

Visit the southernmost tip of Africa: discover other interesting places and the history of the area



# Go No Further....

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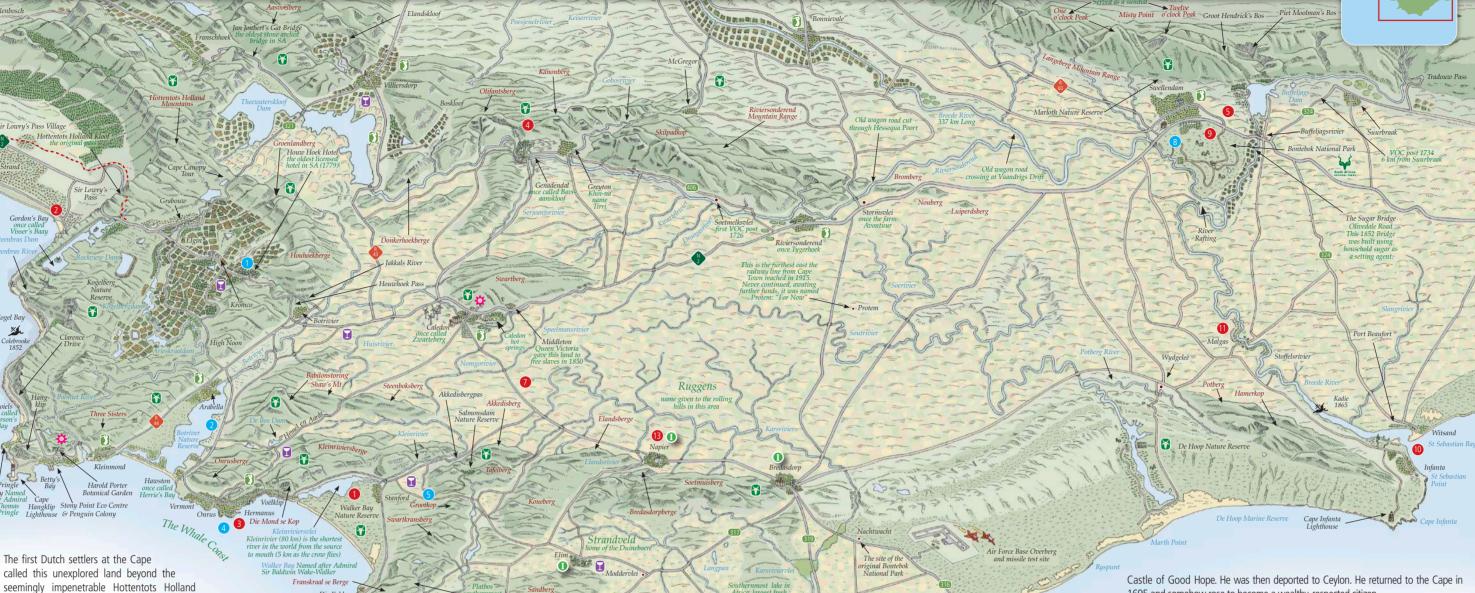
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'There rose no murmur from the ranks, no thought by shameful strength unhonoured life to seek. Our post to quit we were not trained, nor taught to trample down the weak. So we made women with their children go; The oars ply back agen, and yet agen, Whilst inch by inch the drowning ship sank low Still under steadfast men.'



eader of this Khoi-na (Khoi, Khoikhoi, Hottentot,

mountain range the Overberg (over the mountain).

However, once these massive mountain walls had been

breached, the land beyond would change for ever, as the

ousouqua soon discovered. Captain Klaas (not his real name,

but one given to him by the early European traders) was the

Otentottu) clan in the area near the Kromco building. Within a few years not only his Khoi-na name, but also his land, culture and way of life would be lost to these people. During the 1600s and early 1700s there were about 100 000 Khoi-na inhabitants roughout the Overberg. They shared the rea with the San people: the two groups eemed to co-exist relatively well. The uropeans had hardly ventured into this area, and by the 1660s the Nguni Africans had reached only as far south as the Fish River hundreds of miles up the east coast.

so the Khoi-na and San lived in isolation from the outside world. Some early explorers and traders described the Khoi-na as the happiest, most carefree and healthiest people on earth.

