



# BUSHMANS KLOOF

WILDERNESS RESERVE & WELLNESS RETREAT

## CONSERVATION AT BUSHMANS KLOOF



## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: CARING FOR OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat is the proud **Global Winner of Wildlife Conservation Programs** in the **Condé Nast Traveler World Savers Awards (2009)**, and won the coveted **Relais & Châteaux Environment Trophy** in 2007. Its' entire operation is based on sound environmental conservation practices. This covers a wide spectrum: from the implementation of a comprehensive reserve management plan, ongoing monitoring of water quality, rainfall, soil erosion, vegetation cover and wildlife to prevent degradation, to environmentally friendly solid waste disposal and advanced Biolytix waste water processing system.

All management actions are governed by a comprehensive Environmental Management Plan, ratified by the Bushmans Kloof Conservation Trust. Each trustee is an expert in a particular field including wildlife management, botany, archaeology and cultural heritage. Bushmans Kloof makes regular use of the services of the Nature Conservation Corporation, an independent environmental management consultant.

Bushmans Kloof supports the following environmental organizations:

- Cape Leopard Trust (sponsorship of research by means of GPS collars)
- South African Botanical Society and Cape Nature (saving the Clanwilliam Cedar tree)
- Northern Cederberg Conservancy (participation in fire protection, alien vegetation eradication and promotion of eco-friendly farming techniques)

Bushmans Kloof has furthermore developed active relationships with the following organisations:

- Archaeology department of the University of Cape Town
- SAHRA (South African Heritage Resource Agency)
- South African Department of Environmental Affairs
- University of Stellenbosch SCARCE project (a pilot survey of amphibians and reptiles in the Cederberg)
- Cape Town and Western Cape Tourism Association (membership).

We ensure minimal impact by tourists on the environment through implementation of the following:

- Strict protocol is adhered to at archaeological and rock art sites
- Guests are educated in terms of the protection and respect for rock art sites
- Particularly sensitive rock art sites are closed to the public, but interpreted through high-quality MS Power Point presentations
- Only indigenous wildlife species are introduced on the reserve
- Irrigation of the gardens is done through micro-jet irrigation and at judicious times to limit unnecessary evaporation
- Treated grey water is used to irrigate the larger grassed areas
- Only biodegradable detergents are used
- Guests are encouraged to assist in the property's water saving policies and are made aware of the need for water conservation in the Western Cape
- Lodge sewage is treated in a Biolytix system (raw sewage is broken down by worms)
- All non-organic waste is transported off the property to the Clanwilliam municipal dump site
- Organic waste is used as mulch and compost in the gardens
- All the swimming pools are salt chlorinated
- Vehicles are prohibited from driving off-road
- All roads are maintained annually
- Hiking trails are carefully marked and maintained
- All firewood in the lodge is sourced from alien vegetation such as Port Jackson Willow
- All infrastructural development follows strict environmental scoping protocols before submission for final approval from the regional district municipality.

## Community Involvement



Bushmans Kloof has been largely instrumental in the pilot project to involve the local farming community to ultimately create the Cederberg Biosphere Reserve, which will consist of the Biedouw River Conservancy, the Wuppertal Conservancy, and the Cederberg Wilderness Area.

Profits generated through eco-tourism is re-invested in the local community by training and employing staff from the local area, in particular the town of Wuppertal.

The Community initiatives include the following:

- The Wuppertal Community (German Moravian mission station 40 km from Bushmans Kloof – providing employment and purchasing of products for use at the lodge, such as rooibos tea and leather goods)
- Elizabethfontein Primary School (support and contribute towards the upliftment and environmental education of the local children)
- West Coast Municipality (support through improvement of local infrastructure).

## Monitoring Programmes and Research



Adhering to the adage, 'to measure is to manage', Bushmans Kloof's field guides have developed a number of important scientific monitoring programmes, which include rock art, vegetation, soil erosion, human impact, water quality, wildlife and rainfall. The data is stored on a database and statistically analysed to detect long term changes and fluctuations in the natural equilibrium. Monitoring forms the cornerstone of planning and decision-making and is constantly updated and reassessed.

