THE WHALE TRAIL
(DE HOOP NATURE RESERVE)

RESERVATIONS 087 087 8250

NATURE RESERVE
087 087 4012 (office hours)
063 650 9842 (after hours)

OFFICE HOURS 07h30 - 16h00
Monday-Friday

OVERNIGHT BOOKINGS
CHECK-IN 14h00 - 15h00

GATE TIMES 07h30 - 16h00
NB: THE GATE IS LOCKED AT 16h00



The glittering jewel of De Hoop is one of CapeNature's flagship reserves and has a well-deserved reputation as a truly magical wilderness. The reserve lies at the southernmost tip of Africa, where mountains meet the sea and create a fusion between freshwater and marine habitats that support a staggering array of terrestrial and aquatic life. Encompassing roughly 34 000 hectares, this World Heritage Site is one of the largest natural areas managed by CapeNature.

Annually, between June and November, southern right whales make their epic journey back to the safety of these rich waters to mate and calve. The famed Whale Trail Hike is revered as one of the most meaningful ways to experience this extraordinary phenomenon, with CapeNature offering slack-packing at its most idyllic. De Hoop defies superlatives – it must be experienced to be truly understood.

Once you enter the reserve, follow the public entrance signs at the Y-junction to the office. Whale Trail hikers can go straight to their first overnight hut (Potberg hut). Your porterage boxes will be available for you to start packing. Once all hikers have arrived, briefing will be at the Whale Trail Welcome Centre from 14h00 - 15h00.

The ocean deposits sea-borne litter on our beaches every day. We conduct regular beach clean ups with staff and volunteers. Hikers frequently ask if they can help with beach clean-ups, and we do make bags available to volunteers to assist, if they so wish, in the stretch from Noetsie to Koppie Alleen. Please speak to staff at the reserve if your group would like to help.

Go to https://www.google.com/maps and insert these coordinates: 34°22'29.15"S 20°31'59.75"E
Then select search for the map to display.

SELF-CATERING ACCOMODATION UNITS

WHALE TRAIL HUTS 5

All doors and windows must be hooked when opened. Close all doors and windows on departure, because of the presence of baboons. Please do not use the mattresses outside the huts. Please do not move any crockery and cutlery between huts.

12x CAPACITY

(X6 WHILE COVID REGULATIONS ARE IN EFFECT, UNLESS YOU ARE FROM ONE FAMILY OR FROM A GROUP WHERE ALL THE MEMBERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH EACH OTHER E.G. FRIENDS.)

BUNK BEDS PER ROOM

The five Whale Trail overnight hiker huts lie at the foot of the Potberg Mountains, perched high on a sea cliff. Each fully equipped hut sleeps up to 12 people, ,with various room configurations. Groups will be sharing rooms. Hikers bring their own bedding (sleeping bags). Dishwashing liquid and toilet paper are provided in the huts. Firelighters are not sold or supplied. Hikers should bring own toilet paper and small spade for the trail itself. Potberg Hut, which is the first stop, has a microwave.

All huts must be vacated by 09h00 to allow for timeous cleaning and transportation of porterage boxes to different huts. Please take good care of the hut and its contents while occupying it. You will be held liable for any damage or loss to reserve property caused due to negligence.

- NO UNIVERSAL ACCESS
- NO BEDDING + TOWELS
- ELECTRICITY (SOLAR POWERED)
- BATHROOM (SOLAR GEYSER AND GAS GEYSER)
- ENVIRO LOO
- 45 PIECES OF WOOD
- OUTDOOR + INDOOR BRAAI PLACE
- EQUIPPED KITCHEN
- TABLEWARE
- SOLAR OPERATED FRIDGE
- GAS STOVE
- COOKWARE
- BRAAI GRID
- KETTLE
- DISHWASHING LIQUID
- HAND WASH, SHAMPOO & SHOWER GEL

CHECKLIST: WHAT TO BRING

- INSECT REPELLENT
- TORCH
- TOILET PAPER
- TOILETRIES
- SLEEPING BAG + PILLOW
- DRINKING WATER
- MEDICAL KIT
- MATCHES + FIRELIGHTERS
- WALKING SHOES
- SPADE
- SUNHAT
- SUNSCREEN

THE WHALE TRAIL

The approximate 55,7 km trail is renowned for its diverse fynbos vegetation, magnificent dunes and whale watching opportunities. On the trail, you will experience breath-taking views of the Indian Ocean and Breede River Valley. After two days of challenging hiking you descend to the coast to explore the pristine south eastern coastline, one of the largest Marine Protected Areas in Africa.

