

Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve lies in the Hottentots Holland mountains, some 90km south east of Cape Town. This 70 000ha reserve stretches from Elgin in the south to beyond Villiersdorp in the north, and from the Stellenbosch mountains in the west, eastwards to the Groenland mountains. About 7 000ha of private and state property adjoining the reserve is co-managed as the Theewaterskloof Conservancy by CapeNature and local landowners.

The entrance to the reserve is at Nuweberg, 11km from Grabouw on the R321. From Cape Town, take the N2, turn left at the Orchard Farm Stall in Grabouw and left again at the Villiersdorp junction.

History

In 1935 the Department of Forestry purchased much of the land in the Jonkershoek Valley from the municipality of Stellenbosch. Shortly afterwards the Jonkershoek Forestry Research Station was established and this became the initial step in a long history of research into mountain ecosystems, with emphasis on the hydrological cycle and plant ecology. The Forestry industry received added momentum as a result of the shortage of timber during the First World War and the need to create employment during the Depression.

Nuweberg, previously a railway owned plantation, was taken over by the Department of Forestry and new plantations were established on the lower slopes of the mountains at La Motte, near Franschhoek, and at Jonkershoek. There was an immediate reaction from amateur naturalists and others who were concerned about the destruction of the natural fynbos to make way for forestry operations. As a result, several nature reserves were established in the afforestation zone, to protect the Cape flora.

Many of these reserves were too small for long term viability and finally, all these areas were consolidated and the reserve was proclaimed in 1979. This was the first and only nature reserve to be declared under the Forest Act in South Africa.

Water and nature conservation were the primary land management goals, while secondary uses of the area, such as recreation and research, were permitted if they were compatible with the primary objectives.

In 1995, the former farm Rusbos was handed over to CapeNature for management as part of the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve. The land is managed as part of the Riviersonderend catchment according to the management plan of the reserve.

Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve was included as one of the protected areas making up the Cape Floral Region Protected Areas World Heritage Site, declared South Africa's 6th World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2004.

Local communities are expected to play an important part in the conservation of the area and the establishment of a viable local eco-tourism industry.

Geology

The landforms of the Hottentots Holland mountain range have been shaped by the movement and folding of a previously unrelieved landscape. To the east and the north, the mountains of the Hottentots Holland range overlay 550 millennia old Cape granite, which is a relatively erosive rock formation. This results in a convoluted and undulating landscape, and aids the development of nutrient-rich yellowish and reddish soil. Enclosed in the granite that was originally welled up, are remnants of shales and metamorphosed sedimentary rocks that are characteristic of the 950 millennia old Malmesbury Formation.

The sedimentary layers of the Table Mountain Group formation overlay the other formations and dominate the landscape. The oldest of these is the Peninsula Formation - 1 500m of hard, grey sandstone and quartzite that form the prominent cliffs found throughout the range, from the Franschhoek peaks to the escarpments in the Banghoek area, and the Jonkershoek mountains to Somerset West. This is followed by the Pakhuis Formation - a narrow band of tillite formed from material deposited by glacial action 400 million years ago. The tillite contains large amounts of water-washed quartz stones. Soft shales of the Cederberg Formation overlay the tillite. These shales are susceptible to weathering and aid the exposure of the underlying layers in a landscape that is relatively resistant to erosion. In the Hottentots Holland range, the most striking of the shale landforms are the dome summits of Victoria peak (1 589m), Somerset-Sneeukop (1 590m), and the Triplets (1 515m). These peaks, together with the contrasting angular summits of Pike (1 500m) and the Rifberg (1 525m), are the highest in the area.

Terrain

The Reserve's terrain is rugged and very mountainous, with altitudes ranging from 500 to 1 590m. High mountain peaks and steep valleys provide a sense of remote wilderness, while the near-pristine Palmiet River, which originates high in the mountains and traverses a steep gradient down to the sea, is one of the significant attributes of this protected area.

