NATURE AND CONSERVATION

Introduction

Mpumalanga does not need any introduction when it comes to its natural beauty and conservation efforts. The world-renowned Kruger National Park, is among the top 10 attractions for foreign visitors to South Africa, and no visit is complete without gazing upon the wonders of the Blyde River Canyon, along with other sites on the panorama route. The lush vegetation of the lowveld, the trout-filled dams on the escarpment and the rolling hills of the highveld, with its wetlands and cosmos, all have an attraction of its own.

Conservation areas in the Province

National Parks

- The Kruger National Park (the southern section falls within Mpumalanga)

Biospheres

"Biosphere Reserves are designated regions throughout the world where internationally important ecosystems and protected areas lie adjacent to human settlements, and are established to promote solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity and its sustainable use" (www.kruger2canyons.com)

Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve

In 2001, the international importance of the Greater Kruger bioregion, the eastern savannahs and escarpment of South Africa was acknowledged. In that year, the Kruger to Canyons (K2C) Biosphere Reserve was recognised and registered under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme.

This community-driven initiative stretches across the eastern part of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, and also includes the intersection between the Eastern Transvaal Drakensberg Escarpment and the Central Lowveld.

(For more information visit http://www.kruger2canyons.com)
Ramsar Sites

There is only one wetland (along with 18 others in South Africa) in the province that have been declared in terms of the “Conservation on Wetlands of International Importance”. (The name was derived from the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the it was framed together in February 1971).

Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve

Provincial Parks

- Blyde River Canyon
- Jericho dam nature reserve
- Ligvalagwala co-operative game reserve
- Mawewe cattle farm/game ranching project
- Mthethomusha game reserve
- Nootgedacht dam nature reserve
- Ohrighstad dam nature reserve
- Songimvelo game reserve
- Sterkspruit nature reserve
- Wakkerstroom wetland and Paardeplaats reserves.

Private Reserves

The title of the largest private game area in the world, is shared between the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces. The best known private reserves in this area include Klaserie, Timbavati, Thornybush (all in Limpopo), Mala Mala and Sabi Sabi, the last two being in Mpumalanga. Within these reserves there are smaller reserves and fences have been removed. To promote east-west migrations, the borders with the western Kruger Park have also been opened. Some of the Reserves that have become part of the larger Sabi Sabi Game Reserve include Londolozi and Manyeleti.

Lowveld National Botanical Garden

- Incorporates the flowing together of the Crocodile and Nels Rivers, the junction creating the Crocodile Falls, originally known as the Cascades.
- It is well known especially for its collection of some 700 tree species, more than two-thirds of all species indigenous to the region, grown and grouped according to ecological habitat.
- More than 200 bird species have been recorded in the garden.
- The tropical rainforest hosts South Africa's most comprehensive collection of cycads, as well as large number of ferns.
- There are various hikes in the garden and it is wheel chair friendly.
The Kruger National Park

One of the best places in Mpumalanga for bird watching is the Kruger National Park (KNP). Its variety of habitats is home to approximately 520 species (more than half of the species found in South Africa) of which 380 are permanent residents. The others are visitors in the summer from the northern hemisphere for example, the European roller, yellow-billed kite, the southern carmine bee-eater, all the cuckoos and the white stork.

Of the 17 species of eagles, 15 occur in KNP, thus making it the best place to see great birds of prey in South Africa.

KNP also boasts the largest bird in the world, the ostrich.

The Kruger’s “Big 6” birds are:

- Martial Eagle
- Lappet-faced vulture
- Ground hornbill
- Kori Bustard – the largest flying bird in the world.
- Saddle-billed stork
- Pel’s Fishing owl.
Bird watching calendar in Kruger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Bird Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January | • Eggs are hatching  
         • The young birds (fledglings) are learning how to look after themselves  
         • Birding parties common in grasslands and around fruit trees |
| February | • Prime birdwatching time as all migrants are settled  
         • The breeding birds are in full plumage  
         • The fledglings are beginning to mature |
| March  
April  
May | • Migrants depart to Europe, Asia and other parts of Africa |
| June  
July | • Bird numbers are at their lowest in Kruger  
         • The resident species in the southern parts offers better birdwatching opportunities  
         • Until the first rains come, birdlife in the mopaneveld is poor |
| August  
September | • Migrants start returning |
| October | • Generally bird breeding is now well under way  
         • Migrants still arrive from Eurasia |
| November | • The best bird viewing as plenty of food attract insect eaters. |
| December | • All migrants are in the Park  
         • Plenty of food  
         • Breeding is at its peak |
Mammals

- Home to the “Big Five” (visit www.wildlifecampus.co.za for detailed information about each of these animals).

The “Big Five”

This name was coined by the 19th-century big game hunters who considered these animals as the most dangerous to hunt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>The most cunning and fearsome of the “Big Five”. They have refined the art of hunting together and have an ability to get extremely close to their prey before they sprint catch them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopard</td>
<td>The leopard is an elusive, solitary, nocturnal hunter. Leopards will only attack humans when threatened, starving or injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African buffalo</td>
<td>A very big, strong, muscular beast with sharp horns which can be used as deadly weapons. A wounded buffalo is extremely dangerous and it has been known that they turn back on their tracks to ambush their pursuers from behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African elephant</td>
<td>African elephants are aggressive toward humans who come too close - maybe because they have been hunted for thousands of years for their ivory. Many hunters have underestimated the elephant’s strength, speed and its deadly tusk – with fatal results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White rhino</td>
<td>The black rhino is far more dangerous than the white rhino. But the white rhino was chosen to be one of the Big Five mainly due to marketing reasons. There is another group of animals called “The Rare Five”. The black rhino is one of them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

The Kruger National Park is one of the prime Game Reserves in Africa and well-known for its large expanse, variation in habitats and viewing of big game. It not only offers excellent game viewing, bird spotting and a wide range of habitats, but also has a long and interesting history of human habitation. There are more than 255 recorded archaeological sites including, early Stone Age (roughly 1 million years ago), various Iron Age settlements and recent historical buildings and sites.

