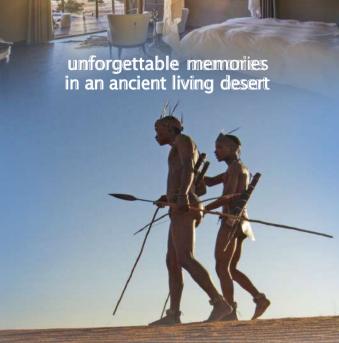
# The West Coast

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# 'There is no finer sheet of landlocked water in the world than this.'

Captain Semmes of the Confederate raider, the Alabama, on entering Saldanha Bay in 1863



outbuildings set in the

heavenly De Groene Kloof. Mamre was established in

1808 as a refuge for the

remaining Khoi-na.

East: it is less widely known that he also accidentally 'discovered' the West Coast. He named the place where he made landfall St Helena. Da Gama stayed for eight days, cleaning his ship and taking on basic supplies. He soon realised that e was not in fact the first there: the ndigenous inhabitants, who became nown as the Khoi-na or Khoikhoi, had been there for thousands of years.

1497 the renowned Portguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, was recognised

as the discoverer of the sea route to the

The Moravian mission station Not surprisingly, encounters between with its church, watermill and the Portuguese and the Khoi-na often ended in tragedy: Da Gama was wounded in one encounter; in another Francisco d'Almeida and 64 of his men were killed at Table Bay. As a result of such incidents the Portuguese decided to make their halfway stop to the East in

Mozambique. Thus the history of the West Coast, the Cape and ultimately South Africa was written by other European powers that subsequently came to dominate the lucrative trade route to the East.

To appreciate the full story of the West Coast we must go back to a time before the local Khoi-na clans, before the ancient San people, before our modern human ancestors walked at Kraal Bay and before the earliest mammals of Langebaanweg. The story starts with the rock under our feet.

The West Coast has the same geological history as that of Table Mountain. Over millions of years, the younger Table Mountain Group of sandstones has been eroded away, leaving only the siltstones of the Malmesbury Group (18 km thick), which are intruded by various bodies of granite. Parts of the Malmesbury Group are visible along the coast as dark grey siltstones at Bokbaai and Ganzekraal. One agent of erosion was the Berg River, which once had a flow rate of 50 km/h



Bokbaai (buck bay) was originally a station for slaves of the VOC for collecting mussels. The homestead was built about 1750. although today it meanders gently through a vast plain. Over the last few million

years the river has changed its exit point to the sea from Langebaanweg to its

One exception to the general flatness of the West Coast is a ridge of granite hills, starting in the south at the Darling Hills and running in a NNW direction all the way up to Shelley Point. This intrusion of several large bodies (plutons) of granite happened at the time when Africa collided with South America and Antarctica around 550 million years ago. Hot molten magma intruded the Malmesbury Group and crystallized into granite, 10 km underground. The granite domes we see exposed to the surface today are the result of millions of years of erosion. This linear array of granite hills is part of the Agulhas-Columbine Arch, which runs next to the Colenso Fault Line that extends from Franschhoek to Cape Columbine.

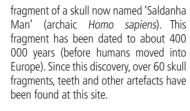
Most of the surface we see today is coated (60 m thick) with very young sedimentary formations. The four main formations, from oldest to youngest, are the Elandsfontyn, Saldanha and Varswater Formations and 6 m of the Anyskop terrestrial deposits. All these formations are made up mainly of dunes with fragments of sea shells that have undergone cementation. These four formations indicate when this area was under water and then later exposed as dry land. This process of change has happened about six times in the last 24 million years.

It was through the exploitation of these younger rock formations for commercial mining that one of the greatest discoveries on the West Coast was made on a farm which was being mined for phosphate near Langebaanweg. One of the workers uncovered fossils which he passed on to the South African Museum. Little did he know that he had exposed the biggest collection of tertiary vertebrate fossils in the world. These fossils are of early mammals that lived here two to five million years ago or were washed down the proto-Berg River to its mouth. The river was then closed off by a sand bar, thus preserving an extensive graveyard. These animals lived at a time when the climate was changing from a warm, humid period to a cool, dry period. During this process, the landscape changed to grasslands and riverine forests. Some of the most exciting of these ancient animals are the large mammals that resemble, in part, their modern counterparts but on a much larger scale, such as short-necked giraffe, sabre-

tooth cat, bear, elephant with four tusks, musk ox, giant pig and many more, unique to this location. Today you can relive this turbulent transition period by visiting the West Coast Fossil Park, an absolute must for anyone exploring this area.