The first European to set foot in the Overberg was the Portuguese navigator, Bartolomeu Dias, in 1488. He also became the first person to round the southernmost tip of Africa. He landed at Mossel Bay where he encountered the local populace. After reaching Algoa Bay, at the request of his disgruntled crew he reluctantly headed for home instead of continuing east; he sailed down the Overberg coast, making landfall on the western side of the Breede River mouth, which he named Cabo de Infante. He made several more stops and left his mark by and Cabo Falso (Cape Hangklip).

The first attempt to explore the Overberg was in 1620 when Augustin de Beaulieu walked around the rugged coastline from Gordon's Bay to Cape Hangklip. He encountered elephants, lions, many other animals and 'miserable savages' as he called the people living there.

## A road more travelled

For the next 44 years, no Europeans set foot in the Overberg. This changed after Jan van Riebeeck had established the Dutch settlement at the Cape in 1652. Within months he had turned to the West Coast for trade and supplies, but the Overberg was spared for another 10 years as the Hottentots Holland mountain range looked impenetrable.

A large Khoi-na clan lived near the site of present-day Somerset West. At first, the Dutch traded there, but in 1664 Corporal Hieronymus Cruse and Ensign Oloff Bergh, under orders of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC or VOC), entered the Overberg to establish trade and look for resources that the VOC could exploit. The key to unlocking the Overberg was the Gantouw Pass (Elandspad) which was first used by migrating eland and subsequently by the Khoi-na. With a gradient of 1:4 and steep rock ledges, it was not an easy pass. A farmer would lose on average a wagon a year on this pass. By the end of the 1800s this track had become a road catering for 4500 wagons a year. Because of excessive traffic and heavy losses, this pass was replaced by Sir Lowry's Pass in 1830.

Elandspad was the first stage in the evolution of a track that became known as the Bolandse Pad or the Kaapse Wagenweg. This route was defined by Khoi-na just north of today's N2 route, crossing the ford at Steenbras (Grietsgat), dipping down into Grabouw where its main obstacle was the Palmiet River (the Khoi-na name was Houtema, meaning Snake River), which was impassable for four months of the year, until a bridge was built in 1815. This valley was first known as Groeneland. Elgin, which was called Koffiekraal, was an old wagon halt and kraal on this route. The Bolandse Pad regains the N2 at Houwhoek Pass which has changed its route

five times in 300 years: from a position roughly where it is today, it was moved into the Jakkals River Valley, then it moved back to close to the present-day pass where it drops down to Bot River. The route from Bot River to Caledon followed a similar route to today's N2, but this is where the N2 and the Bolandse Pad part company. A side road took visitors to the healing waters of the hot springs at Caledon as early as 1662. The Khoi-na were using them long before this. The Bolandse Pad, the N2 of yesteryear, took the same turn-off to Genadendal that is used today. The reason for this route was that most of the trade with the Khoi-na in the Overberg took place in this valley from Genadendal to Stormvlei; later grazing, farmland and timber were sought after in this broad valley. (The forests of Riviersonderend and Swellendam were once abundant, but from 1726 the forests were cut out and the wood was transported over the Franschhoek Pass for the VOC.)

trade, river crossings and passes.

From the Gantouw Pass, the old road runs

The demand for livestock by the VOC was becoming too great for the Khoi-na to meet, so the VOC gave themselves grazing rights throughout the Overberg. The governor of the Cape, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, led the way by bestowing upon himself grazing rights on 18 farms that stretched uninterrupted from the Houwhoek Pass all the way to near Swellendam. He was a highly talented governor, but as a result of his legendary self-enrichment, in 1707 he was banished from the Cape after facing corruption allegations from the leading burghers of the time such as Adam Tas. This episode marked a turning point: the VOC withdrew from direct trade with the Overberg and instead worked through burghers.

The first loan places in the Overberg were granted in 1708 at Botriver, and Caledon followed in 1710. From then on increasing numbers of burghers moved into the Overberg, seasonally at first and then on a permanent basis. One of the reasons for this mini-trek was to escape the claustrophobic governance of the VOC. The



The old Hermanus harbour was once called Visbaai.

VOC was not to be outwitted, so as the colony expanded, government posts were set up supposedly for the protection of the burghers. The first VOC outpost for protection and supplies (like a one-stop shop!) was established at Zoetmelksvlei near Riviersonderend in 1726. From 1720 expansion by the burghers was so rapid that by 1745 the Swellendam magisterial district had been established. Within 100 years of the first European person entering the Overberg, it had become colonised. (The Sandveld took longer owing to its isolation.)

