CITY OF CAPE TOWN

Beaches

A diversity of coastal treasures

CITY OF CAPE TOWN | ISIXEKO SASEKAPA | STAD KAAPSTAD

THIS CITY WORKS FOR YOU

CITY OF CAPE TOWN BEACHES

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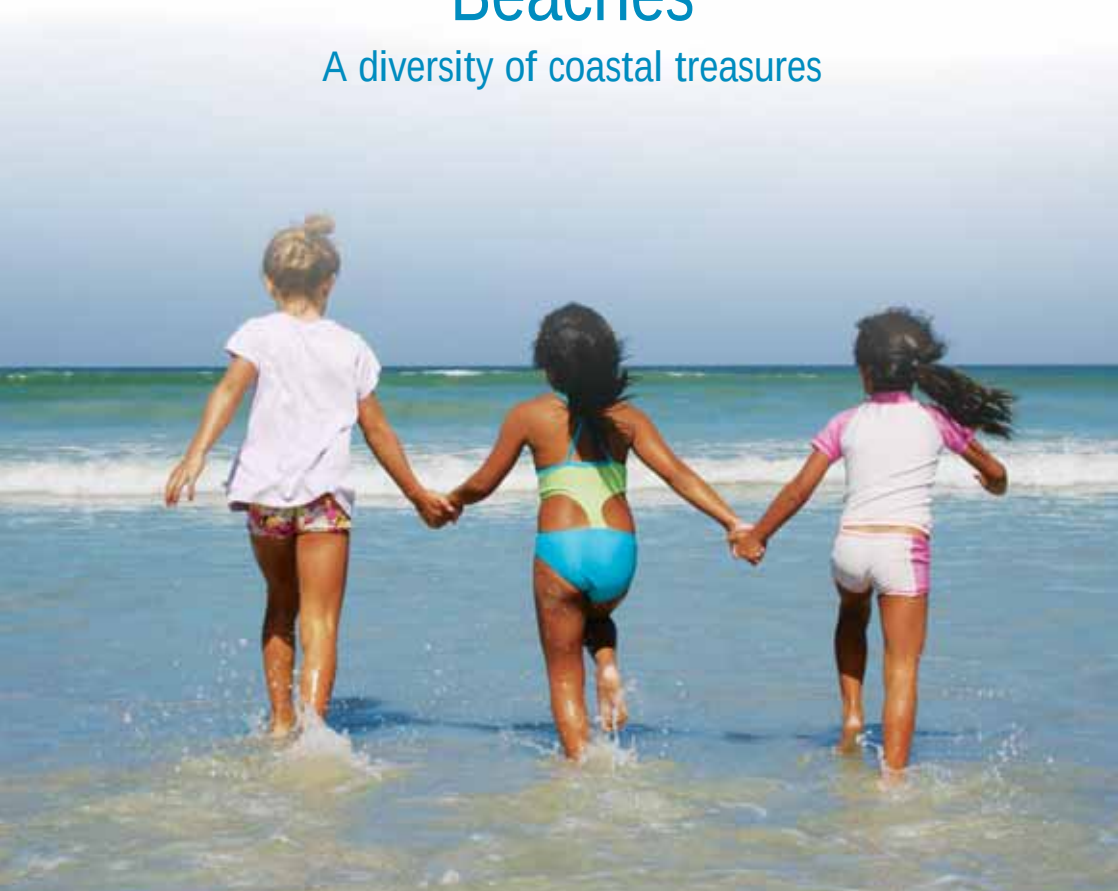


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Penguins sunning themselves at Boulders Beach

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Cape Town's two coasts

Cape Town's beautiful coastline extends for 307 km along the West Coast, around the Cape Peninsula, and beyond False Bay to the Kogelberg coast in the east. The combination of the warm Agulhas current that sweeps down the east coast, and the cold Benguela current that flows up the west coast, results in an incredibly rich and varied marine flora and fauna.

Its mild Mediterranean climate allows residents and visitors to enjoy the beautiful coastline all year round. While winter brings cold and wet weather, there is always a break in the rain long enough for a brisk walk on the beach, and surfers love the large swells generated by winter's north-westerly winds.

In spring and summer, warm and sunny weather returns, but is accompanied by the prevailing southeasterly wind – popularly known as the 'Cape doctor', as it blows the city's air pollution away. The southeaster flattens the swell, but whips up white horses further out to sea, and may give beach-goers a sandblasting if they do not find a sheltered spot. Fortunately, many of the beaches along the Atlantic Seaboard lie in the lee of Table Mountain, and are well-protected from the wind. Clifton, in particular, is recognised as a fail-safe option when the southeaster blows and discourages people from the city's other beaches.

It is also the southeaster that is responsible for the marked difference in sea temperature between False Bay and the coastal waters west of Cape Point. Indeed, the West Coast and Atlantic Seaboard are often referred to simply as 'the cold side', and only the hardy can withstand more than a quick dip in the sea without a wetsuit.

The southeaster, which reaches galeforce at times, pushes and pulls the surface layer of seawater along with it. In False Bay, this has the effect of piling warm water up along the coast, so summer water temperatures generally stay within the 16-22°C range. West of Cape Point, the southeaster pushes surface water in a northerly direction, but it is deflected offshore due to the earth's rotation to the east. Cold water from the dark depths of the ocean rises up to replace it in a process known as upwelling, so sea temperatures typically hover in the 10-15°C range.

Upwelling

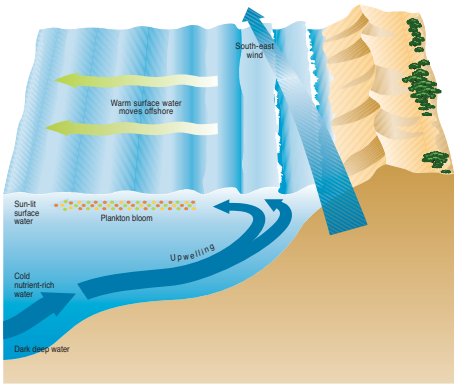
Upwelling makes for chilly swimming, but also ensures that the West Coast is South Africa's most productive marine environment. Freshly upwelled water is a clear, turquoise colour because it contains no phytoplankton – i.e. microscopic plant life that needs light for photosynthesis. However, the upwelled water is rich in nutrients, especially nitrates formed as a by-product of the decomposition of organic matter, which constantly sinks down to the seafloor. The nitrates act as a fertiliser for phytoplankton, which soon form dense 'blooms' that are grazed by zooplankton. Both plant and animal plankton are consumed by pelagic fish, such as anchovy and pilchard, which are in turn food for larger fish, such as hake, as well as seabirds, seals and dolphins.

The abundance of fish supports South Africa's purse seine and trawl fisheries, while the region's dense kelp beds – also dependent on nutrient-rich water – provide habitat for West Coast rock lobster and abalone.

Upwelling conditions favour phytoplankton blooms made up of diatoms. These large cells often grow in chains, or have spiky shapes to slow their sinking rate, and the turbulence generated by upwelling helps them to remain in the sunlit surface waters. Between upwelling events, the sea becomes calmer and warmer, and these conditions are more suitable for phytoplankton blooms dominated by dinoflagellates – i.e. protozoa that can maintain their position in the water by beating their flagella. As the dinoflagellate blooms are concentrated by winds and currents, they become so dense that they discolour the water various shades of red, orange, brown or purple, depending on the pigments within the cells.

Rock lobster 'walk-out' on the West Coast

Some of the species making up these so-called 'red tides' are toxic, and can be fatal to human consumers of filter-feeding shellfish, such as mussels, clams and oysters, which accumulate the toxins in their tissues. Red tides can also suffocate fish by clogging their gills, and typically also result in low-oxygen conditions, as bacterial decomposition of decaying phytoplankton blooms uses up much of the oxygen in the water. Marine animals move into shallow water to escape the oxygen-depleted water, resulting in mass fish strandings and rock lobster 'walk-outs'.



The upwelling process

Tides

The daily fluctuations in sea level, known as tides, are caused by the gravitational force of both the sun and moon on the earth's oceans (see figure below). The moon has the greater influence, as it is much closer to the earth than the sun, so the tides are said to follow a lunar cycle.

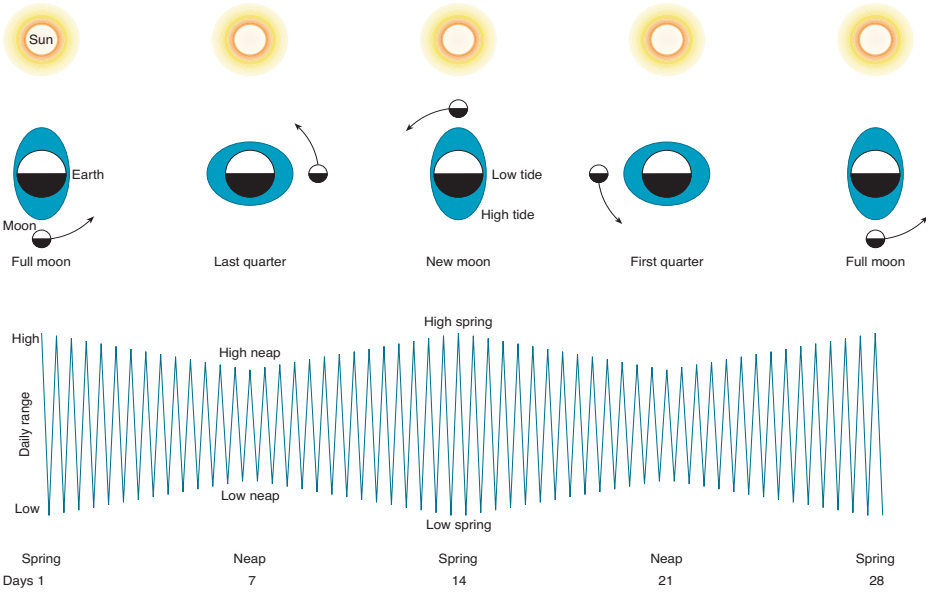
The moon's gravity pulls a 'bulge' of water towards it, causing high tides on the side of the earth closest to the moon. On the opposite side, the water bulges out due to centrifugal force as the earth and moon spin around one another. Since the earth rotates, each point will experience two high tides per day – one due to gravitational pull, and the other due to centrifugal force. As the water bulges out in these areas, it is drawn away from others, causing low tides there.

The moon takes 28 days to orbit the earth, moving a little further round the earth each day. High tides therefore occur about 50 minutes later each day, or 25 minutes later each tide.

Spring tides are extra-high and extra-low tides that occur every two weeks throughout the year, a few days after new and full moon. At these times, the sun, moon and earth are in line with one another, and their combined gravitational pull creates an extra-large 'bulge' at high tide. A greater area of shoreline is exposed at spring low tides, which in South Africa occur at about 10:00 and 22:00.

Between the spring tides are neap tides, when the difference between high and low tides is not as marked. Neap tides occur during the first and last quarters of the moon, when the moon is at right angles to the sun, and their gravitational pulls cancel each other out.

The tidal range – the distance between the low-water and high-water marks – varies enormously from one part of the world to another, but in South Africa it is usually 1,2–2,5 metres. The area of shore between the high-water and low-water marks is known as the intertidal zone.



Rocky shores

False plum anenome (*Pseudactinia flagellifera*)

Rocky shores range from headlands with vertical rock faces and steep cliffs, to wide wave-cut rock platforms. They may even consist of a jumble of different-sized boulders or a 'pebble beach' of smooth stones. At some places, rocky shores extend for many kilometres along the coast, while in others they occur as outcrops separated by river mouths or sandy beaches.

Animals and plants that live within the intertidal zone of rocky shores must be adapted to survive the harsh and variable conditions associated with high and low tides. Twice per day they are submerged in cold water, and subjected to battering waves when the tide rises, only to be exposed to desiccating winds and the blazing sun when the tide recedes. The distribution of species on rocky shores is largely determined by their ability to withstand these physical stresses. Those found low on the shore, where they are only exposed for a short time at low tide, are not adapted to survive conditions higher up, where only the hardiest species occur.

Cape Town's rocky shores have five distinct zones, each with its characteristic plant and animal species.

- The infratidal zone at the lowest level is dominated by beds of seaweed – including kelp – which are home to sea urchins, red-bait, starfish and mussels.
- The cochlear zone higher up the shore is named for its dense band of pear limpets, *Scutellastra* (formerly *Patella*) cochlear.
- The lower balanoid zone has thick beds of fleshy, mostly red algae, as well as limpets, mussels, whelks and anemones.
- The upper balanoid zone is dominated by barnacles, limpets and winkles, while the sea lettuce *Ulva* is one of the few seaweeds able to survive here.
- The littorina zone on the uppermost reaches of the shore is too exposed for most organisms, but the tiny air-breathing snail *Littorina* is abundant. The common shore crab shelters under rocks, while the hardy purple laver *Porphyra* is the only seaweed able to tolerate the severe desiccation of this zone.

Many of the animals found on rocky shores are mobile, so they are able to avoid unfavourable conditions to some extent. Species at risk of

Cape urchin (*Tarechinus angulosus*)

Speckled klipfish (*Clinus venustus*)

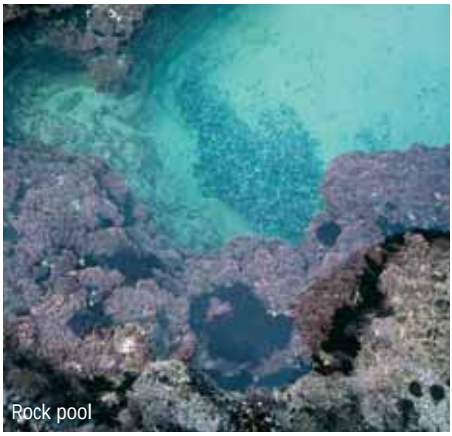
Sandy anenome (*Aulactinia reynaudi*)

Split-fan kelp (*Laminaria pallida*)

overheating or dehydration retreat into rock pools or shaded gullies, while those unable to tolerate strong wave action migrate up the shore at high tide, or take shelter in narrow rock crevices. However, many rocky shore species, such as barnacles and mussels, are sedentary, having permanently fixed themselves to the rock at the time of settlement. These animals have special adaptations to survive in the harsh intertidal environment. For example, some have protective shells that are shaped to limit heat uptake or water loss, and can resist wave action, while many are physiologically adapted to tolerate desiccation or high temperatures.

Seaweeds are the primary producers of the rocky shore food web, although only a few herbivores are capable of feeding on adult plants. Instead, their sporelings, together with diatoms, are scraped from the rock by grazers, such as limpets, sea urchins and periwinkles. Seaweed broken down into small particles by wave action also provides food for filter-feeders, such as sponges, barnacles, mussels, oysters, red-bait and tubeworms. These are in turn food for carnivores, such as starfish, anemones, octopus, fish and birds.


Granular starfish (*Austrofromia schultzei*)


Rock pool


Children discovering life on the rocky shores

Sandy beaches

Sandy beaches are extremely dynamic systems, constantly reshaped by wind, waves and currents. They can be divided into three zones:

- The surf zone, where waves break
- The beach, which includes the intertidal and backshore zones
- The dunes, made up of small, recently formed foredunes and large, established backdunes.

In the sea, waves and currents continually move sediment along the shore, as well as onshore and offshore, whereas on land, wind blows sand up and along the beach. Sand trapped by plants growing near the driftline forms mounds called hummocks, which initiate the development of foredunes.

Sandy beach systems therefore consist of a marine wave-driven ecosystem and a terrestrial wind-driven ecosystem that together make up the littoral active zone – the area in which sand exchange occurs.

Although sand exchange is an ongoing process, it does vary throughout the year. During stormy weather, rough seas erode sand from the beach and foredunes, but the sand is deposited as an offshore sandbar. When calm conditions return, gentle waves carry the sand back to replenish the beach. In this way, the beach undergoes seasonal cycles of erosion and accretion, although major storm events can cause long-term changes.

Structures in the littoral active zone, such as breakwaters and buildings, impede this natural process of sand exchange, and may result in erosion or sand inundation problems. Likewise, destroying the foredunes through development or mining removes the reservoir that supplies sand to the beach during periods of erosion. The same applies to artificial sand stabilisation with vegetation. Along the coast of Cape Town, efforts are now being made to remove the alien acacias Rooikrans and Port Jackson, which were introduced to stabilise the drifting sands of the Cape Flats, but soon spread and became invasive, with a wide range of negative impacts.

Smooth plough shell (*Bullia rhodostoma*)

Indigenous dune vegetation, however, should be protected, as it helps stabilise dunes while also providing habitat for beach fauna. Access to beaches through dune areas is often controlled in order to prevent damage to dune vegetation.

No rooted plants or attached seaweeds can survive the harsh environment of the intertidal zone, but phytoplankton and tiny particles of

Three-spot crab (*Ovalipes trimaculatus*)

White-fronted plover (*Charadrius marginatus*)

Suurvy or Sour fig (*Carpobrotus acinaciformis*)

detritus in the surf zone provide a source of food for zooplankton and larger filter-feeders, such as sand mussels. Some animals, such as plough shells and sand hoppers, burrow beneath the surface, and then emerge to feed on stranded carrion at low tide. Zooplankton, filter-feeders and scavengers are in turn preyed upon by fish and birds.

Living between the sand grains in moist areas are tiny diatoms, fungi, bacteria, protozoa, worms and crustaceans that make up a complex interstitial food web. This plays an important role in sandy beach ecology by breaking down organic matter and recycling nutrients.

Swift Tern (*Sterna bergii*)

Sea pumpkin (*Arctotheca populifolia*)

Malachite kingfisher (*Alcedo cristata*)

Estuaries

Estuaries – where rivers meet the sea – represent a transition zone between the freshwater and marine environments. Their salinities fluctuate on a daily and seasonal basis according to the state of the tide and the strength of river flow. While many estuaries are permanently open to the sea, others are closed by sandbars during periods of low rainfall, when river flow is too weak to scour away sand accumulating at the mouth.

Animals and plants living in estuaries are adapted to survive these variable conditions. However, evaporation from closed estuaries may result in exceptionally saline conditions, while high freshwater input during floods causes a dramatic reduction in salinity. Extremes of salinity that are beyond the tolerance range of estuarine plants and animals have been known to cause mass mortalities.

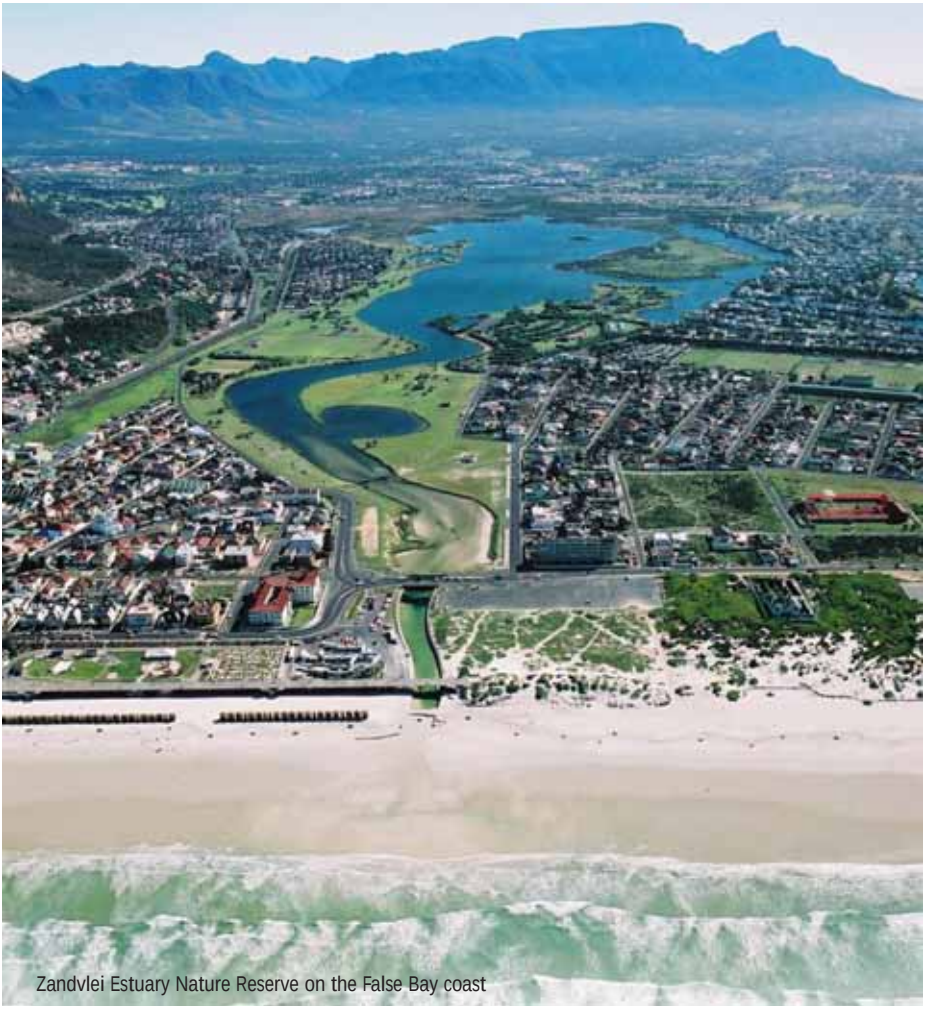
Because rivers carry nutrients and organically rich silt from the catchment area, estuaries are extremely productive systems. Primary producers include phytoplankton in the water column, diatoms and filamentous algae on bottom sediments, aquatic plants, salt marshes and reeds, as well as mangroves in subtropical and tropical areas. Despite the variety of plant types, there are few true herbivores in estuaries. Instead, the detritus of these plants is the basis of the food web in estuaries.

Mobile species such as zooplankton and mullet (harder) are able to migrate to areas rich in detritus to feed, but mud prawns, bloodworms, mussels and other benthic invertebrates rely largely on tidal currents to make food available to them. Surface deposit feeders, such as crabs and snails, forage on the exposed intertidal mudflats for material deposited during the preceding high tide. Some fish feed on the benthic invertebrates, while others eat zooplankton, or prey on fish smaller than themselves.

Many fish species do not reside in estuaries permanently, but use them as nursery areas. The adult fish spawn offshore, and the young enter the calm, food-rich estuaries to develop until mature enough to breed, at which time they migrate back to the sea. Estuaries are also important feeding grounds for a variety of birds, which occupy different trophic levels within the food web. These include the following:

- Plant-eaters, such as red-knobbed coot, which feed on waterweeds
- Invertebrate-feeders, such as greenshank, sanderlings and curlew sandpipers. These birds are waders, and occupy various niches by having different bill and leg lengths that determine their depth and method of foraging. Many waders migrate to South African estuaries during our summer, and then return to their Arctic breeding grounds at the onset of winter.
- Fish-eaters, such as kingfishers, cormorants, terns, fish eagles, pelicans and herons.

Most of Cape Town's estuaries are surrounded by intense development, which has a variety of negative impacts. For example, buildings situated too close to the water's edge may be at risk of flooding when the estuary is closed, leading to



Zandvlei Estuary Nature Reserve on the False Bay coast

artificial breaching of the mouth in response to pressure from property owners. Stormwater runoff and industrial and sewage effluent may result in elevated nutrient levels, leading to excessive growth of nuisance weeds or algae, as well as pollution in the form of toxic chemicals, heavy metals and faecal bacteria.

Activities and development in the catchment area also affect estuaries. Runoff from gardens and farmlands may be polluted by nutrient-rich fertilisers and toxic pesticides, while overgrazing and planting of crops too close to river banks may result in erosion, increasing the silt load reaching estuaries. Large quantities of silt not only smother animals, but also inhibit plant growth by reducing light penetration in the water column. Together with water abstraction, impoundment, commercial afforestation and alien plant invasion in the catchment area – all of which dampen peak flows and reduce the scouring effect of floods – siltation may result in gradual shallowing of the estuary, or closure of the mouth.

Blue Flag

A number of Cape Town's beaches have been awarded Blue Flag status in recognition of their standard of excellence.

The Blue Flag is a voluntary eco-label managed by the Foundation for Environmental Education, an NGO based in Europe. It is awarded annually to beaches and marinas that meet a specific set of criteria, encompassing:

- water quality;
- safety and services;
- environmental management; and
- environmental education and information.

The Blue Flag has become a symbol of quality that can be used for tourism promotion, while also guaranteeing high standards of beach management for local inhabitants. Beaches can lose their Blue Flag status if they fail to comply with the strict requirements.

South Africa was the first country outside Europe to receive Blue Flag accreditation for its beaches. The programme started in Europe in 1987 to encourage beaches to comply with the European Union (EU) Bathing Water Directive. Today, there are more than 3 200 sites in at least 35 countries.

In South Africa, the Blue Flag programme is managed by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) in partnership with the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs (DWEA) and participating coastal authorities under the Coastcare initiative, through which South Africa's policy for sustainable coastal development is implemented. The City of Cape Town subscribes to this policy, which promotes socio-economic development; non-consumptive resource use; integrated management; institutional development; and education, awareness and information. Managing beaches according to Blue Flag criteria facilitates compliance to these and other policy and legal requirements related to the coastal zone.

Up-to-date information about Blue Flag beaches can be found at www.blueflag.org.

Clifton
4th Beach

Shark-spotting programme

The shark-spotting programme at some of Cape Town's beaches developed in response to a spate of shark bite incidents beginning in 2004. Initially, shark-spotting was done on an ad hoc basis when organisers of surfing competitions at Muizenberg asked individuals working as car guards to keep watch from the mountain overlooking the beach, and warn them of any sharks visible in the area. This developed into a more permanent arrangement when a local surfing personality raised funds to employ two 'shark spotters', install an alarm that could be triggered remotely by the spotter on the mountain, and implement a system of warning flags. At about the same time, spotters for the trek-net fishers at Fish Hoek began informing the local law enforcement officers if they saw a shark.

These two community-driven initiatives have since been absorbed into a formal shark-spotting programme co-ordinated by the City of Cape Town, and expanded to other beaches. The warning flag system has been standardised as follows:

- A green flag means visibility for the spotters is good, and no sharks have been seen.
- A black flag means visibility for the spotters is poor, but no sharks have been seen.
- A red flag means a shark has been seen recently, but is no longer visible to the spotters.
- A white flag with a black shark, along with a loud siren, means a shark has been sighted, and bathers should leave the water immediately.
- No flag means spotters are not on duty.

The programme improves beach safety through both shark warnings and emergency assistance in the event of a shark incident. It also contributes to research on shark ecology and behaviour, raises public awareness about shark-related issues, and provides employment opportunities and skills development for shark spotters.

White shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*)

The reason for the increase in shark incidents in recent years is uncertain. The white shark was afforded legal protection in 1991, but it is unlikely the population could have increased to an extent that would account for the sharp rise in shark encounters. The growth of the shark cage diving industry is also considered an improbable cause as long as operators adhere to permit conditions.

False Bay is known to host a high number of large white sharks, which can be attributed to the availability of food in the form of Cape fur seals on Seal Island. However, the seal population at Seal Island has remained relatively stable during the last 50 years, so it is not thought to be a causative factor in attracting more sharks to False Bay.

Research has shown that white sharks remain close to Seal Island from autumn until spring (March/April to September/October). This corresponds with the time the seal pups spend prolonged periods in the water, learning to catch their own prey. The pups are weaned in August/September, and then disperse, after which the sharks leave the vicinity of the island and move closer inshore, swimming parallel to the coastline. It is therefore in the summer months (October–March) that sharks are most likely to be seen off beaches in False Bay.

Furthermore, the number of people participating in water sports, such as surfing, surfskiing and kitesurfing, has grown remarkably during the past few decades. Since these beach users venture into deeper water further offshore, their chances of encountering a shark are higher than a bather in the shallow areas of the surf zone.

Whale-watching

Cape Town's coastline offers some of the world's best whale-watching spots. The whales most commonly seen from shore are **southern right whales**, which visit our waters between June and November each year. Most are females, which give birth in sheltered bays, and then nurse their calf until it is ready to embark on the long migration back to the Southern Ocean feeding grounds.

Humpback whales migrate up the west and east coasts of Southern Africa in June/July each year to their breeding grounds off the coast of Gabon and Mozambique. They return to their Southern Ocean feeding grounds along the same route in about September. These whales tend to occur further offshore than southern rights, but are sometimes seen on the west coast.

Bryde's whales occur off the Southern African coast all year round, but are seen less often because they usually remain offshore. Schools of **dolphins** are also frequently seen, particularly Heaviside's, common, bottlenose and dusky dolphins.

South African legislation prohibits people from coming within 300 metres of whales, unless they have a permit to do so. However, there are a small number of permit holders for licensed boat-based whale watching in the Cape Town area.

Behaviour commonly observed while whale-watching includes:

Breaching – The function of this behaviour, in which the whale leaps almost clear of the water and falls back with a large splash, is not known. It may be a means of communication with other whales, a way of dislodging dead skin and whale lice, or even just a form of play.

Lobtailing – Whales are often seen lifting the tail out of the water and repeatedly slapping it down on the surface. This may be some type of social communication, expressing alarm, annoyance or threat.

Sailing – Sometimes the whales spend long periods doing vertical 'headstands' with the tail held out of the water. One theory is that the whale is using its tail as a sail, while another is that the tail is being used either to absorb heat through solar radiation, or lose heat through evaporative cooling.

Spyhopping – This behaviour, in which the head is lifted vertically out of the water, may simply allow the whale to have a look at its surroundings.

Playing with kelp – Whales can sometimes be seen at the edge of a kelp bed, rubbing themselves against the fronds. Perhaps this allows them to scratch off irritating dead skin and whale lice.

