



# SAMARA

KAROO RESERVE

# FACT SHEET

## INTRODUCTION

Award-winning Samara Karoo Reserve is a conservation journey on 67,000 acres of born-again wilderness in South Africa's heart-stoppingly beautiful Great Karoo region.

Founded in 1997, Samara has pioneered the rewilding of this semi-arid yet uniquely biodiverse landscape, catalysing an ambitious vision to expand the conservation estate to a footprint of 3 million acres in a Global Biodiversity Hotspot.

Today the reserve is one of South Africa's most diverse safari destinations, comprising five vegetation biomes across strikingly varied topography, home to over 60 mammal species including the Big Five and cheetah, as well as 225 bird species.

Samara adopts a responsible tourism model to fund its conservation objectives, with a focus on exceptional and meaningful safari encounters that inspire a deep connection with the wild spaces of the Great Karoo.

## ACCOMMODATION

Three intimate lodges welcome just 40 guests at a time for slow, meaningful and exceptional safari encounters.

Karoo Lodge is a lovingly-restored original farmstead sleeping 24 guests, whilst The Manor offers a contemporary take on Karoo style in a villa sleeping 8 which can be booked on an exclusive use basis. Plains Camp is Samara's latest eco-tourism offering, an off-grid tented experience for up to 8 guests.

## EXPERIENCES

Activities on offer include game drives, bush walks, wilderness picnics, conservation activities, a star bed, fly camping, mountain biking and photographic safaris. Children of all ages are welcomed with a dedicated children's programme.

A member of The Long Run, Samara strives to achieve sustainability across the "4Cs": Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce. Staying at Samara acts as a direct contribution to this vision.

## ACCESS

Samara is easily accessible yet retains a true wilderness feel.

The nearest major airport is in Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), serviced with daily flights from Cape Town (flight duration 1h), Johannesburg (1h45) and Durban (1h30).

Road access from Port Elizabeth to Samara's entrance gate is an easy 2h30 drive on decent tarred roads through dramatic scenery. Samara's lodges/reception are situated a further 30 minutes down a dirt road that winds through the reserve.

The local town of Graaff-Reinet, rich in culture and heritage, is located 45 minutes' drive from the lodges. It has an airfield with tarred runways onto which charter flights can be arranged. Samara also has its own dirt airstrip suitable for light aircraft.

For self-drive guests, Samara is a 7h30 drive from Cape Town along the most direct route (the N1). Many opt to combine Samara with a road trip along the world-famous Garden Route or the increasingly popular Route 62.



# AT A GLANCE

## SAMARA KAROO RESERVE

Reserve size	67,000 acres / 27,000 ha	Country	South Africa
Big Five	Yes, incl. black & white rhino	Province	Eastern Cape
Malaria area	No	Region	Great Karoo
Maximum guests	40 guests	Nearest commercial airport	Port Elizabeth / Gqeberha
TGCSA grading	5 star	Nearest airfield	Graaff-Reinet
Eco-accreditations	The Long Run, Regenerative Travel	Nearest town	Graaff-Reinet
Open dates	Year-round excl. peak season at Plains Camp	Airstrip on-site	Yes, 1.5 km dirt airstrip

## LODGE COMPARISON

\*Please note that Karoo Lodge is closed for extensive renovations during the period 06 May - 14 December 2023 inclusive, reopening on 15 December 2023

	Karoo Lodge*	The Manor	Plains Camp
Lodge style	Traditional Karoo farmstead	Contemporary Karoo villa	Tented camp
Maximum guests	24 guests	8 guests	8 guests
Number of suites	10 suites	4 suites	4 suites
Minimum stay	1 night	2 nights	2 nights
Children welcome	Yes, all ages	Yes, all ages (exclusive use) Over 14s only (shared use)	Over 16s only
Altitude	885 metres	847 metres	721 metres
GPS coordinates	-32.353965,24.861095	-32.391615,24.856976	-32.478655,24.913448
what3words address	<a href="#">///tots.fiscal.studied</a>	<a href="#">///mothership.cocoon.squids</a>	<a href="#">///ballerinas.enlightened.caverns</a>
Electricity / power	220V AC	220V AC	220V AC (mess tent only)
Swimming pool	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gift shop	Yes	Limited selection	Limited selection
Wifi	Yes	Yes	Emergencies only
Laundry service	At extra cost	At extra cost	Not available
Fenced grounds	Yes	Yes	No
Wheelchair access	In certain suites	In certain suites	No



# THE SAMARA STORY

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*"In 1997, we fell in love."*

It was a very strange feeling because it was totally unprompted and quite unexpected. A battlefield is not normally the sort of place one associates with affairs of the heart. However, the battle sites of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu Natal must have inspired some primal emotions that led to conduct quite markedly in contrast to our normal, rational behaviour.

