



THE EASTERN CAPE HIGHLANDS

The Wild Side of Drakensberg



EASTERN CAPE
Highlands





Welcome to the Wild Side!

So, you've decided to visit us in the Eastern Cape Highlands! We're absolutely thrilled to have you, and we hope you enjoy your stay.

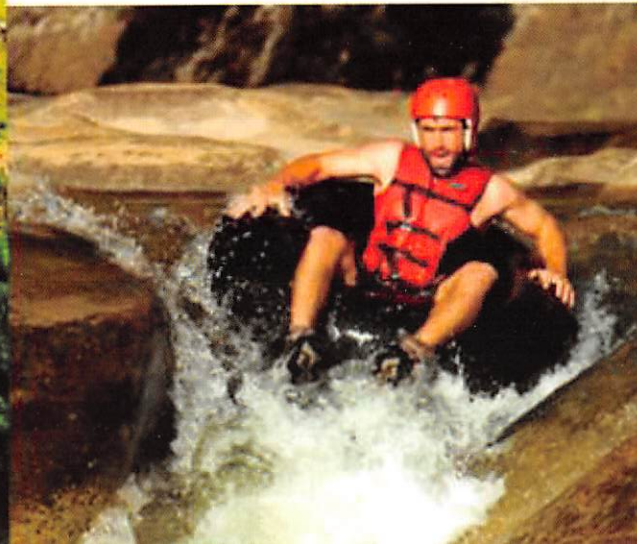
This booklet was designed to accompany you on your journey through the majestic mountains and breathtaking, lush valleys of the area.

Whether you prefer adventure and excitement or peace and tranquillity, family-friendly fun or a solitary escape from the pressures of everyday life, there's something for you to discover in the Eastern Cape Highlands.

The Eastern Cape Highlands is world-renowned for hunting, hiking, mountain biking and is steeped in fascinating history. From the Aliwal North Spa and the Alpine scenery of the mountains to the largest body of water in South Africa - the Gariep Dam - there's an option just right for you and your family.

We hope this booklet will give you some idea of the variety of things to do, places to see and people to meet in the area.

Thank you again for visiting us in the Eastern Cape Highlands. You're on the Wild Side of the Eastern Cape now; there's so much to explore and discover.



The Eastern Cape Highlands: The Wild Side of the Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape Highlands consists of three separate local municipalities: Senqu, Elundini and Walter Sisulu.

SENQU

Home to the historical area of **Wartrail** and **New England**, Senqu is the perfect destination for you if you enjoy hiking, fishing or hunting in the shadow of the magnificent Drakensberg Mountains. Challenge yourself and your vehicle on exhilarating 44 trails, take in the exceptionally varied birdlife on a tranquil walk or have an invigorating bicycle ride surrounded by beautiful scenery.

The numerous hiking trails and mountain passes in the area have given rise to the phrase "stitching the dragon's tail" to describe traversing the escarpment. Several bird species are unique to the area, making it a favourite area for bird watching. The area also abounds in ancient San rock art, making hiking in the area even more exciting; there's something fascinating to discover around every bend.

The Senqu area includes the following towns:

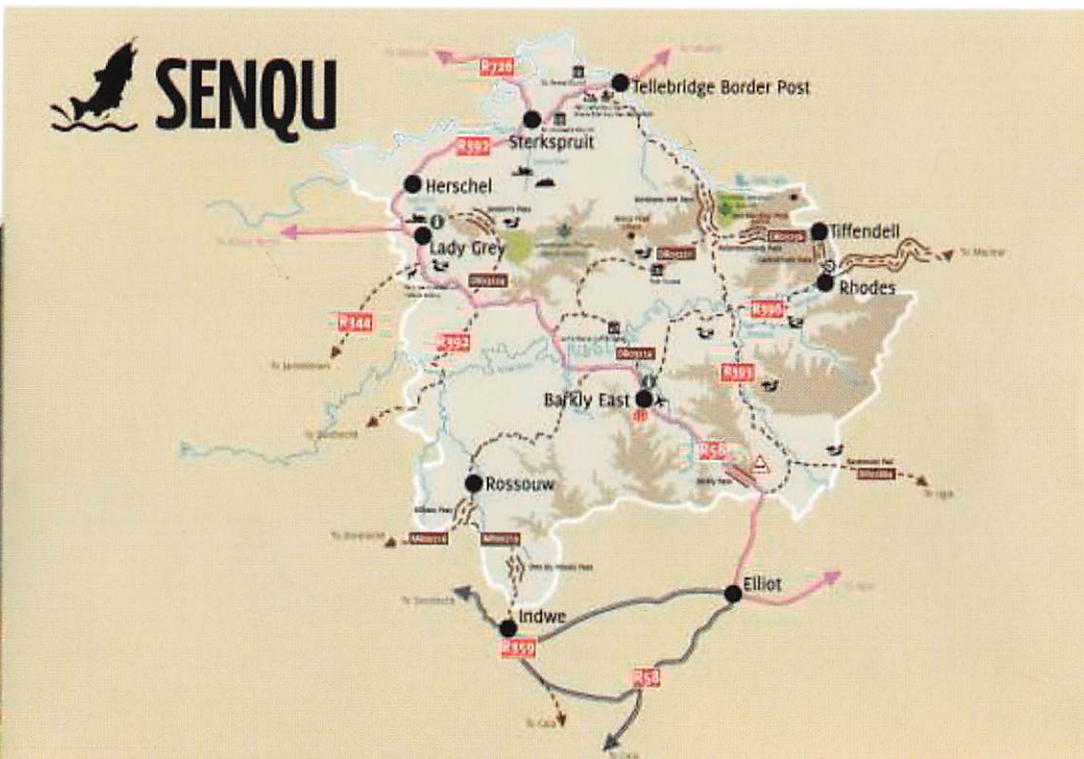
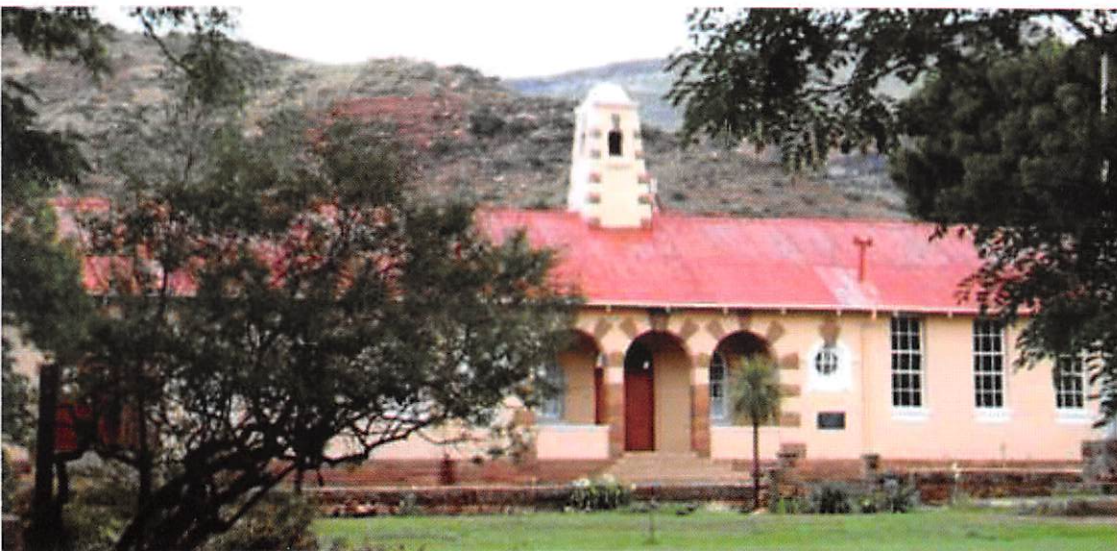
- The historic town of **Lady Grey**, nestled in the Winterberg Mountains, with its historic sandstone buildings, fossil beds and rock art. A magnificent NG Church and museum, the Power Magazine, and a cemetery with graves of soldiers from the South African War can be found here. Lady Grey is also home to the annual passion play, which takes place at Easter and the Lady Grey Arts Academy and the well-known Altec Choir.
- The bustling town of **Sterkspruit**, gateway to Lesotho via the Tellebridge Border Post and home of anti-apartheid struggle hero, Mapetla Mohapi. Sterkspruit is made up of many tribal villages with a mix of the Sotho and Xhosa cultures. Battle sites, historical graves, the Mohapi Memorial, the Wittenberg Missionary Station and the historical border gate at Telle Bridge can be found here. Make sure you visit the pottery at Ma Thabo's home in Thaba Lesdoba and make arrangements to be entertained by traditional dancing and singing. Drive down Lundeans' Nek and enjoy the Holohohatsi Dam.

