

Introduction

Geographical extremes capture the imagination. From ancient mariners to contemporary mankind, the quest has always been to reach the poles, sail around the tips of continents, conquer the highest peaks and dive to the ultimate depths.

This is the same spirit that captivated the explorers of yesteryear who braved one of the most challenging sea crossings of their time: the Atlantic-Indian Ocean crossing via Cape Agulhas. As the southern-most tip of Africa, it has always had its mysteries and adventure, and still captures the imagination of contemporary explorers.

Amongst the mysteries associated with this region, is the legendary 'Cape of Storms' which wrecked many ships en route to the east via Cape Agulhas. Ancient people also left their mark on the landscape. For example, archaeological middens remind contemporary man of a successful hunter-gathering culture that was in harmony with its natural environment; and a cultural heritage that dates back thousands of years to when the Khoi-khoi people trapped fish using ingeniously constructed tidal traps. This windswept, ruggedly beautiful coastal plain at the southern-most tip of Africa, with its rich cultural and natural heritage, has recently been proclaimed as the Agulhas National Park.

This windswept, ruggedly beautiful coastal plain at the southernmost tip of Africa, with its rich cultural and natural heritage, has been proclaimed as the Agulhas National Park on the 23rd of September 1999. The park started as a 4 ha portion of land at the southern tip and has grown through the additions of 36 portions, bringing the area of the Park to 20 959 ha.

Vision

Agulhas National Park seeks to implement and promote the conservation, management and sustainable use of the unique marine, terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and cultural heritage in the Park, in order to maintain or repair its spirit of place at the Southern Tip of Africa, through working together in a manner that benefits the regional social dynamic and economy for present and future generations.

5 Things to seek

- The Southern Tip of Africa
- Southern Right Whale
- African Black Oystercatcher
- Damara Tern
- Cape Platana

Accommodation

Various new tourism overnight products has been developed at Agulhas National Park and is now available for guests to book.

These products were funded by the Infrastructure Development Programme (IDP) to the value of approximately R22 million. Agulhas National Park has the very unique characteristic of being the southernmost point on the African continent and also the point where the Indian Ocean meets the Atlantic. It further protects a very unique landscape of pristine coastline, coastal wetlands and the endangered lowland fynbos. The park is currently in the consolidation phase and spans four different components, totaling 21000 hectares.

- [Lagoon House](#)
- [Agulhas Rest Camp](#)
- [Rhenosterkop Guest Cottages](#)

- [Rietfontein Guest Cottages](#)
- [Bergplaas Guest House](#)
- [General accommodation information](#)

Lagoon House

This historic house, located within the greater rest camp area, has been carefully restored and is situated on a peninsula to the west of the Suiderstrand enclave (of private residents) and with the sea comprising about three-quarters (270°) of the view from this house, it has an awesome location.

This house and farm used to belong to PK Albertyn who bought it from Mike van Breda in 1898 and in the same year a cottage was built for Mrs Albertyn as a birthday gift. The small bay to the west of the house reminded her of a book she had read, called the 'Blue Lagoon' and she called the property 'The Lagoon'. When the children got married rooms were added on both sides of the original cottage. This portion of the park was incorporated into Agulhas National Park in 2001.

The facility has four bedrooms, of which two have separate external entrances and own en-suite bathroom (shower & toilet) and the other two are in the house with a single bathroom (bath, shower & toilet). There is also a kitchen and living area in the house.

[Agulhas Rest Camp](#)

This small camp is located 10,3km from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse. The camp was placed and designed to meet high environmental standards and according to the 'touch-the-earth-lightly' principles by which, inter alia, development was limited to disturbed sites.

Accommodation comprises four two-bed and four four-bed self-catering chalets. The four bed units comprise two separate bedrooms each with own bathroom (shower and toilet) en-suite.

