

Introduction

Just inland from the secluded harbour of Saldanha Bay one finds the azure waters of the Langebaan Lagoon, focal point of the West Coast National Park.

Thousands of seabirds roost on sheltered islands, pristine golden beaches stretch endlessly into the early morning mist and brooding salt marshes are home to vast concentrations of migrant waders from the northern hemisphere. During the spring the strandveld is embroidered with a tapestry of multi-hued flowers, while in the Postberg section many antelope are to be seen in a setting that is as unique as it is idyllic.

Areas of Special Interest

- Bird watching in Geelbek, Seeburg and Abrahamskraal bird hide.
- Mountain bike & Cycling Route Trail.
- Strandveld hiking trails starting from Geelbek Visitors Centre.
- Picnic sites in Kraalbaai & Tsaarsbank.
- Whale watching – August to November in Tsaarsbak.
- Flower & Game viewing from own vehicle – August and September in Postberg.
- Kite boarding, Kayaking and other water sports can be done in Kraalbaai.

5 Things to Seek

- Flamingo's
- Waders
- Black Harrier
- Spring flowers
- Eve's foot print

Accommodation

- [Abrahamskraal Cottage](#)
- [Duinepos Chalets](#)
- [Geelbek Stables \(for school and community groups\)](#)
- [Jo Anne's Beach Cottages](#)
- [Houseboats](#) - Permanently moored floating chalets. Fully catered or self catering.
- Hostels and camping facilities are available for youth groups - contact park on + 27 (0) 22 772 2144.
- There is a variety of privately run accommodation in the vicinity of the park.

To view the accommodation prices, refer to [Tariffs](#)

The park has been divided into 3 recreational zones:

- Zone A: multi-functional section for most water sports.
- Zone B: reserved for sailboats and board sailing (no power boats or angling).
- Zone C: wilderness area, which is closed to the public.

Wild Card Purchases

- Please note that Wild Card purchases can only be made at the Langebaan and Geelbek offices during office hours. No purchases can be made at the gate.

Park Activities

- Restaurant & information centre are available in Geelbek Visitors centre.
- Bird watching in Geelbek, Seeburg and Abrahamskraal bird hide.
- Mountain bike & Cycling Route Trail.
- Strandveld hiking trails starting from Geelbek Visitors Centre.
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Walks

Geelbek Walks: short day walks

- 9 km: is to the dunes, is also a circle walk and starts outside Geelbek Info office
- 7km: includes 16mile beach, and it's a circle walk – starts outside the Geelbek info office and is well sign-posted.

Trails

- [Bakoor Trail](#)
- [Cycling Route Trail](#)
- [Strandveld Trail](#)
- [Postberg Two Day Hiking Trails](#)
- [Steenbok One Day Trail \(Only during August and September\)](#)

Bakoor Trail

This is a short walk from the Langebaan gate to Seeberg view point, which is 4.6km long. Along this route bat eared foxes, Ostriches, Eland and many other animals can be spotted, as well as the beautiful view of the Langebaan lagoon.

Cycling Route Trail



Cycling route information

- All routes start from the Langebaan Gate.

*****All cyclist are expected to pay normal conservation fees at the gate or buy a wild card.*****

Cycling routes are as follows:

- Langebaan gate – Geelbek & return 30km on tarred road.
- Langebaan gate – Kraalbaai & return 70km on tarred road.

Mountain bike routes:

- The **Green trail** (follow Green signs) starts at the Langebaan gate and turns right off the tar down on the old Bottelary dirt road (lift your bike over the chain) and joins up with the original old "white road" where you will turn right. Turning left here is not permitted as there is a bush reclamation project underway there. This brings you back out at the Seeberg Bird Hide and it's an easy ride back to the gate. This trail should take you about an hour to ride (13 km).
- The **Red trail** (follow Red signs) uses a similar route, but has two deviations. The first is to turn off to the right up the steep Seeberg lookout road to the top, after which you rejoin the tar road at the same place and continue towards Geelbek. The second is to then turn left at Mooimaak and follow the Red trail signs around Mooimaak and down along a circular route back to the tar road where you would turn left for a short ride to the Bottelary turnoff as indicated on the Green trail. This one should take you just over an hour and a half to get back to the gate (17km).