The picturesque town of **Rhodes**, is surrounded by pristine rivers teeming with trout and magnificent mountains. Here you can enjoy the mountains, trout fishing and alpine flower hunting. It is also situated close to the ski-resort, Tiffindell.

The historic town of **Barkly East**, home of the Barkly East Reporter, one of the oldest country newspapers in the country, and an excellent museum which gives the visitor a good insight into the history of the Highlands.

The Wartrail/New England is known as wild mountain country with a distinctive and unspoilt montane environment. It is rich in history and culture including dinosaur fossils, famous railway reverses, settler cave houses and magnificent rock art. Vegetation from three biomes can be found here and at least 200 bird species have been spotted. Fly fishing, mountain biking, horse riding, motor biking, river rafting, tubing and hunting all add to an unforgettable experience.

A wide variety of accommodation is available in Senqu and events take place every month.



WALTER SISULU

ALIWAL NORTH & JAMESTOWN

Walter Sisulu is cradled in the foothills of the majestic Southern Drakensberg Mountains and the Senqu (Orange River) and Kraai Rivers. Walter Sisulu is also home to everyone's favourite family attraction: the hot springs at the Aliwal Spa Resort! It is also the economic centre of the Eastern Cape Highlands and the gateway to the Eastern Cape from the Free State. Walter Sisulu forms part of the Friendly N6 Route.

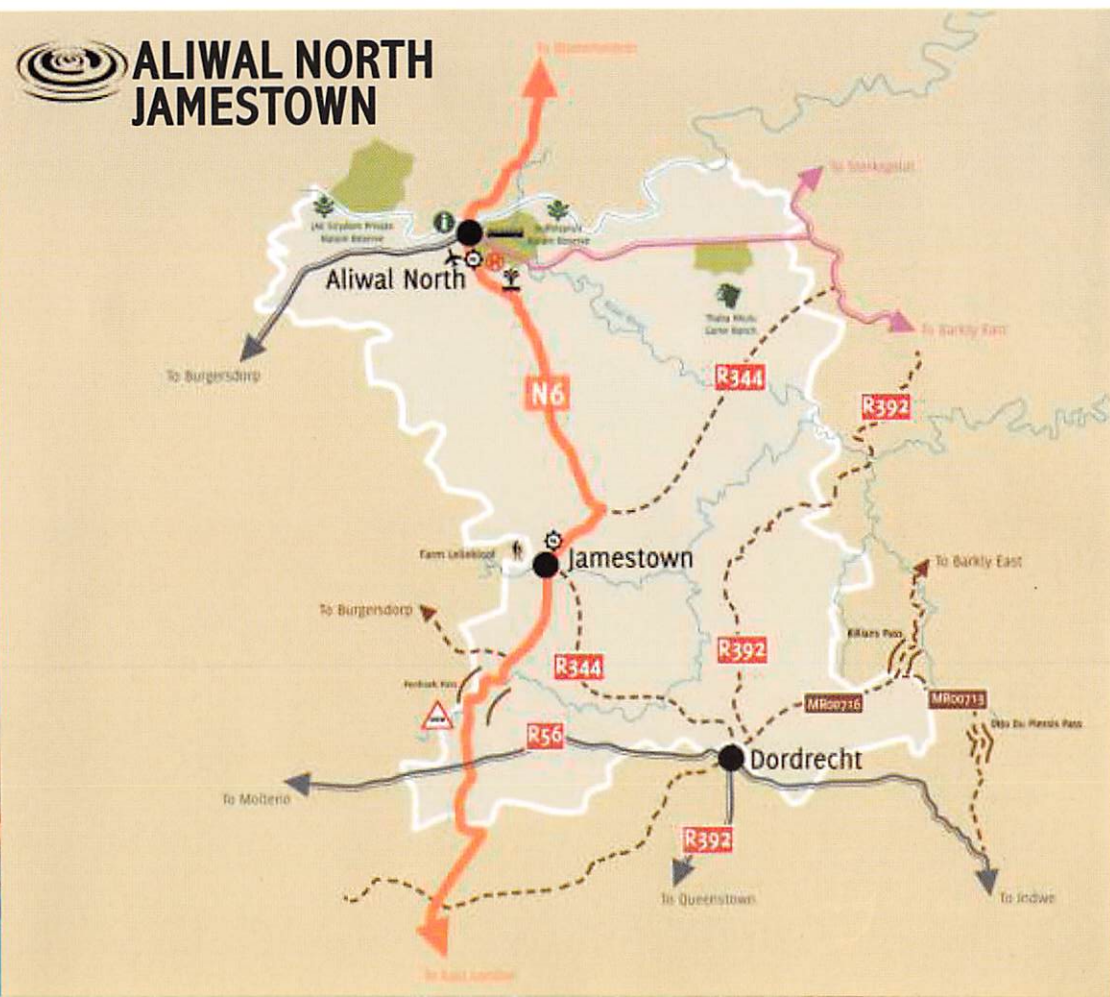
Situated on the bank of the mighty Orange River, Aliwal North is Walter Sisulu's main centre.