A number of research projects have been initiated at Bushmans Kloof including:

- A comprehensive survey of the Cederberg reptiles and amphibians for conservation and ecotourism, by the University of Stellenbosch SCARCE Unit
- A photographic Cape mountain zebra identification project
- A leopard survey project by The Cape Leopard Trust.

The lodge monitors environmental impact through the following steps:

- Waste levels are monitored and reported on a monthly basis
- Hazardous chemicals are stored in a secure place, kept on register and reported on monthly
- Roads and infrastructure are monitored annually
- Together with Bushmans Kloof's resident archaeologist Siyakha Mguni, Professor John Parkington, Head of the Archaeology department at the University of Cape Town (UCT) monitors the rock art on a continuous basis
- Wildlife populations are counted from the air annually
- The Bushmans Kloof Conservation Trust meets bi-annually
- An internal and external environmental audit is carried out on an annual basis.



### Preservation of the Rock Art of the ancient San people

Bushmans Kloof is proud custodian to over 130 remarkable documented rock art sites – some dating back 10 000 years – left behind by one of mankind's earliest societies, the San. Since its inception, Bushmans Kloof has shown a rare dedication to the preservation of this rich cultural treasure, and, accordingly has been awarded South African Natural Heritage status.

To further research the knowledge of this remarkable culture, Siyakha Mguni, a dedicated and knowledgeable Rock Art archaeologist was appointed as Resident Archaeologist and Curator. His primary function is the recording, documenting and research of all the rock art sites in the reserve, in order to create a database linked to a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform. Mguni also lectures and assists the University of Cape Town's Clanwilliam-based Living Landscape Project, and further trains the guides at Bushmans Kloof in current rock art analysis and interpretation, based on new research being conducted all over the continent.

Siyakha Mguni was awarded the coveted UK Antiquity Journal Ben Cullen Prize for 2006, for his paper 'King's monuments: identifying 'formlings' in southern African San rock art paintings'. This follows closely after Mguni announced his discovery of a rare rock art site at Bushmans Kloof, which is of great significance as a ceremonial rock art site.

Guests at Bushmans Kloof may enjoy daily rock art walks to discover the caves and sites, which has been recognised as 'the world's largest open-air art gallery'. Trained guides provide insight into the rich cultural history of the San, a tribe of diminutive ochre-skinned hunter-gatherers who traversed this area in search of food and water, for thousands of years.

In September 2004 the Bushmans Kloof Heritage Centre was opened, which features the Rudner Collection, as well as other authentic, irreplaceable Bushman artefacts that include jewellery, dancing sticks, hunting kits, musical instruments, digging sticks and magic sets, to offer further insight into the history and lives of the San people.

### ENGLISHMAN'S GRAVE



### Anglo Boer War

Bushmans Kloof is also custodian of the legendary 'Englishman's Grave', and maintains the lonely grave site, which is located on the periphery just outside the reserve on the road towards Wupperthal. Bearing the inscription 'Brave and True' this Anglo Boer War memorial was erected by the mother of a young British soldier, Vinicombe Winchester Clowes, who was a lieutenant in the First Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. He died here on 30 January 1901 at the age of 21, when British forces were attempting to prevent incursions into the Cape Colony by the Boer Commandos under General Smuts.



## Alien vegetation eradication

Arguably the greatest environmental threat to Bushmans Kloof's biodiversity is the encroachment of the Port Jackson willow (*Acacia saligna*), an alien tree species introduced from Australia in the 1800's to stabilise the dunes of the Cape Flats area. With little local competition, this species spread like wild fire, migrating north and east, invading areas of indigenous Fynbos and colonising riparian river banks.

Since inception, Bushmans Kloof has invested an enormous amount of money and manpower in an attempt to remove this scourge, and the results have been very satisfactory. Every year, local teams are employed to cut, pull, poison and burn several hectares of infestation. The seedless dry branches are then chopped and used as mulch to brush-pack and stabilise disturbed areas. It seems like a thankless task as the enormous seed bank built up over the years is incredibly viable, resulting in a new crop of seedlings every year. However, the Port Jackson species has been virtually eradicated from the Boontjies and Perdekraal tributaries, with only a small area below the Main Dam wall remaining. This project not only removes aliens, but provides much needed work and income to the local community.

