

EASTERN CAPE GAME RESERVES

The Cape isn't the best area in Africa for game viewing; wilderness areas further north dwarf the reserves mentioned on this page. However, if you are looking for a malaria-free safari (often in demand by families with 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 an easy drive of Port Elizabeth's airport.

ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK

Just over an hour's drive north of Port Elizabeth, Addo Elephant National Park covers 1,250km² of undulating grasslands interspersed with dense evergreen thickets. Though very relaxed elephants (over 450 of them) are the attraction here, you'll also find good numbers of black rhino, buffalo, eland, red hartebeest, kudu, recently reintroduced lion, and a rich diversity of birdlife.

Gorah Elephant Camp occupies a private concession within the park, and sets a high standard. There's plenty of elegance and space in its 11 luxury tented suites, and a stay here includes two 4WD game drives each day.

For a more modest location, **Elephant House** is a lovely guesthouse just outside the park. It's ideal as a base for your own drives, but also arranges optional guided drives into the park.

KWANDWE PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

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 **Ecca 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 has some of the Eastern Cape's most luxurious safari lodges, with high standards of accommodation, guiding and game – and with at least some feeling of 'wild Africa'.

KARIEGA GAME RESERVE

About 90 minutes' drive east of Port Elizabeth, the family-owned Kariega Game Reserve covers 90km² and is one of the area's older game reserves. Kariega has four separate lodges, some of them very affordable. The family-friendly **Kariega Main Lodge** has 21 spacious log chalets, each with a separate lounge, en-suite bedroom and a private deck. **Ukhozi Lodge** has ten luxury suites, each with its own plunge pool and deck overlooking the valley. **The Homestead** is a private lodge, perfect for the sole use of up to ten people; and the luxurious **River Lodge** has ten comfortable thatched suites on the banks of the Bushmans River.

Kariega gives a reliable game experience, including the 'big five', where you will usually get a chance to view lion, leopard and rhino as well as a myriad bird species. Activities here include day and night drives in open 4WD vehicles, fishing, river cruises and hiking trails, as well as a spa and a gym. Boat trips from River Lodge to the nearby beaches at Kenton-on-Sea are fun – and include picnic lunches.



Elephant in Addo National Park

SHAMWARI GAME RESERVE

Protecting 250km² of the Eastern Cape's bush, **Shamwari** 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. Shamwari now has 65 rooms split into seven separate lodges.

SAMARA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

Far from the Eastern Cape's other reserves, about three hours' drive north of Port Elizabeth, Samara Private Game Reserve covers 280km² 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. (They have recently had a very high number of aardvark sightings!)

Samara's **Karoo Lodge** has ten en-suite rooms (five located in the renovated farmhouse), three separate cottages and two new rooms overlooking the waterhole. There is also the **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.

Samara's relatively new **Mountain Retreat** has three double en-suite bedrooms in its homestead and a further two en-suite rooms in the restored Wagon House. A wide wrap-around veranda provides a relaxing spot to enjoy the amazing views. There is also a Jacuzzi and plunge pool.



Cheetah in a playful mood in Kwandwe Private Game Reserve