Rules:

- Respect our Park and do not damage anything.
- Beware of and do not scare the animals.
- Leave no trace except tyre spoors on the route.
- Ride on marked trails only and heed no-entry signs.
- Be alert to other riders and cars.
- Normal road rules apply on the tar.
- No helmet - no ride.
- Except for the deviations described above, no bike may use any other trail or dirt road in the Park.

Strandveld Trail



Day 1:

It takes you through about 14km of Strandveld, which is unique to the West Coast of South Africa. You will be able to identify plants such as the wild asparagus, sedge – stemmed love grass and many more while walking on this trail.

Day 2:

This trail is 14 km long and will take you through strandveld to sixteen mile beach, where you will walk along the beach for 1km before turning back to Geelbek. You will see the water whole filled with water during winter when it

rains; it attracts many bird species and is surrounded by small patches of indigenous vegetation. You will also be walking amongst the dunes, formed when sediments are deposited on the beach by wave action. Different types of dunes will be visible, primary dunes and consolidated dunes, which you will learn more about whilst on the hike.

Postberg Two Day Hiking Trails (Only during August and September)



NB: Bookings opens in June, contact numbers: (022) 707 9902/3

It is essential to read this information:

- Hikers start and finish at Tsaarsbank and overnight at Plankiesbaai.
- Duration: 2 days one night
- Day 1: 15.5 km (6 Hours)
- Day 2: 11.8 km (3,5 Hours)
- Maximum number of people: 12

Start:

Hikers must arrive at the Tsaarsbank gate at 09:00am to start the Trail. Cars can be parked at Tsaarsbank gate. All hikers to show their permit to the gate guard on duty before they start with the hike.

Sand dunes:

Do not take any short cuts and stick to the marked trail so that we can know if you have safely completed the walk by reporting back to the gate guard.

Overnight facilities:

The overnight point is situated at the southern end of Plankiesbaai. Look out for the stone ablution block built into a sand dune at Plankiesbaai. Tents should be put up on the level area close to the ablution block. Please keep off the dunes in the immediate areas of the ablution block and water tanks. Please bring your own tent and camping equipment.

Facilities:

- Ablution block with toilets, basins and drinking water.
- Braai grids and wood.
- Washing up stands and a large kettle to boil water on the fire.
- There are no showers, hot water or cooking utensils available at the overnight facilities.

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16 mile beach:

On the second day, walk along 16 mile beach towards the wrech (Patelis A lemos 1978) until you see a flag and sign which indicates the turnoff into the dunes

Emergencies:

In the event of any injury or similar emergency, please walk to the nearest road and advise passing cars to contact Park personnel at 022 7722 144.

Important Note:

- Water is only available at Tsaarsbank gate and overnight point at Plankiesbaai. No water is otherwise available along the rest of the trail.
- This trail has been completed by both young and old alike, but it is strenuous and should not be undertaken unless you are reasonably fit.
- Under no circumstances will vehicles be allowed to overnight, pick up or drop off people or equipment at Plankiesbaai.

Hikers with medical problems are advised not to start this hike. Remember to bring the map with you and enjoy the hike!!!

Steenbok One Day Trail (Only during August and September)



- Hike starts and finishes in Tsaarsbank.
- Duration: One day hike.
- Distance: 13.9 km (5 hours excluding breaks).
- Maximum number of people: 20

NB: Bookings opens in June, contact numbers: (022) 707 9902/3 Please keep permit/ receipt at hand.

Routine Markers:

The first section (± 2 km) of the Steenbok Day Trail follows the route of the 2 day trail up to Konstabelkop. The 2-day trail is marked with flower sign boards. Where the Steenbok trail deviates from this trail, it is marked with Steenbok signboards. Please stay on the trail.

Water:

Water is only available at Tsaarsbank and Plankiesbaai, therefore ensure that you start the trail with sufficient water.

Start and Finish:

The trail starts and ends at Tsaarsbank gate. Once you are ready to begin, check in with the gate guard at Tsaarsbank. You are advised not to start later than 09:00. The Postberg section closes at 17:00, so please aim to



complete the trail before closing.

Emergencies:

In the event of any injury or similar emergency, please walk to the nearest road and advise passing cars to contact Parks personnel at 022 7222 144.