Sir Francis H. Doyle • The Poetic Picture of the Birkenhead

Meanwhile the smallpox epidemic of 1713 had almost wiped out the Khoi-na, so they were no longer really a force to be considered. There was a futile half-hearted attempt at a rebellion in 1777. The Khoi-na ended up working on settlers' farms or escaped to the sanctuary of mission stations.

As more burghers poured into the Overberg, farms and grazing areas had to be defined. One method used was to measure out 7-8 km from a central point using leather rope. The resulting circle was defined by stone beacons and this became he boundary line of the farm. Another method was to ride out on a horse for 30 minutes and place stone beacons. To this day, there are a few farms in the Overberg that are still circular.

## Shipwreck stories

When a ship was wrecked off the coast of the Overberg, someone's loss became a farmer's gain. Shipwreck 'treasure' found its way into the homesteads (legally or not). To this day some old homesteads can show some part of a ship or its contents somewhere on the farm, such as a beam in the living room, a bell,

There are hundreds of stories about ships and wrecks off the Overberg, but only a few can be told here, for there have been over 250 shipwrecks and more than 2500 lives lost since the first recorded shipwreck on this coast – that of the Zoetendal which went down off Struisbaai in 1673. (The survivors were helped back to the Cape settlement by the Khoi-na, less one who was killed by an elephant.)

In 1722 the wreck of the Schooneberg, which went down on a calm clear day, aroused the suspicion of the authorities back in Cape Town. The story unfolded that it had been intentionally sunk for the loot: the captain was broken on the wheel, one accomplice committed suicide and the others were deported. The loot was buried at Vergelegen in Somerset West, where a sniper in a tree made things difficult for those searching for it. Nothing was found at the time, but the ship's bell was uncovered 100 years later. (Another dishonest practice in order to cause shipwrecks was to light a fire to imitate a lighthouse.)

Ensign Oloff Bergh was used on many salvage operations, but his unofficial cut became so noticeable that he spent some time on Robben Island and in jail at the 1695 and somehow rose to become a wealthy, respected citizen.

The story of the *Meermin* is really more than a shipwreck story. In 1766 the vessel was bringing slaves from Madagascar to Cape Town. Unshackled slaves working on deck managed to take over the ship but they could not sail it. They killed some of the crew, but the captain persuaded the slaves to let

the remaining crew live, telling them that, in exchange, The blue crane is listed he would sail them home. According to some versions, as vulnerable on the for several days the captain sailed east (under half sail) Red List of threatened but at night, unbeknown to the slaves, he turned the ship around and sailed west under full sail. When land of which half are found was sighted at Cape Agulhas, the captain convinced the in the Orienters slaves they had reached Madagascar. Nearly half the slaves left the ship, and after being hoodwinked again by the sailors, they were captured on land by burghers; the remaining slaves were overpowered on board. The slaves had, however, cut the

The Arniston (which supplied the reinforcements at the Battle of Muizenberg) went down off Waenhuiskrans in 1815, with 6 survivors and the loss of 372 lives, because the captain, mistakenly thinking they had already passed Cape Point, turned north and grounded the ship.

anchor ropes, and the ship ran ashore.

The Doncaster sank off Struisbaai in 1836 with no survivors; what happened can only be surmised. The wreck was bought by wagon builders who turned its remains into 'ships of the veld'.

The wreck of the troopship HMS Birkenhead off Danger Point in 1852 is one of the most famous maritime disasters because this is when the orde 'Women and children first' (the Birkenhead drill) come into being. An interesting side story is that there were nine horses on board; eight made it to shore and in less than 48 hours one of the horses had found its way back to its stable in Cape Town, 125 miles away. This is how Cape Town first had an inkling that all was not well with the Birkenhead.

## The vale of grace

With the influx of settlers, the smallpox outbreak of 1713 and diminishing natural game, the Khoi-na of the Overberg were forced into unsustainable areas between farms. Only divine intervention could preserve their dignity. This came in the form of George Schmidt, a Moravian missionary, who set up a mission station at Baviaanskloof, later to be named Genadendal (vale of grace). The only reason the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) gave him permission was that they thought he was wasting his time on the heathen Khoi-

na. His mission station grew until, in 1742, he had a run-in with the DRC over baptismal rights, as a result of which he was pressurized to leave the Cape. The story should go that everything fell apart once he left, but in 1792 the Moravians sent three missionaries to see what had become of Baviaanskloof. To their surprise, they found an 81-year-old woman (one of the first converts) had kept the place alive. This safe haven flourished, attracting more Khoi-na and so-called 'coloureds', to the extent that the farmers wanted it closed down because



Genadendal was the first mission station established in South Africa.



