



# COLOUR ME DAISY

WARM WEATHER, BRIGHT COLOURS, PRETTY FLOWERS... TAKE SOME TIME OFF AND SAY 'HELLO' TO THE FLORAL DISPLAY ON THE WEST COAST

By Nick Dall

## FLOWER FACTS

➤ The Northern Cape is the driest province in the country. Alexander Bay only gets 46 mm of rain each year.

➤ The start of the season varies depending on how much rain falls during winter and when it starts to warm up. Generally low-lying areas get flowers before the high-altitude ones like Namaqualand and Nieuwoudtville.

➤ Regardless of when the season starts, it only lasts about six weeks in total.

➤ The yellow and orange fields of Namaqualand daisies also harbour plenty of other species, including several iridescent vygies or succulents.

➤ The most uniform colour blocks are usually the result of ploughing – undisturbed nature is more varied.

*In the far north, Namaqualand's Goegap Nature Reserve rewards travellers with a wonderful floral display*



*Evita se Perron in Darling is worth a detour*

### A DAY TRIP

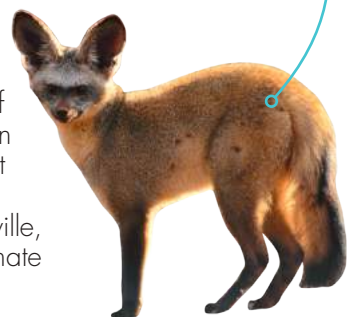
You don't have to drive far from Cape Town to see flowers, although the closer destinations become really busy on weekends during the peak season. This 210 km loop is a firm favourite and the roads are all sedan-friendly.

### DARLING

Only 82 km from the city, there's more to Darling than Tannie Evita Bezuidenhout and Darling Brew (although, you have to see both). If your timing is perfect, the fields outside Darling will be carpeted in flowers. There are also several wild-flower reserves in the area, most of which offer free entrance.

Some days you'll be hit with daisies as soon as you leave Durbanville, on others you'll have to look just a little harder. Call ahead to eliminate the guesswork.

*Keep an eye out for bat-eared foxes in the West Coast National Park*



### WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

The Postberg section (open in August and September) is a 40-minute drive from the N7 gate (speed limits are low) and is fantastic for daisies and succulents. In addition to flowers, you'll see eland, springbok and maybe even a bat-eared fox. There's a pretty picnic spot at Preekstoel (named after a rock that looks like a pulpit) and a kid-friendly lagoon beach at Kraalbaai. Entrance is R60 for adults and R30 for kids, but Wild cardholders don't pay a cent.

### A WEEKEND AWAY

#### LANGEBAAN AND WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

Langebaan is a fantastic beach town, and it takes a bit of the pressure off your family flower-finding mission. If the teens would rather bronze themselves next to the lagoon or try their hand at kitesurfing, then so be it. The West Coast National Park is only about five minutes from town,

so explore the reserve thoroughly. Get lunch – or pack a picnic – at Geelbek Restaurant and make a day of it. As well as the famed Postberg section (see left), the Seeberg/Mooimark area of the park right next to Langebaan is also daisy heaven.

### PATERNOSTER

Paternoster is a quaint West Coast fishing village, but the cuteness factor is amped up when the scruffy hills around town are covered in white, yellow and orange. The Cape Columbine Nature Reserve (entrance R15), with its winding roads and endless hidden coves, has one of the best stretches of coastline ever seen. Add daisies and





Langebaan lagoon is a haven for water-sports enthusiasts



Enjoy seafood at Geelbek Restaurant

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you're in nirvana. For the best views of the flowers, climb the lighthouse tower – but call 022 752 2705 first to find out if it will be open on the day you choose to visit.

Where to stay

- If you've yet to pitch a tent at Tietiesbaai campsite in Cape Columbine Reserve, you haven't lived. Bookings are essential. **022 752 2718**
- There are loads of cottages in Paternoster, but Paternoster on the Rocks has some of the best. **paternosterontherocks.co.za**
- If you're keen for a touch of pampering and luxury, head in the direction of Abalone House & Spa for some five-star boutique service. **abalonehousepaternoster.com**
- The West Coast National park has standard Sanparks cottages, but for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, why not kick back in the Kraalbaai houseboats bobbing serenely on the lagoon? **kraalbaaihouseboats.co.za**

IF YOU HAVE A WEEK

VANRHYNSDORP

Blink and you'll miss Vanrhynsdorp, but it's not the town you've come to see. Vanrhynsdorp is the starting (and end) point of two fantastic flower routes. The Gifberg Circular Route is a great day outing and allows you to witness the spectacular Troe-Troe River waterfall at the Waterval Resort (entrance R20). The Koebee Road has loads of farm gates to open and close, but it has even more flowers.