Human habitation

- Evidence of ancient humans (*Homo erectus*) was found at the confluence of the Limpopo and Levuvhu Rivers, as well as the Letaba and Olifants Rivers. These stone tools, their skeletons and the animals they ate, give us insight as to what they looked like and how they lived.
- Skeletons of extinct animal, including the shorn-necked giraffe, oversized baboon and mammoths show that they were hunted and scavenged on by pre-historic man.
- The San hunter-gathers, descendents of the Late Stone Age people, roamed the area from approximately 6000 years ago.
- Proof of their existence is their rock art. According to a survey done in 2007, 177 rock art sites have been identified in the Kruger National Park, and it is believed that there are still more.
- The Khoi-pastoralists entered the Limpopo valley approximately 2000 years ago and were followed by the Bantu-speaking Iron-Age about 200 years later. In the Malelane area, just south of the entrance gate is the ancient ochre mining site of Dumaneni. Kruger historians JJ Klopper and Hans Borman believe that over 100 000 tons of red ochre were mined at Dumaneni between 46 000 and 28 000 years ago. The San appeared to have been the first miners, using ochre for artistic and medicinal purposes. Iron-Age smelters found art Dumaneni indicate that the mine was operative during the Iron Age, which began in southern Africa approximately 2 000 years ago.
- The archeological site at Thulamela offers insight to a society that lived here between 13th and 17th centuries.
- Masorini, close to the Phalaborwa Gate, is another more recent Iron-Age site.
- Several indigenous tribes were removed from the Kruger before 1913, therefore there has not been much land claims. The Makuleke community, a Shangaan-clan, who had lived in the Pafuri area for generations, was forcibly removed in 1969 to consolidate the park. In 1998, an agreement was reached whereby the Makuleke did not insist on reoccupying the land. A better preposition for them was to enter into a private-sector-partnership with Wilderness Safaris to develop new tourism facilities in the north. Apart from sharing in the profit, this venture also creates employment opportunities for them.
Conservation History

Paul Kruger

- In the early 1890s, Paul Kruger, the President of the Transvaal Republic, became increasingly alarmed by the declining game numbers in South Africa's Lowveld due to uncontrolled hunting and the outbreak of the rinderpest (1896.) (It must always be kept in mind that Pres Kruger was a brave hunter and loved hunting. Once after a hunting accident he himself cut off his right thumb with his own knife).
- After years of trying to convince the “Volksraad” (Parliament), the Sabi Game Reserve, located between the Sabi and the Crocodile Rivers, was finally proclaimed in 1898.
- A second reserve (Shingwedzi) was then proclaimed between the Shingwedzi and Limpopo Rivers,
- These two would form the core of what was to become the Kruger National Park

James Stevenson-Hamilton

- In 1902, James Stevenson-Hamilton was appointed as Sabi's head ranger.
- He was very strict in the execution of his duties, from dealing with poachers to locals, farmers and mining entrepreneurs, anyone that posed a threat to the reserve.
- His determination to preserve earned him the nickname of “Skukuza” (“he who turns everything upside down”).
- He retired after forty-four years of commitment, and is undeniably the 'father' of the Kruger National Park.
One hot summer’s day in the early 1900s, Major James Stevenson-Hamilton was pondering over the achievements of his first five years as Head of the Sabi Game Reserve. He was having a few drinks at Hanneman’s Hotel in Komatipoort together with the local innkeeper. This discussion led to the world’s biggest game reserve. It all started over a beer on the stoep of Hanneman’s Hotel in Komatipoort. The hotel keeper came up with convincing arguments why the warden would soon be job-less. His reasoning and logic was clear, simple and convincing. According to him, (from a business perspective) there was no sustainable continuing infrastructure to make a success of the present Sabi Game Reserve. This was especially true because there was a large group in the public sector who rather preferred to kill animals by hunting than to conserve wild life.

Stevenson-Hamilton’s had a profound mindshift. After the discussion and beer, he started formulating a plan to turn the reserve into a national park, modelled along the lines of the Yosemite Park in the United States. In 1912 he presented his proposal to the colonial authorities. He found an alley in Denys Reitz, his former Boer War enemy. Reitz provided him with a legal framework for his vision. However it was an up-hill battle for 14 years. Hostile public, mining and agricultural opposition to the idea prevented the dream of coming true. In 1924 the Herzog Party came into power. Things turned to the better when the new Minister of Land Affairs, Piet Grobler, who was also enthusiastic about this project, succeeded over a long period to pass through Parliament an Act that consolidated the Sabi and Shingwedzi Game Reserves into a single national park. A former head of Kruger, Tol Pienaar, described the roles of Steven-Hamilton, Grobler and Reitz very poetically as “the Word, the Deed and the Law” – Steven-Hamilton (the Word); Grobler (the Deed) and Reitz (the Law). Their vision and efforts ensured the conservation of one of the top wildlife resorts, preventing also mining excavations, e.g an attempt in the 1960s to mine for coal on the banks of the Luvuvhu River.