Breaching **Lobtailing** **Sailing** **Spyhopping**

Common whale-watching behaviours

Southern right whale (*Balaena glacialis*)

Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

Abalone (*Haliotis midae*)

Threats to the coastal zone

Overexploitation of marine resources is a major threat to coastal biodiversity. Worst affected are abalone (perlemoen), which are severely threatened by poaching, and linefish species, many of which are overfished. However, offshore species, such as hake, kingklip and the deep-water rock lobster, are also considered overexploited.

Intertidal organisms are typically harvested as seafood delicacies or as bait in South Africa, but for some rural communities they are an important food source. Along the Wild Coast, for example, mussels, oysters and limpets are a vital source of protein, and intense harvesting pressure has severely affected rocky shore biodiversity. Co-management systems and education programmes have been implemented in an effort to regulate such overexploitation.

Habitat destruction is primarily caused by development. Dune systems are often flattened for roads, parking areas or buildings, which disrupt sand supply to the adjacent beach. Estuaries are affected by housing and marina developments, and structures such as bridges, weirs and causeways, as well as dams and activities in the catchment that change river flow and silt loads.

Mining is another form of development that causes habitat destruction in the coastal zone, through both dune mining for sand, minerals and diamonds, and marine mining for oil, gas and diamonds. Fishing may also destroy marine habitat when trawl gear scrapes along the sea bottom.

Illegal use of off-road vehicles on beaches and dunes may have severe impacts, not only by crushing plants that help stabilise windblown sand, but also by killing coastal animals, and disrupting their feeding and breeding. Even seemingly harmless activities, like walking on the sensitive vegetation of dune systems or in the intertidal zone of rocky shores, may cause habitat destruction.

Illegal sand mining, Macassar dunes

An exposed nest of the African black oyster catcher

Habitat destruction caused by development

Pollution in the coastal zone mainly arises from the direct discharge of effluents through pipelines, from runoff via rivers and stormwater drains, and from shipping activities. For example, raw sewage is piped out to sea in some areas, while many fish-processing factories discharge fish waste back into the sea. Runoff may be contaminated with a range of pollutants, including sewage, agricultural fertilisers and pesticides, industrial chemicals and litter. Shipping activities increase the risk of oil spills, while shipboard waste dumped overboard as well as lost fishing gear pose a threat to marine life.

Sewage pollution is a health hazard, as it contains bacteria, viruses and other pathogens. Mussels and oysters accumulate these microscopic organisms as they filter-feed, rendering them unsafe for human consumption. In addition, the high nutrient levels associated with sewage and other kinds of organic pollution promote the growth of nuisance algae and weeds, while the decomposition process may deplete oxygen concentrations in poorly flushed estuaries, lagoons and bays, resulting in fish kills in severe cases.

Heavy metals such as zinc, copper, lead, tin, mercury and cadmium contaminate the coastal zone via industrial and vehicle emissions, pesticides, and harbour-based maintenance activities, such as painting, scraping and grit-blasting. Heavy metals are accumulated up the food chain, and are toxic to plants, animals and humans, resulting in behavioural and physiological abnormalities.

Oil spills can have devastating impacts on marine life, particularly seabirds, and also have serious economic effects through lost fishing and tourism opportunities. Litter is not only unsightly, but may kill or injure animals that become entangled in it or mistake it for food, resulting in suffocation or starvation.


Beach clean-up


Penguins released after an oil spill


Debris washed up on the beach


Oil tanker ablaze

Mediterranean mussel (*Mytilus galloprovincialis*)

Invasive alien species threaten the biodiversity of the coastal zone by outcompeting indigenous species, and altering natural processes, such as sand transport, flow regimes and nutrient cycling. For example, the alien acacias Port Jackson and Rooikrans have invaded the Cape coast's fynbos vegetation, and now form bland monocultures. Acacias are nitrogen-fixing plants that increase soil nitrate levels, thereby excluding indigenous plants that are adapted to the area's nutrient-poor soils. Port Jackson and Rooikrans were originally introduced for sand stabilisation, and their effect has been to inhibit the natural sand exchange between beaches and dunes, resulting in long-term changes in beach profiles. Dense stands of acacias also block access to parts of the coast, heighten the risk and intensity of fire, and – since they take up more water than natural vegetation – cause less water to reach estuaries.

Marine invaders of Cape Town's coast include the Mediterranean mussel, which has displaced indigenous mussels and limpets from large areas of rocky shore, and the European green crab, which is a voracious predator with potentially devastating consequences for benthic food webs if it spreads and multiplies. In addition, some species of phytoplankton that have caused harmful algal blooms are thought to have been introduced.

Climate change is expected to impact the coastal zone by increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions such as storms and by accelerating sea level rise. Sea level rise is caused by global warming, which results in thermal expansion of the oceans and melting of glaciers and ice sheets. Erosion on beaches and in estuaries will increase, while rivers and aquifers will be vulnerable to saltwater intrusion. All these effects will alter coastal habitats, while changes in air and sea temperatures, currents and primary productivity will cause shifts in the distribution of species. Strategies and management interventions are being put in place to mitigate the predicted negative impacts of climate change on infrastructure in the coastal zone. Although structures may need to be built in the coastal zone to protect adjacent land and low-lying areas from storm damage and flooding, other approaches, including a natural systems-based approach, are also being used. One such approach is the establishment of a Coastal Protection Zone.

Storm waves flood the Sea Point promenade

Harvesting marine resources

In order to protect South Africa's marine resources from overexploitation, a variety of management measures have been implemented to ensure sustainable harvesting.

Firstly, it is illegal to harvest marine living resources without a valid permit from Marine and Coastal Management (MCM), which then subjects permit holders to various regulations and permit conditions. Recreational fishers are also prohibited from selling their catch as a measure to discourage overexploitation.

South African fisheries are managed by either input (effort) control – i.e. limiting the number of participants – or by output (quota) control – i.e. limiting the catch. The total applied effort is the maximum number of fishing vessels or people permitted to participate in a fishery, while the **Total Allowable Catch** (TAC) is the maximum quantity of a particular species that may be harvested in a fishery for a given year. TACs are determined through stock assessments by MCM scientists, using the reported catch statistics together with research surveys and life history information on the species. They apply only to commercial fisheries, and are split into **quotas**, which are portions of the TAC allocated to different fishing companies.

Bag limits are restrictions on the number of a particular species that may be landed by an individual per day. They usually apply only to anglers, spearfishers and shellfish collectors in the recreational fisheries, although some apply in the commercial linefishery too. Species on the 'prohibited list' may not be landed.

Minimum size limits are set according to the size at which a marine species is known to be sexually mature. They allow organisms a chance to breed before being caught, ensuring regeneration of the population.

Gear restrictions regulate the type of fishing gear used for harvesting marine resources. Their aim is usually to prevent the catching of undersized organisms, and to minimise by-catch or damage to habitat.

Closed seasons are periods in which no fishing or harvesting is allowed. They are normally timed to coincide with vulnerable stages in the organism's lifecycle, such as during spawning – i.e. when fish come together to breed – or when juvenile fish are abundant.

Closed areas are marine protected areas (MPAs) of some kind – e.g. marine reserves, national parks or single-species sanctuaries – where harvesting is not allowed. They are managed to protect ecosystems in their natural state, maintain biodiversity, conserve spawning stocks, and supplement catches in adjacent areas.

MPAs along Cape Town's coast are as follows:

Table Bay closed area

No rock lobster may be caught between Melkbos Point (beacon MB1) and Die Josie near Chapman's Peak (beacon MB2), extending 12 nautical miles seawards from the high-water mark.

A bundle of linefish, which form the mainstay of traditional fishery in South Africa

Table Mountain National Park MPA

No fishing or other harvesting is allowed in the following restricted zones:

- Karbonkelberg, between Oudekraal and the Sentinel at Hout Bay, extending 3,3 nautical miles offshore at the widest point.
- Cape of Good Hope, between the fence at Scarborough, and Hoek van Bobbejaan, extending approximately one nautical mile seawards.
- Paulsberg, between Venus Pool and Smitswinkel Point, extending approximately one nautical mile seawards.
- Castle Rock, between beacon VB2 at Partridge Point, and VB1 at Miller's Point, extending approximately one nautical mile seawards.
- Boulders, between Oatlands and the eastern end of Simon's Town harbour.
- St James, between the tidal pool at Kalk Bay, and the tidal pool at St James.

Helderberg MPA

No fishing is allowed between the mouth of the Eerste River, and the mouth of the Lourens River in False Bay, extending 500 m seawards from the high-water mark.

Strand closed area

Only shore angling (and no other type of fishing) is allowed between the mouth of the Lourens River, and the eastern breakwater of the harbour at Gordon's Bay, extending 500 m seawards.

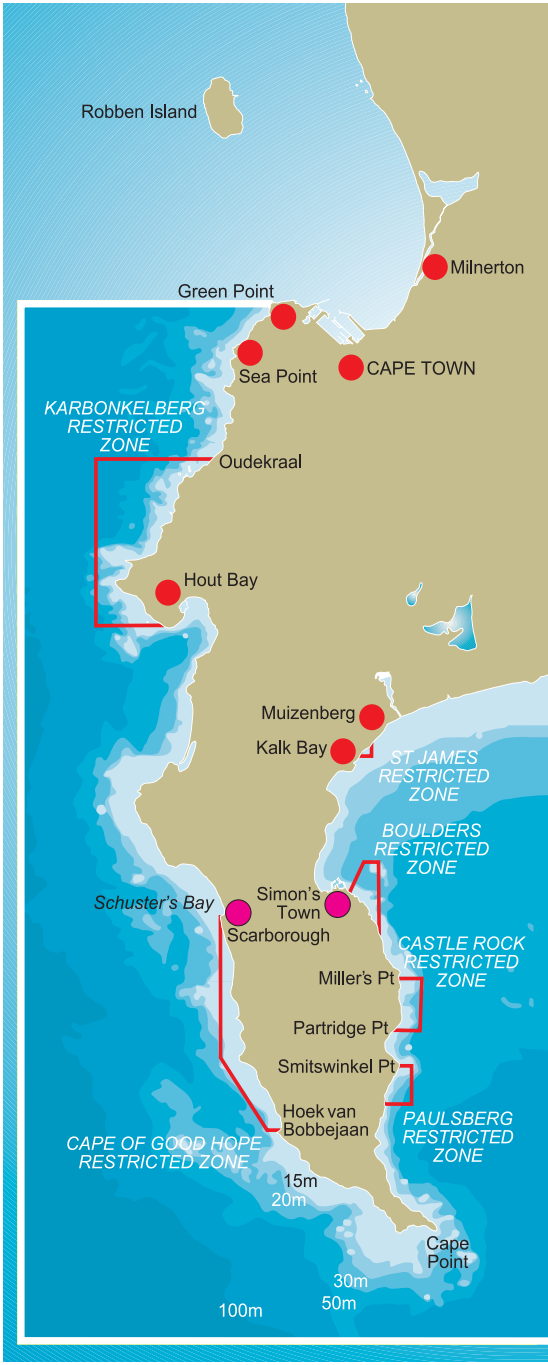


Table Mountain National Park Marine Protected Area

Sustainable seafood

The World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) has compiled a 'Consumer's Seafood Species List' to help seafood-lovers make environmentally friendly choices when shopping or dining out, according to the conservation status of popular fish species (see box alongside).

Species have been grouped into different colour categories, each of which has a different meaning:

GREEN

These species occur as relatively healthy and well-managed populations that can sustain current fishing pressure. Some green species are not targeted by any particular fishery, but are managed as a sustainable by-catch. These species are recommended as the most sustainable choices available.

ORANGE

These species may be legally sold by registered commercial fishers and retailers. However, an increased demand for these species could compromise a sustainable supply, due to one or more of the following reasons:

- The species may presently be rare because it is overfished.
- The fishery that catches them may damage the environment through the method used and/or high by-catch.
- The biology of the species makes it vulnerable to overfishing, or it may not have been adequately studied, but is suspected not to be able to sustain heavy fishing pressure based on information for related species.
- Consumers are encouraged to consider the implications of these choices.

RED

These species are illegal to buy or sell in South Africa according to the Marine Living Resources Act (Act 18 of 1998). Some of these 'no sale' species are very important recreational species that cannot withstand commercial fishing pressure.

Fish species are 'colour coded' in SASSI's Consumer Seafood Species List

CONSUMER'S SEAFOOD SPECIES LIST

GREEN LIST – BEST CHOICE

Anchovy
Angelfish (Atlantic pomfret)
Bluefish (bluenose)
Blueskin (trawl soldier)
Blue hottentot
Butterfish
Chub mackerel (makriel)
Dorado (dolphinfish; mahi-mahi)
Gurnard
Hake (stockfish)
Harder (mullet) – not from estuaries
Horse mackerel (maasbanker)
Hottentot
Jacopever
John Dory
Monkfish
Mussels
Octopus
Oysters
Panga
Queen mackerel (Natal snoek)
Sand soldier (red tjor-tjor)
Santer (soldier)
Sardine (Pilchard)
Snoek
South coast rock lobster
Squid (calamari; tjokka)
Steentjie
Stumpnose, white
Tuna – not bluefin; pole caught is better
West coast rock lobster (west coast crayfish)
White stumpnose
Yellowtail

ORANGE LIST - CAUTION

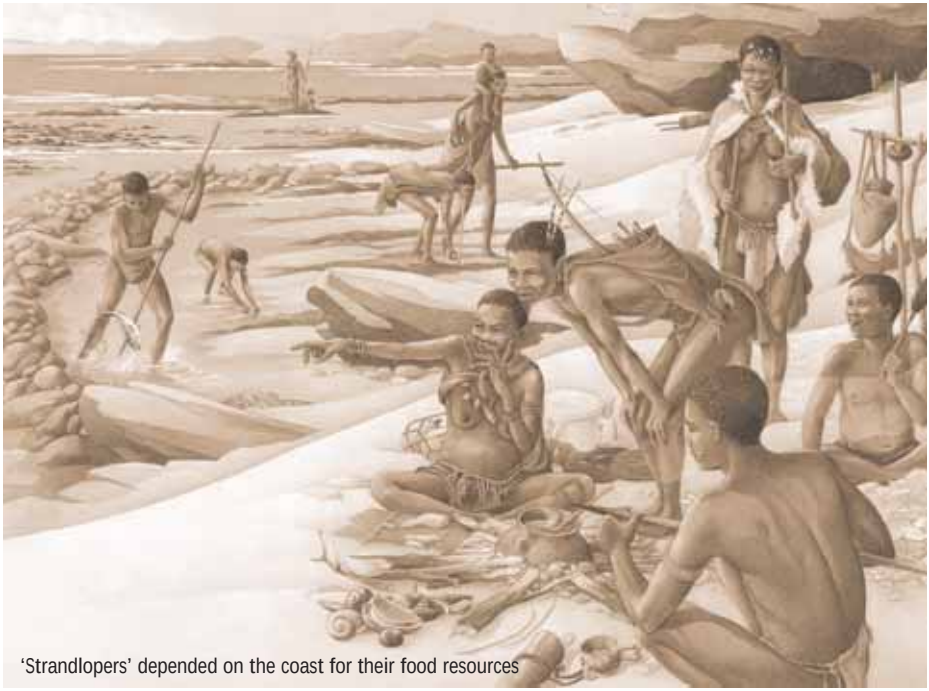
Abalone – not farmed
Bluefin tuna
Carpenter (silverfish; silver)
Dageraad
Elf (shad) – no sale in KZN
Englishman
Geelbek (Cape salmon)
King mackerel (couta; cuda)
King soldierbream
Kingklip
Kob (kabeljou; dusky,silver, squaretail kobs)
Langoustines – local trawled
Marlins
Poenskop (black musselcracker)
Prawns – local trawled
Red steenbras (copper steenbras)
Red stumpnose (Miss Lucy)
Rockcods – all except potato and brindle bass
Roman (red roman)
Scotsman
Sharks – all except those on Red list
Skates and rays
Slingers
Snappers – all except river snapper
Sole – local
Swordfish

RED LIST – NO SALE

Baardman (belman; tasselfish)
Banded galjoen
Blacktail (dassie; kolstert)
Brindle bass
Bronze bream
Cape stumpnose
East coast rock lobster
Galjoen
Garrick (leervis)
John Brown (Janbruin)
Kingfishes
Knife jaw, Cape and Natal (cuckoo bass; kraaibek)
Large-spot pompano (moony; wave garrick)
Natal stumpnose (yellow bream)
Natal wrasse
Potato bass
Ragged tooth shark
River bream (perch)
River snapper (rock salmon)
Sawfishes
Seventy-four
Southern pompano
Spotted grunter (tiger)
Spotted gulley shark
Springer (ten pounder)
Stonebream
Striped cat shark (Pyjama shark)
West coast steenbras
White musselcracker (busher; cracker)
White steenbras (pignose grunter)
Zebra (wildeperd)

Adapted from SASSI's Consumer's Seafood pocket guide.

FishMS Sending an SMS containing the name of the fish for sale to 079 499 8795 will elicit an immediate response about the SASSI listing. For more information, visit the SASSI website: www.wwf.org.za/sassi/



'Strandlopers' depended on the coast for their food resources

Early days on the Cape coast

Indigenous people

Fossil remains and simple stone tools indicate that human ancestors lived in South Africa as far back as the Early Stone Age (2 000–125 millennia ago). During the Middle Stone Age (125–20 millennia ago), humans living in caves along the coast supplemented their opportunistic diet with shellfish, seals and seabirds. Late Stone Age people (20–2 millennia ago) moved with the seasons as they followed migrating game, which they hunted with increasingly sophisticated stone tools. Extensive shell middens reveal that they spent part of the year at the coast, living off its bountiful resources.

About 2 millennia ago, people began making use of domesticated animals and plants introduced from areas to the north of South Africa. In the east, livestock were herded and crops grown near permanent settlements, but in the drier western region, nomadic pastoralists had to constantly move their livestock in search of grazing land.

The first European seafarers and settlers encountered two groups of people along the Cape coast – the herders or Khoikhoi, whom they called Hottentots (now considered a derogatory term), and the hunter-gatherers or San, who came to be known as Bushmen. Today, these groups are collectively referred to as the KhoiSan. 'Strandlopers' (beach-walkers) were KhoiSan people, who harvested and hunted coastal resources.

The first European settlers at the Cape bartered with the local Khoikhoi, but soon displaced them from their grazing land, and in some cases violently robbed them of their cattle. Disease and famine also decimated the Khoikhoi bands, so they were forced to find employment as labourers in the growing settlement.

Elsewhere, KhoiSan were absorbed or exterminated over time by Bantus – including the Xhosa and Zulu – who were migrating southward.

European explorers and settlers

The first European to set foot on South African soil was **Bartolomeu Dias**, a Portuguese nobleman and explorer. King João (John) II of Portugal, inspired by his late uncle, Prince Henry the Navigator, was determined to find a sea route to India to bypass the trade monopolies held by Arab middlemen on the overland routes. Initially, he sent the explorer Diago Cão on two voyages to chart the west coast of Africa. Cão sailed as far south as Cape Cross in Namibia before turning back, but paved the way for Dias, who left Lisbon in August 1487. After passing Cape Cross, Dias continued down the coast, but with the northern Cederberg in sight he sailed out to sea to avoid tacking into a strong southerly wind. When he eventually turned eastward, he sailed round the southern tip of Africa without realising it. Unable to see land, he steered north, and came to the Gouritz River mouth, where large waves prevented him from landing. Soon afterwards, he sailed into a large sheltered bay, where he came ashore and took on water from a freshwater spring. It happened to be the festival day of Saint Blaize in his homeland, so he named the bay *Aguada de São Bras* – the watering place of Saint Blaize. The bay was later renamed Mossel Bay by the Dutch.

Dias continued sailing east as far as the Great Fish River, when his disgruntled crew forced him to turn back, since it was clear that they had now discovered a sea route round the southern tip of Africa as instructed. He rounded the Cape Peninsula on his return voyage in May 1488, and named it *Cabo das Tormentas* – the Cape of Storms. On arrival in Portugal, the delighted King John renamed it *Cabo da Boa Esperança* – the Cape of Good Hope – in recognition of its potential to unlock prosperous trading with the East.

Nearly a decade later, on 8 July 1497, **Vasco da Gama** sailed from Lisbon with his fleet of four ships. Bartolomeu Dias acted as pilot for the first sea leg to the Canary Islands, and advised the fleet to sail far out into the Atlantic to avoid the doldrums of the Gulf of Guinea. They then sailed the oceanic southwesterly winds back towards the African continent, landing at St Helena Bay on 7 November. On 22 November, after being beaten back by strong winds, they finally managed to round the Cape of Good Hope. Da Gama wrote in his journal: "To the south of this Cape of Good Hope, and close to it, a vast bay, six leagues broad at its mouth, enters about six leagues into the land." This bay was later named Valsbaai (False Bay) by Dutch sailors, who mistook it for Table Bay after rounding Cape Hangklip on return voyages from the east.

Da Gama landed at Mossel Bay, and then sailed up the east coast. At Christmas, they named the coast they were passing Natal in honour of the birth of Christ. They finally reached Calicut in India on 20 May 1498, successfully opening up the sea route for the spice trade. They now held a monopoly over this route according to the Treaty of Tordesillas, which had been agreed between Portugal and Spain in 1494 after Christopher Columbus discovered the 'New World' in 1492. Land to the west of a demarcation line in the Atlantic Ocean had been designated as Spanish territory, while land to the east was Portuguese.

The Spanish therefore set out to find a westward sea route to Asia, so that they too could bypass the middlemen in the spice trade. In August 1519, **Ferdinand Magellan** set out from Seville with a fleet of five ships and 270 men. They rounded the South American continent by sailing through what is now known as the Straits of Magellan, and reached the Philippines – the first

Europeans to do so – on 16 March 1521. The following month, Magellan was killed during a battle with an indigenous faction. The fleet had by now been seriously reduced through mutiny, attack, disease and other hardships, and the two remaining ships continued sailing westward in an effort to return to Spain. Ultimately, only the *Victoria*, commanded by **Juan Sebastián de Elcano**, made it back safely, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope in May 1522. It arrived in Spain with only 18 men on board, almost three years after the fleet's departure. Its homecoming marked the first circumnavigation of the globe – although this had not been Magellan's original intention.

Despite a number of attempts to repeat this feat, it was not successfully achieved until the Englishman **Sir Francis Drake** followed much the same route, but also explored the west coast of the Americas at the behest of Queen Elizabeth I. He passed the Cape of Good Hope on the return leg in 1580, and later wrote: "This Cape is a most stately thing, and the fairest Cape we saw in the whole circumference of the earth."

Towards the end of the 16th century, Dutch merchants started sending fleets to the east to break Portugal's monopoly on the spice trade, and in 1602, the Dutch government formed a cartel called the Dutch East India Company – or *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC). Sea traffic round the southern tip of Africa increased significantly, but the voyage was long, and many sailors died of scurvy because it was impossible to maintain a supply of fresh fruit and vegetables on board. In 1652, **Jan van Riebeeck** was therefore sent to the Cape to establish a refreshment station to provide fresh food and water for passing ships. The small settlement established at the foot of Table Mountain – which KhoiSan people knew as *Hoerikwaggo*, or 'the mountain in the sea' – grew to become the city of Cape Town.

Early encounters in the Cape between Khoikhoi herders and European seafarers were seldom as amicable as this illustration suggests

Portuguese sailors, in Southern Africa, raise a cross to mark their arrival

An early map illustrating a distorted representation of Africa

West Coast map

West Coast

Strong southeasters in spring and summer make the West Coast a wind sports wonderland. The wind also drives the upwelling of cold, clear water from the depths of the sea, making for chilly swimming. Light onshore winds bring a cloak of fog, but there are also plenty of calm, sunny days providing perfect beach weather. The West Coast is best explored by turning off the R27 at Marine Drive, which follows the coast from Dolphin Beach to Duynefontein.

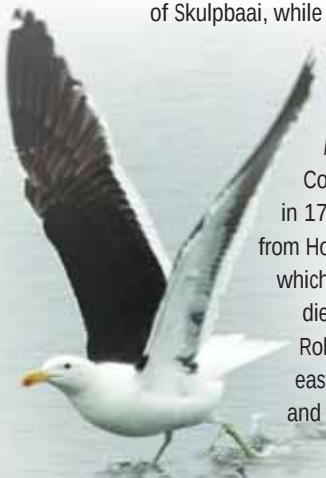
View from the Blaauwberg Conservation Area

Silwerstroomstrand

SILWERSTROOMSTRAND is a coastal resort used mainly by residents of nearby Atlantis and Mamre. The resort lies at the southern edge of an immense bay bordered by Bokpunt in the north, and Springfontein se Punt in the south. Within this bay, a smaller rocky point called Wintersteen provides added protection from the swell for safe swimming in the sea, and there is also a tidal pool for those wanting a warmer dip without the waves. There are picnic sites and braai areas for day visitors, while holidaymakers can stay at the bungalows or caravan park. A slipway is available for boat-launching, and the shore angling is good too, particularly for hottentot during January and February.

Silwerstroomstrand is ideal for long walks on the beach, which extends as an unbroken stretch of sand for some 3 km. The northern half of the beach is backed by a vast dunefield, oriented diagonally to the shore as it reflects the direction of sand blown off the beach by the prevailing southerly winds. Part of the dunefield is a bare sheet of migrating sand, while the rest is covered with strandveld vegetation. Due to its conservation worthiness, this is the southern limit of a potential core area identified for the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve. The habitat here supports a rich diversity of birds, so it is a popular stop on the West Coast birding route.

To the south, a short walk over the rocky point of Wintersteen leads to the little shell-strewn cove of Skulpbaai, while the much larger Matroosbaai lies beyond Springfontein se Punt. The reef offshore marks the watery grave of the *Reygersdal*, a Dutch East India Company ship that was wrecked in 1747 after a disastrous journey from Holland. During the voyage, which lasted $4\frac{1}{2}$ months, 125 men died of scurvy. After reaching Robben Island, a strong south-easter parted the anchor rope, and drove the ship ashore here.



Kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*)

The Kleine Zoute River enters the sea at Van Riebeeckstrand

Only 24 of the remaining crew reached the shore safely, while 93 men drowned.

Silwerstroomstrand is named after the 'silver stream' to the north of the resort. The stream rises from a spring at the edge of the Atlantis dunefield, which supplies water to the town from its underground aquifer.

VAN RIEBEECKSTRAND is a long, sandy beach between the southern border of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, and the mouth of the Kleine Zoute River. It is backed by the suburbs of Duynefontein and Van Riebeeckstrand, and is primarily visited by local residents for walking, swimming, surfing and fishing, although it also draws the kitesurfing set when other sites are blown out. There are numerous access points along its 2 km stretch, but the main beachfront car park is reached from a loop road helpfully named Strand, which leads off Charles Hoffe Avenue. At the **Duynefontein** beach end, the path to the beach called 'Die Bad Pad' (the bath path) winds through a bushy wetland area that supports diverse bird life, as do the estuarine reed beds of the Kleine Zoute River at the beach's southern limit. Further upstream, the Ou Skip resort on the banks of the river – also known simply as the Sout River – has a caravan park and chalet accommodation for holidaymakers.

Cape Flats dune strandveld

Water sport enthusiasts should note that the area in front of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station is a 'no go' security zone that extends 2 km off-shore, and more than 3 km along the coast. On land, however, the public is welcome to visit Koeberg's private nature reserve, which encompasses 2 200 hectares of strandveld habitat. There is a mountain-biking route on the reserve's rolling gravel roads, as well as two hiking trails. The Grysbok Trail to the south of the power station has a 5,7 km and a 2,5 km option, while the Dikkop Trail to the north offers 9,5 km, 19,3 km and 22,3 km alternatives. Both the Dikkop Trail and the mountain-biking route take in two large ponds, where well-constructed hides allow for some surreptitious bird-watching. Visiting the reserve is particularly rewarding when the spring daisies are in bloom, but at any time of year it is possible to see animals such as springbok, blesbok, zebra and ostrich.

Main Beach, Melkbosstrand

MELKBOSSTRAND was traditionally most popular with farmers from the Swartland who spent their summer holidays here, celebrating the new year with 'boeresport' games, such as tug of war on Tweede Nuwejaar (2 January). Today, with the rapid development that has taken place on the West Coast, the beach is used all year round by residents of the surrounding suburbs and the nearby Atlantic Beach Golf Estate, while kitesurfers from further afield come here to take advantage of the strong south-easters in spring and summer.

The beach, simply known as 'Main Beach', is backed by green lawns that are perfect for sand-free picnics, and there are a few cafés and restaurants dotted along the adjacent Beach Road. A rocky outcrop called Slabbert se Klippe – a popular fishing spot – demarcates Main Beach from Kapteinsbaai to the north, which gives way to Van Riebeeckstrand. This means that it is possible to walk along the beach all the way from the rocky point known as Melkbos Point in the south, to the border of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station – a distance of some 4 km.

The waves at Melkbosstrand are relatively tame, so this is one of the few places along Cape Town's West Coast where it is easy to get through the surf safely. For this reason, there is a slipway for launching skiboats on the northern edge of Melkbos Point, and the National Sea Rescue Institute's (NSRI) Station 18 rescue base has been established here. Surfskiers and seakayakers also launch at Melkbosstrand for long paddles along the coast, but there is enough of a wave also to keep the surfers happy, at spots known as Beach Road and Captains.

The local angling club hosts an annual Galjoen Derby in early September, and hottentot, kob and white steenbras are also caught along this stretch of coast. Crayfish may only be targeted north of

Melkbos = Milkwoods

The white milkwood *Sideroxylon inerme* is a slow-growing tree that was heavily exploited in the past, as its hard, fine-grained wood was used for building bridges, boats and mills. Today, the species is fairly common along the Cape coast, and often occurs as dense groves. Nevertheless, it is protected in terms of the National Forest Act of 1998, and may not be cut, disturbed, damaged or destroyed without a licence from the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry. In exposed areas, the tree canopy often displays obvious 'pruning' from the prevailing wind.