With history stretching back from the misty past, when San people populated the area, to the Anglo-Boer Wars of the 19th century, Walter Sisulu is a dream destination for anyone interested in the fascinating past of the area. This, together with a wide range of adventure activities, ensures that there's something for everyone.



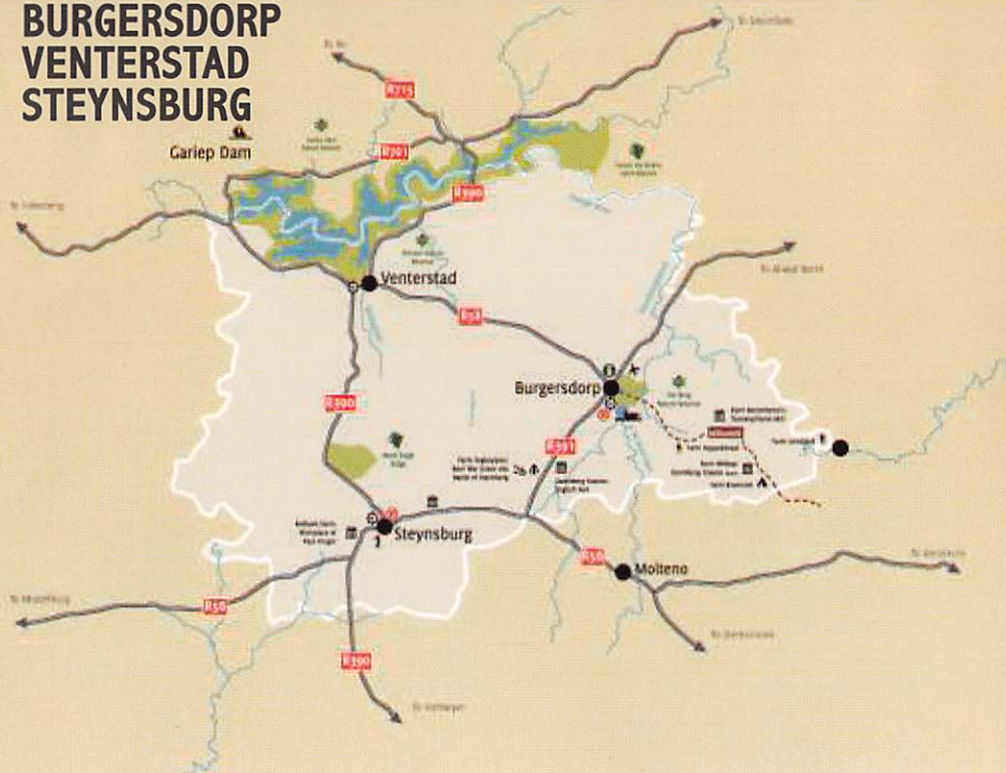
This part of the Walter Sisulu area includes the following towns:

- The main town in the Walter Sisulu area is **Aliwal North**. Situated on the bank of the Orange River, it was founded in 1950 by the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith. Many of the buildings from that bygone era still stand today. Aliwal North is home to the famous hot springs at the Aliwal Spa Resort and is known for its historic buildings and war museums including the memorial site for the Black concentration camp victims, the Garden of Remembrance, Walter Sisulu Freedom Square Memorial Site, the Fort, the Sauer Bridge, the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches and the Church Square Museum (housed in the old 1864 Dutch Reformed Church.)
- **Jamestown** was built on the farm Plessies Kraal, owned by Johannes Jacobus Wagenaar in 1874. Icon tourism attractions include the Louw Wepener Monument, the Jamestown Museum and the rock art panels at Leliekloof's Valley of Art.





BURGERSDORP VENTERSTAD STEYNSBURG



WALTER SISULU

BURGERSDORP, VENTERSTAD, STEYNSBURG

Home to both the oldest town in the Eastern Cape and the biggest inland expanse of water in the country, the Lake Gariep; Walter Sisulu has much to offer travellers and visitors.

