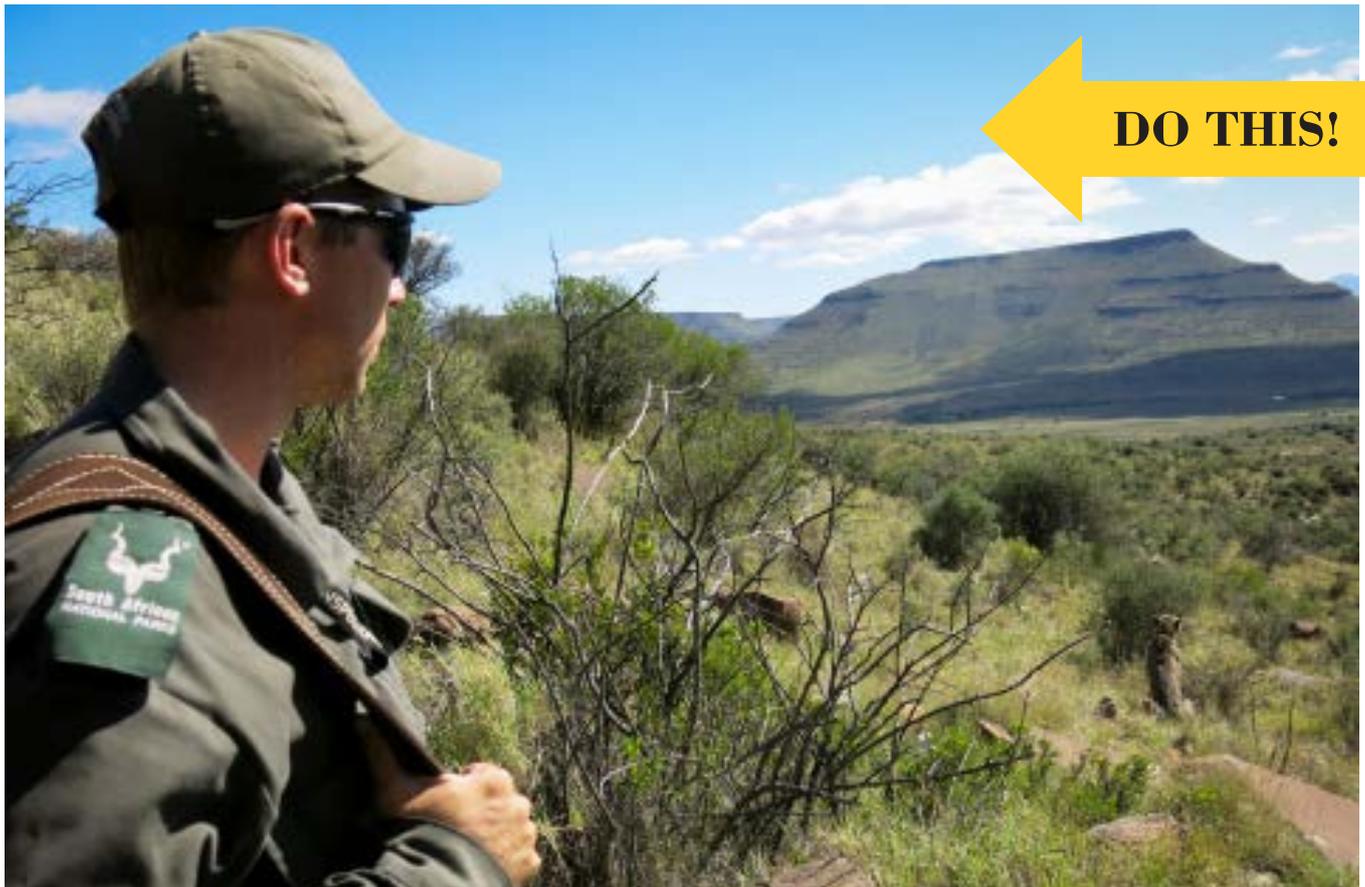


# THIS WEEKEND

Track a cheetah, camp near a waterfall, scale a rock face, go walkabout in Underberg.

DO THIS • STAY HERE • TOWN OF THE MONTH



NICK DALL

## TRACK A CHEETAH IN MOUNTAIN ZEBRA NATIONAL PARK

Traditionally, radio-tracking a big cat has been the preserve of PhD students and wildlife celebrities like David Attenborough. Now you can also experience the thrill of finding a wild cheetah on foot.

By the time you report to reception, your guide will already have downloaded the cheetah's approximate GPS co-ordinates. You'll drive towards the cheetah in an open Landy (brrrr!) until the road runs out. At this point you'll disembark and start tracking the animal on foot. The armed ranger

will stop every couple of minutes and wave his antenna in the air to confirm that you're still on course.

Radio-tracking is not an exact science, as the topography has a huge effect on how the signal is interpreted. We scrambled up the steep sides of a koppie before walking around in circles for nearly an hour. In the end it was one of the other tourists who spotted the female cheetah's round ears poking out from behind some grass.

After we'd found her, we spent 15 minutes marvelling at her from about 10 m away. At first she just lay

there, but after a while she rolled over, stood up and even arched her back. Then she just walked off and disappeared between the rocks.

The cheetah we saw is one of two in Mountain Zebra National Park with a radio collar. They're being tracked as part of a project to determine the impact of the recent introduction of lions to the park.

**Remember:** Wear walking shoes and neutral-coloured clothing. Take water, a snack and binoculars. Book a day or two in advance as numbers are limited to between two and eight people.

**Restrictions?** Open to anyone between the ages of 12 and 65. Over 65s who want to do it must submit a doctor's certificate stating they are fit enough to hike in rugged terrain.

**Where?** 12 km from Cradock in the Eastern Cape, on the R61.

**When?** Daily at 7 am in summer (October – March) and 8.30 am in winter (April – September). The experience takes between three and four hours.

**Cost:** R335 per person.

**Contact:** ☎ 048 881 2427 (reception)

– Nick Dall