# Humans before written history

The West Coast is one of the places in southern Africa that lays claim to the oldest examples of modern man, not the so-called 'missing links' such as Little Foot, Mrs Ples and the Taung Child. In 1953 Keith Jolly uncovered at Elandsfontein a



The next step in the story of ancient man on the West Coast was actually a young girl given the name Eve. In 1995 Dave Roberts was studying the coastal platform close to Pulpit Rock at Kraal Bay, when he stumbled upon human footprints



find. The footprints have been dated to about 117 000 years ago, to a day when a young girl with a size five foot walked diagonally down a sand dune to the lagoon edge, which at that time was a metre away. Since the footprints were now exposed to the elements and eroding fast, a decision was made to cut them out and relocate them to the safety of the Iziko Museum in Cape Town.

## The first documented people

The Portuguese explorers discovered a well-populated land with two different peoples, the first being the San (Bushmen). They are the original people of the West Coast and southern Africa whose presence goes back over 20 000 years. The San were hunter-gatherers, small in stature, with a traditional territory; they moved their camp to different locations within this territory, according to the availability of water and food. What also helped this environmentally friendly lifestyle was that each clan numbered between 25 and 50 individuals, so they had a low-impact footprint. Also, they acquired minimal material possessions. The clan had no leader but relied on older members for guidance.

When Vasco da Gama landed at St Helena Bay, it was the second group of people that he discovered – the Khoi-na. These people made up most of the population as they had herds of cattle and therefore were in control of their food source. Their clans were much larger than those of the San

and they had a leadership structure mainly determined by how many cattle they owned. Their clan structure allowed for members to be workers for richer members. The ancestry of the Khoi-na is a bit of a mystery: the most accepted theory as to how they ended up at the Cape with domesticated animals is that they migrated from present-day Botswana 1800 years ago. Besides relying on their cattle for meat (which they did not like doing, as cattle were their wealth), whale and seal meat were also part of their diet. They moved around to a lesser extent than the San: finding water and fertile land for their cattle was the motivating factor. As access to fresh water was so important, springs were guarded to the point of death. Water supply was therefore the main cause of conflict with the Europeans when they arrived: they did not know that according to Khoi-na custom no one owned the springs, which fell under the jurisdiction of the chief of the area. Anyone wanting water had to obtain the permission of the chief. In reality this process was just a formality, but permission was granted only in exchange for a 'gift'. The importance of water also led to the Dutch choosing Table Bay for a settlement instead of Saldanha Bay, which had an excellent harbour but lacked fresh water. If the Dutch had settled at Saldanha the demise of the San and Khoi-na would have happened faster.

In 1652 the Europeans settled at the Cape permanently: this signalled the start of the demise of the Khoi-na. Within five months of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival,



Buffelsfontein Game Reserve, which is an hour's drive from Cape Town. Visitors can stau overnight or take a day trip.

> Europeans came to have a stronger presence in the area tension increased, resulting in wars between the Khoi-na and the Dutch, the first of which was in 1657. These interactions were low key, mainly involving cattle raids and resulting in few deaths. As the French and Dutch both knew the importance of the area, whenever they were in the bay plundering its resources (such as water, penguin eggs, seals and fish) or fixing their ships, they would put up a flag or plaque claiming it as their own. However, when the French left on a voyage or the Dutch went to their new settlement at Table Bay, the other party would remove the symbol of authority and replace it with its own. (One of the plaques was knocked down by a



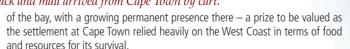
n is the leisure centre on the lagoon: it has always been a place to relax and unwind. Not surpri the first hotel on the lagoon. During WWI it was still reached by a wagon track and mail arrived from Cape Town by cart.

resources. By 1657 a group calling themselves 'Saldanhavaarders' had moved up there permanently. The San were hunted by the Dutch (and by the Khoi-na) so most of them migrated north for their own survival. There are accounts of resistance by the Khoi-na, but it was futile. The smallpox epidemic of 1713 wiped out a vast number of Khoi-na and some San. Some decided to leave and follow Adam Kok, the founder of the Griqua nation, up north. Those that remained fought the Dutch on three occasions but ended up moving north or working on European farms or eking out a living as strangers in their ancestral land.