NIEUWOUDTVILLE

If you're serious about flora, Nieuwoudtville is the one place you absolutely have to visit. In addition to the regular daisies and vygies, it has the world's highest concentration of bulbs



- DARLING TOURISM**  
022 492 3361
- WEST COAST FLOWER HOTLINE**  
072 938 8186
- WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK**  
022 772 2144
- VANRHYNSDORP TOURISM**  
027 201 3371
- NIEUWOUDTVILLE TOURISM**  
027 218 1336
- NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK**  
027 672 1948
- GOEGAP NATURE RESERVE**  
027 718 9906

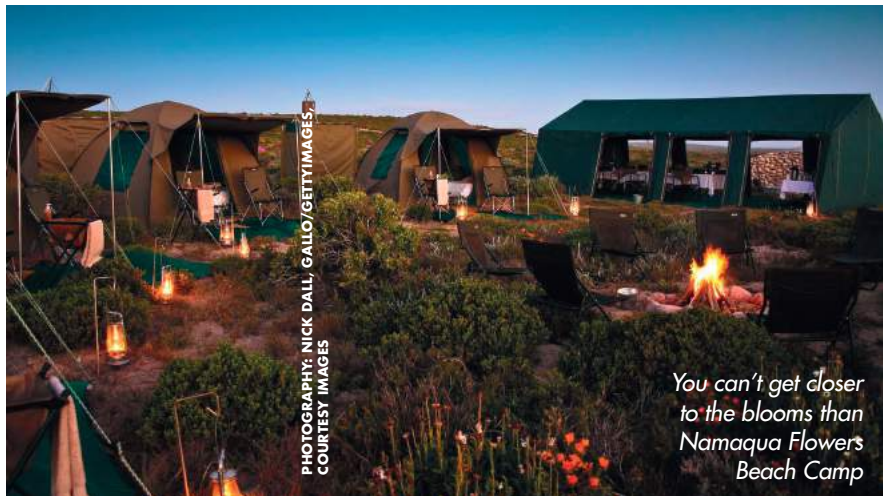


Accommodation at Papkuilsfontein is rustic and charming

**'The flowers only open at about 11 am, and they will be closed by 4 pm, so have a lie-in and a leisurely breakfast before you head out.'** Hannelie also highly recommends a sunset picnic at the evocative quiver tree forest around 25 km from the town.



Put a stay at Nirvana Houseboat in Kraalbaai on your bucket list



You can't get closer to the blooms than Namaqua Flowers Beach Camp

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK DALL, GALLO/GETTYIMAGES, COURTESY IMAGES

per square kilometre, and most of them strut their stuff in spring. And that's before we've mentioned the quaint farm lifestyle, the magnificent waterfalls and the fascinating fossils of the Glacial Pavement. Nieuwoudtville is accessed via the spectacular Vanrhyns Pass, and its altitude is partly responsible for the variety of blooms. In season, there are flowers (including the iconic devil's trumpets) and flower 'reserves' (often just local farms) everywhere. Three of the best are the Hantam National Botanical Garden, Papkuilsfontein and Matjiesfontein Guest Farm. Or you can just hit the gravel and follow your nose.

KAMIESKROON AND NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK

For 10 months of the year, Kamieskroon is the least remarkable of a string of unremarkable dorps on the N7, but in flower season it is the gateway to the utterly spectacular Namaqua National Park, 54 km from town. At the moment, there's only a limited network of roads open to cars, but those with 4x4s can unlock everything the rugged coastal section of the park has to offer. Entrance is R32 (R16 for kids), but Wild cardholders pay nothing.

SPRINGBOK

Springbok is the capital of Namaqualand, but it's still a pretty laid-back spot. Those who make the long trek are rewarded by Goegap Nature Reserve (entrance R30), which allows you to experience its wall-to-wall flowers in a car, on foot, by bike or even on horseback. There's an epic 4x4 trail too.

Where to stay

- For a small town, Nieuwoudtville has a really good selection of accommodation for all budgets, but Papkuilsfontein is truly special. It even has its own enormous canyon, some important San rock art, and hiking and 4x4 trails. **papkuilsfontein.com**
- With only seven tents, Agama Tented Camp is intimate, remote and pristine. There's no electricity, cellphone signal or passing traffic. And the food is out of this world. **agamacamp.co.za**
- The Namaqua Flowers Beach Camp in Namaqua National Park is a luxury tented camp right next to the ocean. It only operates for one month from 14 August to 14 September, so bookings are essential. You can reach the camp in a sedan, but you'll need a 4x4 to explore. **properly.namaquacamps.co.za**