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local farmer, pushed for its establishment owing to numerous shipwrecks. The present lighthouse, designed by Charles Michell (see Sir Lowry's Pass), was built of limestone in 1849 in the Egyptian revival style. It stands 27 m high. The light has a single flash every 5 seconds.

of the shortage of labour for their farms. Another reason was jealousy: the 'nonwhite' children were learning to read and write whereas their own children were illiterate. During the Swellendam revolt (see next section), the mission station had to release former workers to return to the farms, but this was short-lived as within a few months the British had taken over the Cape and they made a point of protecting the mission station. They also lifted a building ban which the Dutch had imposed to try to derail progress.

The mission station flourished and became a place of spiritual peace, learning, printing, manufacturing and farming. Over time, the local farmers came to accept the community and even attended their church services. Nelson Mandela, who visited this, the oldest mission station in South Africa, in 1995, renamed his official residence in Cape Town Genadendal.

## A call to revolution

The Swellendam farmers were going through a revolutionary phase when they recalled their workers from Genadendal. The 'Patriots' of Swellendam, as they called themselves in 1795, were fed up with the heavyhanded and corrupt VOC. The final nail in the coffin was when the VOC cancelled a lucrative agreement for the annual supply of grain and started issuing paper money, which the local people considered forgery. They decided to take over in French

Revolutionary style by relieving the landdrost of his post and forming a new constitution. This was not a new republic as some might think but more like a colony of the motherland by-passing the VOC. This was a very shortlived idea, because the British attacked the Dutch at Muizenberg four months later and the 'Patriots' of Swellendam sent burghers to defend the Cape in the name of their homeland. The Cape was lost to the British and thus Swellendam came under British control: those burghers who did not swear allegiance to the new power were banished.

## Sheep get a woolly coat

Colonel Robert Gordon, who led the Dutch forces which lost at the Battle of Muizenberg in 1795, was a devout loyalist to the king of Orange and was not keen on the revolutionary change that was taking place in the Netherlands, which the 'Patriots' of Swellendam, on the other hand, supported. He was accused of treachery because of the ease of the British victory: this led to his suicide. A few years before his death, he had been given merino sheep by the king of Orange who had received some as a gift from the king of Spain. Anyone in possession of these royal sheep without the king's permission was to be put to death. Luckily, when the king of Spain found out that some merinos were in Cape Town, he asked only that they be returned.



Langeberg Mountains near Swellendam

1488: Bartolomeu 1664: First recorded crossing ias becomes the st European to of the Hottentots et foot on the

1708: First European Holland Pass established (Gantouw Pass) at Botrivier. into the Overberg.

1713: The smallpox epidemic kills a vast number of the Khoi-na, reducing their power in the Overberg.

1743: Swellendan becomes a subdrostdy and the third town established in the Cape Colony.



THE PROPERTY OF

Gordon's wife sold most of the sheep to a passing Australian and three to the Van

Reenen brothers of Cape Town. The Van Reenens crossbred them with local fat-

tailed sheep (which were great for mutton but not wool). After five crossings they

were satisfied they had the perfect sheep, the vaderlandskaap. This started one of

the greatest agricultural achievements in South Africa. The main players were a

few families starting with the Van Reenens and the Van Bredas, later joined by the

Cloetes and Van der Bijls. In 1812 Jan Frederik Reitz, helped by Michiel van Breda,

took sheep farming to a scientific level; they entered the market just at the right time when Napoleon was fleeing Russia and wool was selling at an

all-time high. Later, in 1865, ostrich were introduced to the sheep farms

to hedge financial risk if the wool price was low. In addition, for some

reason the sheep and ostriches consumed one anothers' harmful worms.

In 1817 Benjamin Moodie, along with two partners, had a great idea to

preferred. Barry had his own ship, the Kadie (which sank upriver in

1865) that could negotiate the dangerous sandbar at the entrance to the

Breede to dock 48 km upriver at Malgas, his trading port. This enterprise

was the first step in his becoming one of the wealthiest businessmen in

the Overberg, with headquarters at Swellendam and business interests

in nearly every town and village in the area. His commercial empire

became so large that he printed his own money. To test the validity

of this river venture, the famous Grain Race took place. Wagons

would race to Cape Town against Joseph Barry's ships from

Swellendam and the Breede River area. An average wagon trip took

about 10 days, but in 1872 a Caledon farmer managed the 75 km in

also whipped up a fire that gutted Swellendam. This all happened at

the time the Cape was going through a recession, and, to top it all,

Barry died. The next year, the Barry & Nephews empire collapsed,

Merino sheep began early, with visitors such as Carl Thunberg (1774) and Lady Anne

Interesting information about some interesting places

multimillion-rand businesses.