Limpopo Transfrontier Park

- The late Anton Rupert has taken conservation a step further by pioneering the concept of “Peace Parks”.
- Instead of culling, SANParks have started looking at new methods of dealing with increasing animal populations.
- In May 2002, Kruger, Limpopo National Park (in Mozambique) and Gonarezhou (in Zimbabwe) formally merged into the 35,000 square kilometre Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park, one of the largest game reserves in the world.
- The aim is to eventually create a fence-free park that allows animals to migrate freely across national borders.
- Progress has been made in relocating large numbers of game into Mozambique and dropping fences.
- Due to a high incidence of bovine tuberculosis in the southern parts of Kruger, Zimbabwe has been hesitant to allow an influx of potentially infected wildlife that might be detrimental to their beef trade with Europe.
Fact file

- Covering an area of 19,685 square kilometers, Kruger has taken its place as one of the 10 largest game reserves in the world.
- 3000 kilometers of road
- 23 rest camps (plus several privately operated concession lodges)
- Six rivers feed the park
- The average height is 260m above sea level.
- The highest point being along the eastern Lebombo Mountains (forming the natural boundary of the park with Mozambique).
- 16 vegetation zones, including 1980 plant species and 300 tree species
- A host of excellent picnic sites, walking trails, 4x4 routes, hides and large dams
- 520 bird species
- 119 reptile species
- 147 mammal species
- Every year over a million people, visit the park of which half stays overnight.
- For the best Game Viewing: Visit the park during the winter months (April - September), as water is restricted to rivers and waterholes, where the wildlife gather, and the vegetation is less dense for better sightings.
- To see young animals: Calving season is in November and December.
- The rainy season is in Summer (October – March).
- Average temperatures are 30°C during summer with occasional extremes of up to 48°C.
- During winter, the average temperature is 23°C, however you should be prepared for extremely cold weather, as temperatures can often be freezing especially at nighttime.

Codes for Roads

- All roads in Kruger have codenumber.
- Tarred roads start with an H (= Highway) e.g. H4-1,
- Secondary roads start with an S e.g. S25. Secondary roads are not tarred, but they are well maintained.

Malaria

- Malaria can be a risk during the summer rainy season (October – April)
- This is applicable to camps situated at a lower altitude like Lower Sabie, Crocodile Bridge and all the camps in the north.
- Anti Malaria pills should be taken in time before visiting Kruger during the malaria season.
- A good insect (mosquito) repellant is also needed.
- Pregnant women and children under two should preferably not visit Kruger in summer.
- The most infectious times are between sunset and sunrise.
- It should be kept in mind that only female-mosquitoes are malaria-carriers.
- Should you develop flu-like, feverish symptoms within seven to twenty days after visiting Kruger, consult your doctor.
- Malaria Hotline 092 234 1800
Rules and Regulations

Gate times: For both Entry and Camp gates, unless indicated otherwise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May-Jul</th>
<th>Aug-Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov-Dec</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>4:30 (Camp)</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>05:30</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>05:30</td>
<td>4:30 (Camp)</td>
<td>5:30 (Entry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:30 (Entry)</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>5:30</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>17:30</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>18:30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Check in at Entry Gate to Park to pay conservation fees and receive a permit.
- Declare any firearms in your possession.
- Do not disembark from your vehicle except at demarcated places.
- Do not feed the animals.
- Do not litter.
- Do not remove anything from the park.
- Keep within the speed limit of 40km/h on dirt roads and 50km/h on tar roads.
The Southern Kruger

The Olifants River is the dividing line between the Northern and Southern Part of the Park. In southern Kruger, the two most important rivers are the Sabie and the Crocodile, which form the southern boundary of the Park. More animals roam in southern Kruger. The grasses there are more palatable and a wider variety of habitats also contributes to the higher concentration of animals. The central grasslands, around Skukuza and in the south-east offer the best gaming viewing. The east of his region south of the Olifants River is dominated by the Lemombo koppies, bushwillow and acacia woodlands stretches of grassland and the south-west by mountains.

Southern Kruger can be subdivided into:
- South-eastern Kruger
- South-western Kruger
- Skukuza and surrounds
- The Central Grassland

### Southern Kruger Access Points & Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Points &amp; Camps</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Gates</strong></td>
<td>Southern Gates gives access to Crocodile Bridge Gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crocodile Bridge Gate</strong></td>
<td>- Named after the Crocodile River.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is the most eastern entrance into Kruger, some 12 km from Komatipoort.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- One of the hottest places in the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Crocodile Bridge is the most direct access point to the game-rich south-eastern grasslands of the Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malelane Gate</strong></td>
<td>- An entrance on the Crocodile River, about 50km upstream from Crocodile Bridge.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- It is one of Kruger’s busiest gates, especially during weekends and school holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numbi Gate</strong></td>
<td>- The entrance gate gets its name from the siSwati word for the small fruit of the Transvaal milkplum (<em>Englerophyton magalismontanum</em>). The milkplum has a pleasant taste and is high in Vitamin C. The Voortrekkers used it to make <em>mampoer</em>. Africans use the bark for rheumatism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In 1927 this gate was opened to tourists. In 1927 only three cars have been recorded to have entered. They were charged one-pound entrance fee. At the time Pretoriuskop was the only overnight facility for tourist in the Park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Two years later 820 cars entered Kruger.
• Accommodation was often a problem due to the park’s popularity, with rangers regularly having to give up their own accommodation. Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton humorously quoted the remark of a ranger: “I did not mind so much their using my soap, towels, plates, knives and forks, but I do wish they had not used my toothbrush.”