Atlantic Beach Golf Estate

the beacon on Melkbos Point – to the south, the entire West Coast and Atlantic seaboard to Die Josie at Hout Bay is a rock lobster reserve, extending 12 nautical miles out to sea.

Melkbosstrand also has the distinction of being the landing point for South Africa's undersea communications cables. The SAT-1 co-axial telephone cable laid in 1968 between Melkbosstrand and Portugal was replaced in 1993 with SAT-2, a fibre-optic cable that terminates at the islands of Madeira and Tenerife. The SA-Far East (SAFE) cable runs from Melkbosstrand to Mauritius, India and Malaysia, while another cable to the United Kingdom – with branches to at least 10 African west coast countries – is due to be completed before the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.

In the early 1800s, Melkbosstrand was known as Losperd's Bay, but the original farm here was named De Melkbosch in honour of the area's milkwood trees (see box alongside). An outbuilding of the farm, called the Damhuis after a dam that has long since been filled in and built over, can still be seen on Beach Road. By 1924, this building – originally used as a fish store – together with a post office, shop and a few holiday homes, made up the tiny settlement of Melkboschstrand, as it was then known, but in that year, the Cape Lands Development Company put 600 plots up for sale. From these small beginnings the town developed slowly, until the construction of the West Coast Road (R27) and Koeberg Nuclear Power Station during the 1970s triggered a growth spurt. Over the last decade, Melkbosstrand's development has again accelerated, as the sky-rocketing property market closer to the city centre has encouraged house-hunters to buy in outlying areas offering wide-open spaces and cheaper prices.


Sunset stroll


Spring floral display on BCA's lowlands

BLAAUWBERG CONSERVATION AREA encompasses the coastal strip from the outskirts of Melkbosstrand, to Big Bay at Blouberg, and extends inland to include Blaauwberg Hill, so named because of its blue appearance when viewed from approaching ships. The area has been granted formal conservation status as a local authority nature reserve because it includes three threatened vegetation types – West Coast renosterveld, sandplain fynbos and dune thicket – as well as the transitional ecotones between them.

Apart from its biodiversity value, the area has great cultural and historical significance.

Battle of Blaauwberg

The Battle of Blaauwberg was waged on the plains below Blaauwberg Hill and the slopes of neighbouring Kleinberg in January 1806. It was fought between the Dutch, who ruled the Cape at the time, and the British, whose troops landed from warships anchored off Losperd's Bay – now called Melkbosstrand. The British beat the Dutch, which subsequently established British rule in South Africa for the second time.

The battle ended with the signing of the provisional Articles of Capitulation on 10 January under a milkwood tree in the area now known as Woodstock. The 'Treaty Tree' still stands today, and in 1967 was designated a National Monument (now a Provincial Heritage Site).

The land around Blaauwberg Hill was the site of the 1806 Battle of Blaauwberg, which marked the end of Dutch rule at the Cape (see box below). The area also contains World War II relics, as well as shell middens left by KhoiSan 'strandlopers' from precolonial days.

The nature reserve office and environmental education centre are situated in the controlled-access recreation area known as **Eerstesteen**. The area offers designated braai sites and picnic spots. Portable braai equipment is not allowed. Although there are some playground apparatuses for children, there is little shelter from the wind and sun. Wooden boardwalks lead over the low dunes to the beach, which is popular for long walks in either direction. This is an exposed stretch of coastline, and the surf is usually too rough for safe swimming.

An entrance fee is charged during the summer months for Eerstesteen, which is considered the 'southern gateway' to the Blaauwberg Conservation Area (BCA). Continuing northwards along Marine Drive (M14), there are a number of free access points to the shoreline, all marked by a gravel parking area.

Demarcated paths are used to protect the sensitive dune vegetation

Derdesteen is a popular surf spot, which works best in glassy conditions. Next along is **Kreeftebaai**, where the beach is separated from the sea by a rocky section of shoreline. The rock crevices and kelp beds here are undoubtedly good crayfish habitat, but the entire West Coast south of Melkbos Point falls within the rock lobster closed area, where these crustaceans may not be caught. However, rock-and-surf fishing is allowed, and hottentot, galjoen, kob and even white steenbras can be hooked in these waters.

Kelpbaai is obviously named for its kelp beds, and **Haakgat** (hook hole) for its fishing potential, although this area is also used by surfers and kitesurfers. The last beach before Melkbosstrand is **Holbaai** (hollow bay), but whether it was named by anglers for its fishing hollows, or by surfers for its hollow barrel waves, is uncertain.

Suurvy (*Carpobrotus acinaciformis*)

Popular kitesurfing on Bloubergstrand

BLOUBERGSTRAND has two main beach areas – Big Bay and Small Bay – as well as little Bokkombaai, tucked between two rocky sections of shoreline. **Big Bay** is the northernmost beach, and, as its name implies, is a large, sweeping bay, ringed by dazzling white sand. The shallows offer safe swimming conditions, with volunteer lifesavers from the local club on duty during peak periods, while the waves and wind are a drawcard for water sport enthusiasts, including bodyboarders, kitesurfers and jetskiers. Surfers often prefer two spots just north of the bay, called Kamer van 17, after a rocky outcrop at the bay's entrance, and Horse Trails, close to the racehorse trainer Terence Millard's former estate. The seemingly endless stretch of sandy beach here is perfect for long walks with the dogs, and at spring low tide, people can often be seen doing the 'white mussel shuffle' in the shallows, using their feet to feel for the buried bivalves. As with all marine resource use, a permit for shellfish collecting is required from Marine and Coastal Management (MCM), and bag limits and minimum size limits apply.

Bloubergstrand is famous for its views of Table Mountain, and Robben Island lies directly offshore. Big Bay is normally the end point for intrepid open water swimmers who tackle the approximately 7 km swim from the island through bitterly cold waters. The record time for this test of endurance is about 1½ hours.

Big Bay used to be backed by expansive lawns, dotted with braai sites, but these have recently been replaced by new developments offering a mix of residential, retail and commercial property.

Small Bay is right next to Big Bay, separated from it by a sandy spit that is partly submerged at high tide. This beach is particularly safe for children, because a row of large rocks across the mouth of the bay acts as a natural breakwater, reducing the power of the waves. There are a number of parking areas accessed from the maze of streets behind the bay, and a range of restaurants close by, including Ons Huisie ('our little house') in a whitewashed, thatched building that was once a fisherman's cottage. Built in 1816, it has operated as a restaurant specialising in traditional Cape cuisine since the 1970s.

Beyond Small Bay there is a rocky section of coast known as Kreefgat ('crayfish hole'), but nowadays its inhabitants are off limits because the area falls within a rock lobster reserve. A


Table View beach

wide pathway following the shoreline is very popular with runners, who can pound the pavement all the way from Small Bay to Dolphin Beach and back.

Bokkombaai, named after the dried, salted harders (mullet) that are traditional West Coast seafood, is a sandy strip strewn with the shells of black mussels. The rock pools here – and continuing along the last stretch of the Bloubergstrand coastline – provide good paddling ponds for toddlers, and hours of exploration for inquisitive kids.

TABLE VIEW, so named for its spectacular views of Table Mountain's iconic profile, and its easily accessible, straight coastline, is a favourite stretch for long walks on the beach. Runners and pram pushers opt for the paved pathways that connect all the car parks between Bloubergstrand and Dolphin Beach, while cyclists have a dedicated lane along Marine Drive (M14). During summer, stalls selling arts and crafts are set up alongside the car parks in peak periods.

The beach is steeply sloped, and drops off quickly into deeper water, so it has a powerful shorebreak and dumping waves that reduce its suitability for swimming. It is popular for sunbathing though, and for watching the aerobatics of kitesurfers and jetskiers who ply these waters. Surfers congregate at a spot towards the northern end of the beach.

DOLPHIN BEACH is a continuation of Table View, and is found south of the traffic circle on Marine Drive (M14). Here, the paved pathway along the beachfront meanders between manicured lawns on one side, and a low dune ridge on the other. There is a dune rehabilitation programme in place along this entire stretch of coast, so beachgoers should stay off the dunes, and use the boardwalks and formal access points to reach the beach.

A tourist information centre is located alongside the main beachfront car park, and there are a variety of restaurants and fast-food outlets in the vicinity. The ponds and reed beds of the wetland area near the Dolphin Beach Hotel – after which the beach was named – offer good bird-watching opportunities, with parking available off the hotel's access road.

Dolphins of the West Coast

The dolphins most likely to be seen close inshore along Cape Town's west coast are dusky dolphins. These are very acrobatic dolphins, often observed somersaulting or corkscrewing through the air, or riding the bow waves of boats. They are dark in colour on the back, and white on the belly, with bands of grey on the sides. Although they are sometimes seen in False Bay, they mainly occur along the west coast of Southern Africa, as far north as Angola.

Heaviside's dolphins appear to be confined to the cold waters of the West Coast's Benguela current, so they are sometimes called Benguela dolphins. They are relatively shy animals, and not as boisterous as dusky dolphins, although they do also bowride in front of boats. The front half of the body is mostly grey, and the back half is dark, with distinctive white blazes on the flanks below the dorsal fin.

Bottlenose and common dolphins are more likely to be seen east of Cape Point, or in deeper waters.

Rietvlei Wetland Reserve

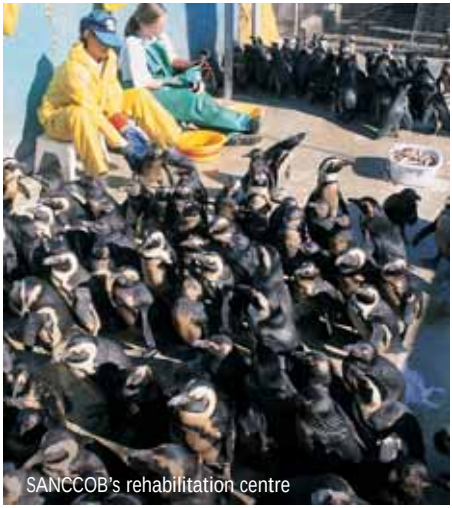
RIETVLEI WETLAND RESERVE extends down to the coastline between Dolphin Beach and Sunset Beach. The beach can be accessed from a gravel car park alongside the R27, but offers no other facilities. However, the main part of the reserve has a range of facilities, including ample parking, toilets, picnic and braai sites, walking trails and a boat-launching site.

The 560 hectare reserve was declared in 1982 to protect the wetlands of Rietvlei and the Milnerton lagoon, which comprise the floodplain and estuary of the Diep River. The river forms a natural ecological corridor that links the reserve to the Blaauwberg Conservation Area further north. Rietvlei's wetlands consist of a number of shallow pans that normally dry out in summer, and a permanent lake known as Flamingo Vlei. During the 1970s, this body of water was dredged to a depth of nine metres to provide infill for the construction of the container berths at Table Bay harbour. The northern lobe is now used for a variety of water sports – including power-boating, water-skiing, dinghy-sailing, windsurfing, as well as freshwater angling – while the southern lobe is a bird sanctuary area. Rietvlei supports a remarkable diversity of birds, with more than 190 species having been recorded here. Of these species, 102 are water birds, many of them migrant waders that visit these waters in spring and summer. A large birdhide allows their behaviour to be observed undetected.

Cape river frog (*Amieta fuscigula*)

Entrance to the reserve is at the Milnerton

Aquatic Club in Sandpiper Road, accessed from Pentz Drive off Blaauwberg Road (M14). A small entrance fee is charged for the reserve, and an additional launching fee and rod tariff is levied (anglers must also be in possession of a freshwater angling permit from CapeNature). The education centre here offers outdoor and environmental education for school groups by prior arrangement. The seabird rehabilitation centre run by SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) is also worth a visit, as it allows for close viewing of penguins and other seabirds. The centre is open to the public all week, with a nominal fee charged as a contribution towards operational costs.


SANCCOB's rehabilitation centre

Flamingos

The two species of flamingo that occur in Africa – the greater and lesser flamingo – can sometimes be seen at Rietvlei, although they do not breed here. The greater flamingo is the larger and paler of the two, with pink only on the wings. The bill is pink, but has a black tip. The much smaller lesser flamingo has redder plumage overall, and its dark red bill appears black from afar.

Both species are found in large flocks at shallow freshwater lakes, saline pans and estuaries, often occurring together, but exploiting different food sources. They both use their specially adapted curved bill for filter feeding, holding it upside down and pumping water with the tongue through its hair-like lamellae to trap food particles. The greater flamingo has coarse lamellae, and eats small aquatic invertebrates that it disturbs from the sediment by treading its feet, leaving wheel-shaped depressions in the mud. Its long legs and neck enable it to feed in deeper water than the lesser flamingo, which sweeps its head from side to side near the water surface to trap diatoms and other algae in its very fine lamellae. Carotenoid pigments in their diet account for the characteristic pink colour of flamingos, so healthy, well-fed individuals are pinker – and more likely to attract a mate – than their malnourished neighbours.


Lesser flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*)

View of Table Mountain from Sunset Beach

SUNSET BEACH takes its name from the suburb that was developed here fairly recently. Previously, it was considered the upper end of Milnerton Beach, and visited only by people taking lengthy walks along the beach. Today, there are a number of access points from the suburb, with five beachfront parking areas. As its name implies, the beach offers spectacular views of the sun setting over the sea.

Milnerton lighthouse

MILNERTON lies at one end of an uninterrupted stretch of sandy shore that extends all the way to Bloubergstrand, some 10 km to the north. There are two main beaches here – Milnerton Beach, accessed from Woodbridge Island, and Milnerton Lagoon Beach at the mouth of the Diep River.

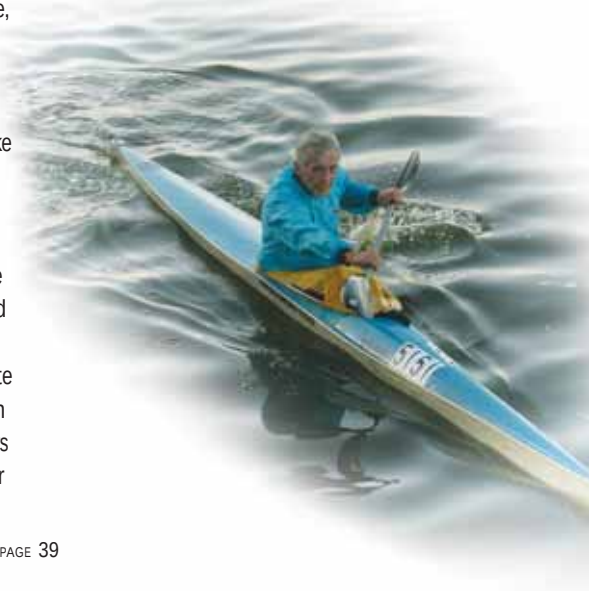
Milnerton Beach is popular for long walks as well as water sports, particularly surfing, kitesurfing and surfskiing. The surf and backwash is often too strong for safe swimming, but volunteer lifesavers from the Milnerton Surf Lifesaving Club keep watch over a demarcated area in front of their clubhouse on weekends and public holidays. Towering over the beachfront car park is the Milnerton lighthouse, an all-white cylindrical cement structure housing an 800 000 candlepower revolving light. It was commissioned in 1960 to provide a warning beacon for sea traffic, because the coastline between Milnerton and Mouille Point had claimed more ships – at least 150 – than any other area in South Africa. The remains of one of these, the cargo ship *Winton*, can still be seen in the surf zone to the north of the beach after running aground here in July 1934. The ship was due to stop over in Cape Town en route from Australia to Britain with 6 000 tons of wheat in the hold, but the captain mistook the lights on top of some tall telegraph masts for those on the breakwater of Table Bay

Palm trees line the Milnerton Lagoon

harbour, bringing the voyage to an abrupt end.

Milnerton Beach is backed by a golf course to the north of the car park, and by the Woodbridge Island housing estate to the south. The estate surrounds Zonnekus – the seaside mansion built for Sir David Graaff in 1929 – and is named after the old wooden bridge over Milnerton Lagoon. The bridge was built in 1899 to provide military access to the 'island' during the Anglo-Boer War. Today, a modern cement bridge carries vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the lagoon, but the wooden bridge – now sealed off as it is structurally unsound – still stands. The Milnerton Canoe Club is situated at the seaward end of the bridge, and hosts time trials on the lagoon every Wednesday night during the autumn and winter months. In spring and summer, many of the paddlers swop their canoes for surfskis, and take part in the weekly 'downwind dash' on the sea from Milnerton Beach to Big Bay.

The lagoon forms part of the estuary of the Diep River, which rises some 65 km away in the Perdeberg and Riebeeck Kasteel mountains, and empties into the sea at **Milnerton Lagoon Beach**. The beach is accessed from Lagoon Gate Drive, and there are public parking and ablution facilities alongside the office complex here. Surfers know this spot as Dumps, and it is also used for paddle and wind sports. Children sometimes play in the shallow, gently flowing waters at the mouth of the lagoon, although this is a potential health risk. Ongoing water quality monitoring has shown that concentrations of faecal bacteria sometimes exceed standards for safe recreational contact. The Potsdam Wastewater Works, which discharges treated effluent into the Diep River, has recently been upgraded, and heavily polluted stormwater runoff into the river system is also being addressed. Fortunately, runoff is minimal in summer, so water quality just inside the mouth generally meets standards during this period.



City Seaboard map

City Seaboard

This stretch of coastline provides a convenient outdoor escape for people living in the city bowl and neighbouring areas, and also attracts residents of outlying suburbs, as its beaches are the most sheltered in Cape Town. Although the sea is too cold for more than a quick dip, the beaches face the setting sun, making for longer days as well as spectacular sunsets.

V&A Waterfront

V&A Waterfront in Table Bay

GRANGER BAY is the closest stretch of coastline to the city centre, apart from the Table Bay harbour and its V&A Waterfront (see box below). However, few people come here to visit the beach, which is a narrow strip of shell and kelp-strewn sand bordered by a rocky shore. Instead, they are attracted to the area by the trendy restaurants and bars that have sprung up along Beach Road in recent years.

In addition, development around the Granger Bay harbour has transformed this previously overlooked coastal asset. The harbour was originally built in the 1960s as part of the Louis Botha Naval Academy, where naval cadets were trained for the merchant navy. It was later taken over by the Cape Technikon, which runs a maritime training facility and a hotel school in the harbour precinct. More recently, an upmarket hotel, apartment block and office complex have been added, and a small boat marina constructed by deepening the harbour basin, and extending the breakwater.

Granger Bay is named after Captain Robert Granger, a merchant, shipping agent and shipowner who lived in a small house overlooking the beach, where whalers once landed their catch. One stormy night in February 1857, Captain Granger saw a small schooner capsize out at sea, and immediately went to the rescue in a small dinghy, putting himself in grave danger. He saved five people, while the rest were rescued by a boat from town. Captain Granger was given an award for his bravery, and some years later, he was honoured in perpetuity when the name Granger Bay appeared on maps of the Cape.

PORT OF CALL

The Victoria and Alfred (V&A) Waterfront and surrounding Table Bay harbour form an integral part of Cape Town's coastline. Apart from being vital to the shipping and fishing industries, they provide a unique opportunity to get up close and personal with marine life. Seabirds such as terns, gulls and cormorants have become habituated to people, and hang about in the hope of scrounging scraps of food. Cape fur seals can be seen wallowing in the harbour waters, basking in the sun on the landing near the Clock Tower, or taking a breather on tyres lining the quayside. An underwater view of their agile aquabatics is on display at the world-class Two Oceans Aquarium, where adrenalin junkies can even dive with sharks in the predator tank. Nearby, the Maritime Museum showcases the maritime history of Table Bay, and houses the largest collection of model ships in South Africa.

The V&A Waterfront has been developed around the Victoria and Alfred Basins, named after Queen Victoria and her second son. In September 1860 – to much pomp and ceremony – the young Prince Alfred tipped the first load of stone into Table Bay for the construction of the harbour breakwater. Ten years later, the Alfred Basin was opened, followed by the Victoria Basin in 1920.

MOUILLE POINT marks the start of the Promenade that traces the coastline through Sea Point to the edge of Bantry Bay. This means it offers a good work-out for walkers and runners, as well as a gentle seaside stroll for the less energetic. Although there is no beach, and the rocky shore below the sea wall is inaccessible, the area is a popular family destination because of the putt-putt (mini-golf) course that operates all week. Nearby is the hedge-lined labyrinth known as Serendipity Maze, but it opens during peak periods only.

Another special experience is a visit to the Green Point lighthouse (see box alongside). Despite its warning beacon, this stretch of coast is notorious as a ship graveyard, with scores of vessels having been wrecked here over the years. The most tragic case is the *Athens*, a Royal Mail steamer that was driven onto the rocks in May 1865 in what became known as the Great Gale of Table Bay. This was in the days before the harbour breakwater was built, so vessels lying at anchor in Table Bay were pounded by heavy seas, and 17 sailships were cast ashore. The captain of the *Athens* tried to steam out to sea, but waves crashed through the engine room skylight, and extinguished the boiler fires, leaving the little ship at the mercy of the elements. She ran aground close inshore, but the many people who rushed to the site with ropes, lights and lifebuoys were unable to reach the ship, and all 29 on board perished. The rusty hulk of the ship's boiler can still be seen in the sea towards Granger Bay.

Some years later, when the *Thermopylae* ran aground in perfectly calm conditions in 1899, local residents put to sea in small boats stored in the sheds at Three Anchor Bay, and directed the ship's lifeboats to safety. All passengers and crew were rescued. In July 1966, the grounding of the *SA Seafarer* prompted an environmental 'scare', as she was carrying a potentially hazardous cargo of tetra-ethyl lead. All on board were saved and her cargo salvaged without incident.

Although little remains of these and other shipwrecks close inshore, the sites are occasionally visited by recreational divers when conditions allow, while the *Thermopylae* has also lent its name to a surf spot here. Another surf spot, just east of the lighthouse, is known as Off the Wall due to its proximity to the sea wall.

THE GREEN POINT LIGHTHOUSE

The Green Point lighthouse, commissioned in 1824, was the first formal lighthouse to be built on the South African coast. Until then, fires or lamps had been lit to warn ships of navigation hazards. The lighthouse has undergone numerous changes over the years – apart from electrification and improvements to the optics, the tower was raised and also changed colour several times to help it stand out against the surrounding buildings. Today, it is painted with diagonal red and white stripes. A diaphone-type foghorn was installed in 1926, despite opposition from local residents, who feared it would disturb their sleep. This was replaced by an electrically operated nautophone in 1986. The revolving lighthouse beam has a range of 25 nautical miles, and an intensity of 850 000 CD (candle power), with one flash every 10 seconds.

The lighthouse is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the Mouille Point lighthouse. However, this was the name of another smaller lighthouse nearby. Built in 1842 on the northern arm of Granger Bay, it remained in use until 1908, when the new beacon on the breakwater of the Table Bay harbour rendered it obsolete. The lighthouse was later demolished, but its foundation base can still be seen in the Granger Bay harbour precinct.


Three Anchor Bay

However, surfers must contend with polluted waters in these parts. Ongoing monitoring has revealed that the coastal waters here exceed water quality guidelines for safe recreational use.

The name Mouille Point originates from the protective mole built to shelter ships, and provide safe anchorage long before the Table Bay harbour breakwater existed. Construction began in 1743, with wagonloads of stone dumped into the sea, but strong waves and currents constantly broke down the barrier, and in 1746 the project was abandoned. The Dutch word for mole at that time was *moeilje*, but the spelling was later corrupted by the French, who – after their arrival in the Cape in 1791 – upgraded the Dutch defences that had been built near the mole. They referred to the site as the Mouille Battery, and the entire coastal strip eventually took on the name.

THREE ANCHOR BAY is a small, sheltered cove between Mouille Point and Sea Point. It has a sandy beach and a slipway, used mainly by recreational boat owners. It is also the main put-in point for surfskiers and seakayakers, some of whom store their gear in the boatsheds beneath the Promenade. Just across the road there is a seakayaking shop that offers guided trips – no previous paddling experience is necessary, because the sea is often glassy calm here. It is a particularly rewarding paddle at the end of the day, with the sun dipping towards the horizon on one side, and spectacular views of Signal Hill and Lion's Head on the other (see box on page 45). Penguins, seals and dolphins are often seen, as well as sunfish.

Pollution problems here mean that the water quality is unsuitable for swimming. However, long-distance swimmers occasionally test their

SUNFISH OR MOONFISH?

The strange-looking ocean sunfish *Mola mola* resembles a fish that has been chopped in half. Its rounded shape has lent it common names in some languages – *poisson lune, pez luna* and *mondfisch* – that can be translated as 'moonfish', but the English name refers to the sunfish's habit of lying on its side at the sea surface, as if sunbathing.

The body of the fish is flattened from side to side, and the caudal (tail) fin has been replaced by a rounded clavus, which is used for steering. There is a long dorsal fin above, and an anal fin below, both of which are flapped sideways for propulsion. Because the angular dorsal fin protrudes above the sea surface, the sunfish is sometimes mistaken for a shark. The distinguishing feature is that a shark's dorsal fin moves through the water in a straight line, while that of the sunfish has a zigzagging, sideways movement.

The ocean sunfish is the world's largest bony fish (as opposed to cartilaginous fish, such as sharks). It has an average weight of 1 000 kg and length of 1,8 m, although individuals of double this size have been recorded. It feeds mainly on jellyfish, comb jellies, bluebottles and salps.

endurance, and attempt to set new records by swimming here from Robben Island. The 10,2 km swim takes over two hours, but some intrepid swimmers have also undertaken a return trip from the beach, spending some six hours in the chilly water!

Three Anchor Bay was originally called Lion's Cove – *De Leeuwen Zantbaeikjen* – by Jan van Riebeeck, due to its proximity to what he knew as the Lion Mountain (later Lion's Head and the Lion's Rump, or Signal Hill). More than a century later, when the Dutch colony was facing attack by British invaders in 1795, three massive anchors with chains attached were fixed across the entrance of the cove to thwart enemy landings. But the British succeeded in landing at Muizenberg in False Bay, and before long had taken occupation of the Cape. By 1800, the cove was commonly known as Three Anchor Bay.


Ice cream seller on the Promenade


Sea Point municipal pool

SEA POINT has a number of small beaches linked by a promenade along the sea wall that stretches all the way from Mouille Point to Bantry Bay. The Sea Point Promenade provides a convenient exercise circuit for local residents and city workers, so from first light to spectacular sunset it is used by scores of joggers and walkers. The lawns alongside the Promenade are used for informal games of football and touch rugby, and there are playground areas for children, with swings and jungle gyms. Many people also walk

THE GUN RUN AND SIGNAL HILL

The Sea Point Promenade is a favourite part of the half-marathon route of the annual Gun Run. The cut-off time for the runners used to coincide with the firing of the noonday gun at the Lion Battery on the slopes of Signal Hill. The two cannons used for this daily time check are the world's oldest iron guns still in daily use. The start of the race has recently been shifted to earlier in the day, so as a special arrangement, the Cape Field Artillery now fire the cannons to start each of the three Gun Run events (21 km, 10 km and 5 km), and also mark the cut-off at 10:00.

The daily time signal was originally introduced in 1833 to allow ships in Table Bay to set their clocks, but the cannons were then fired from the Imhoff Battery at the Castle, and were only moved to the Lion Battery in 1902. However, in 1821, a signalling station was established on top of what was then known as the Lion's Rump. A system of flags and shots fired was used to warn the settlement of approaching ships, hence the name change to Signal Hill.


Rocklands

their dogs here, but those who fail to clean up after them are liable to be fined.

Sea Point has a rocky coastline, so the beaches here are either tiny coves or strips of sand behind the rocky shore. For those preferring not to venture into the sea, where pollution levels have been known to exceed those recommended for recreational use, there is the municipal pool complex at the Sea Point Pavilion. The complex contains an Olympic-sized pool, two smaller children's pools, and a springboard diving pool, all filled with crystal-clear seawater that has been filtered and chlorinated. A small entrance fee is charged.

Closest to Three Anchor Bay, the first beach along the Promenade is **Rocklands**, a small cove ringed by the sea wall. A sheltered gully between the rocks is a popular paddling spot for children, and there is a playground area on the lawns nearby. Rocklands takes its name from the original property that stretched from the shore to the Main Road. In the 1870s, the large house on the property was turned into the Rocklands boarding house, which became a well-known landmark. Over the years, the rest of the property was developed, and the building was eventually demolished. In 1955, the studios of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) were built on the site.

Further along the Promenade is **Graaff's Pool**, notorious as a men-only nudist spot that developed an increasingly seedy reputation during the 1980s and 1990s. A high, whitewashed wall around the pool shielded nude bathers from the public eye, but also helped hide clandestine activities. The pool was a well-known gay pick-up spot – dubbed The Wall – where rent boys solicited their services, and drug dealers pedalled their wares. In 2002, the wall was damaged by storm waves, and rather than repair it, the City

The Promenade curves around numerous small beaches

Council elected to partially demolish it, following continual complaints from local residents about the illicit goings-on at the pool. It was also considered unconstitutional to reserve part of the coastline for one gender, so the men-only signs have come down, but even today, few women venture down the long concrete path to the pool.

Graaff's Pool is named after Sir Jacobus Graaff, who lived in an elegant house opposite it, called Bordeaux. The Graaff family bought the house in 1893 from a prominent wine merchant, Pieter Marais, who had named it after the French wine-growing region. It was in fact Mr Marais who had created the pool for his wheelchair-bound wife, arranging for a path to be constructed from the front gate of the house down to a small natural rock pool, which was enlarged by carting away any loose stones. In hot weather, Mrs Marais was wheeled down to the pool for a reviving dip. Some years later, the pool was upgraded with Jacobus Graaff's cooperation, and given his name.