Barnard (1797) among the botanists, naturalists and adventurers who were

attracted to the area. People came from afar to bathe in the healing waters of

the Caledon springs and farmers packed their wagons for holiday getaways at

the beaches. More recently, some of the best land-based whale watching in the

world, shark cage diving and other outdoor adventure activities have become

Elandspad and Sir Lowry's Pass Visiting Elandspad today, you can still see deep

wagon tracks scoured into the rocks and observe the old signal canon where

there was once a toll gate. The canon was part of the communication network

that ran all the way up to Swellendam. A signal from Swellendam in 1806 took

eight hours to be relayed to Cape Town. In 1830 Elandspad was replaced by Sir

Lowry's Pass (named after Sir Lowry Cole, governor of the Cape). It was built by

Charles Michell using convict labour. With the coming of the motor car era,

Charlie Rorich, in about 1906, drove up Sir Lowry's Pass in a Gladiator – it could

only travel at the walking pace of a man. In 1984 the upper overhanging four-

Gordon's Bay to Kleinmond Gordon's Bay was named after Robert Gordon (of

nerino sneep tame) and was once a VOC tisning station. In 1725 a pirate snip

anchored here and set everyone aflutter. The GB on the mountainside stands

for 'General Botha' (the naval training college) not 'Gordon's Bay'. Kogel Bay,

around the corner, was the scene of the shipwreck of the *Colebrooke* in 1852

when it struck a rock at Cape Point and ran with the wind to the nearest beach.

lane section (an engineering marvel in its day) was built.

Betty's Bay once had a whaling station;

today there is a penguin colony at Stony

Point. In 1930 this area was developed by

Harold Porter and named after Betty

Youldon. The Harold Porter National

Botanical Garden is well worth a visit as

it contains the greatest concentration of

wild flowers in South Africa. (Hendrik

Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid, had

a holiday home in Betty's Bay.) Clarence

Drive, along the coast, was built by Italian

Past, present and beyond

18 hours. The great gale of 1865, which sank 18 ships in Table Bay, that nearly went

The Overberg has remained predominantly a farming area

thanks to the Bokkeveld shale which has enough

nutrient value for the growing of commercial crops

such as barley, oats, wheat and canola. The area is

also known for wine and fruit farming, and

Swellendam boasts the biggest youngberry farm in

the world. Livestock farming involves mainly sheep,

pigs, ostriches and horses. (From an early stage the

well-known families such as the Cloetes, Van der Bijls

and Van Bredas bred top-class thoroughbreds.) Tourism

bringing to an end the golden years of Swellendam.

overland. They set up a sea link to Swellendam via the Breeue
River, but it was the business of Joseph Barry & Nephews in

Woodie which the local farmers

save time and money lost in transporting goods to Cape Town

The Cape Agulhas lighthouse

Wealth flowed upriver

1795: The Swellendam uprising sees four months semi-autonomy from 1766: The muting the VOC. Some 'patriots' on the Meermin. wore the Jacobin cockade.



















industry is established sinks off Danger in the Overberg.

shark cage diving in South Africa takes vlace at Gansbaai.



Waenhuiskrans, the limestone sea cave at Arniston

business to the small town. A medical doctor, Sir Antonie Viljoen, bought a farm (Oak Valley) in Elgin in 1899; to the consternation of the local (mainly pig) farmers, he planted over 4000 oaks and 1000 fruit trees, thus starting the valley's deciduous fruit industry (the history of which is depicted at the Elgin Apple Museum in Grabouw). The Molteno brothers (sons of the Cape governor at the time), the Rawbone-Viljoen family and Edmund Lombardi (who created Appletiser) have also been instrumental in promoting fruit farming in the area, which also supports forestry and offers activities such as hiking, kloofing, fishing

Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve (a UNESCO site) covering 100 000 hectares, is home to the most complex biodiversity on our planet, with over 1800 different plant species, 77 of which occur nowhere else. It encompasses many different types of terrain, and has accommodation and trails on which the magnificent fynbos can be seen up close. Within the reserve is Steenbras Dam, built in 1921 to increase Cape Town's water supply. It has since been enlarged, and is used for generating electricity, as is the Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme (Rockview Dam), commissioned in 1979 and then regarded as a leading example of environmental engineering.

