

NAMAQUALAND

Driving north from Cape Town, the traffic dwindles as the tar road meanders between hills and into rugged mountains. Whilst it's pleasant for most of the year, during the famous flower season (around late August and early September) Namaqualand's hills and heathlands burst into flower, carpeting the ground with vibrant oranges, purples and yellows.

Detour slightly west, to the coast, and you'll reach Langebaan, gateway to the West Coast National Park. As well as being a major attraction during the flower season, this park has a fantastic population of sea birds. Stay at the **Farmhouse Hotel**, which sits on the hill with wonderful views of the Langebaan Lagoon. This old Cape farmstead dates back to 1860 and retains much of its charm. Most of its 16 comfortable rooms have lagoon views, a small private lounge area and a lovely fireplace for those chilly winter evenings.

Inland, barely two hours' drive from Cape Town, you reach Clanwilliam, a tiny settlement where leafy streets are surrounded by extensive orchards – and farms producing rooibos tea. This is a good base for exploring the mountainous Cederberg Wilderness Area and its stands of mountain fynbos vegetation, so bring your hiking boots.

In the heart of Clanwilliam, **Ndedema Lodge** is an elegant Victorian house, with a swimming pool, fruit trees and abundant birdlife in its garden. Inside you'll find two individually decorated bedrooms with air conditioning; outside are two separate garden cottages. All have en-suite bathrooms with showers, and some also

have large Victorian baths. Ndedema's welcoming owner, Wilma, often arranges fresh flowers throughout and is always very helpful – ask her to organise a 'rooibos tour' whilst you're here.

East of Clanwilliam, over the dizzy heights of the Pakhuis Pass, you will find the luxurious **Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat**. In the foothills of the Cederberg Mountains, the 16 stylish and spacious, country-style rooms are nestled in manicured, indigenous gardens, with stunning views. Food is a big focus here: a candlelit dinner on the mountainside is a real highlight. Activities include nature drives, guided visits to see the ancient Bushman rock art, and adventurous nature trails. You are free to hike unguided if you wish, and there is a spa available. For exclusive use, a stunning private villa, **Koro Lodge**, boasts a dedicated guide, a chef and space for up to ten people.

Over the years, we've seen the town of Springbok, in the heart of Namaqualand, change from a rural backwater into a bustling little town. In the flower season, visitors flock here. There is even a local 'flower hotline' to find the day's best blooms – so at this time of year you must

Car Hire in South Africa

The car categories used in South Africa are similar to those in Namibia. Included in our self-drive prices is: **Group M** Toyota Yaris T1 or similar. With radio/CD, air con, ABS & p/steering. Comfortable for 3–4 people.

A range of other cars are available – supplements on request – including:

Group B/C Toyota Yaris T3/Toyota Corolla or similar. With radio/CD, air con, ABS & p/steering.

Group D Honda Jazz or similar. With radio/CD, air con, ABS, p/steering & automatic.

Group K Nissan X-Trail 2WD or similar. With radio/CD, air con, ABS & p/steering; manual transmission.

Group L Toyota Hilux double-cab 4WD or similar. With radio/CD, air con & p/steering.

Group N Toyota Quantum or similar. With radio/CD, air con & p/steering. Seats eight people.

Car-hire insurance

We hire the best vehicles that we can and these include unlimited mileage and all local taxes. The car insurance that comes with our trip ideas includes full cover for theft of the car, accident damage (even single-vehicle accidents), tyre damage, windscreen cover and roadside assistance. We believe that we offer the highest level of cover available in the industry today. Note that it excludes a 'claim administration fee' (typically about £45/US\$70) and towing fees (if the problem is not mechanical). It also excludes water, sand and undercarriage damage – although it is very rare for our travellers to incur such damage. Note that drivers aged 18–20, and those aged 75 and over, should specifically discuss their vehicle insurance with us, drawing our attention to their age. In some cases, cover may be restricted or supplements payable.

One-way rentals

It's very easy for us to arrange one-way car hire within South Africa, and also between South Africa and Namibia. So you can easily start a fly-drive trip in Port Elizabeth, and end it in Cape Town or even Windhoek. (There are usually one-way drop-off fees.)

book trips well in advance.

High on a hill overlooking Springbok, **Mountain View Guest House** has ten tastefully decorated suites. All have air conditioning, a minibar and a TV, and most have a private patio and their own entrance. Outside you'll find a peaceful garden with indigenous plants, and a small swimming pool. Not far from the town centre, **Annie's Cottage** is a restored manor house with 11 individually designed rooms, each decorated in an ornate eclectic style, with a different colour scheme. It has a cool shady veranda, a manicured garden and a small swimming pool. In central Springbok, the **Old Mill Lodge** has 11 comfortable rooms. It's still a very simple place, where you help yourself to tea and coffee from the kitchen before relaxing on the veranda.



Livingstone's daisies in Namaqualand



Rock art at Bushmans Kloof