

50 Places of the Garden Route



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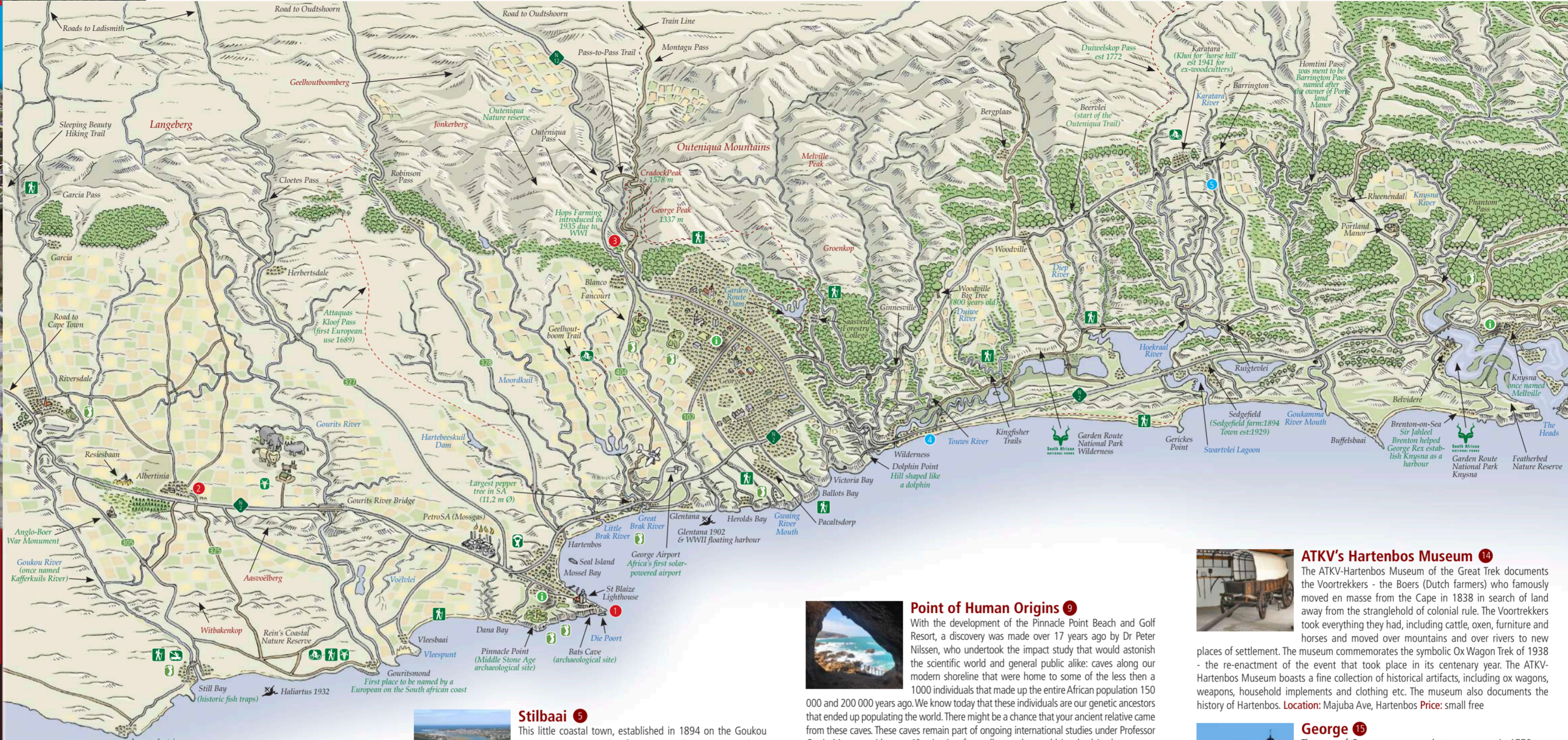
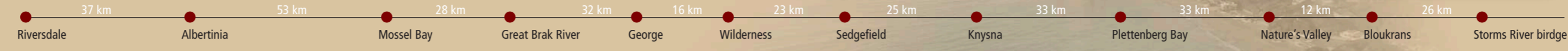


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'Enamelled meads and the most beautiful pastures still added to this scene of magnificence with which I was truly enchanted.'