Greyton This quiet corner in the Riviersonderend mountain range has become popular as a weekend escape for city dwellers and has a small permanent community. In 1791 Weltevreden was granted as a loan farm to M W Theunissen. It passed through a number of owners before being divided into 120 narrow plots with a *leiwater* system for cultivation. By 1854 all the plots had been sold or let. This quaint little settlement might have been rather different today if Thomas Bain, the renowned pass builder, had built a pass over the mountain connecting Greyton with McGregor. You can walk this route on the Boesmanskloof Trail.

Riviersonderend (river without end) The Vigne brothers (who were related to Lady Anne Barnard) emigrated from England in 1842 and acquired Tygerhoek, which remained in the family for 120 years. Riviersonderend was established in 1922 when Edith McIntyre sold the farm (then Tierhoek) to the church council to establish a congregation. Nuwedorp was the first name suggested but an Afrikaans variation of the Khoi-na name Kanna-kam-kanna (meaning 'water, never-ending water') was chosen.

Swellendam This town, the third-oldest in South Africa and capital of the Overberg, is built on seven hills. It has been home to five South African presidents or their families. It was named in 1745 after Governor Hendrik Swellengrebel and his wife, Helena ten Damme. In 1682 Oloff Bergh reported that all the wood had been cut out of this area. Today you can still see remnants of these mighty forests while visiting the Marloth Nature Reserve, which includes the six-day Swellendam hiking trail. The town is rich in history, with many historical buildings to visit.

Suurbraak was established in 1812, close to a 1734 VOC outpost, at the request of the Attaqua chief who wanted a mission station started in his area by the London Missionary Society. Dr John Philip and subsequently three generations of the Helm family served the mission station. Today Suurbraak is known for the manufacture of brooms for tourists and 'Van Gogh' chairs. One of its claims to fame involves dogs: early explorers at the Cape noted that Khoi-na dogs had an unusual ridge of hair down their backs. Charles Helm cross-bred these with European dogs to get the type of dog he wanted. He subsequently took some of

his dogs to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where the breed, which became extremely popular worldwide, became known as the Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Buffeljagsrivier Here Baron van Imhoff established the first VOC outpost in this area to maintain some control over the burghers as they pushed ever eastward, and for protection from raiding Khoi-na groups. Today this valley is known for its deciduous fruit orchards. The Buffeljags Dam, with fishing, birding, water sports and a zip-line, is a must for tourists.

Tradouw Pass This spectacular 17 km pass was once a footpath for the Khoi-na. At the request of John Napier, the arts and culture centre of this region Barry and farmers on the other side of the Swartberg, the government gave the go-ahead for Thomas Bain to build a road, which was

> to the original Khoi-na name, Tradouw (meaning 'women's path'). Bontebok National Park In 1837 there were only 27 bontebok left on the planet. On his farm Nachtwacht near Bredasdorp, Alexander van der Bijl made it his goal to increase the numbers. By 1927 there were 77 in the area and

finished in 1873. The pass was named Southey Pass but the local people kept

ndam. A dedicated reserve for these buck was called f the establishment of the Bontebok National Park just outside Swellendam. Part of the park is on the site of the old horse-racing track. Malgas was Joseph Barry's port up the Breede River. It suffered economically with the collapse of his business empire and the coming of the railway. There was

therefore no need to build a bridge, so the pont that has operated since 1860 remains the only means of crossing the river. (It is the only hand-powered working pont in South Africa today.) Malgas is now a holiday destination for those who relish the quiet life.

For More Information

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1890: The merino sheep

1994: First great white



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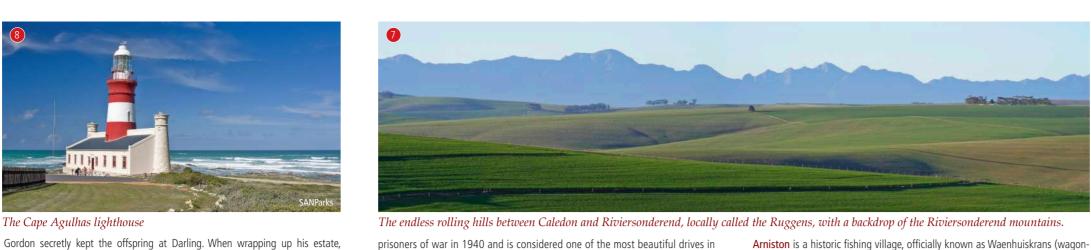


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prisoners of war in 1940 and is considered one of the most beautiful drives in South Africa. Kleinmond ('small mouth' of the Bot River) is a holiday and retirement destination and the gateway to the lower section of the Kogelberg Nature Reserve.