**Orpen Gate**

Orpen Gate was named in honour of Eileen Orpen, the wife of National Parks Board member JH Orpen. She purchased seven private farms in the area, totaling more than 60,000 acres (24,000 ha) and then donated them to the Parks Board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orpen</th>
<th>Maroela</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamboti</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talamati</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imbali</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoyo Hoyo</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamiltons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Roodewal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Satrara</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Singita Le-bombo</td>
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<td>Singita Sweni</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Paul Kruger Gate**

- The closest entrance to Skukuza and the quickest way to get in and out of the Park.
- The large bust of Paul Kruger awaits the visitor, soon after crossing the Sabie River. There have been attempts to remove the bust to be politically correct, but up to now “oom Paul” (Uncle Paul) has survived. The sculptor was Coert Steynberg.
- Fervent Afrikaner, nationalist, racist, anti-colonialist and former president of the Transvaal Republic, Paul Kruger has stamped his legacy through this national park, named in his honour.
- As one crosses the Sabie, one is confronted by the large, somewhat controversial bust of Paul Kruger by the sculptor Coert Steynberg.

The Sabie River is known for its hippos and crocodiles.

| Skukuza |

**Phabeni Gate**

- Phabeni Gate was built in 2002 to improve access to the Park for people travelling from Johannesburg or Pretoria via Hazyview.
- It was built in contemporary African architectural style.
- *Phabeni* means “shelter” in Sotho. The Phabeni steam is also nearby.
- The remains of the trader João Albasini’s ruins are located soon after entering the park.
### SOUTH-EASTERN KRUGER

#### Camps in the South-east

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Biyamiti**       | - The Biamiti catchment area is the heart of central southern Kruger.  
                     - The camp is situated on the Biyamiti River, four kilometers downstream it flows together into the Crocodile.  
                     - The chalets are set in a loose line overlooking the river, unlike the usual laager-like placing of chalets in other SANPark camps.  
                     - There is no shop or petrol station at Biyamiti.  
                     - Biyamiti is renowned for its cuckoos.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| **Crocodile Bridge** | - Situated on the banks of the Crocodile River a few kilometers from the entrance of the gate.  
                         - It is well placed for late arrivals and early departures.  
                         - It is an excellent birding camp.  
                         - The gate entrance can be flooded during heavy rainfalls.                                                                                                                                               |
| **Lower Sabie**    | - Lower Sabie is built on the site of the original ranger’s post.  
                         - Located on the banks of the Lower Sabie River.  
                         - It is the best place to explore the game-rich, south-easter part of Kruger with its high animal activity in the vicinity of the camp all year round.  
                         - During the Anglo-Boer War, an irregular soldier’s force of about 300 English-speaking lowveld residents – called the Steinacker’s Horse - was employed to defend Komatipoort against the Boers. Colonel Ludwig Steinacker, nick named “Bushveld Bismarck”, was their leading officer. Their renumeration per day was 10 shillings, fresh milk, tinned bully beef, tinned pickles, tinned peaches and whisky (which was considered as protection for malaria!). However it appeared that they spend most of their time hunting and drinking.  
                         - In 1901 they had only one big encounter with the Boers at Fort Mpisane where they were thoroughly beaten.                                                                                            |
| **Lukimbi**        | - Lukimbi Lodge is the luxury camp in the Lwakahle Concession.  
                     - *Lwakahle* is derived from the siSwati word for ‘they fight well’.  
                     - There are several Iron-Age sites here dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as a section of the old Delagoa Bay transport road.  
                     - Once, around midnight, a leopard followed an impala into the dining area of the lodge and killed it near the buffet table. Fortunately the mess was cleaned by the staff before the guests arrived for breakfast. |
| **Shishangeni Lodge** | - Part of the Mpanamana Concession.  
                            - It is situated close to close to Komatipoort and the Mozambique border on the edge of the Lebombo mountains,  
                            - The variety of animals attracts all the big carnivores.  
                            - Shishangeni Private Lodge is the main camp. From there you can view the Crocodile River valley.                                                                                       |
### Interesting features and attractions in the South-eastern Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Big Five</th>
<th>Crocodile River</th>
<th>Crocodile Bridge Area</th>
<th>The Selati Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The best chance of seeing the Big Five in Kruger.</td>
<td>• It forms the most southern boundary of the Kruger Park.</td>
<td>• The local drives here are part of what is known as the “Southern Circle”. Several lion prides operate in this area, each with its own distinct hunting techniques and behaviour patterns.</td>
<td>• The Selati railway line was intended to link the Selati goldfields of the north-eastern Transvaal with the railway line from Komatipoort to Delagoa Bay. Its construction (1892-1994) was extremely difficult, costing many lives. It can indeed be said, “that each sleeper on the line represent one human life”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This is due to water being available all year round from the Sabie and Crocodile Rivers.</td>
<td>• The river derives its name from the number of crocodiles living and preying there. It would be most dangerous to walk through the river.</td>
<td>• It also has the highest percentage of Kruger’s white rhino population.</td>
<td>• After two years, the line was only completed as far as Sabie Bridge (Skukuza), only 80km from Komatipoort. Thousands of black and white labourers were employed, truckloads of liquor were consumed and tens of thousands of animals were shot. In 1894 the company was liquidated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crocodile Bridge area is good for lion.</td>
<td>• In 1940, ranger Silas Nyalunga risked his life to dive into the river to rescue a woman and her baby who had been swept off the bank by floodwaters. He received the Bonze Medal of the Royal Humane Society for bravery.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Construction commenced 15 years later, and James Strevenson-Hamilton and his rangers, made use of it by means of a handpump-powered trolley during this time..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leopards roam at Shishangeni Lodge. Also a best chance!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In 1912, the line reached Tzaneen and was operational for many years. It became uneconomical with the closure of the Selati Goldfields. In 1927, it was again put to use with the opening of Kruger to transport tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• However, Park authorities thought the concept of a railway was not in line with nature conservation. It was closed in 1972 and the rails removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The last engine used in the park is came to rest in Skukuza, and “the Selati Restaurant” in the camp, is hosted in one of the original carriages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sabie River

