



Addo Elephant National Park has the Cape's largest population of elephants: over 450 live here



White rhino at KwanDwe

EASTERN CAPE GAME LODGES

The Cape isn't the best area in Africa for game viewing; wilderness areas further north in Africa dwarf the reserves mentioned on this page. However, if you are looking for a malaria-free safari (as are many families with very small children), or you are visiting Cape Town and the Garden Route, and want to extend for a few days of game-viewing, then there are several options. All lie east of the Garden Route and are within easy reach of Port Elizabeth's airport.

Just over an hour's drive north of Port Elizabeth, Addo Elephant Park is a national park that has expanded to cover 1,250km² of undulating grasslands interspersed with dense evergreen thickets. Though the very relaxed elephants (over 350 of them) are the attraction here, you'll also find good numbers of black rhino, buffalo, eland, red hartebeest, kudu, recently re-introduced lion, and a rich diversity of birdlife.

There are two very comfortable places to stay here. **Gorah Elephant Camp** occupies a private concession within Addo Elephant Park, and sets a high standard. There's plenty of classic elegance and space in its 11 luxury tented suites, and a stay here includes two 4WD game drives a day. For a more modest location, **Elephant House** is a

lovely guest house just outside the park – ideal as a base for your own drives, or to take advantage of the escorted drives arranged from here.

Protecting 250km² of the eastern Cape's bush, **Shamwari Game Reserve** is probably the best known of this area's private game reserves – and makes a good choice for those wanting a few days safari, without anything too wild. They now have 58 rooms split into six separate lodges.

Kwandwe Private Game Reserve covers 220km² and is home to elephant, buffalo, lion, cheetah and both white and black rhino. There are four separate lodges here: nine stone-and-thatch suites in the Great Fish River Lodge; three country-house-style rooms in the Uplands Homestead (ideal for families); six modern suites in the über-chic Eccca Lodge; and Melton Manor, a villa that sleeps a maximum of eight. Activities include game drives in open 4WD vehicles, night drives and guided walks. Kwandwe is one of the Cape's best safari lodges, with high standards of accommodation, guiding and game – and at least some feeling of 'wild Africa'.

About an hour east of Port Elizabeth, **Kariega Game Reserve** covers 60km² and



Part of a suite at the contemporary Eccca Lodge, Kwandwe

is one of the area's older game reserves. Kariega has four separate properties, some of them very affordable: the family-friendly Kariega Lodge with 15 spacious log chalets; and Ukhozi Lodge with 10 suites, each with its own plunge pool; the Homestead, which is a villa catering for up to 10 people; and the luxurious River Lodge which has 10 comfortable thatched suites beside the Bushmans River.

Kariega gives a reliable game experience, with activities including day and night drives in open 4WD vehicles, as well as walks. Boat trips down the river to the nearby beaches are fun – and include picnic lunches.

Far from the Eastern Cape's other reserves, about three hours north of Port Elizabeth, **Samara Private Game Reserve** covers 280 km² of wild, open land that is wonderfully remote. Unlike many of the smaller private reserves, it doesn't try to 'tick off the big five'; instead it emphasises the cheetah conservation project here, and offers trips to track cheetah on foot or to see cave paintings and fossils, as well as the usual 4WD day and night drives. (We spotted an aardvark here when last we visited!)

Samara's Karoo Lodge has six en-suite rooms, three located in the renovated farmhouse and three separate cottages; plus a Manor House, for the exclusive use of up to eight guests. Samara delivers a very high-quality experience in all respects, from the accommodation and food to the activities; we recommend it highly.



Cheetah in a playful mood in Kwandwe Private Game Reserve