The Gariep Dam is shared by three South African provinces and is a water sport enthusiast's dream. It stretches a full 90 kilometres from end-to-end and covers 374 square kilometres. It is the perfect setting for sailing, jet skiing, power boating and fishing. Furthermore the area offers a wide variety of ecotourism activities including game-viewing, hiking, angling, bird watching, mountain hiking and exploring unspoilt landscapes. Downstream tourists can enjoy river rafting, kayaking, horse riding, hiking and fly-fishing.

The Oviston Nature Reserve in Venterstad overlooks the eastern bank of the majestic dam, and makes for a perfect nature getaway. On the plains of this 16 000ha reserve you can find a variety of game including zebra, springbok and gemsbok. Tourists can enjoy hiking and bird-watching while on holiday here. Affordable accommodation is available.

- **Burgersdorp**, the oldest town in the Eastern Cape Highlands, is steeped in the history of the Afrikaans people, with a museum and ten monuments where one can learn more about this Town's unique history. They include the old Theological Seminary and school for the Reformed Church which was situated here from 1869 - 1904, two Taal Monuments (one original and one replica), the old Bluegum Tree, the Block House and Fort Brandwag and also the magnificent Dutch Reform Church. Join farming activities and take a hike through the nature reserve with its unique landscape and natural beauty.
- **Venterstad** is the gateway to the Gariep Dam and nature reserves. Various community tourism initiatives are being developed in the Venterstad/Oviston area including a cultural centre depicting the stories and legends of the area and the Kuyasa Arts and Crafts project. The community is also involved in fishing and house boat projects.
- **Steynsburg** is a small Karoo town, nestled between a ring of mountains situated deep in the sheep farming territory of the Eastern Cape, with a healthy climate and brilliant, star-filled night skies. The town boasts all the amenities for a comfortable stay as well as a Country Club, a nine hole golf course, a bowling green and a gymnasium.

ELUNDINI

Situated in the east of the Eastern Cape Highlands within the Maluti and Southern Drakenberg Mountains, the lush and fertile area of Elundini is a perfect retreat for those who enjoy beautiful scenery, fly fishing, mountain biking, and holidays in the mountains.

Besides being an ecotourism paradise, Elundini is resplendent in cultural attractions and history. The fascinating stories of the area's past can be unearthed by the patient traveller, or through an historical tour of the area.

The Elundini area includes the following towns:

- The picturesque town of **Ugie** named after the Ugie River in Scotland, with its vista of the Prentjiesberg, is one of the landmarks of the Southern Drakensberg. Get involved in fly-fishing, travel on the Bastervoetpad mountain pass, hike the Prentjieberg Trails and visit the tractor museum, Methodist Church and Dinosaur Footprint. Make sure you find the Gatberg (Hole Mountain) where wind erosion created a large hole at the summit of the mountain. This fast-growing town is the headquarters of the hinge timber industry of the area.
- The town of **Maclear**, named after the astronomer Royal of the Cape, Thomas Maclear, is situated in the picturesque valley of the Mooi River at the foothills of the Southern Drakensberg. The top attractions are the Woodcliff e Cave Trails, Tsitsa Falls and Naudé's Neck Pass. Make sure you get involved in bird-watching, fishing and other sporting activities. Maclear is also famous for its old mill, sandstone buildings and Sivewright bridge.
- **Mount Fletcher** is named after Reverend John Fletcher, founder of the first mission established by the British Methodists in 1882. First inhabited by the Hlubi tribe, the area is now home to the Basotho, Amahlubi, Amampondomise, Bathembu and Baphuthi tribes. Experience the heritage of the local cultures showcased through traditional dancing, craftwork and cooking. Don't miss a visit to the Tsikeletsi Waterfall the Zibi Meyer Cave and the Kwa Bhaliwe Rock Art. Mount Fletcher is the home of several anti-apartheid struggle heroes, such as Oscar Mphetha and Siniphiwe Mazwai, for whom a memorial has been erected here.



Pristine Wilderness. . .

Some of the natural wonders of the Eastern Cape Highlands include:

NATURE RESERVES

- The Gariep Dam and Oviston Nature Reserve: The Gariep Dam is 100 km long and 15 km wide, covering a surface of 360 sq km. The adjoining Oviston Nature Reserve consists of 16 000 hectares and conserves the Nama Karoo Biome where large herds of ostrich, gemsbuck, zebra and springbuck roam freely.
- The Aliwal Nature Reserve, with herds of eland, buffalo, zebra, wildebeest and springbuck.
- The 3000 hectare Prentjiesberg Natural Heritage Site, a protea woodland with indigenous forests, caves and rock pools where you can find blesbuck, Mountain Reedbuck, Dassie, the Crowned and Black Eagle, the Bearded Vulture and Lanner Falcon.
- The Lammergeier/JozanaTransfrontier Nature Reserve of 25000 hectares in the Witteberg Mountains ranges in altitude from 1500m to 2750m, with breathtaking views. As its name indicates, it is the home of the Lammergeier or Bearded Vulture.

SCENIC MOUNTAIN PASSES

Spectacular gravel road mountain passes traverse the Eastern Cape Highlands. These include:

- Barkly Pass – Elliot to Barkly East
- The Landean's Neck Pass from Barkly East to Sterkspruit via the Tellebridge Border Poster over Landean's Neck
- The Bastervoetpad between Ugie and Barkly East
- The Joubert's Pass between Lady Grey and Barkly East
- The Naudé's Neck Pass between Rhodes and Maclear
- The Pitsing Pass between Naudé's Neck and Mount Fletcher
- Otto du Plessis — Clifford to Tsolo
- Carlislehoek Pass — Tiffindell to Wartrail
- Volunteershoek Pass — Tiffindell to Rhodes

FLOWERS

Unique species of alpine flowers and forty species of ground orchids endemic to this area can be viewed by following the many scenic mountain passes in the area during spring and summer, from October to February.

For more information email tourism@jgdm.gov.za.





WATERFALLS

The many rivers that drain from the Eastern Cape Highlands sponge create dramatic waterfalls when they crash down the escarpment to the Transkei below:

- The Upper Tsitsa Waterfall about 10km from Maclear on the R56 to Mount Fletcher
- The Tsikeletsi Waterfall at Mount Fletcher.
- The Inxu Waterfall near Ugie on the road to Mthatha

BIRDS

Many unique bird species can be seen in the area.