There is a larger, more family-oriented tidal pool at **Milton Beach**, the next sandy beach after Rocklands. The beach is separated from the sea by a rocky shelf, so the pool offers the safest and most accessible swimming spot, although shallow pools and gullies may be fine for a wallow at high tide. There are parking areas and ablution facilities close by, as well as drinking fountains that are popular rest stops for walkers and joggers.

Milton Beach gives way to **Brokenbath Beach**, closest to the Pavilion and its pool complex. Long before the construction of the existing pools, the original Sea Point Baths were situated here. Built in 1895, the baths were enjoyed by both men and women, but at separate allocated times, until they were destroyed by rough seas in 1911 – hence the name of the beach. The baths were not immediately rebuilt, because construction work had already begun on the nearby Milton Pool, which became the fashionable swimming spot of the time.

Beyond the Pavilion, the Promenade curves around the rocky coastline before straightening out behind **Sunset Beach**. This long stretch of sand is fronted by a rocky shore, where the

remnants of a tidal pool can be seen. The pool was built specifically for the use of non-whites in the days when beaches and other public facilities were racially segregated. Some years ago, the retaining walls were broken down because the pool was poorly flushed by the tides, resulting in persistent water quality problems. Nowadays, most sunbathers use the cold-water showers on the beach to cool off. Close by, there is a modern ablution block in the large parking area accessed off the Queens Road circle.

On the other side of Beach Road, running the length of the beach, is the Sea Point Research Aquarium, a facility of the governmental Marine and Coastal Management Directorate. Long ago, the building housed a public aquarium, but has now been extensively renovated and equipped with state-of-the-art technology for pollution and plankton studies, aquaculture experimentation, and research on the biology of fish and other marine organisms.

The next beach along is **Queen's Beach**, named after the Queen's Hotel that was built nearby in 1887. This is the most popular of the Sea Point beaches for sunbathing, being quieter and more secluded than those beneath the main stretch of the Promenade. This last section of Beach Road is a cul-de-sac, so there is little passing traffic, and a free parking space is usually easy to find, as there are two large parking areas. The beach tends to be frequented by singles, couples and small groups of adults, rather than boisterous families. A shallow gully between the rocks provides a safe spot to dunk beneath the waves.

The last of the Sea Point beaches, closest to Bantry Bay, is **Saunders' Rocks**. The beach has less space for suntanners, because it is dotted with outcrops of rock, and is popular with families, probably because it has a small tidal pool. Although somewhat overgrown with algae, the pool is set in a magical position between mammoth granite boulders, so it acts as a drawcard for groups of people, who drape themselves over the surrounding rock slabs. There are also natural pools and gullies on the rocky shore here, but poor water quality compromises their suitability for recreational use.

Saunders' Rocks were named during the second half of the 1800s. A distinguished citizen of Cape Town called Robert Saunders lived at Rock Cottage on the eastern edge of Bantry Bay. His son, John, who also rose to prominence at a young age, later took over the house, so it is not known whether the rocks are named after the father or son, or both.

The rocks between Saunders' Rocks and Queen's Beach – known as the Sea Point Contact – are of much greater historical significance, and

ROCK OF AGES

The rocky shore between Queen's Beach and Saunders' Rocks is of enormous geological interest. Known as the Sea Point Contact, it is a record of a great upheaval of the earth's surface that took place eons ago. The Geological Society of South Africa has erected a plaque in the Queen's Beach car park bearing a simple explanation of the phenomenon.

About 540 million years ago, molten granite magma rose up through the dark sedimentary formations of the Malmesbury Group, which had been deposited at an earlier time. Such was the heat of intrusion that the Malmesbury strata were softened, stretched and dismembered along the contact area, forming a complex zone of mixed rock, called migmatite, over about 150 metres.

By walking along the Promenade from Sunset Beach to Saunders' Rocks, it is possible to see a transition from the undisturbed dark rocks of the Malmesbury Group, through various mixtures of the two rock types displaying distinct bands and fragments, to the homogenous granite around Saunders' Rocks.

The 'father of evolution', Charles Darwin, came to see this feature in 1836, after being told of it by Dr Andrew Smith, the first superintendent of the South African Museum. Darwin spent 18 days at the Cape when the *HMS Beagle* docked at Simon's Town during its five-year circumnavigation of the globe.


Bantry Bay

were declared a National Monument in 1952 (see box). They also provide a convenient entry point for the surf spot called Queen's, best ridden during a high tide, good swell and southeast wind. Other surf spots in Sea Point are Solly's – close to the Pavilion – and Rocklands, both of which are best in a southeaster, but can work in a southwester too.

BANTRY BAY, which lies between Clifton and Sea Point, was originally known as Botany Bay. In 1803, Dr Friedrich Ludwig Liesching – a former surgeon-major and later the first president of the South African Medical Society – established a botanical garden on the lower slopes of Lion's Head. The garden was mainly used to grow medicinal herbs, but also rare botanical specimens. By 1808, the garden had been abandoned, but the name Botany Bay was used for the estate until it was purchased by a man named O'Callaghan in 1882. Being of Irish descent, he renamed it Bantry Bay after an inlet on the southwest coast of Ireland. Perhaps he was motivated by the connotations with Australia's Botany Bay – a notorious penal colony where, starting in 1788, thousands of convicts were sent from Britain.

Today, the coastline hugging the bay itself is quite inaccessible, as exclusive apartment blocks line the sea cliffs. However, anglers sometimes fish off the rocks here, casting their lines into the deep blue waters of the bay.

CLIFTON is the heart of Cape Town's beach scene, pulsating with the energy of the bronzed and beautiful. It is a place to see and be seen, with itsy-bitsy bikinis, G-strings and designer sunglasses the order of the day. While topless tanning is not frowned upon, total nudity is best saved for Sandy Bay. Just offshore, a few yachts lying at anchor in the clear blue waters add to the exotic flavour.

Clifton's four dazzlingly white beaches, separated by outcrops of granite rock, are the most sheltered in Cape Town. This means that Clifton can generally be relied upon for perfect conditions in summer, even when the wind chases people off other beaches. Temperatures can soar on the back beach, but down near the water's edge, the

Clifton 4th Beach

Clifton 4th Beach from above

icy sea has a welcome cooling effect. Here, on the hard, wet sand, more active types work up a sweat with beach bats and frisbees, periodically taking a refreshing dunk in the shallows. Others prefer a quick shower to cool off when roasting in the sun gets uncomfortably hot. Vendors ply the beaches selling snacks and drinks, so it is possible to spend a few hours here without wandering far.

Each of the four beaches has its own special character. **1st Beach**, where many of the locals and old-timers go, is the least crowded, but lacks the cosy atmosphere of the other beaches, as it is overlooked by exclusive beachfront apartments. **2nd Beach** is considered the place to go for a few hours in the sun without too much hype, while **3rd Beach** is a popular gay-friendly rendezvous spot. Finally, **4th Beach** is usually packed with trendy people, but is also frequented by family groups, being closest to ablution facilities and parking areas. For the other beaches, it is possible to park along Victoria Road, and walk down steep stairs to the beach – although given Clifton's popularity, a free space is invariably hard to find. Even at the end of the day, parking is in short supply, because as the sunseekers depart, another surge of people arrive for sundowners, beach volleyball and other alfresco pastimes.

On weekends and public holidays, the beaches are patrolled during the day by volunteer lifesavers from the Clifton Surf Lifesaving Club. The four duty squads that operate on a rotational basis are named after landmark rocks and reefs in the

Sun worshippers enjoy the beach

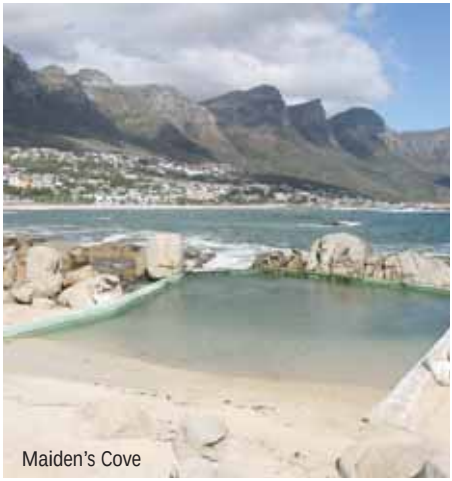
Clifton area, namely Arcadia, Barker, Cherry and Duiker. The club was formed in 1957, and moved to its present clubhouse overlooking 4th Beach in 1986, after a previous building on 1st Beach was destroyed by storm waves. The club periodically hosts surf lifesaving competitions, and a surfski race is held here on Friday evenings during the summer months. Today, the annual Glenn McGregor Memorial Race commemorates a doyen of the sport, who not only initiated these races, but tragically died during one of them. The lifesavers also take part in the Clifton Beach Challenge held each December, which pits them against Springbok rugby players in tests of skill (touch rugby), speed (flag races), fitness (push-ups and sit-ups) and strength (tug-of-war). The Challenge was initiated in 1987 as a fundraising activity for the Lifesaving Club.

Other sporting events held at Clifton include the monthly Clifton Cold Water Mile – an open water swimming event – and the annual Clifton Ski Race, which starts at Granger Bay and finishes on 4th Beach. Formerly called the Sea and Ski Race, this waterski race was initiated in 1958. Non-sporting events are also held at Clifton, such as the Moonstruck music festival in February.

Clifton lies at the foot of Lion's Head – indeed, the paws of the imaginary lion, lying along the Atlantic seaboard, would extend into the sea here. For this reason, the large dome of rock lying offshore to the north of 1st Beach – popularly known as Barker's Rock – is labelled North Paw on topographical maps, while the less prominent Fisherman's Rock some distance off 4th Beach is labelled South Paw.

Both these features, as well as the Clifton Rocks off the headland adjacent to 4th Beach, are colourful dive sites, but can only be visited in very calm conditions, as the surge is often too strong for safe diving.

In addition, a few partly buried cannons representing the last remains of the *Schuilenberg* – wrecked here in June 1756 – can be found in the surf zone off 2nd Beach.


Maiden's Cove

MAIDEN'S COVE is a beach resort that is ideal for families, as it has two tidal pools, a paddling pool for children, a small beach giving way to a shallow gully, and a number of picnic and braai sites. The venue used to be a controlled access beach with an entrance fee, but today, it is freely accessible to all, and has become a very popular destination at weekends.

In addition, tour guides often pull into the car park on the access road to allow their clients to admire and photograph the panoramic view of the Twelve Apostles. They no doubt point out that the buttresses are in fact not named after any of the apostles – having more descriptive labels such as Kloof, Porcupine, Spring, Corridor and Kasteel – and there are more than 12 of them. Originally called the Gable Mountains (Gevelbergen) by Jan van Riebeeck in the earliest days of the Dutch occupation of the coast, they were renamed the Twelve Apostles by Sir Rufane Donkin in 1820, during his two-year term as the British Governor of the Cape. In the same year, he named Port Elizabeth after his young wife, who had recently died in India, his previous posting. Owing to its scenic value, the area between Maiden's Cove and Glen Beach was declared a National Monument in 1949, and became a Provincial Heritage Site under the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999.

Most people know Maiden's Cove for its proximity to La Med – a popular gathering place for post-suntanning eats and drinks. The field in front of the restaurant is the target landing site for paragliders launching from Lion's Head, providing exhilarating entertainment for patrons in the outdoor seating area, while more typical spectator sports – particularly rugby matches – can be watched on big-screen TVs inside. La Med is part of the Glen Country Club, so it is surrounded by bowling greens and tennis courts, and also hosts the finish of the Bay to Bay road race held in January.

CAMPS BAY can lay claim to having Cape Town's most glamorous beach. Its sweeping arc of brilliant white sand is skirted by a row of elegant palm trees, while the beachfront Promenade along Victoria Road is lined with trendy restaurants and bars, imparting a French Riviera feel. The Twelve Apostles provide a spectacular backdrop, while Lion's Head looms in the wings.

As well as being popular with the bronzed and beautiful set, this is also a very family-oriented beach, the great expanse of sand providing plenty of space for children to play. The beach itself is not the safest for swimming – the steep shorebreak makes for powerful waves and a strong backwash – but there is a spacious tidal pool at the Bakoven end. The large rock off the tip of the promontory here is known as Whale Rock, while at the opposite end of the beach, Fisherman's Rock provides a perfect place to watch the sunset. At low tide, it is possible to walk round the front of this granite outcrop, or over the back of it at other times, to reach the little cove of **Glen Beach** – a good surf spot – on the other side.

Camps Bay is not as sheltered as Clifton, and if the southeaster is strong, sunbathers can seek refuge from windblown sand on the lawns behind

Camps Bay beach flanked by the Twelve Apostles

Camps Bay's trendy beachfront promenade

the beach, where patches of shade beneath the palms also offer relief from an overdose of sun.

Parking spaces along the Promenade fill up very quickly on beach-weather days, but after a bit of searching, it is always possible to find a spot up the side streets. During summer, various outdoor entertainment events take place at the beach – including international beach volleyball tournaments – drawing the crowds, and adding to the congestion.

Camps Bay is named after Frederik Ernst von Kamptz, but as far back as 1700, it was part of a large tract of land below the Twelve Apostles known as Roodekrantz due to its red soil. In 1729, the land was granted to an ex-soldier, Johan Wernich, who became a merchant, using the land to farm vegetables and cattle to supply the Cape Town market. He built a farmhouse called Ravensteyn, which was later inherited by his son, and subsequently his son's widow, Anna Koekemoer. In 1778, she married Frederik Ernst von Kamptz, and although he lived here for only 10 years, the area became known as 'de Baai van von Kamptz'.

It was still a remote, undeveloped area, though, to the extent that it was used as an isolation

Beach goers at Camps Bay beach

camp for smallpox patients in 1812. It was only in the 1880s that the area became more accessible, when Thomas Bain was commissioned to build a road from Sea Point using convict labour. The road was completed in 1888, shortly after Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, so it was named Victoria Road in her honour.

Even then, the road was a big hit with cyclists – today, it forms the homeward stretch of the Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour route. Camps Bay became a favourite weekend outing for people across all races (see box below). People only started settling here in the 1940s. In 1901, the road was augmented with a tramway between Sea Point and Camps Bay, and a year later, an additional tramline over Kloof Nek became operational. The trams ceased running in February 1930, as they were no longer economical. The old power station that served them, and provided electricity for the growing village, was subsequently used as a garage, cinema, church and theatre. In December 1987, it was purchased by Pieter Toerien, who transformed it into the graceful Theatre on the Bay. Another historical building set back a little from the beachfront is the Rotunda, which was built in 1904 for concerts, dances, roller skating, boxing and other social and sporting events. Today, the Rotunda forms part of the Bay Hotel, and is used for weddings, conferences and other functions.

AHEAD OF ITS TIME

During the dark days of apartheid, government-mandated racial segregation was practised at South Africa's beaches, as was the case for all public facilities. However, Cape Town's municipal authorities did not enforce this at Camps Bay in the 1970s, so people of all races flocked to the beach, and overcrowding became problematic. A referendum was held for Camps Bay ratepayers, who voted overwhelmingly for the beach to remain open to all. The Administrator of the Cape initially granted permission for this, but following reports of unruly behaviour, he stipulated that a fence be installed, bisecting the beach to create a pay-beach on the side with the tidal pool. An entrance fee of R1 was charged, and the beach remained open to all races, but most people still crowded onto the free side of the beach. After two years, the fence was removed, and nearby Maiden's Cove was instead made a controlled access beach with improved facilities in order to disperse the crowds.

BAKOVEN is a tiny suburb on the edge of Camps Bay. Its beach is just a small strip of sand between a jumble of giant granite boulders, some of which are reminiscent of Dutch ovens, hence the suburb's name. Although small, the beach is home to the National Sea Rescue Institute's (NSRI) oldest station, established in 1967 (see box alongside).

The boulders provide shelter from the wind for sunbathers wanting a quiet spot away from the Camps Bay crowds, and also offer a good vantage point to watch the sunset. The beach is not the best for swimming though, partly because of the limited space and thick kelp, but also because of the sometimes poor water quality.

Behind the beach is a maze of narrow lanes winding between the closely spaced bungalows, creating a cosy village atmosphere. Together with the bungalows at Clifton and Glen Beach, this is a declared Heritage Area, where development is strictly controlled and subject to building guidelines designed to preserve the area's character and aesthetics.

NSRI TO THE RESCUE

In the past, NSRI crew members at Bakoven had no base, and the boat and motors had to be carried down to the beach from an old shed. Today, there is a swish new boathouse on the beach – rebuilt after storm waves destroyed the previous one in May 2002 – and the rescue vessel can be quickly launched through a channel between the boulders.

This is just one of the 29 coastal and three inland stations operated by the NSRI, which has two objectives: to save lives on South African waters, and to promote water and boating safety. Countrywide, more than 800 highly skilled crew members provide rescue services – often in extreme weather conditions – on a voluntary basis, while the organisation's skippers' manuals and water safety workshops help to educate the boating community and school groups.

The NSRI is a non-profit organisation that relies on donations and sponsorships to cover its annual running costs of R10 million. For further information, visit www.nsri.org.za.

The NSRI emergency number is 082 911.

NSRI's boathouse at Bakoven

Atlantic Peninsula map

Atlantic Peninsula

Further away from the city centre, the beaches along the Atlantic side of the Cape Peninsula are more spread out. Each has its own special character, determined not only by the different biophysical features occurring there, but also by the communities living nearby. These beaches are perfect for therapeutic walks and serious sunworship, and also provide the playing field for a range of water sports.

Llandudno

Shallow waters at Oudekraal offer safe swimming for children

OUDEKRAAL and a number of other small coves can be found along the undeveloped stretch of coast between Bakoven and Llandudno. Oudekraal is part of the Table Mountain National Park (TMNP), and access is subject to an entrance fee. Its picnic and braai spots make it a popular destination on summer weekends, even though alcohol is strictly prohibited. This can be attributed to its picturesque setting, with grey, granite boulders juxtaposed against the typically clear, greenish waters. The small inlets between the boulders are protected from wave action, and their shallow waters warmed by the sun – perfect for a quick dip, and safe for children – while pockets of coastal bush provide shade and shelter from the wind around the picnic areas. A large boma can be hired for functions, offering a special venue with spectacular views at sunset. For the last few years, a music festival – known as Jazz on the Rocks – has been held at Oudekraal over a summer weekend. A little offshore, the flat-topped rocks to the left and right of Oudekraal are aptly named Groot and Klein Pannekoek (large and small pancake).

Near Oudekraal – on the Camps Bay side – is the Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa, its walls gleaming white in honour of the 'white house' that once stood here (see box alongside). A little further along is **Cosy Bay**, easily located by the parking areas on either side of the road. There is a picnic table in the parking area on the landward side of the road, while a signboard on the seaward side proclaims that the cove falls just inside the boundary of the Karbonkelberg sanctuary, which extends to the Sentinel at the entrance to Hout Bay. This is a 'no take' zone of the TMNP's marine protected area, where the removal of any organism is prohibited.

Closer to Camps Bay is **Koeëlbaai** and then Klein Koeëlbaai, so named because of the round rocks that cover the beaches of both bays. Some say the name originates from the noise of the rocks rolling over one another in the waves, which sounded like cannonballs clunking together on the deck of a ship. Others contend that the name refers only to the round shape of the rocks, which resembled the bullets (koeëls) in muzzle-loading firearms.

Ascending up the slope behind the road are two sets of stairways leading to the kramats (shrines), marking the burial site of prominent members of the Muslim faith. One is that of Sheikh Nureel Mobeen, believed to have been banished to the Cape from the East Indies in 1716.

The Twelve Apostles provide a dramatic backdrop to Oudekraal

According to popular legend, he escaped from Robben Island, and lived the rest of his days on the mountainside, instructing the local slaves in the ways of Islam. Apart from the kramats, there are numerous graves in the area, making Oudekraal an integral part of the Cape Muslim community's cultural heritage (see box below).

This stretch of coast has also been the final resting place for a number of ships, most recently the scrapyard-bound tanker *Antipolis*, which ran aground at Oudekraal in July 1977 after it and the *Romelia* (see page 61) separated from their tow during a storm. The superstructure of the tanker was cut away for scrap, but the hull can still be seen at low tide. Almost three centuries earlier, in May 1698, the VOC ship *Het Huis te Crayenstein* was wrecked nearby on her maiden voyage to the East. A large rock outcrop on the southern side of Koeëlbaai was named Geldkis (money chest), because only 16 of the 19 money chests on board were saved – one was plundered and two allegedly slid into the sea. Although there is no sign of the chests, a few cannons and other artefacts can still be found in their watery grave beneath the waves.

These and a number of other underwater sites, namely Justin's Caves, Coral Gardens and Strawberry Rock, make the area a divers' delight. The kelp forest fringing the shore shelters a diverse community of small fish and crustaceans, and colourful sponges, corals, anemones and sea urchins abound.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUDEKRAAL

Oudekraal gets its name from the original land estate that extended from the foot of the Twelve Apostles to the high-water mark, while the bay adjacent to the beach resort is in fact called Hottentotshuisiebaai. Both names, which can be translated as Old Kraal and Hottentot's Hut Bay respectively, hark back to the Khoikhoi people who once lived here. Soon after Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape in 1652 to establish a provisioning station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC), he began allocating land below Table Mountain to the burghers for farming, which displaced the clan of semi-nomadic Khoikhoi herders who moved about the area. To maintain good relations with the Khoikhoi he allocated them a tract of land to graze their cattle below the Twelve Apostles where the herders no doubt built a kraal and some huts on the land, hence the names reflected on the maps of today.

The land remained wild and remote until 1838 when it was acquired by Michiel van Breda, and remained in the family for the next century, although portions were sold off over time. The property changed hands over the years and in 1992 was bought by a developer who, despite public protest, demolished the existing house, and built a R40 million hotel and conference centre. In March 2002, the Oudekraal Hotel changed hands, and was extensively refurbished before being re-opened as the Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa.

The remaining Oudekraal Estate escaped development after a protracted legal battle and a ruling by the Cape High Court in October 2007 that the development rights were invalid. The judgement noted that the area is considered sacred ground by the Muslim community, as it contains more than 50 graves and a number of kramats, the desecration of which would amount to criminal conduct. It also has great scenic value and conservation importance.

LLANDUDNO is undoubtedly one of Cape Town's most picturesque beaches. Motorists driving along Victoria Road on the way to and from Hout Bay get just a glimpse of greenish waves, white surf and grey monolithic rocks. Those who take a moment to stop at the lookout site are able to gaze down on a beautiful white beach, and admire from afar the exclusive suburb's architectural showpieces, clinging to the steep slopes. From the water's edge, the setting is even more appealing, with the beach framed by natural bush, and Judas Peak and Klein Leeukoppie ('little lion's head') rearing up on either side to form a dramatic mountain backdrop.

Few people venture into the water for more than a quick dip, however, because the sea is

Llandudno beach

COASTAL DEFENCES

The Llandudno-Hout Bay area has a rich military history, dating back to the 1780s. At that time, the Cape was still a settlement run by the Dutch East India Company. In order to protect the Cape from British occupation, in 1781 the French sent reinforcements to assist their Dutch allies. It was recognised that Hout Bay could be used as a 'back door' to attack Cape Town, so three coastal fortifications were constructed in the area. A French mercenary regiment from Pondicherry in India initially built a battery of cannon guns at the western entrance to Hout Bay. The ruins of West Fort and an imposing row of cannons can be seen on the far side of Hout Bay harbour, next to Fish on the Rocks.

Another battery – East Fort – was built on the eastern side of the bay, and a third – Klein Gibraltar – located in between the two to defend the beach. The East Fort battery and some of the original cannon guns can be seen just below Chapman's Peak Drive. The cannons were last used to repel an enemy on 15 September 1795, when the British ship *HMS Echo* drew fire from both the East and West Forts. In 1995, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of this event, the local Heritage Trust initiated the annual Hout Bay Cannon Race – a 10 km run between the two forts.

After the British invaded the Cape towards the end of 1795, the coastal defences at East Fort were upgraded, and barracks were built to accommodate the soldiers manning the battery. The ruins of the barracks can still be seen today above Chapman's Peak Drive.

During World War II, a concrete observation post, or 'pillbox', was built at East Fort, and naval guns were installed at West Fort and Klein Gibraltar. In addition, a radar station was constructed on top of the Karbonkelberg above Hout Bay harbour, and a gun battery built on the mountain overlooking Llandudno. Since men were needed in active service, both the radar station and the Apostle Battery were operated by female recruits from the Signal Corps and the Women's Auxiliary Army Service respectively. After the war, the battery was maintained for training purposes, and later used by military personnel as holiday accommodation. In 1993, it was incorporated into the Table Mountain National Park, and is currently used mainly for youth camps.

Sunset Rocks, to the left of Llandudno beach

usually icy cold in summer – due to wind-generated upwelling of clear, cold bottom water – the currents strong, and the power of the breakers sometimes intimidating to all but the most confident of surfers and bodyboarders. The beach is popular for sunbathing and sundowners, though, with some people opting for the surrounding granite boulders, which retain the sun's heat, and provide a better view of the sun setting over the sea. In fact, the rocky headland to the left of the beach when looking out to sea offers such a good vantage point of the sun's daily adieu, that it is known as Sunset Rocks. For many years, the rusting wreck of the *Romelia* could be seen lying off the headland, where it ran aground in July 1977. Together with the *Antipolis*, the derelict tanker was being towed by a small Japanese tug from Greece, to scrapyards in the Far East when it broke free during a storm. Much of the superstructure was later cut away and sold as scrap metal, but the stern section could still be seen until some years ago, when it finally broke up and sank beneath the waves.

The promontory to the right of the beach shelters the adjacent Logies Bay, a small cove. It was the resemblance of this promontory and the Sunset Rocks headland to the Great and Little Ormes on either side of Llandudno on the coast of Wales that gave the area its name. Previously known as Kleinkommetjie Bay, it was renamed in 1903 when first marketed for development. The wife of one of the directors of the development

Llandudno lifesavers in training

company had just returned from a holiday overseas, and had commented on the bay's similar appearance to the Welsh resort. The first house was built in 1905, but by 1930, there were still only two permanent residents in the township. There was no shortage of weekend visitors, though, some of whom camped in caves among the granite boulders on the Logies Bay promontory. The largest cave was used in much the same way by KhoiSan 'strandlopers' in an earlier era, as evidenced by a nearby shell midden excavated in 1953.

During the 1930s, a group of regular campers came across a rustic wood-and-iron building under the milkwoods behind the beach. It had been built as a hunting and fishing shack in the early 1900s, but the owner sold it to the group, who christened it 'Whizbang Manor' and used it for many a fun weekend. Later, it became known as The Shack, and was made available to off-duty nurses from Groote Schuur Hospital. In 1972, it was donated to the newly established Llandudno Surf Lifesaving Club, but was demolished a decade later to make way for a new clubhouse. The lifesavers still provide a voluntary service on weekends and public holidays during the summer months.

Other than an ablution block, beachgoers will not find any other facilities here. There are no beachfront bars, ice cream parlours, corner cafes or any other retail outlet in Llandudno, although vendors do roam the beach, selling snacks and cool drinks during busy periods. The beach rarely becomes overcrowded, largely because the car park is very small, which necessitates finding a spot in one of the side streets, and possibly having a long walk down the steep road to the beach.

Sunbathers should leave their dogs at home during the summer months, as the locals have agreed that the beach be kept pooch-free between the hours of 09:00 and 18:00 from 1 September to 30 March. Dog owners are also expected to clean up after their dogs to ensure that the beach's clean white sand remains unsullied. In common with all beaches, a fresh coat of sand is deposited on the beach each summer from the offshore sand bars, after storm waves erode the beach in winter. In the case of Llandudno, however, there are concerns that the beach is eroding faster than it is being replenished, because its sand supply has been disrupted by development and artificial stabilisation of the Hout Bay dunefield.

The boardwalk leading down to Sandy Bay beach

SANDY BAY is Cape Town's unofficial nudist beach. Sun worshippers of all shapes and sizes come here to work on their all-over tan, but the beach is particularly popular with the gay community. Its secluded position – 20 minutes' walk along a sandy track from the closest car park – ensures that it is out of sight from passers-by.

Directions to the Sandy Bay car park are signposted from the road down to Llandudno beach, and it is also possible to get there by clambering over Sunset Rocks. Another option is to walk across the dunes from Hout Bay. The beach is at the terminal end of a headland bypass dune system, and there are concerns that development and artificial stabilisation of the Hout Bay dunes is inhibiting the wind-driven sand supply. This also affects neighbouring beaches replenished by longshore sediment transport via currents and wave action.

Sandy Bay has no facilities of any kind, and there are no buildings in its vicinity – it is a completely natural area that was saved from development, and ultimately protected within the Table Mountain National Park. Nestled below the nek between Kleinleeukoppie and the Karbonkelberg's Suther Peak, it is relatively sheltered from the wind, and offers good surf when Llandudno waves are unrideable.

The fynbos surrounding Sandy Bay has been heavily invaded by alien vegetation, which is now being cleared. The dense bush, together with the remote location, made the access path unsafe in the past – nowadays, the situation is much improved, but it is still advisable not to walk alone here. The path is also used by hikers bound for the Oude Schip Peninsula beyond the beach. The low isthmus joining the rocky headland to the mainland disappears beneath the waves at high tide, turning Oude Schip into an island.

The remains of the *Harvest Capella* – a fishing trawler that ran aground here in 1986 – can be seen rusting away on the isthmus, while the wreck of the crane barge *Boss 400*, which in 1994 broke free from her tow during a storm, lies a little further along the coast at Duiker Point. The path continues round the Karbonkelberg to Hout Bay, but it has been washed away in places, and is considered dangerous by even the most experienced of hikers.