## The Clanwilliam Cedar



Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat, together with the Botanical Society and Western Cape Nature Conservation, has given its commitment to support the Clanwilliam Cedar Tree Project.

Bushmans Kloof grows sapling in its nursery and hosts an annual tree and seed planting ceremony in an effort to reintroduce this highly endangered tree into its natural habitat, and specifically around Bushmans Kloof.

The Cederberg mountains are named after the Clanwilliam cedars (*Widdringtonia cedarbergensis*) that were once abundant on the upper slopes, and are now faced with possible extinction. The number of trees has declined dramatically over the past two centuries, partly due to unsustainable exploitation, and partly due to an increase in fire frequency.

The Clanwilliam cedar is listed as endangered on the Red Data List, and has been short-listed onto a global list of 43 conifer species that are worthy of special conservation attention.

### The Bushmans Kloof Special Collection

Bushmans Kloof has selected the following plants that occur naturally on the Reserve, as part of its very own Special Collection:

- Rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*)
- Taylor's Thatching Reed (*Cannamois taylori*)
- Khakibutton (*Crassula columnaris*)
- Clanwilliam Daisy (*Euryops speciosissimus*)
- Paintbrush Lily (*Haemanthus coccineus*)
- Fragrant Evening Flower (*Hesperantha cucullata*)
- Rocket Pincushion (*Leucospermum reflexum*)
- Magenta Pelargonium (*Pelargonium magenteum*)
- Breede River Yellowwood (*Podocarpus elongates*)
- Clanwilliam Cedar (*Widdringtonia cedarbergensis*)

## The Indigenous Rooibos Plant



Naturally occurring only here in the Cederberg region of the Western Cape, the indigenous Rooibos plant (*Aspalathus linearis*) is renowned across the world for its extraordinarily powerful qualities, proven health benefits and delicious, nutty taste.

The Rooibos plant was widely used by the Khoisan in the region as a herbal remedy for many different ailments, and it is believed that this ancient culture was the first to discover that the needle-like Rooibos leaves could be used to make a refreshing brew.

Growing wild across the expanse of the Bushmans Kloof reserve, Rooibos has been introduced extensively into all aspects of the lodge operations, and in its many forms, uses and guises, is an integral part of the Bushmans Kloof experience.

From the refreshing, chilled Iced Rooibos Tea served on arrival as 'signature welcome drink', and the deliciously fragrant, hand-made Rooibos soap in guest bathrooms, to a steaming pot of Rooibos tea served at High Tea, it is essential to the guest experience here. On a culinary level the Chef makes use of Rooibos tea as ingredient in some of our Cape Country Cuisine dishes, which has led Bushmans Kloof to be a proud contributor to Rooibos Limited's newly published Rooibos Cookbook. Extracts of the Rooibos plant are also used in Bushmans Kloof's spa products - a proudly South African anti-ageing body and skincare range called Africology that is applied in various innovative, therapeutic face and body treatments.

## FAUNA



View the expansive environment and indigenous game with daily nature drives through the reserve including: Gemsbok, Bontebok, Cape mountain zebra, Eland, Red hartebeest, Black wildebeest, Vaalrhebok, Klipspringer, Springbok and Steenbok to name a few. Bushmans Kloof is home to 35 species of mammals, several of which are listed in the IUCN Red Data book and 150 different species of bird such as the Malachite kingfisher, African fish eagle and Black harrier. Sightings of Aardwolf, African wildcat, Bat eared fox, Cape fox and Porcupine are possible.

The owners declined the option to establish the 'Big 5' as Bushmans Kloof remains committed to the ethos of creating a credible, indigenous Western Cape reserve where guests may wander and explore the reserve in complete safety to appreciate the smaller, yet equally significant wonders of nature. The objective is to create a unique wilderness reserve in the Cederberg Mountains as it was when the San people roamed the land 300 years ago.

## Saving the Cape Mountain Zebra



Bushmans Kloof has been instrumental in the quest to save the rare and endangered Cape mountain zebra (*Equus zebra zebra*) from extinction and is the proud owner of one of the largest privately owned herds among the estimated total population of 1200 animals worldwide. In genetic terms this still represents a small population, but is a vast improvement of the just over 400 recorded in 1984. It is considered the largest mammal in South Africa to have come so close to extinction, a fate that sadly, awaited the Quagga, an extinct sub species of the plains zebra.