# 'I have a flag'

As more Europeans rounded the Cape, the West Coast saw more visitors. The French had started using Saldanha Bay as far back as 1602, a year after the Dutch sailor Joris van Spilbergen had stopped there. He named the bay after the renowned Portuguese navigator Antonio de Saldanha,

who he mistakenly thought had landed there in 1503. (De Saldanha had in fact landed at Table Bay.) The French were keen to move their halfway station on Madagascar to Saldanha Bay, much to the consternation of the Dutch. Thus in the late 1600s and early 1700s there were three players vying for control of this bay. The remaining Khoi-na were reluctantly accommodating at first, and traded with the French and Dutch, but as the



Dassen Island once called Coney Island

Klawer Vallei: Groote Post Winery

rhino!) On one occasion the Dutch stole over 2000 seal skins the French had left on Schaapen Island for

Jan van Riebeeck visited the West Coast in 1660 to set up the first government post (a small fortification) called Oude Post at Kraalbaai. When the spring dried up at this post, it was moved to a new site under Postberg. Later, in 1821, under British control, the post was moved to Oosterwal on the Langebaan side of the bay. Van Riebeeck was not a great fan of the West Coast,

and unblessed by the Lord.' But when it comes to blessings, there are few places on earth that can compete with the bounty of the sea on the West Coast, thanks to the nutrient-rich

remarking that '... there is no land in the whole world so barren

Benguela Current. (By 1945, it was one of the top six fishing areas in the world.) The bounty of the land enabled the area to become part of the breadbasket of South Africa and to support the merino sheep industry. In addition, being a disease-free zone made it perfect for raising cattle and top-class horses.

The next visitors to the West Coast were pirates (or 'privateers' as they were called by their home country to

Slave Bell at Klawer Vallei















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The wind farm at Darling



Granite boulders on the way to Paternoster

of Africa. The Dutch managed to capture one of the pirates in 1693, but generally the pirates were left alone by the locals. For example, the privateer, the famous Alabama (a Confederate raiding ship during the American Civil War) visited Saldanha in 1863; she was welcomed in a carnival atmosphere, with tours of the ship for the local people, for some of whom it was their first time on board. However not all were jubilant, as one of its crew, by the name of Cummings, died in a hunting accident and was buried above Saldanha Bay on the farm Kliprug. This grave is the only place in the world where a confederate soldier was buried outside his native country. His body was returned to the USA 131

justify their looting). The British, who had

entered the world sea trade later than the

other European countries, were notorious for backing these privateers: what better

way to hinder the trade of others nations

and get rich without doing the hard work?

Saldanha Bay was the main port of call for privateers refurbishing their ships and

taking on supplies on the southern coast



Ganzekraal, once the site of a historical homestead

years later. Some people today still believe that pirates buried their elusive treasure at Saldanha Bay

Within 50 years of the Dutch settling at the Cape there were 40 farms between De Groene Kloof (Mamre) and Saldanha Bay, and a fair sprinkling further up the coast. Most of these settlers were desperately poor, but some big names such as Eksteen, Cloete, Van der Stel and Versfeld had large cattle farms, horse studs, and salt and fishing enterprises to supply the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The VOC controlled all business at the Cape with an iron fist but this was to change with the political alignment of the European powers, epidemic levels of corruption within the Company and the rise of the English East India Company.

