



LIMIETBERG NATURE RESERVE



Cast your line and enjoy the spectacular scenery.

Fly-fishing amid mountains

If you've driven over Dutoitskloof Pass near Cape Town, you've been through Limietberg Nature Reserve, which the N1 bisects. Next time, stop to enjoy what it has to offer; among others, some of the best trout-fishing in the province. **By Nick Dall**

LIMIETBERG NATURE RESERVE encompasses a generous swathe of the Cape Fold Mountains, one of the oldest ranges in the world. The area is characterised by expansive rock faces, deep ravines and crystal clear streams. It is these babbling crystalline streams and their bounty of trout that have kept me coming back the past 15 years.

Trout, and the curious pursuit of fishing with an artificial fly made of feathers and threads, were introduced by the British about a century ago and have both taken root in the rivers of the Limietberg. The Cape Piscatorial Society, in association with CapeNature, has managed the fishing on the Smalblaar, Elandspad, Witte and Holsloot rivers for decades. This has meant that paths are well maintained, alien trees are regularly cleared and there are always fly-fishers keeping an eye on goings-on in a vast reserve with few rangers.

Fly-fishing has allowed generations of

Capetonians to get to know the reserve intimately. I have walked practically every inch of the four rivers and have seen kingfishers hunting, baboons swimming and otters feasting on crabs. I have marvelled at the amazing hidden waterfall which drops 50 metres or so from a plateau on a tributary of the Elandspad and I have swum in the icy-green plunge pool at its base.

If fishing isn't your thing, there are other excellent reasons to visit the reserve. The campsite at Tweede Tol in Bainskloof has been upgraded and now boasts 21 standard sites and six upmarket sites along with improved ablution and braai facilities. There is also a large and tranquil picnic area for day visitors, plus a number of day hikes of varying difficulty. The Limietberg Trail starts and ends at Tweede Tol and includes an overnight stay at the privately run Corner Lodge, which overlooks the Witte River.

Adrenalin junkies also find their fix in the Limietberg. The sheer sandstone edifices are a rock climber's delight. The selfsame rivers which are tranquil fishing grounds in summer become raging white-water torrents in winter, attracting kayakers from all over.

CONTACT: CapeNature 021-483-0190, www.capenature.co.za



Remember to follow the principle of catch and release, ensure that you have a valid permit and avoid over-exploiting a spot. ▶

TOP FLY-FISHING SPOTS



Savour solitude in the Richtersveld's open spaces.

Fishing affords you the chance to be still in nature and enjoy the surrounds. These destinations will reward your patience.



INSIDE TRACK

At Giant's Castle you'll find crystal streams and dramatic peaks.

1 Richtersveld

Fishing Yellowfish are the indigenous South African equivalent of trout as they are selective feeders which need to be stalked. The Richtersveld is the country's premier yellowfish destination.

Scenery The Orange River flows through spectacular lunar landscapes punctuated by quiver trees. It's one of the best 4x4 destinations in the country.

Accessibility Take the Alexander Bay turnoff from the N7 at Steinkopf. Once you're at Alexander Bay, head inland to Sendelingsdrift. A 4x4 is essential in the park.

Accommodation Camp at Potjiespram and De Hoop or stay in chalets at Sendelingsdrift. For an out-of-this-world experience, stay in one the self-catering units at Tatasberg.

2 De Mond

Fishing The Heuningnes estuary offers sight-fishing opportunities for leervis (garrick), grunter and mullet, all of which can be caught on a fly. Boats and canoes are not allowed.

Scenery The Heuningnes is a small estuary, which makes for a cosy, almost intimate encounter with nature. There are a couple of hiking trails and a fantastic beach at the river mouth.

Accessibility Situated between Agulhas and Arniston, De Mond is accessed through the town of Bredasdorp, which is 26 km from the reserve.

Accommodation There's only one place to stay, the self-catering cottage which sleeps six. Surrounded by milkwoods and right on the river bank, it's an especially wonderful place because you have the whole reserve to yourself at night.

3 Albert Falls

Fishing This is South Africa's best bass-fishing venue. It contains a healthy population of the super-sized Florida strain of large-mouth bass.

Scenery This is the fourth largest dam in the country and the views across the water are great. Wildlife in the reserve includes rhino, buffalo, zebra, giraffe and eland.

Accessibility Access is a cinch. Only 30 minutes from Pietermaritzburg on the R33, it is a popular weekend getaway for Durbanites.