Francois le Vaillant • intrepid explorer • on visiting Outeniqualand • 1781



Riversdale 1
This little town, on the N2, was first founded as a church on the farm, Doornkraal, as a centre for all the farms in the area. It was proclaimed in 1839 and named after Harry Rivers, the Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of Swellendam. The highlight of this farming town is the Langeberg mountain range, notably the Sleeping Beauty Peak, which offers numerous outdoor pursuits. Worth seeing are the many well preserved vernacular houses, the Julius Africana Centre, Korentepoort Dam for watersports lovers and the home, for 2 years, of CJ Langenhoven, the father of the Afrikaans language and the author of the poem 'Die Stem' from which the anthem was derived. **Location:** On the N1 between Swellendam and Mossel Bay **Information:** www.explorersgardenroute.co.za • 028 713 7829 **Price:** free

Garcia Pass 2
When you stay at Riversdale, Garcia Pass, a few kilometres away, is definitely worth a day trip. This is one of the few passes that was not created by Thomas Bain, or his father, Andrew. Maurice Garcia was a civil commissioner at Riversdale and his main ambition was to connect Riversdale to the Klein Karoo interior. His finished product, in 1868, could be described as a bridle path through the Goukou River gorge. Alias, in 1872, the famous Thomas Bain was commissioned to improve the pass which was finished in 1877 by convict labour. Today, the pass is in good motoring order and tarred. The attraction today is 11,7 km of beautiful mountain scenery to drive, places to stop, a visit to the old A toll house, picnic, visit rock pools, hiking or, for the more adventurous, climbing. **Location:** R323 close to the town of Riversdale **Information:** www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrA7yC8fo4 **Price:** free

Albertinia 3
This town, originally Fonteinvlei, was founded in 1900 and named after a Dutch Reformed minister, Johannes Albertyn. Fronting the N2 are shops and amenities that make it a popular rest stop. Behind these is a working town, with farming, thatching, mining and one of the largest aloxe production areas in the world and now, since 2004, a cultural history museum can be visited. You can visit an alox factory and then pose next to the largest sculpture of an alox in the world. This is also the home of Louis Oosthuizen, who won the British Open in 2010: it is here, as a young golfer, that he honed his skills on the local nine-hole course with greens made of sand and oil. **Location:** N2 between Riversdale and Mossel Bay **Information:** explorersgardenroute.co.za/project/albertinia/ **Price:** free

Gourits River Bridge 4
Just outside Albertinia, on the Mossel Bay side, is the deep Gourits River gorge which is worth a quick stop to take in the magnificent view. The river is ancient, going back millions of years, and it was named after the local Gouikwa Khoi-nsa who inhabited the area. This river was also the first landmark in South Africa to be named by the Europeans in 1488 (Rio das Vacas 'river of herdsmen'). In modern times, in 1986, Hilton Davies jumped off the bridge with his climbing rope, paving the way for a commercial venture when Kiwi Extreme introduced bungee jumping in 1991. This venture lasted till 2009 when the authorities deemed the old bridge unstable. The first of the three bridges to cross this section of the river was built in 1892. **Location:** Between Albertinia and Mossel Bay **Price:** free

Mossel Bay 6
Mossel Bay is a great holiday destination with one of the mildest climates in the world. It offers beautiful beaches and many other attractions and activities. Mossel Bay can boast many firsts in South African history, such as the first landing of Europeans on Southern African soil (1488), the first European meeting with the local population, the first successful trade by Vasco de Gama nine years later (a bull for three bracelets), and the first form of a postal system when a sailor's boot was left hanging from a tree which served passing ships and, when Dias died a few years later, a small church was built, making this the first European structure on South African soil. The bay is named after the mussel shells found here. The 1865 and 1900 ostrich feather booms and discovery of natural off-shore gas in 1969 helped the town to prosper. **Location:** N2, between Albertinia and George **Information:** www.vistomosselbay.co.za **Price:** free

Stilbaai 5
This little coastal town, established in 1894 on the Goukou River estuary, is a sought-after get away destination. For those who don't want to just relax and do nothing and feel like some adventure or want to explore, there are 3 nature reserves on your doorstep, endless beautiful coastlines to walk or hike and there are river and sea watersports including swimming, surfing, windsurfing, kite surfing, angling, sailing, canoeing, boating and waterskiing. Within the area are a number of interesting archaeological sites including ancient fish traps and shell landfill that has been carbon dated to around 1000BC. The famous Blombos Cave, 12km outside of Stilbaai, where artefacts have been carbon dated to about 100000-77000 years ago, can also be visited. **Location:** Nearly halfway between Riversdale and Albertinia, take the R305 for 26 km till you reach the sea **Information:** www.stilbaaitourism.co.za **Price:** free