The year 1781 saw the first shot over the bows – the beginning of the end – for the VOC. Holland sided with the Americans, France and Spain during the American War of Independence by declaring war on England. As a result of this declaration, Governor van Plettenberg decided to move some of his



Over 200 kinds of birds can be viewed from the Geelbek bird hide.

richly laden ships from Table Bay to Saldanha Bay for safe-keeping before they could be escorted back to Europe. What unfolded was a disaster for the company. The captains were given instructions to destroy their ships rather than let them fall into English hands. It so happened that the English discovered their whereabouts by trickery and then entered the bay deceitfully under a French flag. Short-lived jubilation turned into panic as the Dutch tried to destroy their own ships. The only ship prepared for this endeavour was the *Middelburg* which was set ablaze by its first mate. (François le Vaillant, the renowned natural historian, who was travelling on the *Middelburg*, lost much of his life's work.) The English managed to capture six Indiamen and other smaller vessels. This one-sided battle is on record as the biggest naval

battle in South African waters. Because of the Napoleonic Wars, the English visited the bay again (during the First British Occupation of the Cape) in 1796, when 2500 soldiers marched from Cape Town at the same time as Admiral Elphinstone sailed up and managed, owing to superior fire power, to persuade the Dutch to surrender their ships. The Cape was given back to the Dutch in 1802 and then re-occupied under the Second British Occupation in 1806 when Saldanha Bay was secured by a small British

# The British decide to stay

Under the British administration freedom of trade was opened up to which paved the way for the West Coast's first er Stephan family, who saw a gap in the transport market. Since Van Riebeeck's time transport had been a major problem for the inhabitants of the area known then as the Agter Baai (behind the bay). Owing to the difficulties presented by the land route with its sandy terrain, nearly all transport had to be by sea. The Stephan family's business transported goods from farmers who were isolated from Cape Town. Their main base was at the mouth of the Berg River: virtually all goods leaving or arriving were carried on one of their vessels. The next phase of their operation was to acquire almost all the best farms from defaulting farmers who owed them money. Their involvement in the fishing industry and other enterprises

force as part of the Battle of Blaauwberg.



Cape Columbine Lighthouse 5 km from Paternoster



The 4 m high Pulpit Rock at Kraalbaai is made up of shell fragments and quartz sand and dates from 100 000 years ago. A superb example of dune stone cross-bedding.

brought the family huge financial success, but their sea transport business came to an end with the development of a road and of the railway line (in 1912) to the area. At this point the Stephan business empire was broken up and the proceeds channelled into a new cannery venture, mainly with rock lobster. During WWII the experimental canning of pilchards (seen as cheap food for troops) took the industry to new heights. As a result of a rush of other investors, 15 new canneries were established, and the West Coast earned the nickname 'Cannery Coast'.

At the same time as the Stephan dynasty was making its fortune, others were making theirs with something entirely different. The year 1844 saw the beginning of the quano rush on the islands off Saldanha Bay. So much for Van Riebeek trying to find his fortune in gold, amber and musk up the West Coast!

However, the venture that might be considered to have brought the darkest hour of the West Coast was the whaling industry. As early as 1497 the first recorded whale hunt (by Vasco da Gama's brother at St Helena Bay) took place. The 1700s saw the Dutch trying whaling on a small scale without success, but with the arrival of American and British whalers whaling reached fever pitch. When Scandinavians (with Norway using the first steam whalers in 1909) joined in, the bloodbath saw Saldanha Bay stained red. The whales' Fossils of many of the first mammals only respite was during WWII, when men turned their attention to killing one another, but after the war the carnage continued until 1967. By then the whale gomphothere that became extinct about population had been depleted to the point where whaling was no longer viable: the doors of Donkergat and seen at the West Coast Fossil Park. Salamander Bay, which together had processed 40 000

whales, were closed. When you visit the Iziko Museum in Cape Town and admire the skeleton of the huge Blue Whale, pause to reflect that this was one of the whales from Salamander Bay.

WWII brought prosperity: with the Suez Canal closed, Saldanha Bay (called 'the Gibraltar of the South' at that time) became an important convoy staging post for Allied shipping. With an influx of military personnel, construction of airfields, coastal defence infrastructure, harbour refurbishing and the Boom Defence (a minefield for submarines) across the entrance to Saldanha Bay, a lot of money was poured into the area and a lot of local businesses must have smiled. Today these military installations can be seen all over the West Coast, from artillery batteries, runways and old sea mines left on Malgaskop, to lookout towers at Jacobsbaai.