Hermanus was once called Hermanuspietersfontein after a Dutch teacher, Hermanus Pieters, who used to bring his sheep down to a spring there. He was not the first in the area: Cloete already had his pleasure farm at Voëlklip and farmers from the Caledon area holidayed there. The first to set up a permanent

home with his extended family was Michael Henn. They lived at Harry's Bay (Hawston) but, on seeing the fishing potential of Hermanus, Henn moved there lock, stock and barrel. He was the first to land (using the dinghy from the *Birkenhead*) in the old Hermanus harbour. Sir William Hoy (after whom Hoy's Koppie is named) was instrumental in promoting the town. (He was the head of SA Railways but ironically refused to allow the line to be extended to Hermanus, as he wanted it to remain unspoilt. A station was built in 1912, but it is inked only by a road service, so Hermanus is unique in having a train station but no railway line!) Today it is a bustling town and one of the best land-based whale-watching sites in the world. Hemel en Aarde once had a leper colony which was relocated

to Robben Island in 1844. It is now a beautiful winegrowing area. Stanford This charming village was named after Captain Robert Stanford. He had left the Royal Navy to farm in this area, but was still on halfpay and so subject to the Navy's whims. When the British government tried to offload 300 Irish agitators from the Neptune at the Cape, Boers and British settlers presented a united front to prevent this. For three months no one broke ranks, but Earl Grey, knowing Stanford's obligation, blackmailed him to supply the Neptune which was docked in Simonstown. After this

incident, the people of the Cape ostracized him. He was rewarded with a knighthood and paid a pittance, but lost his friends, his businesses and his wealth. He left

the way of the for England, a broken man, never to return. bluebuck De Kelders Its main attraction is its rugged coastline with cliffs and caves to explore. One cave, with passages, caverns and underground freshwater pools, runs right under the village. This cave was on the tourist map as far back as the 1700s. An interesting story concerns Hendrik Cloete of Constantia fame, who, when he visited this cave, admired one of the dripstone pillars so much that he offered a small fortune to anyone who could cut it out and deliver it to Groot Constantia in one piece. A few months later, Matthys Beukes, who lived close to Riviersonderend, managed to do so: when he came knocking at Constantia, Cloete had, reluctantly, to pay up. Today visits to this impressive cave can be arranged, but Malgas pont is the last handthanks to Cloete and many others from yesteryear, few operated pont in South Africa

dripstones remain as they have been cut out to make handles Gansbaai This harbour town is well known for its shark cage diving and whale watching from land and sea. An entertaining story from the area concerns the Bulwark which ran aground here in 1963. Its cargo was barrels of wine which seemed like manna from heaven to the community. There were many drunk people that day, and many barrels of wine were buried in the sand dunes, some never to be found. Come Sunday, there was much embarrassment and shame, except for one church leader who had not been there that day. He broke the

sombre mood of the congregation by confessing that his only misgiving was not having been there to enjoy the blessing provided on that (April Fool's) day! **Danger Point** The ghost ship, the *Flying Dutchman* (made popular by the film *The* Pirates of the Caribbean), was first officially reported sighted off this point. It was

here that the ill-fated ship, the Birkenhead, sank. Kleinbaai is where some of the best shark cage diving in the world takes place. There is a rock in the bay (about 200 m offshore) called Black Sophie after a 'madam' who brought a wagonload of prostitutes up from Cape Town to help counteract the

loneliness of the guano workers on Dyer Island, thus averting a strike. Cape Agulhas has the second-oldest lighthouse in South Africa and is the southernmost point of Africa, where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet. Its name means 'Cape of Needles', perhaps because the Portuguese navigators found that here their compasses pointed true north without any magnetic deviation, or because of the sharp rocks.

**Struisbaai** is a great tourist place offering unusual activities like feeding massive skates by hand. David Hidden of Land's End became one of the first winemakers to mature his limited-edition wine under sea water off one of Struisbaai's reefs.



mattress stuffing. The introduction of pigs to this community in 1930 by a German started the well-known Elim processed meat business. Another business that Elim is known for is thatching: their thatchers are renowned throughout South Africa. Salmonsdam Nature Reserve This mountainous nature reserve, renowned for its gorges and waterfalls, is named after the captain of the ill-fated Birkenhead. It offers accommodation and day visitors are welcome.