Climate

The annual rainfall is as high as 3 300mm on the Dwarsberg plateau and winds are frequent and strong. Summers are generally mild and dry. Weather conditions in the mountains can be unpredictable and dangerous.

Plants & animals

The Reserve plays an important role in the conservation of mountain fynbos, with approximately 1300 species occurring, some of which are rare and endemic. Approximately 110 bird species have been recorded, including several species of raptor.

Many animals have been re-introduced, including the rare Cape mountain zebra, eland, bontebok and red hartebeest. Populations of grey rhebuck, klipspringer, common duiker and grysbok occur and, while leopards frequent these mountains, they are seldom seen.

Historical structures

Structures of historical importance are the old Toll building for the Franschhoek Pass and the ruins of the village used by the workers that constructed the Franschhoek Pass. Forming part of the Pass, Jan Joubert's Gat bridge was one of the first bridges ever built in South Africa. It is still in use and has been declared a national monument. The Oxwagon spore and cannons in the Gantouws Pass above the Sir Lowry's Pass are also national monuments.

Tourism Activities

GATE TIMES FOR THE RESERVE ARE 07H00 – 17H00.

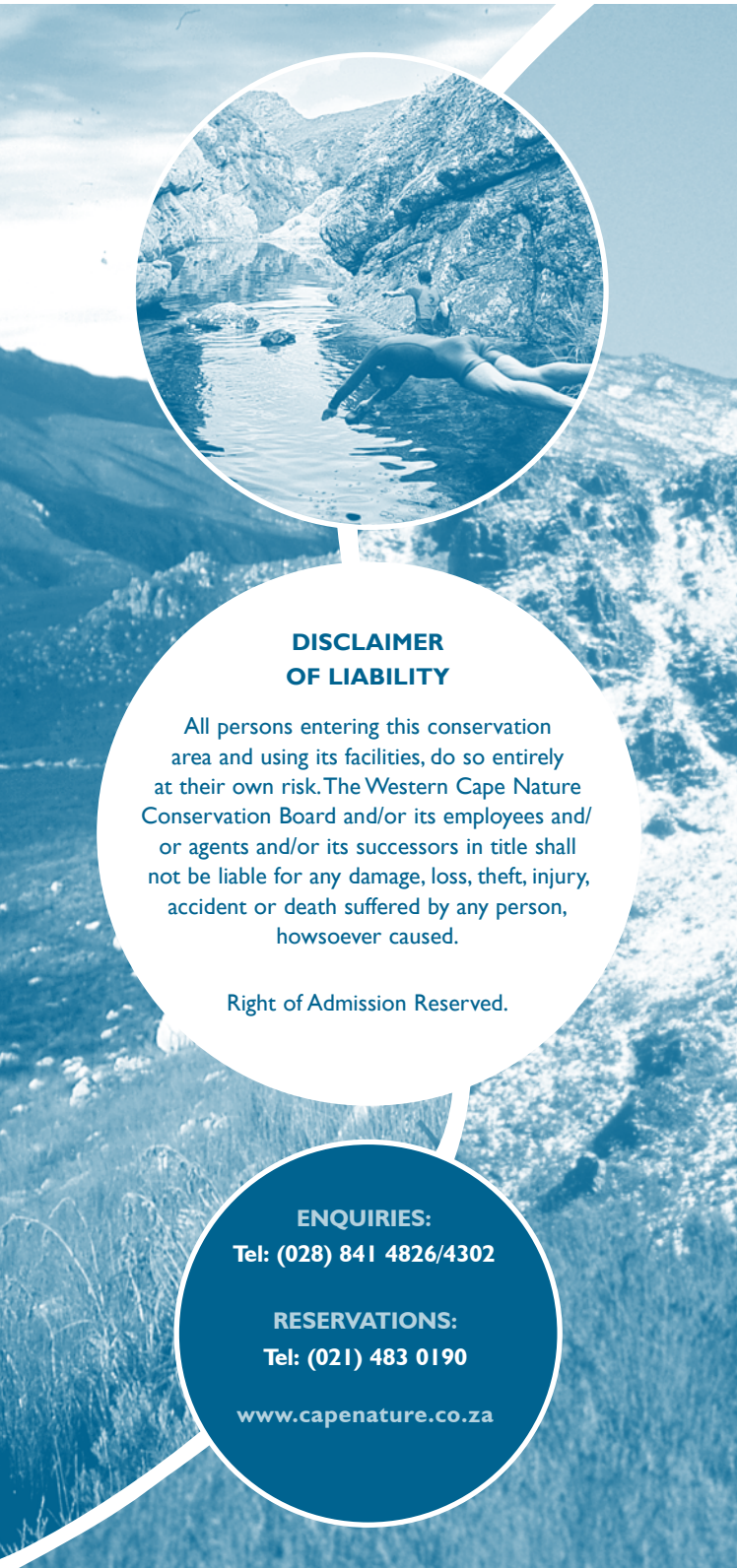
Hiking trails range from day excursions to overnight experiences. **For their own safety, hikers are not allowed to set off after the specified starting cut-off times, in order to complete the hike before nightfall.** Hikers may choose their route, covering either one, two or three days of hiking, but they need to be fit, experienced and well-equipped for extreme weather at all times. Occasionally some trails will be closed due to severe weather and flooding rivers. CapeNature's 'There and Back Safely' guide on hiking safety is available on our website.



