

ROOI - IVOOR ECOTOURISM

‘Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike’ - John Muir

Rooi-ivoor is situated on eight farms (6000 ha) in the Mpumalanga escarpment near Steelpoort. It offers a therapeutic tranquility and an unforgettable getaway adventure. Whether you are relaxing in the camps or challenging your fitness by hiking, mountain biking, birding, tree spotting or 4x4 in the mountains, it will be a freeing experience for mind, body and spirit.

ECOZONE AND HABITATS

Rooi-ivoor is part of the Mixed Bushveld ecozone. A wide variety of habitats are found - mountains, rocky hillsides, plains, mixed bushveld, savanna, riverine forest, afro-montane forest, streams and dams.

FLORA OF ROOI-IVOOR

Areas that tend to embrace high concentrations of flora species with very restricted distributions are commonly referred to as **centres of endemism** or ‘flora hot spots.’ In these areas rare and unusual plants are most likely encountered. ‘Roughly between the Olifants- and Steelpoort rivers is an area known as Sekhukhuneland, a unique variation of Mixed Bushveld and an important centre of endemism.’ (Schmidt, Lotter and McClelland Trees and Scrubs of Mpumalanga and the Kruger National Park, p 18)

The characteristic of the Sekhukhuneland Centre of Endemism is the great diversity and endemic trees and plants in the area. [Endemic refers to trees and plants which are found only in a certain area and appear nowhere else in South Africa or the rest of the world.] Rooi-ivoor is situated in the heart of the Sekhukhuneland Centre of Endemism.

Trees

On Rooi-ivoor 210 tree species have already been identified. This is more than double the indigenous tree species found in the whole of Europe. Thousands of trees have been marked along the hiking and 4x4 trails.

The following endemic trees have been identified on Rooi-ivoor:

Scientific name	English name
Acacia Robbertsii	Sekhukhune thorn
Rhus batophylla	Red-berry grey karee
Rhus Sekhukhuniensis	Sekhukhune karee
Lydenbergia cassinoides	Sekhukhune Bushman's tea
Adenia fruticosa subsp fruticosa	Sekhukhune Greenstem
Nuxia gracilis	Sticky Nuxia
Euphorbia Lydenbergensis	Lydenburg Euphorbia
Rhoicissus Sekhukhuniensis	Sekhuhune grape
Elephantorrhiza praetermissa	Sekhukhune Elephantroot
Eucla Species A	Steelpoort Guarri

The largest know Red-leaved Rock fig tree (*Ficus Ingens*) and the largest know Mountain fig tree (*Ficus Glumosa*) in South Africa grow on Rooi-ivoor.

Proteas

Five protea species are found on Rooi-ivoor, namely *Protea caffra*, *Protea parvula*, *Protea gaguedi*, *Protea roupelliae*, *Protea welwitschii* and a cross between a *Protea parvula* and *Protea welwitschii* has also been discovered.

Aloes

'Die digste konsentrasie van verskillende aalwynspesies is in Mpumalanga naby Burgersfort.' (Sasol Veldgids tot Aalwyne in Suider Afrika, p 18) Rooi-ivoor boasts with eleven of the 125 aloe species found in South Africa. In no other area in South Africa is such a large concentration of aloe species to be found on 6000 ha. A special aloe garden has been planted in the Rooi-ivoor camp, with 600 plants of the eleven species. A large number of aloes, dug up during development at Steelpoort, have been relocated to the aloe garden at Rooi-ivoor, where they are thriving. The aloes flower from March until August and are a much needed source of food for the sunbirds during winter months.

The aloe species found on Rooi-ivoor:

Scientific name	Kind of aloe
Aloe Aborescens	Multi-stemmed aloe
Aloe Branddraaiensis	Spotted aloe
Aloe Burgersfortensis	Spotted aloe
Aloe Castanea	Multi-stemmed aloe
Aloe Chortolirioides var woolliana	Grass aloe
Aloe Cryptopoda (all three shades)	Stemless aloe
Aloe Fosteri	Spotted aloe
Aloe Globuligemma	Stemless aloe
Aloe Longibracteata	Spotted aloe
Aloe Marlothii	Single-stemmed aloe
Aloe Pretoriensis	Single-stemmed aloe

Four aloe hybrids have also been documented on Rooi-ivoor. The aloe marlothii is extremely large, and plants more than 8 meters tall have been found.

FAUNA OF ROOI-IVOOR

Although Rooi-ivoor does not have game fences, a large variety of animals are found here, including Kudu, Red Hartbeest, Bushbuck, Mountain Reedbuck, Grey Rhebok, Duiker, Steenbok, Klipspringer, Bushpig, Warthog, Antbear, Porcupine, Leopard, Brown Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, Caracal, African Civet, Genet, Baboon, Vervet monkey, Honey Badger, Otter, Mongoose, Tree Squirrel, Dassie, Scrub Hare and Bushbabies.