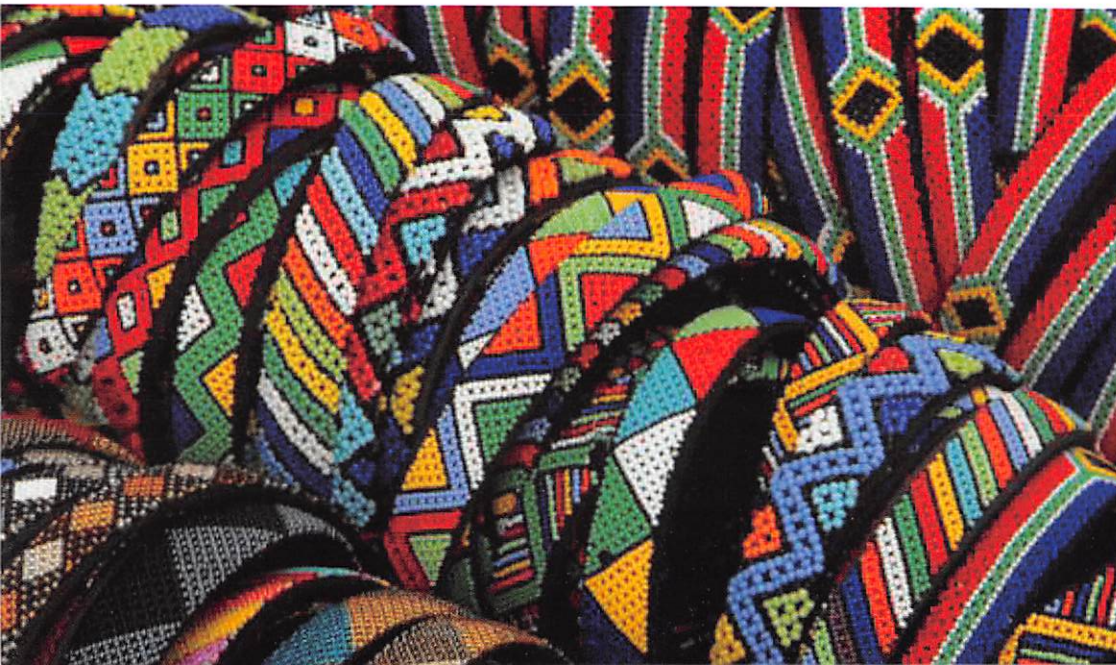
- Visit the vulture colony on the farm Karnmelk Spruit. The colony consists of approximately 140 birds including 100 breeding pairs. By appointment only.
- Crowned cranes can be seen throughout the area during the summer in large flocks on the many scenic roads through the area

PALAEONTOLOGY

The mountain areas are rich palaeontological sites where you can find dinosaur footprints, fossils, and petrified forests.

ARTS AND CRAFTS CENTRES

- Sterkspruit Community Art Centre
Bensonvale Complex, 80 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 9786. Phone: 072 422 4753
- Elundini Arts & Craft Centre
Enkululekweni Location, Mount Fletcher, Contact No. 0614956620



Explore the History and Heritage of the Wildside!

For eons, the Ukhahlamba Mountain Range has been culturally significant area for a myriad of different societies. The Eastern Cape Highlands has some of the most fascinating tales from the distant and not-so-distant past to tell; the many historical tours in the area are a good place to start for visitors wishing to explore this captivating history and cultural heritage.

THE PEOPLE OF THE WILDSIDE:

The San and Khoi

The San and Khoi settled in the Eastern Cape Highlands between 12 000 and 5 000 years ago. San and Khoi rock paintings, both large and small, decorate rock walls in caves and overhangs throughout the awe-inspiring mountains.

The Mpondomise

The Mpondomise ("Warriors with straight horn") is an isiXhosa-speaking tribe that crossed the Drakensberg around 1420. They settled along the tributaries of the Ndenxa River, which later became the Pot River near Maclear.

The area did not suit the Mpondomise, however, and they moved on to settle below the escarpment in the vicinity of modern-day Tsolo and Oumbu.

The Griqua

The Griqua was a small, independent nation and descendants of the San and Khoi from the Eastern Coast of South Africa.

When the Mpondomise left the Maclear area, Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape Colony, offered the land to the Griquas in exchange for their land near Kimberley. They settled briefly near Ugie, but, like the Mpondomise, moved away soon afterwards. A later quarrel among the Griquas, however, saw a group move away and settle once more near Ugie and Maclear.

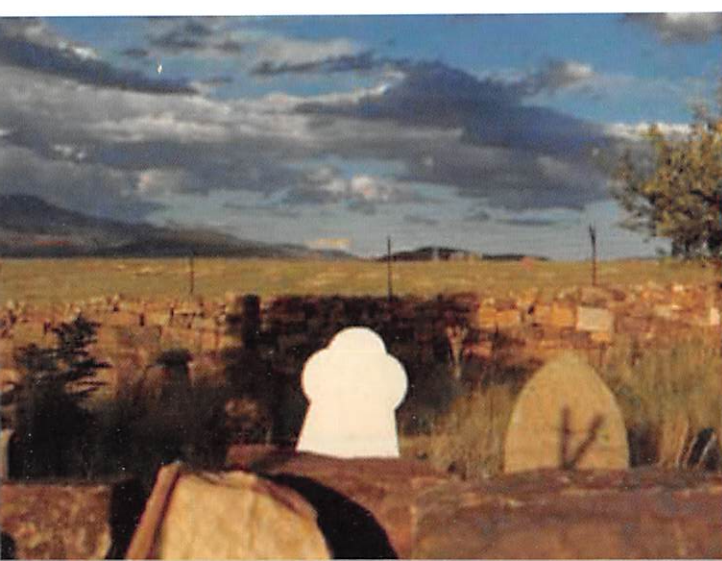
The amaXhosa

The isiXhosa-speaking people in the Eastern Cape Highlands are divided into a number of different groups each with its own history, custom and sense of individuality.