- The word comes from “sabisa”, the Swazi for “to be careful”. This refers to the slippery rocks and danger of crocodiles, when crossing the river.
- In November 1976, two Skukuza rangers – Tom Yssel and Louis Olivier – went fishing at a water hole on the Sabie River near the staff village. The two were thigh-deep in the river when a five-metre crocodile suddenly shot out of the reeds and grabbed Yssel by the leg. Olivier desperately tried to save his friend, following the crocodile and trying to force the crocodile’s jaws open with his hands. Another ranger, Hans Kolver, who had been enjoying a cold beer on a sandbank nearby, saw the incident and rushed to the rescue. He stuck his fingernails into the crocodile’s eyes, but it still would not let go. This tug of war went on, with Yssel losing blood fast. Suddenly the reptile let go of Yssel, grabbing Kolver by the wrist, pulling him into deeper water. Olivier had managed to get a knife and stabbed the crocodile in its eye sockets. The battle was over, but afraid that other crocodiles would be attracted to the blood, they got Yssel out of the water as soon as possible, and rushed him to hospital. He did survive the attack and the next day the badly wounded crocodile was shot. 1978, Olivier and Kolver were awarded the Wolraad Woltemade Decoration for Conspicuous Bravery.

Lower Sabie area

- There are several good game drives within a short distance of the Lower Sabie Camp. Chances are good of seeing the Big Five.
- Sunset Dam is one of several picturesque water holes near the camp. It is ideal for photography because one can get close to the water’s edge.

The Lebombo Mountain range

- The Lebombo is a series of hills that form the border between Kruger and Mozambique. Further south it forms the border between South Africa and Swaziland.
- The hills were formed by volcanic eruptions some 200 million years ago.
- The vegetation types that occur here are mainly drought-resistant bushwillows and euphorbias, due to the fact that this area has the lowest rainfall in Kruger.

The Marula Tree

- The marula is the “medicine tree” of the lowveld and is regarded as sacred by some communities.
- It is found throughout Kruger.
- It has a rounded canopy and grey-brown bark which peels off in round patches to reveal a paler under-surface.
- *Muthi* is made from the marula male and female trees and play an important part in marriage and fertility rituals. It is alleged that by using the male- or female *muthi*, a parent can influence the sex of his child-to-be.

**Uses of the fruit**
- as raw fruit, which is rich in Vitamin C;
- for the brewing of a strong alcoholic beverage
- to make jam.
Elephants love the fruit, as well as others including baboons, monkeys, kudu and impala.

- **The seed kernels** are roasted as a delicacy.
- **Traditional use of bark** includes
  - the treatment of malaria
  - insect bites and stings.

### The Biyamiti area
- The Biyamiti River is a highway route for birds crossing from east to west and *vice versa* in the Park.
- Beautiful patches of woodland are located next to the river - to be enjoyed at Jock's Safari Lodge or Biyamiti camp.

### Some Drives

#### (1) On Route Crocodile Bridge to Lower Sabie (H4-2) 34km

| Good game viewing                                                                 | • The H4-2 was the first road build in Kruger.  
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|• It is rated as one of the best game-viewing road in the Kruger. |
| Gezantfombi Dam                                                                   | • Situated 5km from Crocodile Bridge.  
|                                                                                  | • *Gezantfombi* is the siSwati for “the place where the young woman bathe”. (No comment!) |
| Dense thorn thickets                                                             | • Along the road is the so-called Delagoa Thorn Thicket or Gomondwane bush. Black rhinos (one of Kruger’s rarest animals) roam in these dense thorn thickets. |
| Gomondwane Dam                                                                   | • A popular drinking spot for impala, zebra and wildebeest.  
|                                                                                  | • There is also always a chance to see lions and hyaenas. |
| Albasini’s Trading Post                                                          | • João Albasini had a store on this route. |
| Duke’s Water Hole                                                               | • Duke’s Water Hole, along the S137, was named for Tom Duke. He had survived an attack on his eastern Cape farmhouse during the Frontier Wars, became a decorated hero during WWI, and later was appointed as Sabi’s Head Ranger. Although fond of drinking, he was respected and reliable. Duke passed away in 1934. |

#### (2) On Route Lower Sabie to Tshokwane (H10) 40km

| Muntshe Hill 435m                                                               | • One of the best places in the Park for seeing cheetah as they hunt impala and other smaller antelope that graze here. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|• The Mlondozi Dam picnic site is reached through the Mlondozi Dam road (S29).  
|                                                                                  | • It offers beautiful views over the plains below and the Lebombo.  
|                                                                                  | • In siSwari, *mlondozi* means “perennial stream”.  
|                                                                                  | • During rainy seasons the stream above the dam changes into a long vlei with a series of interesting waterholes: Maforini, Loskop, Hillside, Muntshe and Rietpan.  
|                                                                                  | • Mlondozi creek was the northern base of the Swazi Inyatsi regiment during the mid-1800s, known as the Balondolozi. |
According to Hans Borman, a Kruger researcher, the Balondolozi were involved in several skirmishes with Shangaan groupings over control of the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nkumbe Hill</th>
<th>The highest point in the Lebombo south of the N’waswitsonto River is Nkumbe Hill and is one of the best look-out spots in the whole of Kruger.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>394m</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

South-western Kruger

The south-west is the most mountainous part of Kruger and gets more rainfall than anywhere else in the Park.