All trails start at Nuweberg which has changing room facilities at the parking area. Overnight accommodation for the hiking routes is available at two locations – Landdrooskop Hut and Shamrock Lodge at the first, and Boesmanskloof and Aloe Ridge Huts at the second. Rooms in the huts are booked out in dormitory style or entire rooms can be booked. Landdrooskop has six rooms sleeping between four and seven people per room while the other three huts have three rooms sleeping between nine and twelve people. The huts are equipped with bunk beds and mattresses, water, eco-toilets and a braai area stocked with wood.

HIKING, KLOOFING and MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS		DISTANCE, DURATION, DIFFICULTY	STARTING CUT-OFF TIME
OVERNIGHT ROUTES	Sphinx Route (Nuweberg to Landdrooskop & Shamrock Lodge hiking huts)	±12km 3-4 hours (Moderate)	13h00
	Landdrooskop Jeep Track (Landdrooskop & Shamrock Lodge hiking huts to Nuweberg)	±8km 2-3 hours (Moderate)	13h00
	Boesmanskloof Route (Landdrooskop & Shamrock Lodge hiking huts to Boesmanskloof and Aloe Ridge hiking huts)	±16km 8-9 hours (Challenging)	10h00
	Orchard Route (Nuweberg to Boesmanskloof and Aloe Ridge hiking huts)	±14km 6-7 hours (Moderate)	12h00
DAY HIKE	Palmiet Trail (From Nuweberg along the trail and back along the Landdrooskop Jeep track)	±6km 2-3 hours (Easy)	14h00
KLOOFING [Only open from November to end of April due to winter flooding]	Suicide Gorge	±14,9km hiking ±1,3km kloofing 8-9 hours (Difficult/extreme)	9h00
	Riviersonderend	±8,3km hiking ±6,1km kloofing 7-8 hours (Difficult)	9h00
MOUNTAIN BIKING	Groenlandberg MTB Trail is a ±34km out-and-back route that starts at the main gate at Nuweberg and goes along the top of the Groenlandberg Mountain to Twaalfontein Farm and then back to Nuweberg.		

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:
Metro Mountain Rescue: (021) 937 0300
Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve: 082 413 5258



DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

All persons entering this conservation area and using its facilities, do so entirely at their own risk. The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and/or its employees and/or agents and/or its successors in title shall not be liable for any damage, loss, theft, injury, accident or death suffered by any person, howsoever caused.

Right of Admission Reserved.

ENQUIRIES:
Tel: (028) 841 4826/4302

RESERVATIONS:
Tel: (021) 483 0190

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