Some amaXhosa tribes, such as the Xhosa, Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomise and Bomvana, moved to the low-lying areas some time before 1550. The Xesibe tribe came before the 1700s. Some tribes moved to the higher areas during the early 1800s and it was also during this time that the Hlubi tribe moved here.

The Early Settlers

When the Province of Queen Adelaide was proclaimed in May 1835, the frontiers of the Cape Colony were extended to include a part of the Stormberg region, east of Stormberg River. In 1847, Sir Harry Smith extended the boundaries of the Cape Colony to the Orange River, and from there to the Witteberge and the Kraai River. In January 1848 the new territory was proclaimed a new district and named Albert with Burgersdorp as the seat of government. J M Orpen, the Government Land Surveyor for the Cape Colony, commenced the survey of the farms in this area. The oldest farm, "Roodepoort," was acquired by Jan Greyvenstein in 1864.



HISTORICAL AND HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS ON THE WILD SIDE

Liberation History

The people of the Eastern Cape Highlands revere their anti-apartheid struggle heroes. To learn more about these people and their struggle, visit:

- The Mapetla Mohapi Memorial in Sterkspruit
- The Joe Gqabi Memorial in Aliwal North
- The Aliwal Massacre site in Aliwal North
- The Monument and Memorial Garden for struggle heroes as well as Mdleleni House, where Simphiwe Mazwai was shot by members of the South African Police during the struggle in Mount Fletcher.
- The Tellebridge Border Post where Donald Woods and many others fled across the border into Lesotho via this well known exile route.

The Stone Arch Bridges of the Wild Side

The area boasts many fine examples of stone arch bridges built by the engineer Joseph Newey in the late 1800's over the following rivers:

- The Wildebeest River at Ugie
- The Mooi River at Maclear
- The Kraai River near Barkly East
- The Kraai River near Aliwal North (The Sauer Bridge)
- The Long Kloof River near Barkly East
- The Karnmelkspruit near Lady Grey

War History

- Explore the history of the Gun War of 1880-1881 and visit Palmietfontein on the road between Sterkspruit and the Tellebridge Border Post where the graves of soldiers of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, who died at the hands of the Basotho forces can be found.
- Explore the history of the Anglo Boer War by visiting the Concentration Camp Memorial and the Black Concentration Camp Graveyard in Aliwal North, the Louw Wepener Monument in Jamestown, and the Anglo Boer War Cemetery at Lady Grey.
- Explore the Mpondomise Rebellion against the annexation of the area by British forces in 1882 by visiting the Katkop and Mfabantu battles sites and Fort Usher near Mount Fletcher.

The Zig Zag Railway

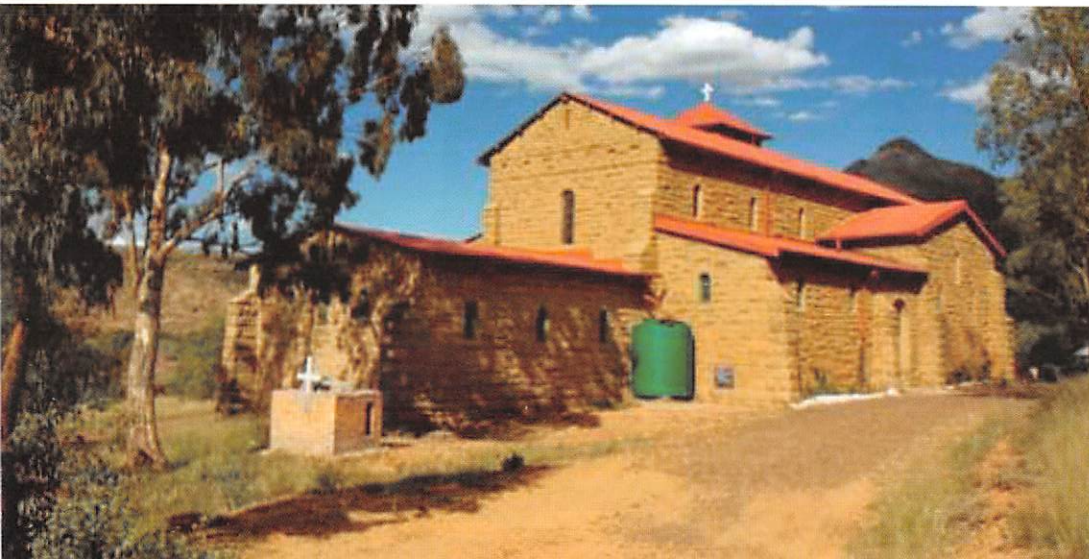
Visit the 157 km railway line between Aliwal North and Barkly East, one of only three remaining lines in the world which has reverses to allow steam locomotives to traverse steep terrain.

You can view three of the reverses on Ian Cloete's farm, Karnmelkspruit, as well as the "tunnel to nowhere:" a stone arch tunnel built for the railway line, but later abandoned. Email: tourism@jgdm.gov.za for more information

The stations at Lady Grey, New England and Barkly East are other fascinating glimpses into the history of the railway.

The History of the Early Farmers

View the stone cairn for the Sephton family, one of the first farmers to establish in the area in 1866 on the road to New England. On this road, you can also visit the five sandstone post houses which are used by the farmers to store items for the railway buses to and from Barkly East Station to be transported to Queenstown for their railway line as well as the Wartrail Country Club, a sports club established in 1887.



The Mission History

Beautiful sandstone churches of early mission stations can be seen throughout the area.

- In the Lady Grey/Sterkspruit area you can visit the well known Wittebergen Mission near Lady Grey, where Olive Schreiner was born, as well as St Michael's and St Teresa
- In the Mount Fletcher area you can visit the Sommerville, Tsekong, Fletcherville, Ephifane, St Augustine, Far View and Tinane missions.
- Most interesting is Meyer's Cave on the R56 between Maclear and Mount Fletcher where the first missionary to this area, Meyer, from the Moravian Mission in Germany, established himself in a cave before building a church. The cave is regarded as a holy place by the church. A pilgrimage to the cave occurs every year.