The five-day trail stretches from Potberg to Koppie Alleen and has five overnight stops. Vehicles are left at Potberg and a shuttle service returns you to Potberg from Koppie Alleen. The trail is clearly marked.

This is slack-packing at its finest. Your extra luggage is transported every day to the next hut, so all you need to carry on the trail is a day pack. The 70-litre transport containers are waiting for you at Potberg hut. Up to 14 units per group of 6 are allowed, or seven units per group of six. Hikers pay for each container transported to the next hut, including units used as cooler boxes on the trail. CapeNature will supply cooler boxes to hikers upon request.

DAY 1

Potberg to Cupidoskraal

15.5 km - Moderate to strenuous ± 8 hours

This is the toughest stretch of the trail and an early start is recommended. It will take you to the top of Potberg at 611 metres, with breathtaking panoramic views of Swellendam in the north, Cape Infanta in the east and Cape Agulhas in the west. You will also have a good chance of sighting the rare Cape vulture. The trail descends towards Cupidoskraal.

DAY 2

Cupidoskraal to Noetsie

15,2 km - Moderate ± 8 hours

The trail follows the crest of the Potberg through mountain fynbos with unequalled views of the Indian Ocean and the Breede River. The route finally leaves the Potberg and leads onto limestone hills with strikingly different fynbos, then descends to the enchanting bay of Noetsie at the coast.

DAY 3

Noetsie to Hamerkop

8.5 km – Moderate ± 6 hours
(4 hours of actual walking)

This short distance allows a leisurely start to the day and ample time for exploring the coastline. Stilgat, with its clear tidal pools and abundant marine life will provide an unsurpassed opportunity for snorkelling and swimming. Several whale watching points lie ahead until you reach a lovely sandy beach stretching all the way to Hamerkop.

DAY 4

Hamerkop to Vaalkrans

10, 5 km - Moderate ± 6 hours

It is well worth the long walk on the beach as the views and turquoise rock pools that you eventually reach are splendid. Please stay clear of the sensitive calcrete formations and look out for interesting seabirds like the shy oystercatchers and white breasted cormorants basking in the sun. Hikers are requested to respect the privacy of the guests staying at the remote Lekkerwater Lodge, which is on this route.

DAY 5

Vaalkrans to Koppie Alleen

7 km - Easy ± 6 hours
(2 hours of actual walking)

Again, a short hike allows you ample time to enjoy scenic landscapes and watch the southern right whales and bottlenosed dolphins frolicking in the waves. Snorkel at your leisure or float in the Hippo Pools before walking up to the Koppie Alleen parking where the shuttle will collect you.

Water management

The Whale Trail utilises underground water, which is safe for drinking, except at Noetsie, where you will find a tap which is marked with a 'drinking water only' sign. Do not drink or cook food with water from the other taps, because the saltiness of the water can cause diarrhoea. Hikers are encouraged to shower less than three minutes and use water sparingly.

Lights

- Solar panels supply the energy for the lights.
- Ensure that all light switches are switched off before going to bed.
- Please note that if it is an overcast or rainy day, the huts might not have any electricity.

Vehicles

- You are allowed to park your vehicle at the Potberg hut (first overnight hut) while off-loading.
- All vehicles must be moved and parked in the Whale Trail parking area before you start the trail.
- Do not leave any valuables visible in the vehicle.

Please Note:

- Signs to follow: white footprint and other directional signs.
- The only water point on the trail is approximately 10.5 km from the 1st hut.
- Walk with a minimum of 2L of drinking water per day, as water points and shade or shelter is limited along the trail.
- It is recommended that you start your hike early in the morning.
- Beware of freak waves, as well as rip currents when walking along the coast.
- Never turn your back on the sea.
- Always carry your mobile phone and map with you.

Transport of luggage on the Whale Trail

- The porterage service provides you the option to slackpack.
- There is an extra cost per unit payable to make use of the porterage service. (Check tariff sheet for cost.)
- A standard 70L container is provided and readily available at Potberg hut.
- No private luggage boxes are allowed on the trail.
- Cooler boxes are available in the huts. A maximum of 2 is provided per group of 12.
- A total maximum of 7 units per group of 6 and a total maximum of 14 units for a group of 12 will be allowed. Cooler boxes that replace units, form part of the total maximum amount of units allowed. NB: If you require 14 porterage boxes, you will need to pay for 14 boxes.
- If payments for the units are made prior to your arrival, proof of payment must be produced at the reserve.

Cash or credit card payments are accepted at the reserve.