Walking on roads:

It is unavoidable that some sections of the trail are on the roads used by the general public. For your own safety please be aware of vehicles.

Regulations:

The trail is situated within a national park and is therefore subject to the National Parks Act. The most applicable regulations are:

- No pets allowed.
- No picking of flowers.
- No removal of any material, plant or animal.
- Speed limit 50km/h.
- Do not litter
- No fires on the beach
- Please remain in you vehicle, for your own safety.
- Please do not pick up tortoises.

- Conference facilities in [Houseboats](#).
- The Park also offers [Educational Programs](#).

Facilities

- Information Centre at Preekstoel and Geelbek.
- **Geelbek Information Centre:**
 - Purchase [Wild Card](#)
 - View images/posters of fauna and flora that can be found at the Park
 - View Eve's footprint
 - Book accommodation
 - Info on bird and bird hides

Park Map



Vital Information

Climate

Rain occurs mainly from May to August. Summers are dry with early morning mists with southeasterly or southwesterly winds. A temperate coastal climate prevails.

Day Visitors

Day visitors are welcome, and form the bulk of all visitors to the park. They can obtain food and refreshments at Geelbek and when Postberg is open there is a kiosk.

Fuel Stations: Petrol/ Diesel

Vehicle fuel is available in all parks (or is available on the park periphery):

- South African legislation stipulates that fuel stations will accept legitimate *petrol/fuel/garage/credit/debit cards* or cash as a form of payment for any fuel purchase.

Office hours

Geelbek

Weekdays

8:30 - 16:00

Weekends & Public Holidays

- 1 September to 31 March: from 9:00 until 16:00 (flowering season)

- 1 April to 31 August: from 9:00 until 16:00

Langebaan

Postberg

Mon- Frid - 5 days - 7:30 - 16:00

09:00 – 17:00 (this section is open during flowering season only - August & September)

Accommodation check-in & check-out times

Check-in @ 12pm

Check-out @ 9:00

*** No late arrivals will be allowed. ***

Tips & Hints

- Remember to bring along bathing suit, angling equipment, hat, sun block, walking shoes, camera, binoculars, bird and mammal reference books.
- Beware of strong and changeable currents on both sides of Schaapen Island.
- Water sport enthusiasts should acquaint themselves with local conditions and boating and angling regulations.
- Saldanha Bay (including the Langebaan Lagoon) is a crayfish (rock lobster) and abalone (perlemoen) reserve. Removal of these organisms from this area is a punishable offence.
- Due to the recreational zoning of the park some water sports are restricted to certain areas. Please adhere to regulations.
- Pets are not allowed in a national park.
- Medical, pharmaceutical, vehicle repair post office and police services in Langebaan Village.
- Nearest hospital: Vredenburg (30km)
- Fuel available in Langebaan Village.

Contact Information

For enquiries e-mail West Coast National Park or phone us on the following numbers:

- Tel: +27 22 772-2144/5
- Fax: +27 22 772-2607

Birding in West Coast National Park

The park surrounds the Langebaan Lagoon, which is a world Ramsar site (site's deemed to be of global significance to wetland bird species).

Many of the wader species are Palearctic migrants, so summer is the best time to visit the lagoon, particularly in September as species return fatigued from their transcontinental travel, and March when they congregate in large numbers to feed heavily prior to undertaking the reverse journey. In such times, the birds are often changing into or out of their Northern Hemisphere breeding plumage.

The best time to observe the lagoon waders is to visit the **Geelbek hide** from low tide as the tide is coming in. As the water level rises the waders are forced closer to the hide until eventually they must fly off until the tide has receded once more. The smaller species depart first, with the more long-legged godwits, whimbrels and curlews the last to leave. *Knot, Sanderling, Little Stint, Ruff, Marsh, Terek and Curlew Sandpiper, Turnstone, Ringed and Grey Plover, Greenshank, Whimbrel, Curlew and Bar-tailed Godwit* are present on most occasions, while there is always the possibility of seeing rarer species. *Little Egret* and *South African Shelduck* may be seen alongside the waders. Flamingoes and *White Pelican* frequent deeper water, and there is chance of seeing *Osprey*. Another isolated hide west of the Geelbek educational centre overlooks a salt pan that is an excellent place to see *Chestnut-banded Plover*.

