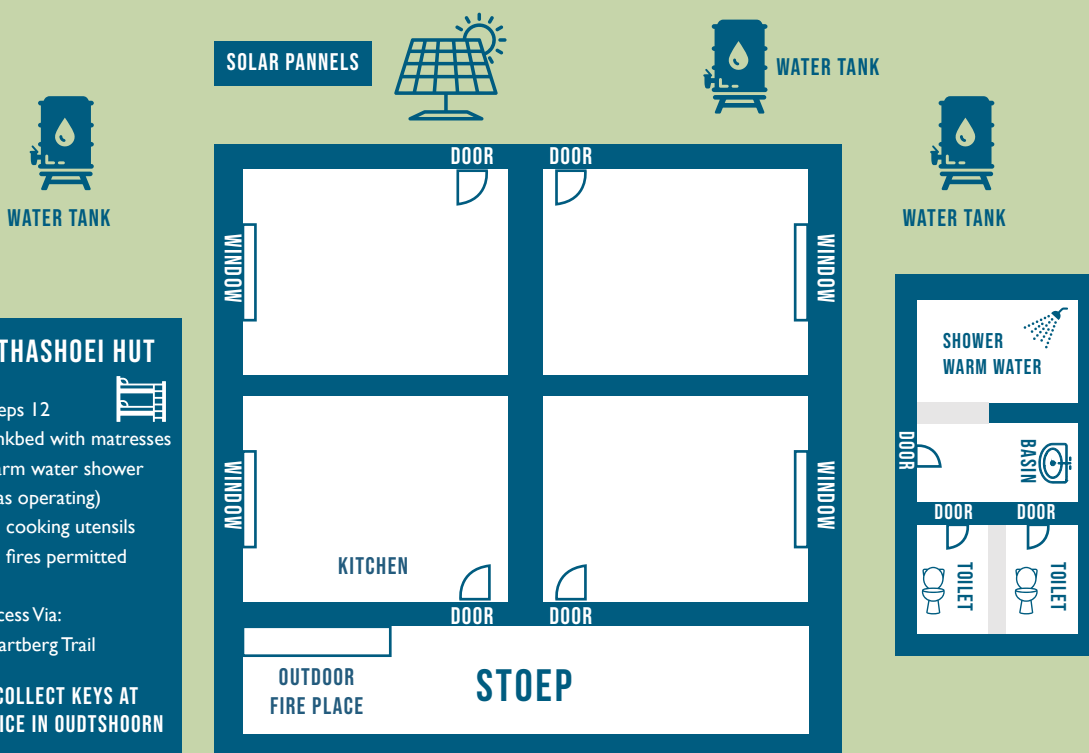
OVERNIGHT HIKING HUTS!

PLEASE NOTE:

- All overnight huts offer basic dormitory-style accommodation.
- Huts can be booked per bed or per room. Please confirm your requirements with the bookings office, as facilities are shared.
- The huts are remote and self-contained. Please leave them clean and tidy, as you found them.
- All items brought in must be taken out. No bins or cleaning services are provided.
- Please respect nature, fellow guests, and their need for peace and quiet.
- Water is available at the huts only and is a limited resource. Please use it sparingly and ensure taps are closed properly after use.
- Keep all doors and windows closed and locked to protect the facilities from wildlife and weather conditions.
- Baboons frequent the area. Do not leave food or personal belongings unattended.
- Please bring: Warm clothing, sun hat, sunscreen, bedding, towels, toiletries, food, cooking utensils, drinking water for the trail, torch/headlamp, toilet paper, and a rubbish bag (all waste must be carried out).
- The showers are gas-operated.
- No cooking equipment is provided. Guests must bring their own gas or gel stove/burner. (available at all Outdoor shops and Game)
- Fires are not permitted.
- **Please report any vandalism or illegal activities in the reserve immediately.**



BOTHASHOEK HUT FLOOR PLAN





BOTHASHOEK HUT

Please note that this is a rustic hiking facility so please be advised of following provisions at all the huts and what you should bring from home. morning during the months of April, May, September and October. The first water point is only at 3km so best to take some water with you from the start. The fauna and flora along the route afford the hiker spectacular views and photo opportunities.

Sleeps a total of:	12 people	
Number of rooms:	3	
Beds:	2 double bunk beds in each room.	
Facilities:	Provided by CapeNature:	Bring your own:
Beds:	• Beds and mattresses.	• Bedding and pillows.
Cooking:	• None (no cooking appliances, pots, crockery or utensils are provided).	• Cooking utensils. • Own stove. • <i>Guests are advised to bring their own gas/gel stove/burner for cooking purposes, available at all outdoor stores as well as Game.</i> • Black garbage bags. • Eating and drinking utensils. • Washing up supplies. • All food and drink. • NB: Please remember that fires are strictly prohibited.
Ablutions:	• Flush-toilets. • Gas shower with warm water.	• Toilet paper. • Towel • Toiletries
Heating:	• None	• Any warm clothing and blankets required.
Lighting:	• None	• Torch or headlamp.