Historically, Cape mountain zebra existed throughout the Cape Fold Belt Mountains and the edge of the Great Escarpment of the Cape Province where its fast-growing hooves adapted to the type of rocky terrain inhabited.

Natural populations survived in three conservation areas: the Mountain Zebra National Park at Cradock, and the Gamkaberg Nature Reserve and Kamanassie Nature Reserve in the Oudtshoorn district. Herds were subsequently established in a number of other locations, including Bushmans Kloof.

Bushmans Kloof Head guide is currently photographing and documenting each of the zebras on the property for the 'studbook', a valuable tool used to determine the reproductive success of individual zebra. In layman terms: 'tracing the family tree of each individual'. The 'studbook' also monitors movement of individuals between breeding and bachelor herds.



Further demonstrating the commitment Bushmans Kloof has to the preservation and protection of indigenous wildlife, it has undertaken to support another major conservation project: The Cape Leopard Trust. This organization is dedicated to the conservation of the Cape's predator diversity, and in particular, the leopard (*Panthera pardus*) as the flagship species. Bushmans Kloof is a primary sponsor of the Global Positioning Satellite systems (GPS) collaring project for the leopard - the apex predator in the Western Cape.

In August 2005 the first Global Positioning Satellite system (GPS) collar was fitted to a leopard for monitoring purposes, before the animal was released in the wild.

The Cape Leopard Trust works towards conserving the Cape's predator diversity through simultaneously implementing conservation and research projects, and tourism initiatives. The leopard is utilized as 'flagship species' to highlight the plight of the trust and to find effective ways to facilitate harmonious co-existence between these magnificent animals and farm owners in the region.

Bushmans Kloof has provided funds that have enabled the Trust to acquire GPS collars with tracking devices that will allow them to determine the home range and behaviour of leopards in the Cederberg Mountains of the Western Cape. In turn this will supply invaluable information pertaining to leopard ecology in this area. It was the first time ever that GPS collars was used to research the leopard in the Cape.

## Protecting the Endangered Clanwilliam Yellow Fish



Small and Large-mouthed Bass from the USA were introduced to the Western Cape river systems during the last century in an attempt to "improve" sport fishing. These aggressive species set about devouring the indigenous fish eggs and juvenile fish to the extent that indigenous species were soon fighting for survival. In the past Bushmans Kloof offered excellent bass fishing in its three dams. It has since initiated a project to prioritise the conservation of the highly endangered Clanwilliam yellow fish (revered by fly fishermen as the 'freshwater bonefish'), which is entirely endemic to the Olifants River system, including the Doring and Biedouw tributaries.

The Bushmans Kloof catchment area is an important nursery for the young fry (juvenile fish) which migrate downstream in the wet winter months. The project involves systematically eradicating all alien fish from the dams that feed on the fragile river systems. At the same time, these dams are restocked with Yellow fish fingerlings caught in nets in the Biedouw River. Two other species that are introduced are the Clanwilliam redbfin and the Sawfin, both endemic to the Olifants River system. Gravel beds have been laid at the mouth of the Boontjies River that feeds the main dam, to assist the adult Yellow fish upstream to spawn again in spring.

During the summer this should result in excellent 'catch-and-release' fly-fishing in the rock pools of the Boontjies and Perdekraal tributaries and all the way to the lodge. Currently fly-fishing is available in the deeper rock pools, with reasonably sized Yellow fish being caught with mayfly nymphs or bead-head flies. Depending on the success of the project, Bushmans Kloof may be in a position to offer very exciting fly-fishing in its main dam within the next two years.

## CONTACT US

**SALES AND RESERVATIONS**  
Tel + 27 (0) 21 481 1860  
Fax +27 (0) 21 481 1870  
info@bushmanskloof.co.za

  
RELAYS &  
CHÂTEAUX  
www.bushmanskloof.co.za

**LODGE**  
Tel + 27 (0) 27 482 8200  
Fax +27 (0) 27 482 1011  
lodge@bushmanskloof.co.za