Rock Art

San and Khoi rock paintings can be viewed throughout the area. Most are on private farms and are not advertised, so as to prevent vandalism. There are trained guides who will take you to view the paintings. Adele Moore of Mondamin farm conducts tours. E-mail tourism@jgdm.gov.za.

Museums

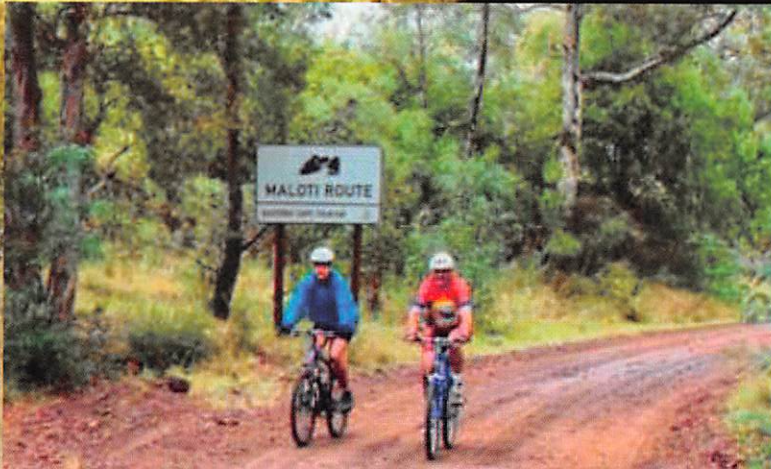
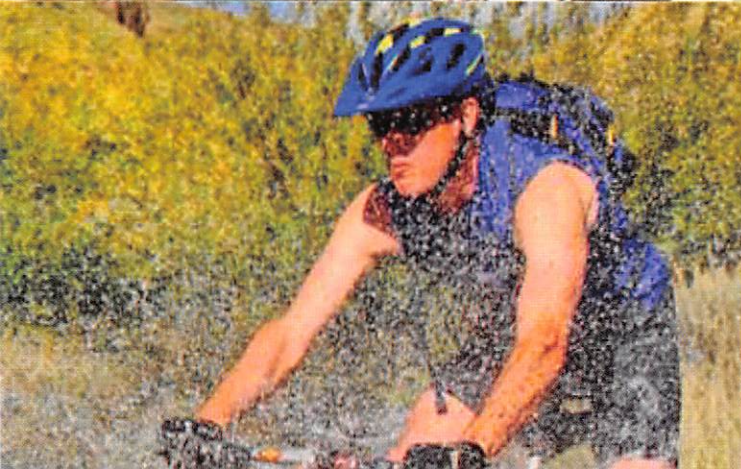
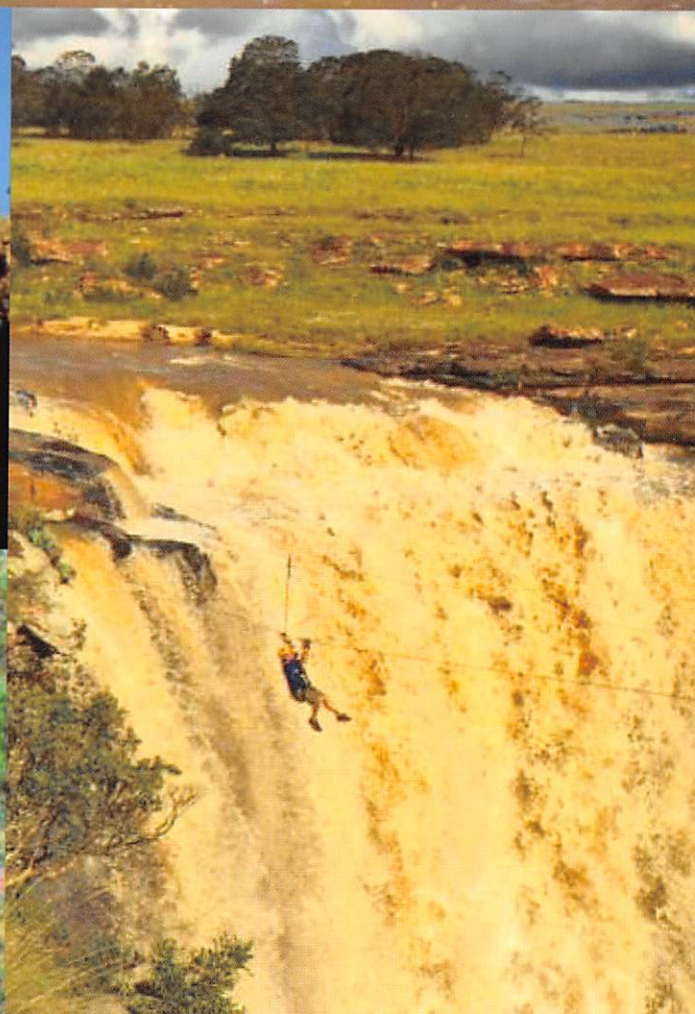
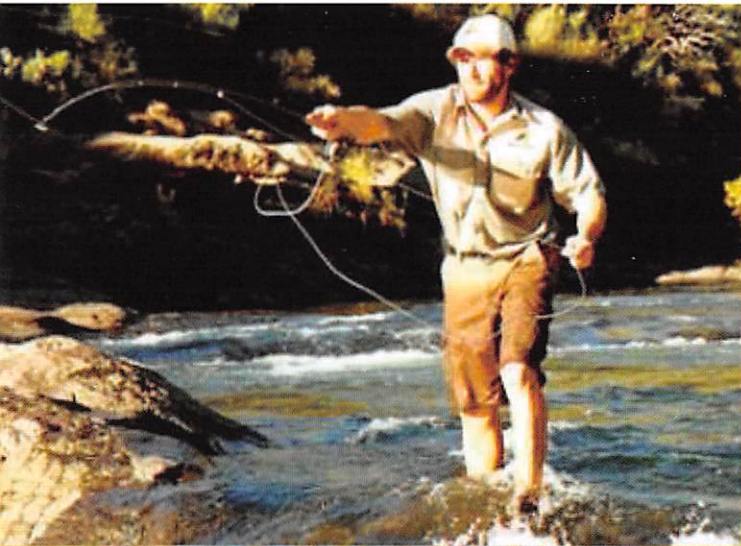
There are several interesting museums in the Eastern Cape Highlands showcasing the history of the area, including:

