



WILD

Wild Coast sunset

Marilyn Tromp recounts trekking around the Wild Coast of South Africa and relives the contrasting experiences of the historic Eastern Cape.



Near Coffee Bay, the Wild Coast

Forsaking the vehicle, my fellow hikers and I crossed the access routes on foot to the most beautiful and remote beaches of the Wild Coast, located just a three hour drive from the harbour town of East London. I anticipated that I would struggle, as I expected that covering 56 kilometres in six days would require a good level of fitness. However, this was not the case and as I began the trek I discovered how moderate the terrain was for the majority of the time, and the spectacular nature of the scenery certainly proved a welcome distraction. Walking for miles along grass-banked beaches and having to do this as part of my job is certainly not a hardship! I thoroughly enjoyed the ever-changing landscapes and encountering a shipwreck along the way was one of my favourite experiences. In addition to the beautiful scenery, every hotel I stayed in had additional activities on offer, from quad biking to boat cruises. I never imagined feeling such a sense of achievement after doing a hike, and making new friends along the way as well as learning more about this remote area were certainly things I will always remember.

In no time the six days were over and we faced a short drive back to East London where I picked up my rental car and set off further inland to the



Hiking along the Wild Coast



The Valley of Desolation



Jacaranda shipwreck, the Wild Coast

about the CAPE

Eastern Cape. Still exhilarated from the beauty of the Wild Coast, it dawned on me just how much the landscapes of the region vary from flat beaches to hillside farms, and rocky cliffs overlooking meandering rivers. I started my adventure in historic Grahamstown, captivated by the “spiral city” architecture and picturesque churches, before visiting the museum to learn more about the Frontier War. For those who think that hours spent in a museum could prove a bit dry, the answer is to go out on a tour with raconteur Alan Weyer, where he recaptures the spirits of the past and entices you to learn more about the area and the people that formed this charming and vibrant town.

I then set off to drive through the Karoo to Graaff-Reinet. The Valley of Desolation offers spectacular panoramic views and the further up the mountains you walk, the better they get which is in complete contrast to its name! In the town, a visit to the Reinet House is a must as it depicts the history of the area. I loved the fact that just a couple of miles outside the town, there is the opportunity for game viewing at Camdeboo National Park. Growing up in Namibia, I have always been spoilt with going on safari, but I still get excited about seeing game and to drive around independently was the perfect way for

me to spend as much time as I wanted doing what I like best. I ended the afternoon with a visit to the Agave distillers outside of town to try out their locally made tequila!

The next day I went on a short safari at Blaauwbosch Private Game Reserve, happy that at no stage on my trip had I required malaria tablets. Although not expecting to see much in the arid Karoo, I did discover a dazzle of zebras staring at me as soon as I entered the reserve. This was only a hint of the game I was going to experience and although seeing a baby rhino was certainly a highlight for me, my favourite animal soon appeared out of nowhere. Not just one, but ten curious elephants lolled up to our vehicle, allowing me to take pictures to my heart’s content.

Ending my stay on the beach in Cape St Francis, I reflected on what I had seen during my time in the Eastern Cape. Relaxed and rejuvenated after a few days here, I could already feel the buzz of planning a return visit.

Marilyn Tromp
South Africa Specialist

FACT FILE

A two week trip to the Eastern Cape including time in the Wild Coast and return flights starts from £1,800 per person. This includes a six day hike with all meals, car hire in the Eastern Cape and three days on safari. Please call Marilyn on 01993 838 416 for details.



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