The reserve's fynbos surrounding the lagoon hosts *Southern Black Korhaan, Cape Spurfowl* and *Grey-winged Francolin, Southern Grey and Cape Penduline Tit, Ant-eating Chat, White-throated and Yellow Canary, Karoo Lark, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Bokmakierie* and *Cape Bunting* are all easily seen. *African Marsh* and *Black Harrier* can often be seen quartering the ground.

The coastal islands at the mouth of the lagoon are breeding havens for a number of species such as *Kelp* and *Hartlaub's Gull, Cape Gannet*, and *African Penguin*. Cormorants and terns are present too.

Mammals

The largest concentration of mammals is in the Postberg Reserve, but this is only open to public during flower

season. However mammals are found throughout the rest of the reserve. Eland, red hartebeest, Cape grysbok, caracal and rock hyrax are some of the terrestrial species to search for. Visitors should also keep an eye on the Atlantic Ocean for passing whales and dolphins.

- [Informational Mammal brochure](#)

People with disabilities

Wheelchair Access

An in-depth [accessibility profile](#) for West Coast National Park has been compiled.

The major attractions of the reserve are the marine and lagoon fauna and flora, fossil deposits, flower displays, wading birds and the use of houseboats. There are a variety of visitor destinations within WCNP all with varying access potential. Some of the more noteworthy ones include:

Geelbek Hide

Accessed via a long wooden boardwalk, a person in a wheelchair can easily enter the hide (although with weathering the boardwalk is a bit creaky in parts). Depending on the tides, a person can have marvellous viewing of aquatic wading birds.

Postberg Flower Reserve

Flower season is August and September, but there is also the presence of some large herbivores. Most of the viewing of the flowers is done from the confines of a motor vehicle. There are a couple of picnic sites and a viewing site overlooking the lagoon. The pathway to this latter facility becomes too narrow for passage in a wheelchair. There are toilet facilities that are spacious and can be easily accessed. However no assisting rails are present.

Lagoon jetties and beaches

There are several jetties leading people onto the lagoon. These have steps and a wheelchair user will require assistance. Mobile toilets that service these jetties or the pathways that lead down to lagoon beach pockets are not appropriate for people in wheelchairs.

(Please see additional information on [Wheelchair Accessibility](#))

Educational Programmes

These Educational Programmes were designed to meet the demands of the curriculum. We strive to address the Learning Outcomes of the various learning areas.





Kids learning about the rocky and sandy shores

Orientation

Slideshow presentation on history of the park. The group gets an opportunity to view different slides of images of the park where a facilitator elaborates on the images, e.g what the park looked like before it was proclaimed; the history of the West Coast National Park, the Khoisan huts, tourist attractions like the flowers, birds, hiking trails, cycle routes and accommodation.

Botanical Route

This excursion entails a dune walk (700m) on the Dawid Bester (master tracker) hiking trail. Identifying of different plant species, plant adaptations and its medicinal value. Learn the importance of the dunes, how they were formed and what is being done to conserve it.

Birds and saltmarshes

Learn about Saltmarsh ecology, the Langebaan lagoon and it's Ramsar status as well as a discussion of migratory birds. Understanding about how the vegetation in the saltmarshes survive and how marine pollution can be detrimental to our marine creatures.

Game Drive

Game drive into Postberg Nature Reserve, game viewing and a discussion on the importance of balance in eco-systems. Environmental issues that are discussed include the overpopulation of game in the Postberg Nature Reserve - how we manage game, the processes that we carry out such as culling and game capturing.

Rocky and sandy shore ecology

Hands-on activity and various forms of life and rocks are explored. Learn about what causes the tides, facts about red tide as well as search for living organisms under rocks and kelp.

Adopt-a-beach project

This involves a beach clean-up, analysing of garbage and a discussion on marine pollution.

Kayaking

Subject to weather conditions.

Educational Hike

People and Conservation officer oversees the hike and is specifically for school groups who are staying in the Stables accommodation. [Route of the hike](#).

Calender Day

Celebrating of calendar days e.g. Heritage Day, Arbor Week, World Wetlands Day etc.