This stretch of coast has also become somewhat of a 'battleground' between poachers and park rangers. It falls within the Karbonkelberg 'no take' sanctuary, but its healthy population of rock lobster presents an easy target for poachers.

The Sentinel at twilight

HOUT BAY beach is more popular with families than with the young and trendy set of neighbouring Llandudno and Sandy Bay. It is safe for swimming, and long enough for a good walk to stretch the legs and give the dogs a run. Walking from one end to another might necessitate getting the feet wet though, because halfway along the beach, the Disa River discharges into the sea. Although at the mouth it is only a trickle in summer – and rarely more than knee-deep in winter – its lagoon has some deeper pools where children often play. Runoff from the informal township upstream and occasional sewage pump failures result in poor water quality in the river. Steps are being taken to address these problems, however in the interim, it is advisable to find a paddling pool further down the beach.

Paddlers of a different kind – with surfskis and seakayaks as their toys – come to Hout Bay for its protected waters, embraced by the encircling mountains. Guarding the bay's entrance on the western side is the Sentinel, also known as the Hangberg because its sheer cliffs seem to hang above the sea. Just out to sea is Dungeons, which produces monstrous walls of water braved only by a handful of local surfers and competitors on the international big-wave circuit. There are also a few surf spots within the bay for those seeking a tamer – although rather unreliable – ride.

Tucked behind the Sentinel is Hout Bay harbour, serving as a fishing port, yachting marina and tourism hub. Within the harbour precinct is the South African sea fisheries museum, which showcases the development of the local fishing industry. Regular boat trips depart from the adjacent quayside for Duiker Island, a rocky outcrop named for its roosting cormorants, which have since been displaced by hundreds of seals (see box alongside). Dive charters operating from the harbour offer a chance to watch the underwater antics of these inquisitive animals, or explore the other dive sites beyond the bay, including Vulcan Rock – a large pinnacle – and various reefs and wrecks. The oldest remaining wreck in the area is the *Oakburn*, a British cargo steamship that struck rocks near Duiker Point on a foggy night in May 1906, resulting in the death of two Chinese seamen. Three years later, the *Maori* – on a voyage from London to New Zealand – met the same fate, with the loss of 31 of her crew of 53. This is the better preserved of the two wrecks, having remained largely intact. The wrecks lie within the Karbonkelberg sanctuary of the Table Mountain National Park's marine protected area, extending from the

Hout Bay harbour

Sentinel to the Oudekraal area, and for up to 3,3 nautical miles offshore at its widest point. No fishing or removal of any marine species is allowed within this 'no take' zone.

Deep-sea fishing charters based in Hout Bay harbour present an opportunity to hook a tuna, marlin or swordfish from the blue waters beyond this zone, while scores of skiboat anglers take part in the annual Snoek Derby, coinciding with a lively Seafood Festival. At other times, seafood is available from a variety of outlets, including Fish on the Rocks and Snoekies Fish Market at the Sentinel end of the harbour, and – closer to the beach – Fish Africa and Mariner's Wharf, touted as Africa's first harbour-front emporium.

On the other side of the bay, the veranda of the Chapman's Peak Hotel is a popular place for seafood and sundowners. The hotel takes its name

THE CAPE FUR SEAL

The Cape fur seal, *Arctocephalus pusillus,* is the only seal that breeds in Southern Africa, with breeding colonies distributed between Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) in South Africa and Cape Frio in Northern Nambia. The seal population now totals some 1,8 million – two thirds of which are in Namibia – having recovered after being decimated by intensive harvesting. From the 17th century, sealers from America and Europe targeted the species for its oil-rich blubber and skins. By the time measures were introduced in 1893 to control the slaughter, the seal population had been reduced to about 100 000.

Seals are protected under South African legislation, and no harvesting has taken place here since 1990. However, the practice has continued in Namibia, where more than 50 000 cubs and over 5 000 bulls are culled each year on the basis that the seals pose a threat to the fishing industry. The bulls are shot with a small-calibre rifle, after which the skin is used for leather products, the meat turned into animal feed, and the genitalia exported to the Far East to be sold as aphrodisiacs. The pups are clubbed and then skinned, so that the smooth black pelt can be used for fur products.

Studies in South Africa have shown that while seals do cause financial losses to the fishing industry, these are minor relative to the industry's total value. Linefishers may lose a significant part of their catch to seals though, and often resort to killing the animals illegally. Another issue of concern is that seals sometimes pose a threat to seabirds of conservation significance, such as African penguins and gannets – either by displacing them from nest sites, or preying on them.

Snoek fresh off the boat

from the rocky massif, rising to a height of 592 m, at the eastern entrance to the bay. In fact, the peak was named after the original name for the bay, in turn named after one John Chapman. Chapman was master's mate of the English sailship *Consent* – becalmed at the entrance to the bay in July 1607 – and was sent ashore in a dinghy at dusk to check whether the bay offered safe anchorage. On arrival back from this chancy venture, the ship's pilot recorded Chapman's favourable findings in his logbook, referring to the bay as Chapman's Chaunce. The name later appeared on English charts of Southern Africa, but was subsequently superseded by Hout Bay, meaning 'Wood Bay'. This originates from Jan van Riebeeck's description of the valley's dense forests soon after his arrival at the Cape in 1652. He recognised the forests as an important source of firewood and timber, and set about exploiting them. By 1710, the valley had been denuded of trees, and the Company woodcutters were withdrawn.

Chapman's Peak Drive – winding around the peak's sheer cliffs to Noordhoek – is undoubtedly one of the world's most spectacular scenic roads, as well as a feat of engineering. It took seven years to build using convict labour, and was completed in 1922. In January 2000, a wildfire destroyed the vegetation cover that helped stabilise the overhanging slopes, resulting in extensive rockfalls, and necessitating closure of the road. After extensive repair and remedial work, Chapman's Peak Drive was reopened as a toll road in December 2003. However, access to the view sites, picnic spots and trailheads located 4 km beyond the toll plaza – but some 400 m below the main view site at the top – is toll-free. Cyclists and runners are also exempt from toll fees, and those taking part in the annual Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour and Two Oceans Marathon enjoy exclusive use of the road for one day of the year.

The scenic Chapman's Peak Drive

The view sites along the road provide a good vantage point for spotting whales between July and November, as well as dolphins all year round. Other interesting sights are the East Fort historical ruins (see box on page 60) and the bronze statue of a leopard, perched on a rock overlooking the sea at the foot of Chapman's Peak Drive. The statue, installed in 1963, is a memorial to the wild creatures that once roamed the Hout Bay valley and surrounding mountains – a leopard was last seen in the area in 1937. A little further along the cliffs, an old jetty jutting out into the sea is a remnant of the brief period when manganese was mined on the mountain slopes above. Mining began in 1909, but the ore was found to have such a low manganese content that operations ceased in 1911. During its short lifespan, a corrugated-iron chute conveyed the ore more than 700 m down the mountain to the jetty, where it was loaded onto boats.

These and other aspects of the area's history can be explored at the Hout Bay Museum in Andrews Road. Additional attractions in the area include the World of Birds bird park in Valley Road, and the craft market held on the village green next to Main Road every Sunday.

View over the bay

Noordhoek's long white stretch of beach

NOORDHOEK is a quiet, semi-rural suburb occupying land that originally demarcated the 'north corner' of the farm Slangkop. Over the last few decades, it has grown from a community made up mostly of artists, hippies and the horsy set, to a haven for city dwellers wanting a taste of country life.

Noordhoek is best known, however, for its gloriously long white beach, extending some 4 km from the foot of Chapman's Peak to Klein Slangkop at Kommetjie. Although its powerful surf and strong backwash tend to discourage swimming, this great expanse of sand is perfect for stretching the legs and walking the dogs, especially at low tide. Three quarters of the way along the beach, high on the shore, is the wreck of the *Kakapo*, a brand new 1 500 ton steamship that ran aground during its delivery voyage to New Zealand in May 1900, after its captain mistook Chapman's Peak for Cape Point. A rusting boiler and other bits and pieces sometimes buried by drifting sand are all that remains of the wreck. Unfortunately, the further reaches of Noordhoek beach are rather isolated – particularly during the week – so it is advisable not to walk alone.

The backshore area of the beach is often covered by a shallow tidal lagoon, visited by a diversity of seabirds. Behind the beach is a bushy, low-lying arc of undeveloped land that becomes waterlogged in winter. Known as the Noordhoek Wetlands, the area not only supports abundant bird life, but also contains rare lowland fynbos, including the largest remnant of highly threatened sandplain fynbos on the Cape Peninsula. Due to its conservation significance, some 450 hectares of this land has now been protected as part of the Table Mountain National Park. This relatively recent acquisition has effectively created an ecological corridor between Chapman's Peak and Slangkop, linking the northern and southern parts of the national park.

There are a number of popular surf spots along Noordhoek beach, including The Hoek on the Chapman's Peak end, Dunes – closer to the *Kakapo* – and Sunset further out to sea, only for the bravest of the big-wave riders. The rocky point

Dog walking is popular along Noordhoek beach

below Chapman's Peak, known as Ratelklip ('honey badger stone'), offers a grandstand view of surfers riding the perfect barrels of The Hoek, and is also a good angling site.

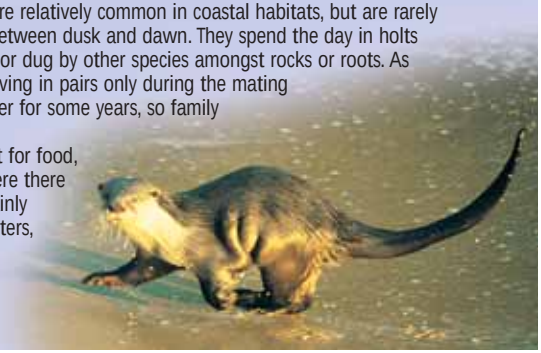
Noordhoek has two main commercial centres – the Red Herring Trading Centre and Noordhoek Farm Village – where a variety of shops and restaurants can be found. A number of stables in the area offer horse rides along the beach, but these should be booked in advance.

KOMMETJIE is a coastal suburb clustered around the foot of the Slangkop mountain. Its name is the Afrikaans term for a small basin or bowl, alluding to the circular shape of the inlet on the rocky headland. It is thought that this natural tidal pool was once used as a fish trap by KhoiSan 'strandlopers'. During the last century, it was reinforced with concrete to form a safe swimming pool, but was subsequently demolished, as it was not well flushed by the tides.

THE CAPE CLAWLESS OTTER

The Cape clawless otters, *Aonyx capensis*, are relatively common in coastal habitats, but are rarely encountered because they are only active between dusk and dawn. They spend the day in holts hollowed out in reeds or dense vegetation, or dug by other species amongst rocks or roots. As adults, they are generally solitary animals, living in pairs only during the mating season. However, cubs stay with their mother for some years, so family groups are sometimes seen.

The otters regularly enter the sea to hunt for food, but appear to use marine habitats only where there is also a source of freshwater. They feed mainly on crustaceans, such as crabs and rock lobsters, but being opportunistic predators, they also prey on frogs, fish, octopus and abalone according to their availability.



Kelp washed up on Kommetjie beach

This stretch of Kommetjie's coastline is known as **Die Kom**, and although water quality problems discourage people from swimming here, there are some popular surf spots off the point. These can be accessed from a number of parking areas off Lighthouse Road, which leads to the Slangkop lighthouse. Standing over 30 m (100 ft) high, this is the tallest lighthouse on the South African coast. It was built close to the rocks where the *Clan Munroe* was wrecked in 1905. The lighthouse premises are open to the public between 10:00 and 15:00 from October to April, but a small fee is charged to climb the tower. In strong northwesterly winds, this is a good place to spot pelagic seabirds, such as whitechinned petrels, sooty shearwaters and Cape gannets – and even albatrosses, skuas and giant petrels when the wind reaches gale force. The Kommetjie coastline is also used as a roost by common terns and sandwich terns – both palearctic migrants – during summer, Antarctic terns in winter, and swift terns throughout the year. In addition, it is possible to see all four types of cormorant here – the bank, white-breasted,

The Slangkop lighthouse

Cape and crowned varieties. Moreover, the Kommetjie coastline is one of the few places on the Cape Peninsula where otters are regularly seen (see box on previous page).

On the northern side of Die Kom – at the end of Beach Road – there is a boat-launching area. This is a hive of activity when snoek are available

in these waters, as well as on weekends during the recreational crayfish season, because the dense kelp beds fringing Kommetjie's rocky shores are home to abundant rock lobster.

Following the roads round the coast from Die Kom in a northeasterly direction leads to Benning Drive. This provides a number of access points to the headland's boulder-strewn shore, which abruptly gives way to a sandy beach skirting a picturesque bay. This is **Long Beach**, a favourite haunt of surfers and bodyboarders, hence the name of the main parking area – Surf Way. It can also be reached from Kirsten Avenue off the main Kommetjie Road (M65).

The beach is relatively sheltered from the wind when southeasters batter the False Bay coast, and is a popular place for a brisk walk with the dogs. Further round the bay, a small stream, the Bokramspruit, empties into the sea, so this part of the beach is more correctly known as Bokram Beach. The beach can also be accessed at the far side of the bay from a parking area on Wireless Road, so named because a radio station was located here until 1960. In fact, the radio station was originally built next to the lighthouse, but was later moved here because manganese deposits in the Slangkop mountain caused interference with the signal. The original radio station was also the reason why the lighthouse was completed in 1914, but only became operational in 1919, after the end of World War I. The light would have illuminated this important military facility, rendering it vulnerable to attack.

The Wireless Road parking area offers the closest access to Klein Slangkop Point at the edge of the bay. By rounding the point along the beach, and wading across the outlet stream from Wildevoëlvlei, it is possible to walk about 4 km along Noordhoek beach, passing the wreck of the *Kakapo* (see page 68), to the foot of Chapman's Peak. More energetic hikers can consider signing up for the Silvermine section of the Hoerikwaggo Trail, which begins at Slangkop lighthouse. After walking through the milkwood groves, and along the Kommetjie and Noordhoek beaches, hikers ascend the steep paths up Chapman's Peak and Noordhoek Peak to overnight at Silvermine tented camp, before walking down the Vlakkenberg to end the trail at Constantia Nek.

For those wanting a night under canvas without the strenuous walk, there is a camping and caravan resort on Wireless Road. Named Imhoff Park, it should not be confused with Imhoff Farm on the Kommetjie Road (M65), a historic homestead that has been converted to a commercial centre offering shops, restaurants, a snake park and farmyard experience, and even camel rides. This area was previously known as Imhoff's Gift, because in 1743 Baron Gustav Wilhelm van Imhoff – the Commissioner Extraordinaire to the Dutch East India Company – granted the land to the widow Christina Rousseau to support her efforts in supplying vegetables to the company's ships in Simon's Town.

SOETWATER, sometimes translated to Sweetwater on tourism maps, is a coastal resort occupying a narrow strip of land between the sea and Slangkop, towering overhead. During the apartheid era, the resort was reserved for use by coloureds only, but today it is open to all, subject to an entrance fee. Visitor numbers are controlled to avoid overcrowding, however, as the resort is a popular destination for get-togethers on summer weekends. Braai pits and picnic tables are available, and camping and caravan sites can be hired by those wanting a longer stay. The Parmalat Enviro Centre, which offers environmental education, life-skills training and adventure camps for children, is located within the resort. The Soetwater area is considered ecologically sensitive, so management plans are being implemented to protect its rich biodiversity.

Much of the shoreline here is rocky, but there

The Soetwater resort

are a few sandy bays, and two large artificial tidal pools offer safe swimming. Dense kelp beds line the shore, so crayfish divers as well as hoop-net fishers operating from small dinghies, can often be seen in their vicinity during the rock lobster season. Boat-launching is not permitted from Soetwater, but launching ramps are available at Kommetjie and Witsands.

Those who have had their fill of sand and sea may prefer to do the easy walk up to the top of Slangkop to see an abandoned World War II radar station, and enjoy the breathtaking bird's eye views over Kommetjie. The 5 km return route starts at a boom on Slangkop Road, and follows a sandy jeep track through the fynbos to the now derelict buildings that made up Cobra Camp. The camp's name and the hill on which it stands (Slangkop = snake head) hint of past experiences with snakes, but the reptiles are rarely encountered.

WITSANDS, so named for its long stretch of white sand, is often overlooked by motorists navigating the route to and from Cape Point, but it is well worth pulling over to watch the kitesurfers in action on a windy day. From the sea-cliff road it is a steep walk down one of a number of sandy tracks to the beach. Another option is to drive

THE WEST COAST ROCK LOBSTER

The West Coast rock lobster, *Jasus lalandii* – commonly known as crayfish or 'kreef' – occurs in rocky habitats, from shallow waters down to depths of 80 m. Its distribution range extends from Walvis Bay in Namibia, to East London in South Africa, but – as its name suggests – highest concentrations were historically found on the West Coast. Since the 1990s, however, there has been a marked southward shift in its distribution, resulting in a significant increase in rock lobster abundance east of Cape Hangklip. It is not yet clear whether this is in response to climate change, or part of a natural, long-term cycle.

The rock lobster is an economically important resource, as much of the commercial catch is exported. In an effort to prevent overexploitation, both the commercial and recreational fisheries are subject to a variety of regulations, which include catch limits, minimum size limits, closed seasons, closed areas, and gear restrictions. In the commercial fishery, rock lobster are mainly caught using baited hoop nets from small dinghies or winch-hauled traps from larger boats, and there is an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for designated zones and areas. In the recreational fishery, there is a daily bag limit rather than a TAC, and rock lobster may only be caught by diving without scuba gear, or by using a hoop net or baited line. Recreational fishers require a permit, may not sell their catch, and are subject to stricter closed seasons and fishing periods. In both fisheries, lobsters 'in berry' (carrying eggs) may not be landed, and must be returned to the sea immediately.

down to the car park serving a boat-launching ramp on the adjacent promontory, which is accessed from a road just outside the entrance gates to Soetwater Resort. At the tip of the promontory, on a rocky headland known as 'Die Eiland' (the island), is a crayfish processing factory (see box alongside). Its communication towers provide a handy landmark for skiboat skippers out at sea. Surfers know the 'crayfish factory' as a big-wave surf spot, while Witsands provides a tamer ride. Swimming is best limited to calm days, as powerful waves and rip currents may catch bathers unawares.

The beach is backed by rolling dunes that constitute a seasonal wetland area, as the dune hollows hold ponds of water during winter. Incredibly, the dunes were used as a municipal landfill site until the early 1980s. Today, channels sometimes break through the dunes after heavy rains, carrying exposed waste into the sea, and littering the beach. The beach is regularly cleaned by a Coastcare team, and moves are also afoot to designate a Witsands-Soetwater Conservation Area with formal protected area status.

MISTY CLIFFS is marked by a scattering of houses clinging to the mountain slope on either side of the Witsands-Scarborough road. The name's origins will be more obvious on some days than others, when a ghostly white shroud of sea mist settles over the village. Sometimes the effect is of driving into a dense fog, only to emerge into bright sunshine on the other side.

The entire section of road between Witsands and Scarborough is a particularly scenic route, squeezed between dramatically steep cliffs and the sea – frequently turbulent, and at times an exquisite turquoise hue. Being elevated, it also offers good whale-watching opportunities between July and November, when southern right whales often wallow just offshore.

Much of the shore here is rocky, with long sections of boulder beach, and access is limited within the confines of the village, as there are few places to park. On the outskirts of Scarborough, however, just before the road deviates away from the shore, is a narrow strip of beach ideal for exploring rock pools. Black oystercatchers (see box) can usually be seen in the intertidal zone.

THE AFRICAN BLACK OYSTERCATCHER

The African black oystercatcher, *Haematopus moquini*, only occurs on the coasts of South Africa and Namibia, its population totalling some 5 000 birds. Despite its name, it feeds mainly on mussels and limpets rather than oysters, and can often be seen foraging in the intertidal zone at low tide. At high tide, when the intertidal zone is submerged, it tends to gather in groups as a predator avoidance strategy, on the basis that many eyes are better at keeping watch.

These birds mate for life, and are territorial, remaining on the same stretch of coastline for most of their life. Once old enough to fly, many of the Western Cape's immature birds migrate to nursery areas on the Namibian coast, where they remain for two to three years, until they have reached sexual maturity. They then return to the area where they were born, and must establish a territory of their own before they can settle down and breed. Unfortunately, the breeding season occurs during summer, so birds on the nest are vulnerable to disturbance by people and their dogs, while the well-camouflaged eggs and chicks are often crushed accidentally – a prime motivation behind banning vehicles from beaches.

Scarborough beach

SCARBOROUGH, named after Britain's first seaside resort, is a 'conservation village', where building guidelines have been designed to protect sensitive biodiversity and preserve the area's rural character. This is fitting, given that the village abuts the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park. Herds of antelope can sometimes be seen grazing beyond the reserve fence – less welcome neighbours are marauding troops of baboons, which often enter homes in search of food. Many of the houses here are holiday homes to which their city-dwelling owners escape on weekends.

The beach, curving gently round a small bay, looks especially inviting on a hot summer's day, particularly when the sea seems crystal-clear. But this tropical appearance belies the bitterly cold water at such times, and it is often only the wetsuit-clad surfers, bodyboarders and crayfish divers who will venture in. Furthermore, rip currents together with a strong shorebreak created by the steep beach slope ensure that this is not a popular swimming beach. However, the mouth of the Schuster's River at the southern end of the beach offers a favourite paddling spot for children.

Wading across the mouth, and walking round the headland allows for a short stroll to the nature reserve fence. From here, it is possible to walk down a gravel road along the fenceline to a grassy picnic site, cross a small bridge over the Schuster's River, and then amble back to the beach along a wooden boardwalk through the milkwood-covered dunes.

For more energetic hikers, there is a route up and over the mountain ridge behind Scarborough that leads to trails through the fynbos to either the Platberg – the flat-topped mountain looming over the village – or Kleinplaas Dam on Red Hill. Permits for these trails must be purchased at Mickey's Mousetrap, situated in a small nook behind the row of postboxes alongside the Camel Rock restaurant. The restaurant takes its name from the rock formation – weathered over eons into the shape of a camel – on the other side of the road.

Aerial view of Scarborough

Chacma baboon (*Papio ursinus*)

Cape Point map

Cape Point

Most people simply refer to this area as Cape Point, but it is more correctly known as the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park (TMNP). The original reserve, established in 1939, was incorporated into the TMNP in 1998. The pristine, rugged coastline is dotted with small secluded beaches.

South African
NATIONAL PARKS

Overnight accommodation available at Olifantsbos

OLIFANTSBOS, on the west coast of the Peninsula, is accessed from the first turn-off from the main road between the reserve entrance and the Oliftantsbos Point itself. The area takes its name from the original farm property called Olifantsbosch, meaning 'elephant bush'. While some maintain that an elephant's skull and bones were discovered here long ago, others believe that the name refers to a stand of low, humped milkwood trees, which resembles a herd of elephants from afar.

The beautiful little bay here is backed by an arc of sand, piled with rotting kelp that is alive with 'beach fleas' (see box alongside). A small stream flows across the beach into the sea, at times forming a shallow lagoon that attracts a variety of birds. The stream rises on the plateau inland, and tumbles down the valley known as 'Die Kloof', before flowing through a wetland area behind the beach. Here, the abundant bird life is generally heard before it is seen, as a chorus of birdsong wells up from the reeds.

Directions to two hiking trails are signposted from the Olifantsbos parking area. The 3-hour Sirkelsvlei Trail takes in the reserve's largest fresh-water body, which is sustained by seepage from the surrounding areas, and also passes the ruins of a World War II submarine observation post. The Thomas T Tucker Shipwreck Trail offers either a 2,5-hour circular route, or a more direct 1,5-hour walk along the beach and back. The *Thomas T Tucker* was an American liberty ship, named after a physician and politician who served as United States Treasurer from 1801 to 1828. In November 1942, the ship was on her maiden voyage from New Orleans to Suez, where she was to deliver weapons to World War II allies fighting Rommel's Afrika Korps. Hugging the coast one foggy night to avoid detection by a German submarine patrolling the area, she ran aground at Olifantsbos Point. It was later revealed that the compass was out by 37°, and the captain thought he was off Robben Island! Some way further south is the wreck of the *Nolloth*, a Dutch coaster that in 1966 struck a submerged object, believed to be Albatross Rock. This reef is known to have claimed an additional eight vessels between 1786 and 1917, making it the Cape's most notorious off-shore hazard.

The two hiking trails head south or inland of

Olifantsbos, the coastal strip to the north of nearby Menskoppunt, being a sanctuary area closed to the public. Furthermore, the entire coast from the reserve fence at Scarborough, to Hoek van Bobbejaan near Gifkommetjie is a 'no take' marine protected area, so angling, crayfish diving and spear-fishing is prohibited here. Olifantsbos is an increasingly popular surf spot, though, which works best in a good west or southwest swell.

Overnight accommodation is available here for those wanting to immerse themselves in the reserve's delights. The old farmhouse has been transformed into the upmarket Olifantsbos Cottage, a self-catering facility in a secluded position away from the comings and goings of day visitors. For many years, the farmhouse served as the Skaife Environmental Education Centre, named after Dr SH 'Stacey' Skaife, a naturalist, author and broadcaster, whose lobbying in the 1930s was instrumental in the reserve's establishment.

GIFKOMMETJIE is accessed from the circular drive branching off the main thoroughfare to Cape Point. Its name, which means a small poison bowl or basin in Afrikaans, refers to a poisonous species of plant found in the vicinity.


Beautiful bays

A path leading from the parking area on the coastal cliff, known as Groot Blouberg, leads to a lookout platform, offering views to the north of a beautiful bay below. This is as far as many visitors venture, but the path continues southward, and descends the steep slope to the boulder beach of Bloubergstrand far below, promising a long slog back up. Once at the bottom, though, it is possible to walk all the way along the coastline to Platboom – and even onwards, over the Cape of Good Hope, to the main car park 10 km away at Cape Point – so seasoned hikers leave a car at each end.

There is also a three-hour circular walk from the Gifkommetjie car park to the headland in the north, known as Hoek van Bobbejaan. The trail winds through fynbos along the ridge, and then descends to the coast, returning along the base of the cliffs through coastal thicket made up of

BEACH FLEAS

Beach fleas are so named for their erratic leaping behaviour, although they are more correctly known as sand hoppers. Unlike fleas, which are blood-sucking insects, these are harmless crustaceans called amphipods that scavenge on kelp and other seaweed washed up on the shore. They play a vital role in sandy beach ecology by breaking down detritus into small fragments that can be ingested by filter feeders or decomposed by bacteria, allowing the nutrients released to be recycled through the ecosystem. They are also an important food source for shore birds, particularly sanderlings, which are adept at picking them up one by one.

Sand hoppers are most active at night to avoid being desiccated by the sun. During the day, they shelter beneath beach wrack, or burrow into moist sand. At night, they emerge to hop down the beach in search of food. Their daily migrations between the intertidal zone and the upper shore are guided by an internal body clock that uses the movements of the sun and moon as a compass for their particular beach. Experiments have shown that moving sand hoppers to a beach on the opposite side of the Cape Peninsula will disorientate them, causing them to hop in the wrong direction.

The sand hopper found on the Cape Peninsula's beaches is called *Talorchestia capensis*. The scientific name is derived from terms for ankle or heel (*Tal*), dancing (*orchest*) and 'of the Cape' (*capensis*).

CORMORANT COAST

All four species of cormorant that occur in South Africa can be seen within the Cape of Good Hope reserve, and two of them – the white-breasted and Cape cormorant – breed here. Cormorant breeding colonies are typically established at inaccessible sites, such as islands and steep cliffs, as a predator avoidance strategy. Along the coast, the birds can often be seen perched on a rock, with wings outstretched. This is because they dive underwater to catch their prey, but since their feathers are not water-proof, they must hold their wings out to dry. In the air, Cape cormorants can be recognised by their tendency to fly in long lines or V-shaped formations, hence their Afrikaans name 'trekduiker'.

The four species can be identified as follows:

- White-breasted cormorant (*Phalacrocorax lucidus*): The largest of the four, with a distinctive white chest
- Cape cormorant (*P. capensis*): The gape of the bill is bright orange, the eye is blue, and the tail relatively short.
- Crowned cormorant (*P. coronatus*): There is an obvious tuft of upright feathers at the base of the bill, which has a pale yellow gape; the eye is red, and the tail relatively long.
- Bank cormorant (*P. neglectus*): The eye and bill are dark, there is a small crest on the head, and sometimes a patch of white on the rump.

Cormorant populations may be dramatically affected by food shortages caused by the fluctuating abundance of pelagic fish, for which they compete with the fishing industry. Mass mortalities result from oil spills and outbreaks of diseases, such as avian cholera, and adverse weather conditions can affect chick survival rates. Kelp gulls and white pelicans prey on chicks, while seals sometimes attack adult birds, and displace them from breeding sites. The birds are also very vulnerable to disturbance by humans.

milkwood trees, Hottentot's cherry and ironwood. Just north of Hoek van Bobbejaan is the wreck of the *Phyllisia*, a trawler that stuck fast on the rocks one night in May 1968.

Hoek van Bobbejaan also marks the northern limit of the marine protected area 'no take' zone, although the exact boundary coordinates fall about 1,5 km north of the point. The coastline below Gifkommetjie is a popular shore angling area, as the gullies between the rocky shelves are prime habitat for galjoen and hottentot.