Black Leopard

Black leopards are observed in only four areas in the world, of which Lydenburg is one. It is not a different species from our own *Panthera Pardus*, but a colour pattern mutation caused by a recessive gene. There is great speculation as to why some leopards are black in colour. One reason given is the fact that the area between Lydenburg and the Strydom tunnel is dotted with caves and that the animals have adapted to hunt in total darkness and spend their days in the dark caves.

Black leopards have been sighted on 34 occasions in the Lydenburg/Burgersfort area. An expert on leopards of the Mpumalanga Parks Board, Gerrie Comacho, was the initiator of a Lydenburg Black Leopard Project to gather more information about leopards in general and black leopards in particular. A young female leopard, who was a problem animal in the Sabie Sand Nature Reserve was released on Rooi-ivoor on 12 August 2004 as part of the official launch of the Black Leopard Project. She was fitted with a Global Positioning System (GPS) and be closely monitored.

Birds

Rooi-ivoor is a bird paradise with 273 species recorded. (About 30% of the birds of Southern Africa)

THE GEOLOGY OF ROOI-IVOOR

‘The large expanse of land that constitutes the Rooi-ivoor recreational area is of great interest to geologists. This is because the rocks that build up the mountainous countryside have been squeezed into a large domal structure.’ (BM Clark, A Guide to the geology of the Rooi-ivoor recreational area near Steelpoort, Council of Geoscience, Rapport 2003 – 0192, p 1)

About 2 060 million years ago, molten rock (magma) , from deep in the earth rose up and was squeezed in between the layers of the sedimentary rocks. The Bushveld Igneous Complex, which hosts the world’s largest proven reserves of platinum and chromite, formed from the magma as it cooled and crystallised. The Bushveld Complex is the

world's largest known igneous intrusion and it is renowned not only for its mineral wealth, but also for the exceptionally well developed and preserved compositional layering present in the rocks. The farm Doornhoek on which the Rooi-ivoor recreational area is largely situated, receives mention in some of the classic texts dealing with the metamorphism induced by the Bushveld Complex.

A calcareous deposit called tufa, which is composed primarily of calcium carbonate and some magnesium is locally present and has formed some tufa waterfalls.

ACCOMMODATION

Four self-service camps with the necessary basic amenities and facilities and a beautiful tent camp under shady trees on the banks of a dam.

Molope base camp

Molope camp can accommodate 80 people in two houses, a rondavel and a flat. The houses have several rooms with bunk beds and mattresses, bathrooms, ablution facilities, hot and cold water showers, flush toilets and solar lighting. Three roofed lapas and two open lapas with braai areas, gas fridges and stoves, kettles, pots, pans and wood are also provided. A large rock pool is situated four hundred meters from the camp.

Rooi-ivoor camp

This is a lovely camp with 5 rondavels, 4 persons each, in a lush garden, lawn and under big trees. Each rondavel is equipped with electricity, fridge, two plate stove, cutlery and crockery. Linen is provided. Ablution facilities with flush toilets and cold and hot water showers. A large thatched lapa and two open lapas with a rock pool 150 meters from the camp.

Stamvrug chalet

This is a beautiful mountain chalet for back packing overnight with panoramic views over a valley and ravines. It has two separate rooms each housing 12 people. Each room has a shower, basin and flush toilet with solar lighting. A sheltered lapa and two open lapas with braai areas. A two plate gas stove, pots, pans, kettles, wood and hot water are provided.

Suikerbos chalet

This castle like mountain chalet accommodates 30 people. Two separate ablution blocks, with EcoSan toilets, hand basin and hot water showers. A two plate gas stove, pots, pans, kettles, wood and candles for lighting are provided. An open and under covered braai facility.

Mamokebi Tent site

Beautiful tent/caravan sites under shady trees on the banks of a dam. Ablution facility, a covered and two open lapas with braai areas are provided.