STANDARD CONTAINERS:
CAPACITY 70L

Length: 60cm

Width: 40cm

Height: 40cm



PLEASE NOTE:

- No loose items or items tied onto the container will be transported.
- A unit should not weigh more than 30 kg.
- No storage facilities are available on the trail. Units for transportation must be ready every morning at 09h00 and must be stacked together inside the kitchen area of the hut.
- Your luggage will be delivered to your hut no later than 16h00 for the duration of the trail, unless there are unforeseen circumstances. (Remember that your luggage will arrive every day a little bit later at the hut than the previous day, because a circular route is followed - so always keep your lunch in your daypack).
- Your luggage will be treated with care, but CapeNature cannot be held responsible for damage caused by inadequate packing.
- Ensure that you insulate fragile items.



SHUTTLE BUS AT KOPPIE ALLEEN



Pickup time is at 12h00. You can arrange for an early pickup at the briefing.

Please wait for the shuttle in the parking area.

You will be shuttled back to Potberg (45 min ride). The shuttle will first stop at the tourism office for you to be debriefed. You can also make use of the opportunity to purchase items at the curio shop. The shuttle will then transport you to the parking area to your vehicles where your luggage awaits you.

Ablution blocks with showers are available at Koppie Alleen and back at Potberg in front of the Whale Trail parking area.

You are not allowed to go back to Potberg hut, as it will already be cleaned for the next group.

WHALE TRAIL RULES

THE FOLLOWING ARE PROHIBITED



PICKING PLANTS



TAKING OF STONES, SHELLS, OR LIVE ORGANISMS



GRAFFITI AND OTHER DISFIGUREMENTS



TAKE ANY SIGNAGE AS SOUVENIRS



LITTERING



FIRES IN THE VELD



CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 8



PLAYING WITH THE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS



Anything that is found on the trail or in the huts, which might belong to a hiker, must be handed in at the office.



NB: You are welcome to pick up any man made litter and drop it off at the next hut.





CELLULAR/MOBILE PHONE RECEPTION

Signal is sporadic; you will get signal mainly on the higher parts of the mountain, on the hard dunes and along the coast.

Be on the lookout for piled up stones, marked by previous hikers indicating where there might be different signal spots.

It is recommended that all hikers take their mobile phones with them, in case of emergency. Keep the main contact cell phone of group leader on in case we need to get hold of you.



EMERGENCIES AND INJURIES

In case of an injury, the injured hiker will be removed from the trail, regardless of how minor the injury. Hikers will not be transported from hut to hut and are not allowed to request/take a lift with the cleaning team. Should this be requested, it would be assumed that you are unfit to complete the Whale Trail and will therefore also be removed from the trail.

We are only able to house injured hiker/s, should they request to wait for the remainder of the group to finish, if we have availability in one of our research facilities. Should we not have availability, the injured hiker/s will have to find accommodation outside the reserve at their own expense.

Call **028 542 1114 / 5 / 7** in the event of an emergency.



POSSIBLE DANGERS ON THE TRAIL



Heatstroke

Sunburn

Hypothermia

Rip currents

Bee stings

Scorpion stings

Snake bites

Horsefly stings







LOST & FOUND

It is every hiker's responsibility to look after his or her own goods. Rather leave all jewellery at home or lock it away in your car.

Before leaving each hut, ensure that you check underneath the beds, mattresses etc. to ensure nothing is left behind.

If the cleaning team find anything left behind in a hut, they will transport it to the next hut or take it directly to the office.

Make sure that your cameras and mobile phones are packed properly in your daypacks, to prevent them falling out along the way.

Most of the lost articles are found on the trail. Anything that you pick up along the trail must please be handed in at the office on your departure.

PLEASE REMEMBER



Visitors are liable for any loss or damage to reserve property due to negligence.



Close all doors and windows on departure, because of the presence of baboons.



Keep the surrounds and facilities clean.



Beware of freak waves, as well as rip currents when walking along the coast.



Start your hike early in the morning.



Avoid light pollution – ensure that all light switches are switched off before going to bed.



Walk with a minimum of 2L of drinking water per day, as water points and shade or shelter are limited along the trail.



All huts must be vacated by 09h00, to ensure timeous service delivery.



Hikers are encouraged to shower less than three minutes and use water sparingly.



There are ports for cell phones to be charged.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

ARRIVAL:
14h00 – 15h00

A briefing will be done on your arrival at the Whale Trail office. Briefing is compulsory and all hikers must be present (only one briefing per group).

Hiking will start the day after your arrival at Potberg. Please ensure that you bring a copy of your booking confirmation and hardcopy proof of payment for porterage, should you have paid for it before arrival.



THIS IS YOUR
ENTRY PERMIT



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