Some of Kruger’s rarer antelope can be spotted here:
- Eland – first recorded around Shabeni Hill in 1883 by the transport rider JG Basson
- Grey rhebok
- Lichtenstein’s hartebeest – successfully reintroduced in Kruger from Malawi after local population become extinct.
- Mountain reedbuck
- Red duiker
- Sable antelope – the first animal to attack a tourist in Kruger in the 1930s.
- Roan antelope

Bushwillows and magic guarris are the dominant trees in the woodlands. It also hosts some other trees not found elsewhere in the Kruger:
- the Cape chestnut
- Kirkia
- Large-leaved rock figs
- White pear
- Zulu milkberry

A DRUNK MAN’S BRAVERY

In *Wild Life in South Africa*, James Stevenson-Hamilton recorded the experience of a ranger called Sakubona. Totally intoxicated, Sakubona returned from a party at a nearby kraal when he encountered a lion.

“According to his own account, he felt indignant, and after inquiring of the lion what it meant by blocking his road in this manner, poked it on the nose with his stick, on which it growled, bit him in the leg, and then ran away”. The next morning a ranger examined the footprints and tracks and confirmed there had been some sort of incident involving man and lion.”

“Of course no-one, not even Sakubona himself,” wrote Stevenson-Hamilton “knows what exactly did happen but he assuredly did have a single-handed and unarmed encounter with a lion in the dark, and came off best. Personally, I think had he been sober the result might have been unfortunate for him, but he was just in that condition when it is impossible to know fear. He had arrived at just that stage of spiritual elevation when a man feels there is nothing in the world of which he is not capable. Also of course, there are lions and lions!”

Sakubona took great pride in showing his scars to tourists - of course for a small fee.
### Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Berg-en-Dal**   | • Berg-en-Dal is a large camp built on the Matjulu River, overlooking the Matjulu Dam.  
                    • It is enclosed by the Malelane mountains.  
                    • More than 100 rock-art sites (Late Stone Age) have been discovered in the neighbouring hills. Unfortunately, none of the sites are accessible without a guide. The three-day Bushman Trail is the best way to view rock art in the Kruger. (Book way in advance, if you plan to go). |
| **Jock’s Safari Lodge** | • The camp is located between the Biyamiti River and the Mitomeni floodplain, a popular gathering place for animals and birds.  
                        • It is named after the legendary terrier, Jock in *Jock of the Bushveld*. In honour of this remarkable dog, there is a statue of Jock fighting a sable antelope near the Reception. |
| **Jock of the Bushveld** | The biography of this dog and his master, Percy Fitzpatrick became the theme of one of South Africa’s best loved books, “Jock of the Bushveld” (Published in 1907). A film about his life, and even a song have been written, all in his honour! The author of the book was Fitzpatrick, son of an Irish lawyer and later became one of the Randlords. Earlier in his life, he used to be transport rider between Lydenburg, Barberton and Delagoa Bay and knew the lowveld well. His dog, Jock, accompanied him on his trips and hunting expeditions. The dog had an unusual way of helping his master. He used to try and trip the animal, pull it down and grab it by the snout, giving Fitzpatrick time took aim and shoot. Numerous encounters with crocodiles, baboons, buffalo and others, are also described in the book. |
| **Malelane**      | • A small camp on the banks of the Crocodile River, just over three kilometers from Malelane Gate.  
                    • Agricultural and other developments across the river do take a little away from the bush experience.  
                    • Close to the Malelane staff quarters, Bruce Leslie was attacked in the bush by a leopard. The ranger stuck his hand into the leopard’s mouth, preventing it from biting his throat and when the leopard had him pinned down he managed to shoot it. After examining the dead animal, he understood why the leopard, who usually avoid humans, attacked him (unusual for leopards). The jaw of the leopard was broken, it was starving and a human was any easy prey. |
| **Pretoriuskop**  | • Situated in Kruger’s south-western foothills.  
                    • It is the oldest camp in Kruger, being already operational shortly after tourists were first allowed in the Park.  
                    • The British royal family stayed at Pretoriuskop during their South African visit (1947). |
### Interesting features and attractions in the South-western region