Follow the links for more information, pictures and availability:

- [Chalet 2-Bed \(CH2\)](#)
- [Chalet 2-Bed \(CH2D\)](#)
- [Chalet 2-Bed \(CH2Z\)](#)
- [Chalets 4-Bed \(FCH4\)](#)
- [Chalet 4-Bed \(FCH4D\)](#)
- [Chalet 4-Bed \(FCH4Z\)](#)

[Rhenosterkop Guest Cottages](#)

These historic cottages lie on one of the oldest farms in the Strandveld and was established in 1742. Matthys (Rostok) Johannes Lourens (Lorenz) received grazing rights here on 21 February 1757 and in 1836 the Cape Government registered the land formally in his name (Matthys Lourens). The farmstead consists of four typical Strandveld buildings built according to the typical vernacular style. The oldest houses probably dates back to the middle of the 18th century while the youngest to 1939/40.

The cottages have been carefully restored for the modern day visitor. The name originates from the skull of a Black Rhino which was found in this area many years ago and is still being preserved in the Springfield Estate museum.

- The facility comprises three separate cottages which can be booked separately, of which two accommodate four guests (two bedrooms with one bathroom) and one two person cottage.

- Energy requirements are provided by solar panels for lighting and gas for cooking, hot water & refrigeration.

The cottages are situated 31km from the Agulhas Cape Lighthouse off the Struisbaai / Elim road.

Rietfontein Guest Cottages

Rietfontein is one of the original and oldest Strandveld farms. 'Rietfontein aan Zandberg' was awarded to Petrus Arnoldus Gildenhuysen as a stock post in the late 1700's. In 1839 the Cape Government registered the land in the name of Dirk Gysbert van Breda.

The facility lies on the southern slope of Soetany'sberg from which the coast can be viewed.

This historic homestead called "Langhuis" (or 'long house') was carefully reconstructed after it was destroyed by fire in 2003.

- The homestead comprises of three two-bed separate units with bathroom (toilet & shower) and kitchen facilities.
- There is also a barn with one two-bed unit with bathroom (toilet & shower) and there is also a large adjacent room where group gatherings can be accommodated.

The homestead is situated 63km from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse off the Struisbaai / Elim road.

[Bergplaas Guest House](#)

Bergplaas, which is located on the northern foothills of Soetany'sberg, was originally a stock post in the 1860's on the farm Ruigtefontein and the original house was built in the mid 1950's. In 1979/80 it was completely destroyed by fire and rebuilt in a more modern style that is still evident today. This land was acquired by SANParks in 2000, being the first acquisition for the newly established Agulhas National Park.

The guesthouse offers a relaxing country setting with endless views of the surrounding countryside. Accommodation at the guest house consists of 5 bedrooms. Four rooms have en suite bathrooms either with shower or bath and toilet. One bathroom has been adapted for mobility challenged.

The guest house is situated 36km from the Agulhas Cape Lighthouse off the Struisbaai / Elim road.

Take Note

- Housekeeping - Prior to your arrival, your chalet is clean and furnished with fresh linens and towels. Daily housekeeping is included except for washing of dishes. Linen will be changed every 2—3 days; towels will be changed every day if so required.
- Inventory - All accommodation is equipped with crockery, cutlery, cooking, utensils, bedding, towels & soap. Each accommodation unit has a braai-area outside.
- Keys – Keys must be returned to reception on check out. Lost and damaged keys will be charged for.
- Complimentary coffee/tea is provided for your first night stay only.
- All accommodation units are self-catering and are equipped with plug points with a 220V electricity supply.

Activities & Facilities

Activities

- [Trails](#)

- [Bird Watching](#)

The following activities are available in the surrounding towns or in the park:

