

Marloth lies within the southern Langeberg mountain range near Swellendam. The reserve is 14 123 ha in extent and is managed together with another 16 532 ha of privately owned proclaimed mountain catchment land. Most of the reserve activities occur between the gently sloping foothills, up to the 'Plaat' at about 600m. The formidable higher slopes, up to the famous 'Clock Peaks', lie between 1100m and 1450m above sea level.

Swellendam is the third oldest town in South Africa and has many interesting cultural-historic features. Marloth Nature Reserve is named after the pioneer botanist Dr Rudolph Marloth who, in 1928, successfully led a deputation of Swellendam residents to petition the Minister of Lands and Forestry to set aside a part of the mountain (190ha) as a nature reserve. This included the forest patches of Koloniesbos and Duiwelsbos and thus protected some of the land. During 1981 the reserve was enlarged to include the rest of the Forest Reserve state land and the Swellendam Hiking Trail was opened. The reserve was designated a World Heritage Site in 2015, as part of the extension to the Cape Floral Kingdom Protected Areas World Heritage Site.

Climate

The climate in the Swellendam area is typical of the southern Cape, with hot summers and cold winters. The rainfall is fairly evenly spread throughout the year with June and July being the driest months and March, October and November the wettest. The mountainous topography also influences local weather conditions, resulting in a higher rainfall and even snow in winter at the higher altitudes.

Vegetation

The vegetation in the nature reserve is predominantly mountain fynbos with patches of Afromontane forest. Spring is the best time to witness the colourful display of mountain fynbos, that includes several protea species and more than 25 erica species. Many of these erica and protea species occur nowhere else in the world. The original forest covered a much larger area but due to exploitation for timber for the local furniture and wagon industries over the past 300 years, as well as wild fires

(fynbos encroachment), it has been reduced to isolated patches in the damper kloofs (riverines). Typical forest species include yellowwood, stinkwood, Cape beech, wild olive, assegaibos, cherrywood and hard pear.

Animals

Marloth supports numerous animal species, although most are relatively small and not easily observed. Mammals include grey rhebok, grysbok, bushbuck, bushpig, porcupine, klipspringer, common duiker, baboon, leopard, caracal lynx, mongoose, porcupine, hyrax and hare. The area is rich in birdlife. Of the 114 species that have been recorded, the Cape Sugarbird is the most conspicuous while African Fish Eagle, Black Eagle, Wood Owl, Red Winged Francolin, Tambourine Dove, four different species of Woodpecker, Cape Vulture and Narina Trogon can also be seen. Visitors should be on the alert for Puff adder, Cape cobra and mountain adder snakes when hiking.

Activities

All trails and activities begin at the Marloth Nature Reserve office, where vehicles may be parked. Visitors can mountain bike, hike or picnic. Horse trail opportunities are available for those with their own horses.

• MULTI-DAY HIKING

THE ORIGINAL 4-5-DAY SWELLENDAM HIKING TRAIL THAT TRAVERSES THE ENTIRE RESERVE IS CURRENTLY CLOSED.

Hikers may, however, still walk the first section of the trail which starts at the office and passes through Boskloof, Goedgeloof, Proteavallei and Wolfkloof. Shorter day routes are possible. This trail is fairly demanding and should only be attempted by fit hikers. Reservations are limited to a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 10 people. Trips should be planned in advance as hikers are not permitted to leave the trail due to it being surrounded by private property, especially at Wolfkloof and Goedgeloof, as well as the possibility of getting lost. Four rustic huts equipped only with beds, water and primitive toilets provide limited overnight shelter. Hikers should bring their own cooking utensils, bedding, warm clothes, hat, sun-

screen and drinking water. Boskloof shelter has no mattresses so hikers need to provide their own hiking mat rolls. Fires are only permitted at the demarcated site at Wolfkloof due to the high risk of veld fires and the scarcity of fire wood. All shelters are self maintained and must be left as found with "leave no trace" principles needing to be adhered to at all times. No refuse bins are provided as hikers must carry out everything carried in, and no dumping of any items is allowed.

• DAY TRAILS

Marloth offers various day trails, ranging from easy, short walks to more strenuous, longer hikes.

- Indigenous forest walks

These trails lead into the cool green depths of the indigenous forest remnants where rock pools, waterfalls and ancient trees wait to be explored. The walks are generally short (between 2km and 5km) and reasonably easy. Look out for bushbuck and baboon.

- The Plaat

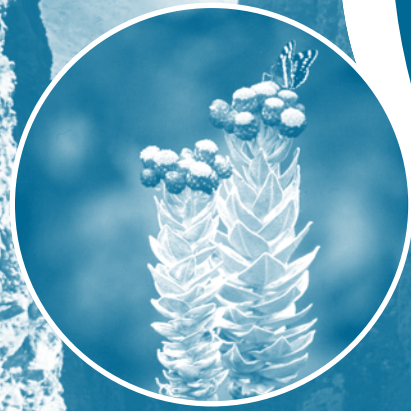
The Plaat walks are slightly longer and range between 3km and 16km. They include a short, steep zig-zag section to reach the mid-band of the mountain at about 600m. Here hikers are rewarded with inspiring views and a variety of wildflowers and birdlife. The many streams en route provide ample cool mountain water to quench the thirsty.

- The Peaks

The mountain peaks of Tienuurkop (1195m) and Twaalfuurkop (1450m) are an ideal challenge for fit hikers. Breathtaking views of the entire Langeberg mountain range, the Rûensveld and even the Indian Ocean are guaranteed. Hikers are advised to carry sufficient water and be prepared for rapid climatic changes and extreme weather conditions.

• PICNICS AND BRAAIS

A 5km drive along a gravel road leads from the reserve entrance through the commercial pine plantations to the Duiwelsbos picnic area. Most of the picnic sites and the braai areas lead off this road, which is usually in a fair condition. The braai area may be closed at short notice due to extreme fire risks at certain times during summer.



CapeNature

www.capenature.co.za

• MOUNTAIN BIKING

The reserve and plantation roads offer good opportunities for exploring from the saddle. The bike trails vary from easy to more advanced. Details are available from the reserve office.

• HORSE RIDING

For those with their own horses, trail opportunities are available in the reserve and adjacent plantation. Nearby private operators provide horses and guided trails. Details are available at the reserve office.

Accommodation

Bushbuck Cottage is a fully-equipped self-catering cottage situated near the start of the trails and an ideal base from which to explore the reserve. It sleeps up to six people in three rooms. (Please refer to information about the overnight hiking trail shelters under Activities - Multi-Day Hiking)

Alternatively, there is a Backpackers Adventure Lodge as well as several other accommodation facilities in Swellendam.

Directions

From Cape Town: Take the N2 highway towards Swellendam. Just past Swellendam, turn left onto the R60 and then follow signs for Marloth Nature Reserve. Turn right at the signpost and travel about 3km until you reach the reserve gates. There is a short amount of gravel road, approximately 1.2km long, leading up to the reserve gates. The route from Cape Town is about 220km and will take about two and a half hours.

Reservations

It is not necessary to reserve day visits, but multi-day hikes and accommodation must be reserved in advance.

ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

- Reserve Office: 028 514 1410
- Duty Officer: 082 4962 450
- Wilderness Search & Rescue: 10177
- Police: 028 514 8102/ 10111



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: 028 514 1410
hvtonder@capenature.co.za

RESERVATIONS

Tel: 021 483 0190

www.capenature.co.za