In June 1942, a major decision that transformed the West Coast was to pipe fresh water from the Berg River to Vredenburg and Saldanha, (55 km pipeline) which finally addressed the area's biggest problem.

The West Coast has always relied on its marine industry as its main source of revenue, but this industry, once among the biggest in the world, has taken a huge knock due to overfishing (but aquaculture with black mussels and oysters is now taking place in Saldanha Bay). The West Coast has met the challenge and diversified into the oil and gas industries. It has used its harbour effectively with

the steel and shipping industries, and in 2013 it became a designated Industrial Development Zone. An industry that has taken off only in the last 10-15 years is tourism, owing to the area's distinctive landscape and spectacular flower display every spring.

# Interesting places

Some places not strictly considered part of the West Coast are included as they are part of the journey up the coast. Information provided focuses on the interesting and unusual: for full tourist information see box at the end.

Blaauwberg (Blouberg): This was the setting for the only European-style battle in sub-Saharan Africa. The English victory at the Battle of Blaauwberg changed the course of South African history as it resulted in the Second British Occupation

Koeberg Nuclear Power Station: This is currently the only nuclear power station in Africa. (It had its roots in the Manhattan Project and the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan.) There is a visitors' centre (free admission) with great interactive exhibits and walks in the surrounding nature reserve. **Silwerstroom:** This beach resort is well worth a visit. The Duckitt family's famous

Cape Dutch homestead, Bokbaai, can be viewed from here.

Bokbaai (Buck Bay): Walking up from Silwerstroom beach, you will come across

Darling district has about 1200 species of flora; for beginners, here are 8 to get started on.



tribe. By 1700 the VOC had taken over this valley. Continual Bokkom Laan is a true reflection of cattle raiding forced the the West Coast's heart and soul. This establishment of De Kleine Post, is a place where one can slow down, a military post. By 1808, on have a meal or buy some local art. account of the success of the

Moravian Church at Genadendal, De Groene Kloof Moravian Church had been established to serve the remnants of the tribe that once owned this valley. **Groote Post and Klawer Vallei:** These two homesteads in De Groene Kloof were once a vegetable garden for the VOC. Groote Post was a military post to repel Khoi-na cattle rustlers. South Africa's successful merino sheep industry started here in 1789 (based on a half-truth at the king of Spain's expense). As a result of this, in 1796 an Australian purchased a few sheep which he took back to Australia to start the merino sheep industry there. Groote Post was taken over

by Lord Charles Somerset for hunting and later William Duckitt acquired it

by swapping High Constantia in Cape Town for it. It is here that Hildagonda Duckitt wrote her famous book of Cape recipes and household hints. Klawer Vallei was once owned by Henning Huising who had a run-in with Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel over the latter's obscene corruption. When Huising left for Holland in disgust, the VOC took over his farm. In 1791 Sebastiaan van Reenen built the present homestead. Both farms are currently owned by the Pentz family, who farm dairy cattle and have re-established

> wine production. Darling: 180 inhabitants wanted a church and the establishment of their own village on the farm Langfontein. This request was granted in 1853 by the

Cape governor, Charles Darling. The village's history is closely linked with 13 that of De Groene Kloof over the hill; thus the Duckitts and Versvelds and the wool and dairy industries are interlinked. On Kapokberg, a hill overlooking Darling, Abbé de la Caille in 1751 took a measurement for working out the arc of the

meridian, thus determining the shape of the earth. During the Anglo-Boer War, Darling was captured for a day by the Boers. WWII saw an airforce base established here to counteract the German U-boat scourge by housing a squadron of Lockeed Venturas, but it was also visited by Airseed Oxfords, an Avro Anson and a De Havilland Hornet Moth. Darling is famous for its flowers and has held an lost his life fighting the British just annual flower show since 1917. The town has also outside Darling, after the Boers had established more than four areas where the public can occupied the town for a day. This was enjoy the flowers (www.darlingwildflowers.co.za). The the closest the Boers came to Cape biggest orchid nursery in South Africa is also found here. Two other places worth a visit are the Darling Museum and Evita se Perron.

found on earth, such as this

two million years ago, can be

Yzerfontein: (iron spring) This area was a VOC farm, with the finest salt in the Cape district. In the early 1700s it was a tiny harbour which also served Dassen Island. Look out for the historic lime kilns on the road to this holiday town, which is named after the spring water that had a rusty colour.