- **The Southernmost tip of Africa** - the official position of the tip is 34° 49' 58" south and 20° 00' 12" east. A cairn marks the tip's exact location. It is at this longitudinal point that the Atlantic and Indian oceans officially meet. (Agulhas).
- **Cape Agulhas Lighthouse & Museum** - the lighthouse was built to aid the early explorers on their passage of the rough seas off Cape Agulhas. Seventy-one steps lead up to the top of the second oldest working lighthouse in southern Africa. Stone mined from the adjacent limestone quarry provided the raw materials for its construction. The building also houses a unique lighthouse museum. Remains of ancient stone fish traps used by the Khoisan people can be seen to the east of the lighthouse.
- **Graveyard of ships:** The Zoetendal, Birkenhead and Armiston are some of the many shipwrecks found along the Agulhas coastline. Showpieces from these shipwrecks are on display at the Bredasdorp Shipwreck museum. Visitors to the area can still see the remains of the Meisho Maru 38 wreck on the shores of Cape Agulhas.
- **Fynbos:** The Agulhas Plain has great diversity of flora. The Agulhas area contains representatives of unique vegetation such as limestone fynbos. Although most species bloom between May and September, there are flowers to be enjoyed in any season.
- **Fynbos Walk:** Explore the Agulhas Plain with its great diversity of indigenous flora, and unique vegetation such as limestone fynbos! Please enquire about the Fynbos Flower Show which is on display alternatively in Elim & Agulhas.
- **Fishing:** Fishing permits can be purchased from the Struisbaai Post Office at the Struisbaai Mall. Rock and Deep sea fishing is a favourite pass time for most visitors at the Southern Tip.
- Cape Agulhas Wine Route – the southernmost wine route
- Napier Breweries – Tel: +27 (0) 82 495-6726
- Museums - Shipwreck Museum (Bredasdorp), Lighthouse Museum (L'Agulhas), Elim Heritage Centre (Elim)
- 4x4 Trails
- Whale Watching (June to September)
- Swimming
- Rock & Surf Angling
- Visiting Art Galleries

Trails

Rasperpunt Hiking Trail:

- A 5,5km circular hiking trail, start/end at the Meisho Maru shipwreck. Experience the coastline, coastal fynbos, ancient fish traps, fresh water fountains for the first half of the walk. Turn inland, cross the gravel road and work your way up the ridge with magnificent views of the Rasperpunt rock formations and the coastline.
- The route markers are numbered along the route and a self-guide booklet can be purchased for R5 from the tourist office located below the lighthouse.
(Opening Hours: 9am to 5pm, closed between 1pm - 2pm).

Other Trails

- Spookdraai (L'Agulhas) - Tel: +27 (0) 28 435-7185, Grootberg (Napier) – Tel: +27 (0) 28 423-3049; Rasperpunt (L'Agulhas) – Tel: +27 (0) 28 435-7185.
- *Shipwreck Hiking Trail*: Experience the Spirit of the Southern Coastline, shipwrecks, fynbos & marine life. Contact: Louis Willemse -083 540 4575
louisfieldguide@kingsley.co.za.

Bird Watching

- **Latest Events:** [Birding Weekend of 4-6 November 2011](#)

Take a slow drive along the Struisbaai-Elim route and enjoy the vast wealth of bird life in and around the Park, especially at the salt pans and along the wetlands. The Park has exceptional birdlife, including endangered avifauna, such as the *African Black Oyster-catcher*.

A comprehensive Birding List of the Overberg can be purchased for R10 from the tourist office located below the lighthouse. (Opening Hours: 9am to 5pm, closed between 1pm - 2pm).

- **Salt Pans:** The Springfield pan was exploited by the Springfield Salt and Farming Company (Pty) Ltd (1914 - 1950). The remains of the concentration and crystallisation ponds, production plant and manager's homestead are now part of the cultural heritage in the Park and a famous birding spot.

Facilities

There are no facilities at the park, but restaurants, pubs, shops, banks, and other facilities are available in the nearby towns of L'Agulhas, Struisbaai or Bredasdorp.

Natural & Cultural History

The area around the southern-most tip of Africa, often referred to as the Agulhas Plain, has rich natural and cultural features, which make it worthy of national park status. The Agulhas Plain is of international significance due to its rich plant biodiversity, with species richness values equalling those of tropical rain forests.

It has approximately 2000 species of indigenous plants including 100 which are endemic to the area and over 110 Red Data Book species. Consequently, the Agulhas Plain is a very important component of the Cape Floral Kingdom, the smallest and richest of the world's six plant kingdoms.

The Agulhas Plain is unique in that a wide variety of wetlands occur in the area, contributing to a high diversity of wetland plants and aquatic invertebrates. This is also home to the endangered Cape platanna and the micro frog. In addition these wetlands attract a host of water birds, with over 21 000 migrant and resident wetland birds estimated to occur in the area annually. The coastline supports a rich marine and intertidal life, with breeding sties of rare coastal birds such as the African black oystercatcher. The nearby islands are home to a variety of seabirds and seals.

