

HOGSBACK

Begins in Cape Town *Duration* 9 days *Highlights* Garden Route, Grahamstown, Graaff-Reinet, Little Karoo

Hogsback, in the Eastern Cape, is an all-year attraction and one of our most popular tours – we've been going there regularly every year for two decades! Although the famous flowering gardens of Hogsback is a main feature, this 9-day tour includes so much else. It's an extensive round-trip that highlights the wonderful variety of scenery of the Western and Eastern Cape, and the rich cultural heritage of our historic towns.

THE GARDEN ROUTE Day 1



We collect you at your home/hotel, and then head eastward over the rugged Hottentots-Holland Mountains, and across the endless rolling wheatfields of the Overberg. Our lunch stop is at the Albertinia Hotel, famous for its local cuisine. We continue along the N2 highway, and enter the Garden Route at Mossel Bay, diverting through picturesque George and Knysna, and then continuing to Plettenberg Bay - aptly dubbed "Bahia Formosa" (Beautiful Bay) by 15th century Portuguese seafarers. After checking in at the comfortable Bayview Hotel, we have time to explore trendy Main Street, before a tasty dinner at the delightful "The Med" Restaurant.

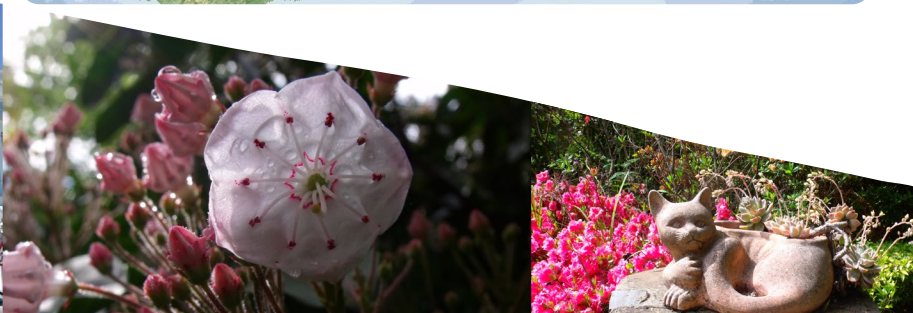
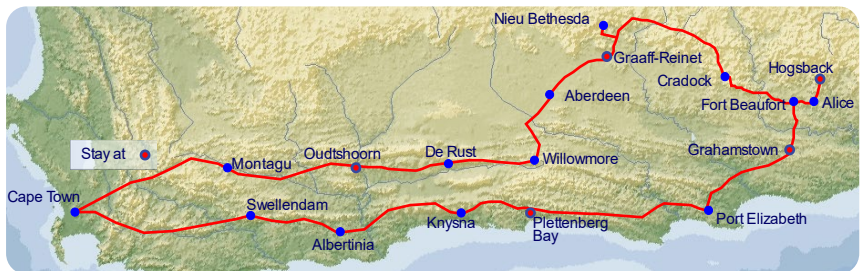
Stay at Bayview Hotel, Plettenberg Bay (1 night)

FRONTIER COUNTRY Day 2

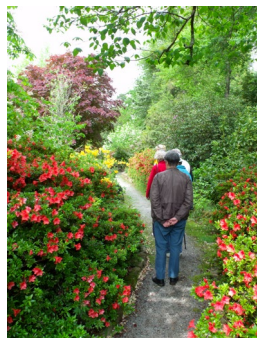


After a scenic tour of Plettenberg Bay, we continue eastward along the Garden Route, stopping to browse through a popular local craft centre. A highlight today is a drive through 90 km of unspoilt indigenous forest, where mighty Yellowwood trees tower over the surrounding forest canopy. We stop for lunch at a charming restaurant, then continue our journey past the harbour city of Port Elizabeth and into "Frontier Country", where, during the 19th century, British Settlers formed a defensive barrier against the amaXhosa Nation. Our destination is Grahamstown - the "City of Saints", so named for its many places of worship. During our stay here we do an informative tour of Grahamstown, exploring interesting attractions such as the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George, department stores of yore, the Observatory Museum and the 1820 Settler Memorial - home of the famous National Arts Festival.