Accommodation There are two campsites on the dam's edge, Notuli and Bon Accorde. Both offer comfortable self-catering options as well as manicured campsites.

4 Highmoor

Fishing Most people go to Highmoor for its two world-class trophy trout dams. The fish here are big. There are two closed seasons, from 19 December to 28 February and from 1 July to 31 August.

Scenery Highmoor is located way up in the mountains, so not only is the drive there vertiginous, but the views from the top are unrivalled. The weather is very temperamental, so come prepared for any eventuality.

Accessibility From Mooi River take the old main road to Rosetta. Turn right onto the Kamberg road. After about 30 km, take the Glen-gary/Highmoor turnoff.

Accommodation The campsite at Highmoor is South Africa's highest and boasts seven tastefully concealed campsites. If you're the adventurous type you could opt for one of two caves (seriously!) but both are a bit of a walk from the dams.

5 Giant's Castle

Fishing The Bushman's River was first stocked with brown trout in 1890 and still offers great dry fly-fishing for selective brown trout. Closed season from 1 July to 31 August.

Scenery As with all reserves in the Drakensberg, the scenery cannot be rendered in words. There's loads to do in the reserve too, including visiting the bearded vulture hide, marvelling at numerous ancient rock art sites or enjoying one of the many hiking trails.

Accessibility Visitors from the north can access the town through Estcourt, by following the signs for the reserve. From the south, access is through Mooi River. Both are about 65 km from the park.

Accommodation The main camp offers self-catering chalets to suit every budget and family. There is even a restaurant in camp if you're too lazy to cook. Camping is permitted only if you're hiking way up in the mountains, beyond the contour line.

6 Lotheni

Fishing Wild brown trout can be caught in the spectacular but chilly Lotheni River. The fish are skittish, so offer great sport for skilled anglers.

Scenery This is a remote section of the Drakensberg and the scenery is magnificent. If you grow tired of fishing, there are lots of great walking trails.

Accessibility If you are coming from Durban, take the dirt road from Himeville. From Joburg you can take the dirt road from Nottingham Road.

Accommodation If you are into fishing, stay in the Simes Rustic Cottage which has a well-stocked dam for exclusive use of the cottage residents and is also a stone's throw from the river.

7 Amatigulu

Fishing Like De Mond, the best fly-fishing at Amatigulu is in the estuary. Being a lot further north, however, the species are quite different. Expect to catch grunter, perch and rock salmon.

Scenery This is one of very few places in the country where you can see wild animals grazing on forested dunes. Game drives and self-guided walks are on offer, and the bird-watching in the reserve is particularly rewarding.

Accessibility Head north from Durban for about 100 km. Take the Nyoni off-ramp, turn right over the highway and proceed 3 km to the reserve's gate.

Accommodation The tented camp offers affordable self-catering accommodation that is in keeping with the rustic feel of the reserve. It's situated in the forested hills overlooking the estuary. Extremely tastefully done, it's a reason in itself to visit Amatigulu.

8 Phongolo

Fishing Why travel as far afield as Chobe, Caprivi and Kariba to catch tigerfish when you could be doing it right here in South Africa? Granted, the fish aren't quite as big, but the river fishing is world class and the dam offers trophy fish.

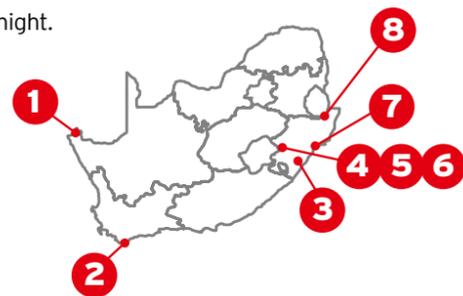
Scenery Phongolo has it all, subtropical mountain forests, a dramatic river and an expansive dam. Plains game is abundant, with both black and white rhino calling the reserve home. The bird-watching is exceptional. There is also a carefully managed hunting concession.

Accessibility Situated off the N2, just south of Swaziland, Phongolo can be accessed from Durban through Richards Bay or from Johannesburg through Ermelo. Take the Golela turnoff and drive for 10 km. At Golela, turn right to the park gate.

Accommodation A small camping and caravan site is located on the shore of the dam. Ablutions with hot and cold water are provided. Each campsite has access to electricity and its own braai. 🐾



De Mond's estuary is a placid fishing spot.



You can go fishing at a range of Wild Card parks and reserves, but these eight are some of our favourites. For more information, go to www.wildcard.co.za.