In spring and early summer southern right whales frequent the waters of the Agulhas coast. Besides its ecological importance, the Agulhas area has a rich cultural heritage. A reconnaissance of the area has established the presence of significant archaeological sites along the coast. The discovery of stone hearths and pottery, together

with shell middens, link the archaeological deposits with the era of Khoisan migration and settlements.

The Agulhas area also provides history of a different kind – numerous shipwrecks of the early explorers attempting to conquer the wild seas off the southern tip of Africa, dot the coastline. Many national monuments are found in the area, such as the historical Cape Agulhas Lighthouse, which has been in operation since 1849. In addition, historical buildings such as the water mill at Elim and certain homesteads reflect the European influence in the history of the region.

Vital Information

Climate

The region has a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.

The mean annual air temperature is 15°C, while the annual rainfall varies between 400- 600mm, with 60 – 70% of the precipitation occurring between May and October. Sea temperatures average between 21°C in summer and 14°C in winter. The region is the coldest during June when the mercury drops to 7°C on average during the night.

Prevailing winds blow from the southeast in the summer and the northwest in the winter.

Handy Hints

- Visit the lighthouse museum in L'Agulhas.
- The Wild Card unfortunately does not include the entrance fee to the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse.

Office Hours

- Week days: 08:00 - 17:00
- Saturdays 08:00 - 13:00
- Some businesses close between 13:00 and 14:00 for lunch, and many are closed on Sundays and Public Holidays.

Banks & Foreign Exchange

Most banks have branches in Bredasdorp. Normal banking hours are weekdays 09:00 - 15:30, Saturdays 09:00 - 11:00. ATM's are available in Bredasdorp, L'Agulhas and Struisbaai. Foreign exchange can be arranged at bank branches as well as Harvey World Travel in Bredasdorp: Tel: +27 (0) 28 424-2821.

Check-in/out times

On the day of arrival occupation can be expected by 14:00 but not guaranteed, on the day of departure accommodation must be vacated by 10:00.

Take Note

- *Inventory:* All accommodation is equipped with crockery, cutlery, cooking, utensils, bedding, towels & soap. Each accommodation unit has a braai-area outside.
- *Housekeeping:* Prior to your arrival, your chalet is clean and furnished with fresh linens and towels. Daily housekeeping is included except for washing of dishes. Linen will be changed every 2—3 days; towels will be changed every day if so required.

- **Keys:** Keys must be returned to reception on check out. Lost and damaged keys will be charged for.
- Pets are not allowed in a national park.
- No vehicles are allowed on the beach.
- No person may drive off the existing roads - it is both illegal and damaging.
- No person is allowed to gather wood inside the park boundaries.
- No person may remove any rocks or plant from the park.
- No day visitor's facilities are currently available in the park.
- Vehicle repairs, post office, medical and police services are available at L'Agulhas and/or Struisbaai.
- **Lost & Found:** For assistance in tracing lost articles contact our reception desk on +27 (0) 28 435-6068. Handling charges, postage & packaging will be charged for return of belongings left behind.

Emergencies

Police

Struisbaai

Bredasdorp

10 111
+27 (0) 425-6440
+27 (0) 425-5400

Fire Brigade

10177
+27 (0) 425-1157

Ambulance

10177

Hospital (Bredasdorp)

+27 (0) 28 435-1187

NSRI 30 Sea Rescue (Agulhas) Emergencies

+27 (0) 28 435-7777
+27 (0) 82 990-5952

General Medical Practitioner

Dr R Smit

+27 (0) 28 435 7130
+27 (0) 82 775 1575 a/h
17 Cinneraria Street,
Struisbaai

Dentists (Bredasdorp)

Dr Engelbrecht

+27 (0) 28 424-1811

Dr Matthee

+27 (0) 82 926-7015 a/h
+27 (0) 28 424-1250

Dr Scholtz

+27 (0) 82 499-9932 a/h
+27 (0) 28 424-2931

Pharmacy (Struisbaai)

+27 (0) 28 435-6913

+27 (0) 82 573-6447

Poison Information Centre (All hours)