Stay at Cock House Guest House, or similar, Grahamstown (1 night)



HOGSBACK Day 3, 4 & 5



This morning we set off northward, following the old "Queen's Road" through the Ecca Pass (constructed by Andrew Geddes Bain in 1843). We travel further into the Amathole Mountains, past scattered rural villages, and up the southern Amathole foothills. In the early afternoon we reach Hogsback and settle in to the comforts of our hotel, with its extensive garden, friendly service and superb food.

During the next two days we'll tour by minibus to visit some of the local attractions, including artists' studios, and showpiece private gardens to enjoy the magnificent displays of flowers. You will have plenty of choice to be as active as you like; you may want to choose one of the attractive walks that abound in the area, ranging from gentle strolls, to walks in the forests and longer hikes to spectacular viewpoints. The Hogsback Arboretum is an ideal spot to enjoy the peace and serenity of the area. You may, of course, prefer to relax at the hotel, enjoying the fresh air and country hospitality.

Stay at Hogsback Arminel Hotel (3 nights)



CAPE MIDLANDS AND GRAAFF-REINET AREA Day 6 & 7



Leaving the mountains, we strike out across the sweeping landscapes of the Eastern Cape Karoo. Our route takes us through Frontier towns such as Alice, Fort Beaufort, Adelaide and Bedford, before we reach historic Cradock, situated in the upper valley of the Great Fish River. We enjoy a light lunch at the venerable Victoria Manor, and sally forth across the Eastern Cape Midlands for Graaff-Reinet - affectionately known as the "Gem of the Karoo".

Our guesthouse is strategically located, offering easy access to the charming town centre with its impressive Dutch Reformed Church, and abundance of interesting buildings - many of which are National Monuments. During our two-day stay we do a with a minibus tour of the town, admiring the many well-preserved historic buildings. Graaff-Reinet, founded in 1786, is the 4th oldest town in the country, and the townsfolk are justly proud of their heritage. We then drive out to the olde-worlde village of Nieu-Bethesda to visit the Owl House, and experience its eccentric art and strange



sculptures. Later we visit a Karoo farm, and learn about the pre-history of the region. After a light lunch, we travel the scenic back roads and arrive in Graaff-Reinet in time for an excursion to spectacular viewpoints around the Valley of Desolation and, time permitting, a game drive in Camdeboo National Park. On both evenings we have tasty home-cooked meals at our guest house. **Stay at Karoopark Guest House, Graaff-Reinet (2 nights)**



PLAINS OF CAMDEBOO Day 8

Our route today takes us southward, across the vast plains of the Camdeboo "...flooded by sun, lonely, sparse, wind-swept, treeless..." to quote Eve Palmer, author of "Plains of the Camdeboo". We divert through the unrushed village of Aberdeen, seeking out picturesque old buildings, before heading for Willowmore, and our tea stop at a quirky local coffee shop. En route we make a brief detour into dramatic Meiringspoort - a deep cleft through the seemingly impenetrable Swartberg Mountain range, where this 25 km defile crosses the Groot River 25 times! After a light lunch at De Rust, we travel through extensive irrigation and ostrich farming areas Oudtshoorn.

Stay at Oue Werf, (or similar) near Oudtshoorn



THE LITTLE KAROO Day 9

Today we take a 'minibus stroll' through the Little Karoo, stopping in at some of those little places you possibly never had time to visit before. We traverse the spectacular Huisrivier Pass before a stop in picturesque Ladismith for morning tea, and then continue through impressive mountain scenery to reach Montagu for lunch at the well-known Montagu Country Hotel. Finally, we wend our way homeward via the Breede River Valley and its winelands to deliver you to your doorstep in the late afternoon.

HOMEWARD BOUND ...