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Bartolomeu Dias Museum Complex 7
The complex is dedicated to celebrating the rich history of the region. It was originally established in the 1960s, but was officially opened under its current name in 1989. The complex is home to the 500 year old post office, The Post Office Tree, the oldest in SA. The first written letter was left here (likely in a shoe) warning of the troublesome conditions in Calcutta. Maritime Museum is also housed in the complex and displays, not least of all, the Dias Caravel, a life-size replica of one of the caravels used by Portuguese explorers. The complex also houses the Shell Museum and Aquarium, the Ethno-Botanical Garden which has indigenous plants and trees used as herbs by the early inhabitants of the area. Malay graves, discovered in 1968, are situated near the Post Office Tree. The complex has a host of attractions and activities within close proximity. **Location:** 1 Market Street, Mossel Bay **Information:** www.diazmuseum.co.za **Price:** free

Die Poort 8
The longest natural rock pool on the South African coast is located in Mossel Bay. Known as Die Poort, rows of dipping sandstone formed this tidal pool. For generations, the town's children have learned to swim in this pool where chains and ropes have been secured across the pool to assist swimmers when the surging tides cause strong currents to wash down the pool. At the upper end of the pool, there is a diving board over a deep pool with high rocks on the seaward side. This is Blougat, a much deeper pool than the first, giving it a deep blue colour and thus its name. Many hours can be spent exploring the rocks around the pools or just lying in the sun. **Location:** Point Road **Price:** free

Point of Human Origins 9
With the development of the Pinnacle Point Beach and Golf Resort, a discovery was made over 17 years ago by Dr Peter Nilssen, who undertook the impact study that would astonish the scientific world and general public alike: caves along our modern shoreline that were home to some of the less than a 1000 individuals that made up the entire African population 150 000 and 200 000 years ago. We know today that these individuals are our genetic ancestors that ended up populating the world. There might be a chance that your ancient relative came from these caves. These caves remain part of ongoing international studies under Professor Curtis Marean, with over 40 scientists from all over the world involved in the process. **Location:** Pinnacle Point, Mossel Bay **Information:** Advance booking essential, by appointment only for the Human Origins Experience Tour that explores the beginning of modern human behaviour. **Price:** Available on request

Diaz Express 10
The Diaz Express is a fun rail experience for the whole family, run on the existing Transnet rail network between George and the seaside resort of Mossel Bay. Mossel Bay serves as the main point of departure with excursions to a variety of attractions, including the ever-popular Santos Beach, Great Brak River, Glentana and Maalgate. The trip provides unsurpassed scenery, history, visits to quaint shops and art galleries and exceptional food experiences. All excursions have lovely views over the Indian Ocean (with a ringside seat for whale watching during the season), river estuaries and the indigenous plant life of the Cape Floral Kingdom. **Location:** Hartenbos Station, Port Natal Avenue, Hartenbos **Information:** www.diazexpress.co.za **Price:** free

Cape St Blaize Lighthouse 11
St Blaize Lighthouse, within Mossel Bay, is worth a walk up the hill for its commanding views and its historical significance. The foundation stone was laid in 1862 by visiting Governor Wodehouse. Thus the name Wodehouse was suggested for the lighthouse but it was never adopted. St Blaize was completed in 1864 and stands 14 m high. Until recently, it was one of only two lighthouses along the South African coast that maintained a 24-hour watch. It was also sought-after by lighthouse keepers as wives were allowed to live in. It is open to the public between 10am and 3pm every day between April and October, with visits by arrangement during the rest of the year. **Location:** 6 Point Rd, Mossel Bay **Price:** small fee

Mossel Bay Zipline 12
Opened in 2020, Mossel Bay can now boast having the longest over-ocean zipline in the world at 1100m. The average speed of the ride is 80km/h with 90m of air below you to the ocean. There are spectacular views of the sea cliffs of Cape sandstone that were deposited 400-500 million years ago which have been distorted to a near vertical position when the Falklands Plateau collided into Africa during the creation of the super continent, Gondwana, 280-235 million years ago. Above this formation, one can see the famous horizontal layers of the Kirkwood formation. This formed during the break up of Gondwana 135 million years ago. **Location:** Book in at 6 Point Road, under the lighthouse at Cape Saint Blaize, Mossel Bay **Information:** www.mosselbayzipline.co.za • 068 022 9183 **Price:** free