- The Aliwal North Museum
- The Barkly East Museum
- The Burgersdorp Cultural and Historical Museum
- The Jamestown Museum
- The Dutch Reformed Church Museum in Lady Grey
- The Tractor Museum in Ugie with an interesting collection of vintage tractors



Visitor Information Centres

- **Elundini Visitor Information Centre**
Tel.: 073 816 9278
- **Senqu Visitor Information Centre**
Tel.: 051 603 0048, Cell.: 071 634 8647
- **Walter Sisulu Visitor Information Centre**
Tel.: 051 653 1738, Cell.: 082 563 3567



Safety tips for Travellers

The Eastern Cape Highlands is a beautiful place to spend your holiday, but should you get in trouble, here's what you need to know.

DRIVING IN SNOW AND ICE

- Obey local speed limits.
- Obey parking signs. Cars parked incorrectly are vulnerable to damage.
- Be sure to clear any snow from the car roof. This is to avoid creating a road hazard to other vehicles.
- Drive cautiously with gradual pressure on the accelerator to avoid wheel spin.
- Avoid unnecessary gear changes. Engage first or second gear on level ground before ascending or descending hills in snow or ice conditions.
- Use low gears on slippery and downhill roads. This includes automatic cars. This will allow you to use engine power to control the car's speed.
- Brake gently. Front and rear wheels can lock easily. This may mean loss of steering and control.
- Brake using short pumps on the pedal. This habit will help your wheels maintain grip on the road.
- Avoid braking when cornering.
- Keep well behind the vehicles in front, at least twice the normal distance.
- On reaching a snow-covered section of road, gently apply your brakes to get an idea of how to use them on snowy surfaces.
- Turn on headlights or foglights in whiteouts, fog and blizzards.
- Do not go faster down hills.
- When meeting oncoming vehicles, give the vehicle going uphill the right of way. It is much harder for a climbing vehicle to start again if it has to stop.
- Be patient when overtaking large vehicles, such as buses. Wait until visibility is good before overtaking.
- In an emergency, it is better to control your car by steering, rather than braking. If you skid, turn the front wheels into the direction of the skid, release the brake and disengage the clutch (if you have one). After the skid ceases, gently apply your brakes.

DRIVING ON GRAVEL

- Keep to a speed of 60-70 km/h.
- Pay attention to traffic signs.
- Switch on your headlights in dusty conditions.
- Reduce speed when passing oncoming traffic and keep to the left side of the road.
- Check your tyres and tyre pressure every day.
- Beware of slippery roads in rainy weather.
- Keep both hands on the steering wheel at all times.







EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Aliwal North Hospital

Aliwal North

051 634 2381/2382

Burgersdorp Hospital

Burgersdorp

051 653 1881/2

Cloete Joubert Hospital

Barkly East

045 971 0091

Empilisweni Hospital

Sterkspruit

051 6110037

Jamestown Provincial Aided Hospital

Jamestown

051 641 -911

St Francis Provincial Aided Hospital

Aliwal North

051 633 2741

Steynsburg Hospital

Steynsburg

048 884 0241

Maclear Hospital

Maclear

045 932 1208

Mlamli Hospital

Sterkspruit

051 611 0090

Taylor Bequest Hospital

Mount Fletcher

039 737 3107

National Tourism Information and Safety Line: 083 113 2345

Cellphone Emergency Number: 112

Police Emergency Number: 10111

Ambulance and Fire Services Emergency Number: 10177

Distance Chart

TOWN	CAPE TOWN	DURBAN	JOHANNESBURG	PRETORIA	PORT ELIZABETH	BLOEMFONTEIN	EAST LONDON	KNYSNA
Barkly East1	1080	563	725	776	505	322	294	737
Lady Grey	1011	635	664	715	493	261	365	577
Sterkspruit	1040	647	568	618	527	252	401	718
Aliwal North	970	725	625	680	490	206	370	655
Burgersdorp	913	715	664	715	387	260	324	578
Jamestown	960	657	667	718	420	264	291	636
Maclear	1130	502	755	805	566	436	326	844
Mount Fletcher	1191	392	740	786	627	469	387	905
Ugie	1107	474	732	783	513	413	265	772
Venterstad	857	868	634	689	426	232	384	581
Steynsburg	835	746	656	701	356	293	327	511
Rhodes	1132	502	675	725	561	360	329	796



- NATURE RESERVES
- DAMS
- SCENIC DRIVES
- NATURAL FEATURES
- PALAENTOLOGICAL SITES
- STONE ARCH BRIDGES
- HISTORIC RAILWAY LINE
- HISTORIC SITES
- TOURISM ROUTES
- ROCK ART SITES
- HIKING TRAILS
- HOLIDAY RESORTS
- RIVERS
- TOWNS
- GRAVEL ROADS
- TARRERD ROADS
- NATIONAL ROAD

JOE GQABI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY:

Private Bag X 102, Barkly East, 9786 • Tel.: (0) 45 979 3000 • Fax: +27 (0) 45 971 0251

Email: Tourism@jgdm.gov.za • Website: www.jgdm.gov.za

For all your tourism information!





WALTER SISULU

ADVENTURE PROVINCE
Eastern Cape
PARKS & TOURISM AGENCY



STEYNSBERG
VENTERSTAD
BURGERSDORP

051 653 0639



ALIWAL NORTH
JAMESTOWN

051 633 2453 / 051 633 2441



ELUNDINI

045 932 8100



SENQU

051 603 1422