| Malelane area | • In Malelane area, just south of the entrance gate is the ancient **ochre mining site** of **Dumaneni**. Red ochre has long been associated with power. In siSwati it is known as *ludumane*, which means “power four times the sound of thunder”. Only the Swazi chiefs and sangomas were allowed to wear ochre. It was mixed with animal fat and applied to their bodies.  
• For centuries Malelane has been a river crossing. In the 1850s, the Malelane Regiment of King Mswati II of Swaziland was stationed here, when the area was under Swazi control.  
• Mswati’s regiments raided this area regularly. At times his influence stretched as far as central Mozambique and southern Zimbabwe.  
• This region is known for the endangered wild dog. |
| --- | --- |
| 19th Century Voortrekker Transport Road | • On this road the little terrier Jock, was born.  
• The site of the terrier, Jock’s alleged birthplace, is located on a turnoff from Voortrekker Road (H2-2) before Ship Mountain. |
| Ship Mountain 662m | • An appropriate name, as the hill resembles the hull of a ship, turned over.  
• It was used for navigational purposes by the early pioneers so that they could keep their direction.  
**A place of refuge**  
• According to oral history, Sotho-speaking people of the 18th century in this region, used the mountain to protect themselves and their livestock against Swazi raiders.  
• The women, children and cattle took refuge in caves on the top of Ship Mountain and the men would then use rocks to foil the Swazi’s ascend.  
**A hidden treasure**  
• There is also a rumour about hidden treasure. It is said, that a stack of 19th-century gold coins is buried somewhere at the foot of Ship Mountain. In the 1880’s Chief Matafini, a former Swazi military commander, settled in the Crocodile River valley after he became unpopular with his king, Mbandeni. To avoid paying tax to the Transvaal Government, he allegedly buried a couple of saddlebags of gold coins in the vicinity of Ship Mountain. Murdered by bandits, his secret was buried with him. |
| Animal population | • When the area was first surveyed by Stevenson-Hamilton in 1902, a single reedbuck was all he saw between Ship Mountain and Skukuza.  
• **The numbers of the animals has since grown from a mere 100 000 to more than 100 000 impala, excluding all the other mammals.** |
### Some Drives

**1) On Route Voortrekker Road (H2-2) 35 km**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretoriuskop</td>
<td>The Voortrekker Road, south-east from Pretoriuskop follows the 1849- track <strong>blazed</strong> by Carolus Trichardt, son of the Voortrekker Louis Trichardt. Under difficult circumstances, he succeeded in opening a route between the northern interior and Delagoa Bay, on the behest of the Transvaal Government. The 250 mile (402km) journey between Pretoriuskop and the coast took 24 days, and it was frequently used by the Albasini.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Mountain</td>
<td>See “<strong>Interesting features of the south-west region</strong>”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afsaal</td>
<td>See the route: Malelane to Skukuza.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Skukuza and surrounds

## Interesting features and attractions

| **Tshokwane** | The name of an old Shangaan chief who lived there until his death in 1915.  
In 1928, Stevenson-Hamilton set up Tshokwane as a ranger’s post to monitor the northern border, formed by the Letaba, of the then, Sabie Reserve. |
| **A lion story** | A former Tshokwane ranger, Ampie Espag, had to shoot a lioness at Leeupan. He secretly then raised her two lion cubs at home, feeding them on meat, condensed milk and water, and loved them as if they were his own children.  
However, the authorities heard about it and ordered Espag to kill his cubs. He refused. His fellow-ranger and friend, Harry Wolhuter, was ordered to do it. For a long time their relationship was strained. |
| **Harry Wolhuter** | Harry Wolhuter was one of the Park’s first rangers.  
In 1904, he was riding on his horse, along today’s Lindanda road.  
Shortly after nightfall, he was suddenly attacked by two lions.  
When he fell from his horse, a male lion grabbed him at his shoulder and dragged him approximately 100m into the bush. Although sub-conscience, he managed to retrieve his hunting knife and stab the lion repeatedly.  
When the mortally wounded lion let go of him, Wolhuter managed to climb into a tree before the second lion could attack.  
The second lion was kept at a distance due to the barking by his dog, Bulle  
After a long time he was rescued by ranger assistants.  
It was touch and go, but finally he recovered after several weeks in a Barberton hospital.  
Wolhuter’s dagger and the skin of the lion he killed is preserved in the Stevenson-Hamilton Library at Skukuza. |
| **Shirimantanga** | On the S112 road, about 6 km from Skukuza, is Shirimantanga Hill or Grano Kop. It forms part of the “Rhino koppies”, a series of huge, picturesque boulders.  
Stevenson-Hamilton was a very devoted man.  
All his talents, love, time and energy were directed to the Kruger Park.  
It was only after his retirement, at the age of 63, that he felt free to marry.  
He and his wife, Hilda, had three children.  
He died at the age of 90, and the couple’s ashes were scattered at Shirimantanga Hill, one of his favourite places in the park. |
### Camps

| **Rhino Post** | Rhino Post safari Lodge is situated in the Mutlumuvi Private Concession just north of Skukuza.  
- *Mutlumuvi* is the Shangaan-word for “motla o mobe” (Setswane), which literally means “dangerous when it comes down in flood”.  
- It offers a special experience for guests.  
- They can safely sleep under the stars on wooden platforms, (called the “Sleepout Deck”). |
|---|---|
| **Skukuza** | The camp is situated close to the confluence of the Sabi-, N’waswirshaka- and Sand Rivers where many game graze all the year round.  
- The site used to be the best place to cross the dangerous river and was known as “Sabi Crossing”.  
- The name *Sabi Crossing* changed to “Skukuza” when James Stevenson-Hamilton made it his headquarters.  
- This was Stevenson_Hamilton’s nickname in Shangaan, meaning “he who turns everything upside down”. This is how the Shangaan interpreted his enthusiasm to “clean the Park of unwanted human settlers”.  
- Today, Skukuza is the “capital” of Kruger.  
- Paul Bester, a Barberton policeman, was the first Kruger park ranger to be appointed in 1898.  
- That same year, when the Sabi Reserve was proclaimed, he built the first rondavel at Skukuza.  
- At night he hyenas would tear of the wildebeest skin he used as a door cover.  
- A hut, dating from those years, together with some furniture and utensils, are on display in the camp. |
| **Tinga Safari Lodges** | The two Tinga lodges are the most accessible luxury experience in Kruger. |
Some Drives