‘Baie dankie vir die paar dae wat ons daar kon deurbring. Ons was werklik verras met die pragtige basiskamp. Dit is luuks in vergelyking met party ander wat ons al op ander roetes teë gekom het. Die huis was so skoon toe, boonop nogal, kry ons ‘n bak naartjies en blomme op die tafel – baie dankie daarvoor.’ Ina Williams en groep

‘Namens die Kilometer Vreter Stapklub wil ek net dankie sê vir die heerlike naweek, die absoluut skoon en gemaklike geriewe wat u aanbied. Dit was ‘n plesier om die naweek daar te wees. Ek persoonlik en die res van die groep voel dat u oornag kampe sowel as die staproetes absoluut puik was en dat van die ander staproete eienaars by u moet kom leer hoe dit gedoen moet word. U dankie briefie en blommetjies was ook baie spesiaal.’ Ina Redelinghuys (Voorsitter)

ACTIVITIES

Hiking

There are 9 hiking trails altogether, totaling 94 km (70 km if any overlap is eliminated). The trails can be combined to facilitate a 3, 4 or 5-day hike. The trails are graded as easy to moderately difficult.

Day (circle) trails:	Tambotie	-	10,4 km
	Vaderlandswilg	-	7,8 km
	Big Tree	-	16,5 km
	Kudu	-	9,8 km
	Smokey Mountain	-	6,4 km
Overnight (backpack) trails:	Moepel	-	13,6 km
	Marlothii	-	6,5 km
	Bosloerie	-	11,8 km
	Bobejaanstert	-	11,4 km

Rated by members of Hiking SA Magalies region as the best short trail of the year 2003.

*‘I wandered along a trail still new, across mountain streams that appear so blue, looking in the distance at mountains so high, with Rock Fig and Moepel for shade from the sky, all my thoughts and peace in my mind, still remembered Rooi-ivoor in Steelpoort so fine’
Tim Hartwright*

‘Baie dankie vir ‘n baie aangename naweek wat ons op jou plaas kon deurbring. Ons waardeer al jou moeite. Die roetes is baie goed uitgelê en ‘n plesier om te stap. Die slaapgeriewe en ablusie is puik.’ JW Hurter – Voorsitter, Bosveld Voetslaanklub

4x4/Quad/Mountain Biking

A 62 km scenery route is divided in two loops, thus making it ideal for a weekend getaway. A detailed map is supplied, with a list of GPS waypoints and signposts along the route to ensure that nobody gets lost.

‘What we really enjoyed about this trail is that one gets actively involved. There are plenty of places to stop, go for a short hike, take a swim or simply picnic under the trees. This is a route for nature lovers to get out in the bush. Rooi-ivoor is a great venue for the active family’ – Beyers Herbst, SA 4x4

Bird watching

Bird watching trails:	Blouvisvanger	-	3,3 km
	Redbilled Helmet Shrike	-	3,5 km
	Bergkwikkie	-	3,6 km
	Cape Batis	-	3,3 km
	Honeyguide	-	2,1 km
	Greencapped eremomela	-	2,3 km

The ‘specials’ of Rooi-ivoor are the Redbilled Helmetshrike, Bat hawk, Greencapped Eremomela, Gurney’s Sugarbird, Narina Trogon, Shelley’s Francolin, Halfcollard kingfisher, Lizzard Buzzard and Tambourine dove. A list is supplied with the names of birds already recorded as well as those which may occur in the area.

Tree spotting

‘Tree spotting adds a new dimension to the outdoor experience and has become a passionate hobby for the new breed of nature lovers’ – Sappi Bushveld

Thousands of trees have been marked along the hiking trails and other routes. A list is supplied to make identification easy, giving visitors the opportunity to learn about the great diversity and the endemic trees in the unique ecosystem of Rooi-ivoor.

Farm holidays and socializing

Socializing is considered an integral part of a visit to Rooi-ivoor. It is for this reason that all the camps are set up with basic facilities such as covered and open lapas with braai areas, with built-in seating and tables. There is a standard volleyball court at the Molohe camp, while at the Rooi-ivoor camp, situated in a beautiful garden, are numerous animals and well stocked bird cages for animal lovers.

'Piet, Thank you for a wonderful weekend. We really enjoyed your hospitality, the facilities and the trail. Your attention to detail is what really makes the difference.'
Keith Banham and group

'Thank you for the hospitality. We had a great time with you indeed and hope that one day we will have the chance to return.' Dr A Kiss

'Baie dankie vir 'n wonderlike naweek. Dit klink na afgesaagde woorde (en jy hoor dit dikwels), maar ek weet nie hoe om dit anders te stel nie. Ek het weer kom mens word (na al die afgelope tyd se spanning) en kan net sê: Dankie.' Theresa en groep.

'Baie dankie vir 'n fantastiese naweek. Elkeen van ons waardeer dit ongelooflik baie....
(Dr) Carl, Inge, Carien, Laura.

For further information contact

Prof Piet Nel

Box 1141
Burgersfort
1150

Cell 082 7288 394
082 9255 055
Tel/Fax (013) 231 7824

www.footprint.co.za/rooiivoor.htm