PLATBOOM can be translated to 'flat tree', and is believed to refer to the wind-pruned milkwoods here. The access road passes the Dias Cross, which not only commemorates the first European sea voyage round the Cape by Bartolomeu Dias in 1488, but also serves as a navigation beacon for vessels at sea. The intersection of an alignment of the Dias and Da Gama crosses with a line taken from another beacon in Simon's Town pinpoints the location of Whittle Rock, an underwater pinnacle in False Bay that rises to within three metres of the surface.

The parking area overlooks a sandy beach that gives way to the rocky shoreline skirting Platboom Point. Stretching northward behind this point is a bare, unvegetated dunefield formed by beach sand blown alongshore. The edges and terminal end of this dazzling ribbon of sand has been colonised by dune fynbos, containing plants such as blombos, waxberry and pelargoniums.

A little to the south of the parking area, a sandy cove marks a break in the rocky shoreline. Beyond this beach, there is a coastal path that intersects the road leading to the Cape of Good Hope within 400 m. Many hikers walk the approximately 4 km from Gifkommetjie to Platboom, and continue on to the main car park at Platboom Point.

Given that Cape Point is the windiest place in South Africa, it is not surprising that Platboom is

a popular boardsailing and kitesurfing spot, but it is best left to experienced wind junkies, as this is a very exposed site. Surfers also come here when there is a good westerly groundswell running.

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE is the true southernmost point of the Cape Peninsula, rather than the tip of Cape Point, as many people assume. Its access road follows the rugged shoreline for some distance before terminating at the car park beneath the Cape. Along the way, it passes Pegram's Point, Neptune's Dairy and Pappiesbank – all good fishing spots for galjoen, hottentot and white stumpnose – and the sandy stretch called Maclear's Beach. In front of the car park, a boulder beach offers plenty of perches to sit for a while and take in the view. On one side, the Cape's craggy cliffs rise up from the sea; on the other, the vista of rolling waves and pounding surf makes for a dramatic seascape.

Cape of Good Hope with Maclear's Beach in the foreground

Sheer cliffs at Cape Point

A steep path leads up to the Cape of Good Hope summit, although many people prefer the easier – although somewhat longer – walk across the plateau from the Cape Point parking area. Once at the top, it is possible to see Cape Maclear, which lies alongside Cape of Good Hope. Both it and the beach are named after Sir Thomas Maclear, who came to the Cape in 1834 as Her Majesty's Astronomer in charge of the Royal Observatory. He also made a major contribution to land surveying in South Africa, and helped establish lighthouses along the coast.

The rock ledges of the two Capes are used as a breeding site by both the white-breasted and Cape cormorants (see box on page 80), while their summits offer one of the country's best land-based sites to view oceanic seabirds. Many of these birds migrate from their breeding areas in Antarctica or the sub-Antarctic islands to spend the winter months in the Benguela upwelling system's rich feeding grounds. A strong onshore wind will bring the birds closer to land, and with the aid of strong binoculars or a telescope, a range of albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters and skuas may be seen soaring on the air currents.

CAPE POINT is the main destination for tourists visiting the Cape of Good Hope reserve. Contrary to popular opinion, the tip of the Point is not the meeting place of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans (see box alongside). The delineation between oceans is a geographic boundary only, and in this case is marked by the southernmost tip of Africa, which is Cape Agulhas, 150 km to the southeast as the crow flies. Nevertheless, a trip to Cape Point to see this finger of rock jutting out into the sea is a special experience.

From the car park, it is possible to huff and puff up the steep walkway – or just take the funicular – to a view site at the old lighthouse, which was commissioned in 1860. Standing at 238 m above sea level, the lighthouse was frequently obscured by fog and cloud, and the need to address this was pressed home when the Portuguese passenger liner *Lusitania* struck Bellows Rock, some 4 km to the southwest, on a foggy night in 1911. The ship only slid off the rock, and sank two days later, so everybody on board was saved, apart from eight people whose lifeboat capsized. Today, the wreck is occasionally visited by scuba divers, but only in the calmest of conditions.

CAPE OF CONTRASTS

While Cape Point is not the meeting place of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, it does mark the transition between two marine biogeographic provinces. To the east, the warm waters of False Bay support a relatively diverse array of species. To the west, the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Benguela upwelling system are home to few species, but these occur in large numbers due to the high plankton productivity. There are distinct differences between the intertidal and inshore communities on each side of the Point. Further offshore, however, a change is more evident south of Cape Agulhas, because there is some mixing of the Agulhas and Benguela currents – and their associated fish communities – off Cape Point.


Cape Point's old lighthouse

Two years after the loss of the *Lusitania*, construction work began on the new lighthouse, built near the tip of Cape Point at 87 m above sea level. The lighthouse became operational in 1919, and was electrified in 1936. With an intensity of 10 million candlepower, it is the most powerful lighthouse on the South African coast, and can be seen from 34 nautical miles, or 63 km, out to sea. Spectacular scenery is just reward for walking along the narrow promontory to a viewpoint above the new lighthouse. The walk starts near the upper funicular terminus, close to the weather station that forms part of the World Meteorological Organisation's Global Atmosphere Watch network, set up to monitor long-term changes in the chemistry of the earth's atmosphere.

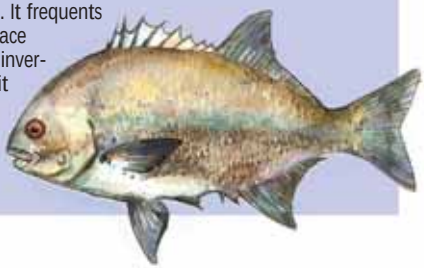
Another popular walk, starting from the car park below, crosses the plateau to Cape Maclear and Cape of Good Hope. Along the way, steep steps lead down to **Dias Beach**. The long climb back up tends to discourage many people from venturing down, so the beach offers a secluded spot in a dramatic setting, surrounded by sea cliffs. Swimming is dangerous here due to strong currents and powerful waves, although bodyboarders and surfers sometimes take them on.

ROOIKRANS is not a beach, but a well-known fishing and diving spot that can only be reached via a very steep, zigzagging path down to some rock ledges poised above the sea. The deep water here is used as a corridor by migrating shoals of large oceanic fish, and in the 1940s, the site became famous for good catches of bluefin and yellowfin tuna. Nowadays, it is the yellowtail runs that mainly motivate anglers and spear fishermen to tackle the arduous trek back up the path, loaded with gear and – with any luck – a few fish. Other species, such as geelbek, galjoen (see box below) and hottentot, as well as crayfish, are also targeted.

The name Rooikrans means 'red cliffs', and refers to the reddish colour of the sandstone slopes here, particularly at sunrise. To the north and south are the caves known as Antoniesgat

SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL FISH

The galjoen, *Dichistius capensis*, is honoured as South Africa's national fish, and is one of the most popular angling species because it puts up a good fight when hooked. It frequents the turbulent waters of the surf zone, particularly at the interface between rock and sand, and feeds on a wide variety of small invertebrates and seaweeds, with mussels, crustaceans and red bait being among the most common prey. Strong wave action not only helps the fish gain access to such food items high in the intertidal zone, but also dislodges them from the rocks, and exposes them in the sand.




Exploring rock pools at low tide, Buffels Bay

and Trappies, which were carved out of the soft sandstone by pounding waves.

Those who do not want to venture down to sea level can enjoy the sweeping views of the Cape Point coastline and False Bay from a lookout point near the car park. This is also a good whale-watching spot between June and November, when southern right whales calve and nurse their young in the bay.

Rooikrans is quite close to the overnight huts for the two-day Cape Point hiking trail, which begins at the reserve entrance, and heads south high above the False Bay coastline, taking in Judas Peak, Paulsberg and Kanonkop along the way. On the second day, the return leg stays close to the Atlantic coastline, before deviating inland to Sirkelsvlei, and continuing on to the reserve gate.

BUFFELS BAY is the reserve's most popular recreation area, and with good reason. It has the only sandy beach on the east coast, curving gently round a beautiful half-moon bay. A tidal pool offers safe swimming when the sea is too rough – or the water too cold – and there is a slipway for launching skiboats. The rocky shoreline to the south has rock pools and gullies to explore, and is backed by a long grassy stretch dotted with picnic and braai sites. Unfortunately, baboons have come to associate this area with food hand-outs and leftovers, and are now a nuisance here, stealing food at any opportunity (see box on page 87).

Scuba divers visit Buffels Bay to see the remains of the wrecked trawler *Tania*, scattered on the seabed, and to weave through the kelp forests fringing the shoreline, which also offer up rewards to spear fishermen and crayfish divers. In calm conditions, the waves in the bay are ridden by bodysurfers and bodyboarders, but serious surfers wait for huge ocean swells rolling in from the south before they bother to come here. Sea-kayakers sometimes launch at Buffels Bay for a scenic paddle to the Point, and the beach is a compulsory checkpoint for the Cape Point Challenge – a tough surfski race that begins at Witsands, and ends at Fish Hoek. It is also the finish line for the few intrepid open-water swim-mers who have braved cold waters, strong currents


Tidal pool at Bordjiesrif

and lurking sharks to swim around Cape Point.

Buffels Bay, which means 'buffalo bay', takes its name from the original farm called Buffelsfontein, dating back to the 1780s, when one of the six permanent residents of Simon's Town was granted grazing rights here. Later, landowners supplemented their income from farming by selling lime, the main source of which was the calcareous rocky outcrop extending from Buffels Bay to Booi se Skerm. Mussel shells, washed up on the beach, were also used, as they yielded lime when burnt at lower temperatures. Near the shore at Buffels Bay are the faintly visible remnants of an old kiln used for this purpose.

Buffels Bay also supported a fishery and whaling station at one time, but by the early 20th century, most land at Cape Point was used for recreational rather than commercial purposes. It was the potential sale of the Buffelsfontein property – by then called Smith's Farm – that led to the creation of the Cape of Good Hope reserve in 1939. This land formed the core of the new reserve, with other properties later purchased or acquired through conservation agreements. The historic Buffelsfontein homestead now serves as a visitor information centre, focusing on environmental interpretation.

BORDJIESRIF is on the other side of the Buffels Bay beach, but is reached via a separate access road. During the apartheid era, when the Separate Amenities Act was enforced, Bordjiesrif was reserved for coloureds. Now that beaches everywhere are open to all, its popularity has declined somewhat, but this makes for less crowded conditions. It also has the advantage of being one of the most sheltered spots in the reserve, and offers spectacular views of Paulshoek, Die Boer and Judas Peak.

Although Bordjiesrif has a rocky shoreline, it is just a short walk to the Buffels Bay beach. There is also a large tidal pool, backed by grassed terraces that are ideal for sunbathing, while the surrounding lawns are dotted with picnic sites. This stretch of coast has always been popular for fishing, because the rocky shore drops away into kelp beds and relatively deep water – hence the name Bordjiesrif, which can be translated to

The Da Gama cross at Bordjiesrif

'little plate reef'. Hottentot and roman can be caught throughout the year. Back in the 1940s, in the early days of the reserve, anglers had to fight their way here from Buffels Bay through dense thickets of alien acacias, but these have since been cleared, and the indigenous milkwoods have resumed their status as the dominant trees.

The road to Bordjiesrif skirts around the partly vegetated dunes behind Buffels Bay beach – formed by sand blown inland – and then passes the Da Gama cross, which commemorates Vasco da Gama's epic voyage of discovery. After rounding the Cape in November 1497, the Portuguese explorer continued sailing eastward to India. In so doing, he opened up the sea route to the East, which became so important for trade.

BLACK ROCKS is accessed off the Bordjiesrif road. This stretch of coast, which includes Booi se Skerm and Venus Pool, is primarily visited by anglers as well as hikers. Shortly after the turn-off, a path signposted from the road leads up to Kanonkop, a rocky ridge topped by a 200-year-old signal cannon. From here, it is possible to join up with the trail that passes Paulsberg and Judas Peak on its way towards the reserve entrance gate, or complete the circular route back to Black Rocks. This descends quite steeply, dropping into a small kloof sheltering a relic forest, before rejoining the road at Booi se Skerm.

A little way back along the road is the restored 'kalkoond' – a limestone oven, or kiln – which dates back to about 1890. Many of the trees in the forest patch nearby were probably chopped down as fuel for such kilns, which were used to produce lime needed for making cement. Limestone is formed from the fossil remains of sea shells, which were deposited on the seabed at a time when the sea level was much higher than it is today. When the sea retreated again, the exposed shell layer was cemented together with calcium salts to form calcrete. The calcrete cliffs between

Bontebok (*Damaliscus pygargus pygargus*)

Buffels Bay and Booi se Skerm were quarried for their limestone, which was then burnt in the kilns.

Booi se Skerm ('Booi's shelter') is so named for the caves in the cliffs here, which were naturally formed as the limestone dissolved away, but were then further carved out by quarrying. Water seeping through the ground would have absorbed carbon dioxide from the soil, reacting to form carbonic acid. This weak acid slowly dissolved the limestone, but it was redeposited on the roofs and walls of the caves as travertine, which produced a good-quality lime when quarried and burnt.

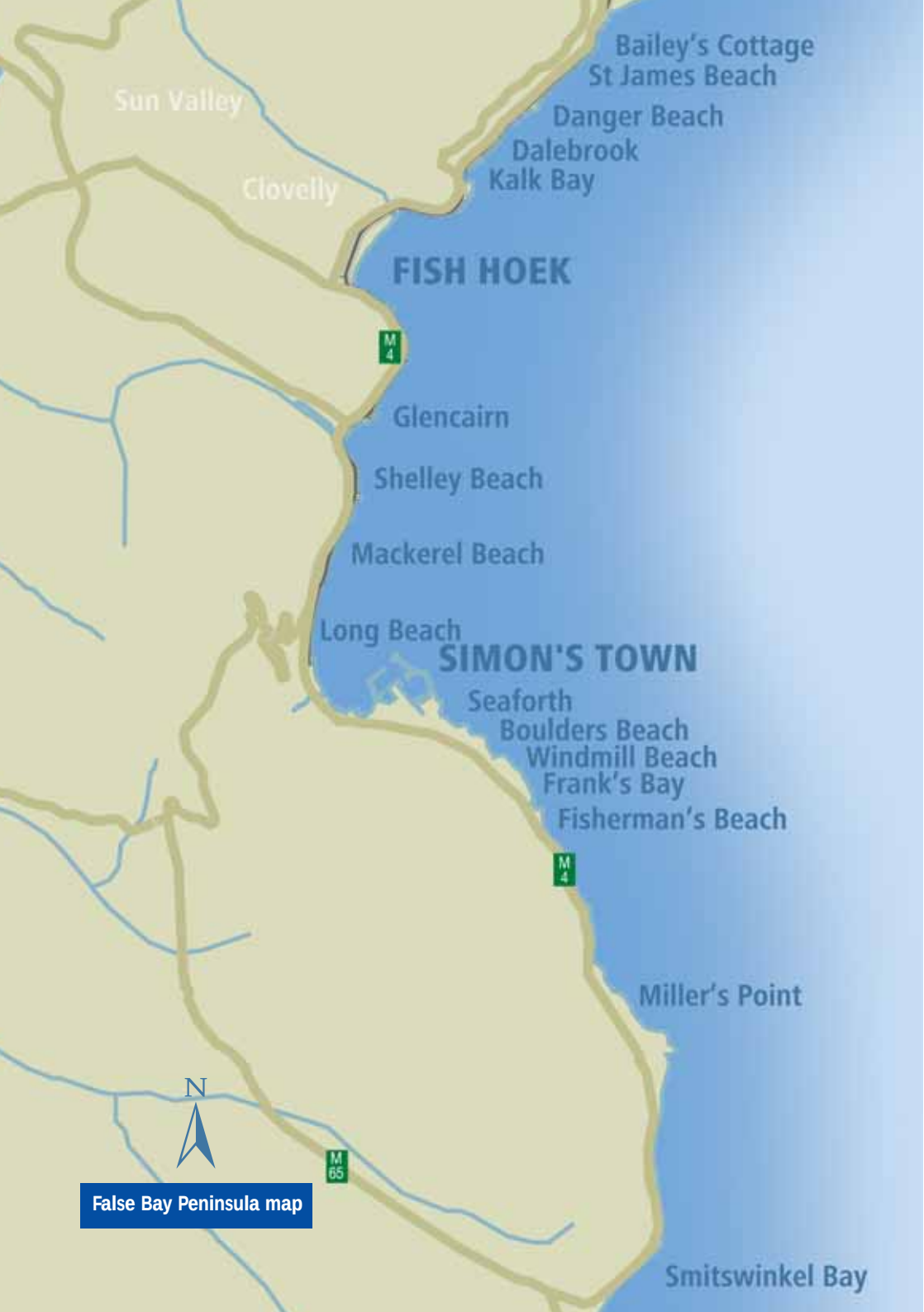
Beyond Booi se Skerm, the road from Black Rocks is closed to vehicles, but provides a pleasant walk to Venus Pool. This is a natural pool on the rock ledges below Paulsberg. It also marks the furthest point that anglers, spear fishermen and crayfish divers may venture, as the area northwards to Smitswinkel Bay Point is the Paulsberg sanctuary, a 'no take' zone extending approximately one nautical mile from the shore.

THE CHACMA BABOON

There are about 350 chacma baboons, *Papio ursinus*, on the Cape Peninsula, divided into about 10 troops – the number fluctuates slightly as troops occasionally merge or split. Five troops are based in the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park, although at least two of these regularly wander outside the reserve's boundaries. Each troop is led by a dominant male, who defends his position against attacks by younger males, until he is eventually replaced.

Baboons are opportunistic omnivores – most of their diet consists of fruits, flowers, berries, bulbs and roots, but grasshoppers, ants and other insects that can be caught are eaten too. Baboons in the reserve sometimes also supplement this food with intertidal shellfish and crustaceans, including limpets, crabs and sand hoppers.

Baboons can often be seen playing and grooming one another. While their human-like behaviour is amusing to watch, and the babies appear cute and cuddly, baboons are potentially dangerous, wild animals. In many areas, they have come to associate people with easily available food. Where urbanisation has encroached on baboon habitat, troops regularly raid homes and dustbins. Within the reserve, people feeding baboons and leaving food scraps at picnic sites have turned some baboons into problem animals with fearless, and even aggressive, behaviour. Monitors have been deployed in certain areas to chase baboons away from potential conflict situations, but it is important to keep car doors and windows closed when baboons are in the vicinity, and food packed securely away.



False Bay Peninsula map

False Bay Peninsula

The beaches on the False Bay side of the Cape Peninsula are blessed with warm waters, so they are popular for swimming, diving and other water sports. Unfortunately, they also bear the brunt of the summer southeaster, so they are best enjoyed in the morning, before the wind comes up in the afternoon. There are also a few sheltered spots that offer refuge from stiff sea breezes.

St James Beach

The secluded cove of Smitswinkel Bay

SMITSWINKEL BAY is a tiny enclave at the eastern border of the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park. Tourists sometimes stop at the car park on the road high above for a bird's eye view of this beautiful cove. Visiting the little beach, however, entails a long walk down the hillside, and a hard slog back up. This means that the beach is rarely crowded, despite the limited space. The sea here is frequently crystal-clear and a tropical turquoise hue – belying the chilly temperatures at such times – and there is often a good wave for bodysurfing. Another reward for the effort of getting here is the spectacular setting, with the dramatic profile of Judas Peak across the bay, and the Swartkop mountain range rearing up behind.

Surrounding the beach is a scattering of cottages, most of which are holiday homes. The cottages have no electricity, and many have been passed down through generations of families. The land here was originally granted to one Petrus Hugo in about 1816, but was quite inaccessible until 1915, when the coastal road from Simon's Town to Cape Point was completed. This opened up the area for recreational use, and four years later, the then owner auctioned off 29 plots.

However, people were visiting this stretch of coastline as long as 1 400 years ago. A midden excavated from a Smitswinkel Bay cave revealed that 'strandlopers' – the San hunter-gatherers and later Khoi pastoralists, who survived on the coast's offerings – had used the cave at some time, as it contained the remains of fish, shellfish, hare, antelope, dolphin and seal, as well as cattle and sheep. Today, some fishing still takes place here, including licensed trek-netting, but this is limited to the confines of the bay, as the Paulsberg and Castle Rock 'no take' marine sanctuaries lie on either side.

The area is also a popular dive site, because during the 1970s, five ships were scuttled in Smitswinkel Bay to form an artificial reef. The old navy frigates (*SAS Transvaal* and *SAS Good Hope*), fishing trawlers (*Princess Elizabeth* and *Oratava*)

The kelp beds at Miller's Point offer good diving and snorkelling

and diamond dredger (the *Rockeater*) are now home to a colourful diversity of sponges, anemones, nudibranchs, soft corals, sea fans and fish. Closer to the Cape Point coastline is Batsata Rock – also known as Smits Reef – where an underwater landscape of pinnacles and gullies teems with fish and invertebrates.

There is some disagreement about the origin of the bay's name. Many say that two rocks on the beach resemble an anvil and bellows – the tools of a blacksmith – hence the Afrikaans name for 'smithy's shop'. Others contend that nearby Batsata Rock was formerly called 'Blaasbalg', which is the Afrikaans term for bellows, while some maintain that farming folk named Smit ran a roadside stall here.

MILLER'S POINT is primarily used by anglers and divers, because it is the main boat-launching spot on the southern side of the False Bay coast. While they are at sea, there is plenty to keep the rest of the family occupied, though, as there are two small beaches, a tidal pool and some sheltered coves that offer good snorkelling in the kelp beds around giant granite boulders. There are also picnic and braai sites on the lawns behind the tidal pool, so anglers returning from a successful fishing trip can immediately cook part of their catch over the coals.

A small entrance fee is charged at Miller's Point over weekends and in peak holiday season, and there is also a fee for boat-launching. Some boats that are launched here venture as far as 40 nautical miles offshore to target yellowfin and longfin tuna. The two slipways get particularly busy during snoek and yellowtail runs, as both commercial and recreational fishers launch their boats here. Furthermore, the Cape Boat and Ski-Boat Club, which has a clubhouse near the southern slipway into Rumbly Bay, frequently organises and hosts fishing competitions.

Adverse conditions at this slipway in strong southeasters and low tides prompted the construction of the northern slipway and


Frank's Bay

breakwater, which is well-protected from the wind and swell.

A little further along from the northern slipway is the Miller's Point caravan park and Black Marlin restaurant, both accessed from a separate road off the M4. The restaurant, renowned for its seafood, is housed in the historic homestead of the farm that once occupied this land. The property was originally granted to one Tomas Drury in 1814 for cattle grazing, but was later sold to Edmund Miller, and inherited by his son in 1838 – hence the area's name. The Millers supplemented farming with whaling, with some of the oil rendered from the whale blubber being burnt in the newly constructed lighthouses at Cape Point and Roman Rock. Prior to becoming a municipal resort in 1961, the land was owned by the Molteno family who ran a dairy farm, but even in those days, people visited this stretch of coastline for recreational purposes, including fishing off the rocks.

Nowadays, no inshore fishing is allowed between Boat Rock – a little to the south of Miller's Point – and Whale Rock adjacent to Smitswinkel Bay, as this area falls within the Castle Rock 'no take' sanctuary. The resulting diverse and abundant sea life in this marine protected area is a drawcard for recreational scuba divers, and there are a number of popular dive sites, including Castle Rock, Outer Castle, Partridge Point and Pyramid. The area around Miller's Point itself is also good for shore-entry diving, as well as spear-fishing, as is Caravan Reef, directly in front of the caravan park. Further offshore – about 6 km off Miller's Point – is the bell buoy marking Whittle Rock, a large pinnacle that rises up to within three metres of the surface. For wreck divers there is a choice of five Smitswinkel Bay wrecks a short boat trip away; the *SAS Fleur* – a navy vessel scuttled in 1965 – in deep water some distance offshore, and the *SAS Pietermaritzburg* close inshore. This ex-minesweeper originally saw service as the British Navy's *HMS Pelorus*, and during World War II opened a safe sea passage for the D-Day invasion of Normandy. She was later purchased by the South African navy, and used for training purposes, before being scuttled in 1994 as an artificial reef.

Miller's Point is also a popular place to launch seakayaks and surfskis. While seakayakers generally opt for calm conditions for a scenic paddle to Cape Point, surfskiers come here in howling southeasters for the 'Miller's Run', riding the swells back to Fish Hoek beach.

FISHERMAN'S BEACH is on the outskirts of Simon's town, opposite the Whale View Guesthouse and Conference Centre. Despite its name, it is not a popular fishing spot these days, although trek-netting and shore angling took place here in the past. The pretty little bay, which is backed by an arc of white sand, and surrounded by large granite boulders, offers safe swimming conditions, and sometimes also a good wave for bodysurfing. At times, the water takes on a lovely turquoise colour, and is often crystal-clear, making it popular for snorkelling. Between the beach and the road is a steep grassy slope, which offers an alternative place to sit or sunbathe when high tides claim the beach. Parking is limited to a dozen roadside bays, which keeps the crowds away. The popular shore-diving spot, 'A-frame', is a short drive to the south.

FRANK'S BAY is often referred to as Froggy Pond. The original property was granted to one Robert Smith in 1813, and named Froggy Farm for the frogs that lived in a freshwater pool there. Today, the bay is named after Frank Muller, who for many years had exclusive rights for trek-net fishing here. The cove is bordered by granite outcrops, which provide some shelter from the wind, and among their jumbled rock formations are shallow rock pools, where children can paddle and play. Unfortunately, the beach is littered with boulders, and kelp beds occupy much of the inlet. The beach is shielded from the road by a steep embankment, but there is nowhere to pull over on the outbound route from Simon's Town. The closest parking area is opposite Fisherman's Beach – a short walk away – unless a space can be found in the side streets of the neighbouring suburb.

Opposite the bay is the Cape Times Fresh Air Camp, a holiday facility for disadvantaged children. The camp is funded through charitable donations from readers of the *Cape Times*. The premises originally served as *HMS Afrikander* – a shore establishment of the Royal Navy – and it was here that Just Nuisance was stationed in 1940 (see page 97).

WINDMILL BEACH is tucked away behind the golf course at Froggy Pond – the site of a Boer prisoner-of-war camp at the turn of the 20th century. It is possible to walk to the beach from either Frank's Bay or Boulders Beach, following a well-trodden path along the coastline, or drive to the end of Links Road, accessed off Bellevue Road – the turn-off to Boulders Beach from the M4. Parking is very limited in Links Road, but there is a larger car park at Boulders Beach.

The windmill after which this beach was no doubt named has long since been dismantled. Despite the implication that this is a windy area – as indeed it is – this is one of the most sheltered beaches on the False Bay coast. Like its neighbour, Boulders Beach, it is surrounded by giant granite outcrops, which act as a windbreak. The white sandy beach slopes gently into two gullies separated by a rocky point. Here, the water is flat, calm and crystal-clear, providing safe swimming and paddling for children in the shallows, and good snorkelling in deeper water. In fact, the beach is often used as a scuba dive training site, as it offers easy entry and exit points, good visibility and minimal wave action. Novice divers are guided on a circumnavigation of the rocky point, departing from one gully, and returning to shore via the other, while exploring the underwater life of the kelp forest. At high tide, the sea floods much of the narrow strip of sand leading to the point, so seakayakers often paddle through the channel between beach and rocks on their way to or from Simon's Town.

Calm waters at Boulders Beach

BOULDERS BEACH is named for the giant granite boulders that create a series of shallow inlets, well protected from the wind and waves. At high tide, when space on the white sandy beaches becomes limited, sunbathers drape themselves over the boulders instead, descending periodically for a cooling dip in the pool-like waters. Because there is little wave action, the shallows are warmed by the sun, and are often crystal-clear. A little further out, snorkellers can explore the underwater world of the boulders and surrounding kelp beds, but since this is a 'no take' zone of a marine protected area, removal of marine life is prohibited. Some way offshore is a large, flat-topped boulder known as Noah's Ark, which seakayakers often paddle around to view the cormorants and seals perched upon it.

The Boulders Beach area is most well known, however, for its large penguin colony (see box alongside), and this is the only beach in Cape Town where a penguin is likely to swim or waddle by. The beach and adjacent coastal strip were incorporated into the Table Mountain National Park in 1998, and a conservation fee (waived for Wild Card holders) is now levied to access the beach and the main penguin-viewing area. Here, wooden boardwalks wind through the coastal vegetation to the viewing platforms overlooking Foxy Beach, where the birds congregate before and after going to sea.

A few penguins can also be seen at no charge along Willis Walk, a pathway linking the two beaches.

Penguins first began settling here in the early 1980s, and now number at least 2 500 birds, after peaking at more than 3 500 a few years ago. The colony's rapid growth cannot be attributed to breeding success alone, as its numbers increased faster than the birds can reproduce. Rather, it was the result of immigration of first-time breeders from other colonies. Once they have begun breeding, penguins return to the same site year after year to find their life partner, but those breeding for the first time have no such limitations, and are able to choose a breeding site with favourable conditions.

THE AFRICAN PENGUIN

The African penguin, *Spheniscus demersus,* is commonly known as the jackass penguin because of its donkey-like bray. It is endemic to South Africa and Namibia, breeding on 25 islands and four mainland sites between Bird Island, off Port Elizabeth, and Hollams Bird Island in Namibia. The total population is estimated at fewer than 120 000 penguins, having declined drastically due to guano scraping and egg collecting in the past, followed in the 1970s by the collapse of the pilchard resource – its main source of food – due to overfishing. The birds were then forced to rely on anchovy, a smaller shoaling fish that is prone to large fluctuations in abundance in response to environmental conditions.

Although pilchard stocks have now recovered, a recent shift in their distribution has negatively impacted on penguins, which must compete with other predators as well as the fishing industry for this food source. The birds are also displaced from island nesting sites by seals, which are increasing in number, and attacked by terrestrial predators at mainland nesting sites. In addition, oil pollution is a significant threat to penguins. Feathers lose their insulating ability when covered in oil, so oiled penguins at sea become cold, waterlogged and unable to swim effectively. Confined to land, the penguins are soon weakened by starvation and dehydration, and also by poisoning if they swallow the toxic oil while preening. All of these factors result in the total population continuing to decline.