Janine Iron and Washing Museum 13
This little private museum was started by Jan Ellis when he purchased a collection of irons for sale in Kleinmond in 1976. His ever-growing collection of laundry equipment became a museum, on the death of his daughter, which is named after her. On entry, visitors can watch a 20 minute video about the history of laundry through the ages from where they can immerse themselves in the more than 640 irons on display as well as washing machines and implements. Some of the items in the collection are the only remaining examples of their kind in the world. **Location:** 3 Onderbos Ave, Hartenbos **Price:** small fee

ATK's Hartenbos Museum 14
The ATK's-Hartenbos Museum of the Great Trek documents the Voortrekkers - the Boers (Dutch farmers) who famously moved en masse from the Cape in 1838 in search of land away from the stranglehold of colonial rule. The Voortrekkers took everything they had, including cattle, oxen, furniture and horses and moved over mountains and over rivers to new places of settlement. The museum commemorates the symbolic Ox Waggon Trek of 1938 - the re-enactment of the event that took place in its centenary year. The ATK's-Hartenbos Museum boasts a fine collection of historical artifacts, including ox wagons, weapons, household implements and clothing etc. The museum also documents the history of Hartenbos. **Location:** Majuba Ave, Hartenbos **Price:** small fee

George 15
The area of George was a woodcutters outpost in 1776, set up by the Dutch East India Company. Under the second British occupation of the Cape, they established George as a town and drostdy in 1811 and later a municipality in 1837. It is the 6th oldest town in South Africa. The city is worth visiting for its location (the largest continuous natural forest in South Africa) and historical value, from the Slave Tree, an ancient English Oak planted by Landroost van Kervel, King Edward VII Library building and the oldest Roman Catholic church in the country. The Outeniqua Transport Museum, which houses replicas of old stations, displays of locomotives and coaches, is well worth a visit. The city has excellent road, air and rail links to all major centres within the country, and is a convenient base from which to explore the many attractions of the Garden Route and Klein Karoo. **Information:** www.visitgeorge.co.za **Location:** Between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth on the N2 **Price:** free

Outeniqua Pass 16
After three passes had been built over the mountain (Montagu Pass, the Voortrekkerspas and the Treinspoor Pass), there was a need for a pass that could handle the traffic volume of the modern age. The Outeniqua Pass was started in 1942 using Italian P.O.W.s. They were replaced with half the number of local labourers which saw an immediate improvement in the pace of construction. Two tunnels were planned in the original design but were not needed in the final outcome. The 14,5 km pass was opened in 1951 and, in 1993, the road went through extensive widening. This route, with numerous viewing sites, breathtaking vistas and historical significance, is a must even if just a drive up and down it as the objective. **Location:** Between George and Oudtshoorn **Information:** www.samountainpasses.co.z **Price:** free

Outeniqua Transport Museum 17
For any train enthusiast, this is the place to visit, with a variety of 13 steam locomotives, including a narrow gauge, the Emil Kessler - Johannesburg's first steam locomotive, the impressive GL Garrett, together with carriages from a bygone era, such as a coach from the Royal Train of 1947. Paul Kruger's coach and private saloons, just to name a few, are on display. Various models of steam locomotives, a brilliant collection of steam locomotive number plates and makers plates can also be seen. There is an extensive model train room and, to add to this, a road motor vehicles and a private vintage car selection. **Location:** 2 Mission Rd, George Central, George **Information:** www.outeniquahootjoe.co.za/museum.htm **Price:** small fee

Montagu Pass 18
This was the first road between George and Oudtshoorn built by Henry Fancourt White. This pass was opened in 1848, having taken 3 years to build by some 250 convicts at a cost of 36,000 Pounds Sterling. It lays claim to being the oldest, unaltered pass still in use in South Africa and covers 17,1 kms of magnificently scenic narrow, gravel road driving, ascending from the tiny hamlet of Herold, on the northern side of the Outeniqua Mountains, up and over the summit and then all the way down to the outskirts of George. The passage over the Outeniqua mountains, which used to take a full three days over the Cradock Pass, could now be accomplished within three hours. Today it takes 15 minutes by car. A normal car can drive this pass. **Location:** Between Herold and George **Price:** free

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