!Khwa ttu San Culture Centre: Here you can experience the ways of one of the oldest cultural groups in the world and the oldest in Africa and take a journey



The Hildebrand Monument, 6 km outside Darling, commemorates the death (in 1901) of a Boer soldier who Town during the Anglo-Boer War.

> the sole purpose of stopping any other marine business Vredenburg: This town, sitting on top of Witteklip, was founded in 1875 to serve a new Dutch Reformed church, but bitterness over access to a freshwater spring gave it the name Twisfontein. Only once this was resolved was the town

Hanley Page in 1919.

wreck 1781

North Head

Ponta da St Lucia

Malgas Island

Jutten Island

Plakiesbaai

Stony Head

South Head

Postberg Nature

Reserve is only

open in August

(today Tuscaloosa Street, Saldanha). Secondly, after

President Kruger's death in exile in Switzerland, his body

was returned to South Africa by sea, and the first people to

see it and pay their respects were the townsfolk of

Saldanha. Thirdly, the first aeroplane to land here was a

Jacobsbaai: Now a holiday and retirement destination, it

was once a safe haven for fishermen who could not get

back to Saldanha in bad weather. One of its first residents

was a Swede who lived like Robinson Crusoe for 30 years.

The Stephan brothers had a 99-year lease on the bay for

Long Point

this hamlet

was struck by a

wiped out gardens.

minor tidal wave which

damaged houses and

Langebaan: This is one of the

oldest towns in South Africa.

William Smith started the first

hotel on the bay and Langebaan

Catalina seaplanes during WWII.

remains the chief leisure centre of

the West Coast. It also has the

distinction of having the first church on

the bay (1862), the oldest pulpit in South

Africa and the first flushing toilet on the

West Coast (specially installed for the visit of

Princess Alice in 1926). During the VOC period,

Schaapen Island was used as the French

headquarters for storage and keeping cattle safe

from wild animals, but in 1772 a lion swam out and

killed eight sheep. During the Anglo-Boer War it was

used as a POW camp. This was also the terminal for English

Saldanha Bay: This is the largest and deepest natural harbour in

SAS Saldanha /

Nature Reserve

renamed Vredenburg meaning 'peace town

Langebaanweg: This military aerodrome, originally named Airforce Station Congela, was established in 1942. Its initial purpose was as a training unit to counter the German and Japanese submarine threat. This

> in Impalas; they are now flying Astras. West Coast Fossil Park: This provincial heritage site is one of the richest sites in the world of early mammal fossils.

> base is where the famous Silver Falcons started

Paternoster: One of the oldest villages on the West Coast, it was long known for its unique old-fishing-village feel. Its main industries are tourism, rock lobster and other fishing. It is also the home of the well-known South African

brand of fish paste, Cape Columbine Nature Reserve and Tietiesbaai: Just past Paternoster is the gated entrance (small fee). The lighthouse here was the last manned lighthouse built in South Africa and the first to have light, fog signal and radio beacon simultaneously (1936). It was named after the Columbine that sank close by in 1829. The most well-known ship to sink off Soldiers Reef near the lighthouse was the Lisboa. This was the first time a radio telegraphy distress call was made from a ship in South Africa. Tietiesbaai within the park is well worth a visit. According to the lighthouse keeper, it takes its name from two hills resembling breasts that can be seen from the direction of the bay.

**Shelley Point:** is a gated leisure resort with a country club and spa. It is also the only place in the world where there is a museum dedicated to Vasco da Gama as it was close to here that he made landfall in 1497.