Penguins moult once per year to replace their feathers, which provide insulation in the water. Moulting begins in November, and during this time, the birds are confined to land for three weeks until new feathers have grown. They then feed at sea for a few weeks before returning to the colony for the breeding season, which starts in January. Penguins mate for life, and each parent takes turns incubating the eggs while the other undertakes feeding trips at sea, regurgitating fish for the chicks on their return. From September, the birds spend long periods feeding at sea to lay down fat reserves for the moulting period.

The penguin colony from the viewing platform

Simon's Town yacht harbour

During the 1970s, when the pilchard resource had collapsed, but anchovy were abundant on the Agulhas Bank, first-time breeders from the West Coast islands began relocating to Dyer and Geyser islands in the south, and the penguin population there grew steadily. In the 1980s, the pilchard resource began recovering, and first-time breeders moved westward in response, establishing three new penguin colonies at Boulders Beach, Robben Island and Stony Point (Betty's Bay). During the 1990s, first-time breeders began recolonising the islands on the West Coast as the recovery of the pilchard stock continued. More recently, however, pilchard stocks have shifted to the south coast – it remains unknown whether this is part of a natural cycle or a long-term trend due to climate change – and the penguin population is responding accordingly.

Boulders Beach is best reached from Bellevue Road, off the M4, while the closest access to the penguin-viewing area at Foxy Beach is from Seaforth Road.

SEAFORTH beach is popular with families, as it offers safe swimming conditions in calm, shallow waters. It is relatively sheltered from the wind, and is backed by a grassy slope, with trees providing plenty of shade. The beach is bordered on one side by Seaforth Restaurant, and on the other by the Institute of Maritime Technology, which undertakes research and development work for military defence purposes.

Although there is a large parking area behind the beach, this also serves the penguin-viewing area at Boulders Beach, so it fills up quickly during peak periods. A number of curio traders operate from a row of stalls next to the parking area.

Seaforth was named after the Earl of Seaforth in Scotland. During the 1820s, Captain Thomas Talbot Harington – a former ship's captain and later ship owner and trader – lived here with his wife, who was the niece of the Earl of Seaforth. Two decades earlier, the bay at Seaforth had served as a whaling station, but following complaints from the neighbouring military battery

Musical entertainment in Jubilee Square

about the stench, the facilities had been relocated to Kalk Bay.

SIMON'S TOWN is home to False Bay's largest harbour, which includes the naval dockyard, yacht basin and commercial waterfront area. The waterfront jetty is used as a departure point for scenic cruises, seakayaking tours and deep-sea fishing charters, as well as whale-watching trips between July and November. With its variety of shops and restaurants, as well as sites of historical interest, Simon's Town has become a popular stopover for tourists on the way to and from Cape Point.

The town took its name from Simon's Bay, named by Governor of the Cape, Simon van der Stel, who surveyed False Bay in 1687, and identified this small, sheltered bay as a safe winter anchorage. It was only in 1741 that the Dutch East India Company followed through on his suggestion, decreeing that its ships use Simon's Bay between May and August in an effort to reduce the losses incurred from storms in Table Bay. In 1796, the British erected a Martello tower to guard the entrance to the bay, a year after they occupied the Cape for the first time. Following their second occupation of the Cape in 1806, the British established a base for the Royal Navy here in 1814. The base was handed over to the South African Navy in 1957.

The most unusual naval recruit was undoubtedly Just Nuisance, a Great Dane that served as an able seaman in the Royal Navy between 1939 and 1944. The dog was already a mascot

ROMAN ROCK LIGHTHOUSE

Roman Rock lighthouse, near the entrance to Simon's Town's naval harbour, is the only lighthouse in South Africa to be built on a rock. The prefabricated cast-iron tower was shipped over from England, and took four years to install, becoming operational in September 1861. The lighthouse was manned until 1919, when it was automated. It has an intensity of 5000 CD (candlepower) and flashes once every six seconds. Roman Rock itself was so named for the abundance of red roman once caught here.


Long Beach

that was much loved by the sailors, and used to follow them onto the train to Cape Town, then guide them home after drunken nights on the town. Following complaints from the train conductors, and threats to have him put down, the dog was enlisted into the navy to entitle him to a free pass on the trains! On 1 April 1944 – his 7th birthday – Just Nuisance was put down, as he was becoming paralysed following a motor accident. The following day, he was buried with full military honours at Klaver Camp on Red Hill. A bronze statue on Jubilee Square commemorates this favourite example of 'man's best friend'.

Jubilee Square itself was completed in 1935, and was named in honour of King George V's Silver Jubilee in that year. The 'historic mile' along Simon's Town's main road contains many interesting old buildings, and the area's history can be explored further at the Simon's Town Museum, Naval Museum, Heritage Museum and Toy Museum.

LONG BEACH is a long strip of white sand on the outskirts of Simon's Town. It offers safe swimming, as it is a gently sloping beach with little wave action, but it is not particularly sheltered from the wind, and there is no shade. Seakayakers and surfskiers often launch here and paddle along the coast to Boulders Beach and beyond.

The access road to the beach, which terminates in a large parking area, is close to the Simon's Town station. The station marks the end of the line for the railway, which reached here in 1890. The Bear Basics shop in the station building stocks a wide range of teddy bears for all tastes.

MACKEREL BEACH is opposite the turn-off to Dido Valley, beyond the navy's north battery. Access to the beach is difficult, as there is no car park, and the railway line runs between the beach and the road. The beach is not popular for swimming or sunbathing, but anglers sometimes cast a line here, and trek-netting also takes place.

A little offshore are the last remains of the *Clan Stuart*, which was wrecked here in 1917 after dragging anchor in a southeasterly gale. The engine block protrudes above the surface, and although not much else remains of the wreck, it is a good dive site for novices, offering an easy shore entry and colourful sea life.

SHELLEY BEACH is a tiny, sandy cove separated from Mackerel Beach by a rocky section of shoreline. Next to it is Shelley Point – a more pronounced headland – where there is a tidal pool. The pool was built in the late 1930s for non-whites, after which they were prevented from using the popular Glencairn pool, built during the 1920s.

A gravel access road leads from the parking area at Glencairn Station, and parking is also available off the main road, in front of the cemetery opposite the beach. However, given the pool's isolated location, it is seldom used. Whales often come close inshore along this


Shelley Point

stretch of coastline between July and November, and passing motorists tend to stop along the road to watch them (see box alongside).

GLENCAIRN has a long, sandy beach that is particularly popular with those wanting to escape the crowds at Fish Hoek. There are a few submerged rocks in the surf zone, and the waves and backwash are powerful at times, but swimming is reasonably safe here. Surfers and bodyboarders can often be seen riding the reef break off the rocky point at the northern side of the bay, and kitesurfers come here in strong southeasters. There is a gravel parking lot off Main Road (M4), with access to the beach via a path over the railway line.

On the point at the southern side of the bay, there is a large tidal pool. Parking can normally be found along the M4, or in the adjacent car park for Glencairn Station. The Else River discharges into the sea in this corner of the beach, although it is rarely more than a trickle, if flowing at all. Across the road is Glencairn Vlei, where gravel paths through the reed beds are enjoyed by birdwatchers and dog-walkers. Once, the vlei was a plain of white sand, periodically flooded by the river, but construction of the railway embankment in 1890 resulted in changes to the river's hydrology. In addition, marram grass was planted to stabilise the drift sand that constantly inundated the railway line, and this spread to the vlei area. Alien acacia shrubs then invaded

THE SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

Southern right whales, *Eubalaena australis*, are commonly seen along Cape Town's coastline between July and November. They spend the summer months in the Antarctic's cold Southern Ocean, feeding on dense swarms of zooplankton, and in April begin the long migration northward. Most of the whales that make the migration are pregnant females, with individual females returning on average every three years. They choose shallow, sheltered bays to give birth to and to nurse their calf, until it is strong enough to start migrating southward.

The species' common name was coined by early whalers, who considered it the 'right' whale to hunt. This was because it was a slow swimmer, and occurred close inshore, making it accessible from small, open boats rowed out from land-based whaling stations, and also because it floated when dead, and yielded large quantities of oil and baleen. The species was heavily exploited from the 1780s until the 1930s, by which time its numbers had declined drastically. In 1937, a worldwide ban on right-whaling was implemented.

The southern right whale population is now believed to be recovering at the maximum rate biologically possible, but it still totals only 10% of pre-exploitation numbers.

the valley, and the vlei was later excavated in places to form artificial ponds. These open-water spaces are now threatened by the encroachment of bulrush, which grows prolifically due to nutrient enrichment of the water.

The parking area on the headland to the north of Glencairn beach provides a good vantage point for whale-watching and seabird-spotting. Between July and November, southern right whales (see box on previous page) come close inshore along this stretch of coast, while strong southeasterly winds between September and March blow offshore seabirds into False Bay. The birds are best viewed on the first or second day of the southeaster in the late afternoon, as they fly southward, back out of the bay. Cape gannet, Arctic skua, sooty shearwater and white-chinned petrel are the most commonly seen species.

The Glencairn area was previously known as Elsje's Bay, but there is some disagreement about the origin of the name. Some say it refers to the Rooi Els trees that previously grew here, while others maintain that it is a corruption of *Ysselsteijn* – the name of a ship that stopped over in this part of False Bay in 1671. In January 1901, the farm Elsebaai was bought by a group of Scottish men, who called themselves the Glencairn Syndicate, apparently because there was a pile of stones ('cairn') at the upper end of the valley ('glen'). Six months later, trading as Glencairn Estates Ltd, they sold off 56 plots. The following year, a glass factory was established in the valley to provide bottles for Mr Anders Ohlsson's brewery at Newlands. A number of glass workers were brought over from England, but they found the area isolated and inhospitable, and operating costs were too high for the venture to be economically feasible. The factory was therefore closed after a few years, and in January 1908, the land was transferred to Glencairn Estates.

FISH HOEK is one of Cape Town's favourite beaches for families. It offers safe swimming conditions and a long, sandy beach for playing and sunbathing, although space does become limited at spring high tide, when waves lap the retaining wall of the beachfront promenade. Volunteer lifesavers are on duty on weekends and public holidays during the summer season, and there is a shark warning system in place. There are often good breakers for bodysurfing and bodyboarding, while surfers ride the larger waves at the Clovelly end of the beach. The middle section – near the lifesaving clubhouse – is used to launch surfskis and kneeboards, as well as Hobie Cats from the sailing club situated behind the dunes a little further along. In addition, trek-netting (see box alongside) is conducted by a licensed operator. There is a large pay-to-enter parking area, well-maintained ablution facilities, a small children's park, and a beachfront restaurant with a take-away outlet.

The 'catwalk' along the southern shore of the bay – named Jager's Walk after a local business-

Children's park, Fish Hoek beach

Local fishermen offloading their nets on Fish Hoek beach

man and councillor actively involved in Fish Hoek's administrative affairs during the 1930s – allows a gentle stroll to Sunny Cove, where an elevated footbridge over the railway line is a good whale-watching spot during the southern right season. Swimming off the catwalk has declined in popularity following a shark attack here in recent years, but scuba divers still use it as an easy-entry access point for training dives in the kelp beds.

On the opposite side of the bay, there is a small tidal pool – called Woolley's Pool – on the rocky point hidden below the road at the entrance to the bay. There is no parking close by, but access can be obtaied via some steps descending from the verge along Main Road to a subway beneath the railway line. At **Clovelly**, the Silvermine River flows across the beach into the sea during winter, but forms a stagnant lagoon in the backshore area during the summer months.

TREK-NETTING

Trek-netting is South Africa's oldest commercial fishery, having been started by the Dutch East India Company in the early 1700s. Today, the fishery is confined to the coast west of Gordon's Bay, and is subject to a variety of management measures. Traditionally, the fishery has targeted harders (southern mullet) and St Joseph sharks, but permit holders in False Bay are allowed to catch certain linefish species too, including highly prized yellowtail. However, the harder resource is overexploited, the export market for St Joseph shark has collapsed, and there are concerns about the by-catch of severely threatened linefish species. In 2006, with the allocation of long-term fishing rights, the number of permit holders was reduced substantially to facilitate the recovery of the harder stock, ensure economically viable ventures for full-time fishers, and protect marine biodiversity. Fishing rights are now valid for 10 years, but can be withdrawn for those not adhering to permit conditions, which are revised on an annual basis. A separate permit is required for trek-net fishers needing to use a vehicle on the beach.

Walkways through the river's rehabilitated wetland area on the other side of the Main Road provide good bird-watching opportunities, and there is also a wheelchair-accessible trail for the blind. At this end of the beach, there is a small parking area on each side of the road.

Fish Hoek was originally called 'Visch Hoek' by the Dutch East India Company, which by 1725 had established a fishing station here to exploit the bay's abundant fish. A century later, there was also a whaling station, but few people settled in the valley until the large farm property was divided up and sold off as plots in 1918. The area was already becoming a popular seaside resort, however, as the railway line completed in the 1880s brought day-trippers and weekend campers to the beach.

In 1929, Fish Hoek made world headlines with the discovery of 'Fish Hoek Man' by a father-and-son team of amateur archaeologists. Victor Peers and his son, Bertie, had begun excavating a cave in the area in 1927, and had found a number of KhoiSan artefacts and human skeletons, before they uncovered a tiny skull with unusual bone structure. The skull was identified as that of an ancestral human who lived some 12 000 years ago.


Boats in the harbour

KALK BAY is best known for its vibrant fishing harbour and its bustling main road, lined with quaint old buildings, housing a variety of restaurants, art galleries, antique shops, book stores and bohemian boutiques. The harbour serves as the home base of False Bay's commercial line-fishing fleet, which sets to sea in colourful wooden boats. At weekends, people flock to see the boats return to port, watch the catches being offloaded and sold in quayside auctions, or buy a fish to take home for a braai. Hordes of recreational anglers can often be seen casting a line from the harbour wall, particularly during a summer run of white stumpnose or mackerel.

There is a small beach within the harbour precinct, where children often swim and play.


Angling off Kalk Bay's harbour wall

Kalk Bay harbour

Poor water quality, as is often the case in harbours, compromises the suitability for swimming here. Two tidal pools situated in front of the Brass Bell restaurant provide an alternative swimming spot, and squeezed between them and the harbour wall is a tiny beach suitable for paddling. The first tidal pool was built in the early 1900s on the site of an old stone fish trap created by KhoiSan 'strandlopers'. During the 1860s, Bishop Robert Gray had regularly bathed in the fish trap while holidaying at his home nearby, so the pool was originally known as Bishop's Pool. The pool was enlarged after it was damaged by storm waves in 1919, and the second pool – named the Kalk Bay Pool – was built three years later, after which it became a popular venue for evening water polo games until the mid-1930s. The retaining walls of the pools have been damaged by storm waves over the years.

Kalk Bay takes its name from the Dutch word for lime, because from as early as the 1670s, the area was a major source of lime used in building mortar and whitewash. The lime was produced by burning shells cast up on the beach in wood-fired kilns. In 1687, the Governor of the Cape, Simon van der Stel, visited Kalk Bay prior to surveying False Bay, and he was impressed by the area's abundance of fish. He later started a

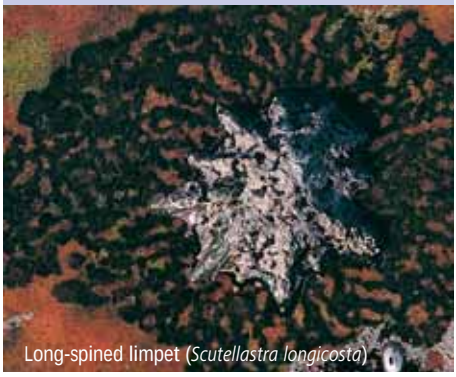
Pear limpet (*Scutellastra cochlear*)

GARDENERS OF THE ROCKY SHORE

South Africa has more species of limpets than anywhere else in the world, and Dalebrook has served as a convenient 'outdoor laboratory' for studying them. These hardy sea snails have a cap-shaped shell, which grows to fit the rock terrain at their 'home scar'. This allows the limpets to roam the rock surface – grazing on algae using their toothed tongue or radula – before returning to their home scar to clamp down as protection against predators, wave action and desiccation.

Some limpets tend their own 'garden' of algae, which they vigorously defend from intruders. For example, the pear limpet, *Scutellastra cochlear,* grazes away most other algae in its vicinity, but maintains a narrow fringe of red algae around itself that only it crops. Rather like mowing a lawn, this stimulates the growth of the 'garden'. In addition, the nitrogen-based excretions of the limpets supply nutrients needed by the algae, resulting in a fertiliser effect. If all the limpets are removed, the red algae flourish at first, but then disappear as they are overgrown by other seaweeds, or eaten by other animals.

This strategy is so successful that pear limpets can reach densities as high as 2 600 individuals per square metre, forming a distinct 'cochlear zone' on rocky shores.



Long-spined limpet (*Scutellastra longicosta*)

fishery here, and over the next century wagon-loads of lime and fish were transported to the Dutch East India Company's growing settlement at Cape Town. In 1807, following the British occupation, a whaling station was also established at Kalk Bay, and during the next few decades scores of southern right whales were butchered here for their blubber and oil. Over-exploitation resulted in a rapid depletion of these gentle giants, and by the 1940s, whaling was on the wane. The last whaling operation in Kalk Bay closed in 1855.

By that time, Kalk Bay was gaining popularity as a seaside resort. Then, in the 1870s, Filipino deserters, who had jumped ship in Cape Town, settled in Kalk Bay, and were soon joined by their countrymen fleeing the violent uprising against Spanish rule. Before long, there was a flourishing Filipino community in Kalk Bay, and these skilled fisherfolk – often called Manilas – played an integral part in the development of the area. In 1883, the railway line reached Kalk Bay, but this caused problems for the fishers. The large viaduct that carried the railway line over the beach prevented them from pulling their fishing vessels – in those days open rowboats – over the road for protection during storms and spring high tide. A storm in May 1898 smashed the boats against the viaduct, causing half the 38-strong fleet to be damaged or destroyed. In 1913, following considerable controversy, work began on constructing a breakwater. This was completed in 1919, providing some protection from storm swells, and the harbour mole was constructed in the late 1930s.

DALEBROOK is particularly popular among families with young children, as it has a shallow tidal pool and a sandy strip behind the rocky shoreline, where small gullies and rock pools make for interesting paddling and exploring. Situated on a lee side, the beach is surprisingly

Enjoying the shallow waters of Dalebrook's tidal pool

well protected from the southeasterly sea breezes that whip up white horses a little way offshore. There are parking spaces along the main road and in a large car park a short walk away. Access to the beach can be obtained via a subway beneath the railway line.

The beach is named after Dalebrook House, built nearby in 1872. The two sisters and their friend who lived here initially ran a cottage hospital, but it was later converted into a boarding house. In January 1918, guests were forced to evacuate when sparks from the chimney set the thatched roof alight, and the building was gutted by fire. The tidal pool dates back to 1906, when local residents built a sea wall to create a rudimentary pool, which was formalised and enlarged by the municipality in 1914.

The rocky shore at Dalebrook is a wave-cut platform, also called a marine terrace, formed at the base of sea cliffs as a result of erosion over the centuries. This flat shelf of rock is submerged at high tide, but despite its harsh environment, it has a rich community of intertidal life, and has played an important part in rocky shore research in South Africa (see box alongside). The area is a marine reserve, so removal of intertidal organisms is prohibited.

DANGER BEACH is a long, sandy beach that is mainly used by local residents. The name alludes to the fact that swimming is not always safe here, because at times, there is a strong backwash and large 'dumping' waves. However, the reef break further out is ridden by an intrepid group of surfers and bodyboarders. The beach is accessed from the St James tidal pool via a path across the grassed area behind the point.

The beach was the site of a terrible tragedy in January 1874, when Mr John Nicholls – the co-founder of Standard Bank in Cape Town – took his three daughters to the beach to paddle at the water's edge. All three girls were engulfed by a large wave, and swept out to sea, and two of them drowned. The devastated family returned to England after handsomely rewarding the fishermen in the area who had gone to the girls' rescue.

Mr Nicholls and his three brothers subsequently donated a baptismal font to the Holy Trinity Church in Kalk Bay, which is still used today.

During the whaling days of the early 1800s, whale carcasses were hauled up on Danger Beach, and secured with the aid of metal rings embedded in the rocks while being carved up for their blubber and oil.

ST JAMES BEACH is famous for the colourful collection of bathing boxes alongside its tidal pool, which offers a safe swimming spot on this rocky section of shoreline. The pool backs onto a sandy beach, and is very popular with family groups, so the area tends to get overcrowded on summer weekends, particularly since it is relatively sheltered from the southeaster. The beach is accessed via a subway beneath the railway line, and parking can usually be found along the main road or in one of the nearby car parks. A walkway along the sea wall provides for a pleasant seaside stroll to Muizenberg. Local surfers can often be seen riding the reef break here, known as 'Off the Wall in False Bay' to differentiate it from a surf site of the same name at Mouille Point.

St James was originally considered part of Kalk Bay, but a Catholic church was built here for the growing community of Filipino fisherfolk, and named St James after the Apostle. In 1900, the church was demolished so that a railway station could be built on the site, and a larger church was built on the other side of Main Road. The station was then known as St James, and increased the area's accessibility as a seaside destination. In 1911, the old KhoiSan fish trap on the shore (see box alongside) was turned into a tidal pool, and before long, it was surrounded by bathing boxes. The small huts were rented from the Council on an annual basis by the who's who of Cape Town to provide a convenient changing room, storage facility and shelter from the elements for a day at the beach. By 1950, there were at least 80 bathing boxes, but today, these have been reduced to 20, and serve mainly as a decorative feature, preserving the area's heritage value.

St James was also the site of the country's first marine biological station, built on the adjacent rocky point in 1902. It served as the home and research laboratory of Dr John Gilchrist, a biologist appointed by the government to investigate the

The colourful huts on St James Beach

ANCIENT FISH TRAPS

The tidal pool at St James was built on the site of a stone fish trap – or 'viswyver' – constructed during precolonial times by the KhoiSan, who roamed the area. These 'strandlopers' built low, curved walls at suitable spots – typically on rocky platforms with a wide intertidal zone but minimal wave action – by packing together rocks and stones collected from the surroundings. The walls were low enough to be inundated at high tides, usually only at spring tide twice per month. Fish using the tide's reach to feed in the intertidal zone would then be trapped by the wall when the water receded through small gaps between the rocks, allowing them to be easily speared.

fishing potential of the Cape. The building was open to the public, and was known simply as the Aquarium, as it contained a fascinating variety of marine life housed in large glass tanks. The Aquarium was closed in 1936, and the building demolished in 1954.

The stretch of coast between the tidal pools at St James Beach and Kalk Bay is a sanctuary 'no take' zone of the Table Mountain National Park marine protected area, where the removal or disturbance of marine life is prohibited.

BAILEY'S COTTAGE is predominantly a fishing spot, although there is a small patch of sandy beach squeezed between two rocky points. Anglers come here in the hope of catching kob or steenbras after a southeaster in summer, or a galjoen in winter. Swimming on this exposed stretch of coast is not advisable, but at low tide or in calm conditions, there may be some small pools suitable for paddling.

The thatch cottage after which the area is named was owned by Sir Abe Bailey, a mining magnate, politician and racehorse breeder, who was born in Cradock in 1864, but divided his time between South Africa and England. The large homestead Rust-en-Vrede – diagonally opposite the cottage – was built for him by Sir Herbert Baker in 1905, and a few years later, he commissioned the construction of the cottage. Sir Bailey developed thrombosis in his later years, resulting in the amputation of both his legs, but he still enjoyed going on fishing trips from Kalk Bay on his boat, secured to the railings in a special chair. His love of the sea was reflected in his interest in marine research, and on two occasions, he donated funds for the development of the old marine biological station at St James. Sir Bailey died at Rust-en-Vrede in 1940, and is buried on the hillside behind the homestead.

Sir Bailey was a great friend of Cecil John Rhodes, who died in 1902 while staying at the small holiday cottage he had bought nearby in 1899. Rhodes Cottage is now a museum, and forms part of Muizenberg's Historical Mile, which also includes Het Posthuys, dating back to 1673. This is the oldest building on the False Bay coast, and served at various times as a lookout for enemy ships, and a policing post to prevent illegal trading between local farmers and visiting vessels.

Opposite Bailey's Cottage is the open-air museum marking the site of the Muizenberg Battlements. In the first week of August 1795, Dutch soldiers erected defensive fortifications here in preparation for an attack from a British fleet that had arrived in Simon's Bay some weeks earlier. On 7 August, the British troops marched along the coast, accompanied by four warships. Before the troops had reached the area, the warships fired on the Dutch, forcing them to retreat. This so-called Battle of Muizenberg was the start of a military campaign that resulted in the British taking possession of Cape Town on 16 September 1795.

St James walkway

Cape Flats Coast map

Cape Flats Coast

False Bay's western and eastern shores, which snake below the rugged mountains of the Cape Peninsula and Kogelberg, are rocky coastlines, interspersed with small beaches, but the gently curving northern shore is a continuous belt of sand, stretching over 35 km. Facing the mouth of the bay and backing onto the Cape Flats – the low-lying land once submerged beneath the sea – it has little protection from the wind and waves, but offers its own rewards.

Cemetery Beach


Muizenberg in False Bay

MUIZENBERG was once South Africa's premier seaside resort, where the rich and famous built their holiday homes. Then the area fell out of favour, and later developed a reputation as a seedy den of iniquity – although its beaches remained popular for their safe swimming and good surfing. More recently, Muizenberg has been targeted for urban renewal, and the decrepit buildings along the beachfront at **Surfer's Corner** have been rejuvenated. Now, the main car park here is lined with surf shops, internet cafes and trendy eateries, and the area is becoming fashionable once more.

Surfer's Corner is considered the birthplace of surfing in South Africa – legend has it that a visiting Australian showed the locals how it was done in around 1910. Before long, collisions with bathers necessitated a separate area being demarcated for surfers, and what was formerly known as Neptune's Corner naturally became Surfer's Corner. It is still the place to learn to surf, and there are a number of surf schools catering for both young 'grommets' and late starters. The shark-spotting initiative, begun here in October 2004 by a local surfing personality, has since been expanded to other beaches by the City of Cape Town.

Next to Surfer's Corner, there is another small beach along the edge of the bay, aptly called **Rocky Beach**. It largely disappears at high tide, but at low tide, its rock pools make a good paddling spot for toddlers. Rock-and-surf anglers sometimes fish here and at nearby Bailey's Cottage. The walkway to St James Beach starts from the car park, and offers a chance of spotting black oystercatchers foraging for food on the rocky shore at low tide. Overlooking the beach is the teak clocktower of the imposing red-brick

Surfers Corner

railway stationhouse, built in 1913, which marks the start of Muizenberg's Historical Mile along Main Road. It was the extension of the railway line from Wynberg in 1822 that stimulated the area's development as a seaside resort.

On the other side of Surfer's Corner is **Muizenberg Beach**, the main swimming beach, which is also known as West Beach as it lies to the west of the Zandvlei outlet. A colourful row of bathing boxes serves mainly as a picturesque tribute to the area's historical heyday, but also provides an effective windbreak. Behind the beach is the **Muizenberg Pavilion**, dominated by a red-and-white candy-striped building. It too harks back to an earlier time – the original pavilion was a wooden one built in 1910, but this was replaced in 1929 by a larger pavilion that included a theatre seating 900 people. That was demolished in the 1960s, and many hope that the current one will face the same fate as part of the area's transformation. At present the building houses an information centre run by Cape Town Tourism, and a functions hall used for conferences, concerts and weddings. The Pavilion complex includes a recreational park with a paddling pool, putt-putt (mini-golf) course and waterslide, as well as an elevated promenade, which doubles as a bridge over the Zandvlei outlet.

Muizenberg's colourful huts

Zandvlei Estuary Nature Reserve

Zandvlei is not only an important wetland habitat supporting rich indigenous fish and bird life, but also a popular recreational water body for dinghy sailing, canoeing and windsurfing. The outlet is periodically breached by bulldozers to manipulate water levels and salinity concentrations in the vlei and canals of Marina Da Gama, a housing development on the eastern shore. In 2006, a small bird sanctuary on the northern shore was expanded to include the water body and surrounding wetland habitat, and given formal conservation status as the 200 hectare Zandvlei Estuary Nature Reserve.

There are car parks on either side of the Zandvlei outlet, the eastern one serving **East Beach**.

Sunrise Beach

Three main access paths lead through the vegetated dunes to the beach, but there are no other facilities. East Beach gives way to **Sunrise Beach**, reached by road from Sunrise Circle. On Sundays, its large parking areas are stretched to capacity due to the flea market here. This is the 'home beach' of the False Bay Lifesaving Club, which provides volunteer lifesaving services in peak periods, and a good training ground for young 'nippers'. It also is a favourite spot for kitesurfers taking advantage of the strong southeasters on this exposed stretch of coast.

However, southeasters often bring the 'blues' in the form of floating bluebottles (*Physalia*) and by-the-wind-sailors (*Velella*), and the sea swallows (*Glaucus*) and bubble raft shells (*Janthina*) that feed on them. Their blue coloration helps camouflage them from predators while they float at the sea surface, at the mercy of winds and currents. Once stranded on the shore, they are a welcome food source for plough shells (*Bullia*), which emerge from the sand, and use their large foot to surf up the beach, before ploughing along the surface in search of carrion. Bluebottles can inflict

Anglers can often be spotted fishing off Cemetery Beach

a painful sting, which should be treated with vinegar and ice once any fragments of tentacle have been removed and the area washed with sea water. Rinsing with fresh water or rubbing sand on the skin should be avoided, as this will cause the remaining stinging cells to discharge.