(1) On Route Skukuza to Satara (Hi-2, H1-3) 93km

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lions</th>
<th>The best chance to see lions in Kruger is on the tar road from Skukuza to Satara.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N’watindlopfu River</td>
<td>Often elephants can be seen at the N’watindlopfu River Crossing and at the three water holes in the vicinity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kruger Tablets Get-out point</td>
<td>A place to stretch the legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshokwane</td>
<td>Roughly halfway between Skukuza and Satara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The only stop where food and refreshments are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tshokwane area is usually good for game viewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central grasslands</td>
<td>It starts north of Tshokwane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The grasslands around Satara are well known for lions and buffalos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) On Route Skukuza to Lower Sabie (H4-1) 46km

| Animals & scenery | Drive slowly along the Sabie River. |
|                  | This is prime lion and leopard territory with an occasional hyaena. |
|                  | This road has a constant flow of animals as they come to the river to drink |
| Nkuhlu Picnic Site | The only official stop to stretch your legs along this road. |
|                  | Terraced banks offer good views over the river and its resident hippo and croc populations. |
| N’watimhiri Causeway | A good detour off the main road. |
| Sunset Dam | One of the main water-bird sighting spots. |
The Central Grasslands

The central grasslands have the highest lion population in Kruger. This is the most game-rich area and includes some of the best scenery anywhere in Kruger.

Camps in the Central Grasslands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orpen</td>
<td>A small camp at Orpen gate. Named in honour a major Kruger benefactor, Eileen Orpen, the wife of the National Parks board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroela</td>
<td>A few kilometres from Orpen Gate. Caters for campers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamboti</td>
<td>2km from Orphen Gate with permanent tents. Caters for people with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talamati</td>
<td>In Shangaan <em>talamati</em> means “abundant water”, which refers to the strength of the camp borehole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyo Hoyo</td>
<td>The architecture blends traditional Tsonga and Shangaan African culture with modern elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamiltons</td>
<td>Animals roam freely among the tented camp that is not fenced in.. The six luxury “tents” are overlooking the N’waswitsontso Dam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satara</td>
<td>‘Farm nr 17” was the name of the farm where Satara is situated. An Indian land surveyor wrote the “17” in his notebook in Hindi. The Hindi of “17” is <em>satra</em>, hence the name. Satara is the second-largest camp in Kruger. The Nthuthwa (Shangaan for “giraffe”) Restaurant in the camp specialises in traditional African meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singita Lebombo &amp; Singita Sweni</td>
<td>Situated in the Lebombo mountains. The architecture is a combination of Great Zimbabwe, Japanese <em>xen</em> and Georgià O’Keere-styles. Singita Lebombo has a beauty spa of international standard; an art gallery and a shop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interesting features and attractions of the Central Grasslands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timbavati Picnic site</td>
<td>Timbavati is the Shangaan word for “brackish water”. It overlooks the Timbavati River..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The White Lions of Timbavati</td>
<td>The presence of white lions have been reported since 1928, however, it was only in the 1970s, that two white lion cubs were discovered in the Timbavati Reserve, bordering the Kruger Park. They both died in the Pretoria Zoo. More sightings of lions followed a few years later, and a great white male was spotted at the Tshokwane area. Up till now, there have been numerous records of white lions being seen in the Park. The lions are not albinos, but the colour is due a recessive gene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that effects pigmentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leeubron Waterhole</th>
<th>• “White lions” have been seen drinking here and it is rated as one of the 10 top sites for wildlife photography.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Satara             | • William Walter Lloyd, one of Kruger’s early rangers, is buried at Satara, after he died of pneumonia in 1922.  
                    • His death is attached to an act of bravery of an unknown black ranger.  
                    • Upon his death, the ranger set out to report the news to Stevenson-Hamilton.  
                    • He ran and walked through lion country, covering a distance of 70km in less than 24 hours.  
                    • Stevenson Hamilton immediately set out, where they found that Mrs Lloyd and her three little sons, had already buried Lloyd under a tree near his home.  
                    • The latter was the first building in the Camp. |
| Pioneer wives      | • Stevenson-Hamilton reflected, “It must be difficult for people accustomed only to civilised surroundings to realise the position of women living far away in the African bush without neighbours, before the days of motor cars, and how they had to be prepared to face any kind of unexpected and sudden emergency”.  
                    • Life was not easy for Kruger’s early rangers, and they lived in a primiti had its tough, living in the most primitive environment, far from the luxuries of home.  
                    • They women were tough.  
                    • Another woman, Mrs Ledeboer at Letaba, nursed her husband, who had also fell ill due to pneumonia and her sick baby back to health. She did this over a period of two months, without he help, or seeing anyone during this time, in a leaking hut.  
                    • Mrs De Laporte, a former World War I nurse, could also tend for herself when her husbands was away. On night, when a pride of lion attacked the donkeys, she stormed out and shot four lions dead and scaring the others away.  
                    • The infuriated former World War I nurse emerged from the house with guns blazing.  
                    • She shot dead four lion and scared the others away into the darkness.” |

Some other Drives

(1) On route the Timbavati Road (S39) 59km

| Interesting stops | • Ratelpan. Bird enthusiasts can visit a bird hide viewing the Piet Grobler Dam  
                    • Piet Grobler Dam. Piet Grobler (a grand-nephew of Paul Kruger) was the Minister of Land during the early 20th century. He was the driving force, putting on the law books, much of the legislation regarding Kruger, including the establishment of the National Parks Board [now SANParks – South African National |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Parks</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • **Roodewal Water Hole** – a big red dolomite dyke.  
  “Roode” = ‘red’ and “wal” = ‘wall’ in Dutch. |
**Resources**

Lowveld botanical garden information (2006)

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