After a long dinner accompanied by several glasses of superb South African Cabernet up in Northern Natal, the site of British triumph and Zulu tragedy, we started chatting to a chap from quite a different part of South Africa – the Great Karoo. Magical tales were woven about the vast herds of springbok which once roamed this area, the "Vanished Kings", the black-maned Cape lion who majestically reigned over the Plains of Camdeboo, the rhino, the cheetah, the now-extinct quagga, the explorers, the characters of yesteryear and the haunting beauty of the semi-desert land.

Overwhelmed and smitten by the magnificence of it all, we went away determined to visit the Great Karoo.

Apieskloof ("Monkey Valley") became the first farm that formed the nucleus of Samara and in 1997 we happily became its owner. The dream continued – amass enough land to have a self-sustaining ecosystem that would support wildlife: the herds of antelope that used to inhabit this area, and the predators to keep the balance that helps maintain these fragile ecosystems.

67,000 acres and more than twenty-five years later, Samara's rewilding journey has picked up pace. The land is beginning to recover from the effects of generations of agricultural exploitation. The haunting beauty of the landscape that first inspired this campaign of rejuvenation has returned.

An ambitious programme of land rehabilitation and wildlife reintroduction has brought Samara's valleys, plains and mountains back to life. Herds of springbok, black wildebeest, zebra and eland now roam the Plains of Camdeboo. Rhinoceros, elephant and cheetah meander across the veld once more. Almost two centuries after it was last seen, the lion reigns again.

Samara's vision now extends beyond our borders to the creation of South Africa's 3rd largest protected area in a Global Biodiversity Hotspot, providing a winning plan for the people and wild places of the Karoo. In staying with us, you become co-creators of this living legacy. Thank you for joining us on our journey.

*Sarah & Mark Tompkins, Founders*

# OUR VISION & MISSION

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## *Rewilding the Great Karoo*

Samara is a passionate conservation undertaking and a catalyst for land-use change in the Great Karoo. 67,000 acres of land have been restored since 1997, and we are working with local stakeholders to create a protected area spanning 3 million acres in one of only 36 Global Biodiversity Hotspots, the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Thicket. This will link the Camdeboo, Mountain Zebra and Addo Elephant National Parks with private land in an ecological corridor, focusing on an innovative partnership-based conservation model.

The Great Karoo is the region that up until 1897 witnessed one of the world's largest migrations – when vast herds of springbok roamed these plains in search of new pastures. As well as the multitude of antelope, herds of elephant moved through the river systems, desert-adapted black rhino thrived in the dense thickets, and the predators – Cape lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, even wild dog – accompanied the melee of prey species across this breathtaking landscape. Resurrecting this malaria-free "Serengeti of the South" and returning the landscape to its former glory forms an integral part of our vision.

Putting dreams into motion, however, requires practical action. We consulted expert ecologists to determine the conservation potential of the land before purchasing 11 farms encompassing 5 of South Africa's 9 vegetation biomes. We then began the mammoth task of eradicating alien invasive plants, tearing down internal fencing and resting the land for almost a decade. Little by little indigenous animals have been reintroduced to the area, with a focus not only on iconic and endangered species but on the ecosystem processes they promote.

We continue to actively restore and rehabilitate the most degraded areas through soil erosion control and the planting of indigenous vegetation, like Spekboom.

In 2006, we set up our first lodge to give social meaning to this conservation undertaking. As a significant employer in the area, one of our proudest achievements is helping our staff realise their own dreams: putting them through further studies and supporting their personal development. We welcome cutting-edge researchers from around the world and educate school children from our local community. We have long seen Samara as site of learning and discovery at multiple levels; a place for personal introspection as well as science generation.

We also welcome discerning travellers exploring a remote corner of the world well off the beaten track, sometimes by accident, but most often by choice.

*Thank you for choosing to support us*