ArcelorMittal SA Steel Mill Hoedjieskop Lynch Poin PetroSA Crude Oil named after a Saldanha Bay Schaapen Island Salamander Bay Isle la Bich Donkergat Langebaar Country Estate West Coast National Park Seeberg Oudepos I View Point South Africa and is home to the naval training base and the South African Military Academy. SAS Saldanha Nature Sixteen Mile Beach Reserve, just behind the military base, is worth a visit; there you can also see relics from WWII. The cornerstone of the harbour's business is fish canning and iron ore exports that started in 1976. Three interesting events are associated with the bay. One concerns Smuts's Boers firing on a British cruiser in the bay during one of only two naval encounters during the Anglo-Boer War. The British returned fire but no one was hurt – only some cows at Oorlogsvlei

West Coast

Fossil Park

Langebaanweg

Sishen Railway Line

Laaiplek, Port Owen and Velddrift: This area offers the holiday-maker a great deal, including water sports, golf, birding and bokkoms (small fish dried on outdoor racks - a traditional food that has fed the local people for hundreds of years). Laaiplek was the centre of the Stephan family business which was conducted from an old run-aground ship, the Neere (Smuts's Boers used the ship as a fort during their raid on the Cape). An interesting story to come from this area concerns the origin of the song, 'Daar kom die Alibama', a folk song of the 'Cape Coloured' communities that is familiar to most South Africans. People have generally thought

the song is about the Confederate raider, the Alabama, but according to Lawrence Green it is actually about a small boat called the Alibama that sailed down to Cape Town from Laaiplek carrying a certain type of reed that grows at Velddrift. These reeds were used in making the traditional Cape Malay wedding bed.

Daar kom die Alibama, Die Alibama kom oor die see. Nooi Nooi die rietkooi nooi, Die rietkooi is gemaak... Kersefontein and Langrietvlei:

of Pieter-Dirk Uys. These two old Cape Dutch homesteads are on the road between Hopefield and Velddrift. Kersefontein was bought as a cattle post by Martin Melck in 1770, but

Evita se Perron in Darling is the

physical manifestation of the genius

today it is known for the breeding of top-class horses. The farm is still owned and lived in by the Melck family. The last known hippo in the Berg River was shot in 1869 by a later Martin Melck. Langrietvlei was established in 1715 by Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen of Constantia fame. Because of the generosity of the VOC regarding tenders, he owned at least two other farms and a fishery up the West Coast. The house you see today is the third homestead, built in 1789. Hopefield: This small town on the banks of the Sout River was founded in 1853 by two people whose surnames were Hope and Field. It was once considered the capital of the West Coast as it was the main town en route to Saldanha and Vredenburg, before the new coastal road was built. Today people visit it for its

This guide provides but a taste of only a part of the West Coast: when you visit, take your time, smell the flowers and enjoy all it has to offer.



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Thanks to Shelley Brown for editorial input. Thanks to Dr John Rogers for assistance with the geological section. Flower Photography: Kate Woode-Smith © Richard Smith • 10 edition • 2019 • Gateway Guides





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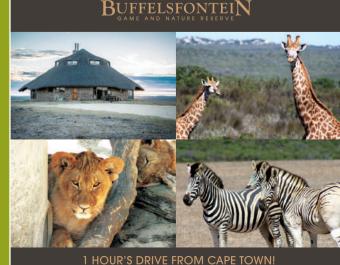
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Paternoster, where new development has taken on the style of the old, is one of the last traditional fishing villages on the West Coast. into their history, traditional knowledge, skills, language and customs.

West Coast National Park: This is not a 'big five' National Park, but it does have animals that belong to the area and, more importantly, it is a world-renowned birding site with Ramsar status. It is also a great place in the flower season when the West Coast explodes into colour. Within the park you can visit the historic Geelbek homestead with its VOC boundary stone dating from 1785, take a drive up to the top of Postberg to enjoy the view or visit Kraal Bay which has been inhabited since Eve's time and was the first VOC post on the bay. (Postberg Nature Reserve is only open in August and September.) Those who enjoy the beach should try out a spot next to the famous Pulpit Rock. Also within the park is Churchhaven, a quaint village established by George Albert Lloyd in 1863 when he deserted from an American ship. Another piece of trivia is that in 1877