Caledon is known for its hot springs which were in use long before the first European explorers arrived. In 1710 the first house was built solely for people using the springs. In the 1890s its water was entered into the World Mineral Spring Contest at Chicago where it took first place. This town was once called Zwarteberg but in 1813 Sir John Cradock renamed it after the Earl of

Caledon. It also holds the distinction of being (in 1891) the second town to establish an annual flower show. The latest addition to Caledon is the wind farm (with 95 m towers and 54 m long blades) at Klipheuwel

house cliff) after the large limestone sea cave of that name. On the beaches you

may still find pumice stones which floated 7000 km as a result of the 1883

volcanic eruption of Krakatoa. During WWII Nazi supporters supplied fresh

produce and diesel to the U-Boats and legend has it that there were clandestine

De Hoop Nature Reserve Once one of Cloete's farms, this is one of the premier

nature reserves of the Overberg, teeming with game including the rare bontebok

This reserve's natural features include the 15 km long and 500 m wide lagoon

(which is great for birding) and Potberg; it is also the home of the well-known

Whale Trail. Other attractions are long sea cliffs and seemingly endless

Witsand, Port Beaufort and Infanta are all located at the mouth of the Breede

River. This area was once a bustling port but today it is a sought-after holiday

destination. Here too, during WWII, the local shopkeeper supplied diesel to

Zoetendalsvlei is named after the ill-fated Zoetendal which was wrecked off

Struisbaai in 1673. It is here that the survivors got fresh water on route to Cape

Town. Around this freshwater vlei, reported to be the biggest (8 km by 3 km)

and southernmost in South Africa, the merino sheep industry flourished; this is

Bredasdorp and Napier These towns, situated unnaturally close together, would

have been one but for the rivalry between Pieter van der Bijl and Michiel van

Breda who had made their fortunes on the back of the merino industry. Each

wanted a church (around which a town would be established) to be built on his

farm. To settle the dispute, the church authorities decided two churches would be

built. Bredasdorp was named after Van Breda; Van der Bijl's town was named

after the governor of the Cape at the time. (Sir George Napier was a military man

who had lost an arm and had a stiff leg as a result of action in the Peninsular War.

As if these were not problems enough, on his arrival at the Cape he was a

widower with five children!) The rivalry between the towns

lasts to this day. Bredasdorp has an impressive shipwreck

Elim This mission village was established in 1824 on the well-

watered bank of the Nuwejaars River in the Sandveld area. It

is named after an oasis mentioned in the Bible (Exodus 15:27).

The need for the establishment of a new mission station arose

because Genadendal and Mamre on the West Coast were full.

Land was purchased from a farmer who had bought it from

Sampson Dyer. Adjacent land was later bought directly from

Dyer to accommodate an influx of new members due to the

ending of slavery in 1834. A visit to this village reveals a place

preserved in time with historical buildings and a traditional

way of life. For 150 years, Elim's main source of income was

dried sewejaartjies (everlasting flowers) used for funerals and

by churches in Europe. The petals were also used as pillow and

tennis matches played on the beach with the Germans

where Van Breda and Reitz had their main farm.

museum.

Botrivier (Bot River) was one of the oldest trading sites and also one of the first designated loan farms in the Overberg. The Khoi-na called it Gouga (meaning 'butter') as some say it was a good place to fatten their sheep; others say the Dutch raded items for Khoi-na butter here. This is a link with from botter, Dutch for 'butter'. In 1839 two men tried to emulate Joseph Barry's Breede River success story on the Bot River but after one attempt the business was scrapped. Most people know about the horses of the Camarque in France: Bot River

has its own wild horses, as horses from a British garrison still roam the countryside. During WWII Catalinas and Walrus

built over the Palmiet which brought

German U-boat scourge Langschmidt on whose farm the village

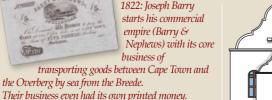
Amphibians flying boats were based at Fisherhaven on the Bot River to combat the Grabouw and Elgin Grabouw was named after the birthplace in Germany of Wilhelm

was established. (He had 23 children, including 3 sets of twins!) The first plots were sold in 1848; in 1852 a bridge was

The view from Witsand overlooking Cape Infanta, the Breede River, Infanta and the low laying Potberg mountain.











Birkenhead

Point. This is when the sayin Women and children first' was first used