Muizenberg was named after Sergeant Wynand Muijs, the commander of the military post established in 1743 at Het Posthuys, which can still be seen on Main Road.

ZONWABE AND CEMETERY BEACH make up the long, sandy strip next to Baden Powell Drive (R310). The surf is sometimes too rough for safe swimming, but the beaches are fairly popular for long walks or just relaxing on the sand, breathing in the sea air, and enjoying the wide-open spaces of False Bay. Anglers fish from these beaches for kob, shad, white steenbras and white stumpnose. Unfortunately, the close proximity to the road offers an easy escape route for criminals; there have been reports of anglers being robbed of their valuables here.

The road runs straight through the beaches'

Bird watching at Rondevlei Nature Reserve

dune system along this stretch, so it is frequently inundated with windblown sand. The Cemetery Beach car park – a cement surface being swamped by a sea of sand – is also inappropriately sited, as it lies right in the middle of the littoral active zone, the area in which sand exchange occurs between the surf zone, beach and dunes.

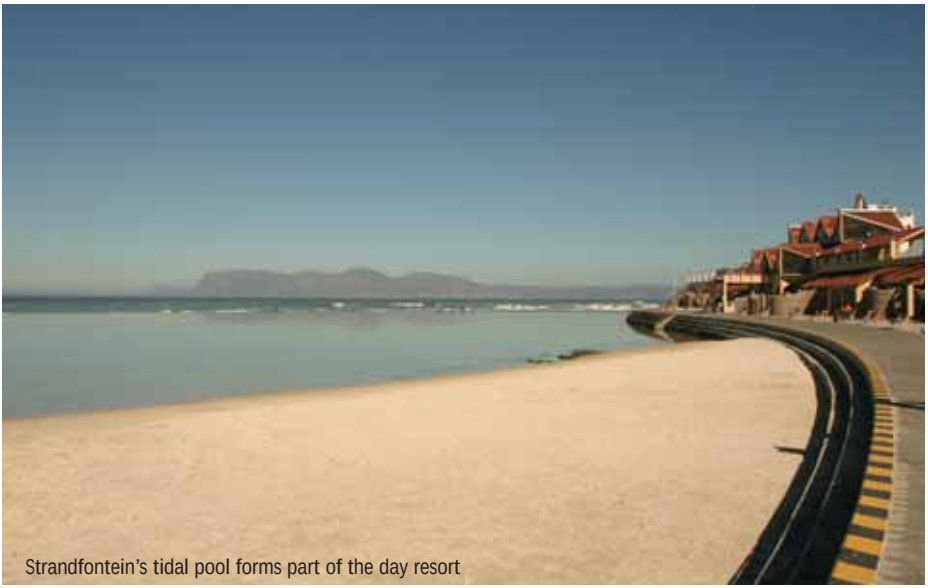
Much of the coastal strip here forms part of the False Bay Ecology Park. The park covers 1 200 hectares, and includes the Rondevlei and Zeekoevlei Nature Reserves, the Cape Flats (Strandfontein) Wastewater Treatment Works and the Coastal Park landfill site (see box alongside for more about brown water patches, which are likely due to the presence of the wastewater treatment works). While Rondevlei and the Strandfontein pans are regularly visited by birdwatchers hoping to spot some of the 200-plus species recorded here, Zeekoevlei is one of the main rowing and sailing centres in Cape Town. Environmental education programmes are run in the park, exposing school groups to 'green' issues, such as biodiversity conservation, as well as 'brown' issues, like pollution.

BROWN WATER PATCHES IN FALSE BAY

Patches of brown water in the surf zone between Muizenberg and Strand are caused by dense accumulations of single-celled algae, or diatoms. The organism responsible is *Anaulis australis*, which occurs in many bays along South Africa's south coast. Studies at Sundays River beach in Algoa Bay have shown that the accumulations are dependent on nitrogen-rich groundwater seeping into the surf zone from the Alexandria dunefield, a natural system with no pollution sources. The formation and duration of brown water patches is linked to turbulence events affected by weather conditions and bay hydrography.

The brown water patches in False Bay, however, have a greater intensity than elsewhere on the coast, and this is likely due to higher nutrient levels in the surf zone. The coastal strip between Muizenberg and Strandfontein receives nitrogen-enriched water from groundwater emanating from the Cape Flats Wastewater Treatment Works as well as the outlets of Zandvlei and Zeekoevlei, both of which are affected by polluted stormwater and river discharges.

The diatom accumulations not only play a useful role as a biological sponge, helping to absorb excess nutrients, but also provide an important food source for fish and filter-feeding invertebrates in the surf zone.



Strandfontein's tidal pool forms part of the day resort

STRANDFONTEIN is a large day resort with an enormous tidal pool backed by a pavilion and flanked by sandy beaches. It has braai sites as well as grassed terraces that make good picnic areas. Lifeguards are on duty during peak periods, and the National Sea Rescue Institute's (NSRI) Station 16 is based here. The resort is very popular with anglers, who come from far and wide in the hope of hooking fish such as white steenbras and galjoen, but it is mostly visited by residents of the nearby suburbs. During the apartheid era, the resort was zoned for exclusive use by coloureds, and they still make up the main user group due to the historical delineation of residential areas on racial grounds.

Seal Island – a large rock that is home to some 60 000 seals – lies directly offshore, about 5½ km away. This is a prime feeding area for white sharks between April and September, when seal pups spend time in the waters around the island before dispersing once they are weaned. It is here that unusual shark breaching behaviour can be observed, as the predators surge up from deep water to attack the seals from below, moving with such power that they fly through the air. Licensed operators offer shark-viewing and cage-diving trips to Seal Island, departing from the harbours at Simon's Town and Gordon's Bay.

A tarred road links Strandfontein with Mnandi to the east, and is sometimes used by cyclists, runners and driving instruction schools. Sadly, it is evidently also used for illegal dumping and off-road driving in the dunes, which are both damaging this sensitive ecosystem. There are a couple of access roads along this stretch down to beach-front car parks, but they are secluded, so one needs to be aware of personal safety.

Further along is the resort of **Blue Waters**, which has camping and caravan sites, as well as chalet accommodation. There are picnic and braai spots behind the dunes, and a pavilion area on the beachfront. The Alpha Surf Lifesaving Club has its premises here.

MNANDI is a day resort with excellent facilities, including a large freshwater pool with water-slides, landscaped lawns with playground apparatuses, picnic tables and braai sites, as well as long, sandy beaches that are good for walking and fishing. During peak periods in summer, lifesavers keep watch over a stretch of beach that is safe for swimming. This beach also offers scenic views of the Wolfgat Nature Reserve's limestone cliffs.

Mnandi was reserved for blacks during the apartheid era. Its name can be translated as 'lovely, just right'. A little way offshore is a rocky outcrop known as Kapteinsklip, which means 'captain's stone'.

The resort was granted Blue Flag pilot status for the 2003 summer season, and awarded full status a year later. It has maintained Blue Flag status ever since.

The limestone cliffs at Wolfgat Nature Reserve

WOLFGAT NATURE RESERVE is a local authority reserve that was proclaimed in 1986. It is important for biodiversity conservation, because it is the largest reserve on the Cape Flats protecting strandveld vegetation, or dune thicket, and also contains dune fynbos.

The reserve had become heavily invaded by alien invasive vegetation – primarily Rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*) – but a clearing programme is now under way. In winter, blooming arum lilies put on a spectacular show for motorists travelling along Baden Powell Drive.

The reserve is also special from a geological point of view, owing to the limestone cliffs and calcrete dunes along the coastal strip.

Wolfgat was in fact named after the fossil den of a brown hyaena ('strandwolf') found in these cliffs in 1962. The den dated back about 45 000 years, but brown hyaenas were found in Cape Town as recently as the 1840s. Shell middens have also been found in the dunes, indicating that KhoiSan 'strandlopers' once harvested shellfish here.

Today, the cliffs are home to a breeding colony of kelp gulls, which can often be seen soaring overhead. They are also used as a launch site for paragliding when there is enough of an updraft to stay aloft for long periods. Being elevated, the cliffs provide a suitable vantage point for whale-watching between July and November, while the beaches below are good for angling.

There are a few gravel parking areas alongside Baden Powell Drive, but car break-ins have been reported here, and one should be aware of personal security. Furthermore, trampling can increase erosion of the dune system, and destroy its sensitive vegetation, so it is better to stay on paths leading from the two tarred car parks, one of which is at the end of Swartklip Road.

Environmental education programmes within the reserve are available for school groups by prior arrangement.

The breakwater creates rock pools which are fun to explore

MONWABISI is a coastal resort that mainly caters for the residents of nearby Khayelitsha. It was built in the late 1980s, and reserved for blacks according to the policies of the apartheid era. Its name means 'bringing joy'.

During summer, it is often packed with people enjoying its facilities, but in winter, it is generally only used by anglers. This is an exposed stretch of coast, where windblown sand creates a constant maintenance problem, but the limestone cliffs along the seafront provide some protection from the wind. The many picnic and braai sites are set out on terraced lawns in the bowl behind the cliffs, while the enormous tidal pool lies in the lee of a headland jutting out into the sea. There are also paddling pools and a pavilion, with kiosks and ablution facilities.

Unfortunately, the beach here is dangerous for swimming, partly because a breakwater that was constructed during the 1990s – to solve the problem of powerful waves and backwash in the tidal pool – has affected the currents moving along

The pavilion at Monwabisi

the shore. So although the breakwater created what seems like a well-sheltered beach, strong rip currents often pull bathers out to sea, and incidents of drowning have been all too frequent.

Next to the day resort, there is an accommodation park with camping sites and chalets, as well as a freshwater swimming pool.

MACASSAR BEACH is a long stretch of sand extending more than 6 km along the foot of the Macassar dunes – Cape Town's highest and most extensive dune system. The beach resort here is accessed from Macassar Road, and includes a number of car parks as well as a camping area. There is also a pavilion, but it is in a state of disrepair, and may need to be demolished. Built too close to the beach, it is being covered by windblown sand, and has also been vandalised.

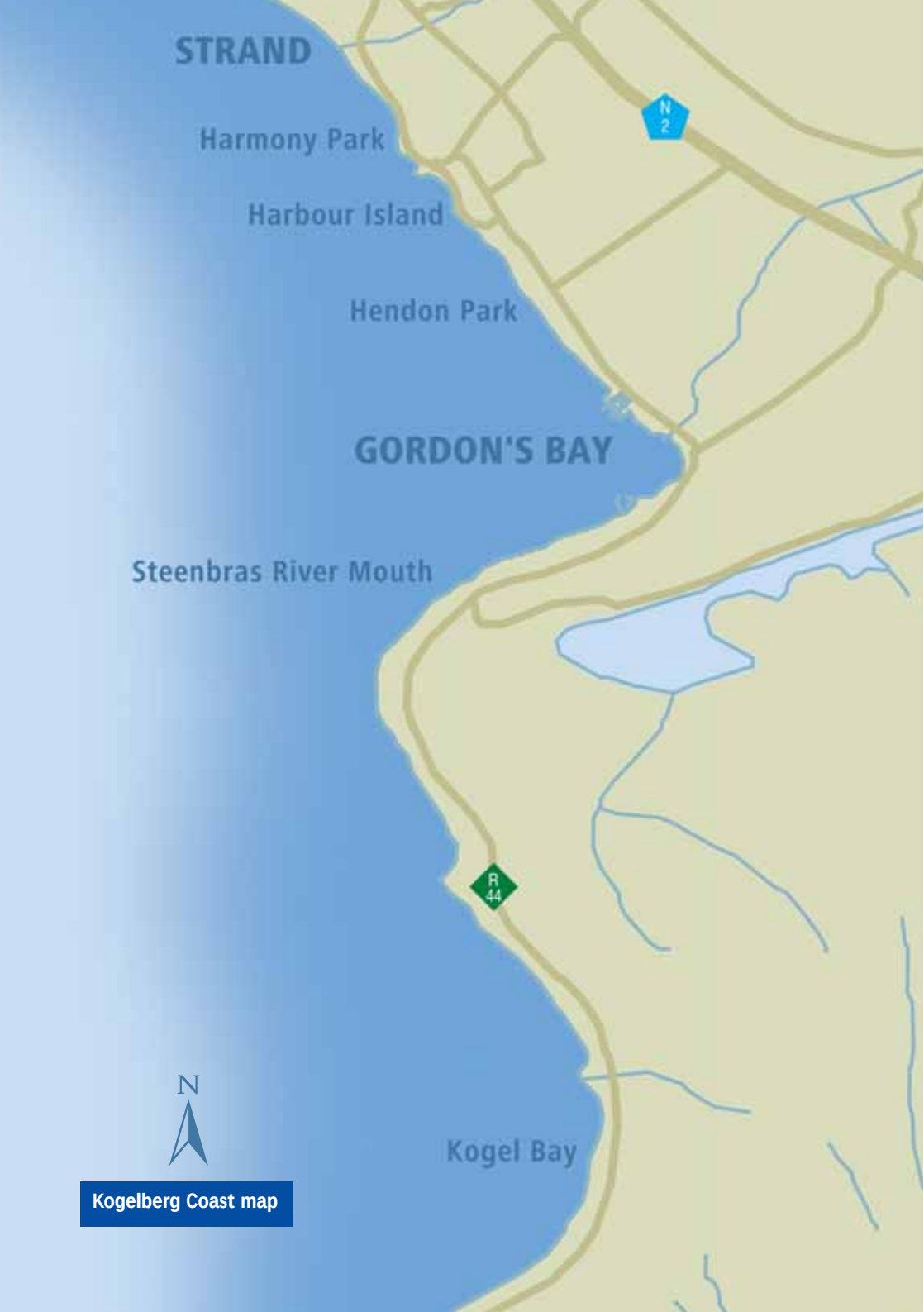
This is a very exposed stretch of coastline with powerful waves and currents, so swimming can be dangerous, although lifesavers from the local club keep watch during peak periods. Kitesurfers often come here to take advantage of the strong winds, but the most regular visitors are anglers targeting fish such as elf, galjoen, white steenbras, kob and blacktail. There is a licensed trek-netting operation too.

The Macassar dunes are considered a biodiversity hotspot, because their cloak of species-rich strandveld vegetation – also known as dune thicket – is threatened by a variety of factors. The dunes are being mined for sand, and damaged through illegal use of off-road vehicles, such as 4x4s, quad bikes and scramblers. In addition, local communities use the area for cattle grazing, hunting, collecting firewood, and harvesting medicinal plants, and with the expansion of informal settlements to the edge of Baden Powell Drive, the dune system is likely to come under increasing pressure.

A dune management plan has been developed to cater for a range of alternative land uses – some of which may only be implemented after mining licences expire – while environmental education programmes are conducted by staff of the Macassar Dunes Nature Reserve.

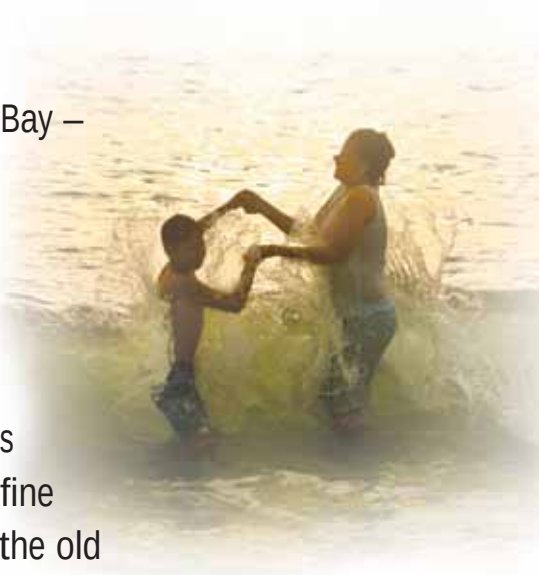
Macassar is named after the Indonesian port, which was home to Sheik Yusuf before he was exiled by the Dutch for opposing the monopolistic trading of the Dutch East India Company. He was first sent to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and then in 1694 to the Cape, where he and his followers settled on the farm Zandvliet, near the mouth of the Eerste River. Sheik Yusuf preached the message of Islam to the escaped slaves he sheltered, and the settlement grew to become the Cape's first Muslim community. Sheik Yusuf died here in 1699, and his kramat (shrine) is now a place of pilgrimage, forming part of the 'holy circle' of tombs around Cape Town.

The Macassar dunes flank the beach



Kogelberg Coast map

Kogelberg Coast



Beaches at Strand and Gordon's Bay – in False Bay's northeastern nook – offer safe swimming in warm, welcoming waters, but beyond this, rocky cliffs plunge into deep water, and the rugged shore is often battered by rough seas. This stretch of coast is famous for its fine fishing, but anglers should heed the old axiom: 'Never turn your back on the sea'.

Kogel Bay

Swimming at Melkbaai

STRAND is so synonymous with its long stretch of beach that its name is the Afrikaans term for beach. Its coastline is made up of two bays – Melkbaai and Mostertsbaai – and is closely followed for over 3 km by Beach Road, which is backed by high-rise apartment blocks, restaurants and shops.

Melkbaai is best for swimming and walking, as it has a long, sandy beach. The shore's slope is very slight here, so the water is shallow for a long way out, making it safe for children. Life-savers from the local club keep watch over demarcated areas during peak periods. The beach is also a launch site for Hobie Cat sailors, surfski paddlers and kitesurfers, while the main spot for surfers – called Pipe – is at the western end, near the mouth of the Lourens River.

Mostertsbaai has a rocky shoreline, with interesting pools and gullies to explore, and is considered the fishing and dog-walking beach.

Behind the dunes at Melkbaai there is a recreational area called Dune Park, which includes landscaped lawns, waterslides and a putt-putt (mini-golf) course. At the eastern end there is a large tidal pool, while the nearby Strand Pavilion – at the intersection of Beach and Main Roads – has an Olympic-sized, heated, indoor freshwater pool. The Pavilion also has a timeshare resort with luxury apartments, and a mall with a variety of restaurants and shops. A flea market is held outside the Pavilion on weekends.

The original Pavilion, built in 1914, was a wooden structure that stood on stilts over the sea. It burnt down in the 1920s, and was replaced by a larger building that included a cinema and entertainment hall. The current Pavilion opened in the early 1990s, but the old jetty in front of it – built in 1934 as a berth for fishing boats – has had to be closed, as it is structurally unsound.

Today, fishing boats launch from the slipway adjacent to the jetty, and head out to sea through Die Poort – a safe passage through the rocky shelf. The area extending 500 m offshore between the mouth of the Lourens River, and the eastern breakwater of the Gordon's Bay harbour is reserved for shore angling, which is very popular at fishing spots such as Poort Rock and Blake's Beach. The area is also good for saltwater fly-fishing, targeting elf (shad) and leervis (garrick). No fishing of any kind is allowed within 500 m of the high-water mark between the mouth of the Lourens and Eerste rivers – in front of the

The Strand's main surf spot, Pipe

former AECI (African Explosives and Chemical Industries) site and Denel – as this has now been proclaimed the Helderberg Marine Protected Area. This stretch of coast has been off limits to the general public for decades due to security measures, and thanks to the absence of human disturbance, it has become an important roost for migrating terns. Up to 20 000 common and sandwich terns arrive from Finland, Estonia and other Balkan countries in December each year, and stay for about four months.

The land between the Eerste and Lourens rivers was originally granted to De Beers – then owned by Cecil John Rhodes – in 1900 to build a dynamite factory to supply the Rand and Kimberley mines. The operation was later enlarged to make chemicals and fertilisers. Two hundred years earlier, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, who had succeeded his father as Governor of the Cape, built his home, Vergelegen, in 1700 in the area that later became Somerset West. He reserved the Lourens River mouth for fishing for himself, and allocated his brother Frans the coastal strip between the Lourens and Eerste rivers. This type of abuse of power led to his dismissal in 1706, after which the Vergelegen land was divided up, and the fishing rights were returned to the public. A community of coloured and Malay fishers settled in Mostertsbaai, but it was only in the 1830s that the area started becoming popular as a seaside destination. In the late 1840s, Landdrost van Ryneveld of Stellenbosch built a holiday home here, and the small village was then called Van Ryneveldsdorp. Later, it was renamed Somerset West Strand, but over time became known simply as Strand.

A tidal pool forms part of Harmony Park's day resort

Wooden jetty over the tidal pool

HARMONY PARK was built for exclusive use by the coloured community during the apartheid era. The day resort has an enormous tidal pool, which includes waterfalls, islands, blow holes and artificial rock pools and bays, as well as its own beach. A long jetty extends over the pool, and juts out above the sea. The design caters for various swimming and paddling areas, and on either side of the pool there is a strip of sandy beach above the rocky shoreline. This stretch of coast is popular for fishing and for exploring the intertidal life of the rock pools at low tide.

The large pavilion here is in a state of disrepair, and is in need of renovation. It is surrounded by expansive lawns, dotted with picnic sites. Next to the day resort is a caravan and camping park that gets very busy during the peak summer holiday season.

HARBOUR ISLAND is an exclusive development surrounding a small boat harbour and private beach. There is a security village of upmarket houses and apartment complexes, as well as the luxury Villa Via Hotel. The hotel and adjacent waterfront area has a variety of restaurants, which are open to the public. Sleek yachts and motor launches are moored in the marina, and there is a slipway for launching boats. The Gordon's Bay Boat Angling Club has its premises here.

HENDON PARK is a municipal coastal resort with chalet accommodation, as well as a camping and caravan park. Alongside the entrance is a recreation park with a waterslide, go-kart track and putt-putt (mini-golf) course. Much of the shoreline here is rocky, but the stretch in front of the camping area is a long, sandy beach that merges with Main Beach, Gordon's Bay.

Gordon's Bay with Bikini Beach in the foreground

GORDON'S BAY – tucked into the northeast corner of False Bay, and marked by an anchor and the letters G and B on the mountainside above the bay (see box alongside) – has a bit of everything for beachgoers. **Main Beach** is a long, sandy stretch, giving way to calm, shallow waters, which are gently warmed by the sun. Wave action is reduced by the rocky reef offshore, so the sea here offers safe swimming for children. There are large beachfront car parks with pay meters, grassy lawns for sand-free picnics, and a few cafés, restaurants and shops along Beach Road.

A paved pathway starts from the corner of the beach, and meanders along the edge of the bay, passing through a stand of milkwood trees, where picnic tables offer a shady lunch spot. This stretch of coastline has a sandy strip of beach above a rocky shoreline, with rock pools for paddling, and a few small coves and gullies for swimming. It is known as **Sunset Beach** for its spectacular views of the sun setting over the mountains of the Cape Peninsula across False Bay.

THE ANCHOR ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE

High on the mountainside above Gordon's Bay, whitewashed rocks have been laid out to create an enormous anchor, flanked by the letters G and B. Most visitors assume that the letters stand for Gordon's Bay, but they are in fact the initials for General Botha!

The emblem was constructed by senior cadets of the SA Nautical College General Botha in November 1949. The previous year, this training facility had moved into premises in the harbour precinct that had been occupied during World War II by the South African Air Force Air-Sea Rescue Base – also known as the Crash Boat Station.

The facility had been established in 1922, when the philanthropist TB Davis donated a training ship for seafarers to the South African Government. The ship was named after General Louis Botha – first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa – who had died in 1919. The ship was moored in Simon's Bay until 1942, after which the training facility moved to a land-based site at Red Hill, until relocating to Gordon's Bay in 1948. In 1966, the 'Bothie' moved to Granger Bay, and became the South African Merchant Navy Academy General Botha.

The Gordon's Bay facility became the SA Naval College, which is still used today for the training of naval officers.

Bikini Beach at sunset

Bikini Beach on the other side of the harbour is rated one of Cape Town's top beaches due to its excellent facilities, cleanliness and safety standards. It is sheltered from the wind, and is especially popular among trendy teenagers and Stellenbosch students for sunbathing, swimming and socialising. The beach slope is steeper here, dropping off quickly into deep water, so the waves are larger and more powerful, sometimes breaking as 'dumpers' on the shore. Surfers ride the left-hand break off the harbour wall, ending up at the beach.

The wedge of white sand at Bikini Beach has developed over the decades since the completion of the harbour in 1939. This used to be a rocky shoreline, but the harbour breakwater has altered the transport of sediment by alongshore currents, resulting in sand deposition here. The harbour is often referred to as the 'Old Harbour' since the development of the Harbour Island marina. Originally built for fishing boats, it now has moorings for yachts and motor launches, and is the departure point for deep-sea fishing charters, scenic cruises and shark-viewing trips to Seal Island. Anglers can often be seen fishing from the harbour walls.

Harbour Island marina

Beyond the harbour, the road veers uphill to join Faure Marine Drive (R44), which becomes Clarence Drive – a wonderful scenic route around the Kogelberg coast to Rooi Els and beyond. There are a number of places to pull over and admire the view as the road traces the edge of the bay, and whales are often seen close inshore during the southern right season. Anglers also park here to access the fishing spots along this stretch, where rocky outcrops and ledges protrude over deep water. In calm conditions, the bay is popular for seakayaking, waterskiing, spear-fishing and scuba diving.

Gordon's Bay is named after Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, the explorer, naturalist and military officer who from 1780 to 1795 served as Commander of the Dutch East India Company's garrison at the Cape, even though he was of


Surfers at Bikini Beach

Scottish descent. After capitulating to British forces following the Battle of Muizenberg in September 1795, he was accused of being a traitor, and committed suicide in despair.

The area was originally called Vischers Baaij by the Dutch East India Company, which established a fishing station here in 1672. A whaling station operated for a short period in about 1830, and soon afterwards, the embryonic village started gaining popularity as a seaside resort. By 1900, it had become the favourite destination for honeymooning Capetonians. Today, it is an attractive option for local and foreign tourists wanting to stay outside the city centre, while being close to the wine farms, golf estates and historical sites of Stellenbosch and Somerset West.

STEENBRAS RIVER MOUTH is about 7 km along Clarence Drive from Gordon's Bay, just after the Sunbird Guest Lodge. Coming from either direction, there are parking areas about 150 m before the bridge over the river, but access to the gorge is on the Rooi Els side, where there is an entrance gate. This marks the start of a popular hiking trail up the gorge to some large rock pools known as Crystal Pools. A permit must be purchased at the gate, and a maximum of 45 people are allowed in the gorge at any time. Groups can prebook by contacting the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, but must do so at least a week in advance, and arrive at the gate by 09:00, or their place will be forfeited. Large groups, such as school or club outings, will be accompanied by a ranger.

Permits can no longer be purchased at Sunbird Guest Lodge or the Helderberg Municipal Offices, and accessing the river by other means – such as

KOGELBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve is South Africa's first biosphere reserve with official status, having been registered under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme in December 1998. Worldwide – in more than 100 countries – there are at least 530 biosphere reserves, each of them zoned into core areas, buffer areas and transition areas to meet the dual objectives of conservation and sustainable development.

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve covers about 100 000 hectares, encompassing the entire coastal area from Gordon's Bay to the Bot River vlei, and inland to Grabouw and the Groenlandberg. The 18 000 hectare reserve – a provincial nature reserve managed by CapeNature – makes up the core area. This reserve is often considered the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom because of its rich fynbos vegetation. It is home to at least 1 600 different plant species, including the endangered marsh rose, *Orothamnus zeyheri*, once on the verge of extinction. Patches of relic indigenous forest contain yellowwood, stinkwood and boekenhout trees, while the riparian vegetation along the Palmiet River includes wild almond, rooi-els, yellowwood and Cape beech trees.

The reserve's buffer areas include private and municipal nature reserves, the Harold Porter Botanical Garden, the Palmiet River estuary, sections of the coast, and the marine area. Plantations, farms, local towns and industrial developments make up the transition zone.

Kogel Bay forms part of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

Rich fynbos vegetation carpets the mountains surrounding Kogel Bay

The Kogel Bay Resort is reached by Clarence Drive

climbing down from the bridge – is prohibited. Hikers should wear sturdy walking shoes, and keep food out of sight of baboons, which can become aggressive. More information can be obtained from the Helderberg Nature Reserve.

Anglers sometimes fish along the coastline near the river mouth, but the sea here is too rough and exposed for swimming.

KOGEL BAY – also known as Koeëlbaai (cannon bay) – is named for the large, round boulders that line its shore in places. These not only resemble cannonballs, but the sound they make as they roll over in the waves apparently reminded early mariners of cannonballs clunking together on a ship's deck.

Travelling along Clarence Drive from Gordon's Bay offers a breathtaking view of the bay and its mountainous backdrop, often draped in cloud. A long, sandy beach fringes the north shore, at times obscured by a haze of seaspray thrown up by strong winds and pounding waves. Behind the beach is the main **Kogel Bay Resort** – a camping and caravan park, with well-kept lawns and shady trees. The beach is dangerous for swimming due to rip currents, but lifeguards equipped with a rescue rubberduck and jetski are on duty during peak periods.

This resort is not open to day visitors, but a bit further along the road there are two braai areas, for which a permit must be obtained by prior arrangement. **Klippies Bay** has a boulder-strewn shoreline, but there are rock pools and a small cove suitable for a quick dip in the shallows. **Spark's Bay** has a large tidal pool, although it is invariably infested with sea urchins. Anglers and spear fishermen sometimes use these resorts to access the coastline, while surfers congregate at spots such as Paranoia and Caves. Caves is close to **Dappat se Gat**, which is reached by a pathway from the car park halfway up the slope on the Gordon's Bay side.

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For more information, or to download a summary of the City of Cape Town Coastal Zone Management Review and State of the Coast Report, please visit www.capetown.gov.za/environment

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