+27 (0) 931-6129

Contact Information

- For enquiries, e-mail [Agulhus National Park](#), or [People and Conservation](#) or phone us on the following numbers:
Tel: +27 (0)28 435 6222
Fax: +27 (0)28 435 6225
- Emmerentia De Kock: [e-mail](#) or tel: +27(0) 28 435 6078
- *Derick Strydom: Tourism Manager*
[e-mail](#)
tel: +27(0) 28 435 6078
- Park Manager: Agulhas National Park
PO Box 120
L'Agulhas 7285

Mammals

Not many terrestrial mammals occur, but the Cape Grysbok is something to look out for in the coastal fynbos.

In the Ocean one can look out for Cape Fur Seals and a variety of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises. The Southern Right Whales come to the bays to breed from August to November.

Vegetation

The Agulhas Plain with a plant diversity and species richness equalling those of tropical forests, makes the Agulhas National Park a jewel in its own right.

The floral diversity includes some 2 000 species of indigenous plants including 100 that are endemic to the area and over 110 Red Data species.

The Agulhas Plain is an important component of the Cape Floral Kingdom, the smallest and richest of the six plant kingdoms of the world.

Many different vegetation types occur in this area. One of them is the endemic Elim (laterite) fynbos, restricted to a few patches in the region, the smallest land surface of any vegetation type in SA. Some of the species confined to this vegetation type are *Leucodendron elimense* spp. *Elimense* and *Leucodendron laxum* (vleirosie).

Limestone fynbos is the endemic-rich vegetation associated with the Bredasdorp Formation limestones. Lime-rich soils are mainly alkaline (pH values greater than 7,5, whereas other fynbos soils are acidic, with a pH value of 4,5 - 6,5) and represented by species like *Mimetes saxatalis*, *Protea obtusifolia*, *Leucodendron meridianum* and *Watsonia fergusoniae*.

Other vegetation types include acid sand proteoid fynbos, neutral sand proteoid fynbos, restioid fynbos and

wetlands.

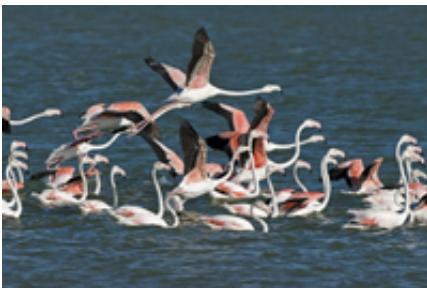
Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative



The Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI) is one of several landscape initiatives in the Cape Floristic Region. It integrates and coordinates efforts to minimise the further loss of threatened natural habitats on the Agulhas Plain.

ABI is implemented by a number of partners who have agreed to work together and pool their resources to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems on the Agulhas Plain. Through their efforts they want to make sure that benefits flow to the local economy through activities such as responsible nature-based tourism and the sustainable harvesting of the natural veld. The area of approximately 270 000 hectares near the southernmost point of Africa is a mosaic of agricultural land separated by stretches of rare and endemic coastal lowland fynbos and wetlands.

Some landowners have conserved their land and veld for many years, but at the start of ABI only 14% of the Agulhas Plain was conserved under legally binding arrangements. Through stewardship agreements with landowners and the expansion of the Agulhas National Park, this figure now stand at 37% (102 000 hectares). At least 40% of this area is privately owned, which reinforces the important role that landowners and the agricultural sector play in conservation.



The fynbos of the Agulhas Plain is of global significance, therefore ABI was able to source funds from the [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#) for its preservation. Substantial funding has also come from the ABI partners. The ABI programme supports the [Cape Action for People and the Environment \(C.A.P.E.\)](#), another GEF-funded programme.

People with disabilities

Wheelchair access

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

Accommodation for the mobility challenged persons consists of two units (one 2-bed and one 4-bed unit) in the rest



camp and one 2-bed cottage at Rhenosterkop. At Bergplaas one of the bathrooms has been converted for the mobility challenge person.

Though the Southernmost point is accessible to wheelchairs users they will require assistance. Access to the museum and tearoom at the bottom of the lighthouse is up steps, and wheelchair users will require assistance. Access to the lighthouse tower is not an option.

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